TELEVISION COVERAGE OF THE INNER CITY

An examination of the professional journalist's practices and production domain and their impact upon the public portrayal of the problems and issues of the inner city.

by

Simon Cottle

A Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD, Mass Communications at the University of Leicester, 1990.

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the portrayal of the problems and issues of the inner city by an Independent Television Company across its factual programming over an eight year period from 1982 to 1989. Following a critical review of existing mass communications' literature an intermediate level of analysis and theorisation is secured which, recognising the explanatory contributions won by competing approaches, nonetheless identifies a significant theoretical lacuna in their midst. This concerns the deliberate pursuit of established programme forms by professional journalists and programme makers and which are reproduced as a 'known result'. The portrayal of the inner city is examined in terms of substantive content, access, forum and means of communication at both 'reading' and 'production' stages of empirical analysis. Essentially the study attends to the interpretative 'resources and accounts' found within this inner city portrayal and placed within the public domain as well as the characteristic and impacting 'properties of the medium'.

Following an extensive 'reading', including an examination of the characteristic forms, subject interests and relational appeals of established programmes genres, as well as substantive inner city news and riot coverage across different factual programmes and employing a variety of quantitative and qualitative reading methods, the study turns to an examination of professional practices within the production and institutional domains. Participant observation, semi-structured interviews and a number of in-depth case studies are used to complement the findings elicited at the 'reading' stage. Professional practices are examined to the extent that they enact and reproduce on a daily basis established interests and properties of the regional news programme. Finally the thesis situates the analysis within the wider and changing institutional context already found to impact upon the limited and characteristic forms of inner city portrayal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research opportunity was conceived in the middle 1980s, a period when having crashed through news thresholds earlier in the decade, the so-called 'inner city' stubbornly refused to be displaced from its new found prominence on the public agenda. While talk of decades can all too easily conceal those temporal rhythms and processes not amenable to tidy ten year periodization, in this instance at least the 1980s may well in retrospect be seen as something of a watershed period for 'the inner city' and much else besides. Two institutions, each in their different ways concerned with the media presentation of the problems and issues of the inner city at this time, collaborated to provide the opportunity for this research. The Centre for Mass Communication Research at the University of Leicester provided, and has continued to provide throughout the research period, the academic facilities, support and established standards of scholarship associated with its impressive and long-standing contribution to the mass communications research field. Central Television, as one of the 'big five' Independent Television companies whose franchise area currently encompasses many of the most deprived inner city areas in the country, practically and generously provided the basic conditions and opportunities without which this project could not even have been envisaged, much less completed. To both these institutions, as well as the Economic and Social Research Council and its facilitating studentship grant, an acknowledgement must be made. Simply, without the support of each, the research would not have taken place.

A tradition of social science teaches, and now personal experience confirms, that to refer to 'institutions' is to run the risk of reifying or at least underestimating the creative role played by people: while institutions can provide the framework of possibility it is people that create opportunities. Here a special debt of thanks must go to Professor J.D Halloran who, having presented me with what can only be taken as an enviable research opportunity, generously declined to stipulate or even delimit the avenues of possible research inquiry and interest. That task fell to my more immediate supervisor, Anders Hansen, whose patience and good-sense helped to curb the ceaseless proliferation of research inquiries. Without Anders' gentle steering touch I would, no doubt, still be up to my eyes in VHS tapes and set to embark upon yet another interesting, but hopelessly impractical, topic of investigation. To both my academic supervisors and their colleagues at 'the Centre', thank you.

Over the period of nearly two years when based at Central elevision in Birmingham I accumulated many debts of gratitude, too many in fact to mention them all individually. However a special thanks must be said to the then Controller of Factual Programmes, Robert Southgate, whose title in line with the changing structures of broadcasting appears to be constantly nder revision. Instrumental in setting up the research opportunity and 'opening doors' rarely traversed by media researchers the project owes much to his enthusiasm for this collaborative venture and genuine interest in Central's portrayal of the region's inner cities. Barry Reeve, Head of esearch at Central, provided further support, advice and readily supplied a wealth of in-house audience data and other information of value.

On a more day-to-day basis I would like to thank the

following newsroom personnel for their kindness, co-operation and candid statements freely advanced in numerous interviews and impromptu conversations. Both Ted Trimmer, Managing Editor, and Bill Campbell, Programme Editor, generously agreed to my many newsroom requests over a period of many months and volunteered much insight into the regional news process, notwithstanding the sometimes frenetic and pressurised daily ebb and flow in which they were immersed. Mike Warman, Head of News West, Lauri Upshon, Editorial Manager, Steve Attack, Acting News Editor and Carol Cuthbert, Programme Assistant/'trouble-shooter' all in their different ways contributed much, and no doubt put up with much from this newsroom intruder. So did the numerous reporters, journalists and other personnel of the newsroom who became the subject of my gaze and permitted me to ask a series of uninformed, and hopefully increasingly, informed questions.

Finally, I would also like to thank all the other programme makers and Central personnel, too numerous to mention each by name, who freely granted their time and understanding of all things television including Simon Bailey, Associate Producer, Malcolm Frazer, Documentary Producer, Dawn Airey, Controller Programme Planning, and Richard Creasey, Controller Features.

While I suspect few will concur in entirety with the argument presented below, advanced as it is from a standpoint outside of the practices, milieu and different aims held and pursued by professional broadcasters, hopefully none will perceive an instance of uninformed 'media bashing' and may even recognise a degree of common ground. Such responses must remain the readers, as the argument, faults and all, remains my own.

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Introduction

Britain in the decade of the 1980s witnessed a series of disorders, the scale and severity of which as much as the continuing possibility of future disturbances, continue to inform news headlines in the decade of the 1990s. Though not strictly accurate to suggest, as one eminent commentator has, that the scale of such disorders are without historical precedent this century, few could deny that 'the inner city riots', as these events have collectively become known, have placed the inner city on the public agenda with unparalleled frequency and prominence in recent years. To reference 'headlines' and the idea of a 'public agenda' is to immediately draw attention to the dependence of these events upon those wider processes and media forms in which the inner city riots have gained public expression. While it can be acknowledged that other sources of information, knowledge and understanding are likely to have informed public perceptions of the inner city riots, it is doubtful whether any command the cultural, social or political centrality and reach of the mass media and its disseminated forms. For many people, probably most people, the only encounter with the inner city riots has been via the images and accounts found within mass media portrayals. In an important sense therefore 'the inner city riots' have been, and may continue to be, constituted by the encounter with the accounts and images found within the mass media.

To emphasise the public nature of the inner city riots is to simultaneously identify the media portrayal of these events as of especial importance. Certainly the problems, issues and concerns frequently subsumed under the label of 'the inner city' can be approached from a number of disciplines and theoretical approaches each with its distinctive line of inquiry, guiding questions, framework of understanding and province of insight. What is apparent however, is that the public discussion and debate surrounding the inner city constitutes an important dimension of 'the inner city' in its own right. Placed high on the media agenda inner city riots have become the subject of social and political interest, debate and contest reaching far beyond the rundown streets and inner city districts in which such disorders have taken place. It is interesting to note that

the first page of Lord Scarman's report, itself a document of continuing media interest and reference, indirectly acknowledges the mediated and public nature of these events when describing how 'British people watched with horror and incredulity' scenes of violence and disorder on their television sets 'demonstrating to millions the fragility of the Queen's peace' [Scarman(1986)].

In an important sense the inner city riots became public property, mediated by the institutions of the mass media, open to appropriation and contested by competing and conflicting accounts each seeking to define, interpret, and explain the problems of the inner city within a particular framework of understanding. These frameworks moreover have frequently sought to align these events, their causes and courses of prescriptive response to established political viewpoints. To recognise the public nature of the inner city riots, then, is also to recognise that the inner city riots are as much to do with the range of reactions and responses unleashed by these disorders as the initial events themselves. Once again, it can be maintained that the mass media have played a pivotal role in the public display of reactions and responses each seeking to align or mobilise public opinion along preferred lines of interpretation and prescriptive demands.

To talk about 'reactions' and 'responses' is to intimate that the inner city riots and their portrayal have been involved within wider processes of public, institutional and policy reaction subsequent to, and possibly in part sustained by media portrayals. It is also to suggest that the meanings informing and assigned to these events are not settled matters, whether self evident or beyond challenge, but rather a matter of public engagement and contest. To focus upon the centrality of the mass media within the public portrayal of the inner city riots is not therefore to necessarily posit the mass media as either the originating source of, or means by which public opinion is simply manufactured and imposed upon an undiscerning and undifferentiated 'public'. It is to suggest however, that the mass media frequently occupy a privileged position in the mediation of important social and political issues where interpretative accounts and resources are placed within the public domain. It is the contention here that such interpretative accounts and resources effectively constitute a

public reservoir or resource available in the active construction of meaning and understanding; these in turn may directly inform, or sustain wider understandings of the inner city and even be instrumental in mobilising public support in regard to subsequent policy and institutional interventions.

However, if the inner city riots of the 1980s helped to periodically propel the inner city to the top of the political agenda, the fact remains that the problems, conditions and issues focused in relation to the inner city cannot be confined to the outbreak of serious disorders. Indeed, some would argue that these disorders are themselves merely the exceptional, if not entirely unexpected, outcome of mundane conditions and structural inequalities which continue to inform the lived realities of inner city existence. If this general position is adopted, it becomes clear that the media portrayal of the inner city riots is but one source of public interest in, and possible understanding of the issues and problems of the inner city and points to the need to attend to other possible forms of inner city portrayal, perhaps of a more general or routine nature.

With the inner city riots of the 1980s and their media portrayal providing an initial backdrop of concern to this project, the practical opportunity of engaging in a detailed examination of the media presentation of the problems and issues of the inner city was provided by a major independent television company. Taking advantage of the generous research opportunity and facilities provided by Central Television PLC, one of the five major independent television companies, this study has sought to extend and complement the limited foci of research interest previously directed at national, and predominantly news press accounts of the events of inner city riots. Deliberately seeking to establish the extent, range and character of inner city portrayal across an extended period of time and encompassing general inner city coverage and concerns as well as the more dramatic outbursts of inner city disorder, the study addresses a regional television company's portrayal of the inner city. Situated within, and broadcasting to one of the largest franchise areas in the middle of Britain, the Central Television region encompasses many of the most deprived inner city areas within the country (see appendix 1).

Recognising both the seriousness of the social and

political questions raised by the continuing existence of Britain's inner cities, as well as the crucial role that the mass media can play in the public examination and debate of inner city concerns, this study seeks to examine in detail the contribution made by one particular instance of the mass media to the public examination and understandings of the problems and issues of the inner city. Directing attention to the general portrayal of the inner city as well as detailed examination of inner city riot coverage across a wide range of television programming produced and transmitted by an independent television company, this study has sought firstly to pursue in some detail the extent, character and forms of inner city presentation found across a number of years, and different types of factual programmes. The first part of the thesis answers in some detail the questions: 'How has the inner city been portrayed by an independent television company within and across its output of factual programming ?', 'What interpretative accounts and resources have been placed within the public domain which could further public examination, discussion and understanding of the problems and issues of the region's inner cities ?'.

Secondly, the thesis proceeds to examine at the levels of established programme forms, professional practice, institutional context and finally wider broadcasting environment the complex combination of factors which begin to account for the extent, forms and character of inner city portrayal elicited and examined in the first part of substantive analysis and which together begin to address the questions: 'Why has inner city portrayal assumed the forms that it has ?', 'What is the role of the media within this portrayal', 'In what ways has the mediated forms of inner city portrayal impacted upon the available interpretative resources and accounts gaining expression within the public domain ?'.

Identifying four fundamental attributes attending inner city portrayal and involving considerations of programme genre, substantive inner city concerns, presentational arrangements or 'forums', as well as the range of accessed inner city voices, the thesis firstly subjects selected inner city programming to examination along these four lines of inquiry before complementing these specific lines of approach with a series of

parallel analyses conducted within the professional environment of programme production and institutional decision-making.

Clearly, this project was dependent in the first instance upon gaining access to the relevant programming as well as the opportunity to undertake detailed quantitative and qualitative analyses of this material; and thereafter, in the second instance, to follow up such findings with an extensive period of participant observation including further detailed case studies, an extensive series of interviews with programme makers and corporate decision-makers as well as the opportunity to consult sources of Corporate secondary data. This empirical part of the research study was conducted over a 21 month period while based within Central Television's Birmingham complex. On all these fronts the generosity and remarkable openess of Central Television and its personnel permitted an unrivalled opportunity to examine in depth the professional practices and institutional context which inform the Company's portrayal of the region's inner cities. Such a remarkable opportunity provided seemingly unlimited lines of research interest, and it was only with difficulty that the impulse to indefinitely expand the research design was held in check.

The support found at Central as well as the generosity of time and resources, and above all the willingness to be the subject of research scrutiny with 'no strings attached' is, as far as can be gathered from research studies conducted within other broadcasting institutions, an exceptional instance of unstinting cooperation. The openess of working journalists and andid statements advanced by programme makers and senior orporate personnel is evident within the thesis, and further testifies to the genuinely cooperative spirit encountered at entral and must be acknowledged as crucial to the arguments and insights marshalled within this study. Any study which seeks to seriously understand the working practices and programme ambitions pursued and enacted by programme makers must, of ecessity, complement a methodology involving perhaps content nalysis and/or qualitative programme 'readings' and period of bservation with an opportunity to ask direct questions. At this oint cooperation is critical, and if not forthcoming leaves the esearch enterprise seriously impaired. Of the 60 plus interviews and countless impromptu conversations conducted

across the research period only on one occasion was such 'openess' not forthcoming, indicating that almost without exception all the individuals spoken to contributed an invaluable source of further information, knowledge and insight which simply could not have been gained by any other means.

With these introductory remarks the organisation of the thesis can now be outlined where further details concerning the research interests pursued in this study can be indicated. Following this brief introductory statement Chapter One discusses the contested idea of the inner city and surveys the competing and conflicting viewpoints which have informed public and academic discussions of the problems and issues of the inner city. Reviewing a wide range of inner city related literature and documentation encompassing numerous academic studies, official and non-official 'riot' reports and inquiries as well as pressure group statements and grass-roots opinion three fundamental perspectives or 'interpretative frameworks' are identified each seeking to account for, and explain the occurrence of inner city riots, and the inner city generally within available political perspectives. These subsequently sensitise and inform the critical 'reading' undertaken in the first part of the study.

In line with the general finding outlined later in the thesis, identifying the regional news programme as by and far away the most prevalent vehicle for inner city television portrayal, Chapter Two critically reviews the wealth of mass ommunication's research previously conducted in relation to ews programming. The chapter critically outlines major lines of theoretical interest informing many of these news studies and a hared, though frequently implicit, preoccupation by both iberal/pluralist and critical approaches with the centrality of ews to the idea of a 'public sphere'. The chapter concludes ith a brief review of the mass communications research iterature focusing upon the 'inner city' and some of its dentified issues and concerns. General research findings of elevance to this particular study are indicated.

Chapter Three takes a wider view of mass communication esearch and theory and seeks to identify major lines of esearch tradition and approach. Finding a diversified field in hich 'traditional' and 'critical' orthodoxies appear to be

undergoing a process of major reassessment and development, a number of recent departure points are observed. Finding no single theoretical approach which is capable of encompassing the multiple complexities and interrelationships between the different 'moments' of the mass communication process but reviewing a number of studies which have contributed important insights and explanatory gains in the understanding of the mediation of important social issues, problems and social processes these findings are pursued further in the following chapter.

Chapter Four, developing upon the theoretical discussion and findings outlined in Chapter Three, as well as the idea of 'the public sphere' broached in Chapter Two, draws these different discussions together and formalises an approach which will order the priorities of research interest to be pursued throughout the remainder of the thesis. In particular, the idea of programme types approached as organising forms or 'genres' characterised by a formalised structure, patterned subject interests and inscribed audience appeals is identified as a means by which the multiple facets of a programme form can be subjected to systematic and incisive discussion which does not seek to 'flatten' considerations of form to a narrowly conceived understanding of 'content'. If the concept and discussion of programme genre provides the basis for gaining an analytical purchase upon the mediating forms of television programming and its impact on inner city coverage, the idea of the public sphere rovides a more substantial and encompassing level of onceptualisation and theorization.

Already observing the political import of mass ommunications to the wider public understandings of particular ocial and political concerns and processes as evidenced in the overage of inner city riots, the concept of the public sphere eceives detailed discussion and elaboration as a possible site or political, social and cultural contest, negotiation and xpression. To what extent and in what forms the public sphere as been enacted and constituted by television's public xamination and discussion of the problems and issues of the nner city is perhaps the underlying research interest addressed n the course of this thesis. Identifying four fundamental ttributes of critical importance to the idea of the public

sphere which profoundly impact upon the public mediation of important social and political concerns these four attributes are discussed at some length. Considerations of 'means of communication', 'substantive portrayal', 'access', and 'forum' all receive further discussion and elaboration before being pursued later in the two main empirical stages of the study.

Having developed a theoretical rationale and guiding framework informing the rest of the study, the remainder of the chapter briefly outlines the general methodology deemed appropriate to this project. Given the scope of research interests which, in this instance, encompass two 'moments' of the traditional conception of the mass communication research scenario, approached moreover from a number of different complementary analytical levels (technological-statutory-commercial; institutional-departmental; cultural-programme form; professional practice-discursive; discursive-linguistic-lexical) a wide-ranging set of methods are used throughout the study. This final part of Chapter Four therefore provides a brief statement and justification for the array of methods used (see appendices 2-5 for diagrammatic overviews concerning the research design, stages and levels of analysis, as well as methods used).

Chapter Five begins the first major empirical stage of the study with a detailed quantitative and qualitative discussion of the primary vehicle of television inner city portrayal: the regional news programme. Seeking to determine to what extent properties of genre impact upon the portrayal of the problems and issues of the inner city and their mediation in the public sphere, the programme form of regional news is first subjected to detailed consideration in terms of genre properties of 'appropriate subject matter', 'formal mode of composition' and rogramme 'stance'.

Having established the characteristic forms, subject interests and inscribed appeals found within the established regional news form as elicited from programmes analysed across a seven year period, Chapter Six analyses the inner city portrayal found within this programme form across the same period. utlining the method by which the concept of the inner city was operationalised for the purposes of this quantitative review and analysis, patterns of subject interest are discerned, a

hierarchy of inner city voices identified and predominating presentational formats charted and discussed according to their impact upon the public discussion and examination of the inner city. Additionally, the pronounced regional news tendency to inflect inner city subjects in a particular manner is also attended to both through examples and a form of quantitative discourse structure analysis.

Chapter Seven confines its attention to a systematic quantitative analysis of the news portrayal of the Handsworth riots as reported within 153 separate news items across a one year period. Riot news interests and priorities are established through a number of quantitative analyses including forms of narrative and discourse analyses, while lexical analyses provide further empirical support for the differential involvement of competing interpretative resources and accounts. A major quantitative visual analysis is also conducted as a complement to quantitative analyses of riot themes, while a discerned ierarchy of inner city voices and pattern of presentational formats also receive discussion to the extent that these, in tandem with predominating news riot concerns, differentially nvolve and privilege competing interpretative frameworks of nderstanding organising public discussion of the inner city iots.

While Chapters Five to Seven have deliberately concentrated pon regional news programming and inner city portrayal, given he general finding that this television form provides by far he most frequent and extensive inner city portrayal of all actual programme forms, Chapter Eight in necessarily more ompressed and descriptive terms reviews other non-news rogramme forms and their involvement, if any, of inner city ssues and concerns across the research period. The chapter oncludes with a complementary study of three non-news riot rogrammes commissioned in the wake of the Handsworth riots and rovides insight into the different formal possibilities for nner city portrayal found across the spectrum of news-current ffairs-documentary programming. Chapter Eight concludes the irst major stage of empirical analysis, having discerned and nalysed a considerable amount of broadcast news and other rogramme inner city material according to the four fundamental haracteristics identified as of central importance to the idea

of the public sphere.

Chapters Nine to Thirteen comprise the second major stage of empirical analysis, seeking as they do to account for the extent, forms and character of the inner city portrayal already analysed in the preceding chapters. Chapter Nine sets the scene for this part of the study by briefly introducing the professional roles, working context and professional practices found within the central newsroom as well as newsroom reliance upon certain institutional sources and routine news contacts. Thereafter, questions of programme genre and its impact are pursued via interviews, participant observation, (including meeting transcript material) and occasional case study material.

Chapter Ten pursues the selection, editing and inflecting processes which combine within the production setting to determine both the extent and forms of inner city portrayal across a number of key areas of inner city concern. Again, a variety of complementary methods and data are marshalled in support of these general findings.

Chapter Eleven examines considerations of programme form, presentational formats and their changing forms across the 8 ear review period and begins to account for the deployment of these different 'forums' and their respective possibilities and limitations of public involvement and engaged dialogue in terms f professional news expectations, established programme onventions and changing technological capabilities.

Chapter Twelve addresses the important question of inner ity news access, and details a number of case studies emonstrating the professional practices and expectations irectly impacting upon the array of voices finally gaining news ccess; this chapter also summarises the principal findings eveloped across the four news production chapters and restates ts main conclusions concerning the explanation for the extent, haracter and forms of inner city portrayal examined in the irst empirical part of the thesis.

Chapter Thirteen acts as an institutional complement to hapter Eight, and the review of non-news programmes as well as ituating regional news programming within the changing nstitutional context of independent regional broadcasting. itched at a wider level of corporate organisation and re- tructuring in the face of the radical changes confronting

British broadcasting, these momentous processes are referenced in so far as they have already been found to impact upon Central's regional current affairs and documentary programming. While regional news programming continues to enjoy, if anything, an increasingly assured role within the wider objectives of corporate strategy, regional current affairs has come under increasing pressure to maximise its audience appeal and popularise its forms, while regional documentary has been subjected to similar pressures being simultaneously rescheduled, constrained to alter its presentational form and popularise its appeal or disappearing entirely from the range of regional programme fare. The qualitative and quantitative impacts upon inner city portrayal of these non-news changes are ighlighted, before the discussion is brought to a close.

As the conclusion to this thesis, Chapter Fourteen estates some of the central arguments, findings and conclusions oncerning this case study of an independent television ompany's mediation of the problems, issues and concerns of the nner city and its contribution to the public sphere. onsiderations of mass communication's theory, method and oncept are also addressed on the basis of the research practice nd findings gained during this study, while possible avenues or further inquiry and research interest are intimated.

Chapter One

The Idea of "The Inner City": Site of Semantic and Social Struggle

In 1980's Britain the term 'the inner city' has found public prominence. Placed on the political agenda and surrounded by political rhetoric the term threatens to disintegrate under the weight of competing appropriations. Or, alternatively, it may lose whatever descriptive purchase it may once have offered and solidify into a partisan symbol mobilized in the furtherance of wider political objectives. Frequently colonized by opposing political ideologies and social viewpoints, either the problems of 'the inner city', or 'the inner city' as the problem, have been pressed into the service of competing political interpretations each replete with identified social symptoms, iagnoses and prognoses of the exact nature, and necessary ocial and political responses required by the ills of the inner ity. Whereas medical analogies suggest, after due attention to erceived symptoms, that an ailment can be identified and within et parameters of medical judgement treated along commonly ccepted lines of practice, the inner city offers little in the ay of common understandings, and much less concerning agreed esponses.

As a site of social struggle, difference and political ontest the very term has itself become a 'keyword' in Raymond illiam's sense, a term which increasingly begins to signify ider frameworks of meaning and understanding which themselves ay be undergoing historical and social change. The inner city, ften invoked as a shorthand descriptive or reference of something', has in more current usage tended to be mobilized as symbol for 'something', that is, it has been aligned to and ut to work within wider and politically encompassing erspectives. If in one account the sheer range of concerns, ssues and problems characterising 'the inner city' threatens to verride any attempt to pin down to the page an exact referent, uch less unchanging meaning, it is the multi-accentual capacity f 'the inner city', in another account, which can begin to rovide insight into the range and nature of the vying social efinitions currently in play. Thus, if the inner city can best

be approached as a site of social debate, difference and disagreement it is this very constellation of definitions which begins to reference wider social and political perspectives, and it is here that the key to the social understandings of 'the inner city' can be found to reside.

When the prime minister declared in her 1987 post-election statement to the party faithful and attendant press corps that 'we have a big job to do in those inner cities..we want them too next time' not only was reference being made to the relative paucity of votes delivered by such areas but also to the felt need to politically and semantically align and incorporate 'those' inner cities within a wider political project. Political meanings, in other words, are not simply about definitions but also, amongst other attributes, political ends and this is at the heart of the political enterprise. One commentator has gone so far as to maintain 'if there are no conflicts over meaning, the issue is not political by definition'[Edelman(1988), p.104]. he inner city it is suggested here, can be regarded as just uch a contested site where conflict over definitions and eaning takes place, though this need not indicate an exclusive osition. Nonetheless, and as demonstrated below, considerable upport for the following observation can be entertained in the ight of recent political contests conducted around the meaning f the inner city.

> "The critical element in political manoeuvre for advantage is the creation of meaning: the construction of beliefs about events, politics, leaders, problems and crises that rationalize or challenge existing inequalities. The strategic need is to immobilize opposition and mobilize support..It is the language about political events, not the events in any other sense that people experience."
>
> [Edelman,(1988)pp.103-104]

While Edelman is correct to point to the rhetorical and erformative uses and appeals of language in the construction of olitical reality it may also be countered, as noted above, hat such language frequently references 'something', it ncludes and deploys statements for instance which involve vidential support for the meanings and understandings obilized. That is, events, conditions, past happenings and a ariety of forms of empirical data, both qualitative and uantitative, may all be marshalled and placed within overall nterpretative schemas seeking to sustain and support particular

sets of meanings - and not others. While it may be maintained that such referential and evidential concerns do not escape the web of language, it can be suggested that such concerns need not be seen as directly politically motivated. Competing theories, political viewpoints or discourses can frequently share similar concerns and even engage in dialogue, though ultimately such 'shared' concerns may sustain different interpretations. Nonetheless, the point here is that while such competing frameworks may well appropriate the issues and concerns cohering around the site of the inner city differently, such ppropriations though inevitably language and theory dependent eed not be regarded as either language or theory determined. he inner city, in other words, though possibly a potent symbol lso refers to a set of social conditions which cannot be educed to political rhetoric or linguistic artefact.

Friedrich Engels in his classic study of the conditions of he English working class in England in the 1840s, was well ware of the competing understandings involved in liberal ccounts and official documentation of the appalling conditions ndured by the urban proletariat, while at the same time mploying such sources as further evidence for the beginnings of is own account of the 'social war' presaged by such conditions. his study is interesting moreover in that it clearly indicates hat many of the issues and concerns, and indeed wider political rameworks advanced towards the contemporary inner city are not ithout considerable historical antecedents.

> "Every great city has one or more slums, where the working class is crowded together. True, poverty often dwells in hidden alleys close to the palaces of the rich; but, in general a separate territory has been assigned to it, where removed from the sight of the happier classes, it may struggle as it can. These slums are pretty equally arranged in all the great towns of England, the worst houses in the worst quarters of the towns..."
>
> [Engels(1987)p.70.Orig.1845]

Itemizing, often in graphic detail, the appalling onditions and hardships endured by the new class of urban slum- wellers, reference is made to inadequate and overcrowded ousing conditions, endemic poor health often related to nvironmental pollution, insanitary conditions and inadequate nd dangerous work conditions, as well as to the lack of ducation, prevalence of crime, sexual abuse and promiscuity,

alcohol abuse and even the use of narcotics while generally observing the differential impacts of such general poverty upon different sectors of the working class including Irish immigrant groups. The study, notwithstanding the fact that it addresses some of the worst conditions found within 'the inner city' of the early nineteenth century, is remarkable in its listing of concerns which are still at the heart of contemporary social debate. Whatever else such historical sources may offer to current debate about 'the inner city', it is perhaps the acknowledgement that 'rational' analysis and information is not sufficient to an understanding of the political viewpoints which attend and inform such findings.

From early studies such as these, and subsequent social ocumentation and reportage whether conducted by such pioneers s Booth, Rowntree and the Webbs or even such latter day studies s Townsend and others, though all supplying important vidential support for the debate and formulation of social olicy they cannot be seen as the underpinning bases for the nterpretative frameworks and political and social meanings hich ultimately accompany either their adoption or refutation. tedman Jones in his study of Outcast London has convincingly ocumented for instance, how the 'predominant reaction to the ediscovery of poverty in the early 1880s was not so much guilt s fear. The discovery of a huge and swelling residuum and the rowing uncertainty about the mood of the respectable working lass portended the threat of revolution'. A commentator is ited at the time as declaring:

> "I am deeply convinced that the time is approaching when this seething mass of human misery will shake the social fabric, unless we grapple more earnestly with it than we have yet done...The proletariat may strangle us unless we teach it the same virtues which have elevated the other classes in society"
>
> [Samual Smith(1885)cited in Steadman Jones(1971)p.291]

The serious 'bread' riots of 1886 and 1887 while causing onsiderable damage the true import of such events, according to his account, can be found in the strength of middle class eaction to it, itself based on the fear of the dispossessed esiduum that it revealed. It can be contended that social pheavals and riots, compiled deprivation indicators or detailed ocumentation of poverty are all, if considered in isolation, nsufficient for an understanding of the political frameworks

and meanings that can be found to inform their final 'understanding'. Here pre-existing or partly formed social and political beliefs, values and theories combine to interpret such phenomena and studies while simultaneously divesting or investing them with significance and meaning.

Nevertheless if the idea of the inner city can be seen as a multi-valent symbol frequently mobilized 'for' something, it also references a set of identifiable concerns, issues and problems. Such concerns may, or may not necessarily be placed within an encompassing political interpretation though they may provide differing degrees of support to established interpretative frameworks when placed within the public domain. The inner city is a social site where the confluence of wider social processes and structures meet to produce a range of identifiable concerns, issues and lived experiences by those situated within its social and geographical confines. And it is ere that the idea of the inner city gains its empirical or evidential support and substance. The inner city in short can be egarded as both a site of political and symbolic struggle while lso referencing a number of entwined and prevalent social onditions and lived concerns, many of which are endured day in, ay out on a mundane basis. While such social experiences may be egarded as intrinsically 'political' to the extent that they eflect encompassing social structures and processes which etermine patterns of inequality, life chances, and the control f social power these need not necessarily be regarded as 'politicized' in the sense of assuming either formal or rganised expression and opposition.

This chapter seeks to chart some of the main defining haracteristics of 'the inner city' along both these axes of pproach. It cannot delve deeply into the diversity of isciplines that have sought to theoretically accommodate and xplain the phenomenon of the inner city, but it can aim to dentify and explicate the principal issues, concerns and themes hich have variously been defined as the problems of the inner ity, and it can also hope to identify the main political iscourses or interpretative schemas which have sought to rganize discussion, debate and understanding of such inner city oncerns. From the introductory remarks above it is already lear that the idea of the inner city itself represents both a

social and semantic site of struggle and contest, it is therefore necessary to identify the substantive concerns, interpretative and explanatory frameworks as well as main points of difference existing between the main political positions in play. Only then can the mediated reality of the inner city placed within the public domain, be subjected to careful scrutiny and assessment.

In 1980's Britain the series of mainland inner city riots have periodically propelled the inner city to the top of the political agenda. Following these disturbances a rush of social and political commentary and opinion appeared across the mass media, followed by a series of official and independent, public and quasi-public, academic and 'grass-roots' reports and inquiries each seeking to position the riots within an overall nd explanatory framework. Collectively these sources offer an nsight into the main political and competing discourses which ave sought to interpret and align both the riots and the roblems of the inner city to existing social and political rameworks of understanding.

Additionally it is also instructive to consider, if only riefly, other areas of research and documentation which situate nd define the problems and issues of the inner city within a ider temporal and analytic context, and which provide further nsight into this contested site. The following discussion, hen, charts the main issues, concerns and problems of the inner ity as expressed within a wide range of social and political ommentary and identifies three principal, albeit conflicting, nterpretative discourses mobilized in relation to the recent isorders.

he Inner City and Urban Policy : The Official Legacy

As already noted above, there is nothing new about xpressed concern with Britain's inner cities. Where difference an be found is in the way in which the conceptualization of the nner city 'problem' has undergone change and development over he past 30 years or so. This can clearly be seen in a brief eview of different government policies over the period and the nderlying social theories which, in part at least, have

informed such government initiatives.

From the middle 1960s until the late 1970s the 'rediscovery' of widespread and geographically concentrated areas of poverty prompted policy interventions focused on particular localities. In addition to a number of influential studies which challenged the complacency of a post-war 'affluent' society thesis by rediscovering poverty in the midst of such unparalleled consumerism and welfarism, the experience of America with its War on Poverty programme launched in the aftermath of serious race riots also clearly signalled a sense of urgency in tackling possible seeds of unrest at home. The Urban Programme, still the major source of funding directed specifically at inner city areas, was announced by Harold Wilson in just such a period. The urban problem referring to social distress and despair from one side of the coin, references the ossibility of social disorder if turned over. Close attention to the formation of policy initiatives aimed to address the xistence of poverty is increasingly recognised as intertwined ith apprehensions concerning the possibility of social strife nd break-down of law and order [Edwards and Batley(1978); ees,G.,Lambert,J(1985); Sills et al(1988)].

In retrospect the 1960s and early 1970s tended to exhibit atterns of social change already underway in the post-war eriod relating to industrial and consequent demographic changes articularly concentrated in the large urban centres of raditional manufacturing and industry [Hall(Ed)(1981); Hausner nd Robson(1985); Spencer.et al (1986); Robson(1988)]. Taken ogether such indicators are invariably considered in their ultiple impacts and collectively define the idea of multiple- eprivation. Thus, in addition to the concentrations of the nskilled, semi-skilled and unemployed found within such areas, ousing conditions are noted as becoming increasingly run-down, vercrowded and in short supply, notwithstanding the temporary improvements' of rapidly executed slum-clearance campaigns, hile remaining cleared sites often combined with the increasing nvironmental dereliction left by changing industrial location. n addition to the environmental problems of dereliction, waste- and, poor housing and pollution created by remaining industries ituated amongst local housing and increased traffic volumes sing such inner city areas on their way to and from urban

commercial centres, problems of social demise and distress can also be noted. Increased crime rates, truancy and vandalism, incidents of divorce and family breakdown, mental distress and concentrations of the socially deprived and marginalised - one parent families, the elderly, vagrants, prostitutes, the mentally and physically disabled - were all found to be heavily represented in inner city locales.

Moreover, as documented by Rex and Moore(1967) such areas, for reasons of institutional racism, housing market processes, and the location of cheap accommodation as well as the felt need to secure collective protection against an inhospitable and on occasion threatening 'host' society provided ethnic minorities with some of the few available areas of residence.

In the 1960s and early 1970s this broad span of urban deprivation indicators was taken as pointing to the spatial location of poverty within inner city areas, while theories of oth the cycle and the culture of poverty tended to maintain that individuals and families were themselves in some measure esponsible for adjusting to and perpetuating, rather than vercoming their situation of poverty. Such ideas clearly nformed the government sponsored Community Develoment rojects(CDPs) in the early 1970s targeting areas deemed to be uffering from 'individual, family and community alfunctioning'. However, commentators both within and outside hese projects increasingly questioned the potentially bfuscating 'fetishism of space' and pathologising of problems erhaps better approached from an institutional and structural evel of conceptualisation and explanation. If the CDP's action eams increasingly advanced radical and structural accounts of overty and deprivation, now conceptualised as the anifestations of inequality and relative powerlessness, a eries of Inner Area Studies,[DOE(1977a)(1977b)(1977c)] informed he influential White Paper 'Policy For the Inner ities'[DOE(1977d)] and located patterns of economic change as entral to any informed understanding of the problems of the nner cities. Though retaining the notion of inner cities onceptualised mainly in spatial terms, albeit within a broader nd dynamic appreciation of regional and area economic inbalance Policy for the Inner Cities' nonetheless went some way in eflecting these changing explanatory emphases.

Identifying the three constituent aspects of urban deprivation as economic decline involving the run-down of traditional industries, a growing mismatch between available skills and job opportunities and lack of necessary investment; physical or environmental decay and dereliction involving considerable tracts of vacant land and continuing prevalence of inadequate and slum housing; and finally social disadvantage affecting all those, waged and unwaged, living and working within the depressed environs of the inner city, the White Paper sought to arrest the population decline, in part promoted by previous policies encouraging the development of new towns, while seeking to implement a co-ordinated, inter-departmental and locally involved assault on the concentrated problems of urban deprivation. Considerably enhancing the existing Urban rogramme the main means of achieving such aims was nonetheless learly spelt out as follows:

> "In the public sector the bulk of the expenditure will have to be found within the main programmes of central and local government by giving a new priority to the inner areas. The rate support grant will remain the principal source of financial assistance to local authorities."
>
> [DOE(1977d)p.11]

In summary, urban deprivation continued to be onceptualised principally in spatial terms, though pathology xplanations had been superseded by economic and structural rocesses of decline and lack of co-ordinated planning. While an quitable reallocation of resources was noted as essential in edressing the balance between inner city areas and other parts of the country the principal means of effecting such a change as seen as the 'bending' of established government and local uthority sources of funding. These competing perspectives owards the problems of the inner city can be schematically ndicated in the following figure, itself taken from a CDP eport.

Figure 1:1 **Varying Perspectives on the Urban Problem**

Perspective	Perceived Problem	Goal	Means
Culture of Poverty	Pathology of deviant groups	Better social adjustment	Education
Cycle of Deprivation	Individual Inadequacy	Better Families	Social work
Institutional Malfunction	Planning Failure	Rational Planning	Corporate Planning
Resource Maldistribution	Inequitable Distribution	Reallocation of Resources	Positive Discrimination
Structural Conflict	Class Divisions	Redistribution of Power	Political Change

Source: Coventry CDP(1975) cited in Robson(1988).

Before its electoral defeat the Labour government mplemented the policy of Partnerships implicit to the White aper, under the Inner Area Programme, itself part of the ncreased Urban Programme. Awarding either full Partnership or rogramme status to some of the cities and towns with the worst oncentrations of urban deprivation the scheme sought to ncourage the involvement of both public and private bodies, oluntary and community groups, in the implementation of a yriad of schemes aimed at regenerating the inner cities. In 979 the incoming Conservative government though maintaining the rban Programme and the Partnership scheme has considerably hifted the emphasis towards the participation of private nterprise, while implementing a plethora of additional inner ity policies and schemes.

In addition to the 57 Urban programme areas awarded artnership and programme status by 1988 and intended to help ackle the economic, environmental and social problems of the nner cities other schemes, also increasingly or principally irected at the involvement of private enterprise have been stablished. Urban development corporations, derelict land rants, land registers, enterprise zones, and city task forces o mention the most prominent have been introduced across the eriod 1979 to 1988.

If urban deprivation in the early 1960s and 1970s was hought to reside within inner city pockets, understood and pproached as a pathological individual, family or even

community problem and tackled by policies of social experimentation, positive discrimination and increased resources, by the middle 1970s the urban problem though still understood in terms of spatial concentrations increasingly noted the broader economic and structural parameters impacting upon inner city areas and residents and sought to 'bend' mainstream funding and resource allocation, while increasing co-ordinated, co-operative and participatory planning. In the 1980s urban deprivation continues to be situated within a wider frame of economic and structural change while direct implementation of inner city schemes have considerably shifted the emphasis away from the social or community side of participation and decision-making towards the expanded involvement of private enterprise often via administrative structures independent from local authority decision making processes.

However while policies directed at poverty and urban eprivation may well have exhibited a shift of emphases from athological and cultural to economic and institutional eficiency explanations to currently, market and private nterprise approaches considerable overlap may be found on ccasion to inform all such perspectives. Pathological and ndividualist accounts of persisting inner city deprivation can till be heard, particularly in the debates surrounding inner ity riots. In so far as the inner city is understood in patial terms and geographically located by a number of urban eprivation indicators drawn from Census data and officially ecognised in the awarding of Partnership and Programme status o deprivation continues to be approached as a spatial concern usceptible to initiatives targeted towards specific areas. hough ethnic minorities have been recognised as a social group xperiencing particular hardships since the establishment of ection 11 funding, and were explicitly referenced in the etting up of the Urban Programme as well as officially onstituted by ethnic origin alone as an indication of urban eprivation [DoE(1981)], the fact remains that 'places' rather han 'people' tend to be defined and targeted as deprived.

While discussion of the various government policies and nner city initiatives has been the subject of detailed research Lawless(1986); Donninson and Middleton (Eds)(1987); Sills et l(1988)] the fact remains that the Urban Programme and other

forms of inner city funding remain outside of mainstream central and local government fiscal and other forms of resource funding. Indeed, the Urban Programme remains dwarfed by such mainstream arrangements as rate support grant. Local government spending has been the target of severe cut-backs in line with Central government's overall economic policy, thus rate support grant has been cut from 61 % in 1978-9 to below 50 % (1985-6), while councils who 'over spend' have been severely penalised by rate capping and cuts in block grants. The Urban Partnership authorities lost £166 million in grants, £104 million in housing subsidies and £5 million in urban programmes in 1981-2 alone [Slattery(1985)p.288]. Contrary to the 1977 White Paper which identified rate support grant as the principal means of irecting funds towards the regeneration of the inner city it as been cut by 25 % in real terms in the period up to 1985 [Archbishop of Cante.rbury..(1985)p.178].

Moreover while some have countered that an emphasis upon nner city areas displaces from view other areas, such as outer states as equally if not more deprived [Archbishop of ante.rbury..(1985)], so others have challenged any spatial rganization of inner city discussion as nothing short of a fetishism of space' and, as such, essentially obfuscating of he social processes and structures which are characteristic of n inegalitarian social order [Townsend(1976);Seabrook(1988)]. n a recent account of the lived conditions and experiences of hose living within an inner city area, both the potent ymbolism and the physical presence of the inner city are noted s inextricably related:

> "...all the deprivations found concentrated in the inner city are widespread throughout the country..the inner city is therefore a microcosm of deprivation, of economic decline and of social disintegration in Britain today. It is not only a particular sort of place on the map, but a symbol and summation of the darkside of a whole society."
>
> [Harrison(1985)p.21]

From the review and discussion above it is apparent that he inner city can be conceptualised and approached in a number f different ways. Noting the evident difficulties and possible bfuscating implications of adhering to a purely spatial or area nderstanding of the inner city, as if urban deprivation was oth confined to, and accountable by its geographic reference, t can nonetheless be maintained that while not providing an

explanatory frame of reference, the inner city does involve concentrations of urban deprivation [Begg and Eversley(1986)], which though not exclusive to inner urban areas, nevertheless represent considerable tracts of urban deprivation while also referencing many of the problems and issues of deprivation, social inequality and powerlessness found across society in general. The point here, developed below in consideration of the recent 'inner city riots', is that though not possible to account for the phenomena of the inner city by attending strictly to the manifest forms of urban deprivation in isolation from wider explanatory frameworks, it is equally impossible to account for the recent forms of inner city reaction and disorder without due regard to the social and political forces both circumscribed by and negotiated within particular inner city localities. As one recent commentator has observed:

> "..exploratory mappings of the arrangements of social differentiated populations in residential locales are important in describing the nature of life in urban industrial cities and have significance because the spatially ordered experience of differentiated reproduction is an important source of social action."
>
> [Byrne(1989)p.99]

e Inner City as Site of Social Disorder : Perspectives on Civil Unrest

Following the riots in St.Pauls Bristol in 1980, the series f riots in 1981 and those in subsequent years throughout the 980s, the idea of the inner city for many is unlikely to orrespond to the vast stretches of industrial wasteland and ecline referenced by city planners and political economists. hough the official policy positions advanced towards the roblem of the inner cities have on occasion explicitly, and requently implicitly, paid reference to the disadvantaged osition of ethnic minorities within such areas, the inner city tself has increasingly been regarded as too physically xpansive and socially heterogeneous to be confined solely to hose localities of concentrated black residence.

In the 1980s however, the idea of the inner city has ypically come to be identified with those areas where serious ioting has occurred, and it is within such areas that ignificant numbers of Britain's black population live

[Brown(1984)]. In consequence the inner city of Birmingham is unlikely to generally invoke the 26 deprived inner city wards of Birmingham but specifically Handsworth; the inner city of London is likely to bring to mind Brixton, Broadwater Farm in Tottenham or Southall; while St.Pauls in Bristol, Moss Side in Manchester, and Toxteth in Liverpool are apt to assume the status as 'the inner city' within these vast conurbations. In recent years, it is possible to suggest that it is these areas which are recognised as 'the inner city', while a number of publicised reports, inquiries and widespread media attention have only served to reinforce such ideas.

However, it is not only in the aftermath of recent inner city riots that such areas have been noticed as particularly significant and in some senses different from other deprived areas. John Rex [(1982);(1984);(1987)] has deliberately termed such areas as 'the inner city's inner city' and has onsistently, beginning with his now classic statement oncerning housing processes in Sparkbrook, Birmingham [Rex and oore(1967)], and subsequent works focusing on such areas as andsworth [Rex(1973); Rex and Tomlinson(1979)] called attention o the value and need for sociologically informed study of the pecial problems and dynamics characterizing these and similar reas. Ken Pryce(1979) in his ethnographic study of St.Pauls has lso documented something of the specificity of social forms, rocesses and 'endless pressures' experienced by black inner ity residents, while Ratcliffe(1979) has charted in detail the efining demographic breakdown of areas such a Handsworth. The trained relationship often existing between local black ommunities, and black youth especially and the police has been bserved for some considerable time [John(1970);Brown(1982)] hile recent research has increasingly focused on the failures f policing policy and inner city implementation [Smith(1983a) 1983b)(1983c);Small(1983); Benyon(1986); Chatterton(1987); craton(1987)] and documented cases of serious racial abuse and arassment perpetrated by the police towards black people has een compiled [Institute of Race Relations (1979)(1987)].

Other forms of racism, racial discrimination and isadvantage have also been documented and chronicled including eneralised overviews of discrimination in government policy Sivinandan(1976);Solomos(1989a)(1989b)] discrimination in

employment [Brown and Gray(1985); Newnham(1986); Ohri and Faruqui(1988)], training opportunities [Cross(1981)], racial attack and harassment [Gordan(1986); Thompson(1988)] as well as housing, social services, health and education [Bhat et al (1988)]. In summary, a considerable body of social documentation and research now exists which points to the severe and institutional impacts of racial discrimination, racism and disadvantage confronted by Britain's black and ethnic minorities which compound and exacerbate more widely experienced forms of inner city deprivation.

If the 'inner city's inner cities' therefore references amongst other characteristics widespread and institutionalised discrimination it is however not for these reasons that the inner city has come to be associated with Britain's black population. Even before the recent riots of the 1980s it has been noted how connections had been made between Britain's ghettos, crime and race within the popular media.

> "The connections that were made - with the death of the cities, the problem of immigration, the crisis of law and order - were fundamentally descriptive connections. Through the 'public image of the ghetto' we were pushed back up the scale where generalised analogy replaced concrete analysis and where the image of the United States as precursor of all our nightmares came back into play. It was a powerful and compelling form of rhetorical closure."
>
> [Hall et al (1978)p.11]

Invoking a mix of sedimented cultural residues and fears he inner city, it is suggested in this study, provided a potent ymbol in which race, crime and youth conjoined in the myth of lack criminality. Charting the rise of this particular 'moral anic' in connection with the spuriously named crime of mugging', the ensuing controversy over the statistical and olitical significance of black crime is unlikely to be esolved. With so-called 'left idealist' criminologists isputing the statistical bases and social construction of black rime figures on the one hand [Scraton et al(1987); ilroy(1987)], so-called 'left realist' criminologists are more pt to seek out the possible causes for increased incidence of rime in inner city areas on the other [Lea and Young(1982), 1984)]. Though not possible to pursue here, such debates and he wider social discourses to which they refer at least begin o indicate that the inner city, even before the recent

disturbances, was under threat of being appropriated as a site of crime and criminality. Indeed, the historical resonance of such themes can be traced back to Victorian society and beyond [Steadman Jones(1977); Cohen(1986)].

Before attending to various reports and inquiries following in the wake of the 1980s inner city riots which may provide further insight into current understandings of the inner city and is associated problems, it is useful to identify three basic political discourses each of which seeks to account for the phenomemnon of social violence and disorder within a characteristic manner, and which furthermore may be found to order accounts mobilized in relation to recent inner city isorders.

ocial Disorder: Three Available Interpretative Schemas

Recognising that a wide variety of theories have been dvanced towards the phenomena of social disorder and violence ithin liberal democratic societies and discussed elsewhere Taylor(1984)], it is nonetheless possible to generally locate uch differences within broadly three political perspectives or nterpretative schemas: conservative, liberal and radical Taylor(1984); Benyon(1987)]. Clearly, while considerable dentity can be found between these interpretative schemas and, n the case of conservative and liberal positions, the views xpressed by formal political parties these are not intended nor s it empirically the case, that exact identity can always be ound. Rather these positions indicate three broad perspectives hich though often expressing and organising party political iewpoints can nevertheless, given their underlying value ositions and philosophical bases, be considered as considerably ore socially extensive.

The conservative view is disposed to view the existing olitical institutions and arrangements within a democratic ystem as both accessible and, within established traditional ractices, amenable to implementing social change. Political epresentation and the ballot box ensure that minority groups an find political expression and their interests pursued within n increasingly pluralist polity. Outbreaks of violent social

disorder can only be accounted for by reference to either the criminal nature of the event itself or the possible conspiratorial manipulation of others. Social violence and disorder are likely in such a perspective to be consigned to the actions of a deviant minority who, placing themselves outside of the moral and legal frameworks of society, are liable to call forth punitive measures by the established authorities.

It is the illegal act itself, rather than the informing background, history or context which assumes central prominence in such an account since it is here that the conservative viewpoint locates the 'meaning' of violent disorder. If by conservative definition a riot is perceived as an illegal assault, without either reasonable or moral foundation, upon the established social and political order, then responses to such n outrage are likely to be in the form of punitive and increased law and order measures.

Within this conservative perspective however two redisposing interpretative schemes can order responses towards he outbreak of social disorder. Firstly, the criminal nterpretation may come into play where both the illegal nature f the act and the criminal motivation of the perpetrators ssume the focal point of interpretation. Purposefully out for ain and profit the event of a riot may be seen as little more han an opportunity for mass criminal activity typically nvolving looting or organised crimes. Disposed by a commitment o responsible individualism the purposeful albeit illegal act s likely to assume prominence in such a perspective where a ommitment to 'responsible' individualism holds perpetrators ccountable for their actions. However a deeper instinctual orce may also be referenced by conservative accounts where iteral 'outbreaks' of irrational and purposeless acts of estruction breakthrough the social veneer of reason, morality nd consensus values.

The nature of the mob, collectively more than the sum of ts parts, and acting according to blind instinct rather than ational deliberation, takes full advantage of the temporary uspension of moral and legal restrictions and pursues an ntrammelled and libidinous pursuit of instinctual ratification. A gratification moreover which is susceptible to eographical and social contagion. Gustave Le Bon expressed such

perennial fears some time ago:

> "By the mere fact that he forms part of the crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilisation. Isolated he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian - that is a creature acting by instinct. "
>
> [Le Bon (1960)p.32 Original 1895]

Pearson(1984) has also chronicled how such 'respectable' conservative fears have typically accompanied the emergence of violent or disruptive groups, fears based upon the notion of a previously moral and/or harmonious social order now under threat. Outbreaks of lawlessness and violent disturbance are frequently interpreted then, as a critical breakdown in the traditional respect and deference towards institutions and figures of authority, whether it be parents, the church, schools, or those more prominent in the front line of aintaining law and order. Moral degeneration is the flipside to the law and order coin; in fact the conservative is disposed to ee both as inextricably related. The so-called 'permissive ociety' while no doubt objectionable in itself to traditional anons of conservative thought, if left unchecked would begin to ndermine the sanctity and solidity of family, home, church, and tate.

Threats to the established order do not only come from ithin however, but may also be regarded as an illicit ntervention from without. This is the second interpretative isposition found within a conservative perspective. Given an ssumed consensual and/or deferential understanding of the ·ocial order which implicitly displaces the possibility of onceding dissensus or social and political exclusion as an nforming motivation for social disorder, while also unashamedly ositing an elite (whether formed by tradition or merit) as the rime movers in the elite-masses nexus of political process, so onspirators, outside agitators, subversives and extremists are requently found to be behind violent disorders. Moreover, given he nature of the crowd already alluded to in conservative nterpretations, such conspirators are seen as effectively and ynically 'pulling the strings' or orchestrating crowd behaviour o suit their own criminal and/or extremist ends. In short, such roups if found to exist forfeit whatever political status they ay proclaim and become regarded as a criminal or deviant elite'.

An extreme version of the threat from without is based upon deeply sedimented themes of race, nation and historical continuity. Outsiders in such formulations are often posited in simultaneous and logically contradictory roles. While seeking to maintain the 'superiority' of the indigenous or traditional populace compared to the 'outsiders' understood either as socially marginalised or foreigners within their midst, superiority may be claimed in terms of race, culture, economic performance or even territorial conquest. And yet the evident need to maximise upon the sense of threat posed by such a group to the established social order can promote such an 'inferior' group to the status of a machiavellian and devious elite, intelligently seeking to undermine the established customs, way of life and society etcetera.

Extreme variants of this view are not without historical precedence in this country and have on occasion threatened to be revitalised around the recent urban disorders. In such accounts 'immigrants' have assumed the position of an alien wedge supposedly incrementally and culturally undermining traditional ustoms, values and beliefs. The cultural homogeneity and onsensus of the British way of life, long preserved within the territorial context of the Nation is evoked and threatens to ring to the surface half buried, and historically established enophobic fears and nationalistic claims of cultural identity.

In summary the conservative perspective is apt to see ecent urban riots as irrational and mindless 'hooliganism' and riminality or possibly orchestrated criminality and extremism ursuing private gains and profit. On both accounts, the esponse engendered from such an interpretative schema is one of ncreased law and order and punitive reactions to those held irectly responsible.

The liberal perspective, while disposed to regard political rocesses and structures as generally adequate for the epresentation and pursuit of different social interests onetheless recognises that occasional deficiencies and nadequacies may fail to fully address all the needs of those iving within the polity. While the event of a riot or serious isorder is therefore likely to be interpreted as a criminal ccurrence attention is predisposed to look behind the immediate vents and seek out possible informing contexts and motivations

for such a serious breach of law and order. Attention to such conditions as unemployment and widespread deprivation could well assume the possible backdrop attended to by a liberal account of the disturbances, as could the role of the police or inadequacies in the means of political representation. If in this perspective social violence may at least be interpreted as a 'rational' phenomenon to the extent that it expresses underlying concerns which cannot be dismissed simply as an act of criminality, riots are unlikely to be regarded as an effective means of securing either improved conditions or social reform, and the involvement of violence itself can call forth condemnation.

The radical perspective is disposed to regard the occurrence of a riot as more or less inevitable, necessary and meaningful. Pointing to historical precedents where past social disorders have in retrospect been seen as harbingers of important social change and increased social justice social violence may be regarded as a necessary means to an end. The olitical ends in such a perspective may be nothing short of undamental societal change, structural reorganisation or even evolution. Contrary to the conservative viewpoint transfixed on he criminality of the event itself, and the liberal viewpoint eeking a degree of contextualisation and explanation by ttending to prior 'conditions', the radical interpretation is nclined to see the event of a riot as one moment in a onsiderably expanded temporal and social process moving towards ocietal change, a process moreover which though manifesting the iberal's 'conditions' needs to be situated and explained within wider and structural theory. History, as much as context and mmediate background, informs this account as does a vision of he future. The goal of the future in this interpretative schema s not, as in the conservative instance a reassertion of and ontinuity with the past, nor as in the liberal schema a odified, reformed and improved version of the present but a horoughgoing change in the political and social conditions and rganization of society. In this sense, John Benyon's otherwise seful delineation of conservative 'riff-raff' perspectives, but nalytic conflation of liberal and radical 'basic flaws' heories can be further separated and subjected to more detailed xamination if such distinquishing temporal dimensions and

explanatory levels are also considered [Benyon(1987)].

With deprivation, disadvantage and discrimination all potentially finding expression within a liberal perspective seeking to identify and account for social disorder with a view to implementing social reform, the radical position is disposed to situate such phenomena as the inherent outcome of a form of social organization dependent upon the perpetuation of inequality and social injustice. Such 'aberrations' therefore may be regarded as considerably more engrained than liberal notions of legislating reform may be able to concede. Moreover, while reference to widespread indicators of urban deprivation, even particularly acute and concentrated conditions of urban deprivation may provide a necessary background to an account of recent inner city riots, such conditions have on occasion been questioned as insufficient for a full explanation.

> "..how is it that widely felt grievances among young people, such as unemployment and police harassment, have been the precondition for riot rather than organization and articulation through the existing channels of liberal democracy ? In brief, our problem is the growing marginalization of young people, and the younger sections of the ethnic minority communities in particular, from the political process of liberal democracy. It is this political marginality which both increases the propensity to riot as a method of expressing grievances concerning unemployment and policing, and which at the same time exacerbates the social conditions of rising crime rates which become a component of the drift to military policing."
>
> [Lea and Young(1984)p.199]

While Lea and Young's analysis has not gone unchallenged Sim et al(1987] it points to a situation which declining the riff-raff' theories of a conservative viewpoint, nonetheless oints to some of the 'basic flaws' found within society and requently advanced as central to recent disorders Benyon(1987)pp.28-32]. Such basic flaws identified as the roots f recent urban unrest have been noted as follows and ollectively point to some of the key concerns advanced as ritical elements in any explanation of the recent riots.

> "The central feature seems to be a sense of injustice by those suffering from racism, deprivation and police activity. Urban unrest is a violent reaction to events and experiences. It requires a stimulus to set it in motion. The tinder is created by the underlying conditions, but it is ignited by a particular event which provides the spark.....Injustice is thus the central root of urban unrest. It may arise from racism, high unemployment, poor housing, urban deprivation, political exclusion or police misconduct. There are though five other

> factors which may be associated with these issues and with urban unrest. These are ineffectiveness of government policies, a decrease in the levels of identity with the polity, few opportunities for political participation, falling levels of voluntary consent and a decline in perceptions of the regimes legitimacy".
>
> [Benyon and Solomos(1987)pp.182-3]

Not possible to pursue in detail, the array of theories which seek to address the causes of urban violence can frequently be found to inform or be underpinned by one of the three basic political perspectives or interpretative schemas reviewed above. The relevance of such organising frameworks to current discussions of inner city disorders can be gained from the following overview of some of the principal reports and inquiries written in the aftermath of recent urban disorders. As well as identifying the key issues, themes and concerns which these different reports and political perspectives deploy oncerning the immediate riots they also, in combination with the discussion of urban policy and its changing understanding of the inner city above, indicate different interpretations of the undane problems and lived conditions of the inner city xperienced year in, and year out.

e Scarman Report and Riots

Lord Scarman's report into the Brixton, and by extension ther 1981 disturbances, represents something of a landmark in he torrent of opinions, commentary and interpretations nleashed by such events. In many riot reports and inquiries the carman Report is acknowledged, even by some of its sternest ritics, as an impressive and not entirely anticipated fficially sponsored reaction [Hall(1982)]. Subsequent reports hough sometimes pointing to symptomatic silences and evasions ithin Scarman's analysis and recommendations have tended to use t as a benchmark in advancing their own conclusions Silverman(1986); Ouseley et al(1986) Gifford(1986)].

Commenting on the American post-riot experience Field(1982) as observed that 'if riots represent an expression of rievance, or are symptomatic of grievance' then 'they may in a ense be self-limiting, and need not require reiteration, so ong as there is a sense that the grievances have been heard and nderstood'. In other words the inauguration and public

spectacle of an official inquiry may in itself be taken as a means of containing felt grievances. While this may be construed as a form of symbolic reassurance for some, in 1980's Britain the recurrence of serious disorder throughout the decade suggests that such has had little direct impact on the aggrieved participants themselves. Scarman himself(1987) has registered disappointed at the lack and form of policy implementation following his official recommendations. His analysis however remains worthy of attention so long as the conditions identified at the heart of recent riots persist within Britain's inner cities [Scarman(1984).

Four basic conditions were identified as contributing to the Brixton and other riots. Firstly, the population is noted as particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable when compared to other areas. The population is noted as including a higher rate of emographic decline, a higher proportion of semi-skilled and nskilled workers, low income households, high percentage of the oung and the elderly and one parent families as well as ncluding a higher incidence of illness and mental and physical andicap (2:13).

Secondly, the advanced stage of economic and social decay nd consequent high rates of unemployment, housing shortage and istress, lack of recreational amenities and general depressive nvironment form the second basic plank of inner city conditions 2:1-11).

However while such conditions are likely to affect all ocial groups within the inner city, it is ethnic minorities and est Indian youth who are doubly afflicted. Charting the process f immigration into this country, assumed problems of cultural djustment, inter-generational conflict and educational nderachievement are referenced before the following general escription is outlined:

> "..overall they suffer from the same deprivations as the 'host community' (i.e the white population), but much more acutely. Their lives are led largely in the poorer and more deprived areas of our great cities. Unemployment and poor housing bear on them very heavily: and the educational system has not adjusted to their needs. Their difficulties are intensified by the sense they have of a concealed discrimination against them, particularly in relation to job opportunities and housing. Some young blacks are driven by their despair into feeling that they are rejected by the society of which they rightly believe they are members..But their experience leads them to believe that their opportunities are less and their risks greater. Young

blacks feel neither socially nor economically secure." (2:35)

Crime and community police relations form Scarman's fourth major concern. Given the extent of unemployment and felt exclusion by black youth this is taken to precipitate the practice of 'street life' where they are likely to come into contact with both criminals and the police. Moreover, given a history of deteriorating police-community relations within certain inner city areas, in part brought about by police actions aimed at curbing rising crime rates, a general mistrust and suspicion is seen to have undermined the consent required for effective policing. In passing what could be considered as a fifth concern is referenced which alludes to the sense of political exclusion felt by young blacks:

> "They do not feel politically secure. Their sense of rejection is not eased by the low level of black representation in our elective political institutions. Their sense of insecurity is not relieved by the liberty our law provides to those who march and demonstrate in favour of tougher immigration controls and 'repatriation' of the blacks." (2:36)

It is the accumulation of these anxieties and frustrations nd prevailing conditions, Lord Scarman concludes which ncourages young blacks to protest on the streets (2:37). carman's report, it has to be remembered was commissioned under ection 32 of the 1964 Police Act, and as such was not strictly oncerned with analysing social problems and conditions but as e concedes 'the policing problem is only one aspect - although dmittedly a vital one of the social problem'. Referring to the eight of evidence concerning the damaging impact of government olicies concerning cuts in rate support grant, conflicting epartmental policies and the lack of community participation nd involvement in local authority schemes Scarman suggests local communities must be fully and effectively involved in lanning, in the provision of local services, and in the anagement and financing of specific projects.'(6:7).

In summary, then, Scarman's analysis points to a number of eprivations and conditions relating to inner city residents and lack youths especially which, when combined with a deep-seated istrust of the police can quickly be triggered by a minor ncident into a riot. Scarman's analysis for all its hesitancy oncerning issues of racism, police harassment and brutality and nstitutionalised discrimination typically referenced in so far

as black youths, as opposed to black communities, 'sense' injustice, nonetheless provides a catalogue of conditions and political failures which go beyond itemizing different indices of urban deprivation.

In terms of prescriptions Scarman argued that an improved and co-ordinated approach towards the problems of the inner city was required, existing legislation should be fully used in cases of discrimination, while reforms of the police force including changes in the powers of arrest and the constitution of the police complaints procedure, improved riot training and the introduction of riot equipment were all required. Praised in some quarters, damned in others the report provides a wide ranging overview of the problems of the inner city which, in so far as contributing conditions or 'basic flaws' are identified and discussed, tends to assume a liberal interpretation of recent riots while prescriptions relating to police tactics and the introduction of riot equipment tends to indicate a onservative viewpoint. More important than an attempt to try nd situate such a report along a conservative-radical continuum 's the identification of key issues and concerns which will 'nform later discussions of televisual presentations of the 'nner city.

If the Scarman Report identified general concerns and ssues relating to the inner city at the beginning of the 1980s ollowing the Handsworth riots of September 1985 three further eports were written which not only update the general inner ity discussion but also begin to localise the debate to the eographical area under direct discussion. In addition to the ssues, concerns and perspectives discussed above therefore hese three reports provide further indication of the principal oncerns and issues which collectively constitute the inner city s a site of social and semantic contest.

andsworth 1985 : Three Different Realities ?

Following the disturbances of September 1985 in Handsworth nd Lozells three major reports were published each purporting o provide not only an accurate narrative of the events leading p to, and including the events under discussion but also, in

varying degrees to account for the underlying causes of the riots. The Chief Constable's report of the West Midlands Police [Dear(1985)] was published in November of that year and instigated via the Home Office, while Birmingham City Council's decision to fund an independent inquiry led by Julius Silverman followed the Home Office's decision to refuse a public inquiry [Silverman (1986)]. Meanwhile the Race Relations Council of the West Midlands Council had sponsored their own inquiry in the knowledge of widespread dissatisfaction with the form of the other reports and inquiries and thus sought an independent black inquiry [Ouseley et al(1986)]. Clearly much of the substance of these reports chronicles the exact events of the Handsworth riots. What is of primary concern here is the respective interpretative frameworks and identification of the key issues and concerns underpinning these three interpretations of the andsworth riots.

. The Chief Constable's Report: The Official Police View

The Police report begins its account by a summary profile f the Handsworth/Lozells areas and its specific problems of nemployment, crime, population composition and recent nvolvements in drug trafficking which is seen to reflect a rowing national problem. Despite the 'reasonable community armony' said to have been fostered by the police's involvement n specific community projects, a 'hard core of individuals hose activities gave cause for concern to the police and law-biding citizens of the area' had posed a problem prior to the iots(p.9). Dubbed by the police the 'unclubbables', because of heir refusal to participate in community projects, 'drug aking, robbery, burglary and theft rate highly in their ctivities. Not only drug taking, but in recent times drug ealing' (p.9). Indeed, the reports proceeds to suggest that it as a hard core of 'drug barons' which aligned to this group rovide the main explanation for the riots.

> "There is firm evidence to suggest the disorders were at the outset orchestrated by local drug dealers who had become fearful for the demise of their livelihoods. Similarly there is evidence that the riots were fuelled and organised be persons who require the supply of drugs to continue their normal life style." (p.53)

As for the participants within the riots, a further but more widespread group is also identified and then posited as outside of, though related to the Afro-Caribbean community.

> "..the majority of rioters who took part in these unhappy events were young, black and of Afro-Caribbean origin. Let there be no doubt, these young criminals are not in any way representative of the vast majority of the Afro-Caribbean community whose presence has contributed to the life and culture of the West Midlands over many years and whose hopes and aspirations are at one with those of every other law abiding citizen. We share a common sorrow." (p.69)

Moreover the report also suggests that a section of young Afro-Caribbean youths had become 'jealous of small Asian traders within the area and that this accounts for the damaged and looted businesses within Lozells; it is also suggested that this same group is responsible for numerous attacks on members of the asian community thereby exacerbating intra-community racial ostility.

Defining the riots essentially within a problematic of law nd order the Chief Constable calls for increased manpower, riot quipment and training and the introduction of baton rounds. The iots, then, are regarded essentially as the result of a riminal minority thwarted in their criminal enterprise and llicit use of drugs by the successful anti-drug operations of he police. Exactly why the 'drug barons' should orchestrate uch a disturbance, or what they could hope to achieve from such conspiratorial enterprise remains unclear, assuming such a eviant elite would be able to mount such an assault on the olice and authority generally. The report, it hardly needs to e stated, is highly reminiscent of some of the key conservative ositions already identified above including a focus upon the riminality of the event itself, the identification of a group f criminal conspirators and the threat posed by such a minority o a presumed and shared consensus of values which, encompassing he Afro-Caribbean community, effectively marginalises Afro-aribbean youths from their own 'cultural' community as well as istancing them from the wider consensus values of society as a hole. One final passage is worthy of extended treatment in that t sums up the Chief Constable's considered views on the isturbances.

> "It is the duty of us all to ensure that an entire cultural group is not tainted by the actions of a criminal minority. Nevertheless a criminal minority it is. I believe that for too

> long society as a whole, not only in the West Midlands, has been persuaded to excuse patent criminal behaviour by groups that have wilfully set themselves apart from the consensus values of society. Of course there are the deprived in society, and I would never seek to minimise the problems of being young, black and unemployed in a decaying inner city environment..But they can never be taken singly or cumulatively as an excuse for criminal behaviour or as a retrospective justification for rioting, looting and murder. No group can legitimately justify its cause or actions by averring that some laws are inappropriate to it. By these assertions the members of such a group will surely set themselves apart from the society in which they live and forego the right to make demands for acceptance on an equal basis." (p.69)

Here and within the previous passage it has been noted how the report clearly posits a conspiracy at the heart of the riots, a conspiracy moreover of an external group, both rhetorically distanced as part of a separate cultural community and further distanced as an 'outsider' group by its own criminal ctivities. As such both conspirators and general rioters are esignated simply as criminals who have 'wilfully' decided to perate outside of a presumed consensus of values, a consensus noreover which is advanced as including the Afro-Caribbean ommunity generally. Black youths have thus been positioned as eviant criminals without cause, and distanced both by activity nd implicitly by race as outside of mainstream society.

While the problems of the inner city and the possible iberal and radical interpretative resources deployed in terms f such inner city 'conditions' are not ignored, they are hetorically included only to then be displaced by the criminal nterpretative frame offered. The persuasive force of this ccount includes therefore both the marginalisation of opposed nterpretative perspectives as well as the marginalisation of hose involved by their criminal activities and implicit racial ifference. To refer to a 'group' who 'set themselves apart from he society in which they live' and thus who 'forego the right o make demands for acceptance on an equal basis' is to draw pon a racial discourse premissed upon the idea of a 'host' ociety tolerating cultural difference - why else should eference be made to demands for acceptance ? Once again, aising the possibility of an alternative interpretative ramework, the spectre of racial discrimination and racism is aised only to simultaneously be squashed by the criminalisation f those involved. Clearly identified with a conservative

interpretative schema this report nonetheless deploys its argument while simultaneously seeking to undermine competing and opposed viewpoints.

II. The Silverman Inquiry: Occupying the Middle Ground

The Silverman report, published after the Police Report directly contradicts some of the central contentions referred to above. Noting the essential similarities between the situation prevailing in Brixton as outlined by Scarman and Handsworth in 1985, Silverman states that 'while there was organisation, this was extemporary, and was part of the spontaneous riot', and concludes 'there is no evidence whatever for the conclusion of a grand design to burn and destroy and loot a large portion of Lozells Road' (8:7-10). Challenging the Police view which suggested that intra-community racial difference was a contributing motivation in the riots Silverman also notes:

> "The fact that Asian shops were attacked is simply because the shops were there, and the great majority of shops in this area, in Lozells Road and other parts of Handsworth, are mostly Asian owned shops. In fact the rioters themselves included a few Asian youths and the shops damaged or destroyed included Afro-Caribbean shops, and shops belonging to White:Polish and Greek. (8:31)

Not placing any explanatory weight to an assumed conspiracy theory Silverman draws a similar portrait and interpretative schema as Scarman before him. Thus Handsworth is placed within a brief historical context noting the influx of immigrant groups in previous years, the racial composition and cultural diversity of the area and the biting effects of the recession upon the west midlands manufacturing base and those specially disadvantaged groups living within the decaying inner city area. The inner city partnership scheme is singled out for praise though criticisms concerning the local authority's record on involving outside contractors and the number of inner city jobs created, especially within its enveloping scheme, are raised. The acute housing problem within the Handsworth area and the severe problems posed to both young and elderly single and frequently black people are referenced as are the problems of educational underachievement, and apparent discrimination found within Youth Training Schemes.

Accepting that individual cases of police harassment

undoubtedly exist, Silverman concludes that for the police to maintain that the riots appeared 'like a bolt out of the blue' they must have considerably 'underestimated the degree of hostility' felt by Afro-Caribbean youth of the area ; 'I have no doubt that the main object of hatred by these 1985 rioters was the police'(8:15). However, it is the acute effects of inner city unemployment which appear to assume the principal plank of Silverman's interpretative schema.

> "Unemployment in Handsworth/Lozells is one of the worst, perhaps the worst in the whole country..The social consequences of mass unemployment are well known. It impoverishes the family. It is the greatest source of deprivation. The unemployed person feels rejected, with a loss of self-respect and consequent feeling of humiliation." (10:2)

As for the solutions to the problems found within the inner city, 'the regeneration of the inner cities and the solution to their problems can only be achieved by joint action by overnment and Local Authorities'. Echoing both the reports, aith in the City(1984), and The Scarman Report(1981), his rincipal recommendation states:

> "Local authorities are now completely tied in the money that they can raise and the money that they can spend. They must be supported and set free from the restrictions which prevent them from performing properly their services to the community. This forms my major recomendation."(10:13)

Also reminiscent of Scarman is the hesitant treatment of he issue of discrimination. Conceding the existence of ndividual cases of police harassment, and occasional instance f racial discrimination in other areas, the 'psychological' eality of discrimination is put forward as a contributing actor.

> "Racial discrimination and the feeling of being discriminated against is an important part of the social and psychological background of Handsworth. It is part of the alienation felt by ethnic minorities and in my view is an essential element in the cause of the riots."(5:102)

On the basis of these central issues, Silverman recommends n addition to the lifting of restrictions on Local Authorities y Central Government, that inner city Partnerships should be ncreased in scope; leisure facilities and play groups and youth eaders should be more readily available; YTS and Community rogramme places expanded and accommodation for single people ncreased; while the police should review their training

programme and receive increased riot equipment and vehicles, though the introduction of baton rounds is seriously questioned. Additionally, also in sympathy with Scarman's recommendations 'it is necessary to promote greater consultation with, and participation by, local people at the neighbourhood level' (12:21).

In summary, this inquiry in many respects illustrates a liberal 'basic flaws' interpretative model of society and the causes for the Handsworth riots. A series of informing 'conditions' are noted as the backdrop to the disturbances, while a sense of social injustice and exclusion, both perceived and real, is placed at the heart of the account fuelled by economic and social distress - notably unemployment but also compounded by racial disadvantage and discrimination. This last factor, however, as subsequently amplified by two of the ontributing assessors of the report was felt to have been onsiderably underestimated and failed to avail itself of the xisting documentation and research [Patton and Shaw(1986)].

However, in so far as the Silverman Report does not hallenge the label and definition of rioters as 'criminals', nd to the extent that it too recommends aspects of increased olice equipment advanced by the Police report, its otherwise iberal orientation is qualified by these conservative themes. n short, this essentially liberal perspective can be seen as ccupying a middle ground between the conservative and radical nterpretative frameworks.

II. A Different Reality : The Radical Perspective

The report 'A Different Reality' is sub-titled 'an account f Black people's experiences and their grievances before and fter the Handsworth Rebellions of September 1985' and argues in ssence, that the grievances experienced by the black community o beyond the material deprivation familiar to many parts of the nited Kingdom. That is, the forms of inequality which arise rom institutionalised racism and racial discrimination are dvanced as the central issue necessary to any understanding of he Handsworth rebellion. Racism however is not understood as an dded ingredient to a volatile mix of forms of deprivation, but

rather is seen as inhering in the very constitution of experienced deprivation and disadvantage. Racism is certainly not reduced to personal prejudice [Dear(1985)p.69], nor is it understood in terms which tend to stress the perceived disadvantage or 'felt' discrimination, a tendency noticeable both in Scarman(1981) and Silverman(1986).

> "It is racism which accounts for the excess of disadvantage experienced by Black people every day of their lives. All the institutions of power operate in ways that ensure that this situation prevails..nothing can remove the indelible stain of British injustice being meted out to black people; no lies or distortions can alter the way Black people experience the harsh realities of life for them in Britain's inner city areas. It is an experience of relative poverty, institutionalised discrimination, denied opportunity, denigrated pride, devalued culture and state harassment". (p.9).

The report methodically sets out to highlight patterns of oppression and disadvantage, the imposition of a law and order response to black resistance, to challenge the myth of large sums of money going into inner city areas and examines the by- assing mechanisms which ensure black people always miss out ithin the marginal programmes and the local state's response to the disadvantaged within such services as housing, health, ducation and social services (p.7). In addition to focusing pon the negative aspects the black inner city experience, it lso seeks to describe the positive role and vibrancy of self- elp initiatives and community developments formed within the lack community itself. Clearly this is an extensive project elivered in emotional language and while the rhetorical force f its argument may be construed as undermined by such emotional ppeals [Gaffney(1987)] it nonetheless catalogues a wide array f disadvantages and deprivations positioning the black xperience as central to its interpretative schema. Not possible o itemize in detail all these areas, the following cursory emarks indicate the key areas of concern to this particular nterpretative schema of the Handsworth rebellion and wider nderstanding of the inner city.

The recession is noted for having hit the West Midlands articularly hard while acute inner city unemployment figures uggest that such areas have born the brunt of concentrated nemployment. Black unemployment rates are compared both within he inner city and across the city finding that black nemployment assumes staggering proportions. The State's

response to the enormity of the problem is regarded as lamentable with mainstream expenditure failing to address the specific plight of black inner city residents while the 'marginal' schemes of the MSC, partnerships and urban programme said to be inadequate in themselves are also noted as compounding forms of disadvantage and discrimination. Citing a recent evaluation of Birmingham's inner city partnership, the report draws attention to the following findings: 'consultation with the black community has been weak; response to black people's needs has been slow; support has only been in the main for established, well known black groups which has hindered the development of newer Black self-help groups'(p.16). Moreover, citing research findings of the Centre of Research in Ethnic Relations, the report observes that of the £24.5 million spent through the Birmingham Partnership schemes in 1984/5 only 3 % (less than £1 million) was spent on black projects - despite the fact that the black population comprises 43 % of the area's population as a whole.

Housing inadequacies and shortages are seen as particularly impacting upon the single elderly and young as are the chronic hortages of leisure facilities. Typically, the needs of the lderly black person have been overlooked in social service rovision which reflects a wider tendency in the provision of nadequate or culturally insensitive services without involving ither consultation of a level of local input into decision-naking processes. Harassment and unrepresentative staffing ractices found within local hostels are alleged, while perhaps ne of the major criticisms of housing policy has been the lack f contract compliance aimed at increasing local involvement and obs.

In the area of education the consistent underachievement of lack youngsters is observed, though the point is also made that hen black youngsters are entered for examinations they secure a igher pass rate than their white counterparts. Inner city chools however are seen as under-resourced while little ttention has been placed on adapting the curriculum to reflect he cultural needs of their black pupils who continue to be the bject of racist remarks from other pupils and some teachers. ection 11 funding is alleged to frequently be misappropriated or mainstream financing and research indicates that black

students are often labelled 'trouble-makers' and experience higher suspensions than their white class colleagues. Discrimination is also found to have operated within the Youth Training Scheme and city technical colleges.

The Health and social services also come in for severe criticism in terms of both the content and manner of delivery of their respective service provisions. A lack of child care facilities and residential care for the elderly is noted as is evidence indicating that black youngsters are erroneously and readily labelled educationally sub-normal or delinquent and therefore diagnosed as mentally ill or over-represented in institutional care. Fundamental reforms currently being discussed concerning the welfare state are seen as likely to be particularly deleterious in their effects on the black inner city community, and black youth especially. The reduction of supplementary benefits to the under 25's and the planned introduction of the community charge or 'poll tax' will inevitably lead to an increased 'criminalization' of many black eople who default, for no fault of their own, in paying ncreased charges.

Turning now to police community relations it is maintained hat 'the police are viewed by a substantial proportion of andsworth residents as an ill-disciplined and brutal force hich has manipulated and abused its powers in dealing with the lack community over a long period of time' (p.63). The long istory of such poor relations, contrary to Dear(1985) had lready been established by Gus John(1970) when he described hornhill Police Station as 'one of the buildings most dreaded nd hated by Black Handsworth'. The 1984 Police and Criminal vidence Act and the new 1985 Public Order Bill are regarded as ierely extending the powers of the police which remain unchecked)y an independent complaints procedure or democratic line of ccountability.

Unlike the two previous reports, the positive aspect of the lack experience, notwithstanding the array of oppressions and iscriminations endured on a daily basis, is found in 'the antastic degree of positive activities by the black community eflecting their hopes, aspirations, their cultural identities, ffirmation of their identities and their protest and esistance' (p.62).

In summary, this inquiry calls for a 'real community involvement for the usually excluded groups of people in the inner cities' which will enable 'poor white people and black people' to 'determine for themselves their own destiny' (p.89). The focus on black youth as the principal actors in the Handsworth disorders, found both within the previous reports reviewed and general media accounts, is challenged to the extent that it ignores the active presence of black women and underestimates the degree of collective community sympathy and support. As with the preceding reports reviewed, so 'A Different Reality' expresses themes and concerns which enable it to be principally situated within one of the three political perspectives outlined above.

Basic societal flaws are identified which are generally not recognised as susceptible to incremental or governmental reform. Institutionalised racism requires both government intervention and grass-roots organisation and struggle. While the exact nature of the relationship between the State, economy nd political process in regard to 'institutionalised racism' emains unclear, the report nonetheless tends to imply that such struggle will have to engage established structures of uthority and power, hence its strident conclusion: 'violent esistance is now permanently on the agenda while the oppression nd denial of rights and resources continue' (p.77). While the eport may at times appear to share with the liberal nterpretative schema a similar concern with certain inner city conditions' these tend to be situated within a wider structural nderstanding of institutional racism and, as such, evoke a adical interpretation of the Handsworth riots, and inner city henomenon generally.

ummary Findings: Three Perspectives Towards the Inner City

The discussion and review of the idea of the inner city bove has confirmed the idea of the inner city as both a site of ocial and semantic struggle. If the brief overview of changing overnment policies towards the problems of the inner city has dentified recurrent concerns with economic, environmental and ocial deprivation typically found to be particularly oncentrated within inner city areas and approached on an area

basis, the informing conceptualisation of the 'problem' of urban deprivation has undergone periodic changes and shifts of emphasis. However, while the informing explanatory frameworks can be subjected to detailed discussion and criticism, the fact remains that urban deprivation in all its many and varied forms is generally invoked in and across these accounts. This body of policy literature as well as central and local government research documentation provides a useful, if not entirely undisputed, means of identifying Britain's most deprived inner city and other areas via detailed census information and collected indices of urban deprivation (see appendix 1).

In addition, recent inner city disorders and the Handsworth riots of 1985 particularly have indicated in remarkable terms something of the affinity existing between the major reports and inquiries commissioned in the aftermath of the riots and the three principal perspectives identified as available in the interpretation of social violence and disorder. Moreover, different 'key' inner city issues and concerns have been found at the core of these interpretative frameworks, which in turn support their competing explanatory claims and prescriptive projects. The conservative discourse has informed at least one ajor report with the placing of inner city crime, criminality nd even an identified group of conspiritorial criminals at the eart of these 'events' requiring law and order responses. oreover, though an extreme nationalism and full blown racist or 'alien-wedge' discourse is not prominent within these various eports, the implicit tones of a presumed consensus of white alues is clearly discerned on occasion and threatens to treat nsympathetically those 'outsiders' perceived to flout a resumed liberal tolerance.

If crime and criminality predispose one official reaction o fixate upon the illegal nature of the events themselves and he necessity for an immediate law and order response, the iberal concern with contributing and cumulative conditions hether unemployment, social deprivation, racial disadvantage nd perceived racism or even instances of police insensitivity ave also found prominent expression within and across the array f reports and inquiries. Not excusing the criminality of the vents themselves but disposed to identify informing conditions nd felt grievances the liberal perspective has catalogued a

number of issues and concerns, including the need for increased community participation in decision-making and substantial government intervention.

Seeking a co-ordinated and decisive governmental response in the bid to reform contributing conditions and deficient institutional arrangements and processes the liberal perspective has found representation at the level of official reports and inquiries. However, the radical interpretation of the Handsworth rebellion has, in the main, be confined to one report where a wider structural and historical framework of understanding has been invoked. Placing issues of race and racism at the core of its interpretation, disadvantage and discrimination are not seen as one contributing 'factor' amongst others, much less as a concern with individual cases of 'prejudice' but rather the outcome of structural inequalities deeply engrained and daily enacted within the institutions confronting Britain's black population. Nothing short of fundamental and radical change, involving grass-roots struggle and political change at all levels of society will alter this state of affairs. Between them, then, these three accounts of the Handsworth riots, their identified key 'issues' as well as affinity to available perspectives towards social disorder have all helped to provide a wide range of competing inner city concerns, explanatory frameworks and presecriptive demands which will collectively, in ombination with earlier urban policy findings, inform the iscussion of inner city programming analysed in later chapters.

Having identified three principal interpretative frameworks r discourses advanced in relation to competing interpretations f the inner city riots and general understandings of the so-alled inner city, these can now usefully inform the critical xamination or 'reading' of inner city television programming. o what extent these conflicting perspectives inform or find upport in terms of the interpretative resources and accounts inding public exposure across inner city related television rogramming will comprise a central focus in the first major art of empirical analysis carried out in later chapters. owever, as detailed later, it is the news form that has been ound to be by far the principal programme vehicle providing, in haracteristic fashion, the most sustained and prominent xposure of inner city issues and for this reason the following

chapter now turns to a critical review of the increasing number of news studies. This discussion will then be followed by a brief review of the substantive findings already made available within the surprisingly limited mass communication studies conducted specifically in relation to the problems and issues of the inner city and their media presentation. Both discussions in the following chapter will then conclude with a number of critical observations or 'theoretical departures' which will inform and direct, along with the discussion above, the remainder of this study.

Chapter Two

NEWS STUDIES AND THE INNER CITY: AN OVERVIEW AND DEPARTURES

The study of news exhibits both a history and diversity of research interests and approaches which might at first appear to confound any attempt to situate such variety within an overall discussion. Given the contested theoretical ground within which such discussion and debate is conducted it is hardly surprising perhaps that such differences and developments should characterise these disparate studies. What is of general interest however, and which furthermore may begin to demarcate a common ground is the sustained attention that has been, and continues to be devoted to the study of news. Perhaps here, if anywhere, a semblance of unity may at least be glimpsed to the extent that news, in contrast to many other forms of mass media output, has frequently assumed the principal area of research interest. While growing consideration of other forms of media output has in recent years begun to complement this academic news 'bias',(or should I refer to 'structural orientation' ?) news continues to provide a rich source and pre-eminent interest for academic study. The possible underpinnings for such sustained interest will be discussed further below before both the lines of descent and theoretical points of departure for the resent study are indicated.

As early as 1921 Walter Lippmann in his important study olitical O inion made the following observation, in many espects prescient of much later studies.

> "Every newspaper when it reaches the reader is the result of a whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed, in what positions they shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, what emphasis each shall have. There are no objective standards here. There are only conventions. (p.354)

f the idea of the social production of news was first raised by .ippmann, it is usually acknowledged that such a proposal was irst implicitly investigated in a series of studies carried out n the United States in the 1950s. Following the suggestive lead f social psychologist Kurt Lewin, David Manning White pursued he idea that a 'successful' news item must first of all negotiate a number of 'gates' (White 1964). Such gates, manned y individuals exerting individual discretion and selection

choices was taken as indicative of the 'subjective', if not entirely random, nature of news selection. Observing a wire-editor, a significant 'gate-keeper' of a morning newspaper, White proceeded to illustrate how this particular Mr Gates discarded the bulk of potential copy in his search for news and concluded:

> "It is only when we study the reasons given by Mr. Gates for rejecting almost nine-tenths of the wire-copy that we begin to understand how highly subjective, how reliant upon value--judgements based on the 'gate-keepers' own set of experiences attitudes and expectations the communication of 'news' really is." (p.165)

This particular Mr Gates apparently discarded certain items with such 'revealing' remarks as 'He's too Red', 'Propaganda' 'Don't care for suicides' and that moreover such decisions were likely to vary according to time of day, and the amount of copy space remaining as the daily deadline approached. This study is often cited as demonstrating an early individualised and 'subjective' account of the news process. While the metaphor of gatekeeping may well contain inherent limitations it is not strictly the case, as current accounts are apt to maintain, that hite's study failed to involve wider levels of explanation (Schudson 1989). It is the case that White tended to posit the ews flow in essentially a linear, and one way direction with ews already seemingly pristinely packaged, requiring little if ny editorial input over and above its initial selection, while he possible directing or even manipulating involvement of news ources, both news hungry and learned in the requirements of such Mr Gates, was seemingly not considered as entering the news lay. It may also be the case that such a metaphor tends to lace an unwarranted focus upon the individual (as opposed to ollective, organisational, cultural or structural) agents and eterminants involved in the news process, as well as ositioning the news process in essentially quantitative selection' terms, as opposed to qualitative terms involving ppreciation of the news process as 'inflecting', 'transforming' r even 'manufacturing' and 'constructing' the news as product. owever while Mr Gates is an individual gate keeper, exercising ndividual selection choices these can nonetheless reference a ider community and culture from which and to which such choices' may be seen to be indebted.

> "It begins to appear (if Mr Gates is a fair representative of his class) that in his position as 'gatekeeper' the newspaper editor sees to it (even though he may not consciously be aware of it) that the community shall hear as a fact only those events which the newsman, as the representative of his culture, believes to be true." (p.171)

Moreover, if the extract above begins to situate Mr Gates within a wider class, culture and/or community of interests, his understanding of the audience also influences his 'subjective' decision making and appears to be daily enacted within this particular news form.

> "The category of news suggests groups that should be interested in a particular story, that is teachers, laborors, professional people etc...Our readers are looked upon as people with average intelligence and with a variety of interests and abilities.. Anyway I see them as human and with some common interests. I believe they are entitled to news that pleases them and news that informs them of what is going on in the world."(p.170)

These two areas of concern, news reporters as representative of a wider culture, and influential conceptions of the news audience, have only recently been pursued with increased academic rigour, but their presence in this early study indicates that neither in this example or later studies considered below, is it likely or usual for a particular study to place all its explanatory eggs in one theoretical basket - no matter the retrospective placings by others. The complexity of news variously understood as institutional process, journalistic product, social symbolism, cultural practice, discursive and narrative form, or even social and civic ritual as well as informational resource and source of entertainment and pleasure, all combine to 'limit' the explanatory claims of any one study r retrospective account. That White's study should deliberately equest from the editor his concept of the audience for whom he elects stories and that furthermore he should emphasise the ews editor's disposition for a 'news angle' illustrates that ven in such early studies research interests are present which re still informing the study of news.

If Mr Gate's held certain expectation's concerning his erceived audience's news requirements, (an important onsideration discussed further below) the collective or group ature of journalistic expectations was illustrated in the Langs tudy of the television coverage of General MacArthur's 'triumphant' return to Chicago following his disagreement with

President Truman (1953). The basis of the Lang's study was to demonstrate the 'contrast between the actually recorded experience of participant observers on the scene, on the one hand, and the picture which a television viewer received ..and the way in which the event was interpreted, magnified and took on added significance on the other'. They were primarily concerned with 'how the picture of events was shaped by selection, emphasis and suggested inferences which filled into the already existing pattern of expectations'. The preceding media coverage of MacArthur's tours in other cities seems to have led to what the Lang's term a 'landslide effect'. That is, the media appear to have been responsible for creating an image of wild and enthusiastic reception which was then anticipated by broadcasters within one major city after another. With such expectations in place broadcasters set about promoting the triumphal return and covered the event in such anticipated terms. However, according to one of the Lang's participant observers :

> "I had listened to the accounts of MacArthur's arrival in San Francisco, heard radio reports of his progress through the United States, and heard the Washington speech as well as radio accounts of the New York reception. I had therefore expected the crowds to be much more vehement, contagious and identified with MacArthur...These expectations were completely unfulfilled..I had expected roaring exciting mobs; instead they were quiet, well-ordered, dignified people..The air of curiosity and casualness surprised me."(p.5)

The author's were particularly concerned that this event hould be construed by the media as an image of overwhelming ublic sentiment in favour of the General, when the decidedly ıore controlled and muted actuality if persistently misreported as thought to seriously damage the liberal democratic process. hus they assert 'news and special event features constitute art of the basic information of "reality" which we require in rder to act in concert with anonymous but like minded persons ·n the political process' (pp.10-11). Leaving aside the evident ursuit of, and attendant difficulties found with the notion of 'objective' news reporting, this study at least begins to uestion the portrayal of news events in terms of the pre-xisting news expectancies held by the journalists themselves. hat is, while the exact derivation of such a journalist frame ·s ultimately left unclear - is this something which generally

inheres within journalists as a social class, professional or organisationally constrained group, or perhaps wider partisan culture and therefore is generally attendant to all such events, or is it specific to this particular event, and in either case what is the exact social connection between journalists and the wider political process signified by MacArthur's triumphal return ?' - the portrayal of this news event is seen as very much the produced outcome of the news process rather than the news event itself.

If the Langs study began to raise the question of journalists now perceived as a group who collectively exhibited a shared news expectation directing their eventual portrayal of the event, a later study by Halloran et al.(1970) employing the concept of 'inferential structure' sought to situate a similar journalistic expectancy of violence to the social and political turmoil of the 1960s. This 'underlying frame of mind' so entrenched that in the event of a largely peaceful demonstration, the news accounts nonetheless highlight what minimal violence did occur, or relatedly situate the event as being without violence (which is very different from being proclaimed non-violent, and even further removed from the object of the demonstration, seeking to challenge the violence of one nation state against another) can also be seen to remain largely theoretically unaccounted for. As with the Lang's study, so this study having raised the possibility of a collective 'inferential structure' leaves in abeyance its particular social, professional, institutional or cultural origins and/or supports.

If the Lang's study, and the later anti-vietnam war demonstration study began to effectively undermine any simplistic conspiracy idea of the media, they also began to substitute a more complex, and less consciously purposive ccount of the news process. However, if an explanatory account f such specific 'inferential frames' or wider journalistic ractices and professional values is sought an array of later and contending theoretical perspectives can usefully be attended to.

While some of these approaches towards news can be briefly iscussed below it is apparent from the early gate-keeping and 'inferential structure' case studies that attention can usefully be focused on the production domain and practices which produce

and process the news product - though different theoretical bases and guiding research questions clearly need not necessarily furnish similar findings. It is useful, albeit with the qualification above in mind, if more recent studies are considered to the extent to which they may be considered as representative of the major sociological perspectives which seek to account for the news forms, range and diversity of substantive contents delivered by the news institutions. Following in part Schudson's (1989) useful delineation, these can be considered under the respective headings of political economy, organisational and professional, and cultural and textual approaches towards the study of news production.

Political Economy

As with all other general approaches towards the study the mass media, so the political economy approach can assume different variants and emphases according to the authors under iscussion. However, generally maintaining that the rganisations of the mass media, situated within a competitive ommercial environment, are propelled to pursue profit- aximising strategies it is maintained that the resulting media utput exhibits a coincidence of interests to those of the ominant political and economic elites. Forces of centralisation nd conglomeration, audience maximisation and advertising ependency are all manifestations of an economic imperative to urvive within a commercial and/or market situation and all are ariously seen, either directly or indirectly, as impacting upon he range, substantive content and forms of media output. robably the most serious and sustained attempt to develop a olitical economy approach towards the study of the organisation nd forms of the mass media has been advanced by Graham Murdock nd Peter Golding.

> "For us the mass media are 'first and foremost industrial and commercial organisations that produce and distribute commodities' within a late capitalist order. Consequently, we would argue, the production of ideology cannot be separated from or adequately understood, without grasping the general economic dynamics of media production and the determinations they exert."
>
> [Murdock and Golding(1979)p.210]

As examples of some of these determinations which have been advanced as producing ideological repercussions, in terms of media output content and forms are the following. Increasing conglomeration through market pressure and profit-maximising strategy leads to a constriction and standardisation of available leisure choices, these same pressures lead to the pursuit of increased audience size and/or targeted audiences particularly attractive to advertisers, which in turn tends to displace minority and oppositional concerns and issues from view - the 'safer' middle ground of consensus values and interests is deemed to be where the widest possible audience is situated, and not the site of oppositional or challenging viewpoints. Those voices most likely to challenge existing social arrangements are systematically denied access or representation; lacking economic power or the command of the necessary resources such groups are unable to communicate to a broader audience. Moreover, and particularly interesting to the extent that at least some eference is made to the substantive content of news, is the following observation:

> "By reinforcing the division between public and private spheres, between production and consumption they sever the connections crucial to the development of critical consciousness."
>
> [Murdock,(1980)p.59]

Distancing the explanatory account from any assumed nstrumentalist position, much less conspiracy theory, Murdock ıotes in connection with the evolution of the press and its form nd content of 'news:

> "..the press's successive adaptations to its changing market situation has generated an evolutionary coincidence between the structures and emphases of news presentations and the central tenets of the dominant ideology. It is not necessary to invoke direct intervention to explain this consonance, it arises out of the normal commercial dynamics of the news paper industry."
>
> [Murdock,(1980)p.62]

However while the general economic and commercial arameters and dynamics are seen to severely curtail, restrict nd impact upon the range of news contents and forms, some of he more strident claims which posit 'the normal commercial ynamics' as seemingly both necessary and sufficient for an xplanatory understanding of media output have, on the occasion f an empirical case study given way to a more complex picture,

requiring other levels of analysis. Debunking the idea of a generalised conspiracy Murdock notes:

> "It is all too easy to look for conspiracy. Certainly newspapers are enmeshed in the present economic and political system both directly through interlocking directorships and reciprocal shareholdings, and indirectly through their dependence upon advertising. They therefore have a vested interest in the stability and continuing existence of the present system. However, the links between this general framework and the day-to-day business of gathering and processing news material are oblique rather than direct."
>
> [Murdock,(1981)p.208]

Retrospectively pursuing the Demonstration study, already noted above, it becomes clear that if the definitions applied to the demonstration by the press are seen to largely coincide with the definition provided by the legitimated power holders the explanation for such a state of affairs must attend to 'the process through which events come to be selected for presentation as news, and the assumptions on which this process rests'. While 'selection' processes and journalistic 'assumptions' may well be circumscribed within a commercial nvironment, it now appears that political economy though a ecessary element to the discussion of news forms is not ufficient for a more comprehensive account. Indeed, as will be iscussed below, as in recent years the invocation of a dominant nd 'legitimating' ideology has tended to be displaced by a onsiderably more complex, variegated and sometimes 'negotiated' nderstanding of 'ideology' so too the work of Murdock has in ore recent years increasingly pointed to the less than omogeneous forms of media output, different degrees of access nd 'openess' and 'closedness' found across different media enres [Murdock 1982; Schlesinger,Elliott,Murdock (1983)]

One further political economy approach can also usefully be eviewed, to the extent that it also illustrates both the trengths and the limitations of a political economy approach pplied in isolation from other levels of analysis. The work of ames Curran [1978,1982,1986] has consistently sought to xplicate the role of market, and especially advertising forces, n the fortunes and developments of the press. Referring to the istory of the radical press Curran has noted that market forces ucceeded where legal repression had failed in containing in the ise of a radical press against the background of growing

prosperity and the reassertion of ruling class domination.

> "The operation of the free market, with its accompanying rise in publishing costs, led to a progressive transfer of ownership and control of the press to capitalist entrepreneurs. It also led to a new economic dependence on advertising that encouraged the absorption or elimination of the early radical press and inhibited its re-emergence".
>
> [Curran(1982)p.226]

While the general operation of market forces is seen as curtailing the opportunities for the development of a radical press in the past, the same forces are also posited as crucially determining the changing content of the press in more recent periods [Curran, Douglas & Whannel (1980)]. It is argued that current affairs news coverage has undergone a discernible and dramatic decline relative to human interest newspaper content, and that furthermore this is noticeably different according to the distinctions existing between the popular and the quality press. However, while such a finding may appear to be reflective of different readership tastes survey findings have suggested that in fact both readerships of quality and the popular press have indicated similar patterns of news interest. Curran et al account for this finding by the different economic situations confronting the popular and the quality press. Whereas the popular press is more inclined to rely on increased 'mass' circulation and its cover price to maintain profitability and therefore increases its percentage of 'universal' human interest stories, the quality press is seen to be more dependent upon advertising revenue which, targeted towards high income groups, thereby exerts a 'serious' news orientation.

The political economy of the human interest story is thus positioned as the underpinning determinant to the increasing olarisation and trivialisation of the press. The ideological epercussions of this state of affairs are perceived to inhere in the fact that though offering themselves as non-political, uman interest stories do in fact represent 'reality in a form hat powerfully reinforces and complements the dominant olitical consensus articulated in its current affairs coverage' [Curran et al,(1980) p.316].

The analysis has not gone entirely without challenge [Sparks(1988);Negrine(1989)] and once again it can be suggested hat the adequacy and/or sufficiency of a political economy pproach to an understanding of the state of the modern press

generally and the analysis of the human interest orientation of the popular press, and increased public affairs orientation of the quality press specifically needs to be augmented by other levels of analysis and theorisation. While Negrine may question the percentage figures, indicating that perhaps the trend is not so marked as originally maintained, while also questioning the news subject categories (should law, police and accident news be excluded from public affairs news ?) the fact that parts of the press involves considerable 'human interest' material and have undergone a discernible shift in terms of news content (though perhaps not entirely without historical precedent [Berridge (1978)]) is clearly of importance and cannot be dismissed lightly by declaring 'newspapers which do not change are likely to be the exception rather than the rule' (Negine p.87). The fact that 'human interest' news has assumed such a prominent place within the popular press is of particular interest and ust be attended to by reference to its possible appeals and ttractions for a readership which clearly responds with nterest to such news forms.

More recently it can be observed that political economy rguments continue to provide explanatory insight into patterns f technological and commercial change which, though not ecessarily resulting in the dissemination of a 'dominant deology', may nonetheless contribute to the increasing social olarisation and fragmentation identified by others as haracteristic of the 'new times'[Hall and Jacques,Eds(1989)] ith the creation of the differentially endowed 'information ich' and 'information poor' [Murdock(1986)]. Invoking the three iered understanding of citizenship advanced by T.H. Marshall nd referencing civil, political and social dimensions to an istorically accomplished form of citizenship, recent echnological and commercial developments are found to be ncreasingly 'excluding the poor' and thereby undermining the esources for effective citizenship [Golding,Ed.(1986); Golding nd Murdock (1990)].

It can be observed however, that while a political economy pproach can afford considerable insight into the market mperatives and constraints which inform the operations of the ews media at an institutional and organisational level, they re not in themselves capable of providing a more encompassing

and nuanced account of the forms and specific types of news content found within and across the different news media. The explanatory space, sometimes found within at least some of the variants of a political economic account, is apt to assume the role of a silent void which, existing between the wider economic environment and output of news, has been recognised by others and 'filled' by a variety of means discussed below. Not intending to diminish the very real advances afforded by such an approach, not least in terms of its implicit challenge to any simplistic conspiracy theory, or variant of a purely instrumentalist account of the news media these same strengths can, if left uncomplemented by different levels of analysis, turn into its weakness awarding too much explanatory power to economic factors alone.

Such limitations can now be seen to include a tendency to level all news output to the same determination by constraining market pressures; a disposition to underestimate both the heterogeneous nature of different news organisations as well as the role of the professional communicator which can both, on occasion exhibit a critical independence from established and institutional centres of power; a failure to pursue both internal organisational differences and conflicts as well as ifferences pertaining to wider institutional interrelationships hich cannot simplistically be assumed to be either monolithic r internally uncontested; and, perhaps most damagingly, onsequent upon a failure to attend to the moment of reception nd wider understandings of the audience, such an approach has requently posited the mass media as assuming a 'pivotal role in haping social consciousness', which is further assumed to be esponsible for successfully legitimating an inegalitarian ocial order. While it may be possible, though not without some ifficulty given the varied nature of different news forms, to aintain that a 'dominant ideology' is indeed disseminated, the otion that such is in fact responsible for securing the ontinuance of an inegalitarian social order remains a base ssumption, rarely empirically pursued. Nonetheless, the fact emains that such an approach has considerably enhanced the nderstanding of the news process to the extent that all major ews institutions are either directly, or indirectly subject to ider economic constraints and market forces which can, and do

limit the organisational parameters within which news production necessarily takes place.

Finally, and contrary to the impression that may have resulted from above, not all political economy approaches underpin an ideological understanding of the role of the mass media. Dallas Smythe has probably gone further than most in throwing into sharp relief the advertising logic which is seen to underpin the production of media output. In fact in Smythe's pessimistic formulation the media far from enabling advertisers to sell commodities to consumers, in fact reverse this relationship with the audience assuming the status of a product which is now sold to advertisers. Programming in this scenario is merely an 'inducement, gift, bribe or "free-lunch" to recruit potential members of the audience and maintain their loyal attention' [Smythe (1981)p.5]. In such a formulation a concern with the ideological content of such forms is completely subsumed under an all pervasive economic determinism. Generally however, it can be observed that the political economy approach has in the past tended to underpin an assumed ideological understanding of the mass media, though more recent formulations keen to chart the commercial impacts of the 'new times' are less preoccupied with the resulting symbolic forms and absences of media fare than with the physical 'screening out' or exclusion of certain audiences due to the prohibitive costs of market-led, as opposed to public service oriented, mass media.

ews Production and the Professional Communicator

If the political economy approach is theoretically disposed to account for news in terms which do not rely on either onspiratorial or instrumentalist understandings, that is news ersonnel are regarded as necessarily constrained into erforming a similar function, no matter the selective nature of ecruitment procedures, individual political orientation or ocial background of the journalists themselves, other studies ave focused upon just such characteristics as providing xplanatory insight into the news selected, scripted and finally resented.

Superficially the analysis of journalist recruitment rocedures, social and educational backgrounds and general

socialization into the role and craft of news production may hold out the promise of increased understanding. To a degree this is undeniable. However, if such analyses sought to account for the final news product exclusively in such terms the argument cannot be sustained. In an impressive overview of such studies Phillip Elliott (1977) notes that the social background of many journalists, and media personnel generally are on the whole middle-class. While this is an important finding in itself, it falls far short from providing anything like an adequate account of professional news ideologies which need not necessarily coincide with the values found within social background, while such a finding is ill-equipped to account for those growing number of journalists who have not originated from a similar social background. As Elliott has noted:

> "No occupation in cultural production has been professionalised to the extent that a prior period of education and training provides the first situation for career competition. Instead many careers involve extensive periods of learning by doing in the less rewarding and prestigious sectors of the industry."
>
> [Elliott,(1977) p.144]

Moreover given that career advancement within the news edia, and elsewhere within the culture industry is often ependent on past, and notably recent past performance, it could e maintained as Elliott suggests that 'achievement' as opposed to 'ascriptive' norms may appear more important within the ressurised environment of news production. Achievement however, 's clearly dependent upon the internalization and externalization of shared professional values and practices to he extent that such is recognised as the path to career advancement. If professional socialization, as opposed to social ackground, holds out increased explanatory promise this ionetheless begs the question why such socialized journalistic iorms, practices and news values should assume the form that hey do as well as persisting through time. Some of these uestions have been addressed, but to the extent that answers ave been found these have tended to look to the wider rganisation of news production rather than to the inspection of ournalists themselves. While this literature has tended to note he homogeneity of journalists as a group - either in terms of ocial background, political orientation and so on - some tudies have introduced a basic cleavage which at least appears

to identify two different types or orientations of journalists.

John Merrill's(1974) study while arguing perhaps naively for the unfettered 'freedom' of journalists, as if such was attainable, identifies two fundamental orientations of journalist, the so-called 'apollonian' and 'dionysian' which may be taken as approximating Janowitz's(1975) 'gate-keeper' and 'advocate' model of journalists. Taking his empirical evidence from Johnston's study Newsmen and Newswork which involved an extensive survey of working journalists and a similar distinction between 'neutral' or 'participant' journalists, Janowitz maintains that 'the gate keeper can be considered as the ideal of the enlightenment of the mass public, the advocate as the ideal of the lawer and almost that of the politician'. In other words, the gate keeper model is seen to represent the enlightenment tradition with the journalist performing a neutral conduit role, relaying faithfully and factually news events, while the advocate on the other hand, possibly doubting the objectivity of facts, and certainly aware of the under-representation of minority groups and issues takes up the pen in the name of increased social understanding and social responsibility. However while such studies may point to a situation which is not characterised by journalist uniformity, though the degree of heterogeneity is only marginally improved ith two basic orientations, such differences may in fact eflect more upon journalist's self perceptions, than iscernible differences of news output.

Such studies as these while tending to throw light on the rofessional norms and values of journalists, have not been able o account for the 'discrepancy' existing between different olitical orientations found within the journalist profession nd the general similarity of news output found across the ıews media, and certainly cannot account for the remarkable niformity of news output within any one news organisation. oreover such studies have tended to assume, like early gate eeping studies before them, that the value systems impacting ıpon news accounts are indeed those of the individual ournalists involved, rather than say the editorial expression f the media organisation itself or established conventions nscribed into an established news form, or indeed the array of ources which gain regular and routine entry into the news

domain. Such studies though largely confined to the past nonetheless continue to occasionally resurface in the present.

While the 'social compositional' approach [Schudson(1989) p.274] to the study of news has at least begun the task of attending to the news professionals themselves, it is not until such practices and professional values are situated within their organisational and bureaucratic settings that a more developed understanding of the interaction between organisation and professional value systems begins to be illuminated. In an early study Sigelman(1973) noted 'how a particular matrix of organisational processes - which commence in the recruitment of the reporter, carry through in his socialization and culminate in his working arrangements' are 'structured for conflict avoidance'. In a more recent contribution Soloski(1989) has also observed:

> "Both news professionalism and news policy are used to minimise conflict within the news organization. That is, professional norms and a news organization's news policies are accepted by journalists, and only in rare instances are either professional norms or news policies a point of disagreement among the staff of the news organization. Like a game, professional norms and news policies are rules that everyone has learned to play by; only rarely are these rules made explicit, and only rarely are the rules called into question."
>
> [Soloski(1989)p.218]

Interestingly Gaye Tuchman has also noted how the journalist's espousal of 'objectivity', so often advanced as a ornerstone of journalistic professionalism may also be seen as means of conflict avoidance, both in terms of intra- rganisational difference, but more importantly in warding off otential criticism from external critics.

> "To journalists, like social scientists, the term objectivity stands as a bulwark between themselves and the critics. Attacked for a controversial presentation of the 'facts', newspapers invoke their objectivity almost the way a Mediterranean peasant might wear a clove of garlic around his neck to ward off evil spirits."
>
> [Tuchman,(1972)pp.660]

With studies such as these the interactions between rofessional journalist norms and value systems and

organisational requirements and goals begin to reveal something of their complex interdependencies each sustaining and being sustained by the other. If Sigelman and Soloski have indicated the necessity to attend to the imbrication of organizational goals within professional claims to independence via the internalization of conflict avoiding norms, a number of historical studies have also suggested that journalism's professional claims to 'objective' and 'impartial' reporting reflects more upon the changing system of party and vested interest patronage and market imperatives than a universal attribute of journalism often advanced as a professional self-perception [Smith(1978); Elliott(1978); Schiller(1981)]. If the above studies have attended to such concerns in broad historical or professional sweep, an array of studies have considerably attended to such complexity with a number of fine grained participant observation studies.

Commonly referred to as 'production studies' this array of news studies conceals at least three possible areas for confusion. The first confusion, perhaps voiced most frequently by journalists themselves concerns the status of the term 'production'. Contrary to possible misunderstandings which may be inferred from the use of such terms exemplified in a number of key studies 'The Manufacture of News'[Cohen and Young (1981)], 'Deciding What's News'[Gans (1979)], 'Creating Reality'[Altheide (1976)], 'Making News'[Tuchmann (1978)], 'Making the News' [Elliott and Golding(1979)] and 'Putting "Reality" Together' [Schlesinger (1978)] or even 'News from owhere' [Epstein (1973)] and 'Visualizing Deviance' [Ericson et l (1987)] such studies do not necessarily imply that news is a manufactured fiction, a 'put up job' but simply (and complexly) that news has to be crafted - selected, written, packaged and delivered within a narrative form - and as such is inextricably social creation and likely to bear the traces, or imprint of uch routine and organisational processing.

The second possible confusion may be found to inhere ithin the exact status of 'organization', is this to be nderstood in essentially internal bureaucratic or dministrative terms, referencing established intra-organisation outines and practices, or does it refer to a wider level of rganisation, now understood as a verb rather than a noun, which

thus accomodates all inter-organisational relations and news practices including the important news relationship to sources ?

The third possible confusion reflects the differing ontological status afforded to the 'independent' world of news events. While the journalists' dismay elicited by such terms as 'construction', 'creation' or 'manufacture' may be misplaced to the extent that such terms do not carry any implied purposive distortion, they nonetheless do carry differing philosophical weight in regard to the understanding of the social 'construction' of reality. Molotch and Lester have thus maintained that the media can best be approached as 'not reflecting a world out there, but the practices of those having the power to determine the experience of others..Seen in this way one approach towards the mass media is not to look for reality but for purposes which underlie the strategies of creating one reality rather than another'(1981,p.133). While the various authors may adopt differing stances towards the epistemological status of news in relation to the 'external' production news environment, some maintaining a dualist position others leaning towards a radical social constructionist position [Hackett(1985)], they would all nonetheless agree that the 'production' of news is essentially an ordered, organised and organisational accomplishment and therefore open to empirical inspection.

For Paul Rock(1981) news may be regarded as 'eternal recurrence', since when the perennial patterns of news coverage are considered it can be maintained as Galtung and Ruge(1965) have already observed that news may be better understood as 'olds', to the extent that news coverage is a pattern of overage which relentlessly repeats itself. Rock accounts for this repetitive character of news in the following terms:

> "News is a peculiar form of knowledge: its character derives very much from the sources and contexts of production. With few exceptions, those sources and contexts are bureaucratic, and news is the result of an organised response to routine bureaucratic problems."
>
> [Rock(1981)p.64]

Focusing on news production in a newspaper office Rock bserves that what at first might appear to be unregulated, is n fact controlled. The mapping out of pages into certain ategories, when combined with the periodization of news into

daily quotas are seen as fundamental bureaucratic responses to the task of producing a daily newspaper. Indeed it is this periodicity of news which, following the rhythms of major public institutions and the daily cycle of reading patterns often posits an 'event orientation' found at the core of news stories, which thus accounts for the failure to provide wider historical, structural or contextual accounts within which such 'events' can be better understood.

Schlesinger in his study of the BBC also chronicles the bureaucratic nature of news production and the 'stop-watch' culture that pervades the news operation.

> "The news we receive on any given day is not as unpredictable as much journalistic mythology would have us believe. Rather the doings of the world are tamed to meet the needs of production systems in many respects bureaucratically organised."
>
> [Schlesinger(1978)p.47.]

Interestingly, as already noted by Galtung and Ruge(1981)it is this daily temporality of news production which is seen to characterise the very form and inherent explanatory limitations of news.

> "Production is so organised that its basic dynamics emphasise the perishability of stories...It is always today's developments which occupy the foreground. The corollary of this point is that there is an inherent tendency for the news to be framed in a discontinuous and ahistorical way, and this implies a truncation of context, and therefore a reduction of meaningfulness.."
>
> [Op.Cit.p.105]

Here we find that the routines and organisation of news roduction are seen as crucially impacting upon the news form itself, limiting its discursive capacity in terms of its nherent inadequacy in conveying 'meaningfulness'. Golding and lliott(1979) have similarly argued for instance that news lacks wo crucial dimensions, power and process, and is thus tructurally incapable of providing other than an uncritical and onsensual view. In accounting for such limitations of form the xplanation once again is situated within the organizational and roduction arrangements of the news producers.

> "The invisibility of power, both within and between nations, is caused by many factors; the geography of news gathering, the simplification of the dramatis personae of news and the limited

> arenas which news can survey, which lead to an emphasis upon formal political events. Social process similarly disappears as the exigencies of production mould a view of reality which is fragmented and ahistorical."
>
> [Golding & Murdock (1979)p.218]

If the production processes are seen to impact decisively upon the form of news (seemingly displacing entirely wider social, cultural or even ideological journalistic practices) so too have they been identified as crucially influencing the types of news item comprising a television or radio news programme or newspaper. Here the 'bureaucratic' organisation of news production steps outside of the newsroom and seeks to routinise its relationship with its principal news sources.

Schlesinger and others have already noted how television news production is essentially reactive, depending in the main upon news accounts already reported by other news media and news agencies, as well as 'diary' stories invariably concerning the pre-planned news happenings found within the world of politics and public affairs. It is unusual, in other words, for journalists to have instigated and pursued an investigative story, rather they are involved in an institutionalised dependence upon other media and key source institutions.

Steve Chibnall(1977,1981) in a seminal study has done much to illuminate the inter-dependencies existing between the mass media and other institutional sites. Observing how certain 'sources' - the term 'source' itself becomes problematised given its active participation in news definition - effectively limit, and on occasion define the news story even before the journalist is able to construct his/her story from the available material. eferring to crime reporters specifically, he maintains that these could on occasion be more accurately known as 'police eporters' since it is the police, not the copy-taster, editor r reporter which is the first and possibly most important gate eeper. Noting how crime reporters enter into a series of xchanges with their police sources he discerns how over the ourse of such contacts, the reporter is increasingly drawn into he world of the police, rather than vice versa, a process also ore recently observed in terms of the journalistic reporting of he Falklands War, and the physical and psychological dependence f journalists upon their assigned military units [Harris 1983)].

> "It is in fact a complex process of socialization by which the journalist's frame of reference, methods of working and personal system of perceptions and understandings are brought into line with the expectations of his sources."
>
> [Chibnall(1981)p.88]

One recent review of news studies, perhaps overstating the case, has concluded in regard to news sources that 'it matters not whether the study is at the national, state, or local level the story of journalism, on a day-to-day basis, is the story of the interaction of reporters and officials..there is little doubt that the centre of news generation is the link between reporter and official.'[Schudson(1989)p.271]. Indeed it is this institutional embeddedness which has led Stuart Hall(1975) to articulate the following powerful account of the role of the mass media:

> "Together with the national press, these media, organised as public communications systems, crucially intersect, on the one side, with politics, government, power and the State, and on the other side, with what we might call the 'public discourse' amongst the audience at large about questions of national and international significance...It is the point at which broadcasters and their institutions mediate - hold the pass, command the communicative channels - between the elites of power (social, economic, political, cultural) and the mass audience."
>
> [Hall,(1975a)p.124]

This position, seemingly placing the emphasis upon the media institutions themselves as the principal or 'primary definers' of events in a later study assumes a secondary, though no less crucial role in the signification of events. Both the practical pressures of constantly working against the clock and the professional demands of impartiality and objectivity are seen 'to combine to produce a systematically structured over-accessing to the media of those in powerful and privileged institutional positions.' The result of this incorporation of Becker's 'hierarchy of credibility' by the media leads Hall and is colleagues to conclude that a structured preference exists hich privileges the views of the powerful, and that it is precisely these social elites which become 'the primary efiners' of events. [Hall et al,(1978) p.58].

This 'systematic overaccessing' has further been stablished by later studies [GUMG(1980); Ericson et al(1987)] hile the reverse to such a situation has indicated that those ithout formal organizational structure are less likely to enjoy routinized media contact and access, though they may well

receive news coverage but not in terms which they have been able to influence [Gitlin(1982)]. Ericson, Baranek and Chan have concluded for instance, that 'the reliance on selected people as knowledge resources is itself limited mainly to key spokespersons for particular bureaucratic organisations. While individuals without an organizational affiliation are cited - especially in designated places such as letter-to-the-editor columns, or for specific purposes such as to inspire "fear and loathing" over a tragic event in a news story - they are a small minority statistically' [Ericson et al,(1989) p.1].

While this hierarchy of credibility is generally perceived to be in place throughout the news media, it can be countered that such a generalised assumption may at least need to be qualified, though not discounted, in specific genres of news which may in fact also considerably supplement research orthodoxies concerning the 'authoritative and authenticating' underpinning to 'impartial and objective' news reporting. That is, it is permissible to hypothesise that news may well establish authority and audience interest by a variety of means, some of which may even on occasion relegate the 'expert', 'the politician' or 'bureaucratic spokesperson' to a secondary position.

If the study of news-source interaction has considerably enhanced the organizational understanding of the news process a comprehensive study of source organizations and their various organizational needs and strategies in securing and controlling news flows has begun to illuminate some of the complexities and negotiated positions adopted by source institutions keen to rotect their organizations from intrusion by journalists while lso seeking to secure favourable publicity. The knowledge nvironment, in other words, is characterised as much by what is nstitutionally and 'privately' enclosed and concealed, as that hich is publicly disclosed [Ericson et al (1989)]. It is only hen both media organizations and the source institutions are pproached in their mutual interdependencies, and knowledgeably bserved from both sides that the dynamics of their interaction ay be comprehensively charted. This work has only just begun.

In summary, it can be noted that organizational and rofessional journalist news studies have considerably advanced he understanding of the news process. Attending to

organizational routines and bureaucratic arrangements studies have noted how bureaucratic responses have sought to tame the news environment and bring it within the orderly and structured procedures of a continuous news manufacturing process. While studies have noted the intra-organizational arrangements seeking to 'routinise the unexpected', so too have they noted the inter-organizational dependencies existing between different media institutions, as well as other key institutions. Here one of the key concerns with other 'source' organizations has involved a recognition of the privileging of social elites, whom it has been maintained can enjoy routine access and are afforded considerable opportunity to define the important issues of the day. Moreover, while the news may be regarded as largely composed of news items relating to, and involving the world of political and social authority, so too has it been suggested that the news form - truncated, decontextualised and largely 'event' orientated - can be accounted for in terms of the temporal production cycles of the news process. Professional value systems and practices have also been noted as providing a means of organizational conflict avoidance necessary to the collective pursuit of a standardized news product, which in so far as it bears the trace of an author it is the news organization itself which leaves its depersonalised stamp.

Such studies though often incorporating some attention to ·ournalist social background, political allegiance and rofessional socialization nonetheless have tended to subsume uch interactional considerations within the constraints and irectives that characterize the organisational arrangements and oals as a whole. That is, while professional practices and roclamations of journalistic independence exhibited by working ·ournalists are attended to, these are frequently interpreted nder the guiding framework of organizational need and equirement. This is not necessarily to deny that such forms may ell possess other functions and meanings for the journalists hemselves, but it is to suggest that there is a homologous 'fit' between such 'action' and 'organizational' perspectives. o this extent, such accounts may well be disposed to either nderestimate or misinterpret the degree of conflict and issonance both within the newsroom, and also existing between arious levels of the organizational hierarchy.

Organizational studies though illuminating a critical area of the news production process may on occasion, given a bureaucratic and delimited organizational understanding of organizations considerably insulate organizational 'imperatives' or 'needs' from wider political, social or even cultural understandings of the news genre. Organizations can usefully be approached from a wide variety of approaches or 'metaphors' whether as machines, organisms, information processes, cultures and sub-cultures, sites of competing interests, conflicts and power, psychic environments or even instruments of domination [Morgan(1986)].

The main point here is that while collectively the array of production studies, in combination with political economic approaches have sought to distance their explanatory frameworks from either conspiratorial or instrumentalist accounts, they have done so largely to the degree to which they have insulated the news producing personnel from surrounding social, cultural and political beliefs and values. That is, 'belief', 'value', 'ideology' are only conceded analytic significance to the extent that these are artefacts of economic or organizational processes. While not wishing to resurrect individualised and subjective accounts of news output (though even these occasionally have their place within the scheme of things - consider the highly 'personalised' television news features or 'authored' newspaper columns) others have sought to emphasise the unavoidable dependence of journalists upon wider cultural assumptions, values and expectations which in turn inevitably inform the symbolic constructions of the news professionals.

One final observation of the studies reviewed above is that, given the fine grained attention to the production environments of news organisations, a strong flattening tendency exists which appears to frequently assume that news is a standardised, universal and homogeneous product. This assumption is thought here to have been overplayed, with the result that oth subtle and sometimes glaring differences exhibited in terms f both news content and form evident both within and across ifferent news media have been ignored. While all news may well e organizationally and bureaucratically processed this begs the uestion why such variety of news forms can be found both ontemporaneously and historically. If differences of

organizational and bureaucratic arrangements are invoked as a reply, this merely begs the further question why such different arrangements should exist - assuming such can indeed be found. Here the deficiencies of an organizational approach are likely to be thrown into sharp relief.

News as Culture and Text

In a recent review of news studies Schudson has observed that within organizational studies it is often possible to find subsumed a cultural view. Analytically distinct such a view can be distinguished from the organizational view : 'Where the organizational view finds interactional determinants of news in relations between people, the cultural view finds symbolic determinants of news in the relations between ideas and symbols' [Schudson(1989)p.275].

While such a formulation offers a useful means of delineating a particular group of news studies, it can be maintained that numerous studies have for some considerable time emphasised the cultural importation of symbols and ideas into the news product. Studies which have paid reference to those 'most opaque structures of meaning'[Hall(1981)p.234], or 'news values' [Galtung and Ruge(1981);Chibnall(1977); Hetherington (1989)] have frequently imported what may be taken as wider and informing cultural values in their respective news value inventories. Hall's oft-cited statement is worthy of further consideration in this respect.

> "'News values' are one of the most opaque structures of meaning in modern society. All 'true' journalists are supposed to possess it: few can or are willing to identify and define it. Journalist's speak of 'the news' as if events select themselves. Further, they speak as if which is the 'most significant' news story, and which 'news angles' are most salient are divinely inspired. Yet of the millions of events which occur every day in the world, only a tiny proportion ever become visible as 'potential news stories'; and of this proportion, only a small fraction are actually produced as the day's news in the news media. We appear to be dealing, then, with a 'deep structure' whose function as a selective device is un-transparent even to those who professionally most know how to operate it."
>
> [Hall(1981)p.234]

The study of news as essentially a cultural artefact, albeit as a site contested and expressive of wider social divisions and difference, have in recent years following the work of Hall and his colleagues [Hall et al(1980)], produced a number of cultural news 'readings' [Hartley(1982); Davis and Walton(1983a); Fiske (1987)pp.281-308]. Variously drawing upon varieties of semiotic, textual, and linguistic and discourse theories these, in the absence of other levels of theoretical approach, have tended to situate such forms as relatively direct expressions of a wider and sustaining, albeit contested, culture. That is, while they may well appear to symbolically mediate the fractures and fissures found within a surrounding culture, often to the advantage of a dominant or 'preferred' ideological position, such news studies have little, if anything to say concerning the institutional or organizational mediation of such a cultural contest and wider cultural terrain [Connell and Mills(1985)].

A further body of work, deserving more detailed discussion than possible here, has also sought to approach news output, amongst other broadcasting forms, in terms of a wider historical and cultural framework which begins to address broadcasting forms as important symbolic rituals expressive of and sustaining a shared sense of national community, identity and culture while also assisting the deepening or unifying form of democratic processes.[Elliott(1980); Chaney(1986a)(1986b); Scannell(1986a)(1986b),(1989); Cardiff(1986); Cardiff and Scannell(1987)]. In a seminal article Elliott drew the distinction between ritual and ideology believing 'ritual cannot simply be reduced to the rational. It draws on what is customary, familiar and traditional in the culture. It tries to add spiritual and emotional communion to any sense of political unity, though from any single point of view it may not work' [Elliott(1980)p.146]. Moreover for Chaney, it is just in this ritual sense that 'the possibility of mediating private response to public forms that the symbolic from of ritual will be particularly crucial'[Chaney(1986b)p.120]. If Elliott and Chaney are sensitised to the integrating aspects of ritual, affirming the experience of a collectivity which otherwise may have an ambiguous cultural location, Scannell for his part is more celebratory in tone. Challenging ideological approaches to the

media he maintains:

> "For all its seeming sophistication the Theory of Ideology says something very simple indeed; something not very different from what Leavis was saying in the 1930s: the media are harmful and the function of literary criticism or theoretical critique is to expose them in that light. Such an approach is not reconcilable with any view of broadcasting as a public sphere that works to enhance the reasonable democratic character of life in public and private contexts."
>
> [Scannell(1989)p.158]

However, it can be maintained that such 'ritual' studies though from an opposed theoretical tradition to the 'ideological' readings noted above, nonetheless also invoke a wider social-cultural interpretation of 'culture' dependent on a close interpretation of broadcasting forms. In this regard some of the other levels of news analysis already considered have tended to become displaced; broadcasting becomes more or less directly expressive and supportive of a wider culture, while the parameters of economic constraint, production routines and professional practices become lost from view under a unifying, as opposed to ideologically partisan, cultural expression and display. Interestingly however, both approaches have increasingly become sensitised to the relational aspects found to inhere within the communication of news, which reference a further index of cultural forms. The debate between Thompson and Montgomery [Thompson(1984),(1986); Montgomery (1986)] throwing into sharp relief the evident difficulties of applying an ideological interpretation to both referential and relational components inevitably entwined within any discursively organised communication, though not entirely without precedence in terms of studies attending to news as a social relation [Brunsdon and Morley(1978);Dahlgren(1981)], has latterly received increased attention [Hartley & Mongomery (1985); Scannell(1986a); Cardiff(1986)].

Much depends of course on the contested understanding of 'culture'. It was noted how both the early studies of Lippmann and White both paid reference to the 'subjective' decision making processes of news personnel, and that these in part at least were thought to be reflective of a wider culture and/or class situation. The Glasgow University Media Group (1976,1980) in more recent times have proclaimed:

> "..television news is a cultural artefact; it is a sequence of socially manufactured messages, which carry many of the

> culturally dominant assumptions of our society. From the accents of the newscasters to the vocabulary of camera angles; from who gets on and what questions they are asked, via selection of stories to presentation of bulletins, the news is a highly mediated product."
>
> [GUMG (1976)p.9]

For the Glasgow Media Group, while the news is a highly mediated product, it is a product which does not only bear the traces of its production but wider cultural allegiances and assumptions. Indeed, in part this is at the core of the debate which this series of studies unleashed [Connell(1980); Elliott(1981); Harrison(1985)]. To what extent, in other words, is it permissible or even possible to infer from a selected range of news output, either conscious intent or ideological complicity of the news personnel ? While the concept of inferential structure, as noted above, was originally intended to highlight unwitting 'bias' to the degree that news personnel had become immersed within a general media culture, when the Glasgow group employ the concept of 'inferential frame' it becomes the means by which skew is achieved [Elliott (1981)p.171]. That is 'the basic inferential frames regularly used by the newsproducers conditioned the reporting of strikes and did so in ways which were quite clearly skewed against the interests of the working class'. In the absence of close attention to the practices and professional values of the broadcasters, this study is disposed to invoke a wider understanding of culture, which sustaining and supporting partisan 'inferential frames' is imported into the coverage of news events. Unfortunately, while organizational 'culture' understood as professional socialization and practices has been eclipsed, it has been replaced by a wider culture now politically characterised and contested and instrumentally promoted by broadcasters.

Clearly there are at least two different understandings of culture at work here: professional organizational culture and wider societal culture. The point perhaps, is not so much to take up a position in regard to one or the other but to begin to inquire into the interrelationship and dependencies that may be found to inhere between them both. However, if these two senses of 'culture' have very much come to the fore in a number of news studies, both may be seen as giving rise to a socially specific and historically situated understanding of culture:

organizational culture resulting in necessarily partial, skewed or even ideologically inflected news output; and wider social culture as either the site of imported ideological contest, 'difference' and hegemonic negotiation, or as source of a 'unifying' culture understood as form of symbolic ritual but all informing the news product in historically and socially specific ways, ways moreover that are deemed recoverable by cultural analysis.

A third level of culture has been identified by Schudson however which is taken to be considerably more encompassing and removed from the socially contested or ideological forms, and even the symbolic ritual senses noted above, and which pertains to the 'cultural air that we breath' [Hoggart in GUMG(1976) p.x]. However while it is not clear that Hoggart is seeking to introduce an 'ideology free' conception of culture, Schudson for his part indicates a number of 'culturological' areas that may be considered as contenders as trans-historical or trans-social forms influencing both the content and form of news output.

Turning to a concrete example he pursues Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge's explanation for why news stories should assume such a highly 'personalised' form. The proferred explanation included a cultural idealism - the western view that individuals are masters of their own destiny; the nature of story telling itself and the need to establish 'identification; and lastly the frequency factor. This last explanation, already alluded to above, notes that people act during a time span that fits the frequency of the news media (daily) more so than the actions of 'structures' which, given their evolution and development through extensive periods of time are unlikely to assume prominent 'daily' news attention. This conception of the 'culturological', though inelegant is perhaps useful to the extent that it emphasises that the symbolic landscape of media forms may in fact reflect and represent a considerably expanded historical and trans-social conception of enduring cultural forms which need not necessarily be deemed directly expressive of either hegemonic contest and the play of social interests or the ritualised deepening of collective/national identity and solidarity. As Schudson suggests in relation to long-standing news values and judgements 'It seems to me too simple, though common now, to label this as 'ideology' or the 'common sense' of

a hegemonic system. It makes of human beliefs and attitudes a more unified, intentional and functional system than they are'[Schudson(1989)p.277].

Considerable sympathy can be expressed with this viewpoint, though it can also be suggested that the 'recovery' of historical and/or social forces gaining expression within and through cultural forms remains, as yet, in its infancy. The risk that in acknowledging trans-social or even trans-cultural forms, the social and political specificity of historically situated forms are rendered invisible, or merely theorised as of 'universal' standing, threatens to collapse the analysis of culture, involving in its mediated aspect the moments of production, transmission and reception, into a relatively obscure and timeless phenomenon, immune from incisive examination. If a position is adopted for instance, which maintains that cultural analysis includes 'the study of symbolic forms - that is, meaningful actions, objects and expressions of various kinds - in relation to the historically specific and socially structured contexts and processes within which, and by means of which, these symbolic forms are produced, transmitted and received' [Thompson (1988)p.361], it is perfectly possible to include a level of cultural analysis which is not confined exclusively to the recovery of the immediate play of social forces and interests, or ritualised enactment of the wider polity and yet which acknowledges cultural continuities within historical time. Much depends, of course, upon the focus of analysis and conceptions of the 'historical' and 'social'. What can be ventured here is that even Schudson's notion of the 'culturological' though considerably expanding the cross-cultural and historical parameters of 'culture' would not, it can be suggested, seek to collapse the 'culturological' into the 'universal'. History and the social therefore continue to circumscribe the cultural, albeit within an expanded analytic frame which usefully illuminates the enduring and trans-social continuities as much as the historically and socially proximate character of 'culture'.

With reference to these wider parameters of culture, however conceived, the limitation of attending to simply the oment of news production - whether approached via the guiding framework of political economy, the world of the professional

communicator, or organizational approaches - begins to reveal something of the limitations of such approaches. In other words, to be developed below, while the traditional communication scenario of production-transmission-reception is apt to posit the communication flow in analytically and temporally distinct stages, stages moreover that flow in one direction, it can be maintained in contradistinction that the moment of reception is in some senses coincident with the moment of production to the degree that established genre requirements are already inscribed into the news product as selected, appropriated and inflected, and which moreover express a wider and established cultural expectancy. News genres, it has to be remembered, are normally established, tried and tested and constantly refined over a considerable period of years, if not decades, establishing a traditional or familiar rapport and appeal both immediately recognised and understood by its audience.

Little reference has been made to the audience in the studies noted above, and in part at least this may reflect the the audience's status as a 'missing link' to use Philip Schlesinger's phrase, given the common finding that audiences appear not to be at the forefront of journalists' professional concerns and preoccupations. This finding however, may well have been overstated due to journalist's understatement of perceptions of audience profiles, news expectations and interests. The perception of audience, in other words, though not constantly brought to the fore in terms of working journalist's accounts of professional practices, may nonetheless e perennially structured into news policies and programme identities internalized into the requirements of the news genre itself.

It is here that a further, and possibly crucial determinant f specific types of news programming - impacting upon news ontents and forms - may be found to reside. A news programme, r newspaper form though inevitably finding organizational xpression need not, on this approach, be seen as simply riginating within a bureaucratic need to 'tame the news nvironment'. Moreover, given the spatial-temporal viewing ontext of audiences attending specific news genres, wider ultural expectations may well be imported into commercially ried and tested news programme identities. In this sense the

news genre may well respond, in symbolic form, to a wider social-cultural terrain and need not be approached as simply either a conspiratorial or politically instrumentalist expression via professional newsworkers nor originate from commercial and organizational imperatives. Moreover, though news can be regarded as inescapably a 'cultural' form, this need not be reduced to simply manipulative, hegemonic, pluralist or ritual models of social and political cultural mediation. It is possible that all these models may, on occasion find support in and across different news forms, as is the possibility that analysts sensitised to the trans-social and trans-cultural reach of the 'culturological' will find contents and forms of perennial news inclusion.

It is also possible to conjecture however, that the cultural can be found to reside within established characteristics of different news forms, both appealing to, and possibly in part responding to audience interests and expectations. These tried and tested conventions and appeals are arguably what differentiate one news form from another, and which to date has tended to be both under-researched and under-theorised. News, approached as a form of genre, may well further illuminate an important aspect of the cultural which offers a complementary level of analysis to the various approaches informing the news studies reviewed above.

Critical Departures I

The review of some of the major news studies above has indicated a number of theoretical lines of approach as well as some of the strengths and weaknesses found across this growing body of academic literature. If one principle finding has suggested that the news is unlikely to be adequately accounted for in terms of any one of the approaches discussed above, it has also been suggested that the study of news necessarily must involve at least some attention to the respective analytical moments of production, transmission/content and reception. Such 'moments' contrary to any unilinear understanding of such distinctions can be considered in terms of their mutual integration, and here discussion of the news genre can usefully be attended to as an established cultural form, embodying both

in terms of its traditional and substantive news concerns and relational aspects a particular cultural identity and appeal.

Implicitly, and contrary to many of the studies noted above, 'news' is not thought to be an established and invariant product but rather exhibits a diversity of forms, contents and relational aspects found both within any particular news media and genre and across the news media generally. This, it seems to me, is as important as the evident similarities, in so far as these can be found, existing within and across the news media.

This leads on to the following theoretical departure point which, sometimes explicit sometimes implicit in the majority of the studies reviewed above, is the focused attention upon news, as opposed to other forms of symbolic and cultural communication. Why should this be so ? Notwithstanding the evident theoretical differences above, news has assumed a pre-eminent source of study because it assumes a central position in the public dissemination of political and social communication. News in other words is frequently positioned as one of the key sources of information and opinion necessary for the formation of political opinion and consent, and as such has historically been posited at the heart of liberal-democratic theory.

Interestingly, while some of the critical communication scholars referenced above may well maintain that news manifestly fails such an exalted political role, it nonetheless is central to the legitimating processes necessary for the maintenance of the established social order. Herein lies its significance as a source of continual academic and other study. While liberal scholars are apt to see news as providing a vital role in the furtherance of democratic processes, providing a citizenship with a continuous forum and update of the requisite information, knowledge and understanding necessary for participating and functioning within a representative polity, critical scholars, with few exceptions, are apt to regard news as one of the principal means of legitimating an inegalitarian social order, which if anything, thwarts the extension of participatory democracy. Both however are apt to regard news as a pivotal support within and sustaining the public sphere.

Almost without exception, it can be argued that the studies reviewed above and their informing theoretical concerns are animated by a covering concern to chart the forms and nature of

this news involvement within the public sphere. It can be briefly noted for instance, that the Langs were concerned that MacArtur's misrepresented 'triumphal' return could be injurious to the democratic process, while the unwitting bias deployed via 'inferential structures' was seen by another group of authors to unconsciously misrepresent both the actions and justifying rationale for a mass demonstration - itself one of the principal and historically won means of democratic expression and public protest [Halloran (1988)].

Representatives of the political economy approach have sought to demonstrate the coincidence or consonance of news content and a postulated 'dominant ideology' resulting from wider structural constraints and economic processes and posited news as a key ideological site in securing public consent and compliance, while studies of journalists and journalism have frequently been preoccupied with their political character, and therefore possibly, distorting influence that may be evident within news communication. Similarly, while authors of most production studies are keen to distance themselves from any idea of instrumental and conscious news bias, they are also intent on explicating organizational features which result in 'ideological forms', forms moreover which may be regarded as either furthering a particular 'legitimating' ideology, or undermining, or at least diminishing the nature of important public communications.

Finally, it has been observed how a number of cultural studies have also, either in restricted hegemonic/ideological terms, or else in more expansive, 'deepening' cultural ritual terms, sought to chart the symbolic resources disseminated by news within the public sphere and their political impacts.

If historically the development of the press has internalized its self-perception as performing a critical, independent and watchdog role, summed up in the phrase 'the fourth estate', more recently its broadcasting progeny have also sought to revitalise and marshal such claims in the ensuing debate concerned with the changing structure of commercial and Public Service broadcasting. The close affinity seen to exist between Public Service broadcasting and the safeguarding of fundamental democratic processes, at least as expressed by significant voices from within the media itself, once again

indicates an institutionalised awareness of, and self-justification in relation to notions of the public sphere.

Clearly, notwithstanding the diverse theoretical and explanatory frameworks deployed across the disparate group of studies reviewed above, the study of news may be seen as occupying a pivotal site in the heartland of mass communication concerns, a site moreover which is seen to be crucial in the maintenance of the public sphere. The concept of the public sphere will receive further elaboration and discussion below, here it is important to note its implicit and sometimes explicit presence informing the array of studies addressed above, while also noting the relative absence of discussion and analysis which seeks to examine the character of the news public sphere.

In part this may be taken as accountable to the generalised discussion of news as essentially a homogenous product; if news is generally understood to assume a certain form and content, why attend any further to the possible differences and variety of contents and forms, since these are all brought under the same hammer of economic constraint, organizational product, professional ideology or wider cultural expression. That is, such theoretical positions appear to leave little room for the internal structuration and differences of news, and therefore have either paid scant attention to the overall news output, or else focused upon a limited 'snapshot' perhaps covering a particular news subject. In such generalised discussions news has infrequently been explicitly related to the idea of the public sphere, though this arguably informs its underpinning research rationale.

Alternatively when the public sphere is debated and discussed it is apt to assume the status of an abstract concept far removed from the actuality of specific news genres, or even particular types of news coverage. Moreover consideration of the multiple-aspects deemed inherent to the concept, elaborated in following chapters, have also failed to be addressed in an integrated and empirical fashion. Hence, though news as 'information' is more apt to be charted in terms of the public communication of important news issues and events this central plank to liberal and critical understandings of the public sphere has rarely been complemented with examination of such constitutive attributes as 'forum','access' and characteristics

of the mediating institutions themselves enacting the public sphere.

One further and crucial failing evident across many of the studies already discussed is that they have become 'news-centric'. Though for the reasons already referred to, news has been selected as a pre-eminent form of communication deemed of special interest and significance typically the discussion of news takes place in something of an intertextual and programme vacuum. This is a further limitation upon the development of a concern and discussion of the nature of the public sphere in that news findings cannot be generalised to different genres and programme forms.

This finding is perhaps all the more surprising to the extent that though frequently underpinned by a shared concern with the nature and forms of public news communication, to the extent that such are deemed to be intrinsically supportive of established social and political arrangements, other areas of 'actuality' coverage - current affairs and documentary - have failed either in isolation, and certainly with very few exceptions in combination, to be addressed along the lines indicated above. And yet it is only when news, current affairs and documentary, to name only the most obvious, and by no means only vehicles for the dissemination and discussion of important public events, issues and concerns are addressed in complementary terms to the discussion of news presentations, that an improved understanding of both the limitations and possibilities of the news genre and surrounding actuality genres can be gauged and situated within a wider discussion of the televisual public sphere.

If the critical discussion above has begun to advance some general theoretical 'departure points' following on from an overview of news studies, the remaining part of this chapter will briefly review the existing mass communications literature concerned with media portryals of the inner city and its related issues and concerns. Here a second discussion examines the substantive findings of the existing, albeit relatively rare, mass communications literature specifically concerned with inner city issues and outlines a further set of departure points informing both theoretical and substantive aspects to this study.

The Inner City and Mass Communications Research

The media coverage of the inner city has not been the focus of any sustained or detailed research. This is surprising to the extent that the idea of the inner city, as elaborated above, is clearly of long standing concern, and in recent times has assumed a significant prominence within competing political perspectives. As well as indicating a grouping of fundamental social concerns and conditions, the inner city is a site often surrounded by social and political contest and struggle. For these reasons alone, it is permissible to suggest that attending to media coverage of the inner city provides an area of concerns which can usefully be examined in the public arena of the televisual public sphere. In other words, it is instructive to inquire into the resources, accounts and political perspectives which have been advanced within the public sphere and to consider to what extent these represent or reflect the range of issues and interpretations identified and struggled over within the wider polity ? In other words, what is the contribution of the disseminated images and portrayals placed within the public domain by the mass media to the wider social and political contest, understandings and struggle which is conducted around the site of the inner city ?

Though no research has exclusively focused upon the media portrayal of the inner city, some of the central issues focused in relation to the inner city have received some research attention, while the response to riot coverage in comparative terms at least reflects something of the media's own tendency to concentrate upon the spectacular, dramatic and disorderly events as opposed to the mundane, ordinary and lived conditions and contexts which inform the immediate happenings of a riot. These studies and others will be briefly reviewed to the extent that they provide a growing body of findings of immediate interest to the inner city discussion above - the underlying theoretical and methodological questions raised by these various mass communication studies will be considered in the following three chapters.

The fascination of crime news has long been noted as a staple ingredient of the news form [Berridge(1978); Chibnall(1980); Dahlgren(1988b)] and exhibits a number of

affinities to identified professional news imperatives of immediacy, dramatization, personalization, simplification, titillation, conventionalism, structured access and novelty [Chibnall(1977)p.23]. Moreover its constant public display as a form of 'deviance' [Ericson et al(1987)] simultaneously threatening and affirming societal values and norms invests crime news as a potent perennial in the ritualised affirmation and constant renewal of social order [Elliott(1980)]. If the inner city tends to be understood in some interpretations as essentially a 'problem of law and order' both in terms of mundane crime and inner city riots it may be anticipated that such forms may attract considerable news attention when covered within news forms which perennially involve substantial crime news attention. If such is found to be the case, this raises the set of questions which seeks to address why inner city crime news should attract so much interest.

If crime news on this finding might reasonably appear to be prominent within news accounts of the problems and issues of the inner city, concerns focusing upon aspects of urban deprivation and social welfare may be anticipated from previous studies to be sparsely present [Golding and Middleton(1982)]. This last study is of special relevance in that, not content to confine attention to the mediated images and issues of welfare, poverty and inequality, it has discerned a wider cultural 'residue' of popular resentment to the idea of welfare, a resentment moreover which has, on occasion, been focused and orchestrated within the mass media:

> "If blaming the victim is a deeply entrenched philosophy, a system of positive redistribution, or even income maintenance, will always be viewed with suspicion, especially by those who earn their poverty or face its worst consequences despite their best efforts to escape its clutches in the crumbling squalor of our inner cities."
>
> [Golding and Middleton(1982)p.200]

Not theoretically dependent upon the idea of an imposed moral panic orchestrated by primary definers, that is political and social elites, or the secondary definers of the mass media this study places far more emphasis upon the 'orchestration' of existing public fears, anxieties and deeply embedded cultural resonances. 'The media do not create or impose attitudes. They orchestrate or selectively reinforce among the contradictory attitudes that people hold towards institutions and processes'

(p.238). Moreover, after an extensive content analysis of different forms of mass media news, as well as identifying a relative paucity of social welfare related news, it is also observed that 'insofar as the mass media have expounded the public debate it would seem that claims to comprehensive pluralism in our mass communications media are demonstrably exaggerated'(p.244). If general welfare news has been seen to be slight and less than comprehensive in its exposure of the public debate news of unemployment has also been found to provide few explanations though available and wider societal interpretative frameworks have been found to organise news treatments [Barkin and Gurevitch(1987)].

Studies focusing upon the media portrayal of race and racial conflict represent one of the few areas which, in relative terms at least, has sustained a growing body of research effort. The studies by Hartmann and Husband(1974), Hartmann, Husband and Clarke(1974) and Critcher, et al(1977) have variously attended to national and provincial press treatments of race and generally concluded that 'the way race related material is handled by the mass media serves both to perpetuate negative perceptions of blacks and to define the situation as one of inter-group conflict' [Hartmann and Husband(1974)]. Moreover the most recent review of press reporting of black issues and problems has documented, both at the levels of overt and inferential racism, that 'black people re overwhelmingly portrayed as problems' and 'racism pervades the British press' [Gordan and Rosenberg(1989)].

If in the 1960s and early 1970s black communities became identified in media portrayals as 'immigrants', who became seen s a 'problem of numbers' sustained in part at least by a onstant flow of negative news accounts, the attractions of onflict, deviance and negativity to culturally resonate news alues was further extended in the late 1970's and 1980's by the iscovery of the new crime of 'mugging'. Perceived as an instance of a moral panic after Cohen(1973) the news resentation of the rise of 'mugging' threatened to produce a urther twist in the labelling process drawing upon deeply edimented cultural fears rotating around race, youth and crime, hile paving the way for the imposition of an increasingly uthoritarian state and law-and-order response to the problems

posed by failing political consensus and economic decline [Hall(1975b); Hall et al(1978)].

More recently, the cultural embeddedness of traditional news values [Husband(1975b);Downing(1975)] have been seen to play a critical role in the orchestration of yet another moral panic associated round race, replete with the public identification and vilification of a new class of 'folk devils', that is, anti-racists [Murray(1986a); Gordan and Rosenberg (1989)]. The cultural terrain which supports and sustains racist mythologies, while sometimes supplemented with the sort of conjunctural analysis attempted by Hall and his colleagues [(CCCS(1982); Hall et al (1978)] has also informed the studies referred to above. That is, while news values may well provide a professional and practical means of organising the repetitive tasks of news production such accounts cannot be separated from their wider cultural and social circumscription [Van Dijk (1988a)]. As Husband and Chouhan have recently argued 'the long history of immigration into Britain has a crucial consequence in that it provides a historical precedent for resentment, discrimination and racism being generated within the indigenous population, and this same history can be invoked to justify claims to a British tradition of tolerance' [1985,p.272].

Such cultural assumptions, it has been argued, have considerably informed not only some of the major reports and inquiries that have sought to interpret recent inner city disorders, but have also informed their news mediation [Downing(1985)], though Braham(1982), qualifying any blanket assertions has noted how journalists can on occasion override the news value pursuit of negativity, deviance and violence and attempt to 'keep the tension down' in situations of racial conflict. In a production study of a current affairs programme concerned with racial prejudice Elliott(1972) has also noted the 'liberal' and, essentially uninformed perspective informing the series' construction.

However, if press accounts have been afforded the most research interest in terms of presentations of race, broadcasting and entertainment genres have also begun to secure increased attention. Recent studies have thus attended to news, current affairs, and entertainent genres with special regard to racial stereotyping and/or the under representation of racial

minorities both within media presentations and minority involvement within the production process itself [Husband(Ed)(1975b); Cohen and Gardner(Eds)(1982); Twitchin(Ed)(1988)]. Some attention to the attitudes of ethnic minorities to television programming has been conducted [Jones and Dungey(1983)] while ethnic and minority media have also been overviewed [Husband and Chouhan(1985)].

If the news values of conflict and negativity have been seen to combine with cultural and racial stereotypes to the detriment of black communities in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, the series of black civil rights protests in America affords further insight into the media presentation of racial issues. Paletz and Dunn(1969) considered the coverage of civil disorder by a 'responsible' paper and concluded that, far from the paper sensationalising the events in focus, the Editor's guidelines were followed with the result that the attempts of a minority of blacks to curb the destruction assumed prominent visual and textual display. While not guilty of negative stereotyping, the coverage 'created the impression that the majority of the Afro-Caribbean community was against the violence' and accounts for this form of coverage by referring to 'first, deliberate restraint; second, unintentional distortion resulting from concern with authority and the particular way the media were organised to gather civil disturbance news' (p.345).

In a recent review of American news treatments of civil disorders in both the 1960s and 1970s Martindale(1985) concludes, in sympathy with the Kerner Commission, that while the events of civil rights movement and the ghetto riots had been covered, news accounts 'had failed to cover adequately the conditions underlying the civil rights revolution and the cause of racial conflict'(p.2); genuine grievances had failed to be communicated to the general readership, while a focus on violence and conflict 'helped create a picture of black demonstrators as unreasonably demanding and militant'. While this review study concludes that such presentations may help to preserve the status quo by providing unsympathetic coverage to those who seek change, it is also noted that in a different period, and differentiating between media, some media have been found to considerably increase the degree of access afforded to dissidents and provided increased coverage of underlying causes.

While possible to challenge the liberal assumption that underlying causes can be readily identified, much less agreed upon by all parties involved, it is nonetheless apparent that the news media cannot be simply assumed to be monolithic in organisation, nor undifferentiated in output. The major finding of this review study however follows the major observation already outlined by the Kerner Commission some time ago.

> "The Commission's major concern with the news media is not in riot reporting as such, but in a failure to report adequately on race relations and ghetto problems and to bring more Negroes into journalism..Disorders are only one aspect of the dilemmas and difficulties of race relations in America. In defining, explaining and reporting this broader, more complex and ultimately far more fundamental subject the communications media, ironically, have failed to communicate."
>
> [The Kerner Report(1968)p.382]

In Britain in the 1980s, following the scale and significance of both the events themselves and their media presentation, the 'inner city riots', have attracted considerable research attention. The disorders and their media presentation has invariably been covered to the extent that press accounts have been the subject of ideological and discourse analyses [Sumner(1982a); Cohen(1982); Joshua et al(1983); Murray(1986b); Hollingsworth(1986)]. In addition Downing(1985) has concentrated specifically upon the 'elite' press, and Murdock(1984) the popular press while Hansen and Murdock(1985) reviewing across the popular and quality national press have observed a degree of differential alignment to what they see as a populist discourse seeking to organise the interpretations of recent disorders.

These latter studies are interesting in that they distance themselves from any simplistic analysis which maintains a priori that a dominant ideology is likely to be proferred in such accounts, and locate at least a degree of internal differentiation and discursive struggle within and between the main contending perspectives in play. This degree of internal differentiation found within press accounts was also considerably enhanced to the extent that Murdock(1982) and Schlesinger et al(1983) have charted something of the different iscursive openings and closures affected across different television genres. Such studies have revitalised an area of mass communications inquiry too readily diminished by an

unnecessarily restricted and limited conception of ideological processes and forms.

In a novel study, notwithstanding its monolithic conception of ideological closure, the role of 'the inner city' is seen as providing a central and essentially mythical role in the 1981 disorders. Burgess(1985) has observed, also across a selection of popular and quality newspapers, that 'the newspapers fulfil an ideological role in which a myth is being perpetuated of The Inner City as an alien place, separate and isolated, located outside white middle-class values and environments' (p.193). This particular study, though ultimately unsatisfactory for its concentration upon the inner city conceptualised entirely as 'myth' or symbol, thus failing to ground the social perspectives in play in relation to the social forces, conditions and struggles centred around the inner city, nonetheless offers graphic evidence of the pathological understanding of poverty and culture discussed earlier, and resurrected within press accounts of the riots.

In addition to the studies of press coverage of urban disorder, two studies focusing specifically upon television coverage deserve reference. The first study by Howard Tumber(1982) has not gone without criticism, due to its efforts to refute the 'copy cat' thesis, an idea frequently aligned to a conservative understanding of the causation of riots, though also found within Scarman's report, and generally underpinned by a behaviourist model of televisual 'effects'. To concentrate on this aspect, it has been argued, was to take seriously an obfuscating idea which displaces attention from the possible social causation of the riots while failing to inquire into other areas of more important inquiry [Herridge(1983)]. While the grounds for seriously attending to the copy-cat thesis may be considered slight, though not without considered attention elsewhere [Janowitz(1968); Southgate(1982)] the fact that such was deemed to be possible by considerable numbers of broadcasters is a finding worthy of pursuit. Nonetheless, Tumber's analysis at least begins to chart the main evening national news broadcasts over the two week period of the 1981 summer of rioting, though lack of local news recordings restricted quantitative analysis to this one area of news coverage.

Adding further confirmation to the general finding advanced, without exception, by all the press studies noted above Tumber's content analysis of the riot news material 'revealed television's preoccupation with law and order as the answer to the problems of the disturbances rather than as a possible cause' and following a review of this material rhetorically asks did the viewer 'understand that the kind of violence that erupted in the inner cities in 1981 was a result of many factors ? If there was sublime ignorance among the population and among senior politicians, must not television take part of the blame ?'(p.51). If this study is decidedly hesitant concerning the 'meanings' conveyed by national news coverage of inner city riots, notwithstanding the law and order preoccupation identified, Justin Wren Lewis (1982) is less circumspect maintaining that 'television is an ideological apparatus whose signifying practices bring together a whole range of disparate discourses from a multiplicity of sites'(15). Closely attending to the discourses and narrative stages of revelation, interpretation and closure the televisual enigma of the Brixton riots in April and July of 1981 are contrasted.

Interestingly, television news treatments are seen to have covered these temporally proximate disturbances in different ways. While the April 1981 Brixton disturbances afforded opportunities for the law and order frame to be undermined by the media questioning both the role of the police and invoking a frame of understanding posing social conditions as explanatory factors, the later July 1981 riots are seen to have been almost entirely subsumed within a law and order understanding of the events in question. Wren-Lewis accounts for such differences by attending to the narrative forms of these different episodes:

> "We can begin to answer this question by considering the difference in narrative forms: Brixton was the story of an event; Toxteth, Moss Side etc, were all episodes of a continuous saga. The self-contained structure of the news structure was transformed into the episode of structure of a crisis. The repetition of the revelatory sequence disrupted the revelation-interpretation-closure narrative, the revelations interrupting the interpretative stage and subverting any attempts to close the analysis..The shift in narrative form created the conditions for the re-establishment of the law and order discourse."
>
> [Wren-Lewis(1982)pp.24-25]

This account of the televisual portrayal of inner city disturbances is of note because once again it points to the formal possibility of discursive 'openings' within media treatments while also indicating something of the inherent and predisposing limitations of news forms when remaining confined to initial (revelatory) events. However, given the concentration of this study upon the immediate days of riot coverage within national news coverage it may be questioned whether either the dimensions of time, and possible diversity of media approaches allows the conclusion that in the case of the July riots a law and order frame paved the way for a coercive government response. Moreover, though the identified shift in narrative form is seen to have 'created the conditions for the re-establishment of the law and order discourse' the analysis threatens to invest such news forms as the determining agency of discursive involvement 'requiring' certain discourses and not others, rather than as a site where discourses are played out.

Critical Departures II

In summary, all these various studies have tended to indicate that while national press and televisual coverage of inner city disturbances are not entirely 'closed' ideological accounts they have nonetheless tended to privilege an underpinning law and order frame of reference and interpretation. While the different theoretical approaches informing the study of the mass media generally will be iscussed in more detail in the following chapters where the indebtedness of the media to variously conceived levels of etermination will be considered further, it can be noted that the majority of the studies above, whether concerning presentations of crime, race or welfare, for instance, have all begun to demonstrate that established news values and perennial news interests may well impact upon the coverage and portrayal f the inner city in general.

Specifically in relation to the research interest devoted o recent inner city riots the following general points of nterest and lacunae can be noted and pursued throughout the tudy. Firstly, attention for understandable reasons has tended o focus upon the initial and immediate coverage of riots; while

this may well be the most immediately significant moment of media portrayal, it is not clear how, if at all, such accounts are supplemented over a considerable period of time.

Secondly, attention has focused in the main upon national press, and to a limited extent national television coverage, such media forms cannot necessarily be assumed to be 'representative' of the mass media generally.

Thirdly, attention has not only been focused upon national media forms of riot coverage but so too has it tended to focus upon the specific form of news, seemingly subsuming other forms and genres of media coverage to the generalised conclusions derived from the study of news.

Fourthly, these studies with few exceptions have advanced their analyses from a close reading of the 'texts' frequently inferring a degree of ideological complicity though the mechanisms and constraints which may inform such coverage have remained unexplored.

Fifthly, and relatedly, while near exclusive attention towards the texts of media presentation is likely to overprivilege an assumed ideological intent upon the part of a seemingly undifferentiated news driven media, the ideological impact upon the audience is also in distinct danger of being assumed.

Lastly, media critics are in danger of compounding long-standing criticisms of the mass media maintaining that news tends to identify the event of a riot as newsworthy, while the every day conditions, problems and issues which can help contextualise such 'events' are often ignored. Media researchers, in other words, are poorly placed to account for media riot coverage if they are not also equipped with a general understanding of, in this instance, the reporting of the inner city on an everyday basis over an extended period of time. Only then is is permissible to begin to advance conclusions concerning the media coverage of the problems and issues that surround the inner city.

With these final observations concerning media research into the portryal of inner city concerns and the recent inner city disorders, this discussion can now be brought to a close. Following a critical overview and discussion of the growing research literature devoted to the study of news and latterly

mass communication research charting the portrayal of the inner city and related issues a number of theoretical departure points have been raised. These can now inform the following two chapters where questions of mass communications theory are considered before a theoretical approach is outlined which, drawing on the discussions above, is thought to be capable of ordering research priorities and guiding insightful lines of inquiry.

Chapter Three

MASS COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH AND QUESTIONS OF THEORY

TOWARDS AN APPROACH

The review of news studies above has begun to indicate, in addition to the diversity of inquiries pursued in relation towards the study of news, something of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks informing such studies. Making the necessary distinction between 'theoretical approaches' which can be understood as the broad orientations towards, and possible alignment within, the major social theories informing the social scientific enterprise and 'theories' which can be taken to be more narrowly focused and conceived constructs typically formed and pursued within the process of research [Giddens(1989)p.711], it is apparent that different levels of theorization inform the studies reviewed above.

While some studies have sought to align themselves to the major preoccupations of sociological inquiry by claiming that mass communications' research should be seen as 'part of the overall study of social and cultural reproduction which has traditionally occupied the heartland of sociological analysis' [Murdock and Golding(1977)p.12], other studies have been pursued at a lower level of theorization, content to empirically pursue more narrowly conceived concerns and 'theories' within the immediate contexts of research. While such differences cannot adequately be conceived in terms of empirical research versus theoretical speculation, given that 'theories' inevitably attend empirical research and empirical data generally informs even the most speculative of social theories, it is apparent that explicit reference to, and involvement of wider social theories have been unevenly distributed across the research field. Nonetheless, it is apparent that a number of major theoretical approaches have helped to guide and inform various mass communication research interests while structuring the basic questions posed to the, variously conceived, mass communication process.

This chapter seeks to explicitly chart some of the major theoretical approaches and debates informing the study of news

and other forms of televisual output before proceeding to secure a framework deemed particularly apposite to, and illuminating of some of the concerns deemed central to the televisual portrayal of the inner city. This is not to suggest that any one perspective has a monopoly in terms of theoretical appositeness, or explanatory insight, but it is to suggest that even within the eclectic field of mass communications some approaches are likely to be more fruitful, illuminating and offer increased explanatory possibilities than others. Even so, it is worth bearing in mind that both the social nature and social concerns informing the mass communication research 'object' are simply too multifarious and simultaneously open to too many interesting and important lines of inquiry for any final and hoped-for theoretical denouement.

Nevertheless if the inter-disciplinary nature of the mass communications field permits a seemingly infinite number of research inquiries, the array of guiding theoretical approaches as presently constituted is less extensive, though constantly open to refinement and development, evolution and change. While the previous chapter provided an overview of news studies and various conceptualisations of the news process and product, this chapter explicitly seeks to provide a wider overview of the theoretical frameworks and discussions which have informed these studies within the general field of mass communications research. Less concerned with the contributions of individual studies than with the wider parameters of social theory, and deployment of theoretical approaches informing the research field, the discussion will seek to chart some of the main issues, theoretical tendencies and substantive questions currently characterising this work. The following chapter, building on the discussions of this and the preceding chapter will then develop a theoretical framework capable of ordering, research priorities and offering explanatory possibilities concerning the televisual presentation of the inner city.

Though the conceptualisation of the mass communication process can vary enormously depending upon the general social theories and/or theoretical frameworks from which it is approached, it can generally be recognised that three 'object domains' have historically characterized its theorization. These domains of inquiry theoretically posited in conceptually

different ways and accorded differing degrees of analytic importance continually return to haunt those approaches which fail to address their interrelated concerns and dependencies. The very term 'mass communications' resonates with an historical concern with the social upheavals wrought in the face of an industrialising modern social order and the recognition of the role played within this process by the institutions of the mass media. While one continuing theme has addressed the nature of 'mass society' in terms of the perceived mass nature of the audience - urbanized, individuated, alienated and essentially dependent upon, and vulnerable to the forces of mass communication, a second theme attends to the industrial nature and institutional forms characterizing the organs of the mass media themselves. The industrial organization of the mass media and its wider institutional incorporation within and relationship to the contexts of economy, polity and society represents the first 'object domain' traditionally pursued within the mass communications research endeavour.

If the institutions of the mass media can be approached in terms of their organizational forms and industrial character -of interest in their own right given their considerable industrial and commercial presence - the fact that this particular industry produces and disseminates commodities which have an informational and symbolic nature clearly indicates that research effort and interest can approach this second object domain in terms of the forms and character of the messages distributed and transmitted. While the communication of symbolic forms necessarily implies attending to the 'moment' of the text and the interpretative resources and accounts found therein, a processural understanding of 'communication' also points to the moment of reception of these forms, and their interpretative appropriation, consumption and deployment by audiences within various contexts of activity and use. These three object domains have been subjected to competing conceptualisation, theorization and research scrutiny. Afforded differing importance and emphasis the analytical, though not necessarilly temporally distinct 'moments' of production, message and reception have variously been approached by an array of theoretical approaches, themselves oriented within wider understandings of social theory and paradigms of social scientific endeavour.

In surveying the field, attention can usefully be directed at some of the major lines of theoretical approach and division especially in relation to the three integral moments deemed inherent to notions of mass communication. While emphasis is directed towards the most clearly expressed theoretical tendencies, other approaches can also be reviewed in so far as these often provide opposed positions in relation to which these major positions have sought to define themselves. The first part of this paper will review the major lines of approach characterizing the two 'orthodoxies' found within the mass communications field, while the second half will proceed to identify further approaches and tendencies which have, in recent years, begun to problematize these basic distinctions and some of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks characterizing much mass communications research. Having critically reviewed some of the broad theoretical apporoaches and current developments within the mass communications research field the next chapter outlines a theoretical framework deemed to hold explanatory promise and relevance in relation to both the subject of inquiry - the televisual portrayal of the inner city - and existing lines of theoretical endeavour.

Mass Communications Research: Traditional and Critical Orthodoxies

It has become customary and in general useful to demarcate mass communictions research into two broad camps of research interest and orientation: the 'Traditional' and the 'Critical' paradigms [Gitlin(1978); Hall(1982a); Fejes(1984)]. These two orientations can and do indicate a major cleavage within the research field and can therefore usefully be addressed; however, as the discussion will go on to indicate, the diverse and competing approaches found within each 'tradition' begins to suggest that such demarcations can best be approached as general 'tendencies' which themselves generate and sustain internal disputes and competing perspectives, further illustrating something of the 'ferment' recently declared as characterising the mass communications field [Journal of Communication (1983)].

The Behaviourist Model: Effects Research

While the 'Traditional' orientation has historically been supported by public monies, and underpinned by perennial public fears and anxieties concerning the effects of new entertainment media and technologies upon the behaviour of individual audience members, the research enterprise pursuing such short-term, relatively immediate and 'psychologised' effects has generally been conducted within the Behaviourist paradigm, pursued under the mantle of positivist science and methodologically disposed towards the quantification of 'effects' ideally gleaned from 'stimulus-response' laboratory experiments or field studies.

Lasswell's oft-quoted and synoptic overview of the mass communication's scenario of 'who says what, in which channel, to whom and with what effect' in its behaviourist guise has tended to be conceptualised in accordance with basic theoretical commitments, methodological procedures and, often unstated, value assumptions. Whether the mass media are taken to be an omnipotent force, mirroring the conclusions of the preceding tradition of mass society theorists or relatively and literally ineffective medium [Klapper(1960)], the theoretical dispositions and grounds for such conclusions have in the main derived from an individualised, psychologised and socially decontextualised notion of media effects. Moreover, given the pursuit of such narrowly conceived media effects, research attention has inevitably been disposed towards the mass communication moment of audience engagement, with 'effect' conceived in limited fashion as the last stop within a unilinear and essentially one-way street. If messages have tended to assume an unproblematic, and frequently quantifiable status as a homogeneous 'content', only of interest to the extent that it provides a behavioural stimulus, the audience likewise, notwithstanding some of the more sophisticated conceptualisations involving such 'mediating variables' as age (symptomatic of the preoccupation with 'effects' upon the 'vulnerable' young) gender or social class, is of note merely to the extent that behavioural responses are provoked, measured and causally verified. The term 'communication' in this restricted conceptualisation of media influence can be regarded as a misnoma for the actual processes sought by the research enterprise.

As for the informing production practices and institutional arrangements of media personnel, or organizational structures and commercial goals of the media industries, never mind the wider cultural and political ramifications of the mass media generally these fail to be highlighted, given their extrinsic position to the guiding spotlight of behaviourist method and theory. Additionally the changing socio-historical linkages integrating the agencies of the mass media within wider societal and political arrangements, whether contemporaneously or historically, have also failed to be highlighted within this particular research endeavour as have the mass mediation and dissemination of symbolic forms and their import as, and influence upon, wider and longer-term social processes and forms. On all these fronts of inquiry, so the pertinent research questions have been symptomatically 'silent', hidden from view because essentially unthinkable within a paradigm which adopts an uncritical stance towards these larger questions posed to the status quo. As commentators have observed, the behaviourist tradition is disposed to dismiss the Critical approaches' theoretically speculative sweep and value commitments as mere 'ideology', politics dressed up as research, and yet it is this very stance of value-neutrality which calls forth from others charges of, at best theoretical naivety, and at worst political duplicity [Hall(1982a); Halloran(1983)].

Pluralism: The 'Mainstream' Sociological Approach

While implicit political and value positions can be seen to inform even the most scientifically rigorous 'effects' studies designed along behaviourist lines, pluralist approaches developed within mainstream social science have adapted, though not entirely distanced, such natural science models of orthodoxy. The intermediate stance of these more sociologically inclined studies has been summarised by two practitioners within the pluralist approach as follows.

> "Preoccupation with the effects of the mass media flows naturally from the pluralists tradition's view of society as constituting a plurality of potential concentrations of power (albeit not necessarily equal to each other) which are engaged in a contest for ascedency and dominance. The mass media are then seen as a central means through which this contest is

> conducted and public support for one or another grouping or point of view is mobilised. Clearly, questions about the effectiveness of the media as sources of influence and persuasion loom large in this perspective, and the attention of media researchers is thus directed to ways of measuring and assessing such influence and to the sociological and psychological variables that intervene in and filter the process of persuasion."
>
> [Blumler and Gurevitch(1982)p.261]

Clearly the continuing affinities between this pluralist position and the behaviourist concerns and procedures are apparent with its pursuit of scientifically measured media-effects now conceptualised in terms of 'persuasion', though wider social factors are minimally invoked to the extent that these represent 'variables' that 'filter' this media influence. Underpinning this position however is an implicit, sometimes explicit, theory of society which approximates a liberal-democratic conception of dispersed social power grounded in a plurality of competing social interests. Notwithstanding its recognition of the constant struggle for dominance between different social interests, the mere fact that diverse interests groups exist and compete is typically taken to undermine Marxist accounts premissed upon fundamental social contradiction and class opposition. Pluralism both inhibits the operation and dominance of particular interests in general and class power in particular, while providing a fertile and creative arena in the cultural and political exchange of ideas. While the theoretical view of society is premissed upon a dispersed conception of social power, the power of the media tends to remain wedded to the behaviourist search for, and scientific calibration of relatively direct effects.

To return to the mass communication scenario traditionally defining the different moments and research interests attending the communication process, it is apparent that pluralist researchers, unlike the strict behaviourist position noted, are more inclined to inquire into the production and institutional frameworks of media organisation, though the operation of control and media power is likely to be sought within a one-dimensional view of power [Lukes(1980)]. That is, questions of ownership and control are likely to be interrogated in terms of the dispersal of decision-making processes found within any one institutional site while also noting the countervailing power characterising the wider situation of competing institutional

interests.

Indeed, a number of the 'organisational' and 'professional communicator' news studies already reviewed can comfortably be situated within this broadly conceived pluralist perspective when approaching the mass communication moment of 'production'. Often attending to political forms of programming and the news form in particular, the pluralist conception of dispersed social power arguably informs both the understanding of the political role of the mass media while also structuring the research design in terms of the internal organisational processes of decision-making and degree of professional independence sought within the production processes of media institutions. In these senses, the difference between the frequently articulated professional self-perception of journalists as the guardians of the 'fourth estate', formally independent, objective and responsible watchdogs safeguarding the publics' right to know practised without fear or favour, and research priorities advanced from within a pluralist perspective are not necessarily that different.

Messages are also liable to be investigated to the extent that different groups find representation and diverse forms of media fare reflect a plurality of social interests, and, in this sense the evident similarities found to exist between traditional pluralist positions and those advanced more recently under the notion of television conceptualised as a relatively open, 'cultural forum' [Newcomb and Hirsch(1985)] are apparent, despite differences otherwise pertaining to competing emphases placed upon television approached either as a 'transmission' or 'ritual' model of the communication process [Carey(1989)]. Moreover, given the wider liberal-democratic commitments and social theory entertained by pluralist positions it is also understandable that special focus would be directed towards the representative nature of political forms [Blumler and Gurevitch(1982)(1986)].

However, given the continuities with behaviourist traditions noted in the passage above, and exemplified in a number of research studies, it is also apparent that pluralist positions have continued to direct attention to the 'persuasive' effects of discrete television messages upon audiences, though a further body of inquiry, 'uses and gratifications research',

[Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch(1974)] has done much to reclaim the audience from a position where it has for all too long been assumed to be essentially undifferentiated, passive and impotent in the face of the manipulative force of media messages, while simultaneously providing continuing support to the pluralist notion of diverse social interests and dispersed power. Beginning at least to inquire, at an explicit level, into the operation of social power and some of its institutional mediations, the limited nature of these pluralist advances when combined with a continuing subservience to a particular understanding of the social scientific enterprise, for some qualifies its advances upon strictly behaviourist preoccupations. In many respects, this basic orientation can be seen to occupy an intermediate position between classical behaviourism and some of the critical approaches reviewed below.

If the flames of public opinion continue to be periodically fuelled by the latest 'behaviourist' research findings however, concerning what for many appears to be the quintessential mass communication concern with the effects of screened 'violence' or 'sex', (two preoccupations resonating with the sedimented themes of a basic conservative discourse mobilised in relation to issues of social order and control, as discussed earlier) the power of the media generally and television particularly has in the past, and increasingly in the present been reconceptualised in wider social terms by a number of research approaches collectively subsumed under the label of the 'Critical' approach.

The Radical Orthodoxy : Critical Approaches

Questioning the stance of scientific neutrality, and eliciting the underlying theoretical and epistemological premisses informing behaviourist and positivist canons, the critical orientation challenges any assumed and relatively direct 'effects' of the media upon individuals by conceptualising the role and 'influence' of the media within a considerably more complex and dynamic understanding of social processes and forms. While the exact mechanisms of media influence and impact may vary within this general orientation, a

shared concern with wider forms of social incorporation and control and their role in maintaining stratified and class divided societies generally provides a backdrop of common assent. More specifically, the political and theoretical commitments found across this broad critical orientation have tended to principally conceptualise the power of the media in terms of legitimation, and here the troubled concept of ideology frequently assumes centre stage. Within this broad orientation commentators have tended to observe at least three distinct approaches [Gurevitch et al(1982); Fejes(1984); Lodziak(1986)]. These can be reviewed under the headings of Political Economy, Culturalist and Structuralist approaches.

Political Economy and the Question of Determination

The political economy approach, as discussed earlier, though ultimately concerned with the dissemination of a dominant ideology taken to be pivotal in the securing of consent and societal legitimation, is theoretically predisposed to concentrate upon the economic structure and forces that circumscribe media production and concerns of corporate control. Challenging both simplicities of conspiracy theorists, and the professional claims to journalistic independence occasionally buttressed by liberal-pluralist accounts reviewed earlier, this theoretical approach invokes a wider set of constraints which are taken to effectively determine the nature and form of media organization and output.

Instrumental approaches, whether invoking top-down conspiracies from smoke-filled rooms or, in more sober accounts pursuing questions relating to issues of ownership and control, and 'bottom-up' claims to professional journalistic autonomy and independence are questioned to the extent that, situated within a problematic of action and power, wider structures and determinations fail to become the focus of analysis. Approaches preoccupied with the 'social composition' of journalists, reviewed earlier, and intent upon uncovering a presumed explanatory significance relating to journalists' social class background, selective recruitment procedures, professional socialization and expressed political allegiances and the forms of media output produced are theoretically disposed to interpret

the intentional, and consciously purposive actions of journalists and media personnel as the principal agencies and explanatory factor informing the production process and product. Whether media content is deemed therefore to be 'biased' and politically motivated by some, or 'objective' and politically impartial by others on both counts however, the research design and questions pursued are premissed upon an 'action' or instrumental conceptualisation of power and its operation. As such, the politcal economist maintains the research focus is unlikely to illuminate the wider constraints and determinations which circumscribe the actions of all journalists and the wider institutional sites within which they operate - hence 'the pivotal concept here is not power but determination' [Murdock (1982a)p.124.].

If both radical instrumentalist accounts and pluralist positions have focused upon issues of ownership, control and decision-making within and across institutional sites, a third strand of attention has focused upon the mass media industry and its perceived dependency upon audience demands. 'Consumer sovereignty'[Whale(1977)], the notion that ultimately the collective consumer decides by voting with their myriad individual consumption choices and enacted preferences, though invoking a wider level of determination than instrumental concerns nonetheless fails to take account of the established presence of conglomerate concerns to override consumer preferences and minority interests. Moreover such an approach also fails to interrogate the powerful role of advertisers and the indirect, and occasionally direct determinations exerted upon the selected 'markets' targeted and pursued via particular forms of media output [Murdock(1982a)].

Implicitly engaged with all these contending approaches, the political economy approach seeks to principally approach the institutions of the mass media in terms of their industrial and commercial embeddness within a wider matrix of economic forces. However, while such an approach arguably furnishes findings of intrinsic interest, most forms of political economy seek to establish a link between such wider determinations and the ideological forms and content of media output taken to be pivotal in the legitimation of an inegalitarian social order.

This de-limited 'political economy' approach, in the main

focused upon the immediate economic and market pressures and constraints confronting and impelling corporate and industrial media strategy, has provided and continues to provide insight into patterns of media conglomeration and expansion as well as something of the market forces impacting upon both the range and general forms of media output from the 'culture industry'. So much is clear. What is less certain is the degree to which this form of political economy can begin to address the wider research concerns and interests identified by the leading practitioners from within this approach.

> "To say that the mass media are saturated with bourgeois ideology is simply to pose a series of questions for investigation. To begin to answer them however, it is necessary to go on to show how this hegemony is actually reproduced through the concrete activities of the media personnel and the interpretive procedures of consumers. This requires detailed and direct analysis of the social contexts of production and reception and their relations to the central institutions and processes of class societies. Extrapolation from cultural texts, no matter how subtle and elaborate, are no substitute.
>
> [Golding and Murdock(1978)p.70]

This ambitious statement, while challenging semiotic and cultural readings which confine their focus of attention to either a structural and 'immanent' or more interpretivist reading of the text, also points to a considerably enlarged conception of the mass communication process. The traditional communication scenario involving the moments of production-message-reception, find expression within this much expanded and radicalised formulation, though now it becomes harnessed to a social theory premissed upon class difference and power. The point however, and notwithstanding some of the more strident claims concerning the 'sufficiency' of the political economy approach noted earlier, is that it is apparent from the above formulation that the de-limited form of political economy can only be seen as one partial strand, albeit an important strand, within a much increased theoretical project which seeks to address 'the social contexts of production and reception and their relations to the central institutions and processes of class societies'.

Moreover, the curious lack of emphasis upon the message itself, no doubt in part a result of the polemical point being waged, nonetheless requires increased emphasis within any

adequate theoretical perspective. While the text may no longer be deemed either self-sufficient, much less univocal given its situatedness within the social moment of reception and interpretation, as well as indebtedness to the backdrop of production, it nevertheless assumes an inescapable role within the social processes of communication and, as such, provides an indispensable research resource demanding detailed analysis and interpretation. The problem here, it can be suggested, is that concerned to recover the wider determinations of social relations structured into the prior conditions of economic and market forces, the text itself is approached as intrinsically of only relative interest, though its ideological effectivity is rarely doubted. From the angle of approach encouraged by a strict political economy perspective, the really interesting area of inquiry preceed the moment of the text, while both communicative 'moments' of text and audience reception tend to be posited as foregone conclusions already prefigured within the terrain of prior economic determinations. While the more sophisticated political economy approaches have proceeded to supplement this line of approach by attending to other levels of constraint and journalistic activity, including organizational routines and the 'world of the professional communicator', thereby conceding a considerably more complex and sociologically nuanced pursuit of the production moment, the emphases found within this theoretical approach have been pre-disposed to down-play the analytic importance of the text.

The possibility that the text itself, in its own right as a discursive form, and not simply as an outcome of a preceding set of unintentional determinations, can both express and help constitute the realm of social relations is in danger of being overshadowed by a search for analytical and temporally prior determinations. Social relations approached not simply as continually pre-existing configurations but processural arrangements continually invoked, interpreted and mobilised at the level of the discursive arguably invests the text with heigtened analytic importance.

Moreover, if the text is investigated from an angle of approach which has empirically attended to the moment of reception, the necessity for an increased analytic and interpretative consideration of textual forms and properties is

further reinforced. None of this is to question the necessity of attending to wider economic constraints and determinations, or the gains derived from attending to the 'culture industry' as an industrial and predominantly commercially organised enterprise, along with other 'guiding' perspectives, nor even the possibility of a largely unintended 'consonance' between media forms and ruling or dominant beliefs and values. It is to suggest however that increased attention and analytic importance be placed upon the 'social' resources and accounts mobilised within the text, if an integrated approach is sought to the social processes and forms attending mass communication.

The Culturalist Approach and the Politics of Textuality

If the import of the 'culture industry' can be approached within the political economy perspective as 'first and foremost industrial and commercial organisations which produce and distribute commodities within a late Capitalist economic order', and as such directs research priorities towards the second term in the couplet 'culture industry', given that 'the production of ideology cannot be separated from or adequately understood, without grasping the general economic dynamics of media production and the determinations they exert' [Golding and Murdock(1979) p.210], other approaches have reversed the theoretical emphasis and procedural priorities by attending to the ideological elucidation and forms found to inhere within the 'cultural' products themselves. The 'culture industry' is thus now scrutinised via its cultural products, directing attention towards the analysis of cultural texts while the industrial processes and practices have tended to lose whatever research specificity they might have entertained above, by becoming submerged within, and expressive of a surrounding and contested cultural terrain.

Culturalist positions not surprisingly given the formulations noted above, have called forth a good deal of criticism [Golding and Murdock(1979); Garnham(1983)], as well as invigorating an area of mass communications research interest - the analysis and interpretation of media messages - not previously noted for its subtleties of approach demanded by the

complexities of informational and symbolic forms. Situated within a wider and socially dynamic conceptualisation of culture, and implicitly engaged with both the crude economic determinisms exercised by certain forms of Marxist theorisation as well as unnecessarily restricted conceptions of culture as the creations and artefacts of an educated few, this media approach has developed within a wider project in which culture has been reclaimed as an important and mediating expression of a wider social experience, an experience moreover generally taken to be informed by the social stratifications and segregations of class [Williams(1965); Hall et al(1980)].

While the early and seminal 'cultural studies' texts of Hoggart(1977), Williams(1961) and Thompson(1968) challenged the unneccessarily restricted and elitist understandings of culture, by uncovering the 'lived meanings' of working class culture and experience, the forms of modern experience and consciousness increasingly became regarded as susceptible to, and oriented within a dominant ideology, while theoretical infusions into the cultural studies project increasingly problematised the notion and independence of the primacy of 'experience' [Hall(1986)]. The creative theoretical syntheses forged by Stuart Hall and his colleagues [Hall et al(1980)] has done much to revitalise this area of work, often re-working themes and positions from an eclectic array of authors including Marx, Gramsci, Barthes, Volosinov and Althusser into a sophisticated theoretical position which has undergone subtle development across the years [Hall(1977)(1980a)(1982)(1983)(1985)(1988)]. Specifically in relation to the theorization of the role and operation of the mass media however, and in accord with the delineation of basically two research traditions Hall discerns two opposed paradigms which can best be described as representing a shift from 'mainstream' to 'critical' perspectives, that is from 'essentially, a behavioural to an ideological perspective' [Hall(1982a)p.56].

Within the critcal paradigm, two central concerns dominate the research endeavour: 'How does the ideological process work and what are its mechanisms ? How is 'the ideological' to be conceived in relation to other practices within a social formation'(p.65). While messages are related to the play of social difference and opposition structuring the wider cultural

terrain, the media themselves are posited as assuming a pivotal site within the force field of social power. The 'encoded' text, in other words, is apt to be regarded as a condensed social document both expressive of the wider and hegemonic alignment of social forces, while further reinforcing and mobilising these same forces within the moment of audience 'decoding'. One commentator, in broad sympathy with Hall's culturalist project, has advanced the following perspective towards Marxist interpretations of media texts.

> "The questions of the politics of textuality and the problematic of cultural studies, taken together, provide one way of defining the task of Marxist interpretation: to describe (and intervene in) the way messages are produced by, inserted into, and function within the everyday lives of concrete human beings so as to reproduce or transform structures of power and domination."
>
> [Grossberg(1984)p.393]

While institutional arrangements and professional practices have occasionally been invoked as the formal mechanisms 'securing the pass' in the mediated display of authoritative statements and interpretations legitimizing events [Hall(1981);(Hall(1975);Hall(1980);Hall et al(1978)] latterly the mechanisms by which consent is secured has tended to focus upon the linguistic and discursive forms mobilised within the text itself [Hall(1985);(1988)]. However, while this position has been challenged for failing to attend to the 'necessary' conditions identified by political economy as the backdrop to all media productions, thus ceding too much 'relative autonomy' to the domain of the cultural and discursive, so other intellectual currents, discussed below, have sought to entirely dispense with the notion of 'determinancy' and 'relative autonomy' as involving either a crude economic or class reductionism derivative of a lingering empiricist dualism. Hall's latest position can usefully be considered, to the extent that it adopts an understanding of ideology which, recognising the existence and materiality of different social interests, also cedes a level of determinancy to the constituting force or power of ideas/discourses to not only give expression to, but also constitute social interests.

> "...interests are themselves constructed, constituted, in and through the ideological process. What is more, social collectivities have more than one set of interests; and interests can be and frequently are contradictory, even mutually exclusive...It is therefore possible

> to hold both the proposition that material interests help to structure ideas and the proposition that position in the social structure has the tendency to influence the direction of social thought, without also arguing that material factors univocally determine ideology or that class position represents a guarantee that a class will have the appropriate form of consciousness. What we know is that there is no unitary logic of inference or deduction from one to the other. The logics of different ideological formations remain polyvocal, or as Volosinov would say of all discourse, 'multiaccentual'; not infinitely open-ended, but essentially plural in character."
>
> [Hall(1988)p.44]

On the basis of this formulation of a 'marxism without guarantees' Hall concludes that class interest, class position and material factors are useful, even necessary, starting points in the analysis of any ideological formation but these are not sufficient, because 'they are not sufficiently determinate to account for the actual empirical disposition and movement of ideas in real historical societies'. This stance in relation to the vexed problem of ideology is worth citing at some length because it implicitly challenges, and in turn has been challenged by, the third approach subsumed under the Critical paradigm, the structural approach. Before moving on to briefly review this theoretical approach to the study of media forms, it is useful to inquire how the culturalist approach addresses and reconceptualises the three 'momemts' of the mass communication process.

From the British culturalist framework this scenario has tended to be reconceptualised in terms of a communication 'structure produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments - production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction', however while production may imply attending to institutional and organisational practices and working arrangements or perhaps even the theoretical terrain staked out by the political economy approach described above, in this formulation as Hall states the 'object' of these practices is meanings and messages in the form of sign vehicles of a specific kind organised, like any other form of communication or language, through the operation of codes within the syntagmatic chain of a discourse' [Hall(1980)p.128]. Production, in other words, is conceived principally and theoretically as the moment of message encoding, and is practically approached via an interpretation of the message. While technical and institutional contexts are

referenced there is no doubt in this formulation that the encoding of messages relates principally to the wider cultural and social terrain. Moreover the existence of polysemous messages far from endorsing a pluralist understanding of the social dispersal of power rather points to a dominant cultural order.

> "Polysemy must not, however, be confused with pluralism. Connotative codes are not equal among themselves. Any society/culture tends, with varying degress of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world. These constitute a dominant cultural order, though it is neither univocal nor uncontested."
>
> [Hall(1980)p.134]

This formulation, while impressive in its theoretical reworking of Marx and Gramsci, Volosinov and Barthes also illustrates the politicised conception of culture, both as the site of a dominant imposition and continual contest in the struggle over meaning. The point here however, is that the moment of production as ordinarily conceived becomes subsumed, and some would say indefinitely submerged, into a generalised sea of cultural contest and opposition structured into the very language and discourse which 'encodes' media products. As such, while the space for differentiated audience 'decodings' was fruitfully opened up and pursued by others [Morley(1980a); (1983)], thereby involving increased attention to the otherwise impoverished moment of reception and audience studies rarely conducted from within a critical perspective, this approach nonetheless begins to lose any theoretical purchase upon the specific and differentiated 'moments' of organisational and institutional routines, production practices and wider key linkages to other institutional sites within and across the social, economic and political spheres. The diverse and differentiated contributions which the mass media make to the way in which societies are created, maintained and transformed and the formal and informal mechanisms by which media practices are organised are therby at risk of being collapsed within a general politics of signification seemingly at odds and ill-equipped to deal with Hall's conceptualisation of society as 'a complex structure in dominance'.

If this theoretical approach runs the risk of collapsing the political (including questions of state politics[Cf.Jessop et al(1988)]) into the cultural, while indefinitely leaving in

abeyance considerations of the economic a number of studies have developed this heightened sensitivity towards the politics of the text. The approach to cultural texts as both a site of ideological struggle and resistance as well as the site of securing consent and ideological domination contains two currents of thought pursued by others. The studies of the Glasgow University Media Group(1976)(1980) have sought to demonstrate the 'dominant modes of presentation and framing' found across national broadcast news, while other studies have noted how sub-cultures and youth cultures can selectively appropriate and subversively inflect media forms [Hall et al(1976); Hebdige(1979); Willis(1977)]. Studies of popular culture following the turn to Gramsci have also sought to recover the social relations and 'negotiated' terrain of opposition and dominance discerned within this politicised understanding of popular cultural forms [Bennett et al(1986)].

The increasingly sophisticated and subtle analyses of these studies while implicitly challenging monolithic notions of a 'dominant ideology', mistakenly taken by others as 'the' marxist position [Abercrombie et al (1980)], nevertheless continue to focus and recover the political within a highly mediated world of cultural forms. As such, not only have questions of social and political power been severed from base economic structures and processes, but so too has the relative autonomy of political arrangements tended to be submerged within an all embracing cultural contest. The politics of the text, in other words, becomes the site of the political leaving questions of institutional and state power under theorised. This tendency has reached its reductio ad absurdum in some of the positions reviewed below where the social relations recovered by culturalist readings of the text appear to become indefinitely severed from such material bases, only to become permanently constituted in and by the sign.

Structuralism and the Power of the Sign

The processes of signification and representation posited at the heart of structuralist accounts, and drawing upon wider currents of structuralist thought gaining expression within

linguistics, anthropology, psychoanalysis and semiotics have sought to explicate the internal mechanisms or processes of signification inscribed within the text, while distancing themselves from the pursuit of any assumed 'distorting' or 'false' presentation of the 'real' found within media representations. Mirror analogies, whether clouded, cracked or refracting it is suggested, are often invoked within media studies and remain premissed upon empiricist traditions simply pursuing ideology as an assumed discrepency or distortion from the transparently real existing beyond the television screen [Bennett(1982)]. Structuralist and semiotic accounts have generally sought to elicit the constituting force of language and discourse while later positions, influenced by Althusser's notion of interpellation and general theory of the subject proposed by Lacan, locate the subject positions offered by the text as the site from which the 'real' is both constructed, and known - simultaneously sustaining the 'ideological' self-misrecognition of the Subject as site of authorial independence [Coward and Ellis(1977)] and, as inscribed within the idea of the 'classic realist text' a position of 'dominant specularity' [Maccabe(1981)].

The intellectual history, complexities and considerable deficiencies of many structuralist positions in relation to media theory have been charted elsewhere [Clarke et al(1980); Hall et al(1980); Hall(1986); Woollacott(1982)], what is clear however is that the inordinate emphasis placed upon signification as an outcome already prefigured within the text as an instantiation of language, privileges a particular understanding of language as paradigmatic for structuralist accounts while emphasising both the structured and structuring properties of discourse as 'langue' to the detriment of the performative and creative uses of language as 'parole' when approached in instances of its actual deployment and use. While emphasis upon the former is likely to lead to an awesome conception of the determinism exercised by the text, emphasis upon the latter is more likely to arrive at negotiated, variegated and provisional understandings of the effectivity of specific texts.

Moreover, the issues raised by the 'inter-textual' location of all texts, indicating a terrain of pre-existing audience

expectations and understandings effectively 'orienting' the reader in relation to specific texts [Morley(1980b);Fiske(1987); Barker(1989)], in addition to the empirical recognition of differentiated readers and readings following upon the unavoidable distinction between the 'ideal' or 'inscribed' reader addressed by the text and actual readers or interpretative communities [Morley(1981);Jensen(1987)], as well as differentiated contexts of use, consumption and engagement [Lodziak(1986); Morley(1986)(1990)] and cross-cultural differences of programme interpretation [Katz and Leibes(1986)] all combine to seriously challenge and qualify the structuralist tendency to place the 'text' in a supreme position of omnipotence

Studies which fail to directly consult actual readers via empirical case studies of specific textual readings must of necessity advance whatever textual conclusions and interpretations they have with a degree of circumspection. Moreover the methodological and theoretical tools currently available within reception studies also suggests that even with attention to the moment of audience reading, conclusions as to the directing, and ideological impact of the text must remain at best tentative and provisional, while the social contexts and activity of media consumption and use cannot rely solely upon viewers accounts but, of necessity, are likley to be informed by wider social theories. If the text is understood as an 'outcome', produced at the production-text-audience interfaces, though textual properties can usefully be identified and pursued by a variety of means, these cannot be construed as effecting a foregone interpretative conclusion, much less an unassailable determinism [Dahlgren(1988a); Thompson(1988)].

The cursory overview above has been able to do no more than offer a few generalised criticisims of a broad and internally differentiated current of thought which has influenced a number of theoretical positions in relation to the texts of the mass media. In relation to the mass communication scenario, the tendency has been for the entire social process of mass communication to either be bracketed off, in the pursuit of an immanent analysis of the text, or else implode and dissolve these wider moments of 'production' and 'reception' within a theoretical recovery of the 'meanings' unleashed by the text.

While it is the case that structuralist and semiotic readings have much to offer in the analysis of texts [Barthes(1987); Williamson(1985)], it is less certain to what extent these insights can sustain some of the more global, psychoanalytic not to mention ahistorical theorizations of the Subject advanced within the film journal Screen and elsewhere [Coward and Ellis(1977)].

Nonetheless, as will be referenced below, shorn of some of its more speculative and grossly determinist excesses structuralist analyses have redirected attention to important textual properties including the relational, as much as referential appeals inscribed within all texts and the subject positions offered to an audience. As a collection of studies directed at the forms of mass communication it has to be said, such approaches have invariably imported a wider social theory with which to buttress their accounts [Fiske and Hartley (1978)], and can be regarded, at best, as a possible adjunct to a wider and theoretically more encompassing approach towards the *mass* communication process.

Orthodoxies and New Departures

From the cursory accounts offered above it is clear, even at this general level, that the mass communications field exhibits a number of theoretical tendencies which in broad measure can be subsumed under the organising labels of 'traditional' and 'critical' research. At the outset however, it was also indicated that these lines of difference merely point to some of the basic distinctions or tendencies found within the mass communications field. That is, while affording a degree of order upon a diversified field, these cannot be held as exhaustive of all approaches and positions. Indeed, some commentators have gone so far as to suggest that the possibilities of future 'convergence' between mainstream and critical traditions within the area of reception studies is possible [Schroder(1987);Jensen(1987)] while others have maintained that these two traditions share more concerns than may at first be presupposed [Blumler and Gurevitch(1982); Fejes(1984)]. Interestingly both Fejes, and Blumler and

Gurevitch for instance, reference the case of the agenda-setting model as a mainstream research model provides a line of inquiry of inherent interest to critical concerns.

The agenda-setting model [McCombes and Shaw(1972)] maintains that while the media may not dictate to people what they think, it may nonetheless signal what they think about. That is, stepping back from an assumed persuasive or attitudinal influence, priorities of importance and general frameworks of interest may be communicated by the mass media by way of the selections and priorities of issues and topics raised. Setting out to empirically pursue this model the array of issues and topics gaining media exposure are compared to audience emphases placed upon these same issues. Clearly, in so far as this model attempts to grapple with the impact of the media upon the wider cultural environment of its audience, not just in terms of the issues placed on the public agenda, but also those that are not, then its relevance for perspectives advanced towards the operationalisation of social control and power are apparent [Fejes(1984)]. While it is the case that the model is destined to severe difficulties in terms of its empirical application, and that it fails to engage with the subtleties and nuance of meaning attending symbolic forms, merely charting the presence or absence of identified issues and concerns, it nonetheless offers a basic theoretical approach which implicitly informs many Critical studies.

If the agenda-setting and other empirically pursued models [knowledge gap, spiral of silence, dependency model, cultivation thesis] provide examples of overlap interest and concern shared between mainstream and critical approaches, it is also the case that a substantial body of work not entirely wedded to behaviourist orthodoxies or ideological approaches continues to inform the mass communications field. If sociologically informed mainstream research, then, provides a more complex set of positions than has sometimes been claimed, recent developments have also begun to unsettle some of the central concerns and theoretical positions advanced across the three main Critical approaches advanced above. Some of these positions and recent developments can be noted as providing important advances which are of interest to the study of news and other forms of televisual programming.

The Critical approach as reviewed above has clearly been assumed to have been essentially concerned with the operation of social control and power as mediated by the mass media and the dissemination of ideology. The role of ideology within the production, reproduction and transformation of structures of social power and control assumes the informing theoretical premiss to the array of Critical approaches reviewed above. The problem with this formulation is that while ideology itself has proved to be a notoriously slippery concept often open to mutually exclusive definitions as well as problems of empirical investigation, research approaches both within and without the Marxist traditions have increasingly problematised critical preoccupations while simultaneously opening up news avenues of inquiry.

These critical developments can usefully be addressed under the four interrelated concerns of 'the critical orthodoxy and the problem of ideology'; 'ideology reconsidered and properties of the medium'; 'television culture as ritual and the television cultural forum'; 'the media and the social totality approach: towards the idea of the public sphere'. Each of these areas of development contain theoretical gains and departures when applied to both mainstream and established critical concerns and are of germane interest to the present research project.

The Critical Orthodoxy and the Problem of Ideology

In the review above it is apparent that the conceptualisation and role of 'ideology' is placed at the heart of the three principal tendencies characterising the Critical tradition of media studies. The problem arises, however, as to the exact understanding and role of this much contested term. Clearly, given the inherent connection existing between the idea of ideology and its service within a number of Social Theories the profusion of contending positions in regard to ideology should come as no surprise nor as a necessary indication of concept inadequacy. The concept itself continues of course to inform the social sciences generally and has received detailed discussion elsewhere [Larrain(1979)(1983); Sumner(1979); Giddens(1979); Thompson(1984); McLellan(1986)]. However, within

the field of mass communications research developments have occurred which simultaneously begin to qualify its centrality within the critical approach, while also 'firming up' its conceptualisation and practical pursuit.

Recent developments, as discussed below, point to the recognition that though the pursuit of ideology within media forms remains an important line of inquiry, it of necessity cannot be seen to monopolise 'critical' inquiries nor can ideology be adequately studied in isolation from other attributes and characteristics of the medium within which it gains expression. The study of ideology, in other words, can best be regarded as a more specific area of inquiry, typically focused in concrete terms, and situated within a much expanded and complex understanding of the communication process. To return briefly to the three main critical approaches reviewed above, the theoretical and conceptual understanding of 'ideology' deployed across these frameworks indicate both the shortcomings and possible impetus for more recent developments.

Notwithstanding its central role within the main variants of political economy approaches and granted enormous power in the legitimation of social inequality and wider inegalitarian capitalist order, the theoretical elaboration and discussion of ideology has failed to be addressed in any extended sense. The inherent risk is that when considered at all ideology is apt to assume the position of a generalised shopping list of general and seemingly invariant forms. Accountable perhaps to the underpinning quest for prior determinations, pursued under the guiding theoretical framework of political economy, rarely has detailed empirical analysis of texts been conducted under this approach since the research focus is inevitably directed elsewhere. The properties and actual forms of media messages have, with a few notable exceptions, tended to be ignored [Curran, Douglas and Whannel(1980)]. Furthermore the social, political and historical specificities of ideological struggle and forms is thereby rendered of marginal interest, since the main work of ideological elucidation has already been accomplished by attending to the 'social relations' structured within the levels of determination previously exercised upon the moment of production.

In an important article, 'Ideology and the Mass Media: The

Question of Determination' [Golding and Murdock(1979)], the theoretical prism which refracts the study of ideology is clearly intimated, and given the general sense of determination already described it is perhaps not surprising that ideology should assume such a generalised, and at times seemingly unchanging form. News is thus said to be ideological in three ways: by focusing attention on those events and institutions and events in which social conflict is managed and resolved, the inference being that as such news is in the business of consensus formation; by following statutory demands and professional codes of practice in relation to impartiality, objectivity and neutrality news is once again disposed towards the politically 'safe' ideas embodied within the wider social consensus; and thirdly, news is inherently incapable of providing a portrayal of social change or of displaying the operation of power in and between societies (p.218).

While these three ideological attributes may be concurred with, or challenged the point remains as to why these three forms should be selected, and not a possible array of others. Though conflict has generally been recognised as a perennial staple of the news form, it is less certain whether its resolution and management is the principal focus of news interest. Moreover the social values informing the middle-ground 'consensus' need not be conceived as consensual as some commentators have believed [Held(1984)]. As settled political alignments change so the existence of social, political and cultural dissent frequently assumes more prominent public expressions though not necessarily unified under homogenised blocs of organised opinion articulated either in accordance with or radically opposed against a presupposed middleground of consensus. The 'consensus', in other words, can perhaps be seen as a starting point for inquiry, rather than as a settled reference point determining the range of opinion addressed by news forms.

Moreover, while it may well be the case that the historically abstracted, socially decontextualised and essentially truncated nature of the news form is ill-equipped to capture the operation of wider determinations and long-standing structures of power, it is simply not the case that visual and verbal manifestations of 'power' and 'social change' are

absented within broadcast news. News accounts of tanks in Tiananmen square, riot squads in Brixton and picket line conflicts each with their accessed interpretative accounts all dramatically indicate the operation and contested nature of social 'power'. It is perhaps the form that this televisual presentation of power takes, rather than its absence or presence, which is the point at issue.

On the basis of this particular formulation it is legitimate to inquire whether all news forms are thereby to be seen as internally undifferentiated, inherently ideological, and therefore indistinquishable ? If this is the case, surely the diffentiated nature, textual richness and political appeals found across the popular-serious news continuums (within both broadcast and print news mediums) is at risk of being subsumed within a generalised abstration illuminating little of the historically concrete play of social conflict, contest and variety of cultural forms/rituals affirming a commonality of experience and interests and the manner in which they all become selectively appropriated, inflected and disseminated by the mass media.

If the political economy approach is disposed to conceive of ideology as a generalised phenomenon, essentially as an outcome or result of preceding structural arrangements, the culturalist perspective is apt to forefront the socially contested and continually negotiated sense of ideological struggle. Whereas ideology is apt to be posited in classical marxist terms as 'false consciousness' bathing the audience in the distorted reflections of the material conditions of existence, implying both an empiricist epistemology and differentiation of 'true' from 'untrue' beliefs, science from non-science, the culturalist position has tended to adopt a more concrete, and socially contested approach to ideology. Less concerned with the pursuit of an assumed distorted reflection of the real, ideology is conceived as the terrain within which social interests continually struggle to define and pursue their interests. The focus of analysis shifts and the importance of language and discourse as the terrain of struggle becomes the domain of interrogation. In summary form, following Volosinov, the class struggle is transposed to the site of the sign, or 'the class struggle within language'.

> "By ideology I mean the mental frameworks - the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation - which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works."
>
> [Hall(1983)p.59]

If this formulation of ideology returns ideology to the relatively immediate and differentiated expression of social groups and classes, thereby distancing any residual notion of a generalised imposition of 'false consciousness', it also begins to challenge the notion that ideology is a partial element within a wider realm of the non-ideological. The problem now begins to arise, of course, if all ideas, beliefs, systems of representation etc. can conceivably be seen to be 'ideological' in the sense that they afford social groups the means of making sense out of their particular situations and the way society in general works, ideology becomes invested with an elasticity which considerably problematises the pursuit of its empirical application.

While Hall's position represents a sophisticated attempt to hold on to the Marxist problematic of historical materialism, with ideology articulated in relation to, but not necessarily directly expressive of, either economic or political levels of the social totality, structuralist currents as already noted have frequently dissolved all levels into the site of the sign with ideology, as an instantation of language constituting both the subject and the 'real' within discourse. Ideology in such accounts becomes dissolved within the autonomous sphere of signification where messages and meanings begin to take on an independent and constituting existence denying the notion of a correspondence, necessary or otherwise, between material conditions of existence and the circulation of ideological forms [Grossberg(1984);Sholle(1988)].

If ideology in the political economy approach tends to be conceived as a generalised 'dominant ideology', in part sustained by the 'consonance' of forms, or unintended outcome of prior determinations and the ideas and beliefs of ruling groups, in the culturalist approach it has tended to be seen as the incessant discursive struggle and contest for hegemonic dominance, a situation both expressive of contending material and social interests and the discursive means through which such struggle becomes conceptualised, defined and articulated. The

mass media have become in this formulation 'pivotally, the site and terrain on which the making and shaping of consent is exercised, and, to some degree contested. They are key institutions in the operation of cultural hegemony' [Hall (1975a) p.142], a hegemony moreover, following Althusser, oriented 'within the mode of reality of the state' [Hall(1977)p.346].

Structuralist currents however, distancing themselves from the classical terrain of Marxism have tended to displace the residual understandings of the social totality conceptualised in terms of base and superstructure with ideology becoming a 'deep structure' only apparent in its effects - the enunciated speech and subject positions found within discourse. While Barthes and others proclaiming to employ an immanent 'semiotic method' [Fiske and Hartley(1978)] have sought the connotative level of signification, structured within the interiority of the sign and interpreted as bourgeois 'myth' and 'ideology' respectively, their dependence upon the moment of textual interpretation, and its 'extrinsic' social derivation even led Barthes himself to note that semiology was originally based on 'a eurphoric dream of scientificity'.

However, the second wave of structuralist thought, stepping outside of an immanent anaysis of the text, and pursuing a theory of the subject proceeded to claim that 'ideology is conceived as the way in which a subject is produced in language to represent his/herself and therefore able to act in the social totality, the fixity of those representations being the function of ideology' [Coward and Ellis(1979)p.78]. While 'ideology' is invoked in a highly functionalist manner, for later 'post-structuralist' theorists the concept of ideology betrays its former allegiance to an outdated mode of social theory, apparently intent upon recovering underlying connections between material processes and discursive forms, when the search should be conducted in relation to the formal possibilities of knowledge and power constituted in discourse.

For some, the very notion of ideology as a motivation of something other than itself - whether the mode of production, the economy, material conditions of existence, social relations, class experience - is said to be derived from the determinist problematic of marxism, instead a theory of power and knowledge

is proposed which 'refuses to conceptualise the power of signification as determined elsewhere' [Sholle(1988) p.30]. Developing upon Foucault's critique of ideology this recent formulation summarizes a post-modernist tendency within the sphere of media theory. Maintaining that a shift is required from 'the analysis of ideological contents in texts and the further attempt to link these contents with referents embodied in determinate conditions to an analysis of the forms of knowledge, norms, and models that make particular forms of knowledge historically possible' the deficiency of such a position is plain to see and need not detain us long.

While the discursive conditions of knowledge can readily be acknowledged to the extent that they impose a framework (episteme) facilitating knowledge and understanding, this is a far cry from saying that discourse, in this archaeological sense, actively constitutes knowledge, power and understanding. A formal pursuit of the discursive conditions of knowledge simply cannot explain the different knowledges mobilised and contested by competing or opposed social interests nor the 'coming to blows' of engaged actors and the role of the 'battle of ideas' found within the same historical moment. While power can usefully be approached, if only partially, in terms of the meanings, and possibilities of meanings enacted within discourse, the chronic lack of a theory of articulation between competing powers, often conducted within and between different institutional sites and social collectivities, sometimes manifested within different discourses and sometimes failing to find public discursive form at all, indicates that such a project is likely to offer little in the way of the empirical and socially informed analysis of the social foundation of both knowledge and power. But then a position which pursues discourse as a realm sufficient unto itself is likely to dismiss the invocation of a social foundation as part of the problematic of determinism.

If empirically pursued across the three moments of mass communications however, the production, dissemination and reception of media messages involves different social and institutional processes the complexities and diversity of which if seen as a form of determinism, assumes a highly differentiated and complexly indeterminate form. Interestingly,

it is just this differentiation and complexity of the mass communication process, and particularly the differentiated nature of different media, media forms, and the possibility of differentiated 'readings' dependent upon different sites of social engagement which is denied in this theoretical framework when applied to the mass media.

> "The media create a way of seeing, a method of ordering and judging, a means of selection and preference that constitutes the domain of the discussable. This order of discourse creates both an exclusive domain of knowledge and subject positions corresponding to that domain."
>
> [Sholle(1988)p.38]

The theoretical framework proposed above far from distancing itself from a determinist problematic, has in fact resulted in mirroring exactly those theoretically generalised, empirically insecure and totalizing statements concerning the role of the mass media found in earlier pessimistic accounts of the mass society.

Ideology Reconsidered and Properties of the Medium

So far it has been noted how ideology has assumed a central, if variously conceived role within three principal lines of theoretical approach. To date, the most clearly articulated theory of ideology situated within a wider understanding of culture and addressed to the specific arena of mass communications, paying careful attention to the three interrelated object domains of inquiry - production, message, reception - has been advanced by John Thompson (1986)(1988). Situated within a wider and 'structural conception of culture' the analysis of culture is said to involve 'the study of symbolic forms - that is meaningful actions, objects and expressions of various kinds - in relation to the historically specific and socially structured contexts and processes within which, and by means of which, these symbolic forms are produced, transmitted and received' [Thompson(1988)p.361].

This formulation stressing that cultural activities are always situated within specific social-historical contexts structured in certain ways and therefore involve relations of power - a factor taken to be underestimated in the symbolic

approach to culture as an interwoven system of construable signs involving interpretation of meaningful actions and objects - provides the starting point and impetus for the specific analysis of ideology. This point is important in that though it may be suggested that Thompson's wider understanding of culture points to the necessity for ideological analysis, the fact that culture, and not ideology forms the starting point implies that media forms can be approached from a number of perspectives, not all of them necessarily focused in terms of ideology. The analysis of ideology however remains the goal of this framework and ideology itself is conceptualised in the following terms.

> "The analysis of ideology is primarily concerned, in my view, with the ways in which meaning and power intersect. It is concerned with the ways in which meaning is mobilized in the interests of powerful individuals and groups. This focus may be defined more sharply as follows: to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning serves to sustain relation of domination."
>
> [Thompson(1988)p.370]

The study and analysis of ideology is conducted within, what is termed a 'depth hermeneutics', involving the three interrelated levels of social-historical analysis, discursive analysis and interpretation. Attending to the social contexts and fields within which cultural phenomena are situated, social-historical analysis seeks to address the social relations and institutions within which messages are produced, disseminated and received and the ways in which these are characterised by asymmetries of resources and power. Within the context of the three object domains of mass communation, this is of particular relevance to the institutional sites and forms of organisation of the mass media industries and the production environment.

Given that the production context produces 'complex symbolic constructions which display an articulated structure', the second level of analysis, 'formal discursive analysis', aims to explicate the structural features and relations characterizing meaningful objects and expressions. While impossible to itemise all the possible lines of approach and methods aiming to elicit the structure of discursive forms it is apparent that content analyses, semiotics, discourse and narrative analyses as well as linguistic methods relating to lexical terms and such syntactic structures as nominalisation and passivisation can all variously and usefully be deployed at

this level of analysis, while attention to wider considerations of programme form, presentational style, use of visuals, humour and so on can also be pursued.

However, notwithstanding some of the individual claims advanced from within these different 'methods' it is maintained that given the profoundly social nature of the mass communication process, pointing to both the social processes and institutional arrangements characterising the moment of production and different social contexts, uses and hermeneutic features of the reception moment formal discursive analysis cannot escape the fact that a level of interpretation is inherent to the study of ideology.

> "However rigorous and systematic the methods of discursive analysis may be, they can never abolish the need for a creative construction of meaning, that is for an interpretative explication of what is said. An interpretative explication may be mediated by the analytical methods..but interpretative explication always goes beyond the methods of formal analysis, projecting a possible meaning which is always risky and open to dispute"
>
> [Thompson(1984)p.137]

This theoretical framework while offering little in the way of advancing new insights into either the various moments of the mass communication process or methods deployed therein, nonetheless has the considerable merit of providing an integrated approach conceptualizing all three object domains as necessary sites of interrogation in terms of the study of mass communicated culture and the specific study of ideology. It also provides a framework which, explicitly aware of the integrated nature of the mass communication process structured into its overall theoretical schema, avoids the tendencies found across a number of approaches considered above to advance global claims while typically investing the particular research object under scrutiny - whether the moment of production, message or reception - with an inflated and general explanatory self-sufficiency. Placing the level of interpretation as a necessary and constitutive part of the process of analysis, and applied across all three moments characterizing the mass communications process, the tendency to advance global claims from hermetically sealed positions of theoretical exclusivity becomes unwarrantable. The interrelated concerns of this theoretical framework inevitably encourages theoretical findings and

generalisations being couched in more circumspect and tempered tones, reflecting both the inherent complexities and inevitably 'interpretative' moment of the mass communications process and its analysis.

While the theoretical and methodological framework proposed by Thompson offers a useful schema in the study of mass communicated culture, the question arises whether ideology understood as the mobilisation of meaning in the service of relations of domination can adequately encompass the variety of structural properties which characterise the formal/discursive forms generously referred to. That is, how can some forms be seen to be ideological, and others not so ? While all attributes may be taken to be involved in some measure in the delivery of 'meaning', to what extent they can therefore be deemed 'ideological' is less certain. Indeed, this very point has been raised by others in regard to the relational aspects of language.

> "..the operation of ideology and of power may be seen in terms of this two-fold distinction in signification, so that ideological processes are seen as drawing upon the reality-constructing systems, and power relations are seen as in part constituted by the social relational system. One merit of articulating the relationships in this way is that it captures a sense of the way in which power may operate on occasion quite without the dissimulating cloak of ideology and yet still take discursive form."
>
> [Montgomery(1986)p.63]

If attention can usefully be directed at the relational aspects of language, intrinsically part of all discursive forms though commonly accepted to be an important part of political rhetoric, a similar argument can also be advanced in terms of the presentational forms and encompassing genres within which meanings gain expression. Given the general density of possible meanings unleashed within any programme form, and the frequently internally fragmented and structured form of different programme types it is legitimate to inquire to what extent these characteristics, always implicated in the formal/discursive display of meanings, can themselves be considered as 'ideological'. The concept of genre here provides an intermediate level of inquiry, mediating 'ideological' expressions within a form which may well exert its own determinations simultaneously reflecting both its institutional construction and circulation as a commodity and also wider

allegiance to audience expectancies and interests.

Neale(1981), for instance, has maintained that 'genres are not to be seen as forms of textual codifications, but as systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject' (p.6). While Feuer(1987) discerning three approaches to the study of genre - aesthetic, ritual, and ideological - indicates that the study of genre cannot be confined to the search for recurrent textual properties, while the insights gained from reception studies and a more 'negotiated' understanding of ideology as hegemonic struggle and contest, limits the notion of genre as directly ideological. Interestingly Raymond Williams for his part, also distancing the study of genre as the pursuit of formal taxonomic properties, has provided a useful means of attending to different genres in terms of the three interrelated attributes of 'appropriate subject matter', 'mode of formal composition' and general 'stance' [Williams(1977)pp.180-185]. While Williams has prefigured later positions in regard to the 'relational' dimensions attending all discursive forms, so other authors have sought to investigate how different programme types have afforded differing opportunities in both terms of the range of discourses securing access and degree of 'openess' and 'closedness' attending such forms [Murdock(1982); Elliot, Murdock and Schlesinger(1986)].

Remaining relatively undeveloped these directions nonetheless indicate that while ideology may continue to be pursued in terms of the substantive and referential concerns or meanings delivered within programme forms, the general character of the medium and relational dimension attending all mass communications though intimately related to such concerns call for increased attention. Discourse, in other words, is structured within a medium, the properties of which may be taken as significantly impacting upon both the form and substantive content of the delivered message. These points, indicating the need to address the characteristics of the medium as well as the substance of discourse, will be taken up below.

The discussion above has begun to qualify the centrality of 'ideology' previously placed within various research frameworks. The elasticity of the concept itself, recognition of its subordination within a wider understanding of culture and

increasing recognition of different levels of analysis which, though related to the formal display of discourse cannot been seen as inherently 'ideological' in, and of themselves have all pointed to the less than exhaustive advantages of 'ideological' analyses. Moreover, the recent expansion in interest found across a growing body of reception studies have also severely dented notions of relatively direct ideological incorporation and control exercised via the medium of mass communications. The initial promise held out by reception studies to find a correlation between class position and the ways in which media messages are decoded, has increasingly found itself resorting to the idea of different sub-cultures and most recently, the considerably more malleable notion of different interpretative communities in the search for a discernible relation between different social groups and differences enacted at the moment of audience decoding.

Perhaps in part impaired by the sample capabilities of a qualitative methodology, but also the original grossness of the social catergories informing the research enterprise, reception studies have generally failed to secure the once hoped-for 'cultural map' promised by earlier studies. Morley, it will be remembered, had sought to 'show how the social meanings of a message are produced through the interaction of the codes embedded in a text with the codes inhabited by the different sections of the audience' [Morley(1983)p.177]. More recently, a leading reception researcher has suggested:

> "It may be necessary in reception analysis to think of audiences in terms of codes or discourses, rather than in terms of socioeconomic categories. For reception-analytical purposes, recipients are their codes of understanding. Like the preferred reading of the text, the demographic definition of the recipient may be used as a preliminary categorization in practical work with audiences, but it is a closed category that cannot register the ongoing processes at the site of reception."
>
> [Jensen(1987a)p.28]

Having originally sought a 'cultural map' of decodings relating to different social groups, generally conceived around the axis of class, the risk that discourse itself now becomes the site of correlation with audience discourses and discourses sustained within the text assuming the research focus, is in danger of losing what was originally the impetus of inquiry: the social patterning of decoding sought to correspond with

different social groups.

However, perhaps of more direct relevance to this discussion it is apparent that reception studies generally have begun to indicate something of the tremendous complexities involved in the analysis of the moment of reception, while implicitly undermining any notion of the relatively direct dissemination and acceptance of a dominant ideology. Peter Dahlgren, for instance, has argued that research focused in relation to news is concerned with 'a problematic more fundamental than that of ideology, namely how TV news programmes produce and convey meaning' [Dahlgren(1988a) p.287]. This programmatic statement has found wider support within a general cultural perspective towards the media within which two related tendencies are beginning to emerge as clearly defined theoretical approaches.

Television Culture as Ritual and Television as Cultural Forum: Towards Television Centrism ?

As indicated above a number of studies have recently begun to question and qualify the centrality of ideological inquiry, and have often been advanced from within a much expanded 'cultural' approach to the study of mass communications. These developments can now usefully be addressed. James Carey has maintained that 'conflict and contradiction are as inevitable to us as language and the ability to say no. Therefore power and ideology are central to social life. They are less than the whole cloth, however.' [Carey(1989)p.108]. Broadly noting two emphases within the study of culture and communications, a transmission model and a ritual model, Carey provides a further indication why the centrality of ideology needs to be tempered.

> "A ritual view of communication is directed not towards the extension of messages in space but the maintenance of society in time (even if some find this maintenance characterized by domination and therefore illegitimate); not the act of imparting information or influence but the creation, representation and celebration of shared even if illusory beliefs. If a transmission view of communication centers on the extension of messages across geography for purposes of control, a ritual view centers on the sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality."
>
> [Carey(1989)p.43]

Clearly this formulation finds its mark when thought in relation to the array of news studies reviewed earlier. While many studies have adopted essentially an information model of news, the transmission of which is taken to be supportive of either a democratic polity dependent upon the free-flow of information or inegalitarian social order maintained by the legitimating 'work' of ideology, other studies have noted the ritual aspects of news programming either in the positive sense of sustaining a shared sense of commonality and culture, or alternatively, in more negative terms, as a means of cultural incorporation and control. While both tendencies are capable of supporting both radical and more liberal understandings in relation to news programming, they pursue their respective arguments within differing conceptualizations of the news form and process. Carey himself, drawing back from a position which positions culture as the entirety of the symbolic mental landscape in which we all live, is concerned to maintain a wider sense of social power, structure and transformation arguing 'it is through communication, through the intergraded relations of symbols and social structure, that societies, or at least those with which we are most familiar, are created, maintained and transformed' [Carey(1989)p.110].

Other authors, however, have been less hesitant and have tended to invest the mass media, and television especially with a cultural role of central importance, a role moreover which is characterised by its essential pluralism and mulitplicity of viewpoints sustained within a 'cultural forum'.

> "In its role as a central cultural medium (television) presents a multiplicity of meanings rather than a monolithic dominant point of view. It often focuses on our most prevalent concerns, our deepest dilemmas. Our most traditional views, those that are repressive and reactionary, as well as those that are subversive and emancipatory, are upheld, examined, maintained and transformed. The emphasis is on process rather than product, on discussion rather than indoctrination, on contradiction and confusion rather than coherence."
>
> [Newcomb and Hirsch(1985)pp.278-279]

This approach is of interest in that recognising both the diversity of media forms, and suggesting that far from offering a relatively closed 'ideological' medium television provides a multiplicity of meanings within an open forum capable of sustaining subversiive and liberatory, as well as repressive and reactionary views, the echoes of a liberal-pluralist postion are

clearly discerned, albeit theoretically subsumed under a generalised participatory culture as opposed to mediating fourth estate role focused in relation to the polity. While this approach is apt to take a midway stance between Carey's 'transmission' and 'ritual' models, other cultural perspectives have emphasised the ritual side of mass communications.

Ritual studies of news, as reviewed earlier, have contributed much to the analysis of the news form and the manner in which shared cultural expectancies, norms, values and beliefs can receive public affirmation and even celebration [Elliott(1980);Scannell(1989);Chaney(1986a)(1986b);Cardiff (1986)]. The sense in which such characteristics of the news form can be seen as enriching and sustaining, or alternatively incorporating and controlling varies from author to author though it is perfectly possible to suggest that both tendencies can be simultaneously present. However while studies such as these have invariably held back from approaching the mass media at a generalised level, confining their attention to particular media presentations and publicly communicated issues, other approaches have tended to approach the mass media, and television specifically as a central and organising cultural force in its own right [Ellis(1982); Newcomb and Hirsch(1985); Postman(1987); Fiske(1987)].

While such a generalised approach can illuminate features of the medium in general, the inherent risk that this media-centric approach will collapse both the independence and articulations of other levels of the social formation within its own boundaries is ever present: 'television as culture is a crucial part of the social dynamics by which the social structure maintains itself in a constant process of production and reproduction: meanings, popular pleasures, and their circulation are therefore part and parcel of the social structure' [Fiske(1987) p.1]. The problem with such a formulation, it can be suggested, is that the view of the social structure as interrogated from the media outwards, rather than a position which investigates the role of the media from an extrinsic position of infoming social theory, is likely to offer a highly 'mediated' view of the social structure while tending to aggrandize the centrality of television within the wider processes of societal reproduction and transformation.

More generally, it can be maintained that failing to attend to the moment of production and institutional forms of organization and practices, the cultural emphases found across this growing body of work are likely to underestimate the role of the informing backdrop of production to the forms of cultural fare disseminated, while the specific contribution of media institutions and the manner in which they are organised, function and 'mediate' the wider cultural, social and political terrain is, ironically given the media centrism found within this broad tendency, inadequately addressed. Indeed, it is the media-centrism which is found in these accounts, and more generally discerned across the three Critical approaches reviewed above, with their focus upon the legitimating work of ideology, that has led one commentator to radically question the assumed ideological power of television. This last approach can usefully be addressed to the extent that it offers a further critical approach towards the conceptualisation and study of the mass media, while dismissing either a transmission or ritual understanding of the power of television conceived either as ideological or cultural incorporation.

The Media and the Social Totality Approach: Towards the Idea of The Public Sphere

It has already been noted how different critical approaches have directed differing emphases towards the three moments of the mass communication process. The political economy approach, intent upon recovering the wider social relations and determinations exercised upon the institutional forms and operational procedures of the mass media, has noted the general economic and commercial imperatives resulting in media centralisation and concentration. Pitched at a wider level of historical abstraction it has also been observed how these tendencies have increasingly undermined the formation of political opinion and democratic involvement.

> "The thesis I wish to advance is that what we are seeing and what we face is a continuation of the shift away from involving people in society as political citizens of nation states towards involving them as consumption units in a corporate world. The consequence of this for the culture is a continuation of the erosion of what Habermas called the public sphere or C.Wright

> Mills the community of publics. The hallmarks of both these types of polity were contests between politically expressed demands based on knowledge, information and association in democratic, nation states - a type of society which Habermas sees as typical of the bourgeois moment of capitalism. Instead a mass society develops founded on an acceptable level of comfort, pleasure and control in which people participate as members of the market."
>
> [Elliott(1986)p.106]

The mass media are taken to play a crucial role in this erosion of the public sphere. However, while this general trend can be related back to the ownership and control, increasing centralisation and market and technological imperatives characterising the operations of the mass media, more recently it has been argued that the wider social forms of political disinterest and the prominence of consumerism cannot be laid at the door of media-centred processes of change. Rather a social totality approach is required which, situating the audience within a wider social theory of temporal and spatial activity within advanced capitalist society, approaches television as the colonization of leisure time increasingly relegated to the private-domestic sphere [Lodziak(1986)(1988)]. In other words while television may be conceptualised as a powerful medium, it is not in relation to its messages that its power resides, but rather its political displacement effects via its colonization of the non-work, domestic based, and essentially privatised use of leisure time.

This summary statement cannot do justice to the broad terrain of social theory encompassed within this position, however while it is possible to concur with the need to situate accounts of the power of the media within a wider social theoretical framework it appears that, in this instance, the ideological baby has been jettisoned with the media-centric bath water. That is, while media messages may not directly and simply impose ideological effects given that audiences come to the television already structured into temporal daily rhythms, routines and spatial activities, or, perhaps in crude terms conditioned to the 'dull compulsion of the economic', the consonance of televisual forms and these wider parameters of social life and existence continues to be worthy of attention. While social theorists have a great deal to say of interest to the media theoretician, particularly relating to the wider social forces impinging upon the individuals, family members and

social collectivities that eventually comprise an audience, enough is known concerning viewing habits to indicate that while in one sense audiences may well be watching television as a habitual domestic 'spatial-temporal' activity, advertisers, programmer makers and, it can be suggested, audiences can, and do knowingly differentiate between watching television in the inert sense above and actively viewing television programmes albeit with varying degrees of discrimination, conscious selection and attention [Tunstall(1985)p.135]. The distinction, clearly, is crucial and indicates that while the 'spatial-temporal' dimension of television viewing is an important and relatively under-researched area of media inquiry, media content and its wider appeals to different interests, issues and general life situations is of continuing relevance and may well provide a degree of homologous fit to these wider social concerns.

This point can be established by briefly referring to a number of studies which have indicated something of the forms of appeal that can inform different types of media product and the life situations of their audience. Tod Gitlin, for instance, has suggested the following line of research interest that could be pursued in relation to the private sphere and publicly disseminated consumer culture:

> "It might approach consumer culture as a displacement into the private, individual sphere of impulses toward freedom and happiness unrealizable in everyday life as both condition and consequence of the failure of a radical political alternative that could speak to the prevailing unhappiness. A counter-paradigm could scrutinize 'the culture industry' as both social control and failed, muddled, privatized revolt against the expoitative conditions of work and family in the world of organised capitalism."
>
> [Gitlin(1978)p.107]

Janice Radway has argued that the avid reading of romance novels by some women reflects not only upon the romanticised beliefs and values traditionally seen to ideologically incorporate women within patriarchal relations of domination but also the evident failure of these same traditions as lived and experienced by women.

> "It is true, certainly that, that the romantic story itself affirms the perfection of romance and marriage. But it is equally clear that the constant need for such an assertion derives not from a sense of security and complete faith in the status quo, but from a deep dissatisfaction with the meagre benefits apportioned to women by the very institutions

legitimated in the narrative.
[Radway(1983)pp.71-2,cited in Schroder(1987)]

In relation to the increasing popularity of the popular press, Colin Sparks has maintained that if 'we take seriously the implications of the fact that the consumers choose this sort of newspaper because it speaks to them about things which matter to them, then we are speaking more about social and political life in a stable bourgeois democracy than about the nature of the press'. Addressing the popular news prevalence of sport, entertainment and sexual scandal over the world of formal politics, the 'explanation for this state of affairs is that political and economic power in a stable bourgeois democracy is so far removed from the real lives of the mass of the population that they have no interest, in either sense, in monitoring its disposal [Sparks(1988)p.217]. In other words, while these and other mass produced forms can be approached as both 'ideological' and 'commodities' produced within the culture industry, they nonetheless <u>also</u> address, obliquely, the wider social conditions within which people find themselves. Enough has been said to indicate that Lodziak's thesis of the 'displacement' power of television when viewed from a social totality perspective need not be taken as indicative of the 'irrelevance' of attending to media forms themselves. This point also relates back to the conception of 'genre' understood as established orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text and audience and begins to point to a more complex and interrelated conceptualization of the mass communication process and forms than has generally been found across the various approaches discussed above.

Concluding Observations on Theory within a Diversified Field

As indicated at the outset this chapter sought merely to chart some of the main lines of theoretical approach informing mass communications research. From the critical review above it is apparent that attempts to construct a generalised theoretical framework which seeks explanatory self-sufficiency is likely to founder on the complexities, diversity and heterogeneous social processes and forms involved in media production, disseminated

forms and differentiated audiences engagements. While some of the more strident approaches reviewed have often provided important insights and gains, these invariably remain of a partial nature until supplemented and tempered by a more encompassing, if not so theoretically elegant, perspective involving at least some recognition of the three interrelated 'moments' of production, message and reception. While earlier positions have either perhaps been more inclined towards an approach firmly situated within, and consciously aligned to wider social theory, other, perhaps more naive, approaches have approached the processes and forms of mass communication as seemingly a transparent and identifiable object of inquiry requiring little explicit theoretical delineation or analytical justification. What is clear however, is that the very pervasiveness and deeply embedded nature of the mass media within modern societies renders their examination both necessary and simultaneously problematic. As Todd Gitlin has observed:

> "In some ways the very ubiquity of the mass media removes media as a whole system from the scope of positivist social analysis; for how may we 'measure' the 'impact' of a social force which is omnipresent within social life and which has a great deal to do with constituting it ?"
>
> [Gitlin(1982)p.8]

The approaches reviewed above, adopting differing stances in relation to the notion and practice of 'positivist science' have nonetheless in their different ways sought to address the questions of mass media effects, influence and impact and have provided a range of theoretical positions from which to view these complex and difficult questions. However, while these provide varying degrees of conceptual, analytical and explanatory adequacy, the fact remains that no single theoretical approach has, as yet, even begun to encompass the multiple perspectives and diverse questions which can simultanously be put to the mass media and their wider social and political involvement. Such a state of affairs, of course, is unlikely to change and should perhaps be embraced rather than silenced via positions of 'rigorous', and yet ultimately unilluminating, theoretical exclusivity.

While the critical review above has at best provided an overview or general description of some of the most apparent lines of theoretical difference, it cannot hope to capture the

rich diversity of either individual studies nor the vast array of social concerns and issues, impacts and influences, which have been pursued in relation to the means of mass communication. In reviewing some of the main lines of theoretical division and approach, it is apparent that informing social theories, and the conceptualisation of ideology in particular has, for a number of studies, led to generalised statements in which the 'power' and social centrality of the mass media has been taken as granted. While such positions may provide the guiding theoretical basis informing particular studies, the inherent risk that what needs to be established is merely assumed and the diffentiated nature of mass communications rendered into a relatively homogenised or 'one dimensional' understanding of the social function of the mass media is all too apparent.

The pursuit of a theory of mass communications appears to be destined to either accord the institutions of the mass media with a social centrality and force which frequently verges upon a form of media determinism, or alternatively tends to dismiss the mass media as largely irrelevant to the more central and serious questions of our times. Both responses, it seems to me, are without foundation and derive in part at least from the pursuit of a generalised theory of mass communications combined with a restricted and relatively direct notion of media effects or influence.

Instead of pursuing a theoretical approach which seeks to establish the central 'role' or general 'function' or even wider 'impact' of the mass media within a modern social order, a diversity of lines of approach can simultaneously be sustained and pursued in relation to a myriad of research interests and questions. While this is not to demote the stature or necessity of informing social theory, it is perhaps to accept the evident realities attending mass communications research. Given the complexity and, in many ways, integrated and inextricable nature of mass communications within different social forms and processes, the research enterprise is seriously impaired if a theoretical schema attempts to delimit and foreclose the range of legitimate lines of inquiry, or the approach to be adopted. In this sense the following statement offers a programmatic perspective towards the study of mass communications which,

declining any single theoretical approach, nonetheless provides an overview of many valuable lines of inquiry already pursued across a number of individual studies.

> "The media help to set the social/political agenda. They select, organize, emphasise, define and amplify. They convey meanings and perspectives, offer solutions, associate certain groups with certain types of values and behaviour, create anxiety, and legitimate or justify the status quo and the prevailing systems of social control. They structure 'the pictures of the world', that are available to us and, in turn these pictures may structure our beliefs and possible modes of action. It is in these complex and difficult ways that we must examine the influence of the media."
>
> [Halloran(1978)p.825]

Having noted many of the possible impacts and influences of the mass media, this position adopts a degree of pluralism, or a 'multiperspective approach' [Halloran(1983)], in relation to the lines of inquiry that can usefully be pursued without feeling constrained to attempt to unify disparate lines of approach within a single theoretical framework, much less develop a definitive theory of mass communications. While many of the substantive positions indicated can be found in various theoretical approaches reviewed above, these need not be regarded from a more open perspective to be the exclusive concerns of such approaches. Rather, it appears that these basic questions can be informed by varying social theories though they need not be regarded as indicating a position which centres the mass media as a unified, undifferentiated or essentially 'ideologically' closed medium.

In the light of the above it is interesting to briefly return to the question of possible media impacts and influences. Suspicious of global and generalised claims concerning either the effects or influences of the mass media, it is nonetheless clear that a number of studies have contributed much to the understanding of the various and different ways in which the mass media impact upon society. Reference here could usefully include the seminal study of Folk Devils and Moral Panics [Cohen(1972)], which, identifying a specific social issue and spiral of societal response signalled and amplified by the media paved the way for a number of later studies which, rather than focusing upon the media writ large, have confined their sights to specific issues and social problems and the role played by the mass media in their signification and wider societal

response. Studies such as Racism and the Mass Media [Hartmann and Husband(1974)], Images of Welfare [Golding and Middleton (1982) and Policing the Crisis [Hall et al(1978)] for instance and reviewed earlier, have each in their own way sought to establish the particular contribution of the mass media to the social signification and possible responses and reactions of the wider public, policy makers and implementors to contentious social issues.

If specific areas of social and political concern can usefully be pursued in terms of their media signification and possible amplification which in turn is situated within a wider institutional nexus of reaction and response, so the 'reality constructing' capability of the media, its ability to selectively present and frame images, issues and priorities, as well as provide organised frameworks of understanding have long been recognised [Lang and Lang(1955);Halloran et al(1970)] and pursued across a wide range of social issues and events whether social problems, crime and deviance [Cohen and Young (eds) (1981); Chibnall(1977)], the presentation of the women's movement [Tuchman(1978)], the anti-Vietnam war movement [Gitlin(1982)] and countless other areas of social conflict and strife too numerous to mention. The underlying premiss informing these and other similar studies is the recognition that given the highly restricted capacity of any one individual to directly encounter or experience the myriad issues and concerns signified within the media, the dependency upon media images, portrayals and representations across a number of contentious areas is potentially of considerable impact and influence. On occasion such 'representations' can dramatically call attention to events, for the most part, previously unknown and yet remain scarred within popular consciousness.

> "Dawn, and as the sun breaks through the piercing chill of night on the plain outside Korem, it lights up a biblical famine, now in the 20th century. This place, say workers here, is the closest thing to hell on earth..."
>
> [Michael Burke, cited in Harrison and Palmer(1986)]

When Michael Burke scripted these memorable words, not only was the power of the media demonstrated in its ability to focus attention upon the distant plight of others and, in part at least, thereby impelling a spiral of wider popular response and

offical reaction, but so too was the power of the media also implicitly invoked in its previous silence towards the impending doom now capturing the world's attention. The recent upsurge in popular concern, fears and anxieties directed towards environmental issues and concerns has in large measure been placed on the political agenda by the mass media and reflects a further dramatic instance of the contribution played by the media in raising issues and concerns to the top of the political agenda. While the institutional relationships between the media and other sites of social power, clearly needs to inform any empirical analysis of these and other 'agenda setting' issues, the discursive forms these cognitively raised issues assume must also be attended to.

Media portrayals as well as containing the cognitive pre-requisites, the bits and pieces of information which offer the possibility of assigning importance and significance to some issues, and perhaps equally as importantly not others, also provide the basis for developing more general frameworks or 'pictures of the world' which help organise meaning accomplishment and understandings. Generally recognised that the media play an important role in helping to set wider agendas of social, political and cultural importance, the analytical distinction sometimes drawn between 'cognitions' and 'attitudes' or 'opinions' is less clear when pursued across actual cases of empirical research.

'Representations', the images and views of the world that help structure the mental landscape, are also invoked within the formal communication of mediated 'information' and it is here that the 'influence' of the media has increasingly been sought. Pictures of the world, representations and images, in both verbal and visual senses, all point to the possible roles played by the media in structuring the views and perspectives that we hold. While some have been disinclined to accept the 'influence' of the media as an imposed 'symbolic' landscape, seemingly ordering both perception and possible modes of activity with little or no reference given to the realms of social experience and activity that inform media consumption, others have sought to establish the general symbolic reality conveyed by the media and its impact upon social perceptions, and even involvement in generating levels of public fear or anxiety - which in turn may

encourage officially sanctioned responses and reactions. Here reference can briefly be made to the 'cultivation' thesis of George Gerbner and his colleagues concerning the 'mainstreaming' of American society in terms of, say, widespread social fears and anxieties concerning levels of crime and social violence, is clearly of continuing interest and provides a suggestive, and in all probability much increased relevance to questions posed to the 'effects' of television violence [Gerbner and Gross(1980)].

Not surprisingly, the directly 'political' role of the mass media, as noted in an earlier chapter, has often preoccupied media researches both within liberal-plurlalist and more critical approaches. However while the 'political' dimension of the mass media is likely to be interpreted more widely by radical accounts than liberal understandings of institutionalised political processes and arrangements both have been disposed to accord the mass media considerable political influence and power in this regard. One commentator has noted:

> "Politics and the political infuse all aspects of our lives, our attitudes and our behaviour. And because the mass media are at the heart of the processes of communication through which "problems" and their "resolution" are framed and discussed, they deserve extensive analysis."
>
> [Negrine(1989)p.3]

While studies have sought to establish the influence of media upon voting behaviour and political attitudes, the long-standing and inextricably infused nature of political mass communications and established political processes and arrangements suggests, according to Seymour-Ure, that the 'influence' of the mass media is not confined to the 'assumption that the effect of the media is limited to the potency of their messages' [cited in Negrine op.cit.p.8]. That is, by attending to the function the media play within political processes 'influence' need not indicate either change or reinforcement of individual behaviour or attitudes. Rather, the embedded nature of political mass communications, institutional interdependencies and reciprocal modifications of political process and forms all point to the entwined and frequently indissoluble nature of politics and mass communications.

Discerning what is termed a 'media logic', recent commentators have observed that 'when a media logic is employed to present and interpret institutional phenomena, the form and

content of those institutions are altered' [Altheide and Snow(1979)]. These changes can be relatively minor, perhaps relating to the way politicians dress and groom themselves, or they may, according to these authors, be of major impact as in the case of present-day political campaigning. The omnipresence of the media in contemporary society has led to a situation where 'every major institution has become part of media culture'. Moreover, for some the nature of the medium itself, as with television, is likely to trivialise the communication of serious social issues [Postman(1987)]. While some of these positions appear to constantly run the risk of positing the mass media as the central cultural hub within a social wheel disseminating political reality outwards down its various spokes, thus invoking the charges of media centrism or even determinism once applied to certain mass society theorists, they nontheless call attention to the deeply embedded and entwined nature of mass communications and its possible impacts.

This review of some of the most impressive studies conducted in mass communications research has sought to indicate that while no single 'Mass Communications Theory' exists, considerable gains and insights have nevertheless be won into our understanding of diverse social issues and the contribution played by the mass media in their public 'mediation'. These studies, and others too innumerable to mention, have pursued different lines of inquiry, posed different substantive questions within differing and sometimes conflicting theoretical models of society. The seemingly alarming finding that different approaches can generate findings of mutual interest, without necessarily impeaching theoretical or methodological underpinnings, is perhaps explicable by the nature of mass communications itself. So, for example, if from one perspective television provides the means for establishing, celebrating and affirming a commonality of experience and therby contributes to the deepening of the democratic process [Scannell(1989)], from another the principal import of television may be taken as the means for legitimating an ineqalitarian social order and securing social control [Murdock and Golding(1977)], while yet another approach may discern the deeply embedded domestic activity of television viewing and its role within wider processes of temporal activity structuring work and non-work

routines [Lodziak(1988)].

While the theoretical emphases, and general conclusions reached by each of these, and many other, 'competing' approaches may temper the claims of any one approach, they all nonetheless provide new insights into the complex realities of television viewing and its disseminated forms. If the emphases of each or all of these approaches can be challenged, the fact that each can sustain its position from the researches conducted points as much to the complex and multiple realities of mass communications as to the informing constructs of competing social theories. In summary, it can be be maintained that the study of mass communications represents a diversified field composed of differing theoretical approaches and substantive lines of inquiry which collectively pay testimony to both the importance and differentiated nature of the mass media and their involvement across a multiplicity of social processes, structures and forms. Having critically reviewed some of the most important lines of theoretical difference ordering the substantive questions put to the mass media, the following chapter will develop a framework deemed appropriate to the televisual presentation of the inner city.

Chapter Four

TELEVISION AND THE INNER CITY : SECURING AN APPROACH

Introduction

In securing a theoretical framework in which to pursue the televisual portrayal of the inner city two basic bodies of knowledge, discussion and debate have informed the approach adopted. Firstly, the public discussion and contested array of perspectives advanced in relation to the social and politcal problems, issues and concerns of 'the inner city' - as outlined in chapter one. And secondly the literature and theory of mass communications research, providing as it does a range of theoretical approaches and debates relating to the various issues and substantive questions raised and pursued in terms of the mass communication process. This second body of literature has been reviewed earlier concerning firstly, the voluminous literature and research effort conducted in numerous studies of print and broadcast news; secondly, specific studies relating to inner city issues and concerns and their public 'mediation'; and thirdly, the general literature relating to major lines of theoretical approach informing the study of mass communications. Both of these 'contested' areas of debate and discussion, the problems of the inner city and mass communications theory, have inevitably informed the theoretical framework thought useful and appropriate to the examination of the televisual portrayal of the inner city.

With the inner city providing an instance of social struggle and politcal engagement, representing an important social contest deeply implicated in, and dependent upon the mobilization of competing meanings and interpretative understandings, the medium of regional television provides an instance of the mass media which has contributed to the public portrayal and debate centring upon the inner city. In a sense therefore, both the inner city and regional television provide case studies which together can be investigated to the extent that both illuminate important features of the public 'mediation' of important social and political concerns. The public debate surrounding the inner city affords an instance of

political difference and conflict which can be interrogated to determine how, and in what forms the mass media have 'mediated' an instance of social and political contest; while focusing upon the instance of a particular regional independent television company affords an opportunity to inspect in detail how one particular institution of the mass media, via its portrayal of the inner city, is organised, practically produces and performs its programme function in relation to an important social issue. These two avenues of approach will be briefly elaborated upon before proceding to stipulate the research foci in more detail.

The Inner City: A Case Study of Social and Political Contest

The earlier discussion of the inner city, it will be remembered, concluded that 'the inner city' can essentially be regarded as both a social and semantic site of contest and difference. Historically precedented many of the problems and issues raised within the wider inner city debate are invariably of long-standing concern. However, it was also observed that social problems can be conceived in different ways and placed within competing interpretative frameworks. These wider discourses seeking not only to provide a particular definition of the key inner city issues and concerns have also invariably sought to provide an explanatory and interpretative framework with which to account for, and 'understand' the inner city while also advancing prescriptive demands. In other words, the social issues and problems raised within and addressed by the inner city debate have frequently been aligned to wider political perspectives.

Following a careful review of a wide range of available discussion, debate and research literature it was noted how three principal discourses have sought to organise and align public understanding of the inner city. While these discourses are most clearly evident across the range of inquiries and public debate following in the aftermath of the 1980's urban disorders the principal interpretative frameworks mobilised in relation to the inner city debate have, in so far as they have become organised within a pre-existing political terrain, been publicly available for some considerable time. Moreover, though elaborated as intended 'ideal types', and as such assumed to

infrequently exist in 'pure form', it was nevertheless found that a remarkable consonance existed between these discourses and the actual frameworks of interpretation, explanation and prescription deployed within official and unofficial inquiries into recent inner city riots.

The upshot of such findings for this particular research project is that the inner city represents a site of social and semantic difference. These differences have tended to be organised around the three 'key' areas of concern - problems of law and order, urban deprivation, and racial inequality and social injustice - and have respectively tended to be placed at the core of conservative, liberal and radical accounts of the inner city. These three fundamental areas of concern have therefore informed the three principal inner city discourses with differing degrees of emphasis and, in relation to recent inner city riots, explanatory force.

The starting point of this inquiry therefore raises the fundamental question of exactly how the inner city and its competing interpretations have been presented within its televison presentation. Or, more formally, in the context of the research opportunity: To what extent and in what form has independent television portrayed the multiple issues and represented the array of social and political perspectives focused upon, and mobilized around the region's inner cities ?

From the review of relevant mass communications studies relating to inner city themes and issues six main findings were noted. In so far as the media presentation of the inner city is concerned, research generally has tended to focus upon firstly, the immediate coverage of the event of a riot, leaving in abeyance considerations of general inner city reporting; secondly, the research focus has invariably attended to national forms of press coverage, with only two studies specifically focusing upon national forms of television coverage, thereby possibly contributing to the tendency to discuss 'the media' as essentially uniform in purpose and undifferentiated in content; thirdly, attention has tended to focus upon the specific coverage of national news, ignoring the possibility that different media and different media forms may have contributed differentially to the public portrayal and 'mediation' of the problems and issues of the inner city; fourthly the close

readings of the discourses evident across the inner city riot, national news coverage has failed to attend to the informing backdrop of production and general journalistic practices impacting upon this coverage, thereby encouraging inferences in regard to ideological intent; fifthly, in so far as these readings have attended to the manifest discourses displayed across the texts of riots coverage, little attention has been paid to the characteristic forms or particular inflexions of programme types or 'genres' attending these portrayals, that is, properties of the medium, though inescapably involved in processes of signification and the dissemination of meaning, have been insufficiently attended to; and sixthly, it has been noted how the 'audience' has singly failed to be afforded any research effort in relation to the presentation of inner city issues, and riot coverage particularly, notwithstanding claims relating to the likely impacts of such coverage upon the wider audience.

While this project can seek to address aspects of all these research lacunae, the last can only be dealt with tangentally. However, in so far as the approach indicated below pays close attention to the inscribed audience appeals and expectations structured within, and elicited from, a consideration of the genres in which the televisual presentation of the inner city has principally taken place, increased attention will be directed to aspects of audience involvement. In addition to these findings relating in the main to studies already conducted in relation to media riot coverage, a number of studies have also suggested that certain categories of news are likely to be afforded increased news treatment than others. Finally, from this wide review it has also been hypothesised that further insights can be gained from attending to the properties of the medium itself, an area of research interest insufficiently pursued to date, and the manner in which these may be found to impact upon the public portrayal of the problems and issues of the inner city. These various 'findings' and research lacunae can now be placed within a wider framework which seeks to address the particular medium of regional television.

Regional Television: A Case Study of the Mass Media

The very nature of the inner city, contested and open to conflicting accounts and occasionally finding headline attention when situated at the top of the national political agenda by serious outbreaks of disorder, has recently placed the inner city at the heart of social and political debate. How this debate has been conducted, and what interpretative resources and accounts have been made publicly available by means of the regional medium of independent television is therefore one part of this much wider public canvas. It is part of a canvas however which has hitherto failed to receive research attention, notwithstanding the importance of this particular medium and its potential significance for the public portrayal and understanding of the inner city.

While the inner city has periodically hit the national headlines and has been afforded a degree of research interest the long-standing and routine coverage of inner city issues and concerns within the possibly heightened relevancies, and certainly more 'proximate' context of the regional televison medium have failed to attract any research interest whatsoever. While this may be a regretable omission, it simply reflects the overriding absence of serious empirical research which, to date, has failed to address the particularity of regional television in general, and independent television specifically. With one recent, and generally deficient regional news study conducted in highly impressionistic and judgemental terms [Hetherington(1989)], the organization of regional television, its forms of regional programming and diverse 'regional' aims, appeals and ambitions have yet to attract the research attention which this established sector of public and independent broadcasting deserves.

Moreover, if the medium of regional television has played a particular role in presenting the resources and interpretative accounts of the problems and issues of the inner city on a more mundane basis than national media, it is also the case that when national news attention has momentarily been focused upon such events as inner city riots, these have invariably received extended and considerably prolonged attention within the regional media, long after the 'events' themselves have

disappeared from the national public stage. How these events have continued to be signified over the long term, and how the inner city has been portrayed in general across an extended period of time, on a day to day basis is therefore of considerable interest considering the paucity, and invariably highly focused nature of research confined to inner city riot coverage.

If the earlier discussion of the inner city has identified and confirmed its position as a social site of conflicting and competing interpretation clearly it offers a key area of interest that can usefully be pursued in terms of its media portrayal, simultaneously addressing many of the debates and discussions informing mass communications research and theory. As a site of social and political engagement the televisual presentation of the inner city represents an area of public debate which can 'put to the test' many of the leading contentions of the critical approach noted above, concerning the propensity towards ideological closure characterizing the mass media. Noting the competing understandings of 'ideology' however, this overworked term will not preoccupy the present study. Rather, the competing and conflicting interpretative discourses already discerned as the principal means of organising discussion and understanding of the inner city will be pursued across the medium of regional television. More concerned to sytematically and accurately establish the extent, range and forms of inner city coverage and the interpretative resources and accounts characterizing this portrayal than to apportion the increasingly unhelpful tag of 'ideology' to the coverage reviewed and analysed, the analysis will nonetheless be concerned to chart the possible adequacy or inadequacy of this coverage when considered against the key issues and concerns emphasised across the principal discourses of inner city discussion and debate.

Approaching the portrayal of the inner city informed by this wider view of the main interpretative frameworks mobilised around the site of the inner city, it is possible, with the development of an appropriate methodolology, to begin to chart the televisual presentation of the inner city and determine the extent, forms and character of this coverage. However, as the theoretical discussion of the last chapter has already

indicated, to simply approach the mass media with the intention of identifying and comparing the substantive contents or discursive positions disseminated with a presupposed benchmark, whether a naive 'insight' into the true nature of empirical reality, or, as in this instance, an overview of the principal and contending discourses organising the principal lines of public debate and inner city viewpoints, runs the risk of failing to identify and account for the specific contribution and impact of the mass medium itself upon the final 'contents' or available discursive positions placed within the public domain.

In other words, a number of the recent theoretical inquiries pursued in relation to, what I have termed, 'properties of the medium' have begun to note the surrounding forms within which these discursive positions may gain expression. Attention has increasingly been devoted to the relational and positioning aspects of language and discourse as noted earlier, while others have attended to the range of viewpoints gaining access, or degree of 'openess' and 'closedness' afforded by different programme types, as well as the degree of programme resolution, or 'tightness' and 'loosness' attending public discussion and controversy. It has also been indicated that the concept of genre, when applied to television programmes also begins to offer valuable explanatory insights into the span of contents, formal arrangements and relational aspects of programme stance which routinely combine to impact upon the form of mediated inner city coverage. These, and other characteristics of the medium, can all usefully be investigated to the extent that they profoundly impact upon the nature, forms and formal possibilities attending the distribution of substantive ideological or discursive positions.

Focusing the Research Aims

On the basis of the above the approach pursued can usefully attend to the presentation of the inner city generally, including riot coverage but not exclusively so, across an extended period of time, within the medium of regional television. In addition to establishing the extent, nature and forms of this inner city presentation and the relative presence

or absence of the three organising inner city discourses found to characterize recent inner city debate, attention will also pursue the impact of particular characteristics or forms of the medium itself, discussed under the organising heading of genre and discussed across news, current affairs and documentary coverage. While considerable attention will be devoted to a systematic and analytic appraisal of this televisual portrayal of the inner city, attention will also be directed, in complementary terms, to key aspects of news production and the wider institutional domain which have been found to crucially impact upon general inner city coverage.

As a first step in forming an appropriate theoretical framework Habermas's conception of the 'public sphere' can usefully be called upon to the extent that it initiates discussion of four basic attributes, or defining characteristics which can be deemed central to the televisual portrayal of the inner city. By the term 'public sphere' Habermas refers to a realm of social life in which citizens can come together as a rational body, in which general interests can be discussed, debated and decided upon.

> "By 'the public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion - that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions - about matters of general interest. In a large public body this kind of communication requires specific means for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it. Today newspapers and magazines radio and television are the media of the public sphere."
>
> [Habermas(1974)p.49.]

Habermas' classic formulation of the public sphere identifies four principal areas of investigation which can be taken as crucialy impacting upon the public communication and formation of public opinion, namely, the range of opinion finding public expression, the degree of access, the type of public forum, and the character of the means of communication. These will all be addressed below, first however Habermas's

conception can briefly be subjected to some discussion to the extent to which it can be accepted as an adequate framework for approaching the mass media and the mediation of political processes and forms.

The historical, 'ideal' and ideological conceptions of the public sphere as elaborated by Habermas(1989) have all contributed to current discussions of the public sphere. Originally seen as the outcome of historical forces of mercantile capitalism, the public sphere became the arena in which political opinion could find a collective formation and expression, mediating between the disparate individual interests of civil society and the functioning of the state. This 'ideal', if perhaps originally more flawed than even Habermas recognises, has subsequently been seen to be increasingly undermined and eroded by the structural arrangments of modern social democracies. Indeed, it is this aspect of the increasingly unrepresentative, economically centralised, and politically partial nature of the means of communication of the public sphere, taken as the institutions of the mass media, which has led commentators to critically contrast the 'ideal' public sphere of Habermas' original formulation with the actual state of affairs characterizing the operation of the mass media in more recent times[Elliott(1986); Garnham(1986);Dahlgren(1987)].

However, if the increasingly centralised and conglomerate organizations of the mass media can be approached in terms of the erosion of the public sphere, the concept of the public sphere can itself be approached as an 'ideology' . Here shared historical antecedents relating to the media as agencies of 'the fourth estate' and the notion of a rational, democratic and openly available forum in which collective opinion is formed and channelled upwards to the political institutions of the state has been investigated to the extent that journalists continue to endorse such a view, both in terms of the use of traditional subject categorizations of news - political, economic, cultural etc.[Jensen(1987b)], and also in terms of the professional self-conceptions of their wider social role and responsibilites [Elliott(1980a); Schiller(1980)].

If the idea of the public sphere permits both lines of approach, to the extent that the mass media continue to play a central role in the mediation of political reality, while

simultaneously becoming increasingly economically entrenched within that same reality, a further position in relation to Habermas' model has also begun to be developed. Habermas' original study(1962), generally taken by later commentators as of significance in that it pointed to crucial developments within the mediation of political interests by definition situated within the public sphere, has tended to displace interest in Habermas' related concern with the changing fortunes of the 'private sphere' - also found to be susceptible to changing historical function and social definition . This 'flipside' of the Habermasian concept of the public sphere, with few exceptions, has tended to be eclipsed in general discussions, though recently linguistic analyses have recovered this feature of public communication and begun to unravel its ideological significance. Attending to the reading 'positions' offered to audience members as well as the forms of general inflexion of events, disposing their appropriation and interpretation as either of private or public interest, the mediation of 'public' events can frequently be consigned to either the public or private spheres of interest with considerable impact upon the signification of political events and processes. Whether an audience is addressed as, say, political citizens or private consumers or the manner in which public events are signified as 'personal' affairs or events of 'public' consequence can all crucially impact upon the nature of communicated events and processes [Kress(1986)].

Clearly, all these lines of analysis in relation to the idea of the public sphere are intrinsically interesting and begin to illuminate particular characteristics of the means and forms of mass communication which can usefully be pursued below. However, it also needs to be said that the original Habermasian theory of the public sphere both in its historical and 'ideal' formulations, has on occasion lent itself to an overly rationalist understanding of political process and engagement. This is apt to invest the mass media with a centrality and political primacy that ignores both the entrenched and ragged nature of political and social struggle, often conducted at a less than 'rational' level of consensus formation, while also tending to displace or dismiss other possible functions and dimensions of the mass media which cannot simply be subsumed

under the politicised conception of the public sphere. In other words the mass media have frequently been taken to contribute to the formation and development of the public sphere though their political significance cannot, as argued in the previous chapter, be confined to this particular dimension.

Founded upon a rationalist understanding of the forms of political communication, and positing the formation of political opinion at the centre of the public sphere, the model does not easily fit the complex and varied ways in which mass communications contribute to wider social, political and cultural processes anf forms. The Habermasian public sphere, if simply taken to intimate an 'ideal speech situation' of mass communication proportions, may be criticised in that it proposes a narrowly conceived understanding of the political process, dependent upon a rationalist approach to communication and the formation of consensual opinion.

Interestingly, though the theoretical review of the previous chapter has frequently referred to critical positions intent upon explicating the role or contribution of the mass media to political processes and forms, direct reference to opinion formation has been less evident. The reason, it can be suggested, is that 'political opinion' implies an unnecessarily restricted notion of political communication founded upon a rational understanding of intellectual deliberation and engagement. While this is not to deny the importance of this aspect of political communication, it cannot easily accommodate other, and perhaps on occasion equally as important, considerations concerning the symbolic and ritual appeals of political communication, nor the general representations, images and frameworks of understanding which help order the accomplishment of meaning and interpretation and yet which do not necessarily assume the deliberate, and articulated form of 'opinion'.

The concept of the public sphere in so far as it invokes a unitary understanding of public opinion therefore is liable to incorporation into an essentially liberal-rationalist or alternatively radical-constructionist position each positioning the public sphere as the pivotal site where common understandings and purposes are perceived and pursued. It is argued here in contrast that this undermines the notion of the

public sphere as an arena where wider social difference and conflict can assume extended public expression. The public sphere is not thought to be necessarily the site where an imposed and one-dimensional 'social reality' is constructed a'la Marcuse(1972), but it may well prove to be the site where social differences become publicly negotiated, managed and defined. The view adopted here therefore is contrary to that of the 'rhetorical theorist' cited below which is perhaps representative of a wider tendency to invest the 'public sphere' as both the source and the enactment of consensual social power.

> "The concept of the public sphere refers to a discursive realm in which individuals and groups may transcend their private concerns to interact freely in ways conducive to forming a common sense of reality. In this realm, citizens voice their concerns, discover their generalised interests, and through their common sense of reality emerge as a public and pursue their common cause."
>
> [Hauser(1987)p.438]

Interestingly this formulation is not dissimilar to the cultural forum approach already reviewed, and both may be subjected to similar criticism. Contrary to the unified and essentially consensual understanding of the 'public sphere' it may be countered that 'the public' rarely, if ever, forge a common sense of reality pursuing a common cause, though this may well be the aim of disparate social positions seeking to realign and unify 'public opinion' in ways that are supportive of their respective social and political projects.

In summary, it has been suggested that the centrality of 'public opinion' placed at the heart of the Habermasian public sphere need not be taken as identifiable with the principal role or function of the mass media, whether historically, currently or even upon the political realisation of its 'ideal' form. To suppose that the mass media and the public sphere can simply be defined in relation to the formation and dissemination of 'public opinion' is to seriously overestimate the political centrality of the media and underestimate the differentiation of 'the public'. While the rationalist foundation for this mass communicated 'ideal speech situation', even in its 'ideal' conception, may be regarded as unwarrantable given the non-rational and symbolic dimensions attending human communication, the essentially unified conception of 'public opinion' is also troublesome given the existence of competing and conflicting

social interests continually denying both the notion of, and basis for social consensus.

Distancing the approach adopted here, then, from an overly rationalist understanding of the public sphere, the conception nonetheless accepts that the mass media frequently provide the public stage on which political contest and struggle is publicly displayed, as well as the site from which interpretative accounts and resources either sustaining or detracting from wider public perspectives are publicly made available. The televisual public sphere pursued in this project does not necessarily presuppose that the mass media assume a central role in the formation of a shared public opinion and common sense of reality; the mass media may well, however, contribute in diverse and possibly differential ways to the social and political processes of struggle, negotiation and conciliation enacted on a wider terrain.

While the public sphere is thought to be constituted by the mass media, it cannot be deemed to be coincident with the disparate roles and functions of the mass media in entirety. Herein lies both its dependency and potential corruption given the changing forms and diverse aims characterizing the institutions of the mass media. It is in this sense that Habermas' once discerned 'rational-critical' or 'culture-debating' function of the public sphere has increasingly given way to what he regards as a 'culture-consuming' public oriented within a 'pseudo-public sphere' [Habermas(1989)pp.159-180].

With these observations, the discussion can now return to those characteristics identified by Habermas as central to the concept of the public sphere. Essentially Habermas's conception of the public sphere refers to the means by which a public forum, with guaranteed access to all, furthers the rational formation and dissemination of public opinion. Four constituent elements can immediately be identifed which provide a useful starting point to the present analysis: public opinion, forum, access and means of communication.

I The Public Sphere As Political Communication

Though the assumed formation and delivery of 'public opinion', as discussed above, need not be taken as the only or

even the best way of formulating the role of the media within the public sphere, it can be maintained in relation to the portrayal of the inner city that the range of interpretative accounts and resources finding public expression will assume a central point of interest and analysis. The discursive positions finding expression within and across inner city related regional programming provides a principal focus of analysis, and in so far as this substantive coverage presents both interpretative resources/and or accounts of direct relevance to established inner city perspectives then it can be maintained that competing 'public opinions' are variously sustained or displaced.

However, given that the act of meaning accomplishment is dependent upon the moment of reception, this analysis makes no claims as to either the formation or effective dissemination of 'opinion', what it does seek to chart however is the range, extent and forms of inner city coverage and the interpretative accounts and resources placed within the public domain from which different 'opinions' may well gain differing degrees of sustenance and support.

II The Public Sphere As Forum

As well as referencing substantive concerns and opinions, Habermas' public sphere implies a social arena in which and by which such concerns gain public expression. This immediately poses the question concerning the nature or form of the forum itself. How is it structured, does it exhibit diversity or uniformity and how does this impact upon the possibilities for the exchange and the dissemination of meaning ? The term forum or arena therefore involves considerable relevance to the discussion of the public sphere since it is here that the 'sphere' is effectively enacted and brought to public life. Surprisingly little attention has been devoted to a close analysis of the range and formal possibilities/limitations associated with the televisual public sphere.

Forum or arena may be understood in terms which reflect the various levels within which the public sphere is organised. In its mass media aspects the various levels of forum could include the following levels and possible instances: general media/institutional level - (newspapers, radio or television);

organizational level - (the BBC, Central Television etc.), the level of genre - (national evening television news, social documentary, magazine current affairs programme); or internal programme level - (chaired discussion, interview, news desk format etc). At all of these levels then, the concept of 'forum' indicates that different possibililities and limitations may be found to attend the formal arrangements accompanying the advancement and exchange of meaning.

III The Public Sphere as Access

If the public sphere is visible to the extent that a public forum references issues and concerns of public interest and debate, so too does it implicitly involve recognition of social difference and diversity of views. Opinion formation is inextricably related to the formal possibility of disagreement, dissonance and social difference which pre-exist the possibility of publicly managed and formed social consensus, or, in more cynical terms, control. The first sense of access therefore implies the generalised involvement of a wider public which gains access to the play of social difference and vying interpretative accounts. To the extent that such social differences are encountered through, and circulated within the public sphere, such a sphere by definition must be readily available and accessible to the wider public. This implies that a medium is widely or universally available, and is not restricted either by price, scarcity or perhaps geography, and moreover that it does not require a specialised or esoteric knowledge nor exclusive level of cultural competence in order for the accessing of the general public. Access in this first sense, therefore, references the public sphere as a site of generalised accessibility.

If the formation of public opinion implies the possibility of social difference and disagreement then so too does such difference imply the possibility of competing or even conflicting social positions and interests. While such differences need not necessarily be assumed to be neatly sealed within identifiable social groups, classes or status positions as if, to borrow an image from Poulantzas', such could be easily recognised from the ideological number plates displayed on their

backs, nonetheless social differences tend to be voiced from collectivities and groups with shared experiences, life situations and those who have formed a sense of common identity and purpose. To this extent, though not denying the complex and diversified nature of cross-cutting, cumulative and intermediate social cleavages [Dunleavy and O'Leary(1987)p.61], which need not always coincide with, nor be voiced exclusively by one particular social group, it is still the case that within formal antagonisms and struggle the collective form of social difference tends to assume an identifiable expression, voiced by 'representative' members of the collectivity in question. In this sense the second understanding of access involves a scrutiny of the range of social actors gaining direct access to the public sphere.

The social relational 'Who', though not always coincident with the referential 'What', of public sphere concerns nonetheless can generally be seen as crucially impacting upon the diversity or relative paucity of 'representative' views and interpretations found within the public sphere. This, as already noted, has often assumed an important research finding in a number of news studies, though it was also noted that 1) given the evident tendency to level all news forms a universal hierarchy of 'accredited witnesses' has frequently been claimed to characterize all news forms, and 2) that such is seen as underpinning a journalistic epistemology claiming a position of independence while authenticating through the authoritative and 'objective' pronouncements of others. On both these fronts it was suggested that perhaps such findings may have been overplayed, diminishing a situation where different news forms may well exhibit more differentiation of access than first conceived, and secondly that informing journalistic epistemologies need not always be oriented towards the authenticating 'objectivity' of social authority armed with a positivist understanding of the social world.

Moreover, inquiring into the social actors securing access in this second sense of gaining a direct presence within the arena of the public sphere need not be confined to the news genre, but should also seek to chart, in this instance, the formal presences and absences of representatives of identified social positions across the different genres of news, current

affairs and documentary programming.

The third sense of access and the public sphere concerns the means by which access is secured. In other words the form of access may also be considered as a highly localised form of 'forum' discussed above. Whereas a particular social actor for instance may perhaps be involved within a current affairs discussion programme, the individual form of access may be occasioned by a reference by another speaker, or perhaps a selected quotation. Such forms of access therefore can again be seen as providing different, and possibly differential forms of discursive possibility and control. These are clearly of immense importance to the whole notion and operation of the public sphere.

IV The Public Sphere As Means of Communication

The fourth key element identified as essential to the operation of the modern public sphere is the existence of a means of communication which can overcome the physical and geographical problems of an extensive and dispersed audience. Clearly, 'means of communication' can assume diverse forms and different institutional and organizational levels but all potentially impacting upon the possibility of securing open, unfettered public debate and discussion. Institutional and organizational levels as well as individual programme forms can all be found to characterize and structure the formal possibilities involved across different means of communication.

The 'medium', it has often been claimed from an array of approaches and with varying degrees of determinism, can crucially impact upon the 'message'. It is here that perhaps some of the strongest criticisms levelled against the ideal of the public sphere have been voiced. Thus the economic and commercial involvement of the media, compliance to legislative and state guidelines and operational policies, a class of professional rhetors, involvement in, or vulnerability to institutional inter-dependencies and different centres of social, political and economic power amongst other 'distorting' features have all variously been advanced as fundamentally undermining the ideal of the media public sphere. Clearly, while these diverse levels can all usefully inform the study of

contemporary forms of media organization and structure for the purposes of this research selections will be made which reflect the level of analysis deemed most illuminating to the concern in hand.

In this instance while broad parameters of institutional and organizational structure, including the commercial and political environment of independent television will be attended to at a general level, detailed attention will focus upon the 'means of communication' at the level of those television programmes or genres found to be the prominent vehicles of innner city portrayal. Occasionally referring upwards to organizational and institutional levels and even wider political and commercial environments, the research focus will principally be devoted to the level of programme forms and increasingly refined downwards to textual and discursive forms. The 'means of communication' in this sense will of necessity be restricted to those levels deemed most illuminating of the processes and forms directly impacting upon the portrayal of the inner city.

These four defining attributes of the public sphere can be pursued in relation to the range and forms of regional television's coverage of the inner city, both in terms of a systematic and analytic 'reading' of television programme content and the array of production practices and professional values directly informing their use and deployment. Such attributes though sometimes raised and empirically pursued in other researches have failed to be integrated within an overall consideration of the televisual public sphere. Studies have frequently attended to the substantive concerns and issues placed on the public agenda across a number of themes and issues of public concern, but only occasionally has attention been devoted to charting those social actors gaining access and their role played within this public forum, while discussion of the types and varying impacts of different televisual forums and encompassing genres accompanying the delivery of substantive issues have only rarely been pursued. No study, as yet, has sought to integrate such aspects within an overall discussion of the televisual public sphere, notwithstanding the evident complexity that the televisual presentation of information, ideas and symbols is inextricably tied to the programme forms,

formats and general style or orientation within which and through which such informational resources are publically made available.

Before a final research design and methodology is outlined however, given the explanatory emphasis attached to the idea of 'genre', a concept not readily deployed within either traditional or many variants of critical mass communications research, further discussion of this particular level of analysis is perhaps called for.

Regional News And Television Genre

Given the general finding that regional television has rarely commissioned factual programmes or programme items of direct inner city relevance, as detailed in later chapters, it has been found that by far the most prominent vehicle for inner city coverage in terms of programme frequency, relative audience size and schedule placing have all pointed to the programme form of regional news. Therefore regional news programming assumes the principal focus of interest in this study since it is here that daily weekday programmes, consistently high audience figures and an increased degree of programme 'relevance' to inner city concerns have all identified regional news as the major source of independent television inner city coverage. It can also be suggested, that no apparent difference is thought to alter this finding in terms of public service television, indicating that television's inner city coverage generally has principally and routinely been confined to regional news programming.

Representing a major corporate and schedule commitment regional news programmes regularly and routinely provide five major weekday evening programmes with increasing numbers of bulletins presented through out week days and weekends. Confining attention to the major weekday programmes, three to three and half hours of news programming routinely fill the early evening schedules throughout the 52 weeks of each and every year, involving currently in excess of sixty separate news items each week. Audience figures for regional news programmes are high, and if aggregated across the 15 different franchise areas viewing figures approximate those for prime-time national

news programmes. Despite the evident paucity of research interest expended on regional news when compared to national news forms it is apparent that, what ever else one has to say about regional news, it cannot be lightly dismissed on the basis of audience size, corporate commitments or schedule presence. Regional news, its particular appeals, inflections and journalistic content deserves detailed and considered research treatment and may well have much to contribute to the debates and discussion too often conducted as if all television news forms were essentially uniform and indistinguishable.

One way of attending to the specificity of regional television news is to approach such programmes as a type of genre. The use of 'genre' is here used to indicate that regional television news programmes exhibit an identifiable form and range of appeals which is both readily recognised by viewers and producers alike and relatively consistent through time and therefore open to quantitative and qualitative analysis. While both the uses of 'genre' and 'form' are liable to invoke competing, or even obscure notions of literary kinds or 'types', perhaps even the essentialist categorisation of all literary works into such universal forms as epic, lyric and dramatic, when applied to the programme forms of television the historical and provisional nature of different types of programmes and encompassing genres are immediately apparent. Whatever genre may indicate within the context of television then, it cannot be assumed to be a restricted and unchanging set of formal classifications. Providing a rich and plentiful flow of changing and dynamically juxtaposed forms, it is this very profusion of the television medium which constantly threatens to challenge any attempt at formal taxonomy; the array of species, sub-species and developing hybrid forms of television currently found within the schedules are simply too extensive, and too fluid for that.

Nonetheless while the pursuit of an essentially descriptive taxonomy may be deemed of little use in and of itself, and the identification of unchanging, much less universal, 'forms' constantly open to empirical refutation, the concept of genre when applied to species of news programming and aligned to a wider theoretical project provides a powerful adjunct to the lines of theoretical approach adopted in the majority of studies

reviewed above and also indicates that a systematic study of genre offers more than a descriptive overview and classification of different types of television programming. The term genre, then, in this discussion indicates a fairly direct approach to the study and explication of relatively established programme conventions and expectancies which help organise both the substantive subject matter and mode of delivery which together are here taken to constitute the defining characteristics of a television genre.

As noted earlier, one commentator has provided a useful definition of genre as the 'orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject' [Neale(1981). While the question remains as to the relative determinancy that can be accorded to these circulation 'moments' of production, message and audience, variously emphasised across many of the approaches reviewed above, this may be regarded as both its theoretical strength and, if remaining unsupplemented by other levels of analysis, its source of potential weakness. That is, declining to pursue a unilinear understanding of communication and determination, the concept of genre at least begins to raise the possibility that programme forms represent established, complex and condensed moments which cannot adequately be accounted for by any single theoretical approach, while also recognising that as established forms, the form itself may be seen to exert a degree of determinism or 'presence' which is not reducible to the immediate play of social interests, preceding economic determinations or organisational production routines and requirements.

Furthermore, as developed above, the concept of genre contains a particular heuristic advantage when applied to the study of television forms and the news form in particular. Not only does it direct attention toward the differentiation that can be found to characterize different programme forms and types of news product and news journalism thereby encouraging an examination of various levels of difference over and above simple categorisations of 'news content', but so too does it provide an important adjunct to the established theoretical field which has coloured the academic study of news. Two principal advances can be identified and sketched in relation to the review of news studies carried out earlier.

Firstly, by attending to genre along the lines of analysis indicated below, the understanding of news as both a cultural form and manufactured product can be theoretically extended. While recognising both the virtues and specific contributions afforded by political economy and organizational approaches, as well as instrumentalist approaches which attend to the role of the 'professional communicator', the conceptualisation of news as an established genre neither succumbs to the sometimes blunt determinisms found within variants of political economy nor the tendency towards functionalism found within many organizational approaches, while also qualifying the ideologically complicit understandings of the news professionals often attending instrumentalist approaches towards news production. As suggested above, while all these orientations towards the news process provide important insights and raise different research problems worthy of pursuit, the sense that an important and to some extent 'mediating' theoretical space has remained relatively unexplored cannot be avoided. This theoretical space, recognising wider economic constraints, organisational imperatives and routines and professional value systems and practices as all impacting upon the news product, nonetheless also recognises that the news product is <u>not</u> undifferentiated, either internally within any one organisational output, or across different media and news formsand that these three broad approaches - political economy, organizational studies, and the 'world of the professional communicator' - can, at best, only begin to address such difference.

Secondly, while a recent resurgence of interest in the reception moment of news can only be considered as necessary and welcome given the often forgotten 'missing link' of the audience frequently identifed and compounded by media researchers, the understanding of news programmes as a form of genre points to the constant inscription of audience interests, and positionings within the formalised arrangements and appeals built into the constitution of different types of news programme. This suggests that the theoretical consideration of audience is inextricably involved within the news production process and product, though this aspect has often largely been ignored by media researchers content to note the largely uninformed awareness of audiences expressed by journalists themselves. Such methodological

failures have contributed in part at least to a deficient theoretical appraisal of both the determinism exercised by established news conventions while also dispensing too readily possible considerations concerning the passive involvements and inscriptions of audiences within the moment of production, and affirmed within established cultural forms.

If the discussion of news understood as a form of genre provides a significant and to some extent mediating concept between the contextualising and constraining approaches of political economy and organizational approaches on the one hand, and instrumentalist or interactional considerations of the world of the professionbal communicator on the other, it also begins to directly address something of the relationship between cultural forms and the wider cultural terrain addressed in many of the approaches already reviewed. The discussion above concerning the increasing recognition of news as a cultural form, either by way of 'ritual' or 'ideological' studies which seek to reintegrate the news product within a wider socio-political culture can also be significantly enhanced if approached via the directing focus of the concept of genre. Genre, in other words, provides an organising and intermediate concept which considerably sharpens the understanding of cultural forms without either collapsing the specific form in question into a direct expression of a 'surrounding' albeit variously understood contested or consensual culture, and thus losing any theoretical purchase upon the exact role of the news production process, while also avoiding any assumed and relatively direct ideological complicity pursued by the immediate social interests of the news producers themselves. Moreover, though recognising that the news genre is inevitably dependent upon organisational and bureaucratic routines, an approach sensitised to the differences displayed between different news forms, can also inquire into the professional understandings daily informing the news form without simplistically invoking a form of ideological or political instrumentalism.

An established and relatively successful genre (both in terms of longevity and audience figures) such as the regional news form may be taken as exerting something of its own determinancy or 'presence' via established conventions, appeals

and widely shared expectancies and cannot therefore be adequately accounted for by any single approach aiming for theoretical exclusivity. The insights and levels of explanatory analysis of many approaches are here deemed necessary to a comprehensive discussion of the news form. This study, recognising the insights and explanatory gains offered by many of these approaches nonetheless identifies an intermediate level of theorisation and analysis hitherto insufficiently explored with which to complement existing understandings of the news form. If the concept of genre is sometimes accused of lacking sufficient theoretical clarity, seemingly developing a catalogue of descriptive categories while tending towards an historical appreciation of cultural forms, it can nonetheless provide a useful and not entirely atheoretical adjunct to the study of television news as will be demonstrated below.

More specifically, in terms of the focus of this particular project in so far as established expectancies and appeals inscribed into programme forms impact upon the range, and forms of political and social struggle and their form of public mediation within the public sphere, then this attribute of the public sphere, understood at the programme level of 'means of communication', deserves detailed attention.

The Televisual Mediation of the Inner City: A Research Approach

The discussion above has set out the principal research interests in relation to the televisual presentation of the inner city. Essentially pursuing the portrayal of the inner city as mediated within the televisual public sphere, the principal research interest is directed towards the interpretative resources and accounts placed within the public domain by the medium of regional television. Concerned to establish the extent, range and forms of inner city portrayal over an extended period of time, and across different types of programmes attention will attend closely to the properties of the media organising and impacting upon this coverage. Having pursued in some detail the extent and character of this inner city coverage, research attention will then seek to explicate some of

the primary production processes and professional practices which begin to account for the range, extent and character of this inner city coverage found across an extensive sweep of broadcast material. Helping to structure and organise this research design three key concepts have informed the discussion - the public sphere, the inner city, and the idea of televisual 'mediation'.

The concept of the public sphere, though generally underpinning the array of news studies already reviewed and invariably implied as either an informational resource and prerequisite to democratic involvement and decision making or else as a means of societal legitimation and social control, has rarely assumed explicit discussion and analysis. Habermas' conception however, though not without some attendant difficulties, provides a useful beginning for an analytical framework which aims to pursue the televisual mediation of the problems and issues of the inner city. The public sphere considered as a forum in which political conflict, social struggle and cultural difference can ideally find public discussion and expression provides a reference point with which to chart the portrayal of the contested site of the inner city.

Moreover, while the exact constitution of the televisual public sphere can be approached along the lines of the four 'attributes' outlined above in relation to inner city coverage, this study also provides an opportunity to empirically consider the generalised positions of other theoretical approaches concerning the political role and function of the mass media. To what extent the portrayal of the inner city represents a relatively 'closed' ideological perspective, confined to the accounts and 'key' concerns of a conservative discourse perhaps articulated by authoritative figures, can be appraised below, as can a more hegemonic understanding of ideological contest and struggle mobilizing different interpretative accounts and 'key' concerns while permiting at least some degree of debate, difference and accomodation of competing perspectives. Similarly liberal-democratic accounts premissed upon an open and pluralistic exchange of views, as well as the recent 'cultural forum' formulation with its invocation of television focusing upon 'our most prevalent concerns, our deepest dilemmas' can all be considered following a detailed examination of both the

extent and range of inner city perspectives finding public expression. To what extent, and in what manner, in other words, the televisual public sphere discharges these competing understandings of the political function of television can be addressed in relation to the presentation of the political contest and social problems and issues surrounding the inner city.

The idea of the inner city has also received considerable discussion and elaboration as a site of social and political difference and struggle, which can now inform an extensive review and analysis of regional inner city television programming. This earlier discussion permits an operationalization of the concept of the inner city and its key concerns, while also identifying available social and political discourses which can inform a more detailed and critical quantitative and qualitative reading of the inner city coverage found across the programme forms reviewed.

The term 'mediation', while also central to the idea of the 'public sphere' as a site where political and social viewpoints are disseminated, deliberated and discussed in that 'mediating' arena of public intercourse and opinion formation (seen to be, in some formulations at least, midway between the state and private interests), also implies an institutional means of both enabling and also possibly shaping or inflecting such public expressions as they are both literally and figuratively 'mediated' on route to the wider public domain. Mediation, in this sense, is both the means which enables and sustains a public sphere while also representing one of the possible means for its diminishment and detraction from its 'ideal' formulation. Here the possible explanatory levels and contexts of the institution of television need to be carefully addressed.

Clearly the range of useful and relevant lines of inquiry in regard to the institutional and organizational arrangements and practices of one independent television company need to be considered in so far as they provide an encompassing or general context within which inner city portrayal is organised, or alternatively as they more directly impact upon the presentational form and selection of inner city concerns. Though all levels may be of interest and relevance, some are clearly less proximate than others to the immediate concerns of this

study. Consideration of wider economic and commercial institutional goals and objectives can be considered alongside political and legislative forms of institutional circumscription as relevant and encompassing contextual levels, but which do not directly impact upon the form and content of inner city coverage. However, organizational arrangements and structures relating to programme scheduling and audience maximising strategies begin to impact upon the array of openings and closures afforded to inner city portrayal, while journalists' professional practices, routines and established genre expectations and appeals can be seen as directly impacting upon the discursive openings and presentational forms available to, and occasionally filled by inner city coverage.

Similarly, while the choice has been taken to restrict analysis to actuality forms of programming, it is apparent that in terms of the perennial coverage of the concerns and issues of the inner city, as well as in terms of consistently high audience ratings, it is the programme genre of regional news that provides by far the widest opening for such coverage, pointing to the need to attend mainly to this particular actuality form, though attention will also be devoted to a limited array of current affairs and documentary programming as well.

If the principal focus of this study is an examination of the issues, images and interpretative frameworks of the inner city placed within the public sphere it is the immediate professional practices as well as encompassing cultural and discursive forms of the surrounding programme genre that will assume the most detailed area for attention, since it is here that the inner city most directly encounters the processes of journalistic appropriation, selection and inflexion.

The four principal aspects deemed crucial to an analysis of the televisual mediation of the concerns and issues of the inner city are deemed to be (following the review of mass communication's literature and discussion of the public sphere) the interpretative accounts and resources which address the array of issues and concerns of the inner city, or, in other words the substantive content of inner city coverage; the forum within which such ideas are expressed and the associated discursive possibilities and limitations found to inhere within

such arenas; the array of social actors who manage to secure access (as opposed to coverage) within such portrayals and the forms that such access has assumed; and finally, the social and cultural distinctiveness and inflection exercised by different programme genres within which, and through which inner city issues have been addressed. These four substantive concerns will command the major part of empirical study, though other 'contextual' levels will be referenced in so far as they provide a necessary backdrop to these more immediate concerns.

In summary this project is essentially concerned with the mediating role of television situated between the inner city on the one hand and its public expression and contest on the other. It is to an examination of the exact role and involvement of television within this public exchange of meanings centred upon the inner city that this study will soon turn. Having outlined the main lines of theoretical interest and approach informing this study, a brief outline and justification of the chosen methodology can now be indicated.

The Televisual Mediation of the Inner City: Notes on Methodology

This study, seeking to grapple with an arena of social and political struggle, gaining expression through complex symbolic and cultural forms produced by professional journalists and programme makers working within the pressurised institutional and commercial environments of regional television has, of necessity, been disposed to adopt a flexible and eclectic approach towards the research methods deployed in this study. Aiming to find a purchase upon different levels of the reseach object from multiple lines of approach, the methodology trawls far and wide in its efforts to gain analytical insight and increased explanatory possibilities relating to the complex processes and forms under scrutiny. Accordingly, the principal methods employed across this research includes content analyses, genre analysis, discourse analyses including quantitative lexical and visual analyses, a variant of narrative analysis, discourse structure analysis, literary or interpretative analysis, participant observation, case studies and semi-structured interviews as well as consulting various sources of

corporate secondary data. These various quantitative and qualitative methods have all been selected individually and in combination because they were thought to be appropriate to the various levels of investigation pursued in relation to the wider theoretical aims informing this project.

Methods invariably come with theoretical strings attached and, given the multiple-method approach deemed appropriate in this study, some justification and consideration of some of the possible limitations, as well as strengths of the general methodology proposed is called for. This discussion cannot enter into the sometimes extensive literature and debates surrounding many of the methods employed, but it can at least indicate in general terms the advantages and necessity for such a multi-method approach.

For the purposes of analysis the study has followed the practice of organising the empirical research into two basic components, the review and analysis of broadcast inner city material, and a focused production study (see appendices 3-5). This division is useful in an analytical sense, enabling an extensive review of inner city material before pursuing some of the key production practices and professional values impacting upon inner city portrayal. If this general arrangement is also adopted in terms of presentation of findings, it perhaps needs to be stressed that both parts of this study are conceived as a conceptual whole. If this is generally claimed in similar studies, it is especially relevant in this case given the four delimited research inquiries informing both the general 'reading' and production study. Attending to the substantive inner city portrayal, types of forum, degree of access and considerations of genre conventions which together are taken as crucially defining and impacting upon inner city coverage, these four key areas are also pursued into the production domain resulting in two analytical domians which are nonetheless conceptually and theoretically taken to interpenetrate as a conceptual whole.

This approach, as already discussed, is based in a theoretical position which has established the necessity of attending to both the range of perspectives currently defining the issues and problems of the inner city as well as the properties of the medium within which and through which these

wider social and political positions gain expression. If one line of approach towards the televisual portrayal of the problems and issues of the inner city therefore can be said to adopt an informed or 'extrinsic' position, a second line of approach, intent upon explicating the properties of the medium impacting upon this public 'mediation' of the inner city, inquires into the 'intrinsic' character and organisation of the television medium itself. Unlike other studies, therefore, a wide array of methods have been employed which have been pitched at varying levels of conceptual and analytical abstraction depending upon the level of the research object inquired into, as well as the angle of approach adopted, whether 'extrinsic' or 'intrinsic'.

The methodology organising this study inevitably reflects this dual theoretical perspective and calls for analytical distinctions perhaps not always found within the same study, while also employing methods which are capable of delivering increasingly focused findings as the research object becomes scrutinised in more detail. This is the case concerning the general reading, but also to an extent with the production study as well, where observations are made relating to institutional, organisational, programme/genre, professional practice, and news case study levels. This general approach can be indicated by describing the first analyses of inner city news portrayal carried out below.

In the analysis of regional inner city news coverage an initial overview of the genre of regional news will be quantitatively and qualitatively established by attending to 78 separate regional news programmes and 1220 separate news items broadcast over a 7 year period, before proceeding to examine in close detail the forms and substantive concerns of general inner city coverage gained from a review of nearly 300 regional news programmes. Given the previous discussion and intermediate theoretical status afforded to the concept of genre, this part of the study represents more than a general 'contextualising' aspect, given that a key plank of inquiry is the extent to which this wider level of programme organisation impacts upon, and infuses with inner city portrayal. Having then elicited the recurrent themes and topics, and general form of inner city reporting, the focus becomes further sharpened with an extended

analysis of one year of riot reporting following the Handsworth riots of september 1985. This pays careful attention to the general narrative structure, discursive references, visual references and even lexical terms employed across this span of coverage. In this way, the general advantages of a broad overview are gained maximising upon the 'representativeness' of the findings produced enabling general statements to be made concerning the perennial subject patterns and contours of the regional news genre as well as the routine and regular nature of inner city reporting, while increasingly refined analyses enable a more qualitative reading to take place, where the 'validity' of advanced interpretations can find detailed textual support.

Setting out to determine the extent, range and forms of inner city coverage across a broad sweep of broadcast material this study clearly requires a method which can systematically deal with an extensve breadth and diversity of broadcast material. A form of content analysis is thus suggested, and is used extensively in combination with other methods throughout this project (see appendix 6 re. content analyses' details). Given the past and present criticisms levelled at this particular method of analysis and reviewed elsewhere [Holsti(1969);Krippendorf(1980)], a few words need to be said concerning its use, strengths as well as its acknowledged limitations.

Traditional content analyses have increasingly been subjected to a deal of criticism, especially in relation to the perceived imposition of subjective categories frequently assumed to be value-free while riding roughshod over the subtleties of symbolic forms in the pursuit of quantitatively measured indicators of 'significance'. Much of this general criticism has found its mark. If harnessed to a theoretically informed project however, with specific questions posed to an extensive sweep of material content analysis remains a valuable tool for gaining a systematic overview into specified areas of interest. While questions of 'significance' cannot be answered by content analysis alone, as a method it may furnish evidential support for wider theoretical arguments and interpretation. Content analytic 'findings' it can be suggested are only as illuminating as the questions posed, and the categories used, it remains however a valuable tool capable of delivering systematic, if

often blunt, findings that afford insight into the broad parameters of an extensive amount of material.

In this project content analysis has been used in conjunction with other methods to elicit quantitative findings with direct bearing upon all four attributes deemed to characterise the televisual portrayal of the inner city. Initially attempting to gain an overview of the broad contours and patterns of regional news subject matter, which in turn provide an insight into an important characteristic of the regional news genre, content analysis has been able to furnish systematic findings of general interest.

At this point, some discussion is required concerning the different levels of analytical abstraction informing the design and coding of news subject matter. Consigning detailed accounts of the coding categories employed throughout these different analyses to the appendices, for the general purposes of this methodological discussion the first two content analyses conducted can be briefly considered. These illustrate the differing degrees of analytical abstraction required by the overall theoretical schema pursuing both 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' analyses while also reflecting the increasingly focused forms of analysis seeking to address the extent, range and forms of inner city portrayal. Firstly, therefore, an 'intrinsic' reading position is adopted which seeks to merely chart the broad contours of regional news coverage, while the second analysis referred to seeks to chart at a higher level of analytical abstraction, the interpretative resources relevant to the inner city and placed within the televisual public domain.

At this initial level, regional news has been approached from an 'intrinsic' position. Following a sustained soak in over 300 news programmes selected from over 7 years of regional news programming, as well as the general familiarity with regional news gained as a frequent news viewer of many years standing, regional news programming and its structured division of different news subjects are approached at a relatively descriptive and common sense level. Seeking to approach the established categories of news as structured by the news producers and generally recognised by the news viewer the subject categories of news are sought at face value. While the charge of 'subjectivism' is always an attendant possibility in

conducting a form of content analysis where categories applied may be found not to be universally recognised and thus open to dispute, the constructs used in this first line of approach are of a fairly general and recognisable order. Thus, within the context of regional news it can be maintained that viewers, producers and analysts alike can recognise the validity and faithfulness of such general descriptives as 'crime news', 'disaster and tragedy news', 'consumer and leisure interests', 'regional affairs' and so on.

While this is not to say, that a higher level of theoretically informed abstration could not be employed on these same news items, it is to suggest that it is possible to systematically elicit a profile of regional news which represents a 'recognisable' and, at the level of a face value reading, 'reasonable' overview of the perennial forms of regional news subject matter. These principal subject areas have further been broken down into different types of subject areas news, whether 'court reports' 'police operation', 'general crime' as in the general instance of Crime Subject news, or to take another example, 'disaster/accident', 'funeral/inquiry', 'tragedy' and 'award/compensation' as in the Disaster Subject news area. These more refined subject areas still seeking to remain faithful to the manifest and apparent distinctions characterising the general subject areas and gleaned from an extensive piloting exercise, provide further insight into the recurrent forms of regional news coverage at a more detailed level.

Whilst recognising that these last categories, given their increased refinement, could perhaps on occasion be challenged by other interpretations, they nonetheless seek to approximate some of the more apparent and recurrent types of regional news subject divisions. So for instance, the relatively under-represented subject area of Politics has been further divided into 'world impacting politics', 'parliamentary/legislative politics', 'national party politics', 'regional party politics' and 'political walkabout/status visit'. These more detailed types of Political news, have followed the apparent types of explicit political news found to regularly characterise this particular news subject area. Not pretending to provide an 'extrinsic' and theoretically informed categorisation of

regional political news which in all likelihood would devise a different, more encompassing and logically consistent set of coding categories, but seeking rather to mirror the actual forms of regional news which appear to order the actual political coverage reviewed, these more focused categories have been developed. Subsumed within the general subject areas, these refined topics provide a supplement to the general overview while affording a degree of increased descriptive purchase upon the patterns of regional news as a whole.

Seeking a general and recognisable description of the regional news genre this exercise does not pretend to provide a definitive account, but rather provides findings supported by an extensive and systematic review of regional news programmes based on recognisable categories of recurrent regional news subject matter. In summary, this first content analysis permits an overview of the general contours, patterns and possible continuities of regional news subject matter as found across an extensive span of news items.

If this first analysis has developed coding categories which aim to follow as closely as possible the 'intrinsic' structures of the regional news genre, when pursuing the portrayal of the inner city a higher level of abstraction is called for. Following the discussion of the inner city, an array of concerns and issues were discerned as collectively defining the problems and issues of the inner city and that moreover these have variously tended to be organised into competing political interpretative frameworks. At this point, these various 'extrinsic' issues and concerns can be ordered into a number of inner city themes and sub-themes or topics which can then inform the analysis of broadcast material.

So for instance, the inner city theme of poor housing could be found to be generally referenced by a news item, while the inner city topic of overcrowding assumes the inner city housing issue specifically referenced. The news item itself, though referencing this inner city theme and specific topic, may principally be reporting the case of a family's protest against their overcrowded living conditions. In this second analysis, informed by the array of contending issues and concerns which collectively constitute the inner city debate, news items are approached with a coding schedule pitched at a higher level of

analytical abstraction. While some regional news categories such as 'crime news' for instance, may coincide with established inner city concerns, this need not always be the case, hence the 'extrinsic' approach adopted in this second analysis.

Given the informing concern with the wider, albeit conflicting, realities of the inner city, and the mediating impact of the forms of coverage itself upon this contested social site, this dual approach to the 'content' of regional news has been adopted. As the research becomes increasingly focused so the analytical categories become increasingly in debt to the informing social and political frameworks characterizing the inner city debate. These two analyses outlined above, in fact only assume part of the initial researches carried out, with others addressing wider considerations of genre, forum, and access before the study moves on to consider in increasing detail the discursive issues and concerns that have centred around one instance of inner city disorder, the Handsworth riots, enabling a much more nuanced and detailed study of an example of inner city coverage than the analyses already referred to.

Having outlined the general theoretical aims and broad methodological design the following provides a brief overview of the plan of the various stages of research and methods used. However, with 30 plus separate analyses employed across this study the following account can only provide a general overview of the principal stages of research and methods used. Diagrammatic overviews of the research design and stages, methods used and further details concerning content analyses samples and categories can be found in appendices 3-6.

Two principal stages, 'the reading' and a study of 'professional practices and the production setting', structure the research design comprising seven sequential stages of empirical analysis (appendix 3). Firstly a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods are deployed in order to examine the genre of regional news, the major vehicle for routine televisual coverage of the problems and issues of the inner city. Attending to 'appropriate subject matter', the 'mode of formal composition' especially in regard to the different presentational formats organising news presentation, and general programme 'stance' which has been pursued primarily via a

quantitative analysis of accessed news participants, as well as a qualitative interpretation of informing regional news values deemed to underpin the review of broadcast material, on all these fronts the genre of regional news as a vehicle for inner city coverage receives attention at the outset.

The second stage of analysis pursues the range, extent and forms of inner city coverage from a considerably increased sample of regional news programming (nearly 300 programmes). Developing a comprehensive span of inner city issues and concerns from the extended inner city discussion carried out in chapter one, this material is quantitatively assessed according to various presences and absences of these concerns and issues while noting which inner city discourses are either advantaged or disadvantaged by this portrayal given their competing and conflicting 'key' concerns discerned earlier. While the substantive content of inner city portrayal also receives more qualitative interpretation while reviewing the various inflexions and news treatments of these different themes and topics, other aspects of the televisual public sphere in relation to the inner city are also considered.

A quantitative overview of inner city actors gaining news entry, and the various presentational formats delivering this coverage is considered in terms of its possible impact upon the positions presented. Moreover, intent upon explicating both the impact of a regional news discourse structure upon the forms of inner city treatment, while also developing this technique in relation to the 'private' or 'public' inflexion that news stories can receive these analyses furnish further data which is of considerable relevance to the discussion of general inner city portrayal and the differentially advantaged and disadvantaged interpretative frameworks organising the discussion of the inner city.

The third stage of analysis, considerably tightens up the focus of interrogation by attending to one year of riot coverage. This is analysed at a number of levels, but is informed from an extensive and relatively comprehensive discussion of the Handsworth riots and the competing frameworks of understanding seeking to interpret these events outlined in chapter one. Following upon the earlier discussion of the principal interpretative frameworks organising inner city

discussion and debate, the semantic markers employed within these discourses provide a variety of lexical 'anchor points', pointing to the interpretative frameworks to which they are aligned. These are subjected to close scrutiny and provide detailed support relating to the impact of the differential involvement of key 'riot' actors, and the range of interpretative positions finding expression across this extended portrayal of inner city riot coverage.

Moreover, identifying over one hundred themes and references which have accompanied the discussion of the Handsworth and other inner city riots, each of 153 news items are subjected to detailed scrutiny. These various themes and references then provide the basis for an informed overview of the preponderant concerns finding public expression across 12 months of riot and post-riot coverage. Once again the extent to which certain emphases can be discerned as supportive or distancing of competing interpretative frameworks is then broached on the basis of these systematic evidential findings.

Similarly, while inner city news was attended to according to the structures of discourse organising its news presentation, a form of narrative structure is used to appraise the principal news emphases finding expression according to the different narrative elements which organise this extended 'story of a riot' found across twelve months of news reporting. These in turn are further considered in terms of their differential advantaging and disadvantaging of different interpretative and explanatory frameworks of understanding. The analysis of the Handsworth riots also attends to the visual dimension of its portrayal and is closely interrogated in a manner which allows both verbal and visual references and their mutual articulation to be appraised over the 153 separate news items reviewed.

While principally attending to the substantive 'content' of this coverage, the three other attributes of the television public sphere are also addressed by attending to the range of inner city actors gaining news entry, the array of presentational formats or forums within which this portrayal takes place, as well as a general discussion of some of the impacting influences of the genre of regional news which can be seen to inform this overall presentation.

The fourth stage of analysis, keen to establish the extent

to which these news findings are confined to the vehicle of news programming or to which they may be supplemented across different forms of televisual inner city coverage, reviews at a more general and descriptive level other forms of regional programming before turning to three non-news 'riot' programmes which are subjected to a similarly detailed analysis across the four dimensions of substantive riot portrayal outlined above. This fourth stage of analysis concludes the general and detailed 'reading' of inner city broadcast material.

On the basis of these findings the first analysis included in the second major stage of empirical analysis or stage five (see appendix 5) attends to the professional practices, programme conceptualisation and production setting involved in the daily reproduction of the regional news genre. Thereafter the sixth stage of analysis attends to the identified concerns of access, forum, and substantive inner city news and news riot portrayal examined and interrogated within the professional news domain. Each of these aspects is pursued via particpant observation, semi-structured interviews and individual case studies. A less extensive exercise comprises the final and seventh stage of analysis with a series of interviews conducted with programme makers and producers, as well as corporate controllers inquiring into the organisational parameters and institutional changes currently underway and which have already begun to effect the range and forms of factual programming and their portrayal of the inner city considered above.

These seven stages of empirical research provide the core to this research study and furnish complementary findings in the central investigation into the processes and forms impacting upon the public mediation of the problems and issues of the inner city by a regional independent television company. It is to the first of these seven stages of analysis that the study now turns.

Chapter Five

THE REGIONAL NEWS GENRE

Having outlined above something of the theoretical contribution which may be gained from attending to the nature of news understood as genre, the following discussion will seek to identify at least some of the major characteristics which collectively constitute the popular genre of regional television news. Following Williams(1977) three broad dimensions can be pursued which provide a purchase upon different forms of genre: 'stance', 'appropriate subject matter', and 'mode of formal composition'. Stance, for Williams, indicates 'a mode of basic (social) organisation which determines a particular kind of presentation'(p.183), that is, the stance of a genre may be taken as involving a particular form of social relationship and address existing between the addresser and the addressee. All texts, in other words, no matter their substantive subject matter additionally involve a specific 'stance' in relation to both the subject matter and reader, while further implying a particular form of socio-cultural organization and communication. One commentator at least has interpreted the stance of the news genre as follows:

> "In the case of the news genre, the stance which is projected stresses the role of the journalist as the independent observer, his/her gathering of social facts as well as the contrasting of viewpoints, and so on. Simultaneously, the reader/viewer is posited as the recipient of reliable, factual information, which is presumably relevant in a broadly political sense."
>
> [Jensen(1986)p.50]

While this formulation is certainly in broad accord with the majority of news studies and their collective findings reviewed earlier, it too has tended to assume that news forms invariably project a positivistic epistemology and independent role in relation to the viewer who is seen as receiving factual information necessary for the functioning and well-being of the wider polity. While the element of stance may well involve such aspects when considered in terms of certain news forms, attention to other popular and populist news forms is likely to indicate an increasingly differentiated and complex stance, or projected social relationship with both its audience and subject

matter. Indeed, as Williams originally noted, and to some extent confirmed in the review of the majority of news studies above, the important aspects of stance 'are especially likely to be overlooked, or to be given insufficient weight, in local historical analysis'(p.184).

The second of William's aspects of genre concerns appropriate subject matter. Given that an established genre tends to involve a recognised and perennial range of subject matter, the establishment of such relevancies can lead to certain subjects being deemed 'appropriate' and others not appropriate as the subject for the particular genre in question. Typically, it has often been claimed that the subject matter of news is principally concerned with elites and involves an 'overriding emphasis on parliamentary politics and a range of related economic issues'(Jensen(1986)p.50), or 'news occurs in the public sphere(which is where elite people circulate) rather than the domestic. The domestic appears only when it is the site of extreme or violent crime, and can thus be considered a matter of public law and order' (Fiske(1987) p.284). Once again it may be countered that the field of news is considerably more diversified in terms of 'appropriate subject matter' than many studies have often allowed.

William's third element of genre concerns the 'mode of formal composition'. Clearly news forms are readily identifiable by a characteristic mode of composition which in itself may be taken as projecting a particular stance toward both viewer and subject matter. The mode of formal composition may be taken, in the instance of news forms, to involve at least the three principal areas of the overall programme structure or composition, the individual news report and internal or textual divisions found within the news item itself. Once again however, while studies have frequently commented upon the segmented nature of news reports, and some studies have addressed the overall programme composition of news forms, little attention has been devoted to the array of presentational formats that accompany news programmes and some of their respective possibilities and limitations as formal arrangements in the public communication of social issues and concerns.

These three elements clearly may often be seen as overlapping and mutually supportive but they nonetheless begin

to indicate the possibility of the category of genre as a means of capturing something of the cultural differences and specificities found within and between different cultural forms understood as specific forms of social communication and engagement.

> "Genre, in this view,is neither an ideal type nor a traditional order nor a set of technical rules. It is in the practical and variable combination and even fusion of what are, in abstraction, different levels of the social material process that what we have known as genre becomes a new kind of constitutive evidence."
>
> [Williams(1977)p.185]

The following analysis of one example of the regional news genre will attend to these three dimensions of genre in elaborating the properties of the medium within which and through which the problems and issue of the inner city have found their principal television portrayal. Clearly, a considerably expanded discussion could usefully be performed in this regard which could also be approached by a variety of different means. Here it is the broad characteristics of the regional news genre which is pursued in relation to its delimitation of, and impact upon the portrayal of the problems and issues of the inner city taken up below. A more detailed and nuanced discussion of the regional news form must await future analyses.

I Regional News Genre and Mode of Formal Composition

Regional news programmes have assumed an established place within early evening schedules, normally following directly upon the early evening national news programmes, though periodically national and regional news programmes have also been interspersed by prime-time soaps. In scheduling terms the early evening regional news programmes has played, and continues to play an important role in establishing and maintaining an early evening audience encouraged to remain with the schedule as it progresses through the evening. If the schedule space is understood as both a 'gap' and a requirement or schedule need, regional news programming 'fills' this requirement in a distinctive form. While it will be maintained below that the particular regional news programme under review, and more generally as representative of the genre of regional news as a

whole, exhibits a distinctive character or even collective persona in large measure promoted by the presentational 'stance' of the news presenters, modulation and content of news subject areas as well as incorporating a particular and to some degree populist pattern of social access it is initially instructive to briefly consider the 'mode of formal composition' of this genre by attending to some of the basic parameters and arrangements found to characterise the regional news programme.

Reviewing across a 7 year period, programmes remain on average around half an hour in duration, though individual programme durations can and have varied considerably with the shortest programme reviewed at just over seventeen minutes (17:15) while the longest programme was recorded at over 54 minutes (54.24). Moreover, while individual programmes vary in duration, the practice of scheduling considerably extended friday programmes and periodic runs of longer monday programmes indicates not only something of the flexibility of the regional news form as a pliable element within the schedule but also that it can seek to respond to, and in part help constitute daily, weekly and seasonal patterns or rhythms of social organization and activity.

Typically, extended friday programmes are likely to provide an increased overview of sports news and events of general leisure and recreational interest, or, especially pronounced within earlier programmes, even to indulge in pre-weekend 'fun and frolics' perhaps involving a celebrity programme presenter. The formal duration of the programme can thus be noted as both flexible and adaptable. Open to short notice change in the face of major news stories or other scheduling dictates it nonetheless tends to give expression to, and in so doing help institutionalise, the changing daily, weekly and seasonal rhythms of social organisation and activity. In particular the pronounced tie to both domestic routines and weekly leisure (non-work) interests, most clearly evident in the substantial amounts of time regularly devoted to sports items, occasional 'whats on' inserts and other leisure preview and review items suggests even at this basic level of duration that regional news programming seeks to address a particular rhythm and routine of social organisation and experience.

If the programme duration can be seen to be both flexible

and adaptable the number of news items, here defined as an identifiable and individual news story delineated both by news treatment and distinct presentational format, also exhibits considerable flexibility while also demonstrating a clear pattern across time.

Table: 5:1 **Average Items Per Programme**

Years	1982/3	1984/5	1986/7	1988/9
Average Prog.Items	17.5	14.8	12.2	9.5

Excluding sport items, these figures reveal that over the period reviewed the average number of news items contained within the regional news programme though always highly restricted has discernibly decreased across the period. If such figures reveal the severely restricted form of the regional programme in terms of the available item 'slots' found within the overall programme 'space', when compared to the news media of newspapers they also dramatically illustrate the severely confined scope of this particular form of news programme - it is likely, for instance, that a typical evening newspaper would include the current average of regional news items in merely one or two pages. While the appetite of press journalism can be seen to be voracious when compared to the discriminating palate of regional television news such contrasts indicate, in addition to the variable programme durations and steady declining number of news items indicated above, that whatever a regional news programme is, it is not tied in any umbilical sense to the world of 'news' but rather shapes its own world of 'news' according to programme and scheduling dictates.

If these basic parameters indicate something of the formal composition of the regional news form, attention to the news item itself is also of general interest. A news item, delineated by an identifiable news story and subjected to a distinct and separate news treatment can in fact assume different forms. An item may, for instance, assume an independent and integral form; be placed within a grouping or 'cluster' of items which assumes the form of an insert or small programme within a programme, each with its cluster of thematically related concerns; or an item may in fact, though maintaining a separate identity involve more than one news story by seguing from one to the other within

the same and integral presentational treatment. Reviewing across the sample period the following results are obtained.

Table: 5:2 **News Item Forms**

News Item As:	Frequency	Percent
Separate/Integral	1030	90.2
Part of Cluster	92	8.1
Part of Package	20	1.8
Total	1142	100.0 %

From the above it is apparent that the news item in the vast majority of cases assumes a distinct, separate and integral form. Regional television news like its studied national counterpart, is in the main delivered in highly segmented and discrete units which, though stacked and possibly juxtaposed with other items, formally declare no dependence on previous or following items. While 'bridging' or even thematic continuities may be established by studio presenters and underpinning regional news values, the news item itself seeks to maintain a form of presentational independence and substantive autonomy within the overall programme composition. Interestingly, however, on a limited number of occasions it is also apparent that though maintaining the form of an integral and separate news item, these have been placed in groupings or organising clusters where similar or related items have been placed within the covering mantle of a programme 'insert'. It is also evident on highly infrequent occasions that news items have thematically segued into 'related' areas of concern, though such remain within an overall minority.

If the news item is the basic building block of the news media, it can nonetheless exhibit a wide range of presentational formats permitting varying degrees of verbal and visual access and involvement which formally permit differing degrees of opportunity for discursive involvement, engagement and development. Television news, unlike many other television forms is perhaps unique to the extent that it invariably employs a number of rapidly moving presentational formats within the boundaries of one programme. This apparent diversity can be recognised as one means of providing relief from an otherwise potentially repetitive and 'levelling' succession of news treatments permitting little scope for the signification of relative importance, while simultaneously encouraging at least

bites of concentration from an audience known to typically have competing domestic demands placed upon its viewing attention. This pattern is deemed more important for present purposes however to the extent that it may affect the formal possibility of discursive openings and developments in terms of news treatment of serious social issues.

Such considerations though arguably always of immediate relevance in the presentation of news understood as social accounts and interpretative resources, may be deemed especially significant wnen deployed in relation to socially contested issues and concerns. While a full review of the relatively wide range of different regional news presentational formats will be elaborated and their different formal possibilities examined in relation to inner city coverage, as will the formal structures or discourse elements that comprise typical regional news stories, a summary account of three principal distinctions observed across the diversity of presentational formats can be charted at the outset.

Such formats, it is maintained, provide differential formal arrangements in the dissemination, examination and development of social viewpoints, ranging from 'restricted' to 'limited' and 'expansive' possibilities. In fairly direct terms it can be maintained that whereas a newsdesk report involving a direct verbal account by the news reader, involving no access or participation by other voices, and a minimum of visual inputs directly 'restricts' the formal possibility of contest, discussion and debate involved in the social play of different interests and viewpoints, the 'limited' interventions attendant upon the involvement of 'outside' voices and visual references following the involvement of interviews considerably increases the possibility for social dialogue, debate, and the display of difference. If the involvement of outside viewpoints via news report interviews is still, nonetheless, confined within, and directly mediated by the editorial process and final packaging, typically juxtaposing verbal and visual clips within an overall presentational narrative, the formal possibility of direct engagement between different social viewpoints available within the 'expansive' forums of group interviews, discussions and/or even direct presentations enjoys a number of possibilities clearly denied in both 'restricted' and 'limited' formats.

These three aggregated presentational formats each involve differing formal possibilities in the public placing of interpretative accounts and resources. While a full analysis of their use as well as the journalistic practices determining their deployment in relation to the portrayal of the inner city is pursued later in the study the following general findings indicate something of the regional news genre's composition in terms of these three types of presentational arrangement. If the sample of 1142 separate news items are considered in terms of these three basic presentational format distinctions the following findings result.

Table 5:3 Regional News and Presentational Formats

	Frequency	Percent
Restricted	611	53.5
Limited	487	42.6
Expansive	44	3.8
Total 1142	Percent 100.0 %	

It can be noted that the bulk of all news programme formats either involve relatively direct studio-based formats involving no direct presence of outside voices, or involve the accessing of others via filmed interview clips, though these also remain within the highly packaged control of the final editing process. Unlike 'live' studio based interviews, or group discussions such formats can be considered 'highly mediated' to the extent that the selection of clips, juxtaposition and overall narrative remains dependent upon the final editorial process, whereas studio interviews and group discussions considerably expand upon the formal possibility of participants directly engaging with others. The possibility of non-news personnel deploying such rhetorical strategies as agenda-setting and agenda-shifting techniques, for instance, [Greatbatch (1986)] as well as developing upon the multiple advantages attendant upon the maintenance of conversational integrity are thereby not found within the vast bulk of all news items, with over 96 % of all news items presented in either 'restricted' or 'limited' formats. Reviewing across the sample period, the use of 'limited' formats, perhaps now the news form par excellence, involving edited filmed interview clips collected by Electronic News Gathering(ENG) technology has clearly increased as the use

of 'restricted' formats, though still comprising almost half of all programme formats, has undergone a relative decline. Interestingly, the more 'expansive' and formally 'open' formats, always within a strict minority appears, if anything, to have undergone further decline in recent years.

Table 5:4 Regional News and Presentational Formats By Year

	Restricted		Limited		Expansive		Yearly Total	
Year	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1982	142	60.7	80	34.2	12	5.1	234	20.5
1983	107	52.5	79	38.7	18	8.8	204	17.9
1984	103	55.1	78	41.7	6	3.2	187	16.4
1985	107	58.8	71	39.0	4	2.2	182	15.9
1986	73	47.4	81	52.6	0	0.0	154	13.5
1987	71	47.3	76	50.7	3	2.0	150	13.1
Totals	611	53.5	487	42.6	44	3.8	1142	100.0

[NB. table percentage figures indicate relative percentage of presentational format within each year, thus looking down the years the apparent decline in frequencies and yet increases in percent is due to falling item frequencies across the sample period while the format under consideration may have increased in relative terms.]

It is already apparent that the genre of regional news exhibits certain forms which may already suggest that this particular forum for the public portrayal and engagement with some of the contested issues and concerns cohering round the site of the inner city may assume a characteristic regional news form. The severely restricted number of daily news item slots, themselves segmented and formally isolated, in combination with the cursory overview of three forms of presentational format suggest that the 'forum' of regional news may provide diminished opportunity for the public dissemination and exploration of the issues surrounding the inner city. Such findings however, remain partial until considered in the light of two other dimensions characterising regional news genre - appropriate subject matter, and stance.

II The Regional News Genre and 'Appropriate Subject Matter'

If it is useful to inquire into some of the aspects of the regional news genre by way of attending to certain elements of its 'mode of formal composition' it is particularly instructive to establish the patterns of regular news subject matter or

content, since it is here that perennial news interests and values begin to give shape to the characteristic concerns of regional news. At this preliminary level a relatively direct overview of the patterns of content is sought, and on this basis the following categories of content have been developed after a prolonged soak in the daily stream of regional news programming. As elaborated in a preceding chapter, it is neither the intricacies of journalistic framing, nor the nuance and subtlety of meaning buried within either the inner recesses of text or implicit and informing discourse which is sought at this preliminary level but rather the traditionally established, relatively self-evident and generally recognised categories of news content which collectively constitute the subject matter of regional news. Even so, the following categories do not pretend to be definitive or exhaustive, a similar exercise could perhaps have formulated slightly different categories, and ordered them differently though it is suggested that if the perennial subject matter of the regional news genre was sought, as opposed to the theoretical interests of the analyst, the resulting list would share much in common with both the categories and general findings elaborated below.

Attending to over one thousand different news items a number of recurring subject categories were developed, which included a further list of regular and occasional sub-subject areas. These basic subjects and sub-subjects can be itemized as follows.

Table: 5:5 REGIONAL NEWS : SUBJECT CATEGORIES

SUBJECT	CODE	SUB-SUBJECT
Disaster/Accident/ Tragedy	(01)	- Accident(fire,crash,..)
	(02)	- Tragedy(suicide,early death..)
	(03)	- Funeral/Inquiry/Coroner's verdict
	(04)	- Compensation/Award
	(05)	- Other
Crime	(08)	- Specific Crime/Police Operation
	(09)	- Court/Trial/Verdict
	(10)	- General Crime(Crime Waves..)
	(11)	- Police Crime/Malpractice
	(12)	- Other
Political Administration	(15)	- World/International/European Affairs
	(16)	- Parliamentary-Legislative
	(17)	- Parliamentary-Party Politics
	(18)	- Regional Party Politics
	(19)	- Political Elite-Visit,Statement
	(20)	- Other

Economy/Employment
(21) - Business/Industry General
(22) - Business/Industry Specific
(23) - Industrial Action/Relations
(24) - Industrial Conditions(Not dispute related)
(25) - Employment/Unemployment(figures)
(26) - Employment/Unemployment(not solely 'figures')
(27) - Other

Local Government/ Services
(28) - Local Government/Administration (excluding specific services below)
(29) - Housing
(30) - Health
(31) - Education
(32) - Social Services/Welfare Provision
(33) - Urban Renewal/IAP/MSC-CP...
(34) - Roads/Transport/Planning
(35) - Environment/Pollution
(36) - Policing(Policies,Politics, Practices)
(37) - Prisons
(38) - Probation
(39) - Defence/Armed Services
(40) - Other

Politics of Community Protest and Problems
(41) - Demonstration/Protest
(42) - Pressure Groups,Support Groups
(43) - Race/Racism/Disadvantage
(55) - Community/Group-(Difficulties/Struggles/Problems)
(46) - Other

Consumer/Leisure Interests
(45) - Seasonal Excesses(floods,storms,..)
(50) - Consumer/Safety
(51) - Science/Technology/Invention
(52) - Housing(not Service focused)
(53) - Education(not Service focused)
(54) - Health(not Service focused)
(56) - Community/Group-As Celebration (Culture,Religion,Festivals)
(57) - Historic Sites,Monuments,Buildings
(58) - Rural/Past(traditions,crafts, pursuits)
(59) - Leisure/Activities/Exhibitions/ Past-Times
(60) - Entertainment/Films/Theatre
(61) - In-House Promotion
(62) - Other

Human Interest
(70) - Animals(unusual,fluffy..)
(71) - Children/Babies(talented, unfortunate,..)
(72) - Royalty
(73) - Celebrities/Famous/'Stars'
(74) - Eccentric/Bizarre Individuals Events
(75) - Brave/Adventurous Deeds
(76) - Enthusiasts/Hobbies(not commonplace)
(77) - Unusual Talents/Events

(78) - Day in the Life of
(79) - Charity and Charitable Pursuits
(80) - Seasonal Festivities(excluding Community etc...)
(81) - Comic Interludes
(82) - Variety Acts
(83) - Other

If we exclude Sport, and consider the remaining 1142 news items coded across the period 1982-1988 in terms of the frequencies of items found within the major Subject areas above the following findings are obtained.

Table: 5:6 Regional News: Subject Patterns

	Frequency	Percent
Crime	294	25.7
Human Interest	261	22.8
Economy/Employment	165	14.4
Consumer/Leisure	144	12.6
Services	106	9.3
Accidents	93	8.2
Politics	49	4.3
Protest-Politics	30	2.7
	Total 1142	100.0 %

The first thing that can be ventured about these figures is that the top two subject areas Crime and Human Interest, representing nearly half the programme items between them, indicate quite clearly the main planks of Subject mix which characterise this regional news programme as a whole. The second two groupings of Subject area again reveal this 'heady brew' of 'public' and 'private' sphere concerns, with news concerning the Economy and Employment gaining almost a similar frequency of items as Consumer and Leisure which together comprise a further quarter of all programme items. Interestingly, a popular misconception concerning news as essentially disaster and accident preoccupied is dispelled with little more than 8 % of all items fulfilling this expectation, while a studied conclusion frequently stating that news is about formal politics is similarly qualified at this regional level with politics receiving sparse attention. Reviewing across the period the following findings are obtained.

Table 5:7 Regional News Subjects: An Overview

	1982-1984		1985-1987	
Human Interest	27.6		16.6	
		>50.5		>46.6
Crime	22.9		30.0	
Economy	14.1		14.4	
Consumer	13.6		11.6	
Services	8.0		10.5	
Accident	7.7		8.4	
Politics	4.3		4.3	
Protest	1.9		4.0	
	100.0 %		100.0 %	

Dividing the sample period into two equal groups of consecutive years the general pattern, with some marginal changes, appears relatively unaltered. Where movement is most apparent is in the relative decline in Human Interest news and relative increase in the other staple of the regional news genre, crime news. However, even here it should be emphasised that even in the later period the sub-subjects labelled as 'Human Interest' continue to assume the second most frequent news subjects, while crime news has increased its position to nearly a third of all items. While minor changes have taken place in other categories the overall pattern remains clear, and it would appear that in so far as the news programme has changed its subject emphasis in recent years, this represents a matter of degree rather than a change of kind. The general 'mix' of items, then, has remained relatively consistent over the sample period, and it is this in tandem with the journalistic stance considered further below that characterises the particular species of regional television news.

As well as charting basic contours of content in terms of item frequencies, a further means of gauging the constructed appeal of the programme is to consider the involvement of what are called 'promos' and 'teases'. These, as the names imply, act as short trailers with the promo informing and enticing the audience to stay watching after the national news programme and advertisements, while the tease performs a similar function broadcast immediately before the opening title sequence. These invariably contain references to 2 or 3 news items (approximately 20 % of all items) and succinctly reveal the 'mix' of stories that are deemed most likely to keep the viewer watching. As such they give a good indication of the balance of

subject matter deemed by the programme makers as of most appeal and interest to the potential viewer. The promo and tease, in addition also represents a further element in the formal composition of the programme and indicates something of the sought appeal and relationship to an intended audience.

Table 5:8 Regional News : Promos/Teases

Promo and/or Tease	N.	%
Human Interest	66	31.4
Crime	32	15.2
Consumer	30	14.3
Services	26	12.4
Economy	21	10.0
Accidents	15	7.1
Politics	15	7.1
Protest	5	2.4
	Total 210	100.0 %

Once again the heavy preponderance of Human Interest stories becomes apparent, in this instance even to the displacement of Crime stories, while the essentially private, domestic and consumer appeal of the programme is further reinforced with items of general consumer and leisure interest assuming the third most frequent subject items selected for promos/teases. That is, these subject areas are promoted both in themselves and in complementary fashion to appeal to viewers - to entice, hook or 'tease' him or her sufficiently to keep watching. Examples of these enticements will be considered below, both because in their selected combinations they clearly reveal the operation of regional news values within any one programme, while also indicating in succinct propositional form, what any one story is promoted to be about.

This broad programme subject 'mix' which appears to regularly and routinely depend upon a heavy preponderance of crime news and the kinds of human interest items listed above is also further evident in the forms of news item, noted in Table 5:2 above. Thus, of the ten percent of items that are grouped within a recognisable cluster of similar items, crime stories (66.7 %) and human interest (18.5 %) form the vast bulk of all such groupings, while of those few items which segue into related news stories within the same item, these are again heavily represented within crime (20.0 %) and human interest (20.0 %) categories of news subject. The saliences of perennial

news subject areas is thus not confined to news subject areas covered alone but is also expressed within promos and teases, forms of news item, and as will be discussed below presentational formats, and the accessing of different social groups. On all these fronts the programme 'balance' and promoted audience appeal is quite clearly skewed towards certain areas of news interest.

So far we have seen how the programme mix of subject areas considerably privileges certain subject areas of news - crime, human interest, economy, consumer - while considerably diminishing other areas - politics, regional services, etc. However, these categories are arguably still too broad, and perhaps, as in the case of 'human interest' still require some definitional elaboration. Further insight into the genre of regional news can be elicited therefore, if these categories of news are examined in more detail. At this more detailed level it is also possible to begin to pursue the array of common and recurrent themes or 'core' regional news values which appear to help organise and underpin the regional news genre. If such can be identified, not only can the character of the regional news genre begin to assume a discernible news orientation but so too will the medium of regional news be open to examination in terms of its likely impact upon the portrayal of the inner city pursued below.

The two major subject planks of regional news, as we have seen are Crime and Human Interest stories. While these have undergone a relative change in emphasis over the sample period with crime news now assuming the most frequent of items followed by human interest stories, these two categories of news together have maintained a consistent position where they comprise the bulk of all news items. However, what in regional news terms do these categories comprise, what kinds of news stories are regularly found within these and the other principal Subject areas ? Do they exhibit internal patterns of coverage, and, if so what are these ?

Regional News: Crime

Having examined the general subject areas which appear to regularly characterise the make-up of a regional news programme

the following Sub-categories can also be elicited. The frequency and relative preponderance of these more refined categories across the sample period are as follows.

Table 5:9 Recurrent Forms of Crime News

	N.	%
Specific Crime	136	46.3
Court Trial	131	44.6
Police Crime/ Malpractice	12	4.1
Crime in General	11	3.7
Crime Other	4	1.3
	Total 294	100.0 %

From the table it is immediately apparent that not only is crime news a major component of regional news (25.7 % of all sample period items) but that crime news, in the main, focuses upon isolated incidents of crime either as a reactive report following an incident of crime, or an account of specific crimes brought to court and judicially processed. Both separate crime reports and accounts of specific court proceedings are by far the most frequent of all the sub-subject categories reviewed across the sample period thus once again confirming the prevalence of crime news in general, and specific forms of crime news in particular.

Over 90 % of all crime reports thus assume a highly routinised and institutionalised form. This, of course, is true in both a literal and dramaturgical sense. With nearly half of all crime stories dependent on the courts to provide the public stage, actors and reported dialogue the dependence of journalists and the news process upon the judicial process is one that generally results in a highly standardised and ritualised account, generally delivered within a restricted presentational format. While the courts represent one of the major institutions involved in crime, the police of course represent the other.

Crime news is a major building block within regional news programming and as the professional province of the police will inevitably involve them in some manner across the different types of crime news. It can also be noted at this point that police involvement is not restricted to solely crime news however and, as will be demonstrated below, entry is gained

across a wide array of different regional news subjects. However, and notwithstanding the vast majority of crime items and other news subject areas involving the police in a particular role towards incidents of crime, criminals and selected areas of criminal activity in general, the occasional inclusion of items focusing upon police crime and malpractice alerts us to a possible underlying journalistic concern with a wider understanding of 'deviance' in one of its many different social forms.

The vast bulk of crime news has now been accounted for, nonetheless occasional items have given expression to a wider consideration of specific types of crime, or even crime in general where an overview has been painted as to the rising or changing pattern of crime within society at large. Here we find items concerned with an assumed rise in drug pushing, an increase in assaults and 'muggings', and single items concerned with the availability of fire arms, and an assumed upturn in vandalism, christmas shoplifting and burglary of the elderly. Little more than 1 % of all items, though relating to crime were found not to fit easily within any of the above categories. If the types of criminal activity reported are subjected to a general overview the following findings emerge.

Table 5:10 Regional News : Crimes Reported

	Frequency	Percent
Murder	76	25.8
Robbery	50	17.0
Burglary	29	9.8
Assault	19	6.5
Fraud/Corruption	18	6.1
Rape/Sexual Assault	16	5.3
Drug Dealing/Possession	15	5.0
Vandalism	10	3.4
Arson	8	2.7
Animal Cruelty	6	2.0
Child Abuse	5	1.6
Driving Related	5	1.6
	Sub-Total 255	Sub-Percent 85.7 %
Remainder	39	13.2
	Total 294	Percent 100.0 %

[Nb. the remainder (13.2 % of all crime stories) comprises 7 'minor' police malpractice stories, and a variety of items that do not appear to regularly appear, though their regional news value is readily identifiable - a rival Kissogram Company dispute ending in court, a man who forced his daughter to

commit bigamy in order to circumvent immigration laws, an old age pensioner who defiantly refuses to pay a rate surcharge despite the possibility of being sent to prison.]

What is apparent from the table above is that 'serious' crimes against the person gain prevalent entry to regional news; it will be remembered that the sample consisted of 78 programmes in total and here we see that no less than 76 items were concerned with reporting murder. Serious robbery, involving violence or the threat of violence is also heavily reported, as are rape, sexual assault and burglary. While murder and robbery appear to be newsworthy in their own right - though the involvement of a beauty queen or diplomat are certainly news enhancing - less prominent and perhaps less 'serious' crimes are more likely to be reported if they involve a 'respectable/responsible' and/or 'status figure', animals or children, or a comical or surprising aspect.

Thus the involvement of a councillor or senior police officer in fraud, head teacher or consultant in indecent assaults on school children or patients, the possession of drugs by a Duke, or involvement of a race relations officer in shoplifting are all examples of crime reporting where the involvement of 'respectable' individuals holding responsible public positions has increased the likelihood that such forms of crimes become newsworthy. Similarly, the involvement of a famous cricketer in an assault, boxer in a drink driving offence or footballer in drug taking will promote the news value of such items pushing them over the routine threshold of disinterest normally shown towards 'lesser' crimes. Cruelty cases involving animals and children are also relatively newsworthy, as are stories concerning the theft of a rare bird or the police hunt for a tyre slasher which turns out to be a dog, while a bungling burglar or thief caught by footprints left in the snow present enough novelty to enable them to be selected as worthy of news treatment.

A further and major consideration that can be noted here, to be developed later, is that crime news as well as selectively focusing upon certain types of crimes perpetrated in the main upon isolated individuals, also invariably involves a focus upon crime as an isolated incident (though these may occasionally be put together in incremental fashion in order to reference an increase or even 'wave' of crime) but nonetheless the

phenomenon, persecutors and victims of such acts are invariably posited in individual, isolated and decontextualised terms. Attending to the typical regional news crime story begins to indicate that crime tends to be routinely presented in so far as it becomes institutionally prosecuted and publicly reprimanded, while simultaneously positing culpability and motivation, if present at all, within the domain of individual agency and rational responsibility. The most frequently reported crimes are crimes which involve a direct and invariably physical attack upon the sovereignty of the individual and/or property. The execution and responsibility of crime appears then, to be very much within the private sphere of activity while its public face is only conceded to the extent that it becomes subjected to the mediated public spectacle of social sanction and reprimand.

Regional News: Human Interest Stories

While confusingly the label 'human interest' can be applied to specific types of news subject, a regional news journalist is also likely to maintain that any story should involve 'human interest'. That is, a 'good' regional news story should appeal both in terms of its presentation and involvement of 'people' to a widespread if not universal curiosity and interest which has become labelled 'human interest'. Thus, typically, crime news for instance may sometimes be regarded as a form of human interest story. However, within this broad orientation which frequently attends all regional news subject areas, a discernible group of stories assumes the form of the regional human interest story par excellence. It is therefore possible to elicit a recognisable variety of sub-subject areas which routinely and regularly feature within regional news programming and which furthermore can be termed 'human interest' not simply be means of journalistic inflexion but substantive content. The internal frequency of such sub-subject areas is recorded as follows, while it can be noted that Animals, Eccentric/Bizarre, Unusual Talents and Events, and Celebrities are all items that individually appear within the top most frequent nine items of regional news. That is, rubbing shoulders with the top two crime stories, and individual disaster stories, this characteristic juxtaposition of the 'serious' and the 'slight', the informative

and the entertaining is constantly highlighted when reviewing the programme contents on a number of different variables.

Table 5:11 Regional News: Human Interest

	Frequency	Percent
Animals	46	17.6
Eccentric/Bizarre	39	15.0
Unusual Talents/Events	39	15.0
Celebrities/Famous	35	13.4
Unusual Children	21	8.0
Enthusiasts	19	7.3
Royalty	17	6.5
Seasonal Festivals	10	3.8
Adventure/Travel	8	3.1
Charity	8	3.1
Variety Acts	7	2.7
Day in the Life	4	1.5
Comic	4	1.5
Other	4	1.5
	Total 261	100.0 %

As already stated collectively this subject area of human interest items comprises nearly a quarter of all items sampled across the period, and as such represents the second major plank of news subject covered. While each sub-subject category could enjoy detailed discussion particularly in regard to the multiple-appeals and values inscribed within such items, such remarks will remain of necessity at a relatively general level. What can be observed however, is that without exception all these categories resonate with a particular appeal to the private worlds of domesticity, family, leisure and the sovereignty of the individual.

The seemingly infinite variety of regional news stories regularly demonstrating this complex of underpinning regional news values found within this and other subject areas illustrates both something of the elasticity of such organising themes and their popular resonance. These values can be discerned as principally centring upon the related values of individualism, enterprise and eccentricity, the pursuit of leisure and consumption and the domains of home, family and region. Moreover, their inherent populist appeal militating against the formal worlds of public office and political process perhaps exemplified in the bureaucratic intrusions from a national political centre, though not exclusively confined to the national political apparatus, provides a continual

affirmation of a seemingly 'universal' human nature and 'natural' attitude more concerned with the human immediacies and ordinary experiences of life than expert and professional debate and engagement. This fount of popular sentiment and commonsense attitude to 'the way of the world' is routinely tapped and given expression via the endless display of individual characters and local characteristics of regional diversity.

If regionalism finds expression through geographical diversity and the quirkiness of local characters, so a supposed community of interests can also be invoked through either the traditions and sense of community found within a romantised historical past, or 'natural' and harmonious rural idyll. Both the elasticity and immediate appeal of such values resonate within the following human interest stories and consumer/leisure sub-subjects discussed below. Selected at random from over the seven year period and all expressive of this inner matrix of regional news values the following descriptions indicate something of the extraordinary range of such human interest stories.

Table 5:12 Random Review of Human Interest Items

Police dog handler saves his dog;
Man who canoes to work;
Boy wrestler may lose licence because knocked out;
UFO sightings round Birmingham;
Vicar brought in to exorcise ghost;
Clint Eastwood Fan/Fanatic;
Wedding of football fanatic;
80 year old marathon runner;
Battle of Britain pilot digging up shot down plane;
Bishop of Hereford goes up in balloon watched by children;
Sculpture made out of shoes;
Princess Di at Brierly Hill Glass factory;
Pub that doubles as a church;
Pub landlord sings to beer;
Pub landlord offering free pint to OAP'S who buy 7 pints;
Pub landlord plays pub bottles;
Man who lives with 2 girl friends and wife;
Lucky beneficiary of shares;
Pools winner;
Violin maker, charges £2-3000 per violin;
Animal stories - zoos, births, wild-life parks, shows etc.
A look round Noel Gordan's flat;
Father buys unemployed son a flying school;
Unemployed mum lands job as trainee trapeze artist.
Knife thrower recruits unemployed girl as assistant;
Unemployed woman set up as shoe shine girl in Leamington Spa;
Family made redundant- set up own business;
National Smile week;
OAP refuses to move home for inner relief road;
Recovery of 'Sefton'- horse blown up by IRA;

While it is the case that in the earlier programmes of the sample period 1982-1984 the human interest category of subjects was, in its more excessive mode - studio chats with celebrities, charity gimmicks, and comical items - more pronounced than within the remainder of the sample period, the heavy preponderance of general human interest stories characterised by the kinds of appeals indicated above persists across the period as the second major component of the programme while the informing matrix of values expressed within such stories, as observed below, often reaches far beyond this particular grouping of regional news stories.

Individualism whether expressed through eccentricity or enterprise and success, benevolence and brave deeds or unusual and exceptional talents is significant perhaps not so much in terms of an assumed liberal philosophy of individual rights and free-market enterprise, but because it locates self-determination, individual responsibility, and decision making firmly within the privatised orbit of family life, domestic ritual and private consumption. To the extent that such characteristics are consistently inscribed within this major plank of programme subject matter they constitute a potent mix of sentimentality and displaced social control. The private worlds of home, family and leisure are where individual responsibility, difference and choice are expressed, exercised and celebrated; while the public world of political process, social organisation and resource allocation, that is the domain of social control, remains dislocated, assigned to the separate world of the public sphere. The interpenetrations of the 'public' and 'private' worlds are thus invariably displaced from view, severed by a blanket acceptance of and appeal to the privatised spheres of individual independence and consumer interests.

To the extent that such an appeal can readily support a populist denigration of political organisation and the operation of power as simultaneously 'bureaucratic' while positing politicians and the political process as the domain corrupted by ideological rhetoric, attention must also be focused upon the other domain which gives sustenance to such constructions. In this mutually reinforcing sense, the extent to which the 'other side' of the public sphere assumes a privatised form bathing in

the warm glow of ideology-free neutrality, naturalness and commonsense must also be attended to. It is here that the seemingly superficial, slight or just entertaining aspect of the human interest story reveals a serious facet which frequently reinforces and emanates from an underpinning set of regional news values that extends to both the private and the public worlds.

Moreover, as elaborated upon later, to the extent that certain appeals of the private sphere are apt to invade the journalistic appropriation of the public sphere, this public world can itself be incorporated into a particular 'privatised' construction. Thus issues of widespread public concern have frequently been placed within the privatised sphere of interests. Unemployment, for instance, may be focused to the extent that an individual youngster answers a 'bizarre' job advertisement; the plight of a bankrupt business is tangentially noted as a consequence of its effect upon the domestic ritual of a wedding; the immiserisation of many old age pensioners is of note only to the extent that it forms the backdrop to an item about a pub landlord's attempt to increase his sales of beer and so on. Not only do many of the items thus indulge in a highly routinised manner the private worlds of family, home, leisure and consumption while celebrating the virtues of individualism, enterprise and achievement, but so too do they frequently co-opt issues and problems normally assigned to the public arena of political authority, policy formulation and exercise of formal political power, only to disengage such interests, in pursuit of their 'human interest' aspect. The journalistic pursuit, appropriation and inscription of 'human interest' in this sense effectively dissimulates the concerns of the public sphere by 'privatising' their appeal.

It can also be noted, that invariably such a privatisation also proffers an implicit 'resolution' to such structural disparities: the focus invariably is upon 'success' secured through enterprise, individualism and the sheer tenacity or quirkiness expressed within the rich vein of regional characters. The private sphere it is suggested is both a particular domain of appeal and assignment, and can only be understood in terms of its complex relation to, and mediation of the public sphere.

Regional News: Consumer/Leisure

The related subject category of consumer and leisure items are of general informative interest; though not generally referring to the immediate events and happenings in the formal world of power and social organisation nor principally displayed as primarily of celebratory or entertainment value, such stories comprise a further substantial component of the programme (12.6 %) which again largely focuses upon the private worlds of home, leisure and consumption. The sub-subject groups itemised are as follows for the sample period.

Table 5:13 Regional News: Consumer/Leisure

	Frequency	Percent
Leisure General	33	23.0
Consumer safety	29	20.1
Rural Past/Traditions	21	14.6
Historic Sites	14	9.8
Health(not service specific)	8	5.5
Science/Invention	7	4.9
Entertainment-Film,Theatre	7	4.9
Education(not service)	6	4.1
Central In-House promo	6	4.1
Other	4	2.7
Housing(not service)	3	2.1
Community Group/Culture	3	2.1
Seasonal Excess/Effects	3	2.1
	Total 144	100.0 %

This subject group of items comprises the fourth most prevalent group of news items, with general leisure, consumer and safety, and rural and past rural customs and traditions each within the top quarter of the most popular 69 individual items while collectively they comprise nearly 60 % of this particular grouping. An individual photographer recording the scenes of a particularly well preserved 'historical' village, a ceremony awarding butchers who sell hormone-free meat, safety measures in local swimming pools, the rehearsal of Bolshoi academy dancers, the invention of a new form of mobile pedestrian walkway designed for shopping precincts, or the prettiest village in England are all representative examples of the kind of consumer interest and appeal which again considerably characterises this component of the programme and, in combination with the human interest element already alluded to, skews the basic programme thrust towards the private domain.

Regional News: Economy and Employment

Nearly 14 % of all programme items (14.4 %) have explicitly focused upon aspects of the economy and related employment and unemployment issues. The Sub-subject categories are as follows for the sample period.

Table 5:14 Regional News: Economy/Employment

	Frequency	Percent
Industrial Action	66	40.0
Specific Business Focus	59	35.8
General Job Losses/Gains	33	20.0
Substantial Jobs Focus	6	3.6
General Business Focus	1	0.6
Industrial Conditions	0	0.0
	Total: 165	100.0 %

The most prevalent form of item relating to the Economy is Industrial Action and Relations which comprises 40 % of all Economy/Employment related items within this Subject Category. Here the emphasis is invariably upon the visual and confrontational aspects of strike action, while the news treatment frequently widens its initial concerns by considering the effects experienced by the region's general public. The general public, thus whether addressed as disrupted travellers, shoppers deprived of choice or inconvenienced hospital patients, or parents faced with temporary school closures are thus posited as interested private consumers within these various disputes and not as political subjects who may or may not feel certain sympathies or even allegiances with the various disputants involved.

The focus upon the effects of industrial action, while addressing perhaps the largest possible constituency of interest, also begins to return issues and contest finding expression within the public arena which furthermore are often of a political nature given the changing involvement and ramifications of industrial law, to the privatised sphere of consumer interest - displacing other possible roles or subject positions remaining undisclosed within a particular construction of the 'general public'. The construction of the concept of 'the general public' in this sense seriously skews attention from the public sphere to that of the private. Once again, the pursuit of

'human interest' within such items can effectively displace and transpose 'public' issues into 'privatised' interests and concerns.

While industrial action, if relating to visible and visual forms of protest and disruption as opposed say to imposed wage cuts, or deteriorating conditions of work, is an important feature within regional news - indeed, it is the third most frequent type of all regional news items - then so too is explicit attention upon the fortunes of specific industries and businesses associated with, or located within the Central television region. Between them these two principal forms of Economic item comprise almost three quarters of all items within this category.

A further 20 % of items less frequent within recent years, though once a regular two-weekly item, delivered in direct news desk fashion the officially released unemployment figures relating to the region. These have also invariably assumed an established form of delivery which, like court reports, are a highly standardised and restricted 'report' presented in a compressed and restricted presentational format. However, the more substantive treatments of regional unemployment have not been entirely absent though assuming less than 4 % of all items within this category. If we consider some of the items that have been covered within this category we find, for instance, that on one occasion the release of new unemployment figures was followed up with an interview with the Secretary for Employment, a Trades Council representative and group interview with unemployed people in an inner city unemployment centre; while very occasional items have considered the impact of unemployment in more general terms - one relating to the specific area of the Forest of Dean, another addressing the question 'how easy is it to get a Job' while a third segues from the closure of a company with the loss of 1,200 jobs into a consideration of the Midlands recession.

Once again, it can be noted that such items though more expansive than short news reports concerning the latest unemployment figures, tend to 'humanise' by individualising the experience of unemployment while failing to place the generalised phenomenon of unemployment within a wider structural context and its differential impact upon certain social groups

and inner urban locales. The regional employment/unemployment figures, for instance, as averages considerably down-play the official figures for specific inner city areas while the unofficial estimates are displaced from view as are the general methods and changing criteria upon which such official figures are derived.

In summary, the sample period reviewed demonstrates that in the main economy and employment issues are addressed to the extent that strike action is reported particularly in industry/service related areas where an impact upon the general public - conceived essentially as consumers - is anticipated. However, individual businesses also form a more positive, even celebratory role within regional news with business success stories and their impact upon employment forming a strong emphasis within the programme while simultaneously helping to define a sense of regionality and regional identity. Interestingly, the success of a particular industry or business, perhaps in launching a new product or gaining a new order, though confined to business within a geographical area of significant distance appears to be deemed proximate to the interests of viewers, though the region's unemployment blackspots, and particularly hard-hit social groups also found within the same geographical proximities do not appear to attract similar news interest.

Regional News: Local Government/Services

Under 10 % of all samples items involved news treatment of the array of local government and other services. The sub-subject categories in order of item frequency are as follows.

Table 5:15 Regional News: Local Government/Services

	Frequency	Percent
Health	29	27.4
Social Services	13	12.3
Defence/Armed services	12	11.3
Police - General	10	9.4
Prisons	10	9.4
Housing	7	6.6
Environment	7	6.6
Roads/Transport	6	5.5
Education	5	4.7
Local Government Other	3	2.8
Urban Schemes	3	2.8
Probation	1	0.9
	Total 106	100.0 %

Nearly a quarter of all Public Service related items are related to health. The vast majority of these Health related items concern possible negligence by medical professionals leaving patients paralysed, brain damaged or in possession of strictly unwanted operating instruments, while stories either highlighting the effects of shortages or imposed stringency measures also figure prominently. These, particularly if they involve the denial of life-saving operations, equipment or professional medical attention for children can assume the lead position within the running order of the programme.

Improved medical techniques and facilities also occasionally feature as do outbreaks of such serious diseases as meningitis - particularly threatening to children. What is interesting about those stories focusing upon shortages and imposed 'cuts' is that invariably they focus upon an individual case, typically involving children, and the inevitably anguished responses elicited from close relatives and parents. This is not necessarily to say that the story is first and foremost about the individual/family plight, but it is to suggest that the story is usually framed around the human dilemma confronting a particular individual or family, which then may or may not act as a vehicle for wider considerations and contextualisation.

Social Services and aspects of the supplementary benefit system feature as the next most present Service area within this category. Once again stringency measures feature prominently via a protest of young homeless people after a radical change in the benefit system, a threatened closure of a boys home and home for

the mentally handicapped, and the individual stories of a disabled woman who had her benefit stopped because her helper was deemed to be co-habiting by the DHSS, and the plight of a lorry driver recently discharged from hospital forced to live in accommodation for the alcoholic homeless because of a chronic lack of after-care facilities.

Both these latter stories, as in the case of many of the individual/family health stories noted above, were principally focused upon and about the individual's stories and their respective dilemmas while affording some opening to consideration of the wider service provision and regulations impacting upon individuals in similar circumstances. That said, it has to be noted that in both the last two cases mentioned the principal focus was explicitly upon the individual situations and only tangentially opened up some wider discussion of social considerations.

Social services not heavily featured within regional news nonetheless appear open to a limited number of news treatments. In particular stories concerning children, particularly appeals for foster parents, are featured on the positive side, while on the negative, an anti-bureaucratic frame capable of championing the rights and commonsense of the 'ordinary people' can readily be mobilised against either the meddlesome or do-gooding experts and service administrators if basic expectations appear to be breached. Social workers arguably occupy an ambivalent social position which can alternatively be regarded as unwarranted bureaucratic intrusion or champions of the poor and dispossessed. Which frame may ultimately be put in place is dependent upon the particular item, but what is apparent is that invariably such stories appear to pursue the human interest found within the plight of a particular and individual case, while the wider impacts and experiences of those subject to the social services and benefits system appear, when present at all, to provide a limited degree of background to the personalised account which assumes the news focus.

Referring to the items noted above it can be maintained that the double affliction of physical handicap or physical illness and lack of means of support appears to legitimise questioning of the benefits system, whereas a physically able and healthy person is not readily able to carry either a championing or

merely questioning news item, despite the more widespread and representative nature of such cases. Such items, perhaps unconsciously but implicitly perpetuate the notion of the deserving and undeserving poor, while failing to tackle the wider social realities of poverty and disadvantage.

While the category of defence and armed services falls outside of the main research interest with most of its coverage concerning the death or injury of 'local' soldiers in Ireland, celebration of the region's regiments and public displays and official manoeuvres, it is interesting to note once again that treatment of other substantive areas of news can gain entry through even the most unexpected general categories. Thus, the plight of a returned unemployed Falklands veteran who was forced to sell his medals because he couldn't survive on supplementary benefit becomes another example of how individual stories can tangentially act as vehicles for wider issues, while simultaneously locating news treatment and focus upon individual circumstances. This example also, once again, by omission implicitly involves the notion of the deserving and undeserving poor.

Other sub-subject categories of particular relevance are Police with just over 9 % of all such Service related items. Here items concerning new police technology (surveillance helicopter, plastic bullets, new type of police car etc.) are reported as are increases in funding and manning levels, bravery awards for officers involved in the Handsworth riots, and the achievements and difficulties faced by women police officers. The police can also gain news entry by involvement in charitable ventures and donations, displays of driving prowess and police animal handling skills, in addition to individual profiles of exceptional and/or senior officers. As will be discussed more fully later, this impressive array of forms of police entry across a wide variety of news subject areas provides a constant source of police involvement within regional news programming. Thus, as already noted clearly their involvement within the bulk of all crime news - itself the highest frequency of all news items, as well as more general considerations of policing practice and policies noted above combine with other forms of entry - disaster/accident, demonstrations, and human interest items - to affect a spectacular and constant presence within the

public eye which is not confined to simple crime reports.

Unlike the institution of the Police the prison service gains restricted subject areas for entry, and is present only in less than one percent of all sample programme items. Roof top protests, occasional escapes and heavily inflected human interest items such as the close-up on prisoner's poetry, or moral outrage at the jailing of an old age and impoverished pensioner for failure to pay his rates or bravery of a prison warder in saving an inmate from fire are the only prison stories reported in the sample period. The life, conditions and enclosed world of the prison in the main remains concealed from the media unless publicly brought to its attention by such outbursts as a protest or political intervention.

The remaining categories do not figure very prominently within either this Subject category or overall programme item frequencies. Urban environment items tend to feature stories involving pressure groups concerned with acid rain and other major threats to the environment, or local authority decisions relating to pollution and toxic waste disposal, while items relating to general considerations of urban environmental deprivation have not appeared within this sample of items. Some consideration of the specific problem of vandalism within tower blocks, however has featured within Housing stories, which have included consideration of individuals who have bought council houses only to find them structurally defective, and tenant protests about problems of damp and exorbitant heating prices.

Council housing was otherwise only featured to the extent that one item revelled in the surprising council house in a stock-broker area which also had a swimming pool, and a country cottage in bad disrepair put up for auction. The novelty value of such stories, their surprising breach of widely held expectations, was arguably the impetus for such items, while the mundane generality of living conditions and expansive nature of many 'housing problems' failed to be newsworthy in any sustained sense.

The probation service gained hardly any coverage at all, with only one item relating to a 'public outcry' following the appointment of an ex-spy to a probation service position - hardly a representative example of the practice of this particular service but illuminating of the kind of news values

which can occasionally bring such a service into public view. The rehabilitative role of the probation service perhaps by definition is not likely to be readily newsworthy given the relatively long-term nature of its interventions and essentially undisclosed and unquantifiable effectiveness. It is also, of course, in part dealing with individual and increasingly group orientated approaches to offending behaviour which at a minimal level invariably problematise any simplistic notion of individual responsibility in relation to offending patterns. To this extent, though not ruled out as a likely area for news treatment, such coverage would begin to qualify the often unexplicated but implicit 'rational man' model of criminal activity incorporated into crime reports.

The plethora of Urban Aid schemes which might have been considered available for regional news treatment in fact feature very infrequently, usually with the arrival and press statements of a senior government minister. Nonetheless, a regional news antipathy towards politicians (see below) and the possibility of political manipulation for propaganda purposes does not in fact grant routine access to politicians at a regional news level, while it can also be surmised, in the absence of cases of personal 'deviance', that politics and politicians as an area of news subject does not lend itself so readily or extensively to the human interest story or journalistic inflexion referred to earlier. That said, if a major scheme such as an Urban Development Corporation is launched by the Minister responsible in an area of acute deprivation, with the attendant political disagreements as to its validity and accountability, then such a news item can be considered important enough to lead the evening programme. The fact remains however, that on a routine level the vast array of governmental, local authority and quasi-independent Urban schemes have not gained entry within regional news.

Regional News: Disasters, Accidents and Tragedies

Forming only 8 % of all sample items Disaster news still arguably occupies an important and traditionally informative news role. Disasters and accidents by and large happen to individuals and small groups of people, typically families and

or family members living within, or once living within the region. The numbers of work place accidents reported is not substantial, and in any case invariably and rapidly positions 'victims' as friends and family members. The emotional and empathic appeal is based on the ability to identify with and sympathise for either the victims or the bereaved relatives while perhaps acknowledging that, 'but for the grace of god' it could have happened to 'you and yours'. A house fire in which children are killed, a motorway crash killing a whole family are the sharp end of the private sphere. Geographically proximate though invariably involving complete strangers, the force of human tragedy is the losers side of the human interest coin. Whereas human interest stories essentially celebrate through eccentricity, difference and enterprise within the domain of individual responsibility and independence so arguably accidents and small scale disasters constantly affirm the shared vulnerability of us all at a moment when responsibility and independence has succumbed to an even greater force of adversity and circumstance.

A parallel could be drawn at this point between populist invocations of feelings of exclusion and impotence experienced by 'ordinary' people towards the distant public world of decision-making and formal political power and that of the world of blind fate invoked by accident and disaster stories (in addition to a number of human interest stories concerned with the world of the paranormal, the occult, mysticism and superstitions). A transcendent visitation whether assuming the form of a tragic accident or sudden relegation to the dole queue share a similar news 'matter-of-factness' treatment which invariably posits the world of control or determination as somewhere other than the orbit of human influence and intervention. The extent to which 'accidents' and 'tragedies' are in fact dispersed differentially throughout the social structure and involve characteristics relating say, to poor housing, deprivation and emergency service resourcing and so on, is a social dimension/determination that is lost from view within the individuated treatments of accident news.

Interestingly, just as Unemployment news frequently assumes a standardised news account involving the delivery of released official figures with little or any elaboration, so disaster and

accident news frequently also assume a direct presentation delivering the bare 'facts' of the incident, though personal eye witness testimony or expert involvement is also frequently involved. While such news accounts may or may not be filled with meanings which work at this deeper homologous level, they nonetheless present a series of individuated news reports which refer to private misfortunes, while in their more elaborate news treatment involving personal eye-witness accounts, testimonies of friends and relatives and perhaps heroics of bystanders and others. This is very much the mediated 'private' world which is brought home to the viewer via his or her inclusion within the regionalised domain of personal tragedy. .

Clearly social proximity is not strictly related to geographical distance, but proximity is, or so it would appear, related to a shared geographical space occupied at least at one time by the unfortunates involved. A tragedy involving strangers a street away, is logically as socially remote as a tragedy anywhere within the world. And yet it is this assumed attachment to proximity, to a shared sense of personal locality, though never necessarily 'shared' in any sense of personal intercourse, that links, no matter how remotely, the sense of identity and empathy sustained by regional disaster news. Bringing the public world of mediated events 'back home' in ever increasing proximities to the domestic and private spheres of interest and appeal is arguably a prime appeal of regional news which stretches across its various news subject areas and is inscribed into its particular form of journalism.

Regional News: Political Administration

Politics, at the level of regional news, is not big news. Comprising little over 4 % of all items the sub-subject categories were recorded as follows across the sample period.

Table 5:16 Regional News: Political Administration

	Frequency	Percent
World/International/European	18	36.7
Political Visit/Statement	14	28.6
Parliament/Legislative	8	16.3
Local Party Politics	5	10.2
National Party Politics	4	8.2
	Total 49	100.0 %

Included in the category Politics is the sub-subject area of impacting World, International and European events designed to pick-up those items from the wider geographical stage that are deemed of regional interest and relevance. In this sense they may involve varying understandings of the term 'politics'. In fact, the principal form of extrinsic-regional news item relates to individuals who have become entangled with foreign authorities to the dismay of friends and relatives and occasioning a statement by a local MP. The Falklands war featured in three items, and interestingly given the 'private' appeal and inflexion found within many regional news items these items concerned a 'family split' at the outbreak of the war due to the son's profession as a sailor and daughter's life in Buenos Aires; and a trader whose son was sent to the Falkands, who refused to sell Colgate toothpaste because it continued to be advertised in Argentina . While the remainder of items involved EEC directives and schemes impacting upon regional affairs.

While not frequent in any absolute sense, senior government politicians and opposition leaders' statements and 'walk-abouts' designed specifically for media coverage figure as the second most prominent form of explicit Political news. These public statements, visits and walk-abouts while occasionally selected as newsworthy if involving the most senior of parliamentary politicians invariably must also contain further 'news angles' if they are to be deemed of regional news interest. Journalistic wariness of manipulation and, as will be developed below, regional news antipathy to the world of politics provides a stringent questioning of the inherent news worthiness of such events, which frequently assume the status of 'pseudo-events' deliberately courting media coverage and exposure. Debates and legislative enactment in parliament of general interest or relating to specific industries located within the region are also present, as are a limited number of items relating to local and national party politics. These, however, remain principally focused upon routine political processes and events - local and national elections, party conference coverage.

Political news, then, is explicitly focused upon parliamentary and party politics while local politics and minority group or special interest politics rarely gains

regional news attention. While infrequent items of political news severely limit the opportunity for human interest stories, if an opportunity presents itself as in case of the family with two brothers both campaigning in a local election from opposing party political positions, or, in the absence of such obvious human interest appeals, other aspects may consciously be sought out as in the item concerning a party political conference which concentrated on the effects upon local trade.

Regional News: Politics of Community Protest and Disadvantage

The remaining subject group which collectively contains the most infrequent regional news items sampled across the seven year period concerns the politics of protest and disadvantage. The sub-subject categories reviewed are found as follows within the sample of 1142 items.

Table 5:17 Regional News: Politics of Community

	Frequency	Percent
Demonstration/Protest	13	43.3
Pressure and Support Groups	13	43.3
Race and Racism	4	13.3
	Total 30	100.0 %

Less than 3 % of all programme items fall within this last subject area. Of these the vast majority concern organised opposition and protest. For the purposes of this analysis, industrial action which can also of course be regarded as a form of organised protest (5.8 % of all items) were consigned to previously discussed subject areas. This residual category was designed to focus upon community politics and protest. Clearly, organised groups and protests figure the most prominently within this subject group which together comprise 25 items. Protests centred on such diverse issues as a coal pit closure, planned motorways, a bill proposing reform in the Abortion act, and a petition against social security reforms and roof-top protest by council tenants complaining about deprived living conditions, as well as a protest against a planned new mosque. Pressure and supports groups gaining entry to regional news included Help the Aged, a help-line for the blind, young gamblers anonymous and animal rights groups.

To the extent that many of these issues have not appeared elsewhere within the sample of items reviewed it could be maintained that organised protest and public demonstration do indeed create openings into regional news and gain the publicity and exposure of issues that hitherto have been ignored. However, as already indicated across the variety of news subject areas reviewed above, to the extent that many of these same items enter a media world not of their making, with its own set of priorities and expectancies, they may well run the risk of a particular journalistic appropriation which can on occasion sacrifice issues for spectacle, information for entertainment.

The last category in this subject group Race/Racism while clearly of enormous relevance and interest to this analysis nonetheless hardly appears to explicitly feature at all. The four items explicitly focusing upon race concerned a case of four Chinese men being refused permission to become members of a local conservative club - the suspicion that such a story was deemed newsworthy simply because it breached certain expectations cannot be discounted; a call by two M.P's for an inquiry into the practices and philosophies informing anti-racist training courses; a substantial item (8 minutes 44 seconds) concerned with the difficulties confronting Asians and Afro-caribbeans who must confirm their right to British citizenship or else face deportation by the Home Office; and finally an item which focused on the thriving business success of a company involved in shipping 'disillusioned' West Indians back to the West Indies.

While these and other similar items from a considerably expanded sample of inner city items will be discussed in more detail below, it is important to note from this preliminary content analysis that issues of race and racism rarely assume an explicit focus within regional news. On the infrequent occasions that they have, their presence may have as much to do with the pursuit of established regional news values as the public exposure of common difficulties and problems confronting ethnic minorities within the central television region.

These remarks however, remain at best tentative until the expanded sample of a further 210 programmes have been reviewed and further items dealing with race and racism quantitatively and qualitatively assessed.

The Subject Matter of Regional News : Summary Remarks

From the review of the perennial patterns of regional news subject matter elicited above a few general observations can be made. Clearly, while the exact subject composition of the regional news programme reviewed cannot be seen as totally set, or unchanging, it has been noted how a remarkable pattern of relative consistency endures between the major areas of news subject areas across the seven year review period. The predominating areas of crime and human interest news continues to comprise nearly half of all programme contents, while the relative proportions of the other areas of regional news subject appear to have undergone little movement in terms of broad subject prominences.

More specifically, it has been noted that one of the principal subject planks of the regional news genre, crime news, provides a regular and consistent display of typically individual forms of regional deviance. Human interest stories, the second principal mainstay of the regional news programme provide a varied fare of celebratory and entertaining items which typically appeal to the private sphere while invoking a set of underpinning values cohering around individualism, enterprise, eccentricity and regional identity typically finding expression in relation to the private domains of home and family and the pursuit of consumer interests and leisure activities. Such values, though most clearly expressed at a substantive level within human interest and consumer/leisure items, have also been identified as strongly present in the form of inflection that has accompanied other areas of regional news subject matter. Thus, attending to social services or features on unemployment, or economic and business issues it has constantly been observed how such issues are frequently focused in relation to individual cases and personalised stories, which often fail to provide a wider frame of contextualisation and background. That is, the pursuit of human interest, now understood as an inflexion of journalistic treatment appears to constantly threaten to encompass other areas of regional news interest, ostensibly relating to the public sphere only to draw them back into the 'private' sphere.

Here it can be emphasised once again, especially given the

potential ambiguities that surround the term 'human interest', that what has been observed as an inherent attribute of the kinds of 'human interest' subjects reviewed above finds more general application as a journalistic tendency to inflect other areas of news interest with a similar news treatment apparently intent upon maximising 'human interest'. The recurrent patterns of news subjects provided by regional news do not therefore simply express a narrowly conceived set of subject preferences, the spectrum and diversity of subjects covered is simply too expansive for such a charge to be sustained. It can be suggested from the review above however, that in so far as there is unity in diversity, this is a fractured and often competing 'unity' of established news subject areas and treatments underpinned by a complex set of regional news values. Such regional news values, it is maintained, provide an organising and essentially populist orientation within a wider or encompassing framework of news practices and professional ideology frequently discerned in relation to national forms of television news journalism. To what extent such perennial patterns of regional subject matter and journalistic inflexion impact upon the portrayal of the issues and concerns of the inner city will be closely scrutinised in the following chapter. One final defining characteristic of the regional genre has yet to be considered, however, and this concerns the overall 'stance' of the news programme under discussion.

III The Regional News Genre and Stance

The aspect of genre defined as 'stance' by Williams referred to 'a mode of basic social organisation which determines a particular kind of presentation'. More specifically, it can be suggested that stance involves a form of social relationship between the addressed and the addressee, as well as a projected relationship in regard to the substantive content. As indicated earlier, news studies have frequently observed that typically the stance projected stresses the role of the journalist as the independent observer in the presentation of social facts and different social viewpoints.

The previous discussions concerning both the 'formal mode of composition' and the range of 'appropriate subject matter' found

to characterise the regional news genre have already in part implicitly addressed such concerns. Thus, the programme composition delivered in a series of separate items, often delivered in direct and 'restricted' formats begins to indicate something of the projected stance in relation to the role of the programme in terms of the information delivered, as do both 'limited' and 'expansive' formats. Whereas the 'restricted' formats appear to position the presenter or reporter as delivering an objective and factual account beyond question or reproach, 'limited' formats frequently begin to suggest, via the accessing of conflicting views, that the field of news is open to some dispute and therefore invites a degree of interpretation of the issues and meaning involved, while 'expansive' formats tend to positively question the notion of any assumed and simple 'fact of the matter'. Each in its way alters the projected stance of the news programme in relation to both its subject matter and audience.

Similarly, the array of subject matter and concerns and its implicit appeal to, and positioning of, an intended audience also speaks directly to the sought relationships forged between the news form and its audience, the news form and its subject matter, and the implicit relationship promoted between the news subject matter and the audience. The subject matter of regional news, for instance, implicitly positions the audience into a particular position whether, say, as consumers, political subjects, animal lovers or even morally outraged citizens and members of a shared regional community. However, as the preceding discussion has already indicated, regional news cannot be understood as simply promoting an independent and objective stance in relation to the formal delivery of information.

The underpinning complex of regional news values elicited from an examination of the sub-subject areas already briefly noted, suggest that the projected stance of popular forms of journalism need not simply be approached as a form of independent and informational conduit. On occasion, regional news stories and the increasingly familial mode of address adopted by programme presenters as the programme modulates from so-called 'hard' to 'soft' news throughout the course of the programme actively give expression to particular social viewpoints. If some of the more obvious core regional news

values are considered which appear to regularly inform the range of subject matter characteristic of the regional news programme the following begin to suggest that far from the genre of regional news striving to create a stance of independence premised on factual objectivity popular news forms actively encourage a form of identification with, and expression of wider cultural sympathies and viewpoints - wearing their support for certain expressions of popular culture and experience, as it were, on their journalistic sleeve.

Table 5:18 The Regional News Genre: Core Values

* Conflict and Deviance
* Individualism and Eccentricity
* Enterprise and Success
* Regionalism
* The Private Domain of Family and Home
* The Pursuit of Consumption and Leisure
* Ordinary Life and the Realms of the Experiential and Affective

Clearly any shopping list of discerned news values can be more or less extensive, and open to competing interpretations. The above simply seek to capture something of the recurrent character and nuance of appeal which routinely inform the programme subject matter reviewed above. As values, almost by definition, these are unlikely to be open to a strictly quantitative analysis, nor can they necessarily be deemed as formally independent from each other. Rather they point to the complex of values which collectively indicate something of the news orientation and specificity of the regional news genre gained while reviewing considerable tracts of the subject matter of regional news carried out above.

Conflict and Deviance

The pursuit of, and journalistic interest in 'conflict' is generally recognised, and regional news journalism appears to be no exception in this regard. The visual and verbal manifestations of 'conflict', in many of its diverse forms

routinely attract news interest. Explored more fully in the second part of analysis, it can nonetheless be stated at this stage that frequently it is the manifestation of 'conflict' in and of itself, which can appear to attract news interest rather than the informing social positions or derivations to such public contests. Conflict, it can be suggested, is of interest to news journalists because it constantly holds the news promise, albeit social threat, of developing into dramatic breaches of the established procedures and social norms of conflict management. At its outer limits, conflict can involve or spill over into violence and acts of criminality invoking the related news concern with the many and varied forms of deviance.

The prevalence of regional crime news clearly indicates an overriding concern with a particular form of 'criminal' deviance, which publicly displays the incidence of individual transgressions and the effects upon those directly involved. A sense of 'us', the regional community, tends to be invoked against 'them' the criminal outsiders, who may occasionally serve to unite the common pursuit of such miscreants via emotive accounts and 'Police Five' appeals for public assistance. Individualism, understood as the positing of a rational and independent model of human behaviour and action, frequently informs the news account of crime providing a negative aspect to its celebratory and idiosyncratic expressions found elsewhere within the genre subject matter. It would be a mistake however to confine 'deviance' to routine crime stories, given the identification above of types of minor misdemeanour selected as newsworthy because of the public prominence or social role associated with the individuals involved. The private behaviour of public figures, especially if involving some insight into the inner recesses of personal life and activity is likely to elicit news interest, though the genre of regional news has generally held back from explicit treatment of sexual misconduct as a means of sensationalism and titillation finding expression in tabloid styles of journalism.

Individualism and Eccentricity

Individualism can be invoked either via criminal and other forms of deviant transgression or celebrated via the endless

sump of regional characters and eccentrics regularly finding expression within the regional news genre. As well as displaying the rich variety of regional diversity, unified through difference, such displays ritually affirm the success, enterprise and experience of 'ordinary' people in the face of adversity. Such successes, however, just as personal tragedy and hardship stories elsewhere, are likely to assume a personalised form displacing wider structural contexts and processes. Individualism is an infinitely malleable value which can be sought and inscribed into almost any facet of human experience, and within the genre of regional news it invariably is.

Enterprise and Success

Regional news gives the lie to the common idea that news is inherently concerned with negativity. Regional news positively affirms and celebrates individual achievement and success, whether secured through individual creativity, tenacity and enterprise or simply good fortune. Success itself tends to be posited as personal acclaim or public recognition won through individual enterprise or creative talent, and typically involves monetary rewards and the display of affluent consumption. If individual success is frequently celebrated, so too can the wider successes and fortunes of the region assume a focal point of interest. Business successes, corporate developments and municipal public projects simultaneously define the parameters of the news region, while also appealing to a common environment and sense of regional identification.

Regionalism

The regional news genre though not generally enveloped in the parochial loyalties or 'mini-nationalisms' of traditional localities and custom, will nonetheless frequently celebrate and affirm regional differences via its human interest and leisure/consumption strands of established subject matter. However, the form of 'regionalism' displayed within the overall programme genre tends to be a fairly bland and nondescript allegiance to geographical locality and the common occupation of a shared environment, rather than a fervent parochialism

indulging in pronounced characteristics of regional difference. While the geographical diversity and, to some extent, homogenised experiences found within the large urban centres diminishes possible traditional allegiances, the regional news genre has generally refrained from a bellicose attempt at regional identification. Rather its regionalism, appears to be underpinned by a populist appeal to the common experiences of a populace who happen to share a geographical space in common with others.

The Private Domains of Home and Family

If regionalism does not depend upon the advancement of a spurious identification of parochial custom and allegiance, it nonetheless involves an appeal to a common environment and shared experience. Domestic rituals, preoccupations and concerns of the regional populace given expression within and across the subject areas of regional news arguably define and mark out a common area of regional existence. While the aggregate family in such portrayals is apt to assume something of a mythical status characterised along lines of gender, race, class, and populated by heterosexual parents, talented children and complemented by an ample array of fluffy pets, the appeal to family and domestic concerns and issues constantly addresses the sovereignty of the family, and sanctity of the home placed at the heart of the private sphere. If the experiential side of family life and domestic customs is regularly invoked in an ample involvement of children and family animal stories, the sustained attention to the non-work pursuits and activities of leisure and consumption is deeply structured into the construction of such family and domestic-based appeals.

The Pursuit of Consumption and Leisure

The popular appeal to a shared experience as consumers is constantly inscribed into both items substantively concerned with consumer and leisure pursuits and concerns, as well as frequently 'invading' other areas of regional new concern, whether issues relating to industrial relations, service provisions or even politics. The private appeal, and sphere of

private interests addressed through this common-denominator of consumption and leisure, further reinforces and affirms the shared experience and pursuits centred around the private domain of the home. While frequent attention to the luxury consumption habits of the well-to-do displays the manifest trappings of social inequality, such inequalities tend to be rendered politically irrelevant given the 'shared' family base around which consumption takes place and the pursuit of wealth is motivated.

Ordinary Life and the Realms of the Experiential and Affective

Contrary to findings already reviewed concerned with the patterns of news coverage found within other forms of news, regional news as already indicated tends to celebrate 'ordinary' life in contrast to the cerebral conceits and intellectual theorising of political and social elites. The ordinary life, as well as focused in relation to the domain of family and domestic ritual and general consumption interests is also premised upon the immediacy of experience. Experience is afforded heightened journalistic recognition within the regional news genre which considerably complements traditional preoccupations with expert opinion and professional knowledge.

Relatedly, if objectivity is sought through the directness of 'ordinary' personal experience so too can the 'truth' or meaning of a situation be publicly conveyed by appealing to the affective levels of understanding. While the eye-witness' account and experience of an accident, bruised and battered crime victim's defiant or tearful statement, or life-long employee's state of visible shock to sudden factory closure all relate to entirely different areas of regional news subject matter, they all nonetheless appeal directly to the affective level of empathy and feelings. In its more pronounced forms this championing of ordinary experience over expert pontification can assume a populist contempt for academic theorising and elite culture, which may occasionally even begin to question the socially removed practices and pronouncements of political elites as literally and socially 'out of touch'. In social science parlance, the regional news genre considerably expands upon the interpretivist mode of understanding and meaning

accomplishment, while nevertheless maintaining a positivistic respect for the authority and objectivity of expert opinion and factual pronouncements.

The stance of the regional news genre, then, appears to considerably expand upon any narrowly conceived model of news as the dissemination of elite information of direct relevance to a participatory political system. Regional news may more accurately be interpreted as a cultural form, giving expressing, affirming, sustaining and even celebrating a populist understanding of social existence. Internally differentiated the ensemble of themes and core values which regularly inform the subject matter and stance of the programme reviewed threaten, on occasions, to override the established orthodoxies and practices of 'serious' forms of national news journalism. While it is not possible to engage in an overview discussion of different types of journalism, regional news can be situated as a particular form of popular journalism which, declining the excesses of certain tabloid forms of populist appeal, continues to align itself to the established and respectable canons of serious 'objective' news journalism while recreating both a popular and populist identity of recognised appeal.

At this preliminary level, as well as attending to the different areas of regional news subject matter already reviewed above which point to different areas of public and private news interest, it is also possible to chart something of the popular construction of the regional news genre by briefly attending to the accessing of different kinds of social actor. Research has constantly noted a privileging of social and political elites within the sphere of news, which it has been argued tend to authenticate both the 'objectivity' of the accounts put in place and authoritativeness of the news form itself by virtue of the respected public office held by accessed spokespersons. While this may indeed be supportive of the 'positivistic' authenticating strategy of journalists (as well as reflecting a degree of routinised and institutional interdependence) the following findings suggest that regional news may also 'authenticate' by accessing 'ordinary' people relaying experiential based accounts. In other words, an 'interpretivist'

strategy may also be employed within the popular cultural form of regional news.

Stance And Regional News Access

For present purposes, ten different types of social groups were identified as prominent within regional news and these were considered across the sample period and news subject areas and coded as present or absent within each news item. The ten groups considered were as follows.

Senior Politicians - All parliamentary politicians, whether cabinet, government or opposition front bench and MP's were coded as 'senior politicians while Junior Politicians referred to local councillors and party political spokespeople.
The one exception to the general rule above, is where local MP's who are not present as Cabinet or Front bench MP's but rather in their capacity as local MP's were coded as Junior Politicians. Given the regional nature of the news programme under discussion the distinction was clearly thought to be necessary between these two categories of politicians to the extent to which regional news can be seen as 'reflecting' or 'representing' regional and local party political structures and processes as opposed to national or international concerns.

Police - All uniformed and non-uniformed members of the police force were coded. Given the preponderance of news items involving the police this was clearly a group which was deemed to be of routine presence within regional news, and it was thought highly relevant both at this basic profile and later inner city analyses stages.

Professional/Experts - Clearly, unlike the Police above, this group incorporates a vast array of social groups. What unites them for present purposes however, is that they have a acknowledged formal role and expertise in the main based upon training and/or established social recognition.

Business Spokespeople - This social group while not necessarily exhibiting a professional training or expertise nonetheless assumes an important role to the extent that their role within the market place as producers, employers and consumers affords them strategic social significance.

Celebrities - Unlike the previous social groups this group

can be considered of interest to the extent that it doesn't necessarily involve professional training, expertise or even assume strategic social positions. Rather, they assume a recognisable identity to the extent that social prominence can be based on recognition or 'fame' alone, typically gained through the mediated world of entertainment and sport.

Representatives - While the five or six groups above can be regarded as typical candidates for Becker's 'hierarchy of credibility' or Hall's 'primary definers' and the Glasgow University Media's Group 'accredited witnesses', that is they are all institutionally and socially powerful groups, the following groups are in the main less politically and socially prominent both in terms of an institutional or organisational base and social recognition. Trade Union representatives, pressure group and community project leaders would be included within this social group. That is 'representatives' in this sense would be either formally elected, or invested with a degree of 'representative authority' by other group members.

Involved Group Member - While not formally 'representative' as in the sense above, such participants are nonetheless not selected at pure 'random' as in 'vox pop' below. Rather, because of an involvement within a particular issue or struggle for instance, the news presence would be related to shared intent and collective purpose.

Individual(s) in Focus - While assuming perhaps a principal focus within a news item, but who are nonetheless not 'representative' in any organisational or informal sense, nor merely an 'involved group member' such individuals can assume a prominent role within news items. Typically an eccentric or enthusiast, or someone who has undergone an unusual, sad or traumatic experience for instance can be designated as an 'individual in focus'.

Vox Pop/Witness - These participants though not always strictly selected at pure random, as sometimes suggested by the term 'vox pop', are essentially peripheral or supportive to an item rather than forming a focal point. A witness to a crime, a neighbour of a bereaved family, or a 'random' street interview would all be designated under this social group.

Taking these ten general social groups an overview of their respective presences within the sample of 1142 separate news

items across the seven year period is gained as follows.

Table 5:19 Regional News and Social Groups

Social Group	Frequency	Percent
Individual(s) in Focus	242	23.9
Professional/Expert	196	19.4
Business Spokesperson	137	13.5
Representative	92	9.1
Police	76	7.5
Vox Pop/Witness	72	7.1
Celebrity	59	5.8
Involved Group Member	57	5.6
Junior Politician	49	4.8
Senior Politician	32	3.2
Total	1012	100.0 %

[Note: Given the general overview aims of this basic analysis these figures represent the presence or absence of each social group within any one item and not multiple appearances, or reappearances within each item.]

From the above it is apparent, contrary to any simplistic assumption that political and social elites may necessarily dominate within the participating social groups at a regional news level, that the genre can and does afford access to 'ordinary' or non-elite individuals and groups. Nearly a quarter of all participants are 'individuals in focus', while vox pops and involved group members two other contenders as groups of non-elite, 'ordinary' people together constitute over a third of all actor involvements (36.6 %). However just under one fifth of all entries are gained by professionals and experts. Perhaps these two groups between them typify the regional mix of news and the popular journalistic epistimologies informing the regional news genre. To reiterate the point made above concerning the stance of the regional news genre, and contrary to the canons of positivist social science, news objectivity may in fact be sought through a combination of logically uneasy yet compelling strategies which seek to authenticate by deploying both professional and expert opinion and information while also involving an experiential or 'interpretivist' account typically provided by an individual relating a personal experience, demonstrating a particular situation lived, experienced and felt etcetera.

Business spokespeople clearly gain the next most prominent group of entries while representatives secure less than one tenth of all entries, despite the vast array of possible groups

and associations which may have been thought possible areas for news interest. While both groups of politicians do not fare very well in relative terms, if combined they assume 8% of all forms of entry. However, if one considers the vast array of formal political issues and arenas of public discussion this group may be considered under-represented though given the relative infrequency of politics as a regional news subject matter, their relative infrequency of appearance may not appear as unexpected.

The police in contrast, unlike the previous groups of business spokespeople, and representatives is simply one professional group and yet it too nearly gains 8 % of all entries. Vox pops have gained little more than 7 % of all entries indicating that impromptu accessing of ordinary people is not common practice while celebrities are present with just less than 6 % , though it should be remembered that if the numbers of sports personalities routinely gaining news access were also included, their presence would be much increased. Involved group members have also secured less than 6% of all entries, indicating perhaps that involvement and comment is in the main sought from representatives and formally acknowledged 'leaders' as opposed to 'ordinary' involved group members.

In sum it can be stated that the single most prominent group is individuals in focus which would seem to considerably qualify any blanket acceptance of all news forms as effecting an overall and formal 'hierarchy of credibility', though it must also be stated that professional/expert participants and business spokespeople both respectively and together comprise a weighty presence within regional news. Politicians, contrary to some expectations, though confirming initial findings regarding the paucity of regional political subject news, are also relatively under-represented while the police, as one single professional body amongst many, manages to secure a not inconsiderable presence. Interestingly, while such a regional hierarchy of access may be assumed to simply reflect the patterns of subject matter, if subject matter involvement is scrutinised it is found for instance that 'individuals in focus' though prominent within the human interest subject area, are also present across the range of general subject areas.

An important aspect of the stance of the regional news genre has been found to be organised around an understanding of

its 'human interest' appeal, now understood both as a particular area of substantive regional news subject matter and more generally as a journalistic inscription, or inflexion put in place upon different subject areas of news, and which, as we have seen has afforded considerable access to non-elites. This particular aspect of journalistic stance, typical of 'popular' journalism generally and found within regional television news, also begins to point to logically competing yet televisually complementary epistemologies underpinning journalistic practices and values concerned with news objectivity. These can be taken as the authenticating strategies of involving expert opinion, comment and incorporating perhaps a wider professional view occasionally having recourse to statistical information and corroboration while simultaneously pursuing the human experiential 'meaning' invariably located within an individual experience and shared in an essentially interpretivist mode. This provides a further dimension to the idea of human interest and, as will be developed below, is intimately involved in what can be termed the 'private mediation of the public sphere'.

Chapter Six

REGIONAL NEWS AND THE MEDIATION OF THE INNER CITY

The idea of the inner city, as already elaborated, is very much a contested semantic and social site of vying interpretations and viewpoints. Surrounded by political and social commentary and debate the import of such public discussion is periodically underlined with the latest eruption of open conflict reported from inner city streets. The inner city provides therefore an example of profound social and political difference where the mobilization and exchange of meaning can become a material force intervening in the very political and social processes which affect the fabric of lived inner city conditions and possibilities for change both within the immediate vicinity of the inner city and beyond. Much can depend upon exactly whose 'meanings' and what 'meanings' are established or put in place, and the repertoire of existing frameworks of perspective and understanding to which such meanings are aligned. While this is not to suggest that such pre-existing repertoires can be regarded as either fixed or unchanging, it is to maintain that social and political reality is refracted through, as well as informing, established frameworks of understanding. In ideal-typical terms some of the most pressing and publicly available interpretative frameworks deployed and contested across the site of the inner city have been outlined earlier.

In terms of political rhetoric and understanding this is of course, the very stuff of politics where a struggle is perpetually carried out under the guiding framework of political ideologies to appropriate and make ones own, both established and new 'problems'. Typically a political ideology invites us to recognise, interpret and understand and possibly act or not-act on the basis of its incorporation and deployment of an array of pressing social concerns. 'Problems', just like political converts, are in a sense recruited and put to work within a particular framework of understanding and action. The inner city has assumed just such a status in 1980's Britain, often symbolising contradictory social and political diagnoses and prognoses for Britain's state of health.

This analysis of inner city news coverage seeks to chart the interpretative resources and accounts which have been placed within the public domain by a regional news programme across an extended period of time. While this is only one public forum potentially capable of addressing the concerns and issues of the inner city it is arguably an underestimated, and certainly under-researched forum where frequently 'wider' national news issues and concerns, in addition to specifically regional 'local' interests, receive public expression and examination. The relatively localised appeal of regional news programming may well bring home to viewers, both literally and figuratively, certain issues and concerns with added relevance and appeal based upon the closer proximities of geographic and social interest. Certainly in regard to the issues and concerns of the inner city it can be surmised that regional and local news media have played, and continue to play an important role in the portrayal of the inner city on a regular and routine basis frequently covering events and concerns finding expression in no other public medium. Such coverage can be regarded in its own right as an important interpretative resource in the public understanding of the inner city. A resource moreover which is only occasionally and intermittently supplemented when, following the latest outbreak of serious disorder, or perhaps intervention by a senior political figure, national news media propel the oft-forgotten inner city to fleeting headline status.

While the serious breaches of law and order have also, of course, secured heightened, and when compared to national news media, considerably expanded and sustained regional news interest, this chapter seeks to chart the portrayal of the inner city brought home to viewers on an every-day or routine basis leaving the following chapter to focus in increased detail on the regional news coverage of a major eruption of inner city conflict. More specifically, this chapter pursues the range and prominence of different inner city issues and concerns and their form of expression within the genre of regional news, while also attending to the range and impacts of different presentational formats involved in their delivery. Given the often competing and conflicting social positions voiced in relation to the problems and concerns of the inner city it is deemed especially important to attend to the range of social actors gaining access

and their respective forms of news entry within this inner city portrayal. On all these counts, the idea of the televisual public sphere is subjected to close scrutiny, since it is here that the display of social perspectives, difference and conflict surrounding the site of the inner city are publicly mediated.

In the preceding discussion some of the general defining or characteristic features of the regional news genre have been briefly identified and outlined. These, it will be remembered, involved considerations concerning the mode of formal composition, established patterns of appropriate subject matter and the general stance of the regional news genre which, amongst other features, was found to gain expression in a characteristic array of social actors gaining news access. On the basis of the findings from these different analytical inquiries something of the characteristic form of the regional news genre has begun to emerge and suggested various impacts, both constraining and sometimes facilitating in the dissemination and expression of inner city concerns and issues. The coverage and portrayal of the inner city will now be subjected to a similar, if more elaborate and refined, examination which pays special attention to the range of substantive concerns and issues, patterns of actor involvements and the range of presentational formats or 'forums' within which and through which the portrayal of the inner city has taken place, before finally returning to the genre of regional news and some of its characteristic impacts upon, and inflection of the portrayal of the inner city. But first it is necessary to define exactly what is meant by this term 'the inner city' in order to operationalise it within the context of an examination of regional news coverage.

The idea of the Inner City Operationalised

The idea of the inner city is an essentially contested site open to competing and conflicting interpretations, prescriptions and explanatory schemas. However, as the opening discussion has already observed it is nevertheless possible to discern recurrent themes and issues which subsist across the main interpretative schemas or political discourses in play. These, as discussed previously, involve both a geographical or spatial component as well as an array of social themes and issues

centring for the most part upon the interrelated problems and issues of urban deprivation and disadvantage, concerns of law and order and issues of 'race' and racism. Drawing upon an extensive local government effort it is possible to identify those areas which have officially been designated, on the basis of multiple indices of urban deprivation, as inner city areas throughout the Central Television region. The first limited idea of the inner city then, simply identifies those news items, no matter their substantive content, which reference any of the identified 'core' inner city areas throughout the central television franchise area. That is, a simple **spatial reference** can be deployed as the first 'inner city' news category.

Clearly, however, while it is useful to see how certain inner city areas fare within general regional news coverage this does not address those items which may deal with the substantive issues and problems identified as key inner city concerns, but which fail to involve a specific spatial reference. The second inner city category therefore selects all those items which address identified or key **inner city issues** and concerns at a general level. These key areas as discussed in detail at the outset involve reference to the complex of problems relating to urban deprivation, crime and law-and-order, and race and racism.

These first two categories thus deploy a spatial and a thematic selection criteria which are of indirect relevance to the coverage of the inner city. However, it is the last two categories that can be considered of direct relevance, here the third category involves both an explicit inner city spatial reference as well as involving an aspect of the inner city problematic as outlined above. All news items involving both **spatial and thematic inner city references** therefore assume this third understanding of inner city news.

The final category, recognising that the inner city has in recent years frequently been equated to the recent outbursts of civil disorder dubbed 'inner city riots', aims to select all those items which explicitly deal either with urban riots or items deploying a specific 'inner city' lexical reference. This fourth category of inner city news can be considered as **explicit inner city items.**

The Regional News Programme and Extent of Inner City Coverage

In order to secure a much increased sample of inner city items for this more detailed analysis, 288 separate programmes were searched involving in excess of 3000 separate news items, searched in yearly six week periods across seven years of regional news programming. In all 357 inner city items were identified from this search. Using the same categories as noted above the following types of inner city news item comprise the sample.

Table 6:1 **Types of Inner City News**

Inner City News As	Frequency	Percent
Spatial	22	6.2
Issue	111	31.1
Spatial/Issue	173	48.5
Riot/Lexical	51	14.3
Totals	357	100.0 %

[Note: Given that 9 programmes included in sample of 78 programmes analysed at stage one were also included in sample two, because of rolling sample at stage one, 279 different programmes searched in total. In other words, nearly 56 weeks of weekday programmes searched across the seven year period.]

Just over 6 % of all inner city items within the extended sample are seen to be of inner city interest merely by a spatial or geographical reference alone. The identified 'core' inner city districts and areas therefore appear to feature within regional news infrequently, when compared to their presence within established inner city themes and concerns. In other words, inner city districts, in so far as they may be regarded as newsworthy, either in themselves or indirectly as the context of other news interests, are mainly featured within the news to the extent that they involve reference to an aspect of the inner city problematic.

Regional news which features, in a non-explicit and non-spatial sense, issues of general inner city concern, detailed below, assumes just over 30 % of all inner city items, suggesting that regional news can and does involve news items of some relevance or germane to the inner city debate and discussion without necessarily spatially or lexically referencing such concerns. In this sense, this category indicates to a degree perhaps that the phrase, 'the inner city',

which in recent years has assumed something of a catchphrase, has not been overly adopted and deployed within regional news television, though close scrutiny of the popular and local press is likely to indicate that such a heightened news sensitivity can be found elsewhere within the news media.

With nearly half of inner city sample items involving both a clearly identified inner city district or areas and covering an issue or concern of direct relevance to the inner city, a significant proportion of the sample items can be deemed to be of direct inner city relevance.

Similarly, though only comprising a relative minority of all such items with just over 14 % of inner city items, the category inner city riot/lexical can also be regarded as inherently and explicitly of relevance to the inner city. Once again, however, the relative absence of direct reference to the inner city as 'the inner city' indicates that at least in regional news terms the problems and issues of the inner city, despite their massive presence throughout the Central Television region, has not resulted in the adoption of an explicitly referenced and organising 'inner city' frame deployed on all those occasions when identified problems, issues and areas find their way into the news.

If this last category is further broken down into those items which involve reference to inner city riots, explicitly 'the inner city', and other associated lexical terms such as 'deprived area', 'unemployment black spot' and so on, the following further distinctions are found.

Table 6:2 'The Inner City' as Lexical Reference

Lexical Reference:	Frequency	Percent
Riot	28	7.8
Lexical Other	14	3.9
'The Inner City'	10	2.8
Total	52	14.3 %

It can be seen that 28 items or just over half of this form of explicit inner city coverage involved reference to the 'inner city riots'. Or, in terms of the inner city coverage as a whole, 7.8 % of all inner city coverage has involved reference to the inner city riots. Confirming the idea of the 'the inner city' as not significantly present as an explicit organising frame within

regional news, only 10 items (2.8 %) in the sample of 357 made explicit reference to 'the inner city'.

This inner city 'riot/lexical' category at the outset further illustrates that studies which have concentrated solely on inner city riot coverage are poorly placed to advance conclusions concerning the portrayal of the inner city in general. Riot news coverage, in other words, is in this instance of regional television news clearly within a minority of all inner city news coverage, and it is to this general coverage incorporating inner city 'riot' news which the analysis now turns.

Regional News and the Span of Inner City Concerns

Unlike the first stage of the content analysis which was designed to chart the broad 'perennial' subject areas which characterise regional television news, the themes pursued below derive from an extrinsic position which has paid careful attention to the array of social viewpoints and perspectives currently advanced towards the inner city, and which provide the starting point for this analysis. In this sense, while certain themes below, will invariably overlap with previous Subject categories elicited from an extensive review of regional news programming, and employed in the previous analysis of the regional news genre, they essentially derive from an informed position outlined earlier concerning the contested idea of the inner city. While the identified inner city themes and topics are all discernibly present at a manifest level of regional news content, the fact that they can also be deemed of inherent interest to the idea of the inner city, and indeed often reference the inner city by one of the four types of inner city news outlined already, points to a different level of analytical engagement and reflects the specific research focus now pursued.

Before each of these Themes is subjected to further discussion and analysis which will involve disclosing exactly what each inner city Theme has comprised, it is useful if first the sample items are considered according to the key concerns posited at the centre of the three identified political perspectives found to organise the public discussion of the inner city. Following the earlier discussion it can be briefly

noted that the conservative discourse was found to principally be concerned with issues of criminality and law and order, the liberal discourse was particularly concerned with the effects of widespread and concentrated urban deprivation, while a radical discourse has been advanced which positions the inner city's ethnic minorities and black populations in particular, as both disadvantaged and, in some senses effectively disenfranchised from mainstream society by racism and racial discrimination. At a general level, then, it is interesting to note which of these 'megathemes' predominate within regional inner city coverage, not necessarily in the sense that these directly represent the principal discourses in play, but rather to the extent that such relative saliences and silences may differentially provide the resources from which such discourses can gain sustenance and support. For the purposes of this analysis, these three sets of concerns can be termed 'megathemes' of inner city concern, as a means of indicating that though possibly relevant as 'resources' they cannot simply be taken as direct expressions of these different perspectives.

Table 6:3 Megathemes of Inner City Coverage

Megatheme:	Frequency	Percent
Law-and-Order	172	52.1
Urban Deprivation	108	32.7
Race	50	15.2
Total	330	100.0 %

[Note: for purposes of above minority of 'spatial'/coincidental Themes (27) have been excluded, as not relevant to above, hence total equals 330 not 357]

At this general level it is apparent that in excess of half of all inner city items deal in some measure with the problems issues and concerns of law and order. While crime news as noted above assumes a significant percentage of inner city news, when combined with issues of policing and direct riot reports the number of items concerned with 'law and order' in a general sense is clearly highly prevalent. The numerous themes aggregated under the label urban deprivation have collectively resulted in less than one third of all items, while issues and problems associated with race and racism are the least prominent within inner city news with little over one seventh of all such items involving such concerns. While such relative figures are

suggestive as to the dominant megathemes and possible alignment to the main discourses that surround and inform the debate over the inner city, these various themes need to be subjected to close scrutiny before a case could be made that such saliences do in fact offer sustenance to the principal inner city discourses. The various Themes and Topics deemed central to the contested site of the inner city have been identified and arranged as follows.

Table 6:4 Inner City Themes and Topics

SPATIAL

Accident
Tragedy
Human Interest/Individual
Human Interest/Collective
Other

RACE/RACISM/DISCRIMINATION

Racism/Disadvantage
Ethnicity/Culture
Community Organised/Struggle
Immigration/Emigration
Other

CRIME

General Crime
Riot as Event
Specific Type of Crime
Crime/Court Report
Other

POLICING

Community Policing
Accountability
Powers/Equipment
Harassment
Malpractice
Operations
General Policing
Other

UNEMPLOYMENT

Conditions/Benefits
Training/Skill Shortages
Demographics
Other

POVERTY

General
Charity
Other

HOUSING

Homelessness
Debt/Eviction
Conditions
Other

HEALTH

Service Provision/Delivery
Health-Poverty
Other

EDUCATION

Institution Resources
Individual Resources
Achievement/Disadvantage
Curriculum
Extra-Curricula
Other

SOCIAL SERVICES

Facilities
Service Delivery
Benefits/Conditions
Other

LOCAL ECONOMY

Business
Finance Difficulties
Economy Structure
Redevelopment
Other

EMPLOYMENT
Conditions/Low wages
Training/Skill Opportunities
Redevelopment & Employment
Other

ENVIRONMENT

Dereliction/Depressed
Pollution/Congested
Development
Other

LEISURE/RECREATION

Shortage/Inadequate Facilities
Other

Politics/Administration
Party Politics
Community Politics
Central-Local Government-Relations/Difficulties
Local Community - Local-Administration/Difficulties
Other

RIOT/REBELLION

Riot Related Items(nb. Riot forms subject of full and separate analysis in stage three of content analysis).

On the basis of the inner city themes above, it is possible to gain an overview of exactly which themes predominate within regional news inner city coverage. These can then further be refined in order to elicit further the array of inner city topics found, and by omission not found, within this inner city coverage.

Table 6:5 Regional News and Inner City Themes

Theme	Frequency	Percent
Crime	114	31.9
Race	50	14.0
Policing	47	13.2
Spatial	27	7.6
Housing	24	6.7
Education	15	4.2
Poverty	11	3.1
Environment	11	3.1
Riot	11	3.1
Local Economy	10	2.8
Health	9	2.5
Unemployment	7	2.0
Social Services	6	1.7
Employment	6	1.7
Leisure/Recreation	6	1.7
Politics/Administration	3	0.8
Total	357	Percent 100.0 %

At a general level, the first significant finding from the above is that crime news assumes nearly a third of all inner city news coverage. Crime news it will be remembered has always assumed a significant proportion of regional news items with nearly a quarter of all general regional news items focused upon

crime, however this figure within the context of specifically inner city news has increased its presence even further and by far assumes the single most prominent strand of inner city news. The second and third most prevalent inner city news Themes with over a quarter of all further inner city items are Race and Policing respectively. Interestingly, these three Themes have indeed been the focus of much recent debate concerned with the inner city, and the inner city riots in particular. To this extent they appear to have an established representation within regional news. However, the further area of key inner city concern, namely urban deprivation in any of its manifest aspects is relatively displaced from view to the extent that 'coincidental' or spatial inner city news items figure as the next most prevalent inner city theme. This form of inner city coverage, as stated earlier, is in a sense merely referencing an identifiable inner city area without dealing in any substantive sense with the defining issues of the inner city.

Thereafter it is notable that many of the key issues and concerns of the inner city indicated by the other Themes receive relatively little news attention when compared to the areas already indicated. Thus the various aspects of Poverty and Urban Deprivation whether Housing, Unemployment, Social Services or Leisure facilities all receive sparse attention. Riot news, an area that may have been considered a principal form of inner city coverage in fact assumes little over 3 % of all inner city coverage when considered across an extended period, while the important political considerations involved in the inner city problematic, whether referencing the fragmentation of local political expression, the fissures characterising local community-local administration relations and involvement or wider fractures existing between local government and central government all assume the least prominent themes within the entirety of this extensive sample of all inner city regional news coverage.

The following discussion now turns to a more detailed examination of the constituent topics which together comprise the identified inner city themes across the sample of inner city news items. Given the breadth of the material discussed attention, in the main will focus upon the most prominent themes of inner city news, merely noting the conspicuous silences and

near absences of those themes which find little or no news portrayal across the sample.

Inner City News: Crime

Crime news from the analysis above appears to be a major staple of the regional news genre. This interest within the context of general inner city news is further extended to encompass nearly one third of all inner city coverage(31.9 %). If the broad theme of crime news is further broken down into different types of crime news item, the following pattern is found.

Table 6:6 THEME: CRIME

TOPIC	Frequency	Percent
Crime/Court Report	99	86.8
Crime Specific Type	7	6.1
General Crime	3	2.6
Riot As Crime Event	3	2.6
Other	2	1.8
TOTAL	114	100.0 %
[Theme Percent :		31.9 %]

Once again the main distinguishing characteristic of these different types of inner city crime news is the extent to which, by and large, crime news features as either an isolated event invariably involving reference to a reactive police operation or court proceedings. In the main, with nearly 90 % of all crime items assuming this form, crime news assumes a highly routinised and standardised expression involving either one or both of the principal institutions of the criminal justice system. Interestingly, of the nearly 87 % of all crime items which assume the form of a specific incident of crime or court report, those that refer to an isolated incident and police follow-up operation comprises 52 or 52.5 %, while 47 or 47.5 % of all such items involve a court report. Moreover, the vast majority of all crime reports assume a restricted, typically, news desk format which, in both presentational and substantive senses tends to provide the barest of information, with little or any elaboration and explicit comment either by news presenters, reporters or 'outside' voices.

However while inner city crime news does indeed generally assume the form of an isolated incident or court report, other types of crime news can and do occasionally appear within regional news treatments. Little over 6 percent of crime items focus on a specific type of crime, while nearly 3 percent of items have focused on crime in general. Thus, in the sample a few items focused on specific types of crimes, including an alleged rise in violent street crime; the problems of vandalism within tower block estates and another concerned with vandalism on specific bus routes; violent attacks perpetrated upon inner city doctors conducting late night calls; a women's self-defence group following a spate of serious sexual assaults; and finally a publicity campaign involving Scouts aiming to combat the numbers of burglaries within an inner city area. Typically these 'specific' type of crime items involve a more elaborate, if not expansive, news treatment involving the accessing of outside voices and viewpoints while occasionally referring to the increase of certain types of crime, such as 'mugging', previously the subject of a series of separate news reports.

Similarly, though strictly within a minority of all crime news, items that focus upon more than one type of crime while permitting a general 'overview' also receive more elaborate news treatments. In the sample, one item focused on the general problems of violence and types of violent crimes found within a Coventry inner city area; another provided a studio based, if slightly entertaining based discussion of an M.P's proposal to indelibly mark all 'vandals, hooligans and trouble-makers' by dying and shaving their hair; and a third referenced a 'violent crime wave'.

Given the focus of this particular analysis a further category was designed to select all those riot news items which covered the event of a riot, either in its immediacy or direct aftermath. The assumption that such events can principally be signified as 'criminal' is clearly inscribed within these particular news treatments, as discussed below, and thus permits them to be placed under the general Crime theme. That said, only 3 riot event items were picked up within the sample period, though other riot related items have also been covered within the sample period as discussed below under the theme of riot related news items. These items, little under 3 % of all

items, in combination with the vast majority of all crime event/court reports further confirms the prevalence of an 'event orientation' found to characterise in the main most crime news. Two further items, one of which concerned a call by M.P's for an inquiry into a case of wrongful imprisonment, and another referencing a protest by women peace campaigners following the imposition of fines upon some of their colleagues were deemed to be outside the main types of crime news above, though the 'event orientation' is arguably still very much a defining feature of these remaining sample items.

Table 6:7 CRIMES REPORTED IN THE INNER CITY

Crime	Frequency	Percent
Murder	44	38.6
Assault	21	18.4
Robbery	15	13.2
Rape/Sexual Assault	7	6.1
Vandalism/Hooliganism	7	6.1
Burglary	6	5.3
Drugs Dealing/Possession	3	2.6
Arson	3	2.6
Animal Abuse	2	1.8
Fraud	1	0.9
Remainder	5	4.4
	TOTAL 114	100.0 %

If attention is briefly turned to the types of crime which are reported within and across inner city crime news, the crimes above appear most frequently. In broad outline, the relative priorities of these different categories of crime appear to follow the general pattern already discerned within regional news as a whole. These as already discussed in the main prioritise violent crimes against the person, with murder assuming an almost routine and regular presence within the evening programme. However, while violent crimes against the person, including murder, assault, sexual assault and robbery (often involving the threat and/or use of physical violence) comprise the main types of crime news both in general programme terms and specifically within inner city news, it is noticeable that the specific category of assaults, has tripled its presence within inner city news when compared to the wider programme crime news. Popularly called 'mugging', yet misleading to the extent that a variety of street crimes are subsumed under one heading, the category of assaults has indeed figured prominently

within the news, and moreover has on occasion commanded elaborate news treatment. The involvement of the elderly as victims appears to be particularly newsworthy with numerous items explicitly focusing upon individual cases where the elderly victim's experiences are recounted.

Moreover, it is the category of assaults that has featured most prominently, alongside vandalism, within the categories of specific and general crime news. In other words assaults have become the focus for more elaborate news treatment and discussion, while the numerically more frequent category of 'murder/killing' has failed to receive any wider news treatment at all within the sample period. Some crimes, it would appear, are contenders for a wider frame of reference and news treatment while others remain firmly individuated. Within this sample, in addition to the numerically present category of murder, robbery, drugs possession and dealing, arson, fraud as well as animal cruelty crimes, though reported as isolated crimes, have all failed to attain any wider news interest and attention, while vandalism not reported in individual terms at all has gained a wider news attention in these different types of news interest.

If 'mugging' is particularly newsworthy to the extent that it involves and posits the elderly as victims almost to the extent that in news terms 'mugging' has become archetypically the crime belonging to the elderly, the generational divide is balanced to the extent that vandalism permits the entry of youth to a degree where vandalism can be counterpointed archetypically as the crime belonging to youth. The fact that 'mugging' as officially documented typically involves young people as victims, and moreover young males as the 'mugged' is not reflected by a news interest which persistently selects certain types of 'mugging' as its news priorities.

The prevalent routinised and compressed treatment of crime news can be compared to other institutionalised forms of news already noted above, whether accident and disaster news reports or the latest release of unemployment figures - all deliver the barest of information with little or any comment and qualification by outside viewpoints. Such viewpoints are missing to the extent that a presumption exists which maintains that, on these occasions at least, the facts speak for themselves. In the case of crime news however the barest of 'facts' invariably

posit both the perpetrator and the victim in individual terms, in receipt of either unjustified and largely violent attack or judicial reprimand and punishment. The numerous social dimensions of crime as both a collective phenomenon experienced and perpetrated by 'individuals' but profoundly social to the extent that such individuals frequently exhibit wider patterns of behaviour and circumstance against a background assumption of societally shared norms, becomes displaced from view by a news form which reports certain types of crime invariably as a constant succession of isolated events, both individually perpetrated and experienced.

In summary, regional inner city crime news can be taken as a curious species of news which, whatever else it provides, furnishes little information, insight or understanding as to either the extent or possible causes of crime - whether in individual, collective or societal terms. Content to rely in the main upon the recurrent and ceasless news reports supplied by either the courts or the police, crime news often appears as a daily news ritual, furnishing little insight into either the extent, social circumstances and,or individual motivations of those involved. While the majority of crime reports can be summarised as above, the extent to which reports such as these occasionally furnish a backdrop to a wider news treatment of either specific types of crime usually referenced as a 'crime wave' or even societal upturn in criminal, and usually associated, violent crime and behaviour, alerts us to the possibility that though a repetitive ritual, crime reports may well furnish a key interpretative resource sustaining a wider perspective upon crime and criminality and the identified 'problem' of the inner city.

The fundamental point here however, in so far as inner city news is principally concerned with individual crime stories which in themselves furnish little if any wider understanding as to the specific determinations informing the patterns of inner city crime, is that the inner city is likely to be firstly interpreted in terms which are dominated by crime, criminality and concerns of law-and-order, thereby possibly displacing other key concerns and issues also of germane relevance to the inner city. Secondly, the possible interrelationships existing between individual crimes and the inner city context generally can be

diminished or even severed in entirety. Thirdly, in so far as certain actors appear in social group terms to be identified as 'victims', 'perpetrators' and others, it is conceivable that particular types of crime can become associated as 'belonging' to certain social groups, and not others. Fourthly, the predominance of crime news advanced as individual instances of criminal activity, identifying an individual culpable agent while implicitly, in the absence of either individual or social contextualisation, establishing the individual concerned as the sovereign 'cause' provides an incessant resource consonant with the conservative framework of understanding outlined above.

Disposed to locate issues of social agency, causation and moral responsibility within the sovereign individual the form of such news accounts are apt to be supportive of such an interpretative schema not simply in terms of its declared subject matter, but also the form of the crime news treatment itself. The inner city in such accounts becomes the site or physical location of increased crimes, typically violent street assaults, while the social interconnections evident between the inner city understood as a socially and economically deprived place and inhabited by vulnerable and marginalised groups, and established patterns of crime become lost from view. The inner city, in other words, becomes the location of crime, and not a source for its contextualisation much less social explanation.

Inner City News: 'Race', Racism, Discrimination

With 14 % of all inner city items reviewed, this theme constitutes the second most prevalent area of inner city news interest after crime news which secured over 30 % of all news items. If the theme of race, racism and racial disadvantage is further broken down into a number of topic areas, the following pattern is elicited. At a cursory level it can be noted that the bulk of such news items have concerned the topic of racism and discrimination, while the second most prevalent topic has related to various aspects of minority culture and ethnic identity, while the third most prominent topic has specifically dealt with the issues of immigration/emigration. The remaining items have featured items concerned with, or reflecting community projects and initiatives while three items were deemed

to be outside of the main categories of news interest above.

Table 6:8 THEME: RACE/RACISM/DISCRIMINATION

TOPIC	Frequency	Percent
Racism/Discrimination	20	40.0
Ethnicity/Culture	16	32.0
Immigration/Emigration	7	14.0
Community Struggle	4	8.0
Other	3	6.0
TOTAL	50	100.0 %

[Theme Percent : 14.0]

By far the most prevalent topic of inner city story relating specifically to the problems and issues of racial and ethnic minority groups is that of racism, racial disadvantage and discrimination. If these various items are subjected to further consideration it is found that the majority of items, in this instance 75 % refer to individual cases brought before the courts and tribunals. The majority of all such items principally involve individual cases and circumstances of racial discrimination, while the remaining have focused upon wider implications of court rulings, and published research reports documenting widespread practices of discrimination.

News stories reporting individual cases of discrimination and racial harassment are thus by far within the majority of all items and, as discussed in some detail in relation to crime stories, isolated and individuated from wider considerations of context. The collective and social nature of racism and racial discrimination, originated from collective and institutional sites and experienced as a collective problem is thereby displaced from view, while the bulk of news treatment can cumulatively give the impression that, for instance, discrimination is an individual aberration perhaps a matter of individual attitude or prejudice and, on those occasions when practised will be censored by the courts. The institutionalised and collective realities of discrimination, harassment and attack are thereby ignored as are the historical genesis and contemporary forms of widespread racism and institutionalised discrimination.

Regional news items focusing upon aspects of ethnic and racial identity and culture form the second most prominent group of race related items. If the first group can be viewed as

largely reactive reports to the negative practices of discrimination and racism, albeit within a mainly individuated form, this second group can be seen more in terms of proactive reports celebrating the positive differences of culture and aspects of community life. In contrast to the almost blanket omission of news attention focused upon the Chinese community within other news areas, it is found for example that three items celebrate the Chinese New Year, while the latest AA Good Food Guide provides a further opportunity to highlight the attractions of chinese cooking. The appeal of such items, directed at the wider audience with notions of exotic difference, or as in the case of a Chinese New Year celebration expressing a 'touch of the Orient in Birmingham', essentially celebrate and affirm cultural differences while incidentally reinforcing notions of cultural exclusivity and insularity.

The associate positive values of enterprise, success and achievement also inform other stories within this group. Thus the success of two Asian businessmen producing radio commercials, an exhibition of photographs displaying the talents of a Handsworth photographer, a Jamaican cooking class hosted by a celebrity, and a preview of a concert by the black poet Lynton Kwesi Johnson all essentially celebrate cultural difference and individual achievement. The particularly restrictive understanding of 'culture' deployed across these and other similar items effectively fragments and diminishes the lived 'depth' of a culture as both a way of life and means of negotiating a lived experience by separating out underpinning/informing social, political and historical bases to create a residual understanding of 'culture' as simply a matter of 'human' artefacts, an excrescence of artistic exuberance which though enriching, is in the main not fundamentally expressive of this deeper culture as 'a way of life'.

The implicit understanding of culture as a human creation, invariably produced by exceptional and talented individuals, is an attribute displayed by many of the items reviewed across the general programme subject areas discussed at the outset. To this extent a liberal individual humanism creates a 'cultural' space, only to fill it with the artefacts and bric-a-brac of individual creation while essentially denying their indebtedness to the specificity of social, political and historical determination

and circumstance. Such cultural forms moreover have frequently been forged on the basis of social exclusion, opposition, negotiation and struggle. Culture in this mediated sense is invariably posited as the expressive veneer, the top coat of a cultural identity celebrated as a leisure pursuit or interest after the main business of the day has been completed. Trivialised and compartmentalised into a leisure interest, culture does not so much display an organising basis for social identity, difference and social opposition as a presumption to a shared and universal 'human interest' in all things exotic and entertaining.

A possible exception to this marginalised construction of culture, is when the world of work and the world of culture conjoin, with the skills and crafts born of cultural traditions being employed within artisan business and enterprise. Thus, whether the Asian goldsmiths found within the Belgrave area of Leicester, chinese restaurateurs or afro-caribbean traders of inner city Birmingham they can all assume within this particular form of media news treatment an exotic appeal while also exhibiting a particular and enterprising inflexion of cultural difference. Consider the following 'encapsulating' lead statement for example:

> "Now for a story of survival in these times of recession, for showing true initiative two Birmingham brothers have cornered the market for making commercial radio advertisements aimed particularly at the Asian community. Using local talent they've built up a highly profitable business as Wendy Nelson has been discovering."

Such forays into the world of the other, while celebrating cultural difference in exotic terms can also affirm the world of the known - the world of individual enterprise, success and achievement. Such individualism while affording an opportunity for positive 'good news', also conveys much else besides. Not least of course is the possibility that if such news treatments are generally focused in such a way, not only is the shared and collective disadvantages confronting minority groups dismissed from view, but so too are the collective forms of resistance and negotiation mobilised both from within and without the communities to combat such structural inequalities. Moreover, the very real inference that solutions to such problems are unnecessary, given the succession of individual 'success'

stories which apparently point to the resolution of 'alleged' disparities of opportunity and attainment, is perhaps an unintended and yet real possibility supported by the pursuit of exotic, and/or individual success stories.

An area of race related news, which has been established in past studies as central to reporting race has been news of immigration. In recent years however, the preoccupation with numbers, always carrying the inherent risk that the problem of immigration was centred upon the numbers of immigrants, and not the reactions to such immigration (thereby, 'blaming the victim'), has given way within regional news terms at least to items that focus on the individual stories of family members and relatives denied entry, or under threat of deportation by the home office. To the extent that such reports are still principally concerned with race in terms of immigration, they may perhaps be held up as supplying further support to past constructions which have simplistically assumed black equals immigrant and immigrant equals non-British and hence 'a problem'.

However, such items have also often adopted a supportive and/or challenging role in defence of the individuals and families under threat from a discerned heartless bureaucracy, which may have furthered the publicity cause of the individuals involved. The fact remains however, that these items are about individual cases and rarely is extensive coverage afforded to some of the wider social, political and legal ramifications and considerations involved. The sample period did come across one exception to this finding however, with the inclusion of an extensive item of over eight minutes duration which chronicled a number of such cases before proceeding to provide a platform for politicians and others concerned to challenge the latest home office rulings and practices in such cases.

Clearly, the reporting of 'race' is not a unified and closed perspective though it does perhaps indicate a set of patterned news responses which tend to highlight some areas of concern and not others, while also appropriating individual success stories in terms of a celebration of cultural difference. One further item in this sample is worth mentioning in that rather than dealing with immigration it dealt with emigration, and the individual business success in particular of

a firm providing passage to West Indian 'immigrants' back to the West Indies. This item will be considered further below, but it is interesting to note that both the 'novelty' value of a firm helping former immigrants emigrate, contrary to popular misconceptions, and also providing yet another example of business enterprise and success overshadowed the reasons and causes for such 'emigration'. Clearly 'good news' very much depends on who you are, and the perspectives that you bring to bear on such news stories. Consider the encapsulating lead statement below which both informs and directs as to 'what the story' is essentially about. This introductory statement is also of interest to the extent that the 'anchor' or studio news presenter links two entirely different items, one concerning the speculation as to the location of a new royal residence, while the other references an entirely different set of concerns. Noting the difference, this 'linking' piece nevertheless posits an identity which further compounds the superficial and specious news treatment afforded to this serious social issue.

> "Of course if the royal couple do move it could worry some householders around Highgrove. Now to more people who are moving but in a very different way. Repatriation for Britain's immigrants has long been an emotive issue. But as the dole queues lengthen so the number of blacks trying to leave the country increases. David Foster has been looking at the latest boom business and how one East Midlands' firm is cashing in."

The inner city should not merely be understood as a site of 'problems' associated with racial and ethnic minority groups but also as a site where groups organise, negotiate and manage those problems that are particularly confronting and/or oppressing them. That is, the different communities within the inner city have developed a myriad of support groups many of which specifically aim to tackle some of the many forms of disadvantage and discrimination confronted on a daily basis. To what extent have these gained news recognition or interest ?

From sample findings it is apparent that community groups and struggle has not assumed a prominent place within regional news. One item following a spate of possibly racially motivated murders reported on the fears of the black community via its community leaders, while two others reported the financial demise of a community centre initially launched by Muhammad Ali. One further item reported on a Sikh demonstration organised in support of four Sikhs accused of conspiring to murder the Indian

prime minister. Clearly, these items more of news interest to the extent that they involve a crime interest and known personalities than because they reflect organised community response indicate that perhaps something of an omission is operated by existing news interests concerned with inner city minority groups.

Principally focused on either the negative aspects concerning racism and discrimination and immigration, or alternatively and typically again in individualised terms a particular form of celebratory or positive news, such news treatments have in general failed to chart the organised responses and collective approaches mobilised by and within the different communities towards the array of problems and concerns confronting minority groups

Three remaining items were deemed to be outside the categories already discussed these included an appeal for blood donors from the black community to come forward in the hope that the life of a young child could be saved, while a major health scare following an outbreak of food poisoning after an Indian independence day celebration was also covered on two separate occasions.

In summary, it has been found that news of race, racism and racial discrimination bears many of the hall marks of the regional news genre. Thus, though dealing with issues of racial discrimination and racism, these have tended to be covered to the extent that individual cases have been the subject of a court case, tribunal ruling or, in a minority of all cases a published report. Such items have by and large focused on the individual aspects of such issues while diminishing a wider frame within which such a succession of incidents could be related. Moreover, the celebratory side of the regional news genre has also left its stamp within and upon the array of ethnic and cultural news stories selected as examples of 'good news', while the various and organised expressions of inner city life, have failed to gain significant news exposure.

The inner city minorities though variously assuming a media involvement as victims and criminals, clients or deportees and those who are the subject of outside assistance and help, as well as occasional paragons of individual enterprise and success or creative cultural talent are rarely afforded exposure as a

community organised and capable of giving expression to its own communal needs and interests.

Inner City News: Police and Policing

The inner city theme of police and policing, assumes the third most prominent theme overall, with only crime and race securing an increased presence. Clearly, given the significant coverage afforded to crime already noted the related theme of policing, a sizable theme in its own right, combine to effect a considerable law-and-order skew already discussed as the dominant megatheme of inner city coverage. What issues and concerns of inner city policing have gained news attention, and whether a pattern of inner city related police news is discernible are the focus of discussion below.

Table 6:9 THEME: POLICE AND POLICING

TOPIC	Frequency	Percent
Powers/Equipment/ Manning	18	38.3
Malpractice	7	14.9
Harassment	6	12.8
Operations	6	12.8
Community Policing	4	8.5
General Policing	4	8.5
Other	2	4.2
Accountability	0	0.0
TOTAL	47	100.0 %
[Theme Percent :		13.2 %]

The most prominent policing concern within this theme is that of police powers, equipment and manning. Consider the following report, representative of many such items which appear to simply relay the public statements of senior police officers without involving any discussion of the many social implications inextricably related to policing affairs.

> "The Chief Constable of Gloucester, Mr Alfred Passey, says his officers may have to be issued with guns if the safety of the public and the police is to be maintained. Mr Passey's comments come in his annual report, the latest figures show that crime in the county went up more than 5 % above the national average last year. Mr Passey's comments follow an incident in june last year when a police officer was held hostage at gunpoint at Gloucester's main police station.

Mr Passey says he now sees no alternative to training his force in the use of firearms."

This thirty five second news item delivers a public pronouncement by a chief constable, derived from his annual report. The socially contentious call for the issuing of firearms to police officers, is moreover buttressed by no less than three inferred causal links. Firstly, the need to protect the safety of the public and the police, secondly the increase in the county's crime rate, and thirdly the 'incident in June'. While not stipulating that all are the precursors to such a call, the item clearly positions each as a relevant backdrop. In this sense both the call for firearms, and the rationale for such a course of action is given free reign. The fact that public 'safety', as has been the demonstrated on a number of occasions, can be put in jeopardy by police carrying firearms, while the types of crime indicated as 'increasing' remains undisclosed, and that 'no alternatives' are said to exist effectively seals the item from contestation and dispute. Such public calls for increased police powers and equipment are representative of this most prevalent form of police item. This item which accredits the Chief Constable with a public platform effectively denied to others who may consider such a course of action to be ill-considered, is similarly replicated within the not infrequent items which celebrate the introduction of the latest technical hardware.

The introduction of surveillance helicopters have proved to be a perennial interest within regional news, and while affording good visuals and a display of high technology, also implicitly endorses the rationale for such a course of action while displacing the range of possible objections perhaps relating to financial cost or unwarranted intrusion relating to citizenship rights. Thus when a lead statement declares: 'Four police forces in the West Midlands have unveiled a new flying squad. They're literally taking to the air as part of a new experiment in the fight against crime' the postulated and reified rationale of 'crime' is used to buttress an action which simplistically posits the police as the guardians of law and order. While Batman and Robin may legitimately be said to be involved in a 'fight against crime' the institutions of the

police force cannot be regarded as engaged in such terms, and nor can crime be understood in such an undifferentiated manner. Such simple accounts of crime and policing, often posited in direct binary oppositional form, law - crime, legal - illegal, moral - immoral, good - bad, while providing a ready platform for such celebratory endorsement of police activities, nonetheless extracts the social and political nature of policing by abstracting the police from its location within a matrix of political and social interests.

Items announcing the introduction of riot equipment while providing a degree of background information, to the extent that past inner city riots have been referenced as the motivation for such increased powers, nonetheless consistently fail to consider the background to the inner city riots themselves though on two occasions the ensuing controversy surrounding the introduction of plastic bullets has provoked a limited amount of coverage relating to the essentially controversial nature of such a 'tooling up' police response. However riots have frequently and simply been posited as a rationale for increased powers and equipment, while the role of the police, both within and prior to inner city riots remains unexplored. Once again, the police appear to be institutionally removed from social contest and dispute, notwithstanding their key role within the inner city problematic prior to outbreaks of civil disorder. This theme will be pursued later below.

However, the fact that the police are afforded relatively extensive inner city news coverage, does not exempt them from items which chart police malpractices. Indeed, a significant number of items, nearly a quarter of all policing items deal in some measure with police malpractices and harassment or assault. In tandem with earlier findings relating to police malpractices, the police though enjoying considerable routine news coverage are not exempt from wider news interests oriented towards particular forms of 'deviant' behaviour. The majority of malpractice items centre on individual cases of police 'blunders' where raids have taken place on wrong addresses, while perhaps the most serious concerned the internal inquiry into an alleged case of fabricated evidence being used to secure a conviction and subsequent jail sentence. While 'blunders' and not the accompanying force deployed within such raids, and

though the possibility of an individual case of fabricated evidence, and not the issues surrounding the internal police complaints procedure itself, have dominated such news stories, the fact remains that the police are not immune from negative news treatment though such is likely to be related to individual cases and not, or so it would appear, institutionally focused news coverage.

Similarly, all the reported cases concerned with police harassment and assault have involved individual court cases, while none have provided any overview, or general account of police abuse. This, given the mounting evidence of police harassment and assaults carried out within the inner city, and against black youths in particular, again points to a noticeable inner city 'silence'. Moreover, the individual cases covered within the sample period fail to provide any information concerning a possible racial motive if in fact such has been alleged. The items, as they stand, merely indicate an alleged assault on individual members of the public. Whether these individuals are 'representative' of wider patterns of police activity, possibly relating to collective inner city experiences is impossible to determine from the individualised nature of the reports.

Police operations, sometimes with accompanying news crews, have provided a number of 'fly on the wall' news treatments especially when concerned with the drugs squad. Once again an implicit endorsement of such activities by focusing on the police practices, and not other dimensions of drug abuse offers an essentially 'law-and-order' frame within which the inner city drug problem is positioned. This particular point, given the number of such items prior to the Handsworth riots and developed below in the discussion of a year's riot news coverage, arguably provided considerable support to the subsequent police account of the Handsworth riots as the orchestrated result of a criminal conspiracy by disaffected drugs barons.

One of the most prominent issues arising from recent discussion of the problems and issues of the inner city in terms of policing has been a renewed interest in the possibilities of 'community policing', often aligned to discussions of increased police accountability, and community involvement in police decision making. However, in this sample only a minority of

items can be considered as involving reference to community policing, and of these the majority focused on individual and exceptional 'bobbies', two of which policed small rural communities, while the other occasionally displays his talent for break-dancing 'all in the name of community policing.' Such items appropriated for their individualised human interest, have not dealt with the issues and controversies that have surrounded the idea of community policing but have rather tended to use the idea of community policing as a backdrop for a human interest story. Inner city community policing was afforded one item however, which 'explored' the return of patrol car officers to bicycle beats in Derby's 'worst area for assaults, muggings and robberies' but once again failed to address issues of local involvement at the heart of the community policing issue.

Further 'general police' items have for the most part involved public statements by the Chief Constable of the West Midlands perhaps following the publication of his annual report, and in one instance the award of a bravery medal to a police officer involved in the Handsworth riots. In the vast majority of all such police items, the specific concerns relating to inner city policing identified within a broad span of research and other literature have not been afforded news coverage. Thus issues concerned with community policing and accountability, local community involvement, the adequacy or otherwise of the police complaints procedure, and perhaps most importantly the frequently alleged, and to some extent verified, practice of police harassment and abuse perpetrated against specific sections of the inner city community have all failed to gain news coverage. What issues and concerns have managed to gain news coverage have in the main tended to concentrate, often in uncritical if not celebratory fashion, upon increased police powers and equipment and specific police operations waged against drug abusers.

The law-and-order frame thus generally involved in such items tends towards a 'criminal' understanding of the inner city, as opposed say to a political understanding involving issues of democratic control, local involvement and police accountability. While a series of police items have highlighted individual cases of police malpractice, demonstrating that the news interest is not immune from critical police coverage,

nevertheless these have not been related in any collective sense to the specific inner city policing concerns and practices noted above. While the above is not intended to imply that the problems of specific types of crime and police response are illegitimate inner city concerns, it is to suggest that such aspects have dominated the policing issues to the virtual exclusion of other, and perhaps equally pressing concerns. In combination with the forms of inner city crime news discussed above, a particularly narrow understanding of the problems of law-and-order have been posited as the problem of the inner city which, furthermore, have been found to dominate the portrayal of the inner city.

Inner City News: Spatial Presence

Three major concerns identified as central to any discussion of the inner city, Crime, Race and Racial Discrimination, and Policing have in fact assumed a prominent part of the news coverage of the inner city, though as detailed such coverage has assumed certain characteristic forms as well as providing identifiable presences and silences across some of the key areas of inner city concern and debate. At the outset it was noted how inner city coverage has within a minority of all cases (7.6 %) involved reference to identifiable inner city areas while not dealing with an issue, concern or problem identified as germane to the idea of the inner city. In this sense, it can be noted that those news items dealing with the inner city are more likely to gain some coverage to the extent that they do involve an identified inner city concern. However, the question remains as to what this minority of spatially referenced coverage entails.

Table 6:10 THEME: SPATIAL/COINCIDENTAL

TOPIC	Frequency	Percent
Accident	12	44.4
Tragedy	7	25.9
Human Interest-Individual	3	11.1
Human Interest-Collective	3	11.1
Other	2	7.4
TOTAL	27	100.0 %

[Theme Percent : 7.6 %]

The most prominent group of spatial or coincidental items concerns accidents and tragedy stories. These highly compressed news treatments, as considered earlier, provide the barest of information, while individuating such occurrences from possible wider patterns of social relevance. Consider the following not untypical story.

> "A three year old girl has died at her home in a fire in Handsworth. The body of Ravinda Bugwan was found inside a cupboard in her bedroom. The rest of the family escaped from the fire in a flat above a shop in South Road."

Once again, such an item demonstrates the routine and highly compressed form of news reporting frequently delivering 'accident' and other types of news story. If the basic informational building blocks are analysed it is found that the item involves a lead statement, main event and a degree of context but no background, verbal response, history, or evaluation or expectation. The account exists in isolation from other possible and similar cases and entertains no internal voices, it is a direct news account seemingly providing the bare facts of this tragic incident. However, the seeming neutrality of such an account immediately becomes problematic as soon as one inquires to what extent the fire might have been prevented, or to what degree it shared similar features with other accidents perhaps relating to fire escape facilities in similar properties and so on. The appositness of such inquiries and speculation is, without further information, impossible to determine.

Similarly, stories centring upon human tragedy though referencing inner city areas, frequently treat such stories in highly individuated terms. Even if the inference may be drawn that such stories are likely to be related to some of the wider problems and concerns known to be particularly concentrated and acute within inner city areas, the lack of informing context and background reduces the status of such items to short bites of essentially decontextualised information.

> "A twenty four year old man has leapt to his death from a tower block in Birmingham. The man believed to be from Erdington, fell from the top floor of Martineau Tower in Newtown this afternoon. There were no suspicious circumstances. Police, who were notified after the tragedy, were contacting the man's relatives."

While the police may conclude in terms of their statutory duties that 'there were no suspicious circumstances', it is at least arguable that for most people if a person decides to leap to his death, such a course of action is decidedly suspicious to the extent that such a drastic action remains unexplained. The suspicion in other words, while not necessarily suspecting the criminal involvement of others, raises the question of what could have prompted this man to leap to his death. A recurring discourse structure discussed further below, and characterised by a lead, main event, context and consequence but failing to involve further background information posits this 'event' with so many others as an individuated imponderable. It can also be maintained that a police response to such an event appears to have been uncritically adopted and incorporated into the very structure of the news account.

Similarly the Handsworth story encapsulated in the programme tease concerning a 'baby abandoned on a freezing doorstep - he was only three hours old and wrapped in newspaper', once again points to a possible backdrop of urban and social deprivation experienced in Handsworth, without pursuing the possible reasons for such an action, nor the wider problem of similar cases reported in the past.

If items such as these comprise the bulk of all 'coincidental' spatial inner city items the exact understanding of 'coincidental' must be left in abeyance. However, other areas of coincidental inner city news demonstrating a strong human interest appeal have concentrated on such individuals as the talented teenage Handsworth artist who hopes to go to art college, and the young girl, also from Handsworth who has won a story competition or the eccentric traffic warden finally retiring in Smethwick. If occasional items such as these once again demonstrate a form of individualism so redolent of regional news as whole, other items celebrate collective eccentricities and achievements. Hence the item celebrating the flower box competition and residents living in run-down tower blocks in nechells, or the item highlighting the 'unusual' award granted to Digbeth bus station for the best-kept bus station in an area notorious for dirt and grime.

Additionally, the constant round of royal and official visits can also, if not specifically focused as inner city

visits or related to inner city concerns, be considered as 'coincidental' inner city items, once again demonstrating a populist news interest with members of the royal family.

Inner City News: Problems of Housing

Housing, of all the themes relating to the multiple concerns of urban deprivation, assumes just under 7 % of all inner city related items.

Table 6:11 **THEME: HOUSING**

TOPIC	Frequency	Percent
Conditions	16	66.7
Homelessness	4	16.7
Debt/Eviction	2	8.3
Other	2	8.3
TOTAL	24	100.0 %
[Theme Percent :		6.7 %]

Of all the items concerned with housing, two thirds relate to the broad span of problems covering housing conditions. Of these 7 (44.0%) relate to council improvement schemes while 4 (25.0 %) feature protests by tenants' groups complaining about the appalling conditions in which they live, and the failure of local authorities to intervene, while the remainder (31.0%) have focused on the problems confronting local authorities attempting to grapple with the enormity of housing shortage and government policies. This topic has thus been occasionally covered to the extent that either Council schemes and/or public protests have captured news attention. News attention on housing problems has, therefore in the main tended to be either institutionally led, to the extent that local authorities are the centre of news interest, or alternatively and within a minority of all items, captured by a public protest.

Moreover, while news attention has on occasion provided a broad descriptive overview of the various housing defects and shortages confronting local authorities, little attention has been devoted to the particularly acute problems found concentrated in inner city areas, and more specifically experienced by particular social groups. To this extent 'the housing problem' can assume a problem for 'the authorities', rather than those who have to confront such conditions, or even

a problem 'for all of us', as encapsulated in the following lead statement : 'Now an issue that affects all of us: the state of our houses'. This particular item then proceeds to identify the housing issue as a problem for the general rate-payer. While maximising its inscribed relational appeal by explicitly addressing 'all of us', the item also marginalises the 'problem', of those directly experiencing poor housing conditions, while also transposing the problem confronted by those suffering poor housing into the problem that this poses for the rate-payer in general.

If 'the housing problem' can assume the form of a 'problem' for local authorities, and thereby potentially displace the 'problem' as one lived and endured by residents, the 'problem' can also assume a particularly potent symbolic form, which also acts to detract from a wider social critique. Evident within the array of housing items reviewed is a distinct tendency to single out the **tower block** as nothing short of a concrete, and high rise 'folk devil', where the housing problem is not so much one to do with the structural and differential allocation of social resources and rewards which manifests itself in highly stratified housing opportunities, but rather the tower block itself. The array of social groups relegated to council tower block accommodation, and the fundamentally inegalitarian system of reward allocation which enforces such habitation is symbolically side-stepped. While the planners of yesteryear are pilloried on the platform of public outrage, the tower block is constructed as a monument of poor design, and not as a poor solution directed at the housing needs of poor people. Retrospective criticism, often advanced under the banner of an anti-bureaucratic politics, is socially removed from the site of the present, while the adoption of an anti-bureaucratic frame essentially depoliticises the profoundly political nature of differential housing opportunities.

If the poor housing conditions endured by many within the confines of the inner city has been treated within terms of a 'general housing problem' confronting local administration, the increasing problem of homelessness has received hardly any news treatment. From the few sample items that did relate to the problem of homelessness, one concerns a protest by youngsters forced to sleep rough by the introduction of the recent 'six

week' social security rulings, a human interest item following an old man granted a council house after living in a cow shed for most of his life, and an item questioning a housing department as to how a 15 year-old prostitute 'slipped through the bureaucratic net' and secured a council flat. The administrative blunder, rather than the demise of a girl working the streets, forms the focus of this item, while one further item, already referred to above concerns the individual plight of a discharged patient forced to live in a hostel.

Introduced by the tease: 'A cancer patient who needs constant medical care is living in a hostel for down and outs, because there's nowhere else for him to go' encapsulates the essential story. Focusing on the individual plight of this one man, the position of the quaintly labelled and incidentally semantically marginalised 'down and outs', is of interest only to the extent that they provide a negative backdrop to the plight of this individual man. Once again, it can be noted how a strong individualising inflexion informs not only the original news interest, but also thereafter becomes inscribed in the news treatment itself.

Homelessness to the extent that it is major problem often located within the inner cities, and experienced by particular groups of disadvantaged people, the young unemployed, black youth, and others has failed to gain sustained news coverage. If homelessness is experienced as a problem in its own terms, frequently it is the result of debt and dispossession. Once again however we find the problem being expressed as a problem confronting local authorities who have large rent arrears from tenants, while in more recent times a new 'folk devil' has arrived to neatly position **the problem of debt** as that of readily available credit facilities, rather than the lack of sufficient means of support of those substantial and increasing numbers of people living on or below the poverty line.

In regional news terms it appears that social problems though unlikely to sustain in-depth news treatment can nonetheless gain at least some degree of news coverage. Moreover the sometimes competing, sometimes complementary tendencies constantly inscribed within the regional genre which is disposed to perceive a social problem as the individual and essentially experiential misfortune of a particular individual probably

confronting the unfeeling indifference of bureaucracy and officialdom on the one hand, or rather to locate the problem as inhering in the inability of local authorities to cope with the increasing demand for services posed by the aggregate poor and needy, perhaps implicating us all within 'the problem' as rate payers on the other hand, affords an inherent flexibility occasionally deployed in alternate ways.

Inner City News: Education Issues

This theme, and the following themes each assumes a relatively small presence within the sample of inner city related items, while the presence of inner city items generally has been noted to be in a strict minority of all news items. The figures presented, in other words, dealing as they do with extremely infrequent inner city items can only be taken as indicative of possible if always marginal theme involvements. What is unmistakably assured from the following findings however, is that the portrayal of such inner city themes are generally extremely rare and in certain instances, noted below, appear to be routinely absented from regional news portrayal. The remaining themes will be covered cursorily, indicating in broad outline something of the nature of their principal concerns, and discerned omissions.

Just over 4 % of all inner city items are concerned with education. Of these the majority are concerned with individual schools and in particular a long running protest by mothers to keep open a Nechells primary school selected for closure covered over the course of four items, three items concentrating on the impact of a strike upon individual schools, two items one of which included a parent protest highlighting the effects of education cuts, plus the opening of a new city technology college. Of these, it is apparent that 'protest' whether assuming the form of a teachers strike or parents' protest at education cuts was present within 8 out of 10 items. While a published report, and a status visit by a government minister was involved in the remaining two items. The remaining 'extra-curriculum' education items have focused on such activities as a health project aimed at educating children into eating an improved diet while also indicating a particularly poor inner

city area health profile; an inner city school seeking to equip school leavers for unemployment; and a story celebrating a sports award by a school normally associated in news terms with vandalism and truancy. As is apparent from this small presence of education related items the particular problems, difficulties and character of many inner city schools is not a central news focus within these items.

The problems and concerns associated with inner city schools often centring upon the high percentage of disadvantaged children, and the concerns of lack of resources, multi-cultural education, section 11 funding, educational underachievement, truism and vandalism, and a host of other inner city education concerns have not in any substantial sense been addressed within the sample period. If the other inner city themes are considered for any possible 'overlap' education areas, one item focuses on the controversy surrounding the introduction of an anti-racist policy in schools, another on the introduction of urdu in a Leicester school, while two crime reports reported on a fatal stabbing in a Handsworth grammar school. These collectively however, within the sample of 357 items may be considered as infrequent items which have not, in any significant sense, portrayed some of the problems and issues surrounding education within the inner city. Why school leavers are particularly disadvantaged in some areas, often with bearing excessive unemployment rates, and furthermore why some specific groups of school leavers are statistically more prone to unemployment when compared to others are considerations which remain undisclosed and unexplored in such accounts.

Inner City News: Poverty

With just over three percent of all inner city themes poverty is not a regular feature of regional news. However, while poverty is not a theme which attracts news attention on a regular basis, it nevertheless can attract attention to the extent that charity ventures and appeals can increase the likelihood of a modicum of news coverage. If an appeal involves an unusual activity, eccentric character or high profile celebrity or other figure, then so much the better. Thus the Prince's Trust fund has gained a degree of news coverage as has

the EEC's distribution or 'free handout' of food mountain supplies. Though in the last instance three of the four items covering this distribution focused on the ensuing controversy that accompanied the poorly planned distribution. In other words, the problems of distribution rather than the extent of the need visually focused by the availability of free food, assumes the primary focus. One further item found within the charity category of poverty is instructive to the extent that an individualised account of an charitable organisation's efforts, not only reflects the pursuit of a human interest appeal but also effectively individualises the problems of poverty, as the fault of individuals themselves. Consider the following encapsulating lead statement.

> "One in four children in the region is at risk according to a new survey out today. The National Children's Home warns that more young girls and boys face homelessness, poverty, abuse and bad health. But in Birmingham, a pilot scheme is trying to put things right by teaching young mothers how to care better for their children."

Once again a published report, of a reputable and well known charitable body, heads the item and sets the 'regional' scene for the report to follow. The viewer is informed that increasing numbers of young people face 'homelessness, poverty, abuse and bad health', however without stopping to consider the possible explanations for such a state of affairs, the item immediately proceeds to consider a scheme 'trying to put things right'. That is, having briefly noted a 'negative' backdrop of considerable social concern this is presented only to the extent that it provides a backdrop for the substantive focus of the item, which is the 'positive' scheme 'trying to put things right'. A 'positive', as every child knows cancels out a 'negative', and this report is no exception to the extent that the 'solution' is arrived at, even before the problem has been carefully identified and considered.

When the 'solution' to such widespread concerns is offered, which are generally recognised to be structurally interrelated and in large measure dependent on low income and the range of problems that are associated with insufficient means of support - homelessness, poverty, and bad health especially - it simply postulates an 'educational' programme which seeks to 'teach young mothers how to care better for their children'. The

inescapable inference is that the 'problems' of homelessness, poverty, abuse and bad health are all simply a matter of young mothers unable to look after their children properly. The lead statement neatly encapsulates a set of inferred causal relationships where an increasing incidence of poverty has resulted in a charitable concern 'helping' those who are not the victims of poverty but rather its source.

The remaining minority of poverty items once again includes the publishing of a report by the Child Action Poverty Group, which documents the increasing incidence of poverty in Leicester, a human interest item focusing upon the 'eccentric' behaviour of a buddhist monk begging on the streets of Birmingham, and the success of a bread shop in a 'poorer suburb' of Birmingham selling day-old bread to the 'old, the poor and the bargain hunter'. Notwithstanding the fact that this bread 'until recently went for pig fodder' and 'now its feeding the poor' the occasion is not employed as a means of inquiring into the necessity that has resulted in such long queues but rather it is the novelty of bread queues in 1980's Britain that assumes the focus of attention within the report. In other words, the lack of wider considerations of context, background and indeed historical reference all severely undermine the social construction and experience of poverty while focusing upon the manifest and outward appearances of such determinations. Moreover, the fact that an enterprising business success based on the needs of the poor, the elderly and the unemployed assumes a focal point of interest also considerably relegates those same disadvantaged social groups to the secondary and supportive role sustaining both the news interest inscribed within the item as well as the novel business success of the firm in question.

In summary, and based on the findings above, it can be observed that poverty in and of itself is not likely to attract news attention. However the involvement of charity ventures, official reports, celebrity figures and eccentrics, and novelty value can all considerably enhance news status. On occasion, it can also be noted that the publication of reports can, and has, in a strict minority of cases afforded an opportunity to 'explore' some of the findings involved. However, as instanced in the report above, the news treatment which is then

subsequently put in place can have significant impact upon the coverage of the issues involved.

Inner City News: Environment

News concerned with the inner city environment is also not afforded extensive coverage. With little over three percent of all inner city items the majority of items pertain to the physical attributes of inner city environments. These items respectively indicate their regional news inflexion. Thus they include the adoption of 'freddy' a mascot/logo for the Stoke Garden Festival, a published report warning of the dangers for children playing on inner city building sites, and three further items which extol the virtues of living within depressed areas, in two cases against the backdrop of published reports naming parts of the west midlands as some of the worst in europe. These items, heavily inflected with humour, expurgate the serious intention and findings of the reports only to indulge in a form of regional chauvinism.

Thus, for instance, while one item can open with the statement 'Birmingham has just been voted as the worst place to work and live in', the item is concluded by 'John Swallow reporting there - back to more serious matters now'. The use of humour within regional news indicates contrary to expectations that news exclusively relates to 'serious' matters which by definition are not amenable to the subjective imposition of either amusing news events or the playful inflexion of a news treatment, that news is available as a resource for a particular form of appropriation and inflexion that can only be accounted for in terms of the genre characteristics itself. That is, 'news' once again is perceived as very much the product of the genre from within which it is expressed, rather than any direct reflection of an external world of events.

However, while humour may begin to indicate something of the specificity of regional news in terms of its modulation of news treatment, sought relationships to its audience and extension of the 'news sphere' with its considerably extended range of news subject areas, for present purposes it can also be noted that humour can also have the direct effect of undermining, and dissimulating 'important' inner city concerns

by a news treatment which 'makes light' of pressing or contentious social concerns. In this particular instance, the pressing social concern is no less than the widespread conditions of environmental deprivation and dereliction many of which are concentrated in acute form within inner city areas. To this extent, as analyses of the social context and roles of humour are now beginning to indicate, humour is not exempt from close textual reading nor an involvement within wider processes of the dissemination of meaning. In these senses humour can on occasion be regarded as having a serious social underbelly, though appearing rude if subjected to too close analysis, it is this very assumption of humour as 'outside' and essentially immune from social consideration that provides an insight into both its social construction and potency as a particular form of audience engagement. Humour on such occasions can be seen as involving both the dissemination and dissimulation of meaning at that very moment when an audience is 'lost' in laughter.

Items concerned specifically with the environmental problems of pollution, a problem known and identified as particularly present within inner city areas, both in terms of the effects of high traffic congestion using these areas as passages to work (rat runs), and often involving proximity to industrial effluent and waste products, are referenced only to the extent that either a published report or public protest has attracted news interest.

Interestingly, while such problems may be regarded as particularly pressing for those living within the confines of such areas, a wider audience interest may often be appealed to by seeking to captivate the interest of the audience firstly by the inscription of a privatised form of address, and secondly the positioning of the substantive content as relevant to the widest possible audience.

> "If you're concerned about your health and worried about eating the right things you might think the answer's growing your own vegetables. But it seems not. Half the vegetables grown on inner city allotments may have been polluted with lead from traffic. That's the conclusion of a disturbing report published today, as John Mitchell explains."

This lead statement is of interest to the extent that it is typical of many regional news stories. Firstly it can be noted that it appeals directly to all those individuals who are

'concerned about their health, and eating the right things'. The maximum appeal is thus advanced, since how many people if asked, would admit to not being interested about their health ? Secondly, having appealed to the widest possible audience in a direct and personalised sense, both at the level of a private and individual concern, and also in terms of a personalised and familiar mode of address talking directly to "you", a common assumption is then raised only to be questioned. Here we see in limited detail some of the complexity that even a lead statement can involve both in relational and referential terms. Thus, a familiar mode of address informs the privatised appeal, as does the private concern of one's personal health and possible assumptions concerning the private activity of 'healthy' eating.

This item is not untypical to the extent that it 'works' through its appeal to and sought incorporation of the private individual in an essentially privatised 'public' concern. The pollution of the inner city environment to the extent that vegetables grown on allotments can have high degrees of lead content, is potentially a matter of public concern, a concern which begins to suggest that the inner city environment is unhealthy for all those who live within its polluted confines. As it is, the people placed at the heart of the item are individual vegetable growers and eaters, that is, all of us who are interested in what we eat. However, individuated into a private concern with the individual/domestic activity of food consumption, the public concern relating to inequalities of health endured by collectivities of disadvantaged citizens spatially and socially located within the inner cities is effectively dissimulated.

Finally two items were found to refer to inner city environmental issues to the extent that high status visits simultaneously by two government ministers were reported, each involving plans for major development schemes, while another reported on a local authority video which sought to promote Birmingham to potential 'yuppie' house buyers from London. Again, it can be observed that this last item was strongly inflected with humour challenging the claims of the City Council video and concluding that 'Of course, sooner or later the incoming yuppies will find out about - well the bits the video doesn't show - the Handsworths, the Balsall Heaths, and

Sparkbrooks'. Generalising the plight of run-down inner city areas in a series of metonymic references, the inclusion of such an implicit acknowledgement is only sustained to the extent that it 'pokes fun' at the claims and omissions of the video, while the 'problems' referenced by such inner city areas, yet remaining essentially undisclosed, are effectively positioned as the 'problems' of these and other areas in and of themselves. That is, it is the Handsworths, the Balsall Heaths and Sparkbrooks that constitute 'the problem', and not the starting point for a consideration of what the problems may consist of for those who actually live and work within such deprived areas.

In this theme, as increasingly witnessed in others, it has been seen how a number of inner city themes though present at a nominal level are nonetheless very much dependent upon their form of news inflexion. The form of journalistic inflection can considerably impact upon the exposure and exploration, or diminishment or even dissimulation of the pressing concerns identified as central to the inner city debate. It has in particular been noted how the use of humour, a pronounced characteristic of some regional news treatments, can considerably undermine the possible examinations of serious environmental issues initiated by the publication of research reports, while something of the complexity of a privatised appeal inscribed within an item concerned with inner city pollution has afforded further insight into the sought appeals, and its privatising impact, upon an important inner city concern.

Inner City News: Riots

Given that a full and detailed study of regional riot coverage assumes the focus of the following chapter, this theme need only be noted at this point as of marginal involvement within the bulk of all inner city coverage. As stated at the outset, critics and others are poorly placed to account for the forms and patterns of this form of inner city coverage if such remains abstracted from some of the characteristics found to inhere within the particular medium of news coverage, surrounding news contents generally and inner city coverage specifically, and its relation to informing production and

institutional practices and arrangements.

It can be noted here, then, that explicit news coverage of inner city riots and related or subsequent 'follow-up' coverage of riots has assumed just over three percent of all inner city coverage. Clearly, if an overview picture or portrayal of general inner city regional news coverage is sought, it is necessary to attend to all the themes considered above and below. However, to the extent that riot news may be considered as fundamentally oriented towards the issues and concerns of a law-and-order news interest, to be discussed below, then in combination with the dominant themes of Crime and Policing, riot adds a further endorsement to the prevalent news treatments of the inner city which predominantly position the inner city 'problem' as one of crime, criminality and law enforcement.

Inner City News: Local Economy

With less than three percent of all inner city items the theme of local economy finds a surprising paucity of news coverage. The impact of economic recession, and restructuring has been identified in a number of in-depth, and longitudinal reports, as referenced in an earlier chapter, as particularly impacting upon the fortunes of the inner city and those who live within its confines. The majority of items relating to the local economy of inner city areas have involved reference to plans to develop specific industrial sites, while the majority of these refer to such Government plans and schemes as the designation of the Dudley Enterprise zone, Blackcountry development corporation and decision to grant the west midlands status as an assisted area and therefore eligible for Regional Aid. From these items, each dealing with a particular scheme, and all involving government schemes and ministers' statements, some of the plethora of government urban programme schemes gain news attention. In one instance a private contractor's bid to develop a once thriving industrial site also gains news attention. What is interesting about all these news items is the degree to which 'plans' are announced with reference to perhaps 'the recession' while the differing interpretations concerning the nature and consequences of such a visitation remains largely unexplored. That is, economic news remains largely at the level of specific

interventions, typically by government, and yet the 'problem' to which such interventions are addressed receive little, if any elaboration and comment.

As discussed previously in terms of the routinised reporting of the latest unemployment figures, the economy appears to be an area that is accepted, and reported as beyond discussion. Assuming the role of an assumed consensus viewpoint, reporting the latest government schemes and private developments though invariably keen to announce the increased chances of job opportunities, the political dependencies and considerations of allocative control and decision making remain unexplored because they do not arise within the context of 'economic' regional news. However, if the competing economic diagnoses and prognoses of Britain's industrial ills remains essentially out of view, subsumed under the blanket label, 'recession', regional individual business's or industries are apt to receive either celebratory or commiserating portrayal depending upon their current fortunes. Two items report the successes of two different companies in blackspots of industrial and manufacturing decline, while two others report and commiserate with the human tragedy of the closure of an established industry. One final item dealing with the local economy, reported the setting up of an inner city community bank, aimed specifically at generating local funds for reinvestment in new local businesses, though the explanations concerning a shortage of investment funds for businesses within the inner city is not explored. Once again, a fragment of a possible 'solution' is highlighted while the nature and extent of the 'problem' remains out of view.

In so far as this small sample permits, the coverage of the local economy of the inner city, advanced as so fundamental to the various ills and misfortunes that characterise the inner city and the problems confronting those who live there, has failed to receive significant news attention.

Inner City News: Issues of Health

The inner city theme of health receives infrequent news attention. Of those few items which have dealt with some of the related concerns of health and the inner city, the majority have

in fact dealt with aspects of health relating to disadvantaged social groups and poverty. Thus, three items have dealt with the unusually high baby mortality figures present within deprived areas found in the west midlands, a further two with the effects of hypothermia upon the old while one remaining item announces the finding of a published report which claims that health and wealth are related.

While these minority of cases might indicate that at least some attention has been focused upon the increasing recognition that health and poverty are indeed related, albeit often in indirect and complex ways, not all items are disposed to further such an awareness. Thus, one item though ostensibly concerned with an area of the west midlands with the worst baby mortality figures in the country inextricably skews to focus upon the support or lack of support that is forthcoming from husbands. Once again, though perhaps unintended, an inferred casual link between baby mortality figures and the amount of support provided from 'dads' is implicit to the news treatment which fails to consider some of the possible, and documented, interrelated considerations concerning baby mortality figures within inner city areas.

Similarly, though one item about hypothermia includes a critical and detailed statement from the pressure group Age Concern challenging the government provisions for the elderly, especially those on low income, the other report illustrates once again that a superficial news treatment, involving an implicit but unsatisfactory, causal link, effectively dissimulates the 'problem of poverty and health'. In this instance a couple found dead from hypothermia, declared simply in the programme tease as 'couple die from the cold', proceeds to suggest, having reported the 'facts' of this individual case, that elderly people take the advice of eating regular hot meals, keeping the heating on and wrapping up in warm clothes. In this report the inferred connection is that it is indeed hypothermia that causes death, though the possible interrelationship between poverty and lack of heating, warm clothes or warm meals is not considered. Hypothermia is thus posited effectively as the outcome of inadequate behaviours of the elderly themselves and not wider structural considerations of context pertaining in this instance to the ability to pay, and availability of

adequate care and support services.

These two items indicate that news treatments though nominally covering important aspects of the inner city and health related concerns can provide differing degrees of adequacy and inadequacy when it comes to providing necessary background, contextual detail and inferred causal explanations. Items such as these also indicate that if a challenging or controversial statement is to be advanced it will be advanced via the accessing of an outside agency or, as noted previously, a published report. The exact degree to which an item can be taken as reporting a statement of others, as news in itself, or included to the extent that it effectively justifies a newsroom driven report is difficult to disentangle in any definitive sense. However, when a lead statement declares in a vein similar to that cited below, it is apparent that the published report assumes the role of initial justification and subsequent support to an item which proceeds to explore in further detail some of the contending positions in play.

> "Health workers in Staffordshire were told today that thousands of poorer people were dying needlessly. The claim came in a report published today linking wealth and health . Len Tingle reports."

To the extent that such a format at least permits an array of opinions and perspectives to be voiced which considerably enhance the adequacy of the report which now includes heightened background and contextual detail, and does not infer illicit or inadequate causal explanatory schemas, then the accessing of outside opinion can only be seen as advantageous to the coverage of important issues. As the instance of the hypothermia cases noted above again illustrate, in the item where an outside agency was directly involved, as opposed to simply a news desk report, the adequacy of the resulting report provides a much wider context and background to the 'problem' of hypothermia and does not advance specious inferences. This is not to suggest, of course, that the increased degree of background and or context will necessarily furnish a more objective, much less 'truer' explanation, but it is to suggest that the resources made available and advanced as explanatory by others are at least made explicit, clear and essentially open to scrutiny. This, as has been demonstrated, is not always the case when news

treatment remains firmly within the authorship of the news process itself.

Inner City News: Unemployment

Unemployment may be regarded as one of the most pressing social concerns blighting the inner city. The effect of unemployment upon the unemployed themselves, family relations, the wider community and the local economy have all been widely documented over a considerable period of time as particularly concentrated and acute within the inner city. Moreover, while generalised problems can be identified and discussed in some detail, it is also increasingly acknowledged that unemployment is a social problem which impacts differentially upon different social groups. Young black male youths for instance are known to experience compounded forms of discrimination and disadvantage both within and without the job market, while older men experience different problems concerning the possibility of getting retrained compared to younger workers and so on.

The inner city has also been recognised as a 'demographic problem' with an increasingly concentrated population of the urban poor, disadvantaged and dispossessed. Processes of indigenous immigration and emigration from and too the environs of the inner city have resulted in population structures which have, leaving aside for the moment the relatively new phenomenon of gentrifrication, concentrations of the disadvantaged and the poor. Such considerations, in addition to the demise of local job opportunities in recent years all impact upon the unemployment problems and possibilities of employment within the inner city. With a mere 2 % of all inner city items, unemployment news can be considered as considerably marginalised when compared to other inner city themes discussed above.

Of the strict minority of items relating to unemployment the majority refer in some form to the general conditions and/or benefits system that accompanies officially recognised unemployment. Three items reported on the launch of new campaigns by the unemployed to improve the benefits system, or more latterly to oppose new proposals for social security reform, while the budget occasioned an opportunity to ask a group of unemployed people of their immediate reaction's to the

Chancellor's budget speech, and one further item followed the daily job search of two wednesfield youths. Again, it can be noted that protest, and/or government announcements has occasioned the majority of such items though the search for the 'human face' behind such public events has also very occasionally been sought. Unemployment news is likely to involve, in those extremely rare occasions when gaining news coverage at all, a form of public protest or campaign and involvement of political figures, though on even rarer occasions it may seek to find the human face behind the officially released figures.

Inner City News: Employment

If unemployment is conceded as a particularly central theme to any discussion of the inner city, given its direct and indirect effects collectively and diversely contributing to a wider range of 'urban deprivation' concerns which in part at least flow from low income, then so is employment of germane interest both in terms of working conditions, training opportunities and levels of pay. However, such considerations though central to informed discussion and debate about the nature of the problems of the inner city, have failed to secure significant inner city news coverage. News items relating to inner city employment have gained just over 1.5 % of all inner city coverage.

The majority of this strict minority of items have reported on employment training schemes. Interestingly, however of these one involved the milestone event of the first half million offered a place on the Community Programme scheme providing temporary part-time employment, and the three others all centred upon royal visits to different schemes. In other words, such schemes in and of themselves have not been the focus of news interest but rather the event of a public milestone, or the visit of a social elite.

One further item has centred upon conditions of work, reporting the hazardous conditions found in an inner city clothing warehouse following a court prosecution, while another following the release of 'improved' employment figures involved interviews with the Minister of Employment, a trades council

representative and a group of unemployed inner city residents.

In summary it can be noted how this minority of items once again confirms a pattern of news interests found to inhere across many of the themes above where the involvement of social celebrities or elites and political figures can considerably enhance the likelihood of certain inner city concerns attracting news attention. Moreover, it has been noted though royal visits can and do attract news attention to inner city themes which have not gained regular news interest, this is invariably related to a positive or celebratory event, relating to a particular project or scheme, or indeed the visit itself, while the wider context and background which surrounds such schemes in the first instance are denied sustained, if any attention. Conditions at work and on training schemes and problems of low pay all known to be inherent to the inner city employment scene have failed to gain news coverage, while the occasional royal visit and celebration of specific schemes have managed to gain the majority of all employment related news, though even here it has to be remembered that all employment news, as was the case with unemployment news, remains firmly within a minority of all inner city coverage.

Inner City News: Social Services

Social services designed and directed towards a range of social problems that in the main afflict particularly disadvantaged and disabled social groups, collectively represent a range of service provisions that are of particular relevance, and need, to the concentrations of the deprived and dispossessed found within the environs of the inner city. How then has this organised and administrative response, and indeed the social needs to which it is directed, fared within inner city news coverage ? With only six items or 1.7 % of all inner city sample items relating to social services this inner city theme finds precious little representation within the genre of regional news.

Of the minority of social service related items, all items found within the sample have involved reference to the benefits system. Of these five focus on issues relating particularly to the social group of pensioners, while one item focuses on the

plight of an individual disabled woman. Moreover, where reference is made to other social groups affected by the benefits system this is invariably yoked together with the elderly pensioners as 'the poor and the elderly' or 'the pensioners and the poor' thus invoking an undifferentiated mass of 'the poor', while also implying that in this country at least, to be elderly is in all likelihood to involve poverty.

Moreover of these items, three involve a well known public figure and/or politician, two a public protest, and one the eccentric appeal and visual interest of a protest to Downing street headed by a traditionally clad town crier.The impression gained from this group of items is that two client groups exist in relation to the benefits system: the deserving and, by omission, the undeserving. Whereas the elderly secure at least minimal access, and the case of a disabled woman gains news attention to the extent that her benefit had been disallowed due the decision that her live-in helper was classified as a co-habitee, the vast majority of those able-bodied, and yet arguably socially disabled and deprived social groups existing on low income and in receipt of statutory benefits, has been effectively displaced from view. As for the problems, conditions of work and general workload and policy formation of social services themselves, these also have disappeared from public view, as has the accessing of social workers and others directly involved on either side of the social service 'front line'.

While aspects of the benefits system at least gain some minimal news coverage, the adequacy or otherwise of specific service provisions for particular inner city groups both in terms of service delivery and provision of appropriate client facilities, two areas of identified inner city concern, have failed to secure any news attention whatsoever.

Inner City News: Leisure Facilities

The shortage or inadequacy of inner city leisure and recreational facilities is an area of identified concern which is germane to the wider problems of concentrated urban and social deprivation. Moreover, it is also recognised that within this arena of concern specific social groups have been noted as particularly ill-served within the inner city context. Thus,

whether it is single-parent families and creche facilities, elderly ethnic minority groups and community and day centres, or inner city youth and relevant activity centres, to name just some of the most clearly documented instances, the shortage of adequate facilities directly compounds wider experiences of social deprivation. It is therefore legitimate to inquire to what extent such concerns have been the focus of regional news concern. Representing a mere 1.7 % of all inner city items,this theme heralded six items in total.

Interestingly, as already noted in connection with many of the themes above, all of the items dealing in some sense with inner city leisure facilities have focused on the 'positive' intervention of particular schemes or activities. Thus a public petition resulting in a city council scheme which involves local children planting trees, or a local record producer opening a new music venue, or new Scout's scheme aimed at ethnic minority youth are representative examples of the 'positive' leisure facility news afforded regional news coverage. However, while these items and such events as a well-known political figure unveiling an inner city wall mural can attract news attention, the wider backdrop concerning a chronic lack of inner city resources is invariably only mentioned, if at all, while the positive news focus assumes the substantive point of news interest. As for the particular disadvantages characteristic of the inner city as a whole, and more acutely referenced in terms of specific inner city groups, this wider canvas is displaced from view, while individual cameo portraits assume the principal news interest in this unreported area of inner city concern.

Inner City News: The Politics of Administration

While the lack or inadequacy of physical inner city resources, whether related to recreation, employment and training, or other areas of service provision have all received sparse news attention, notwithstanding their identified importance to the inner city 'problem', the politics of administrating such resources and decision-making processes involved have gained next to no attention whatsoever. Increasingly in recent years it has come to be acknowledged that local participation in key areas of decision-making, with a

degree of real allocative control and responsibility is an area which has hitherto been placed firmly out of reach of local inner city communities and interests. Thus, while community 'needs' are invariably the subject of discussion and debate to the extent that administrative processes have sought to identify and define community needs and requirements, the administrative processes themselves may also be regarded as part of the inner city problem effectively disenfranchising those who 'know their needs best', but who do not find a participatory voice within the decision making process.

If one major fissure is seen to have inhered within local community local authority relations, so too has a second major fissure been thrown into sharp relief in recent years which involves the circumscription of local authority objectives by a wider, and often strained relationship with central government. Both these political concerns, impacting directly and indirectly upon the administration of inner city interventions are therefore at the heart of inner city politics. A third area of inner city political difficulty and difference, which may perhaps be more accurately referred to as fragmentation, rather than fissure is that which inheres within the competing and vying perspectives and organisations which characterise the inner city scene.

A fourth area of politics concerned with the inner city can be taken as the traditional party political system and its periodic electoral processes, involving differing claims and allegiances to the various concerns and interests of the inner city. Clearly areas of overlap can be discerned between this group of concerns and the two political fissures noted above, however they can usefully be considered in separation to the extent that a case can be made that some of the deeper issues revolving around issues of community participation, decision-making and control, and central-local government relations are in a sense beyond party politics as traditionally and narrowly understood. As it is, such fine distinctions may be regarded as unproblematic when considered in the light of the paucity of all explicit political inner city news. These particular inner city concerns, identified across a number of reports and inquiries as crucial to any understanding of the inner city problem, which in turn impact on so many of the inner city themes already

considered, have secured less than 1 % of all inner city related coverage.

Such major concerns briefly indicated as the two 'fissures' and problem of 'fragmentation' above therefore, have not been afforded significant news attention within the seven year sample of regional news inner city coverage. Of the three explicit 'political' items found within the sample, one referenced a party-political debate in parliament concerning the industrial decline of the west midlands, another item reported the appointment, for the first time ever, of a black female conservative candidate to fight for the inner city ward of ladywood in Birmingham, while lastly one item tangentially noted the strain existing between a local authority and central government in a controversy surrounding an enterprise zone where an EEC grain mountain was stored at the rate-payer's expense. None of these, then, have directly focused upon the three main areas of concern, which inform so many of the inner city themes already considered. In other words the politics of the inner city remains curiously and some would say, damagingly absent from the coverage of the inner city taken as a whole.

The Inner City Portrayed: Summary Findings

It can be concluded from the above that the regional news coverage of the inner city, involves a hierarchy of inner city themes receiving differential 'routine' news attention. Of these, as already found in an initial discussion concerning inner city megathemes, a distinct skew of interest leans towards concerns of law and order generally, while the themes of crime and policing are particularly pronounced. While the multiple aspects of urban deprivation collectively assume the second most prominent grouping of inner city concerns, the various separate themes which comprise this group are in the main highly infrequent in terms of their news exposure. Issues of race and racism and discrimination, while securing little more than the most prevalent urban deprivation themes, when aggregated into one of the three megathemes, assumes a minority of news coverage.

While this broad span of concerns and their respective

presences and relative silences is instructive as to the general contours of inner city coverage, a more detailed and close-up inspection has revealed that the constituent topics which comprise each theme reflect general characteristics of the regional news genre itself, while also affording a highly selective form of news appropriation and subsequent inflexion which considerably impact upon the final form of inner city coverage. Noting the tendency to concentrate upon individuals, and individual circumstances if all inner city items are consulted to see what proportion invokes and addresses the wider or covering theme, whether it be the problem of homelessness, unemployment, crime rates or racial attack and harassment less than 16 % of all inner city items have sought to address the identified inner city themes at this general level.

It has also been observed that a characteristic regional news inflexion tends to 'privatise' even the most public of concerns in terms of the stance projected towards the viewer and appeal made in relation to the subject matter of the news item. Moreover, and contrary to widely held expectations concerning the 'negative' inclinations of all news forms, regional news displays, even in the midst of pressing inner city concerns, the capacity to affirm and celebrate through individualism and creativity, enterprise and success the 'positive' happenings found within the region's territorial borders. This has been evidenced across the majority of themes considered though especially prominent within the themes of Race, Employment, Policing, and Local Economy. Perhaps the most extreme instance of the pursuit of 'positive' or 'happy news' is found on those occasions when the heavy inflexion of humour effectively dissimulates the real basis of concern finding expression within, say, the latest research reports concerning regional deprivation, only to indulge in a form of 'humorous' regional chauvinism.

While all the above explicitly and identifiably impact on the coverage of the inner city, it can also be recognised that significant omissions and relative silences have also informed regional television news coverage of the inner city. Some of these specific inner city related silences have already been identified. Over and above the relative paucity of inner city news covering such concerns as poverty, homelessness and the

practices and needs of those concerned with the social services, it has also been noted how the specific form of news concerned with policing for instance has failed to raise the important issues concerning community policing, police accountability and police harassment and brutality. Similarly, the informing political structures and processes summed up in terms of the 'fissures' existing between local communities and local authorities, and local authorities and central government as well as the 'fragmentation' characteristic of inner city community politics have all failed to gain regional news attention. This effective denial of the politics of the inner city, not only reflects a relative disinterest in regional and local party political news but is also found to be a significant 'silence' within such political arenas as policing practice and policy. When policing practice has been the subject of news interest not only has such news treatment proved to be uncritical, but on occasion it has been explicitly celebratory. The exact constitution of the 'political', as similarly noted above in terms of the 'cultural' within regional news, has tended to assume a highly restricted understanding, seemingly confined to a narrow set of formal political party practices and electoral processes.

On these, and other aspects of inner city debate and discussion which collectively define the problems of the inner city discussed earlier and identified above, the coverage of the inner city has been found to be selective, structured by way of a hierarchy of news interests, and in broad measure reflective of established genre characteristics, and susceptible to a particular form of journalistic appropriation and inflexion.

II INNER CITY NEWS: ACCESS

If the range and relative prominence of different inner city themes can be taken as a fundamental characteristic of inner city news in general, and as such delimits or effectively curtails the examination and reporting of some inner city concerns while providing considerable coverage of other inner city concerns, it is also necessary to attend to the patterns of social actor entry within this coverage if the placing and range

of interpretative accounts and resources relating to the different perspectives advanced around the site of the inner city are to be charted. Interpretation and the exchange of meaning is a profound and inextricably social process, and as such is continually constructed, expressed and negotiated by social subjects. Some social subjects however are differentially placed to intervene within the mediated process of meaning construction and elaboration, and it is here that the public sphere, in its regional news aspect, necessitates careful scrutiny and analysis. In other words, while the 'who' of regional news access, cannot in isolation be taken as a direct index of the 'what' of regional inner city portrayal, the presence of some 'key' social groups and relative infrequency of appearances of other 'key' inner city social groups is deemed to have a relatively direct impact upon the interpretative accounts and resources relating to the perspectives advanced in relation to the contested site of the inner city.

As well as pointing to established patterns of social actor access in part reflecting wider social and institutional arrangements while also expressing something of the genre characteristics or orientation of the regional news form itself, for present purposes such findings can be considered of direct relevance in the placing, or non placing, of competing resources and interpretative accounts which inform the contested understandings of the inner city. For the purposes of this inner city focus, the range of social groups have been considerably expanded, with over 90 separate groups deemed of direct relevance to the inner city identified and mapped across the sample of items. These 90 groups have first been aggregated into the following 14 social groups to provide a wider overview.

Table 6:12 Inner City Actors: Access

Social Group	Frequency	Percent
Individual Voice	143	25.0
Police	105	18.4
Government	95	16.6
Business	53	9.3
Community Voice	45	7.9
Education	42	7.4
Court/Legal	22	3.9
Medicine	20	3.5
Celebrity/Royalty	14	2.5
Professional/Expert	12	2.1
Government Scheme	7	1.2
Religion	6	1.1
Social Services	6	1.1
Emergency Services	1	0.2
	Total 571	100.0 %

The first notable finding from the above is that a quarter of all those inner city social actors gaining access to regional television news are in fact 'individual voices'. By this category is meant individuals who neither formally or informally, nor professionally represent others, but rather are present in an individual capacity. This category once again confirms that within inner city news, as in regional news generally there is indeed an opening for 'ordinary' voices.

The police secure the second most prevalent social group gaining inner city news access. This considerable presence clearly reflects the heavy preponderance of inner city crime news (31.9 %) and wider law-and-order megatheme presence which has assumed over half (52.1 %) of all inner city coverage. The third most prominent group, namely that of Central Government and Local Politicians, represents something of a change of emphasis from the general pattern of group entry discerned for the news genre as a whole. Here politicians have doubled their direct involvement from 8 % to 16.6%, though the theme of politics and administration has strictly assumed a marginal presence within inner city news with less than one percent (0.8 %) of all themes explicitly focused upon this dimension of the inner city problematic. This indicates that while politics and administration may not be prominent in terms of the key inner city political issues identified earlier, nonetheless politicians secure access within other areas of inner city news.

The world of business assumes the next most prominent group

with just under 10 % of all actor entries while 'community voices', that is individuals and groups either formally or informally representing a particular community group or organisation, section of the community, or inner city community as a whole outside of formal political administrative arrangements secures nearly 8 % of all entries, and as such in combination with the 25 % of individual voices noted above indicates that in effect over a third of all entries are in fact allocated/secured by those outside of formal hierarchies of social power, once again qualifying any presumed hierarchy of access within this particular species of news. Those associated with education within the inner city have gained some participation within inner city news coverage while the remaining social groups as can be seen above, have failed to gain more than minimal involvement.

Thus professional personnel of the courts, notwithstanding the preponderance of crime news generally, and court reports specifically do not gain significant entry with less than 4 % of all entries, though this is considerably more than the access afforded to offenders, and criminal suspects, discussed further below, who secure little over 1 % of all social actor entries, despite the predominance of crime news and law-and-order inner city news generally.

Similarly, the principal actors identified in connection with the inner city concerns of health and medicine, other 'professional' domains such as architecture, psychology, and the media and the academic interests of professional sociology, as well as government inner city schemes, and social services all fail to secure relatively noticeable presence within inner city news.

Religious leaders and followers are also notable by their relative absence, despite the fact that the inner city has both a variety of different social and ethnic groups many of which define themselves principally in relation to religious faith and practice, while the inner city has also attracted considerable attention in recent years by established and indigenous religions concerned either with the disproportionate effects of inner city deprivation and/or fears of dwindling inner city congregations. The private orientation of regional subject matter and inflexion discussed earlier, is a particular

construction of and appeal to a private world and yet does not, or so it would appear, venture into the non-materialist cavities of spirituality and faith (though this is not to say that other forms of the transcendent are not possible candidates for popular news interest. re. mysticism, the occult and the paranormal).

From the above it is apparent that inner city news has afforded various groups of inner city actors different degrees of access and involvement. If attention turns to the different forms of entry found across this coverage the following findings emerge.

Table 6:13 Access and Forms of News Entry

Form of Entry	Frequency	Percent
Interview	395	69.2
Attributed Statement	139	24.3
Accessed Voice	21	3.7
Discussion	7	1.2
Quotation	6	1.1
Presentation	3	0.5
Total	571	100.0 %

Once again the prominence of the interview as the most frequent form of actor entry is unmistakable. With nearly 70 % of all actors being afforded media access within this form clearly the interview is the most 'characteristic' form of news access. However, though widespread across the range of inner city actors, it is also noticeable that its employment can vary according to the social group which gains entry. Thus courts, and those associated with the judicial processing of the law rarely find expression via interviews though they find considerable involvement by way of attributed statement and quotation - two forms of entry which are in the main reserved for the largely professional groups of actors including the police, government and government schemes and other professional and expert opinion leaders. These 'privileged' forms of entry, attributed statement and direct quotation, while conceivably imbuing those particular social groups and their relayed statements with an authoritativeness which is denied, in relative terms, to other social groups are perhaps of more interest to the extent that they reflect an institutional dependence denied to other groups of social actors. That is,

while semiotic associations may be involved in the different forms of entry their importance is perhaps better explained in that the social actors gaining entry in this form are clearly deemed important enough to merit attributive statement and direct quotation even if the actors concerned are not directly available for interview comment - rather than the form investing significance it is the strategic social position of such groups which becomes expressed through these forms of exclusive access.

The use of quotation is confined entirely to the social groups of Government, the Courts and the Police, while the vast majority, over 90 % , of all attributed statements are also monopolised by these same groups. Interestingly, however, the strict minority of all discussion forms of entry (1.2 %) are confined to education, individual voice and community voice actors, while perhaps the most 'open' of all forms of entry which permits a direct presentation to the audience (0.5 %) are found, on those extremely rare occasions when deployed at all, to be monopolised by the social groups of celebrities and those involved in education. Once again, as elicited in the preliminary analyses of general regional news presentation formats these expansive, 'open' and relatively unmediated items though within an absolute minority indicate that at a logical/practicable level such forms can in fact find expression within the regional news genre. However while the form of 'direct presentation' actor entry can be found within inner city news, the involvement of certain types of actors, in this case education students and celebrities, indicates that such expansive forms are restricted to certain areas of inner city coverage. Thus on further examination, it is found that the three instances of such forms of direct presentation news access are in fact confined to a black poet reading his poems direct to camera, and education students performing part of a school play about being young and unemployed. Nonetheless, the fact that such formats have been, and occasionally continue to be deployed within regional news suggests that they cannot be discounted as entirely absent from the regional news genre.

Thus, not only is the inner city afforded differential portrayal to the extent that different actors secure different degrees of routine to occasional, to almost totally absent, news

access but so too is it the case that different forms of entry can characterise their respective forms of involvement.

So far it has been noted how certain social groups of inner city actors gain differential presence or absence within inner city news which in part at least is related to the inner city concerns or domains within which they are principally involved. However, it cannot simply be taken that all those principal protagonists within an area of inner city concern are therefore likely to gain entry according to such news relevances. As suggested above, in terms of the crime theme and the noticeable absence of direct involvement of offenders and criminal suspects, being germane to a news interest doesn't necessarily result in the promotion from being a potential news object to the discursively more significant status of a news subject actively placing accounts and interpretation.

Who exactly has gained entry within these broad groups of inner city actors is therefore of interest and provides a more detailed insight into both significant inner city actor presences and silences. Four of the most prominent groups of social actors -individual voices, the police, government, and community voices - can here usefully be examined.

Table 6:14 **Inner City Actors : INDIVIDUAL VOICES**

	Frequency	Group Percent	Total Percent
Resident	60	41.9	10.4
Witness/Neighbour	27	18.9	4.7
Victim	13	9.1	2.3
Protester/Campaigner	11	7.7	1.9
Destitute/Poor	10	7.0	1.8
Unemployed	9	6.3	1.5
Offender/Suspect	7	4.9	1.2
Homeless	2	1.4	0.4
Pensioner	2	1.4	0.4
Other	2	1.4	0.4
Rioter/Passive	0	0.0	0.0
Total	143	100.0 %	25.0 %

Interestingly, the most prominent three groups of 'individual voices' gaining access together comprise over two thirds of all such entries (66.9). These three groups comprising residents, neighbours/witnesses or relatives and victims all secure a form of entry by virtue of an objective presence - they all happen to live within an inner city area, have happened to witness a news event, or become part of a news event as a crime victim. In this sense then, these three groups though prominent

tend to perform a supportive role within a news item and not necessarily the principal focus. Typically, residents will be interviewed where reactions or responses are sought which are 'representative' of local feeling or opinion, though in any serious consideration they can only be regarded as 'representative' to the extent that the selected interview statement 'represents' the views of that particular interviewee at the moment of its filmed capture.

Invariably, it is the array of professionals and experts found across the main inner city social groups who perform the major task of providing analysis, comment and interpretation. Nonetheless, as the analysis of group entry indicates below, the involvement of local people within their respective individual capacities is not totally confined to the vox pop form, and they can on occasion be found within other openings. This, as already advanced in regard to the general analysis of the regional news genre, is indicative of the specificity of regional news and its 'local' orientation both in terms of proximities of geography and also social proximities or populist orientation which permits the entry of 'ordinary' people, while pursuing a human interest inflexion.

Protesters and campaigners secure less than 2 % of all forms of entry, while specific groups of the inner city's disadvantaged and dispossessed are granted surprisingly little access considering the enormity of such pressing inner city concerns as unemployment, poverty and homelessness. When compared say to the presence of the police, with its direct involvement within inner city issues of law and order, the voice of the unemployed, homeless and disadvantaged found at the centre of inner city issues relating to deprivation and racial disadvantage and discrimination secure a minimal opportunity to directly give expression to their respective viewpoints. Such groups can in part be seen as absented from the public news domain both as news objects and subjects; the the relative paucity of news attention to such inner city concerns effectively denies both the positing of such groups as the 'object' of news interest and hence the possibility of gaining a 'subject' position from which interpretative accounts can actively be placed within the news domain. Other inner city actors however, though assuming an objective news presence have

also failed to gain a subject position from which their particular voice can be heard.

It has been noted how criminals and criminal suspects though 'central' to crime news, and in at least a half of all crime news they are present to the extent that they are involved within the criminal justice system involving processes of police prosecution, court appearance and trial verdict and sentencing, nonetheless only secure a relative minority of all forms of entry. To this extent, it can be said that the 'criminal' has been objectified, placed within a narrative, and permitted a role but effectively secures no voice. In a sense, it could be maintained that the perpetrator of a crime, though instrumental in unleashing the institutional processes selectively appropriated into a media narrative, thereafter becomes almost an irrelevance. The attention becomes focused upon the unfolding drama, a drama in which the inexorable logic is known in advance and will inevitably be repeated time and time again, and yet it is the motion itself, and not the substance which assumes the principal news attention - an offence is committed, a suspect is caught, a court trial proceeds, a verdict is reached. Within this established scenario typically the suspect progressively vanishes from view, while the process itself becomes the source of mediated interest. Others within this process, the judge, defending or prosecuting barristers and occasional expert and witnesses are all occasionally granted a voice, and yet invariably the suspect has no mediated voice. This lack of a voice effectively silences any possibility for illumination or insight into areas of possible cause and motivation other than that which the professional parties within this process permit to be known, and certainly does not begin to pave the way for a wider understanding of crime in general.

The term 'crime victim', though open to wide definitional considerations of 'crime', and 'victim' which moreover encompass individual and collective senses of both terms, invariably implies individuals who have been subjected to the ordeal or threat of physical abuse and violence. And indeed, within the context of regional crime news with its selective interest in certain types of crime, the foremost of which do indeed involve physical assault and violence, this is exactly what the role of a 'victim' invariably entails. That is, an individual

demonstrating the injuries and aftermath of an unwarranted assault or attack. However, even victims are relatively dispensable when considered within the sample of crime items. Crime news can quite comfortably dispense with both suspect and victim, to the extent that these positions are not required to speak in order that the crime item can assume its established dramaturgical form. This paradox of a drama without the key dramatis personae can only be understood to the extent that the ritual play of established forms and process, occasionally helped along by the relayed speeches and comments of the professional court actors, can assume a highly ritualised form where even the role of 'key' actors is no longer required in the unfolding of such established scenarios.

The standardised effect of such depopulated news stories, at least to the extent that the principal characters have disappeared off stage, is a further instance of the levelling news treatment occasionally supporting a number of wider crime news treatments. Crime news invariably concerns individual cases of crime, perpetrated by identified individuals and yet rarely are such individuals truly individualised. To the extent that crime news in the main concerns a discrete and clearly isolated 'criminal event' separated from wider considerations of crime by the form of news treatment the possibility of individualising such accounts by involving a wider array of voices which could begin to indicate differing perspectives in relation to 'understanding' this particular crime in both its uniqueness and wider generalities is largely eschewed.

To the extent that offenders remain within an essentially unexplored and individually unexplicated category of 'the criminal', crime can indeed assume a homogeneous form seemingly perpetrated by an undifferentiated class of offenders who can only be considered individual to the extent that they are held individually responsible and culpable. While such forms of news treatment may be accounted for in terms of many different explanatory levels some of which will receive attention later, the point here is that such a reductive approach to both crime and 'criminals' is to prepare the ground on which simplistic law-and-order perspectives gain sustenance while denying social causation and individual circumstance largely concealed from viewed by both the standardised news form and limited array of

voices permitted news entry.

In sum, a case can be made that crime news though clearly about individual acts of crime, perpetrated by individuals upon other individuals, rarely affords these key characters a voice and therefore while situating crime as an 'individual' phenomenon, effectively displacing a wide array of social considerations, also fails to truly 'individualise' such accounts by revealing both their particularity or uniqueness and relation to wider social considerations from which their 'individuality' can be interpreted. As it is, they tend to remain as an available and plentiful resource aligned as much by form as substantive concern to a conservative framework of interpretation.

If the elderly have been identified as a significant, and often disadvantaged and deprived social group within the inner city environs, they fail to find a noticeable news presence - a situation also found to characterise a further generational group often placed at the heart of public discussion and debate concerned with the problems of the inner city: inner city youth. Of the 6 % of all adolescents finding a voice within the entire sample of inner city news, their presence has been confined to the concerns of education and government schemes. Generally recognised to have assumed an important role within inner city rioting, as well as other areas of direct inner city relevance - youth unemployment and leisure shortages, homelessness, street life and criminal activity, and, particularly relating to black youth different forms of discrimination, to mention only some of the most obvious candidates of youth related inner city concerns, their presence is conspicuous by their relative absence.

Riot related items, and crime news items concerned with the event of a riot which together comprise 14 sample items (3.9 %), are obviously concerned with the phenomenon of inner city riots and yet no individual 'rioters' whether passive, (on the scene but not necessarily engaged in riotous behaviour) or active have appeared within these or any other items relating to the inner city. Now clearly, as with all these various differences found between the presences and absences, the heard voices and the silent voices, there are no doubt numerous practical, legal and other 'reasons' for such differences of access, some of which

will be charted in a later stage of analysis, but what is important at this stage is to simply map those heard and unheard voices, as potentially curtailing the expression of the contending positions currently in play in regard to the inner city. Inner city youth, heavily under-represented as a generational dimension throughout the inner city coverage, and yet frequently focused in relation to the inner city clearly has both an empirical presence within the inner city, and yet it is a presence more often than not which appears to have been felt, experienced and interpreted by others while rarely has it had an opportunity to literally speak, that is voice <u>for</u> itself, its own account and interpretation of its most pressing concerns. Whether a social group becomes the object of news coverage, or alternatively gains access as a news subject, advancing and negotiating new meanings and interpretations, can clearly have enormous consequences both for the group in question and conceivably wider issues and concerns.

Table 6:15 **<u>Inner City Actors : THE POLICE</u>**

	Frequency	Group Percent	Total Percent
Senior Police Officer	38	36.2	6.7
'The Police'	34	32.4	6.0
Chief Constable	17	16.2	3.0
Lower Rank	15	14.3	2.6
Police Other	1	0.9	0.1
<u>Total</u>	<u>105</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>18.4 %</u>

The involvement of the police, in keeping with the predominance of crime news, and law-and-order news generally secures the second most prominent group of inner city social actors. While the police in fact secure less direct presence than their 'natural' inner city domains of crime and law-and-order might lead one to presuppose as elicited by a consideration of central inner city themes discussed above, perhaps the more interesting question should be why one professional body, amongst so many other institutions, organisations and bodies who also have a legitimate and recognised role within the inner city, should secure the prominence that they do. Before such questions can usefully be posed some attention must be focused on who 'the police' are in this mediated sense. As is clear from the table above, the majority of inner city accessed entries by the police (52.4 %)

are gained by senior police officers with no less than 17 appearances or 16.2 % by Chief Constables. Clearly an internal hierarchy of access would appear to be at work, with relatively few entries secured by lower rank police officers.

The second most revealing result from the above is the amount of media references to 'the police' as an undifferentiated, even reified body, which is then quoted or paraphrased as if speaking with one head. With nearly a third of all police entries in the attributive form 'the police said', the police are by far the single most referenced and subsequently paraphrased or quoted body. The enhancing authoritativeness which may then be imbued in such relayed institutional statements, which can on occasion refer to a police operation on one day and on others internal or even external policy and political matters as if all with the same degree of professional authoritativeness and independence, is perhaps a matter of wider social concern. Thus not only are the police effectively permitted a form of 'relayed' voice, a conduit rarely if at all afforded to other social groups, which may conceivably lend an 'authenticating' aura to the relayed statement, but so too have the police been afforded an opportunity to extend its mediated presence in this public form to areas or issues which are more properly considered of wider political import. And to this extent the police, which can on occasion be regarded as one interest group amongst others, enjoys an unparalleled media presence.

Interestingly, frequent references to 'the police' in this reified sense also inevitably displaces the very real differences of interest and perspective which currently exist both within and between different police forces generally. Intra-professional differences of interest and approach are subsumed under the implicit institutional homogeneity of 'the police' which, though effecting a form of identified closure useful in simplified accounts of the fight against crime and criminals by the protectors of law and order, can also distance or even displace some of the difficult and competing social awarenesses of 'crime' as involving sensitive questions of definition and approach which 'the police' are not always entirely in agreement upon. Policing strategies deployed within the inner city, and forms of community policing in particular,

is perhaps the most obvious example of an issue where the police can and do advance competing perspectives from within the force itself. Recent research, for example, is beginning to clearly indicate that both attitudes and practices of beat constables working within the inner city, are often at odds with the proclaimed community policing policies advanced by senior police officers, where both stereotypical attitudes and, perhaps equally important accepted professional practices rewarded by advancement, are largely dependent upon visible conviction rates, and individual policing prowess.

In a fashion, and not dissimilar to the way in which 'the criminal' can on occasion assume the form of an undifferentiated 'deviant' due to its objectification into a reified and distanced threat, so 'the police' can potentially be posited as a unified, and occasionally reified professional body. The difference in their news complementarity is that whereas one is posited as being in, of and definitely for society, and regularly gains a news voice, the other tends to be positioned as from, against and therefore outside society and secures no voice with which to challenge such objectification and is therefore at risk of losing all rights to further consideration. These different presences and silences, and forms of entry evident across the different involvements of suspects, offenders and the police directly impact upon the forms of interpretative resources and accounts placed within the public domain and, furthermore it is suggested that such perennial forms exhibit a wider consonance to a particular inner city perspective or framework of understanding outlined above.

Table 6:16 **Inner City Actors : GOVERNMENT**

	Frequency	Group Percent	Total Percent
Ordinary Councillor	19	20.0	3.3
'Local Department'	16	16.8	2.8
Member of Parliament	15	15.8	2.6
Government Minister	13	13.7	2.3
Senior Councillor	13	13.7	2.3
'Central Department'	13	13.7	2.3
Local Officer	5	5.3	0.9
Opposition Leaders	1	1.0	0.1
Prime Minister	0	0.0	0.0
Total	95	100.0 %	16.6 %

With 16.6 % of all entries this inner city group of

'government' actors has doubled its involvement within inner city news when compared to regional news in general. If this group is further divided along lines of local and central government it can be noted that 53 or 55.8 % of all entries are gained by local politicians and institutions, with 42 or 44.2 % secured by central government. Clearly, while there is a slightly increased preponderance in favour of local politicians throughout the region, central government are still very much involved within inner city news. It can also be noted that despite the fact that ordinary councillors secure more entries than senior councillors and similarly M.P's secure more entries than Government ministers, when one considers the respective entries involved in each case it appears that the slight lead in frequencies cannot disguise the possible operation of an political group hierarchy of access operated within the news which tends to privilege senior government ministers over ordinary M.Ps, senior councillors over ordinary councillors. It can also be maintained that the political entries as a whole, notwithstanding the regional and local concerns of the inner city, privileges central government and politicians to the extent that they only marginally secure less entries than local politicians.

The world of central government and local administration also provides, following 'the police', the second most prominent involvement of such institutional references as 'the home office', or 'the general purposes committee' (30.5 %), where each refers to a specific comment or paraphrased statement as if individually authored. Once again the possible aura of authoritativeness attached to such forms of entry, as factual statements beyond reproach, given their privileged form of entry, is an implication that is not significantly enjoyed by other social groups.

Table 6:17 **Inner City Actors : COMMUNITY VOICE**

	Frequency	Group Percent	Total Percent
Formal Pressure Group	17	37.8	3.0
Informal Pressure Group	9	20.0	1.6
Formal Community Leader	7	15.5	1.2
Community Citizen	6	13.3	1.0
Community Representative	4	8.9	0.7
Informal Community Ldr.	1	2.2	0.2
Pressure Group Other	1	2.2	0.2
	Total 45	100.0 %	7.9 %

Formal pressure groups, that is established, organised and staffed pressure groups have secured the most access while other more loosely organised and essentially voluntary groups have also gained relatively significant group, if overall marginal, regional news entry. From the findings above it appears that formal organised pressure groups are more likely to gain entry within inner city news than informal or voluntary pressure groups, while both are likely to gain more access than completely unorganised individuals who may nonetheless be perceived to be, or claim to be 'representative' of the community.

Inner City Access : Summary Findings

The inner city in its mediated regional news coverage, as has been indicated, is a selective appropriation of some of the concerns, issues and problems which currently define the inner city problematic as a whole. Not surprisingly, an expression of such news interests has been the differential accessing of the range of inner city actors identified as relevant within and across these concerns. However, while significant differences can be found existing between these different social groups to the degree to which they gain or fail to gain access, it has also been noted that within each social group differential involvement has also been afforded to those directly involved.

Although crime news has assumed the most prevalent form of inner city news concern therefore, both the range of 'relevant' actors and their differential forms of entry begins to indicate that simply to be involved within a particular inner city concern is not to guarantee routine access. While the homeless, unemployed and destitute may be considered to be largely excluded by a hierarchy of news interests which tends to privilege crime news, crime news itself can be taken as accessing differentially key crime news actors. More specifically, it has in part at least been suggested that to some extent such different patterns of access can be related to the genre forms accompanying certain types of news. In the case of crime news, for instance, the prevalent and routine forms of crime reporting, appear to largely operate at a highly ritualised level which effectively displaces an array of voices

necessary if wider and contextualising consideration were to be involved. As it is, the peculiar dramaturgical form of crime news in the main eschews direct actor entry and results in the paradox of a drama with both limited script, and largely absented characters.

Other 'key' groups of inner city actors have also been identified as effectively missing within the discursively significant sense of being granted access as a news subject. Here, both the elderly and inner city youth, two generational groups deemed especially disadvantaged within the inner city context have failed to gain notable news entry. However in the case of inner city youth, often referenced as a news concern or object of discussion and undeniably central to contemporary debates about the inner city, the failure to involve this group either directly, or by professional proxy (probation officers, social workers, youth workers etc) can be considered as a critical omission which leaves the way open for other inner city subjects to place their particular and possibly partial construction upon the problems confronting, or posed by inner city youth.

The relative under-representation of the inner city's racial and/or ethnic minority groups can also be taken as limiting the possibility for 'representative' inner city portrayal. With only 8.6 % of all entries secured by Afro-Caribbean and 6.5 % by Asian participants the representative nature of this involvement can be questioned. Now clearly, the fact that such groups may well be under-represented within the hierarchy of social roles and responsibilities is not something which can, nor should be directed solely at the media. However, to the extent that such a hierarchy is perpetually and implicitly endorsed to the extent that privileged access and forms of entry are granted to some, and not others, is something which can be considered as particularly within the domain of media control. To the extent that regional news can and does afford access through its involvement of 'ordinary' people and concerns, these minority groups have found a limited degree of news entry, reflecting wider patterns of social differentiation and inequality.

It has been suggested above that regional news as a species of journalism operates a particular form of 'hierarchy', a

hierarchy of access that in part reflects its particular genre orientation which is predisposed to ordinary and even celebratory concerns. Thus, in tandem with an authority skew underpinned by an objectivist, (positivist) concern with objectivity and facts, also exists a populist (interpretivist) appeal to the 'sense' or experiential 'meaning' of those involved in, or affected by immediate news events.

Here it can be concluded that regional inner city news has provided a particular pattern of inner city actor access and forms of entry which, reflecting the established genre news orientation, forms of news coverage and possible wider institutional dependencies, has significantly privileged certain actors within the sphere of law and order concerns, while other groups, most notably the unemployed, homeless and disadvantaged, offenders and suspects, and inner city youth and black youth especially, have all failed to gain a subject position from which their particular voices could be heard. Moreover the significant omissions of possible professional 'proxy' voices - social workers, probation officers and youth workers - have further compounded such silences, while the general participation of ethnic minority groups within the generality of inner city coverage have also assumed a delimited form of news presence, confined in the main to 'ordinary' subject positions.

III INNER CITY PORTRAYAL AND NEWS FORUMS

The impact upon the coverage of social issues and concerns by the format within which such concerns gain expression has already been briefly considered in so far as three basic or fundamental presentational formats have been identified and charted across the generality of news coverage. Arguably always of immediate concern and relevance the form of presentational arrangements can be deemed to be particularly crucial in the mediation of controversial and socially contested issues. The inner city assumes just such a contested site and is therefore particularly susceptible to the forms of its formal delivery. Concentrating on the news personnel directly involved, the various forms of visual and sound input, and the different forms of accessed entry granted to non-news personnel the diversity of

routine and regular presentational formats can usefully be charted. Interestingly, such formats deserve increased attention in relation to the differing stances or forms of news 'authority' projected. Here attention remains focused, however, on their different formal verbal and visual possibilities in the public examination of the contested issues and concerns of the inner city. The following formats illustrate that regional news employs a wide range of presentational formats all of which may be taken as involving inherent formal limitations and possibilities in the public engagement and dissemination of meaning. Such impacts can be clearly discerned in the portrayal of inner city issues.

Restricted Formats: [Newscaster no inputs, occasional CN Logo]

The most basic and limited presentational format, in terms of accompanying inputs, which has traditionally delivered the news is the standard 'news-desk' format. Sitting behind a news desk the news presenter formally sits reading the news direct to camera from autocue. This can assume different forms but at its most basic, which continues as standard news practice, it involves no visual inputs specifically relating to the item, or accessed voices. The presenter, in this sense can more accurately be described as a newsreader as opposed to a presenter. Typically such news items can be very short (18 seconds or more), and have in the past often been lumped together to form a news-desk slot where a number of news reports are read out in quick succession.

To the extent that no visual references are involved and no outside unmediated voices gain access, the newsroom is in total control of the news item and exercises complete determination over the image of its delivery and verbal track. The news item is absolutely authored by the editorial process, and involves no inputs which may demur from the presented account. Such an item exercises the maximum claim to objectivity and impartiality given that no other visual or verbal claims can possibly question, challenge or contradict the presented news account. To the extent that verbal response may occasionally be involved, this will be selected quotation or paraphrase of the speech of a news protagonist. When related to the finding above concerning the limited array of inner city social actors gaining these

'privileged' sorts of news entry, this format is unlikely to represent the range of interpretative viewpoints which currently organise the inner city discussion.

While no visual images directly relating to the news item itself are present, visual images are of course constantly present whether the formal image of the newsreader perhaps lending a sense of gravitas, or the frenetic backdrop of the newsroom a sense of news 'nowness', or the central Logo a sense of possible corporate identity and institutional authority. Semiotic associations aside, the point here is that verbally and visually such items remain restricted or closed to possible competing sources of meaning and viewpoints.

[Newscaster and Still Voice Over; Reporter: Still, Voice Over]

Developing slightly on the bare minimum of presentational format noted above, photographic images or symbolic cues may be electronically placed in vision behind the newsreaders shoulders or temporarily fill the screen. So, for instance, an image of the scales of justice will simultaneously appear as a crime report or series of crime reports is delivered, a backdrop with an image of police officers or more metonymically an image of a blue lamp for items relating to the police force and so on. Periodically these are revised, updated and changed but all essentially serve to visually locate the report into a news space that is established as a recurrent form of news story or update on a long running news story. A full analysis of this visual component is discussed below in relation to such visual cues deployed across one year of news riot coverage.

In contrast to Barthes'(1987) discussion, far from the written text serving to anchor the polysemous quality of newspaper images in television news terms at least, a case can be made that in fact the relationship is on occasion reversed with visual iconic and symbolic images serving to anchor the verbal tract. It can be strongly suggested that rarely, if at all, could such images permit a situation of relay, when their purpose is to authenticate the verbal track rather than visually expand the narrative. The remarks above refer to the habit of opening a new item with an assigning image appropriate to the type of news story within which it has been situated, whether crime, police story and so on. Where Barthes' ideas do in fact

come into play is later in the report when, having established the basic type of news that is being delivered, a full screen image of an involved protagonist may be presented which is timed to correspond with a particular line of voiced-over commentary. To this extent such images may indeed now be anchored by the verbal commentary, though the mutually reinforcing and supporting relationship between the verbal and the visual line is carefully put in place and, at this essentially iconic level does not, it can be suggested, permit much room for interpretative latitude. Such items remain restricted in the senses noted above.

[Reporter: No inputs/ CN logo]

In earlier programmes (1982-1983), the news desk format was more heavily prominent than in more recent years, and as part of this format a few programmes also included a reporter, introduced within the news-desk format who then delivered similar news items from a more authoritative 'specialist' reporter position. To the extent that the verbal line is opened up to others, this remains restricted to newsroom personnel.

[Reporter, Direct to Camera]

A relatively expanded presentational format which steps outside the news studio involves a reporter who delivers the substance of a news item direct to camera in front of a scene which is in some sense related to the news report. Typically, court reports assume such a routinised pattern with the reporter commenting directly on the proceedings or final outcome of a court case while standing in front of the court entrance. Such background scenes, intrinsically of no special interest again work metonymically by referencing the news subject area involved as well as creating an aura of 'on the spot' or 'hot' news. In fact, on occasions such reports could just as easily be delivered by a news presenter in the studio, but the outside visual dimension is considered as in some measure news enhancing. (one report reviewed in the sample programmes involved a reporter standing outside a Spanish court house, no more interesting than any other court entrance, delivering a piece to camera !) This format appears to have assumed something of a traditional news form and is particularly employed in

certain news subject areas. Its limitations, to the extent that it remains verbally dependent upon the reporter, and visually on a static background scene, in effect places it on a par with the studio based formats discussed above, while creating an impression of 'live' news coverage.

[Newscaster and Film Voice Over]

A more elaborate news format involves moving pictures or ENG video, which plays while the news presenter delivers his or her script. Here the notion of anchorage very much comes to the fore with the verbal commentary effectively being 'endorsed' by the authenticating image seen on film - in fact, of course, frequently a case can be made that far from the visual element providing independent support to the verbal line it is effectively appropriated by the verbal line to render up certain 'meanings'. That is, the increased polysemous potentiality of moving images is often partially closed off by the directing/inviting commentary which suggests that we see and understand the image in a certain way. Interestingly, such constructions are often more readily glimpsed when perhaps through technical hitches the verbal and visual 'endorsement' slips out of synchrony. An item which refers to a number of police officers in fast pursuit of a get-away gang while presenting a film clip of 20 officers on their hands and knees painstakingly carrying out an inch by inch search, is both comical and revealing of the directing force of the verbal line which, in this instance at least is blatantly contradicted.

However, to the extent that a moving visual element is introduced which may or may not successfully be anchored by the commentary this added element begins to open up increased possibilities and provide expanded visual resources in the interpretation of meaning.

[Reporter and Film Voice Over]

The same comments as above apply in this format with the extra distinction that a division of labour is indicated within the newsroom, which may once again perform an enhancing aspect, given that reporters have periodically assumed a 'specialist' role. Direct involvement remains with news personnel however.

[Reporter in View, Film Voice Over]

The inclusion of film of the reporter in film situ, perhaps giving a commentary direct to camera while in pursuit of the news subject possibly adds a further visual dimension, which once again may increase the possibility of visual confirmation or qualification of the verbal script.

Limited Format **[Reporter and Film Interview]**

The news interview is possibly one of the most discursively significant presentational forms in that it provides an opportunity for non-news personnel voices to place their own interpretation upon events in a relatively direct manner. The invitation to see the news item in a particular way is immediately complicated by the formal possibility of rival perspectives which returns the news account to the world of competing and on occasion conflicting social points of view. However, the interview form can itself assume different formats, which provide differing possibilities in the communication of meaning.

The most basic form of interview, here noted as the news format par excellence, is that of the reporter asking a news subject on film a series of questions which elicits a series of answers. To the extent that the film interview more often than not is packaged into a series of edited interview clips, perhaps from more than one interview subject and also provides further visual references the formal possibilities opened up are now expanded and complex both in terms of the visual and verbal lines and their mutual interaction. While the editorial process is arguably still very much in control of the construction and packaging of such an item, it can no longer be maintained that the news account belongs solely to the news presenter or reporter. The news event, to this extent, has become increasingly complicated, potentially contested and intrinsically equivocal to the extent that differing points of view may find a voice.

Given that such interviews are in fact recorded on ENG, the possible interview situations can be varied and arguably of differing enhancing or detracting value to both the status of the news item and, perhaps more importantly, accessed interviewees. Discussions of the 'workers outside the factory

gate - manager behind a polished desk' syndrome have now frequently been discussed though the semiotic reading, being just that is always open to differing interpretations. However, to the extent that interviews on ENG take place outside of the news studio they may afford interviewees different opportunities within familiar settings to secure advantageous staging and inclusion of enhancing props.

One last and important remark concerning this presentational format, is that while outside voices have indeed found a direct presence within the news item, such voices in so far as they converse with each other, are invariably mediated via the reporter and the editing process. A conversation by proxy, in other words, takes place with the dialogue elicited, positioned and counterpointed by the news reporter. To this extent, the discursive domain, if not the individual news accounts, remains firmly within the grasp of the editing process and is not available as an evolving exchange of views but rather can assume the impression of an exchange which is manufactured by the editing process.

This artificiality is important in a number of senses. It inevitably lends itself to a polarisation and opposition of views which may, or may not, have more common ground than is intimated by the juxtaposed and edited ENG clips. It is likely to down-play nuanced differences rather than full-blown oppositions. It effectively allows little or no room for positions to be clarified and exposed within their mutual articulation, as opposed to individually delivered statements. It is possible to maintain that strengths and weaknesses of any one position, or even both positions assuming for the moment that difference is invariably a matter of binary opposition, are more likely to be exposed if the protagonists are permitted to press home counter arguments and defences. Face to face encounters are where differing views can become clarified, qualified or even debunked if the disputants are permitted to evolve and develop their respective positions.

Moreover, in instances where disagreement and conflict are involved in the news item, it is not just the exchange of views that characterises difference at a rational level, but also differences in social position, and power which can on occasion be found within presented attitudes, linguistic markers and the

deployment of different rhetorical strategies. Such differences can become hidden from view, while the news item constructs an apparently rational 'disagreement' which may in fact conceal many of the other levels of difference informing the arena of controversy and difference - not least of which may be the different access to and deployment of social power.

Expansive Formats [Newscaster/Reporter and Studio Interview]

As alluded to above a semiotic reading of the enhancing or detracting contextual attributes found within an interview context, must always remain tentative due to changing significations that are themselves involved in a social process of semiosis. In other words, a large polished oak desk may signify authority and required social deference in one period, or to one particular social group, while in another or to a different social group bureaucratic indifference and illicit social distance. While the props may change from grand offices, replete with wall to wall books to flowered user-friendly offices littered with high-tech the difficulty of pinning down in any definitive sense either the inscribed or the actually taken connotative associations will always be present.

However, to the extent that certain contexts remain infrequently used, and thus when used are more apt to signify heightened 'importance', such interpretations can more readily be advanced. When the context under consideration is the domain of the news programme itself, the news studio, which in recent years has been used infrequently the heightened sense of importance possibly attributed to the interviewee, and relevant news item remains a real possibility. Newscaster and reporter studio interviews can thus usefully be separated from film interviews in the sense of enhanced importance noted above.

However, more importantly for present purposes a news studio interview is invariably live, that is immediate and consequently un-edited. The flow of dialogue therefore remains intact, chronologically delivered and able to develop and expand upon previous points and positions already put in place. This considerably expands the possibility of discursive development which may or may not be maximised upon by an interviewee. Interviewees of course, remain dependent upon the interviewer's questions and in varying degrees remain entrapped within the

line of questioning pursued, as well as the role of an interviewee who is someone who answers questions but who is not normally permitted to develop a point or an argument by asking and pursuing questions of others. Nonetheless, skills in agenda setting, shifting, and turn-taking, as well as more rhetorically based competences permit the interviewee to develop an argument and put in place a position at some length and in a manner which the edited film interview does not.

[Newscaster/Reporter: Film, Group Interview and Discussion]

While the possibilities of engagement and discursive development are generally considerably increased (though an argument can be made simultaneously in one sense for their constriction) by providing a presentational format which permits a group interview and/or discussion, the fact remains that if carried out on ENG such dialogue may be severely edited with the consequent lose of conversational completeness and integrity - often vital for the full appreciation of the various positions involved and general embeddedness of remarks made. Similar limitations can be identified as already addressed in regard to the presentational formats which involve non-live interviews.

However, to the extent that group interviews are chaired by a reporter with a list of prepared questions which are asked of individual group members the idea of a 'group interview' may be a misnomer. Constrained into seriality, the possibilities of such an interview may afford little more opportunity for cross talk, that is direct dialogue between participants, than a succession of individual interviews. What opportunity may be presented is for interviewees who can be considered as group members in that they share a common purpose or point of view, to follow up on previous questions and responses involving other group members. If a sense of coherence and common purpose defines the group in question, increased possibilities for discursive engagement may be won, when contrasted to a divided or individuated group which does not share such characteristics.

Chaired discussions considerably unleash the possibilities for cross-talk and independent agenda shifts or even substantive agenda setting. However, crucially impacting upon such possibilities will be such arrangements as seating positions, proximity to microphones and the camera's field of vision, the

size of the group, the degree of identity shared by the group and inter-group alliances and allegiances. To what extent such presentational formats have been involved in regional news inner city items and the degree of cross-talk elicited or discouraged will form an interesting focus because this can be considered in relative terms one of the most expanded and open possibilities afforded within news presentational formats.

[Newscaster/Reporter: Studio Group Interview and Discussion]

As already noted, the apparent gain in discursive possibilities unleashed by the involvement of interviewees, and group interviews particularly, is nonetheless potentially diminished by the editing process which effectively disarticulates the integrity of dialogue flow and completeness, in order to selectively extract and rearrange 'sound bites' into the final packaged arrangement. This may or may not maintain the 'sense' of the recorded dialogue, but it unavoidably detracts from its discursive development and contextual embeddedness within which the development and exchange of meaning is intimately related, while also remaining dependent upon the subjective imposition and interpretive editing of others.

However, the live studio discussion and group interview maximises on all the potential benefits already noted. It also secures the advantages of the individual live interview with respect to discursive development and conversational integrity which permits an extended dialogue both referencing established positions already set in place, and indicating points for future conversational flow without fear of subsequent editorial cuts and rearrangement. This format, benefiting from studio enhancing characteristics, live and hence integral and complete dialogue, multiple interviewees and possibility of independent cross-talk and agenda-shifts can be conceived as one of the most open forms of presentational format. If the discursive opportunities of the format are maximised then the array of points of view presented, possibility of independent cross-talk and sustained development of dialogue and critique all combine to effectively minimise the control and authored packaging that inhere within most types of news format.

[Direct 'Authored' Presentations]

On occasions it has been noted how the role of the presenter, reporter or reporter/chairperson has completely given way to the accessing of non-news personnel who have then proceeded to address the audience directly, without any mediating presence of a reporter or presenter. This, to the extent that logically it takes one step further than the most open of formats already discussed, indicates that in practical terms such independent and authored pieces are both practicable and precedented. However, the point here is that to the extent that such formats have already occasionally been employed there is no logical reason for not considering such a format as yet another presentational format which unleashes differing discursive possibilities.

These then are the main presentational formats identified within regional news programming and the following indicates their respective frequencies across the coverage of the inner city.

Table 6:18 **Inner City News Forums**

Format	Frequency	Percent	
Reporter & Film Interview	173	48.5	Limited Format (48.5)
Newscaster & Film Voice Over	75	21.0	
Newscaster & Still Voice Over	38	10.6	
Newscaster & Central Logo	36	10.1	
Reporter & Film Voice Over	14	3.9	Restricted Formats (49.0)
Reporter, Film In View	8	2.2	
Reporter Direct to Camera	3	0.8	
Reporter & Still Voice Over	1	0.3	
Reporter No Inputs Central Logo	0	0.0	
Newscaster/Reporter Studio Interview	8	2.2	
Reporter & Film Group Interview	1	0.3	Expansive Formats (2.5)
Newscaster/Reporter Studio Discussion	0	0.0	
Direct Presentation	0	0.0	
Total	357	100.0 %	

[Nb. Each of the above indicate the array of 'pure' presentational formats found across regional news programming. On occasion two or more forms can be combined or packaged into more complex arrangements. However, the above represent the 'highest' or most open formats that characterise each item across the sample period. Thus, if a studio discussion item also included a news desk report, the item would be treated as a discussion, because this is deemed for the reasons given above, to offer increased formal possibilities for the accessing of outside voices and engaged inner city dialogue and debate.]

From the table above it is apparent, in general accordance with the findings for the regional news form as a whole, that the reporter and film interview represents the news form par

excellence with nearly half of all items assuming this 'limited' format. However, nearly half of all inner city items have been delivered in the 'restricted' formats noted above, which permit no direct participation by outside inner city voices and are therefore entirely dependent upon the voice of the news account itself as constructed and delivered by the editorial process. As for the identified expansive formats found across the generality of regional news programming, though always within a strict minority (3.9 %), these have featured highly infrequently, with direct presentation formats, and studio discussions finding no involvement across the inner city sample at all.

The presentation of the issues and concerns of the inner city has thus, notwithstanding its essentially contested nature and vying social viewpoints, been afforded news coverage which in the main relies either upon 'restricted' or 'limited' formats, both of which remain firmly within the editorial control and packaging of the news process. The restricted formats allow no direct participation by outside inner city voices, though permitting the 'privileged' forms of entry, (attributed statement and quotation), which, as indicated above are in the main confined to the police, court personnel and senior politicians. The limited format though permitting the participation of outside voices does not allow for the direct exchange and relatively unmediated development of social viewpoints. The inner city, in other words, has failed to gain a public forum in which the relatively direct involvement of competing social viewpoints has found an opportunity to advance and defend particular interpretative points of view. Though certain 'key' actors, and predominant themes have been identified as differentially present throughout the news presentation of the inner city, the 'forums' delivering such treatments have not only not given equal voice to the key positions in play they have also failed to provided an opportunity for such points of view to be open to public examination and challenge.

IV THE NEWS GENRE AND THE MEDIATION OF THE INNER CITY

As has already become apparent, the genre of regional news has a character and form of its own which is expressed in and

through its news coverage. Thus, it has been indicated how the regional news programme is characterised by a limited number of potential item slots each positioned and juxtaposed within a particular modulation of perennial regional news subjects. These news subjects, selectively appropriated and inflected according to established news relevances has tended to privilege certain types of news subject and journalistic inflexion or treatment. Most clearly this is expressed within the heady mix of regional crime and human interest stories, to the relative detriment of other possible areas of news interest.

Moreover, as indicated by a number of the findings discussed above, this human interest orientation also impacts upon both news subjects and the array of social actors gaining entry, or access within the news treatment. Making a fundamental distinction between those who are the object of news coverage or treatment, and those permitted access as news subjects it has been seen how the range of social actors involved within regional news, and the array of forms of entry begin to further establish something of the specificity of the regional news genre. The range of social groups securing access is not confined exclusively to political and economic elites but rather encompasses a broad span of social groups. While this 'span' cannot in any sense be taken as 'representative' of all the major groups and interest positions within society, it does however indicate that regional news is not closed to many social groups and individuals who can be regarded as outside formal hierarchies of social power. Such access, it has been suggested, in part reflects both a populist orientation and local concern which, inscribed into the ideology of regional television news, also expresses an underpinning set of news epistemologies deeply implicated in the programme stance.

These basic findings have been further discussed and refined in connection with the coverage and portrayal of the inner city. Thus, to return to one fundamental aspect of the regional news genre, 'appropriate subject matter', it has been observed that inner city news also exhibits a hierarchy and pattern of news subject areas which address a number of inner city themes. Crime news specifically, and general concerns of law and order have clearly dominated such portrayal while other themes, though of identified relevance to the public debate and discussion

surrounding the inner city have failed to gain consistent, or in some instances any news attention. Local community politics, and the politics of community-local administration involvement and participation, as well as issues concerning police accountability and inner city police practices, inner city unemployment and, with minor exceptions, concerns of racial disadvantage have all secured strictly marginal news attention, if gaining any presentation at all.

Moreover, if the 'stance' of regional news programmes gains expression not only through its evident patterns of subject matter but also its projected strategies of 'knowing' which includes the accessing of both authority figures and social elites as well as 'ordinary' people with one group of actors in the main articulating 'factually based', expert or professionally acknowledged opinion and interpretation, the other frequently expressing individually based and experiential accounts, again it has been observed how such general genre characteristics have impacted upon the hierarchy of access and participation found across inner city news treatments. Close attention to the various social groups of immediate relevance to the concerns, issues and problems surrounding the inner city has revealed that significant absences have characterised this news portrayal, effectively silencing the voices and possible alternative perspectives advanced in relation to the inner city. More specifically, while some 'key' inner city groups have gained news coverage but failed to gain a subject position from which to voice their own concerns, others have failed to gain a voice both as an object of news interest and as a subject placing accounts and interpretations within the public domain.

Attending to one particularly crucial aspect relating to the regional news 'mode of formal composition', the variety of presentational formats deployed across the coverage of the inner city have been found to provide a delimited forum for the public participation and exchange of social viewpoints surrounding the inner city. With almost half of all formats confined to 'restricted' forms permitting no direct participation by outside voices, though occasionally providing a form of 'privileged' entry (attributed statement, quotation) confined mainly to the police, courts and, occasionally, politicians, the diversity and contested nature of perspectives surrounding the inner city has

not found a public forum in such news formats. Though 'limited' forms comprise just under half of all remaining formats, again the forum can be considered highly 'packaged' and has not permitted the direct, relatively unmediated exchange of viewpoints. Finally, the strict minority of 'expansive' formats have, in terms of inner city portrayal, eschewed some of the more open forms occasionally found across regional programming as a whole (direct presentations, studio group discussion/ interviews) and largely comprised individual studio interviews.

Moreover, on repeated occasions throughout the discussion in this and the preceding chapter it has been observed how frequently news items have tended to individualise and privatise inner city concerns of wider collective and public importance. This characteristic of the regional news genre can usefully be subjected to a more quantitative investigation to determine to what extent such inflexions have helped structure inner city portrayal in general. A case can also be made that if such features are indeed present across the inner city portrayal, the different interpretative schemas may find differential support and sustenance within these news forms. It will be remembered that the discussion in chapter one observed how competing interpretative schemas advanced in relation to social violence and recent inner city riots have placed differing degrees of explanatory emphasis upon individual responsibility, informing context and social conditions, and wider societal structure. In addition, differing temporal emphases have also been discerned across these conservative, liberal and radical discourses. While the present for one perspective is apt to be approached from a perspective seeking a continuity with the traditions of the past, in another current events are seen as an indication for the need for evolutionary reform and development, while yet a third approach is inclined to regard the present as both a political and social condensation of the past containing the seeds for a radical intervention to transform the future.

To what extent individual and collective as well as private and public inflexions inform the presentation of inner city issues and concerns as well as involving the interpretative resources of context, background, history and future are all of germane interest to considerations of impacting properties of the medium. This aspect of the 'mode of formal composition'

situated within the internal structure of individual news stories is deemed of direct relevance to the extent that different inner city interpretative schemas can be differentially advantaged or disadvantaged by such structures. In the case of crime news, for instance, it was suggested that the standardised form of news coverage tending to focus upon a continuous stream of individual cases of crime, positing the individual as both the source and culpable agent of crime, though supportive to a conservative understanding of inner city crime, and crime in general, does not provide interpretative resources which are consonant to either the contextual pursuit of individual and social 'conditions' identified as central to a liberal account of inner city crime and the problems of the inner city in general, much less the broader historical and societal structures addressed by the radical account and interpretation of the inner city.

On all these fronts, the informing discourse structure attending regional inner city news stories and the individual and 'privatised' inflexion placed upon news stories, though frequently referenced above when reviewing general regional news and inner city news items deserves further quantitative exploration if such findings are to be firmly established. The following discussion charts in more detail these particular aspects of inner city coverage and provides further indication of the specificity of the regional news genre and its impact upon the coverage and portrayal of the inner city and the interpretative resources and accounts finally placed within the public domain.

The Regional News Genre: Story Structure and Inflexion

At a descriptive level regional news can be approached as any other type of established news form. Displaying regular patterns and continuities characterising other news forms as well as particular patterns and forms which help differentiate the specificity of regional television news, such routine characteristics are open to quantitative investigation and analysis. It has been maintained above that different presentational formats impact quite directly upon the formal possibilities of inner city portrayal found within inner city

news to the extent that such arrangements variously restrict or expand the possibility of visual and verbal engagement of inner city positions found across the range of views in play. Here the focus of attention shifts to the recurrent and internal structures of the regional news story itself. Such structures, it can be suggested, differentially provide sustenance and support, or alternatively, implicit disconfirmation or even denial, of particular interpretative perspectives advanced in relation to the inner city. This discussion begins to identify some of the characteristic forms of a regional news story, approached as a combination of particular elements or discourse structure before this is pursued in relation to the observations concerning the journalistic practice of 'privatising' issues of public concern.

Concentrating upon the formal arrangements of elements which together comprise a regional television news story, it quickly becomes apparent that certain patterns emerge which all combine to impact upon inner city coverage. These patterns are here approached at a descriptive level, where such are sought to impact upon the sufficiency of inner city reporting. Deemed to be insufficiently accounted for if remaining simply at this descriptive level however, such general findings will later be returned to a wider discussion and analysis of the regional news genre and its daily reproduction by news journalists.

Following the recent work by Van Dijk on the hypothetical structure of a news schema, the following news schema was found instructive when approaching regional news stories.

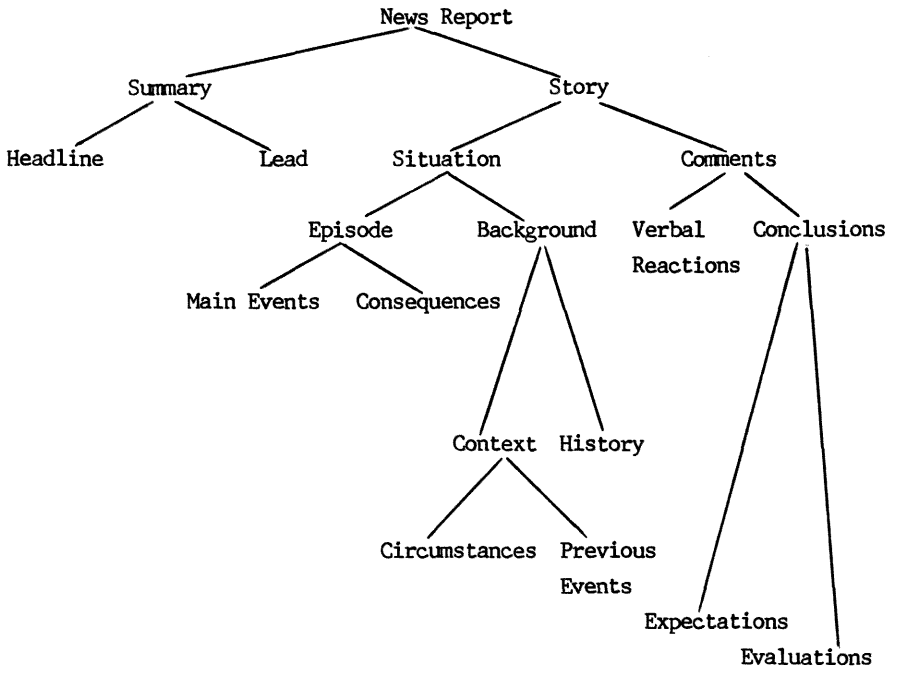


Figure 6:19 **Hypothetical Structure of a News Schema** **(Van Dijk, 1988)**

Van Dijk's schema is useful in that it identifies a number of recurrent elements typically found within many news stories. There are however inherent risks to such an approach, not least of which is the implied expectation that many, most or all news stories can best be approached as an approximation of such an arrangement of discourse elements, and secondly that all news stories, no matter the medium are likely to assume such a similar form. Van Dijk's own examples come from newspapers, and the 'quality' newspapers in particular. The present study, though finding the basic schema above attractive has found it necessary to modify and simplify the schema in order that it can more readily approximate the specificity of regional television news stories, while also proceeding to develop and refine the schema in a manner which relates directly to a principal research concern noted above.

As will be demonstrated the highly simplified or reduced schemata involved within regional television news stories begins to indicate something of the specificity of this news form when

compared to others, say, 'quality' national press. The following analysis also demonstrates that a form of discourse structure analysis need not necessarily be restricted to an investigation of a small sample of news reports.

Regional News Genre: Structures of Discourse

The main elements found to regularly inform regional television news stories can be briefly described as follows.
Lead - Almost without exception, every news story is prefaced by a lead statement, this essentially assumes the role of both introduction and summary advancing the 'essential' story . Unlike newspapers television news of course, does not usually involve a Headline, though for selected stories as described above both programme promos and teases effectively act as verbal and visual headlines. However, if anything the lead within regional news programmes is in the main more prominent given its institutionalised presentational division, with the news desk often introducing a news story in lead form, before handing over to another reporter or film report to continue the presentation.

The point here however, at the level of the individual story schemata, is that a lead invariably prefaces an item no matter the presentational delivery. Interestingly, while Barthes has referred with some insight to the anchoring role that written text can play in pinning down the potentially polysemous quality of photographs, a case could be made that a news lead, or headline equivalent (tease, promo) also seeks to locate what the 'story' is essentially about before embarking upon its particular elaboration. In this sense, a news lead advancing in encapsulated propositional form the 'essential' story, provides a directing account which invites the viewer to see 'what the story is about', before reiterating, elaborating and essentially confirming the account already put in place.
Main Event - In Van Dijk's schema the news story is then further subdivided into situation and comments, each with its own further subdivisions. For present purposes it was found that the element of 'main event' was sufficient to capture the central plank of most news items, while the category of Consequence, was also deemed adequate to the news stories reviewed. In other words, the relatively complex subdivision of a story situation

into an episode, which was then further divided into main event and consequence was found to be unnecessary. Most television regional news stories simply involve one 'main event' or focal point for the news story and do not proceed to unleash a series of interconnected events, related to an overall situation. The 'main event' in effect is the starting point, and end point of most regional television news items with little further elaboration.

Consequence - The element of consequence captures those results or reactions which are related or responsive to the main event. Frequently, the element of consequence can imply a causal relationship which may be spurious, or at least partial in terms of the complexity of relationships involved. Nonetheless, to the extent that a main event is invariably accompanied by a postulated consequence, this is a fundamental element to the regional news discourse structure.

Background - The element of 'background' was interpreted in the context of regional news as providing further information which would help situate the main event within a wider understanding, that is wider context.

Context - This element was taken to indicate further information of direct and immediate relevance to the main event, while background was taken to involve a wider informing relevance. Essentially context would furnish immediate details of circumstance, place and people for instance while background would begin to provide detail of a wider framework within which explanation might begin to proceed in relation to the main event.

History - History provides a specific form of background, too distanced or remote to be considered immediate context, in combination with background it begins to situate the main event within a wider temporal framework or perspective, which may also begin to help locate the main event within a framework of explanation. The further categories of 'circumstances' and 'previous events' deemed useful by van Dijk were found in the case of regional television news to be accommodated by background, context and history. Once again, the relatively compressed and simplified form of regional news stories finds expression in these reduced structures.

Verbal Reactions - Clearly, as already suggested by reference to

a number of other characteristic forms of regional television news the inclusion of verbal reactions within a news schema is likely to be highly appropriate. Indeed, verbal reaction is perhaps quintessentially what a news story is all about. A main event is deemed newsworthy, and thereafter newsroom and/or other reaction constitutes the principal 'stuff' of the news account. Verbal reaction in this instance was confined obviously to outside, or non-news personnel involvement. The wider case that all news is inherently 'verbal reaction' was not allowed to impede this more localised discussion.

Expectations - Under the element comments, subdivided into conclusions and then further subdivided into expectations and evaluations Van Dijk identifies two news schemata which begin to appraise the main event and consequences, one by advancing expectations as to future developments, and the other advancing explicit comments concerning the 'significance' of the news event. While history and background point to a past and possible antecedents informing the main event, clearly expectation points to the possibility of future consequences, reactions and developments. That is the event becomes situated within time.

Evaluation - This element as described above indicates explicit comment which seeks to situate the significance or wider meaning of the event and/or consequence forming the focal point of the news item. Clearly a case can always be made that the very selection, prioritisation and formal arrangements of delivery, not to mention accessed spokespeople all combine to imbue a news story with an evaluative undercurrent. Here however, the interest is with the explicit and direct involvement of evaluation advanced from within the news item itself.

With these elicited regional news discourse elements the inner city sample of 357 separate news items was subjected to a quantitative review. The findings were as follows.

Table 6:20 News Discourse Structure

Element	Frequency	Percent
LEAD	- 355	99.4
MAIN EVENT	- 357	100.0
CONSEQUENCE	- 209	58.5
BACKGROUND	- 218	61.1
CONTEXT	- 351	98.3
HISTORY	- 15	4.2
VERBAL REACTION	- 243	68.1
EXPECTATION	- 30	8.4
EVALUATION	- 57	16.0
Total Items	- 357	

The table above begins to indicate something of the recurrent pattern of inner city news stories specifically, and regional news stories generally. If each of the 357 inner city items is subjected to a detailed scrutiny where the various discourse elements are noted as either present or absent, it is apparent that though elements of lead, main event, context and verbal reactions are generally found across the sample items, background and consequence are less pronounced while remaining elements of evaluation, expectation and history are rarely present. At this general level, it can be suggested that the typical regional news story does not embody many of the interpretative resources that would be required by either a liberal(contextual) or radical(structural) interpretative inner city perspective. In so far as a typical news story reports an 'event' and identifies principal actors the possibility that both dimensions of wider context and/or social structure as well as temporal considerations of past antecedents and future prospects remain undisclosed is daily enacted across innumerable news reports. It can be suggested moreover, that the interpretative resources provided typically exhibit a consonance to a conservative interpretative schema. Where elements of background, history and context are involved rarely, if at all, do such elements assume the form that either liberal or radical accounts would invoke. Frequently merely referencing details of context or background, the main event typically exists in resplendent isolation untrammelled by considerations of wider context or process.

Now, of course, it can be maintained that this merely reflects established canons of journalistic practice seeking to report events 'out there' and 'the facts of the matter', the

point here is that though rarely are explicit evaluative comments advanced by news personnel, the fact remains that at the level of interpretative resource such items remain consonant with a particular interpretative schema and, by default, do not furnish similar resources for competing inner city interpretative frameworks.

In summary it has been suggested that regional news stories do indeed involve a recurrent discourse structure with a recognisable pattern of presences and absences. While it cannot be suggested that such a pattern will always be immediately recognised within each and every news story, the recurrent and basic elements are relatively clear. An example of a news story, selected at random from the sample of stories reviewed can serve to illustrate something of a typical news schema.

Example of a Regional News Schema

a) "A woman has been put on probation for three years after she admitted attempting to kill her children and kill herself.
b) Sharvaz Begin from Handsworth in Birmingham took tranquillisers and gave some to her sons who are two and six years old, then she turned on the gas fire and cooker.
c) Birmingham Crown court heard that Mrs Begin was emotionally disturbed after problems with her lover.
d) The judge Mr Justin Tucker said, he didn't want to punish her but wanted to ensure that the family could be happily united later.
e) He placed an interim care order on the children."

This news story in fact contains a number of discourse elements which are not always present within a majority of crime reports, however it may be regarded as 'representative' of some of the elements that characterise news reports in general. Thus, it is noticeable that the opening statement effectively summarizes the news account which follows. The lead (a) in this instance, directs the viewer that the story is principally about a woman who, after attempting to kill her children, has been put on probation. The opening statement (a) also includes the main event(b), which in this instance can be taken as the attempt to kill her children, while the consequence may be inferred as the court case and verdict. The main event, is then reiterated with further contextual detail and elaboration (b) while the general consequence already stipulated within the lead is also further elaborated (d,e). A degree of background information (c) is also presented to the extent that a possible informing relationship is referenced which also infers a possible explanatory framework

for the main event - an unhappy personal relationship. However, personal biographical detail or other 'historical' detail is omitted in this instance which may have provided further indication as to why this woman attempted to kill herself and her children: has she for instance suffered a past history of emotional disturbance, and how if at all is this to be accounted for either in biographical or perhaps wider contextual terms ? Verbal reaction is confined to the attributed remarks of the Judge (d) while expectation and evaluation at an explicit level of news comment is also eschewed.

This then, represents in fairly direct terms some of the basic constituent discourse elements within this news account. As can be seen, when compared to 'serious' newspaper stories, the relatively simple construction and succinctness of prose becomes evident. Indeed, in fact this particular crime/court report provides considerably more information than many of the crime stories reviewed. Consider the following, not untypical instance, for example.

Example of A Crime Story Schema

a) A man's appeared in court after amphetamines were seized from a factory at Hockly, Birmingham yesterday.
b) Michel Moore, from Edgbaston, is charged with producing and supplying the drug.
c) He was remanded in custody.

Here we find a typically compressed and simplified regional inner city news story discourse structure. The opening statement or lead (a) summarizes the main event and consequence(b,c), while (b) provides further contextual detail and background information, and again no historical/ biographical detail is furnished which could help to situate the main event(b) and consequence(c) within a wider explanatory/interpretative frame. Verbal reaction is also not included, while expectation and evaluation are also eschewed. This thirteen second news item delivers a crime/court report with the barest of information.

News Discourse Structure: the Privatising of the Public Sphere

In an earlier examination of some of the basic and defining characteristics of the regional news genre it was noticed how both through the selective appropriation of certain news

subjects and their subsequent journalistic inflexion the private world of home, family, leisure and consumerism was privileged, while a privatised appeal was also involved in many of the 'hard' news stories discernibly situated within and about the public world of formal power, control and collective decision making. Developing upon this basic finding it is instructive to pursue this idea in regard to the inner city coverage, and inquire to what extent such an orientation may inform the different discourse elements already seen to characterise the regional news genre.

If each of the elements discussed above is further subjected to a refined focus, to the extent that they involve reference to either individual or collective, and private or public circumstances and concerns an increased awareness of the specificity of inner city news coverage is gained which also expresses something of the characteristic forms of the regional news genre. If the respective elements of a regional news schema are considered in these terms, a lead for instance may reference an individual event, a public event or an event which is both within the private and public domains; similarly consequences may refer to individual or private repercussions/reactions or alternatively public reactions and responses or both. Background may involve a wider societal/cultural context or individual set of circumstances while history can either situate such background information within a wider past context or individual biography. Verbal reactions can discernibly be reflecting on individual or private events, and voiced from such an individual capacity, or they may concern public events and happenings and be voiced from a recognised position of public responsibility and authority. Evaluations and expectations can reference such events and consequences as of public or private interest, with future implications similarly separated. Clearly, such distinctions may on occasion conjoin within one element, or repetitions of the same element within one story may provide both public and private reference and appeal. On this basis each of the sample items was scrutinised in the manner of the above, and then a further distinction was introduced which located each element, if present, within either the private, the public, or both worlds. The following findings result.

Table 6:21 The Privatisation of the Public Sphere

Element	PUBLIC/COLLECTIVE		PRIVATE/INDIVIDUAL	
LEAD	175	49.0	218	61.1
MAIN EVENT	170	47.6	224	62.7
CONSEQUENCE	78	21.8	148	41.5
BACKGROUND	105	29.4	128	35.9
CONTEXT	160	44.8	236	66.1
HISTORY	8	2.2	6	1.7
VERBAL REACTION	168	47.1	174	48.7
EXPECTATION	24	6.7	7	2.0
EVALUATION	29	8.1	29	8.1

Total Items - 357

The table above, in fairly stark quantitative fashion, begins to indicate that in terms of the basic regional news discourse elements characterising inner city items, there is a discernible skew towards the private sphere. Hence, it can be noted that less than half of all inner city leads, the essential indication of 'what the story is about' references the public sphere, while more than three fifths of inner city news stories explicitly privilege the private domain. Roughly the same proportions also characterise the main event, or focal point of the news story.

The element of consequence, is nearly double that which occurs within the public sphere compared to the private, while the important and potentially informing explanatory element of background is also skewed towards the private sphere - on those 61.8 % of occasions when background information is included, it is found that less than 30 % of all inclusions involve public/collective references, while just under 36 % reference the private/individual sphere.

Context or immediate detail and circumstances are also skewed towards the private sphere, notwithstanding the generalised experiences and conditions that characterise the issues and concerns of the inner city. In the strict minority of stories which involve an element of history, the public sphere marginally secures more reference than the private or personal/biographical equivalent. Similarly, verbal reactions are almost on a par, with public and private references each appearing within just under half of all inner city items. Thus, notwithstanding the privatised orientation discerned at the levels above, it would appear that verbal response is elicited which references wider public concerns, at least as often as

private verbal references. Interestingly, expectations contrary to the general finding above, in the minority of cases when included at all, are more likely to be involved in terms of public events and happenings than private, while explicit evaluative comments always within a minority are also found to be on a par. The general orientation, however, remains clear and in tandem with the instances previously reviewed above indicates that the genre of regional news exhibits a strong tendency, at the level of subject interests and journalistic inflexion to 'privatise the public sphere'. As a pronounced tendency however, this feature of the regional news genre does not always dominate as the two example offered below indicate.

Example One: The Public Sphere

a) "Policemen in Warwickshire are to get extra protection in case they are called out on riot duty.
b) They will be padded up with special sporting gear like footballers' shinpads and cricketers' boxes that protect the groin.
c) The force has bought one hundred and fifty of each after officers helping out at last summer's rioting complained they didn't have enough protection."

Here we find that a news story is principally in, and about the public sphere. The discourse elements of lead (a) clearly situate the essential story as the public institution of a police force about to get protective clothing, while the main event (a)(b)(c) receives further elaboration and contextual detail(b)(c) all relating to this public event. While the element of consequence, whether in public or private form is essentially absent within this news story, background detail is furnished which supplies an inferred explanatory framework (c) which can account for the main event, namely involvement within the public event of a riot. Verbal reactions in response to this event 'the introduction of protective police clothing' is absent, as are evaluative comments and expectations. This item can therefore be seen to be situated within and about the public sphere and this is reflected throughout its discourse elements.

Example Two: The Private Sphere

a) "A Sikh has been awarded damages against a golf club for racial discrimination.
b) The Wrekin Golf Club in Shropshire must pay one hundred and fifty pounds to Mr.Pranjit Singh.
c) He'd been refused membership and today a court ruled that it was because of his colour.
d) They've ordered the club to think again."

Here we find encapsulated in lead form (a) an individual story concerning the damages paid to a man following a case of racial discrimination. The main event (c) is again elaborated in individual terms, while further detail and context (c) and consequence(a)(b)(d), all posit the item as 'about' this individual case and circumstance. Background information (c) is also provided which postulates an inferred and interesting causal relation namely 'the man's colour', as opposed to the club's racial discrimination, though this was stipulated at the outset. The unfortunate use of language apart, the background information thus provided (c) refers to the circumstance of this individual case as does the court's ruling (b)(d) which positions the element of consequence in individual terms relating to Mr Singh. This item, omitting verbal reaction, history or biography, and explicit expectation and evaluation, essentially 'privatises' the collective and public concern of racial discrimination by consistently treating the story as about an individual event and consequence. The initial lead, in this instance typically positions the following item in terms which inform as to what the story is about, and by definition what it is not about. Thus, the story as indicated is not about racial discrimination, its roots, collective experience or indeed judicial response, rather this is a story about the private individual Mr Singh and his award of £150.00.

Further examples could be provided from the 357 items reviewed which, often in more elaborate forms involve both private and public aspects within their respective schemas of discourse elements. The point already suggested from the overview of the sample of inner city items which noted the 'privatised' inflexion of much inner city related news, has received further confirmation from this quantitative analysis. It can also be suggested that this limited form of discourse structure provides a degree of consonance to the conservative discourse with its emphasis upon the immediacy or effects of

news happenings, positing the individual as both responsible and the prime mover of events. Considerations of consequence, background and history, three fundamental components to any discourse which seeks to situate a particular news story within a wider temporal and processual interpretation, have tended in the majority of cases to be absent or else assume an individual/private focus. Once again, it can be suggested that in so far as news accounts tend to focus upon isolated events, and provide at least a degree of contextualisation but focused in regard to individual or 'private' circumstance, then so is a consonance of news interest advanced which is of support to a conservative understanding of the social world, while the liberal pursuit of informing conditions, and the radical pursuit of wider historical and societal inegalitarian structures appear to be disadvantaged by such inner city news treatments.

In conclusion it can be maintained that not only has the range of inner city themes portrayed by regional news tended to principally concern issues of crime, criminality and general law and order, concerns found at the core of conservative inner city perspectives, but so too has the form of crime portrayal and other inner city themes tended to 'privatise' such concerns by attending to individual cases or circumstances while invariably affording little if any opportunity to the social, collective and societal nature of the issues and concerns focused within the news account. The integral elements of background, context and history which provide the necessary interpretative supports to both liberal and radical accounts and interpretations advanced towards the inner city, when present at all have tended to assume an individualised expression running counter to the collective and shared 'conditions' posited within liberal accounts, while definitely displacing radical presumptions seeking to situate the identified inner city concerns within a considerably expanded and historically informed, structural framework. With these final observations upon the impact of the regional news genre on inner city portrayal and the interpretative accounts and resources placed within the public domain this chapter comes to an end.

Chapter Seven

REGIONAL NEWS AND THE MEDIATION OF INNER CITY RIOTS

The previous two chapters have examined, in some detail, the characteristic forms of the regional news genre and its portrayal of the inner city over an extended period of time. Armed with an overview of the regular and routine news forms informing this regional programme's coverage of the inner city the discussion can now turn to a detailed examination and analysis of the public mediation of an important inner city phenomenon: inner city riots. It is these events, perhaps more than any other, that has recently placed the inner city on the public agenda. Exactly how such events have been portrayed and what interpretative resources and accounts have been made publicly available over an extended period of time and by whom, is therefore of central interest to this project. This chapter takes one particular disturbance which, in terms of loss of life, substantial property destruction and damage as well as subsequent political interventions and general media interest can be considered as one of the most serious and prominent outbreaks of inner city disorder witnessed in the 1980's. This chapter seeks to indicate firstly, something of the socio-economic profile of the inner city ward of Handsworth and adjacent districts before proceeding to examine in detail the portrayal of the 1985 'Handsworth Riots'.

As the term 'Handsworth Riots' may already suggest, lexical terms far from simply referencing something, may also refer to a particular framework of interpretation and understanding. Indeed, given the essentially contested terrain of the inner city riots, it is not surprising that the various keywords deployed should themselves be the subject of dispute. The very fact that an array of competing terms are available indicates that a social contest over meaning is underway which can usefully be explored in terms of its mediated aspect. Though the subject of analysis such terms must also be deployed in carrying out the analyses below, a brief justification of the terms used in this study and their exact status is therefore required at the outset.

The term 'riot' invariably tends to position such an

occurrence in terms of an 'event'. This, in part, has informed other discourses sensitised to the obfuscating force of language, which in contrast seek to establish the reality of a 'riot' as in fact an outcome of wider and historically established social processes. While such positions have tended to forget the historical and in a sense 'respectable' tradition of protest and dissent where 'bargaining by riot' has been perceived as a legitimate expression of social grievances, the possible illegal connotations associated with the term 'riot' and relatedly 'rioter' cannot be entirely discounted. However, in current usage it can be suggested that the terms 'riot' and 'rioter' need not necessarily be taken as indicating a criminal label. That is, these terms are deemed to provide at least a degree of discursive ambiguity and cannot therefore in and of themselves be taken as discursively partisan. These terms will tend to be used throughout the following discussions without implying any necessary commitment to conservative, liberal or radical interpretative perspectives.

Nonetheless, the felt need by some to mark a shift in interpretative framework has resulted in the use of competing 'riot' lexical terms. Thus, 'rebellion' can be seen as a lexical solution to what is perceived as the marginalising, or even delegitimating effects of 'riot', while 'disorder' or 'disturbance' though involving a sense of the breakdown of law and order, appear to leave a question mark over the degree to which such 'breakdowns' can be accounted for as the result of criminal activities or perhaps wider social forces and conditions. For some, then, whereas the term 'riot' positions the event of disorder as a 'problem' for the forces of law and order, in that it carries connotations of purposeless mob behaviour confronting the agencies of order; it can be maintained that 'rebellion' shifts the semantic field to that of the purposeful action of a united group, who, reacting against an oppressive social order and those agencies instrumental in enforcing such an order, collectively 'react' against the 'problem' which is perceived to be an illegitimate state of social exclusion and injustice. In many respects this response can be seen as reversing the semantic field invoked by conservative understandings of 'riot'. As even a cursory account of the terms 'riot/rebellion/disorder/disturbance have begun to

suggest the choice of terms can often bring along a wider framework of accompanying ideological baggage.

To return to the stages of riot portrayal analysis pursued across this chapter, following a brief overview of the characteristic forms of this presentation in terms of inner city actor access and presentational formats deployed, the first principal analysis therefore quantitatively examines many of the 'keywords' advanced in relation to the so-called 'Handsworth riots' across a full year of riot and follow-up riot reports. As well as furnishing suggestive insights into the repertoire of interpretative schemas deployed across this portrayal, this first stage of analysis supplies further confirmation concerning the array of inner city actors which manage to gain news access and thereafter place such keywords and wider interpretative frameworks within the public domain.

However, though eliciting interesting findings which generally support the contention that three principal inner city discourses have indeed sought to align the inner city riots to particular interpretative understandings and that moreover such can be found to be differentially present throughout the news portrayal of the 1985 Handsworth riots, the examination continues to empirically chart both the narrative structures informing this overall coverage as well as the substantive riot news interests and concerns displayed across a twelve month period. These are examined to the extent to which they may be deemed either supportive or possibly detracting from the three identified inner city discourses discussed in chapter one. Finally, a similar and complementary analysis is conducted which attends to the important visual dimension accompanying this extensive news coverage and the degree to which this may also be thought to either sustain or detract from the prevalent riot themes and issues and the interpretative schemas finding support across the portrayal of these disorders.

I Handsworth Profile

The inner city ward of Handsworth in central Birmingham has proved to be, and continues to be of recurrent news interest. This is noteworthy to the extent that Handsworth is only one

ward within 15 designated 'core' inner city wards within the city of Birmingham. Birmingham moreover is itself only one major conurbation given urban partnership status amongst a further nine cities and towns within the central television region each of which have also been awarded urban programme status on the basis of multiple indices of urban deprivation identifying the severely deprived inner city areas within their respective boundaries. Notwithstanding such widespread and concentrated areas of acute deprivation within and across the central television region, the single ward of Handsworth secures nearly a quarter (21.1 %) of all spatially referenced inner city coverage. From over 130 'core' or acutely deprived inner city wards found within the Central television region, then, Handsworth secures by any standard of comparison, substantial news coverage.

If the Handsworth area profile is briefly considered along with the adjacent wards of Soho and Lozells in terms of some of its particular characteristics found across the seven year period from 1981 to 1987 it can be noted that it is an 'extremely deprived area' with over 70 % of all enumeration districts falling within the most deprived 2 ½ % of all enumeration districts in England and Wales [Birmingham City Council,'Inner Area Studies'(1985-1988)]. Census factors used to calculate such deprivation have been based on unemployment, over-crowded households, households lacking basic amenities, single parent households, pensioners living alone and ethnic origin [DoE(1981)].

At an aggregate level Handsworth, Lozells and Soho has experienced a net emigration of 13.4 % of population, including a high percentage of skilled and economically active residents. Nearly 8 % of all households lack exclusive use of a bath and inside toilet, while 30 % of people live in overcrowded conditions (more than 1 person per room), while over 65 % of households have no access to a car. Moreover, according to the housing department prospects for large families on the housing waiting list in the area are bleak. In 1985, for instance only 4, four bedroomed council properties were made available to those households on the waiting and transfer lists. At the 1985 letting rate it was estimated that it would take 42 years to house all cases in the 4 bed queue. One bedroom units were also

noted as in short supply, with only 60 lettings made to single people and childless couples from a waiting list of 1159 cases. If official unemployment rates are considered, in October 1986 for instance, it was estimated that 36.6 % of the Handsworth population were seeking employment with female unemployment running at 26.0% while male unemployment was a staggering 43.0 %.

However, if these various indices are considered to be particularly acute, though not necessarily unprecedented to the extent that similar inner city profiles can be found in other inner city areas, if reconsidered in terms of ethnic composition and experience the picture becomes even bleaker. In a population which contains 31.6 % of people born within the New Commonwealth and Pakistan, and with nearly 60 % of the population composed of ethnic minorities, it was found that 7.3 % of such households lack exclusive use of a bath and outside toilet, 49.4 % of ethnic minority households live in overcrowded conditions, and 58.7 % have no access to a car. Furthermore the general unemployment rate of 36.6 % found within Handsworth (which would be even higher if figures included those placed on such schemes as Community Programme, Restart and YTS, taken off the unemployment register in September 1986) is known to severely impact even further upon ethnic minorities and black youth especially. Thus according to 1981 census information 47 % of 16 to 19 year old males and 44.1 % of females were unemployed, while the figure for ethnic minority youth is known to be considerably higher and had worsened over the period prior to the disturbances of 1985.

Moreover, if the plight of youth and black youth in particular is considered, of the destination of all school leavers in the area only 2.4 % of Afro-Caribbean youth, 5.5 % of Asian youth and 9.4 % of White youth had found employment, while YTS is also known to have reinforced this pattern of discrimination and disadvantage. With Afro-Caribbean school leavers **twice** as likely to join a youth training scheme than other Handsworth youths, one **third** of them were placed on Mode B schemes compared with 1 in 5 White and Asian youths. Though offering some training because such schemes were not employer led, the prospects for eventual job opportunities were considerably diminished.

Interestingly, within the period both prior to and following the disturbances of September 1985 recorded crimes in the Handsworth area fell by 7 % in 1985 compared to the previous year, more than three times the drop across the city. While it has to be noted that at 131 crimes per 1000 of population the local crime rate was still above the city average of 107 crimes per 1000 of population, it nonetheless was below the average of other inner city areas such as Aston/Witton (138 crimes per 1000 population).

If these basic indicators begin to paint a picture of acute social and urban deprivation how has Handsworth fared in terms of its regional news coverage ? Across the seven year sample period, it is interesting to note that Handsworth as well as finding substantial news coverage when compared to any of the other 130 plus inner city wards within the Central region has also been portrayed in terms which augment the already substantial crime and law and order emphases found to dominate inner city news presentations. Thus, with 67.3 % of items relating to law and order concerns, followed by 13.5 % of items of 'incidental' inner city interest by virtue of referencing Handsworth but not inner city related concerns, and 9.6 % of items relating to the wide span of urban deprivation concerns and issues of race and racism respectively, the established news interests already found across the inner portrayal in general have, if anything, become even more pronounced. With only 17.3 % of law and order concerns relating to riot coverage, the general crime orientation of regional inner city news coverage continues to inform the pronounced news interest in Handsworth. In short, Handsworth appears to have assumed a high news profile especially to the extent that this small district has been portrayed in terms relating to law and order concerns, while concerns relating to the massive problems of acute inner city deprivation, as well as issues of race and racism have assumed relatively marginal news presence.

What differences may exist say between Handsworth and the 14 other 'core' inner city wards in Birmingham, or indeed any of the other numerous inner city wards distributed throughout the Central Television region cannot, it is suggested, be accounted for in terms of unusually high or salient crime figures. Pursued in the later chapters, it can be noted here however that such

news salience is rather to be found within a geographical news studio proximity to Handsworth, a heightened news awareness given past social disturbances which appear to have lowered news thresholds generally, a specific news sensitivity also deriving from past disturbances which have lowered the particular news thresholds relating to 'follow-up' riot related items as well as heightened sensitivities alerted to the possibility of further episodes of civil disorder, while finally a genre disposition to find 'human interest' and even on occasion 'positive' news has also encouraged incidental and other stories reflecting 'the other side' of life in Handsworth.

Generally, however, as was found to be the case with the inner city news examined above, so the coverage of Handsworth has tended to displace attention from the massive and acute concerns of urban deprivation and issues of race and racism while focusing upon concerns of law and order. To this extent, it can be maintained that Handsworth provides an available supply of news reporting which cumulatively posits Handsworth as a 'law and order problem', rather than say, a problem of extensive social deprivation and unemployment, or structural and institutionalised racial discrimination, disadvantage and racism.

Moreover, if the various themes were closely attended to, a similar pattern of absences and presences would be found to inhere within the core concerns of crime, policing and race. Thus, to recap, the theme of policing fails to include the inner city concerns of community policing, police accountability and powers, and police harassment and assaults, while typically focusing upon increased technological inputs, manpower and resources. Crime news, by and large, assumes the form of atomised and relatively depopulated, as well as presentationally restricted and structurally simplified accounts dependent upon institutional led processes involving either the courts, the police, or both. Occasional items have also focused, in fly on the wall fashion, upon the activities of the drugs squad, or so-called 'gang wars' by drug dealers. Indeed the increased awareness of drugs as an inner city 'problem' have come to the fore during this period, and especially prior to the Handsworth disorders have provided an available preoccupation later mobilised in influential accounts of the Handsworth riots.

With few exceptions the widespread and extensive problems of racial disadvantage and discrimination, much less widespread racism, have virtually been ignored, despite the mounting evidence available throughout this period leaving Handsworth in terms of its news portrayal as essentially a 'problem of law and order'.

II The Handsworth Riots: Considerations of Forum and Access

Across the twelve month period from September 10th 1985 to September 8th 1986, no less than 153 separate Handsworth riot related news items were delivered by Central News West. Of these nearly half (49.7 %) were either the first item within the programme or also included in the programme tease and promos. The Handsworth riots, in other words, was 'big news' to the extent that a considerable amount of news coverage was devoted to it; the first three news programmes were almost entirely concerned with the Handsworth disturbances, and a special half-hour mid-evening news programme was also produced in the immediate aftermath of these events further indicating the perceived newsworthiness, and allocation of resources to this major news story. Attending to firstly the array of presentational formats or different types of news 'forum' characterising this general portrayal once again a similar pattern as that already discerned and discussed is found to characterise this general portrayal.

Table 7:1 Riots and News Forums

	Frequency	Percent
Restricted	75	49.0
Limited	71	46.4
Expansive	7	4.6
Total	153	100.0 %

With nearly half of all items delivered within 'restricted' formats, a substantial part of this coverage permits no direct access to outside viewpoints, other than the privileged forms of 'quotation' and 'paraphrase' found earlier to be generally confined to police and senior political spokespeople. With under half of all items delivered in the 'limited' format, outside

viewpoints are found within this particular form of film interview format, though as discussed earlier such a format and its accessed views remains firmly within the control of the newsroom and dependent upon the final editorial decisions enacted within the cutting room. With a strict minority of formats permitting a degree of 'expansive' involvement and engagement by outside voices, the opportunity for engaged public dialogue and debate has rarely found a public forum in which to examine the issues, concerns and competing interpretations and explanations surrounding the Handsworth riots'

Moreover, if the array of presentational formats found to order the portrayal of the Handsworth riots is found to follow established news conventions, so too has the array of social actors gaining access within this presentation assumed a similar profile to that already elicited and discussed in relation to the portrayal of the inner city generally.

Table 7:2 Riots And Social Actor Access

Social Group	Frequency	Percent
Police	73	29.1
Government	51	20.3
Community Voice	31	12.4
Individual Voice	26	10.4
Business	24	9.6
Experts/Inquiries	18	7.2
Court	8	3.2
Emergency Services	7	2.8
Education	6	2.4
Government Scheme	5	2.0
Religion	1	0.4
Probation	1	0.4
Total	251	100.0 %

Always prominent, here the police have increased their involvement both in terms of their general news presence and inner city coverage. With almost 30 % of all actor involvement the police clearly have a much increased opportunity to publicly develop their account of the Handsworth riots. Thereafter the formal political world of central government and local authorities are afforded the second most prevalent opportunities to disseminate views and perspectives. While community representatives and 'ordinary' community voices are afforded the third and fourth most prominence. If these groups in particular are inspected a little closer, given previous comments

concerning possible internal differences within these different inner city interests, it is found that three quarters (75.3 %) of all police entries are granted to either the Chief Constable or other senior police officers and only 2 % to ordinary rank officers. Similarly, senior government ministers and local councillors command the lions share of government/ administration involvement while organised community representatives and witnesses/neighbours dominate 'Community' and 'Individual Voices' respectively. Once again, conspicuous absences can be noted relating especially to the unemployed, and the young unemployed particularly and male black youth especially

The principal finding here however, is that the group which secures by far the largest percentage of accessed opportunity is the police, followed by senior ministers, and only then the community as formally organised, before individual community voices secure a voice. Of this latter group it is noticeable that certain groups - the unemployed, the elderly and black youth - all receive relatively little news opportunity. The pattern of access and related discursive opportunities appear to be skewed towards the formal world of political power and authority, and law enforcement in particular. While such institutions may indeed have a legitimate place within the inner city debate and discussion, particularly as focused in regard to inner city riots, it is notable that such voices are not necessarily those who are likely to voice some of the key concerns as lived, felt and articulated by those directly experiencing social deprivation and unemployment, political disenfranchisement and racial discrimination. That is, the very voices who may have articulated points of view and wider frameworks of understanding consonant to either liberal and/or radical perspectives appear to have been absented from such an opportunity, leaving the field open to the views and interpretative frameworks of others.

III THE HANDSWORTH RIOTS: KEYWORDS

As discussed at the outset such an occurrence as the Handsworth disturbances is open to diverse interpretations, each seeking to situate such an event within a framework of

understanding and explanation. The Handsworth riot, in this sense, may be considered as essentially a social site, a contested arena in which different social perspectives seek to mobilise and claim the 'meaning' of such an event in terms which are aligned to, and supportive of their respective interpretative schemas. In this sense, it is noticeable that an array of pivotal or 'keywords' (Williams 1988) are invariably advanced which seek to place such an event within established frameworks of understanding. Such terms thus 'work' to allocate and signify the wider rationale from which, and within which the social event or phenomenon is to be placed and from which its interpretation can be sustained. By way of illustration, such pivotal terms may be regarded as anchor points seeking to attach chains of signification to a wider, and invariably partial river of social meaning and interpretation. The sense of anchoring can also of course, be seen to be an internal lexical device which approximates, in Barthes'(1987) sense the concept of 'anchorage' developed in relation to the interaction between visual forms and text, of which more can be said below.

While attention to an array of keywords is both useful and insightful in terms of alerting us to the possible wider involvement of different interpretative schemas, this stage of the analysis cannot, in isolation, be regarded as sufficient in the pursuit of, in this instance, news coverage of the Handsworth riots. What it can do however, is begin to indicate possible lexical allegiances which may be further confirmed if pursued with closer textual analyses and other forms of quantitative and qualitative investigation. It can also additionally tell us something about who has the opportunity to begin to 'make sense' of the Handsworth riots in terms of its mediated coverage, or, in other words, begin to illuminate who has gained access and begun the social exercise of both placing and interpreting the riots for others.

With these qualifications in mind, it can be noted that at least three sets of pivotal terms can be deployed across the mediated coverage of the Handsworth riots. Each of these is potentially open to lexical appropriation beginning the social process of situating the Handsworth riots within a limited number of interpretative schemes. These three key areas are concerned with labelling the principal actors involved, the

labelling of the event itself and lastly the semantic placing or situating of the event within a particular social space. Firstly, it is instructive to chart the relative frequency of all such terms as deployed by the media themselves, the police, community members and representatives and politicians before the range of semantic alignments delivered via such lexical terms are scrutinised in more detail. The following table thus provides an overview of the deployment of each of these three sets of pivotal terms across the 153 riot news items, and the actors advancing them.

Table 7:3 Social Groups Placing Keywords

	Participants		Event		Social Space	
	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%
Media	66	53.7	331	77.5	162	60.4
Police	28	22.8	35	8.2	39	14.6
Community	11	8.9	17	4.0	21	7.8
Politician	4	3.2	21	4.9	20	7.5
Other	14	11.4	23	5.4	26	9.7
Totals	123	100.0	427	100.0	268	100.0

From the table above it is apparent that in so far as these three types of pivotal terms are deployed it is the media, that is, news personnel which by far places the majority with over half to in excess of three quarters for each group of terms. This is interesting in that it may be taken as significantly qualifying any blanket assertion of the news media as essentially providing a platform of access for the direct relay of the accounts of others. That is, in so far as these initial results suggest in relation to the Handsworth riots, it is the media themselves who may be regarded as the 'primary definers', at least in terms of providing the array of 'pivotal terms'. Secondly, it is found that it is the police who secure the second most opportunities for providing such terms, with over twice as many public placements as any other accessed social group. Interestingly, apart from the specific terms relating to the participants of the Handsworth riots, both politicians and members of 'the community' place approximately the same amount of key terms.

Labelling the Participants

If close attention is paid to the various perspectives currently in play in regard to the issues and problems of the inner city generally, and inner city riots specifically, it is possible, as elaborated in chapter one, to identify a limited array of principal, albeit conflicting, discourses or interpretative schemas seeking to organise discussion and understanding of such concerns. In so far as they provide an organising framework which seeks to make sense out of the riots in different ways the following kinds of labels have been advanced towards the rioters.

Descriptive:	**Examples:**
Political Extremists:	'shadowy figures', 'anarchists' 'extremists'
Organised Criminals :	'drug barons' 'hardened criminals'
Unorganised Criminals:	'rampaging mob' 'looters', 'hooligans'
Rioters :	'rioters', 'Handsworth rioters'
Participants :	'people responsible' 'youngsters' 'those involved'
Disadvantaged/ Disaffected :	'unemployed youth', 'disaffected part of the community', 'alienated youth'.

Initially it can be suggested that the lexical terms used to describe the participants of the riot can provide insight into the array of interpretative schemas which both inform, and are potentially mobilised by, such pivotal terms. If participants are described as 'rampaging youths' or 'looters', or perhaps 'hardened criminals' or 'hard core criminals' the variants of an essentially conservative discourse, invoking either conspiratorial and organised criminality or ideas of moral degeneration and mob gratification, are implicated in such terms. Similarly if rioters are referred to as 'unemployed youth' or 'that disadvantaged section of the community' then the possibility of mobilising a liberal or even radical structural interpretative frame appear to be in the offing.

Table 7:4 **Labelling the Actors**

	Extremist		Hard-Core		Criminal		Rioter		Participant		Disaffected	
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
Media	1	1.5	6	9.1	34	51.5	17	25.8	7	10.6	1	1.5
Police	3	10.7	6	21.4	12	42.9	6	21.4	1	3.6	0	0.0
Community	0	0.0	1	9.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	90.9	0	0.0
Politician	0	0.0	1	25.0	1	25.0	0	0.0	2	50.0	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0	1	7.1	6	42.9	2	14.3	5	35.7	0	0.0
Totals	4	3.3	15	12.2	53	43.1	25	20.3	25	20.3	1	0.8

[Note: Percentage figures indicate relative frequencies within each social group; bottom figures indicates total frequencies per actor terms.]

The first obvious finding from the table above can be noted as the predominance of terms which refer to those involved as criminals. If both the majority of terms referring to unorganised and essentially opportunist criminals(41.3%) are combined with the further criminal references which indicate a coterie of organised criminals(12.2), it is noticeable that over half (53.5 %) clearly label those involved as criminals.

Just over a fifth of all terms refer to 'rioters' which may be taken as a discursively ambivalent term to the extent that no obvious linkage to a particular interpretative schema can necessarily be invoked by the use of 'rioter' in and of itself. A further fifth of all labels refer to the participants in terms which do not invoke moral censure, but rather point to their status as involved people. Though in a minority, some references are made to political extremists in over 3 % of all references, while less than 1 % of terms invoke the status of rioters as 'disadvantaged' or 'unemployed' and so on, which would conceivably begin to align the rioters to a wider liberal and/or radical framework of interpretation.

In summary, it can be noted that a criminal understanding of the actors in question appears to be invoked in the majority of all cases, while a humanistic or liberal appeal to see the rioters as 'people' also secures some involvement. However, it is also apparent that though some place is afforded to such terms which situate the rioters as 'people', rather than hard core criminals or those possessed of a herd instinct, rarely is such extended to include a particular understanding of 'people' as perhaps disadvantaged or deprived. That is, while a conservative account of the riots as essentially a criminal

event appear to have gained considerable support, at least in terms of the key terms applied to rioters, a liberal interpretation secures relatively little support, while a radical account appears to be next to non-existent. With a clear majority of all terms referring to criminals, and with a minority of other terms referring to participants as 'people', an insight is gained into how the rioters may themselves become key terms in the public stage of meaning construction and alignment.

Interestingly, it is the media themselves who place the majority of all labels used (53.7 %) which also considerably favour reference to 'criminals' and 'rioters', though also very occasionally invoking reference to 'participants'. The police for their part also consistently place criminal or 'rioter' labels, while only once referring to rioters in the more humane terms found under 'participant'. Though in a minority with under 9 % of all placings, it is interesting to observe that the broad category of 'community' have almost exclusively used the more humane references implying no moral censure, or indeed closure sometimes invoked by the use of 'criminal'. Politicians though present, have infrequently placed direct references to the rioters though on those occasions when they have they appear to have been equally divided between criminal and participant references, perhaps indicating something of the formal political balance invariably sought by news personnel. Even from this cursory analysis it is apparent that some indication exists for an evident struggle over meaning, mobilised within the very terms that are used to refer to the Handsworth rioters.

If the key terms applied to rioters are further examined in terms of associations with either youth and race, it is interesting to note that news personnel references, which comprise more than half of all references involving the specific category of youth, involve in over half of all instances the coupling of youth with criminal associations ('rampaging youths' 'roaming youths' etc.) while rarely invoking youth in more 'neutral' terms, and only once referring to youth in association with the social problem of unemployment. In contrast, with only one exception, all other references involving terms linked to youth, have not invoked a criminal association but rather have tended to situate youth as involved people. That is, on such

occasions youth has been advanced as a category of people, neither marginalised as deviant or 'outside' of normal society, as implied by the conservative deployment of predatory animal associations noted above, but rather as people who 'belong' to a wider community ('young lads', 'the kids', 'youth of the area' etc.). The category of youth is involved in nearly a quarter of all key words applied to rioters(24.4 %) and is clearly capable when yoked to other terms of expressing a range of associations deployed across the conservative, liberal and radical interpretative frameworks.

Race also features in association with such terms(11.4 %) and of these nearly a quarter also invoke a criminal association, while the remainder are presented in more 'liberal' terms. Of all invocations of race however (64 %) also invoke the category of youth. As argued elsewhere (Hall et al. 1976) the combination of youth, race and criminality provides a potent mix of themes with deep historical and cultural resonance. Though nearly three quarters of references to race do not explicitly invoke criminality, it has to be remembered that within the context of the news report, the lack of explicit lexical associations need not indicate that criminal association cannot find further support from within surrounding textual properties perhaps invoked by the subject of the item itself or indeed visual references, as discussed further below.

However, if much remains to be considered before a more adequate assessment of the exact interpretative resources publicly made available within this riot portrayal can be discussed, even at this cursory level of explicit lexical references it has been seen that an essentially criminal understanding of the participants has been invoked in a majority of cases, and of these it is the news media themselves, followed by the police, who have placed the majority of all such key terms.

Labelling the Event

If the deployment of such key 'actor' terms can be seen to be of distinct support in the semantic organisation of the events under question, so too is the way that the event is described of potential interest. Five principle groupings of

event terms can be noted as of particular interest. Firstly, the event may be signified as a criminal event, and here reference to violence and criminal activity is invoked. Secondly, the event may simply be referred to as a riot, or the Handsworth riots, and once again if considered in isolation such a term may be considered to entertain a degree of discursive ambiguity as does its actor partner of 'rioter'. Thirdly, though not necessarily aligned to a strictly criminal association, the riot may be designated by terms which indicate some form of disturbance or trouble, while fourthly a more neutral terminology may be found which simply refers to the 'events' or 'occurrences' and so on. Fifthly, a radical lexicon may be identified which seeks to indicate the event as a form of collective protest and reaction against a perceived state of oppression and injustice.

Descriptive:	**Examples:**
Criminal/Violence	'violence' 'orgy of looting'
Riot	'riots' 'rioting' 'Handsworth riots'
Trouble/Disturbance	'troubles' 'disturbances'
Incident/Event	'incident' 'event' 'occurrence'
Rebellion	'rebellion' 'revolt' 'protest'

If the year of riot coverage is examined closely in terms of the exact deployment of event labels, the following results are obtained.

Table 7:5 **Labelling the Event**

	Criminal		Riot		Trouble		Incident		Rebellion		Totals/ Percent
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	
Media	46	13.9	243	73.4	34	10.3	8	2.4	0	0.0	331(77.5)
Police	6	17.1	25	71.4	3	8.6	1	2.8	0	0.0	35 (8.2)
Community	3	17.6	5	29.4	4	23.5	3	17.6	2	11.8	17 (4.0)
Politician	8	38.1	9	42.8	1	4.7	3	14.3	0	0.0	21 (4.9)
Other	8	34.8	9	39.1	6	26.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	23 (5.4)
Totals	71	16.6	291	68.2	48	11.2	15	3.5	2	0.5	427(100.0)

[Note percent figures indicate relative frequencies in terms of each social group's deployment of event terms]

Once again it is notable that by far the vast majority of key event terms, with over three quarter's of all designations,

are provided by news personnel with the police assuming the second most involved agency seeking to 'place' the event of the Handsworth riots. It is apparent that the ambivalent term of 'riot' is employed most often, with a criminal reference assuming the second most frequent association. Thereafter, the event is most frequently referred to in terms which emphasise an aspect of 'trouble', while the anodyne terms of 'events' 'occurrences' etcetera are rarely employed. With half of one percent of all designations invoking radical associations of protest and revolt, clearly the Handsworth riots has not been open, in its mediated treatment, to radical placement.

Interestingly if the top two social groups of media and police are compared across the range of event references it is noticeable that a degree of consonance is found to inhere within each of their array of employed terms; if these are then compared to terms employed by the community it is notable that no such consonance is found to exist. With the community references tending to place the event in terms which involve 'trouble', 'incident' and 'rebellion' the media and the police are more inclined to refer to the riots in terms which stress their status as 'criminal' 'riot' and 'trouble' events. Once again such findings can be taken as illustrative of a wider social contest over the signification of the Handsworth riots.

If the above two lexical analyses are strongly suggestive of the relative array of underpinning and informing interpretative schemas organising an extended period of riot news portrayal one further set of key words can be usefully attended to.

Locating the Riots within a Social Space

One final lexical analysis can usefully be pursued which provides further insight into the positioning of the Handsworth riots. The riots as well as perpetrated by a named social group of 'actors', within a designated 'event' also occupies a potentially diverse range of social locations or 'spaces'. Social space in this sense is here used to refer to the geographical, social, political or other domains which help situate the riots within a particular frame of understanding. At least seven different social spaces can be identified which help to semantically locate the Handsworth riots.

Descriptive:	**Examples:**
Criminal	'centre of drug traffic', 'trouble spot', 'area difficult to police'
Volatile/Tense	'volatile area', 'tense area', 'no-go zone', 'explosive area'
Racial/Race	'little Caribbean', 'multi-racial area'
Riot	'riot hit area', 'riot torn area'
Geographical ?	'Handsworth', 'Handsworth-Lozells'
Inner City	'deprived area', 'inner city area'
Positive	'thriving centre', 'commercial centre'

If these various semantic domains are first considered to the extent that they are invoked by the such terms as the above the following findings result.

Table 7:6 Riots and Semantic Assigning

Descriptive	Frequency	Percent
Geographical ? Area	196	73.1
Inner City Area	21	7.8
Riot Area	16	6.0
Criminal Area	14	5.3
Volatile/Tense Area	9	3.3
Positive Area	7	2.6
Racial/Race Area	5	1.9
	Total 268	100.0 %

From the above it is apparent that the majority of all references refer to the geographical space of Handsworth. The use of the question mark reminds us that in so far as Handsworth has received a high news profile in the past it may be considered likely that the term 'Handsworth' already carries far more associations than merely a geographical reference. The discussion above concerning the perennial news treatment of Handsworth, especially in regard to law and order concerns should alert us to the possible semantic baggage that Handsworth has already collected in past mediated portrayals and which is immediately invoked whenever used.

However, one further observation can considerably strengthen the case that Handsworth has indeed received a high news profile in relation to particular sorts of crime. Indeed

its news salience is of such attraction that the bulk of serious disorder labelled as 'the Handsworth riots', as the riots have become known, actually took place principally in Lozells, Birmingham an adjacent inner city ward. Handsworth, unlike Lozells has enjoyed considerable past news coverage, including news coverage of the 1981 Handsworth riots, as such a news sensitivity has arguably been adopted which is likely to position the immediate happenings of the Lozells disturbances within an established set of news expectations. Such expectations, relating to Handsworth and not Lozells, appear to have been instrumental in the initial forming of 'the Handsworth riots' label, a label which remained in place throughout the year's coverage reviewed, and which has now assumed something of an established orthodoxy.

In the light of the above the geographical ? referencing of Handsworth must be treated with caution if considered too readily as a semantically 'innocent' designation. The remaining designations though within an overall minority nonetheless indicate something of the dispute over meaning attendant upon the social placing of the riots. With just under 8 % of all lexical items referring to the 'inner city' it appears that at least some involvement of a wider discourse, perhaps relating to social deprivation has been occasionally invoked. The following three social domains of 'riot' 'crime' and 'volatility' together begin to suggest that Handsworth is a place of potential and actual 'trouble', which may be understood strictly in criminal terms, though not always explicitly referenced as such.

Less than 3 % of all terms refer to the area in explicitly 'positive' terms, though remaining within a strict minority it is at least debatable to what extent such designations could begin to counteract the persistent negative semantic labels already noted. One last set of semantic placings has failed to secure significant reference, in that invocations of race have not, in the main, been applied to the semantic space occupied by the Handsworth riots. In this sense, the radical interpretative schema which places issues of race, discrimination and racism at the heart of the riots has not been significantly invoked. It can also be noted however, that the extreme conservative discourse also raising issues of race is also thereby denied a significant interpretative resource. Extreme conservative

positions positing racial inferiority, cultural difference and under-achievement as key interpretative concerns have thereby failed to achieve, in this regard at least, an explicit anchor point sustaining their particular interpretative framework.

If these various semantic spaces are now examined in terms of their relative frequencies and deployment by different social groups the following findings are obtained.

Table 7:7 **Riots and Semantic Assignments**

	Crime		Volatile		Race		Riot		Handsworth		Inner City		Positive		
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	
Media	11	6.8	5	3.1	3	1.8	15	9.2	112	69.1	10	6.2	6	3.7	162 (60.4)
Police	1	2.6	2	5.1	1	2.6	0	0.0	32	82.0	2	5.1	1	2.6	39 (14.6)
Community	1	4.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	18	85.7	2	9.5	0	0.0	21 (7.8)
Politician	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	16	80.0	4	20.0	0	0.0	20 (7.5)
Other	1	3.8	2	7.7	1	3.8	1	3.8	18	69.2	3	11.5	0	0.0	26 (9.7)
Totals	14	5.3	9	3.3	5	1.9	16	6.0	196	73.1	21	7.8	7	2.6	268/ 100.0%

Once again it is apparent that the majority of all such terms (60.4 %) are placed by the news media, with the second most prevalent terms deployed by the police. With the bulk of all media designations referencing the 'Handsworth riots', the remaining minority of terms indicate at least some invocation of other semantic spaces, with 'crime', 'riot' and 'volatility' the most prominent of these and 'inner city', 'positive' and 'race' being confined to a strict minority of terms deployed by the media.

With over 80 % of all police lexical placings referencing the 'Handsworth riots' the remaining terms principally invoke Handsworth as either a 'volatile' area or an 'inner city' area. Though with only half of all the placings afforded to the police, community voices have also considerably referenced 'the Handsworth riots' while also indicating 'inner city' associations.

Labelling and Interpretative Frameworks: Summary Findings

While such terms cannot be taken in isolation as strictly or directly expressive of informing interpretative schemas, the

range of terms employed across these key semantic sites nonetheless begin to suggest that a struggle over meaning is both evident, and that furthermore a preponderance of terms which tend to emphasise the criminal and illegal nature of the riots have found the most expression. While the deployment of terms which may aim to situate the event within a wider contextual framework, noting the presence of rioters as 'people' or even as part of a community, have on occasion been heard, these remain within a minority, while voices which have sought to situate the Handsworth riots with the help of key words stressing the collective nature of the riots and degree of purposive protest involved have only rarely been voiced.

Clearly, the mediated account of the riot cannot, in any simplistic sense, be described as a form of consistent 'ideological closure' exclusively mobilizing one particular interpretative schema, it can nonetheless be maintained that in so far as these initial lexical analyses permit, a strong indication exists which suggests that the array of publicly available interpretative schemas do not receive equal prominence, while also indicating that some social groups secure more opportunity to semantically align the Handsworth riots than others. Here the media themselves have been found to occupy the most strategic position in terms of advancing the vast majority of all key words, while the police consistently occupy the second most prominent position.

The above analyses though providing useful insights into the range of keywords deployed by different inner city actors across the riot news portrayal in terms of: firstly, labelling those involved; secondly, the events themselves; and thirdly, the social space to which they may be semantically aligned nonetheless remain suggestive if left at the level of such lexical analyses. That is, though highly suggestive of possible competing and differentially involved interpretative frameworks mobilised by and within this portrayal, further analyses must be conducted before any final conclusions can be drawn concerning the interpretative resources and alignments mobilised within this coverage. With these strong indications already in place however, a detailed analysis of the narrative emphases, substantive riot concerns and issues and visual imagery attending this portrayal can now all usefully be attended to.

And it is here that the interpretative resources and accounts placed within the public domain become open to further examination and discussion.

IV The Handsworth Riots: Narrative Structures

The fact that regional news has provided considerable follow up news treatments to the regional/national news event of a major inner city disturbance illustrates the possible importance of regional television news, and perhaps regional and local news media generally, in providing both a sustained news interest and account of important issues only occasionally receiving national prominence. In approaching the extended portrayal of the Handsworth riots over a twelve month period, it is instructive to first identify and chart some of the principal elements which comprise such a narrative, before identifying in detail the substantive content or topics and references which gain news attention. The event of a 'riot', it can be suggested, is situated in time with both a pre and post-history as well as an informing context, - it occurred in a certain place, in a definite form involving certain groups of people in a particular way, for particular reasons. However, if the event of the riot is of immediate news interest and can be investigated accordingly, it is also possible to identify further elements within a wider narrative of riot news reporting.

If the riot can be attended to as an 'event', so too can the immediate 'aftermath' of a riot be attended to, while both the riot as 'event' and 'aftermath' can both be noted as eliciting a number of 'responses'. These three areas, riot as 'event', 'aftermath' and 'response', logically form three initial component parts of the mediated reality of a riot. Moreover, they can each be approached in terms of a number of topics or references which may be found to be of particular support to one of the interpretative schemas vying to appropriate and 'pin down' the meaning of such an event.

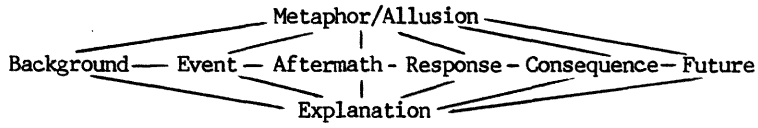
If riot as event, aftermath and response form three fundamental elements to the narrative of a riot, the element of consequence can also usefully be identified as a longer term reaction invoked by the initial riot event. If 'riot as consequence' points to the post-history of a riot, 'riot as

background' therefore points to its claimed antecedents. Both the narrative elements of consequence and background, as well as establishing the event of a riot within a temporal flow, also of course implicitly provide basic ingredients which can substantially assist or hinder the development of particular interpretative schemas. So, for instance, if particular topics are addressed under these broad narrative elements and not others, the overall narrative may well be considered to be disposed towards one or more interpretative schemas. It is therefore essential, just as with the elements of event, aftermath and response, to clearly identify the constituent topics which comprise these two elements of 'consequence' and 'background'.

While the above elements individually and collectively contain important 'interpretative' possibilities in terms of the particular topics securing news attention which together may be taken as supportive of some schemas and not others, the more explicit narrative elements of 'future' and 'explanation' contain further potential support necessary for the interpretation of a riot. While 'consequence' may be taken as the longer term reactions elicited by the event of a riot, the element of 'future' extrapolates from the riot as event and posits a future scenario. To this extent the extrapolation is very much dependent upon the initial understanding and interpretation of the event itself, and therefore implicitly involves an element of interpretation.

The element of 'explanation', in so far as it is found to be present, is an obvious and explicit indication of the interpretative schemas informing the wider interpretation of such event. One final element can also be usefully addressed, namely, the use of metaphor or allusion deployed within the riot narrative. Clearly, allusions and metaphors inherently contain a 'positioning' force which, through explicit association, seek to advance the plausibility and insight of the perspective offered. The interpretative elements found to organise the narrative of a riot over an extended period of time can be expressed diagrammatically as follows.

Figure 7:8 Riot As Narrative: Interpretative Elements



While the elements considered inherent to the story of a riot obviously point to a narrative unfolding through time, it is clear that such elements can be invoked time and time again with little or no regard to developments happening within actual time. In other words, while the event of the riot took place substantially on the night of September the 9th and September the 10th in actual time, in media time it took place substantially on September the 10th, and to the extent that the events of September the 9th are referenced over the course of the following twelve months the element of 'event' is potentially available to be reported time and time again. Similarly with the other basic narrative elements. In other words, these elements begin to indicate possible different prominences within the overall narrative structure which together comprise the story of this particular riot.

In addition to the mediated structure of such narrative elements attention can also be paid to the various topics and references addressed under each element, as well as the principal topic, that is the main explicit concern or issue found with each news item. Such topics and references as well as recurring principal topics can all be systematically identified and quantified in aggregate form in order that an overview of the agenda of riot news concerns can be established and opened to discussion.

For the purposes of these analyses 153 separate riot news items presented by Central West across a twelve month period have been systematically consulted. If attention is first directed at the overall narrative structures, as elicited by attending to a comprehensive quantitative review of over one hundred riot related topics and references encompassed within these different structures, (detailed below) the following elements have been found to structure the riot narrative. Here the basic shape of the narrative is investigated to the extent that different interpretative schemas may be found to be differentially enabled or disabled by such patterns of news

emphases.

Table 7:9 Structures of A Riot Narrative

Riot As :	Frequency	Percent
Event	228	19.9
Aftermath	131	11.5
Response	117	10.2
Consequence	266	23.3
Background	246	21.5
Future	55	4.8
Explanation	44	3.8
Metaphor/Allusion	57	5.0
Total Topics/ References	1144	100.0 %

From the findings above it is apparent that not all elements across one full year of riot reports are present to the same degree. The event of the riot itself assumes just under one fifth of total references, while the immediate aftermath and responses each secure little over one tenth of all references. Over two fifths of this riot coverage, in other words, is devoted to the 'immediate' event, aftermath and initial responses. Clearly, the initial event and related narrative elements, while not dominating the total news coverage, nonetheless are afforded substantial news attention given the compressed duration of these elements within actual time. It can also be surmised that these initial narrative elements are likely to provide some of the basic resources mobilised in accounts of the event itself, which may or may not receive later endorsement and confirmation in subsequent news reports. In other words, while the event can generally be accepted as a serious breach of law and order, if the news coverage continually positions the 'event' as simply that, without involving other considerations perhaps relating to cause, motive or explanation then a powerful interpretative resource has arguably already been established.

The element of consequence assumes the single most prevalent narrative element with nearly a quarter of all topics and references falling within this aspect. While the initial event, aftermath and response receive substantial coverage, it is their relationship to subsequent 'events' that also gains sustained coverage. The riots, though clearly important in and of themselves are also of news interest in that they have prompted, provoked or elicited further consequences. Such consequences

moreover relate back to the initial riot as event and implicitly or explicitly position the 'event' in terms which have necessitated these, as opposed to other, consequences. Clearly, the narrative element of consequence needs to be carefully attended to in terms of its respective composition of topics since these are likely to provide further support and/or confirmation in terms of the mediated signification of the Handsworth riots.

The element of background, already noted as a principal contender in the support or furtherance of an interpretative schema to the extent that the selection of 'relevant' background information implicitly posits a relationship between specific features of a past context and perhaps not others, and the events presently unfolding, secures little over a fifth of all riot topics and references. In combination with the element of consequence, then, it would appear from this initial overview that substantial interpretative 'resources' have been included within the news narrative of this particular riot.

Though within an overall minority, the element of future is present with just under 5 % of all references and topics, indicating that relative to the bulk of all topics, the future is not indulged as a general constituent of news riot concerns. It will be remembered that 'future' was noted as likely to be a particularly revealing narrative element to the degree that it implicitly depends upon the interpretation of the present. The element of explanation, that is an element which explicitly and directly advances an account, including cause, motivation and/or reason for the event of a riot itself, is firmly at the core of any interpretive schema. Interestingly, the element of 'explanation' however, is firmly within a minority with under 4 % of all riot references. While this 4 % needs to be attended to carefully, this general finding indicates that in so far as interpretative schemas are involved they may be sustained more by the array of implicit associations and agenda of substantive topics of concern, than the explicit advancement of 'explanations'.

One last narrative element, 'metaphor/allusion', which was again deemed indicative of possible interpretative schemas informing or underlying news accounts to the extent that such rhetorical strategies are frequently aligned to, and derivative

from a particular interpretative position, are also within a minority with a presence of less than 5 % of all references. Once again, to the extent that particular interpretative schemas may gain sustenance and support from the rhetorical use of metaphor and allusion it is clear that this is not a substantial element within this particular regional news narrative. However, to the extent that this element is present, its exact constituency will be attended to carefully. Overall then, it has been found that the bulk of all riot items are predominantly concerned with the event and its immediate repercussions, while the element of consequence and background are also present to a considerable degree. Explicit concern with explanation, future scenario and the deployment of metaphor and allusion though all present, fall strictly within a minority of all references and topics that comprise one full year of riot coverage.

At this admittedly general level, it appears that the immediate events and their aftermaths have captured considerable news interest. In so far as such 'events' have been found to perform differing explanatory emphases across conservative, liberal and radical interpretative perspectives it can be suggested that such in itself provides a differential interpretative resource, with conservative viewpoints inclined to concentrate upon the immediacy of the event given that this is the site where both criminal activity and criminal involvement is found to account for such violence and destruction. Liberal and radical interpretative schemas though recognising the centrality of the events in question require further contextualising levels of reference while, in the case of the radical perspective both historical and structural references are required for its particular interpretative schema. Interestingly, the element of background has secured considerable presence and it is interesting to inquire below to what extent such may in fact provide either the contextual 'conditions' sought by the liberal perspective or wider historical resources sought by a radical interpretative framework.

V Handsworth Riots: Topics of News Interest

At this point, it is necessary to interrogate the exact topics and references which comprise such riot narrative elements in order to see to what extent key issues and concerns of differing interpretative perspectives have indeed featured within and across this riot portrayal. The general questions pursued at this stage of the analysis are, what are the general concerns and issues pursued within and across this extensive news coverage, and to what extent or degree may these be seen to provide sustenance and support for the various interpretative schemas previously found to organise public perspectives on social violence and inner city riots ? The following analyses attend to a detailed examination of the various topics and references found across the sample of 153 separate news items, organised under the respective narrative elements outlined above.

Given the general aim of eliciting an accurate overview of this full year of riot coverage each separate news item has been consulted on each of a hundred plus riot topics derived from extrinsic sources and intrinsic issues found within the various news items. Each topic was counted as either present or absent for each item and then aggregated across the entire sample. Additionally each item was coded according to one of the hundred plus topics if this was deemed to be what the item was principally about. As well as securing an overview of all subsidiary topics and references finding media expression across the 153 items, an attempt has also been made to gain an overview of the most prominent issues organising this coverage. The following therefore represents the broad agenda of riot topics and prominent issues gaining news coverage across this extended period of riot portrayal as a whole.

Table 7:10 **RIOT AS EVENT**

Topic/Reference:	Frequency	Percent	Principal Topic Frequency	Percent
Rioting: Violence/Stoning	64	28.1	1	0.6
Property Destruction/Burning	57	25.0		
Rioting: Looting	34	14.9		
Police Operation/Amassed	25	11.0	1	0.6
Emergency Service Involvement	20	8.7		
Police Under Attack	16	7.0		
Police Advance	10	4.4		
Other/General Event	2	0.9	2	1.4
Total	228	100.0 %	4	2.6 %

[Element Percent 19.9 %]

[Note: In this and other Riot elements below, percentage figures for topics and references are derived from each particular element which therefore equals 100%, while principal topic percentages are based on the total number of news items, thus percentage figures refer to 100 % equals 153.]

With nearly one fifth of all riot topics and references included across the entire riot narrative the initial riot as 'event' clearly assumes an important presence within the overall news coverage. While this may at first sound commensensical, this is what a riot entails after all, from the previous discussion of the elements which comprise the riot narrative much else besides is also included within the story of a riot. In other words the 'event' is simply the beginning of riot coverage, a beginning moreover which sustains all which follows. In this sense it can be seen that, with nearly one fifth of all references, the riot as event is not confined simply to an initial event in actual time, but rather assumes a protracted portrayal in media time which continues to inform subsequent news treatments long after the actual event. This is significant to the extent that the riot is heavily present as an 'event', and as such does not necessarily evolve or develop into wider considerations. The event may be resurrected days and weeks, months and even years after the actual event took place. Even when providing a 'background' introduction then, the fact that the riot is referenced as an event, an event as described below with a particular media form, is of consequence to the overall riot narrative as well as available resources in terms of competing interpretative schemas.

Moreover, given that the riot as an event does involve an

outburst of social confrontation and a breakdown of the rule of law, which at the level of event may be separated from informing contextual considerations, the riot narrative overall can be seen as heavily weighted towards an understanding of the riot as a 'problem' of law and disorder. If the topics and references are considered, it is found that the event is principally focused in regard to acts of violence, the destruction of property, and looting. While unaccounted violence and destruction appear in themselves to be inexplicable, looting may provide a self-evident rationale, though the wider reason for looting within a context of rioting is not of course necessarily apparent, much less an explanation for the riot itself.

The riot has principally been covered to the extent that the violence, destruction and looting assume the main news focus, while the police operation assumes a further aspect of focus. In the sense that the police operation is referenced as a reaction against the largely unexplained, or visually inexplicable violence and destruction, the event of a riot may in itself be regarded as a news construction of an assault on law and order. The point here is not necessarily to find fault with the news portrayal, but rather to indicate the inherent positioning of the news account in relation to the riot as event. Normatively unthinkable perhaps, yet logically revealing, even the event of a riot could assume an entirely different news aspect (as witnessed in foreign 'riot' reports) if news teams accompanied the riot from within the ranks, and geographical space of the rioters themselves. This is not to deny the evident violence and destruction inherent to a riot, but it is to suggest that violence and destruction, from such an involved proximity, would in all likelihood be reported within a covering mantle of interpretation which would begin to account for such forms. As it is, the event of a riot is invariably referenced as an inexplicable outpouring of violence, destruction and looting perpetrated by a largely absent crowd of rioters whose destructive presence is only known through the evident reactions of a police force confronting such disorder.

The police appear as an 'external' agency confronted by the riot, an agency reacting to the event, rather than as an agency routinely involved within inner city policing and therefore possibly an 'internal' protagonist in a complex process in which

they have had a pronounced role. Once again, the form of the event is likely to conceal such a relationship, with the police posited as an external as opposed to internal agency within the unfolding events. On all these counts, the substantial coverage of the riot as event may be considered in tandem with other elements considered below as disposing the riot as a law and order problem confronted by, rather than inextricably involving, the forces of law and order.

In addition to the general pattern of topics and references noted above, it is also apparent that a minority of principal topics are also included under this element, which add further support to the general violence frame found to inhere within the riot event depiction, while also focusing upon the police operation and involved police as essentially reactants, rather than central protagonists.

Table 7:11 **RIOT AS AFTERMATH**

Topic/Reference:			Principal Topic	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Death of Molidinas	45	34.3	3	2.0
Devastated Property	36	27.5	1	0.6
Costs of Damage	16	12.1	1	0.6
Injured General	14	10.7		
Looted Property	12	9.2	1	0.6
Injured Police	6	4.6		
Other/General Aftermath	2	1.4	1	0.6
Injured Rioters	0	0.0		
Total 131		100.0 %	7	4.6 %

[Element Percent 11.4 %]

If the event of the riot is firmly situated as an outbreak of disorder and criminality the immediate aftermath news coverage confirms and compounds such an initial portrayal. As the full extent of the damage began to be recognised, so the bodies of the two brothers found within the burnt out shell of the Post Office gave the criminal placing of the event a further confirming twist. With media references to murder this particularly sad incident assumed a sinister aspect to be discussed below. (Later, it was confirmed, contrary to news anticipation that the deaths of the two brothers were not 'murders' preceded by beatings, but death by suffocation from fire.) Reference to these two deaths assumes the most prominent

form of aftermath topic with reference to devastated property and costs of damage assuming the next most prevalent references.

With other aftermath news topics focused upon injuries and looted property, the event is further reinforced as a criminal outburst, and of significance to the extent of damage and loss of life caused. While it would be absurd to deny the importance and news value of loss of life and phenomenal financial loss, the point here is not to advance judgement on such coverage but rather to suggest that in so far as aftermath coverage has tended to confirm the significance of the riot as 1) a criminal event and 2) of significance to the degree of loss of life and damage caused other possible 'significations' of the riot are displaced from consideration. Aftermath as a narrative element, like the element of event, is not confined to a strict chronological sequencing following actual time, but is present throughout the year's coverage. It is in this sense that the comments above relating to 'displacement' need to be considered. Assuming over one tenth of all riot coverage the element of 'aftermath' adds further support to the criminal and violent frame ordering the riot event, while a limited number of riot items also include such concerns as the principal topics of news interest, further supporting the comments noted above.

Table 7:12 **RIOT AS RESPONSE**

Topic/Reference:			Principal Topic	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Police Response	37	31.5	7	4.6
Police Investigations	32	27.3	7	4.6
Status Visit/Proclamation	25	21.4	10	6.5
Local Authority Response	7	6.0	2	1.3
Community Representatives	6	5.1	1	0.6
Community Others	5	4.3		
Clearing Up/Boarding Up	5	4.3		
Other/Response	0	0.0		
Total	117	100.0 %	27	17.6 %

[Element Percent 10.2 %]

Further confirming the initial riot news treatment the narrative element of response is heavily skewed towards the police. The accessing of police and subsequent accounts proferred may well be seen as directly providing a 'law and order' frame within which the significance of the riot is made

to mean. Together police responses, that is elicited comments in news interviews, as well as news reports covering ensuing police investigations comprise nearly three fifths of all riot responses. Moreover, these two topics are afforded over 9 % of all principal topics across the entire coverage. Clearly, the criminal frame is further buttressed by such extensive news police interest.

Over one fifth of all responses, following police responses, are secured by status visits and proclamations, the majority of which are gained by senior government and opposition politicians, further reflected within over 6 % of all principal topics. Local authority responses gain 6 %, community representatives just over 5 % and 'ordinary' community voices little over 4 % of all responses. It would appear on this basis that a hierarchy of response is effectively in operation with the police and senior politicians securing the lion's share of media opportunities to 'respond', that is provide interpretative accounts about the riot, while the local authority, community representatives, and ordinary community members share the remainder of responses in descending order of frequency.

Table 7:13 **RIOT AS CONSEQUENCE**

Topic/Reference:			Principal Topic	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Court Case/Trial	38	14.3	31	20.3
Local Authority Initiative	24	9.0	1	0.6
Police Community Relations	23	8.6		
Effects on Traders/Trade	22	8.3	1	0.6
Central Government Initiative	21	7.9	5	3.3
Police Equipment(Offensive)	19	7.1	10	6.5
Inquiry(Silverman)	16	6.0	10	6.5
Police Riot Tactics/Training	15	5.5	3	2.0
Compensation/Insurance	14	5.3	5	3.3
Community Organised(Traders)	13	4.9		
Police Manning/Resources	11	4.1	4	2.6
Police Equipment(Protective)	9	3.4		
Community Organised(Other)	8	3.0	1	0.6
Impact on Birmingham's Image	8	3.0	3	2.0
Inquiry (Police Report)	6	2.2		
Rebuilding/Redevelopment	6	2.2		
Police Cmttee/Accountability	4	1.5		
Inquest	3	1.1	3	2.0
Funeral	2	0.7	2	1.4
Inquiry(Ouseley et al)	2	0.7	1	0.6
Police Recruitment(Black)	2	0.7	1	0.6
Media Response	2	0.7		
Police Awards	0	0.0		
Community Policing Training	0	0.0		
Other/Consequence	0	0.0		
Total	266	100.0 %	81	52.9 %

[Element Percent 23.2 %]

With nearly a quarter of all riot references and topics, and over half of all principal topics, the narrative element of consequence plays a very important role in the overall coverage of the Handsworth riots. The various consequences following on from the event of a riot may often provide insight into how exactly the event of the riot, and its underlying causes are interpreted and signified within news media coverage. This broad span of consequences can usefully be further subdivided below into forms of policing consequence and other concerns. Initially however it can be ventured that with far in excess of any other single topic, court trials secures over 14 % of all the substantial list of consequences itemised above. Regularly and routinely peppered throughout the year's riot coverage, the court cases reported considerably help to reaffirm the initial positioning of the riot as a criminal event, later subsequently endorsed by the judicial processes of law. Moreover, while the

general presence of the courts are found across the riot coverage, the single most prominent principal topic found across the entirety of riot items is also court cases which alone secures over one fifth of all riot report foci and gains more than three times the amount of news reports of any other single principal topic.

If the array of police topics are considered under two separate headings, those which point to an increased police presence and 'tougher' responses in the event of another riot, and those which at least implicitly indicate improving the concerns of community policing and liaison the following aggregated topics and percentage frequencies result.

Table 7:14 **Consequence As Policing: 'Tooling Up'**

Topic	Frequency	Percent	Principal Theme Frequency	Principal Theme Percent
Police Equipment(Offensive)	19	7.1	10	6.5
Police Riot Training	15	5.5	3	2.0
Police Manning/Resources	11	4.1	4	2.6
Police Equipment(Protective)	9	3.4		
Inquiry (Police Report)	6	2.2		
Total	70	22.3	17	11.1

Table 7:15 **Consequence As Policing: 'Community Policing'**

Topic	Frequency	Percent	Principal Theme Frequency	Principal Theme Percent
Police Community Relations	23	8.6		
Police Cmttee/Accountability	4	1.5		
Police Recruitment(Black)	2	0.7	1	0.6
Community Policing Training	0	0.0		
Total	29	10.8	1	0.6

If taken together over one third of all reports dealing with the consequences of the riots involve the police. Of these it is plain that consequences relating to 'tooling up' receive the most prominence with over one fifth of all consequence reports, and over one tenth of the entirety of principal topics. Together with courts, which may be taken as a further indication of the criminal signification of the riots, nearly one third of all principal topics (48) across the entirety of riot items are therefore concerned with the enforcement of law and order. In marked contrast, those other elements of policing which need not necessarily be regarded as supportive of an authoritarian law

and order response, though clearly still very much within the domain of law and order, receive just over one tenth of all consequence reports, and just over half of one percent of all principal topic coverage. Clearly, in so far as consequence is concerned with policing, it is the issues of tooling up, and not community policing or increased police accountability which gains the news interest.

Table 7:16 **RIOT AS CONSEQUENCE : Remainder**

Topic/Reference:			Principal Topic	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Local Authority Initiative	24	9.0	1	0.6
Effects on Traders/Trade	22	8.3	1	0.6
Central Government Initiative	21	7.9	5	3.3
Inquiry(Silverman)	16	6.0	10	6.5
Compensation/Insurance	14	5.3	5	3.3
Community Organised(Traders)	13	4.9		
Community Organised(Other)	8	3.0	1	0.6
Impact on Birmingham's Image	8	3.0	3	2.0
Rebuilding/Redevelopment	6	2.2		
Inquest	3	1.1	3	2.0
Funeral	2	0.7	2	1.4
Inquiry(Ouseley et al)	2	0.7	1	0.6
Media Response	2	0.7		
Total 111		41.5	17	11.1

If Court cases and Police involvement within consequence riot reports are considered in isolation as above, the bulk of all consequence items are accounted for. Of those remaining, local authority and central government initiatives receive significant attention, with central government commanding over 3 % of principal topics. Relatedly, the Birmingham city council sponsored Silverman Inquiry received a high number of news reports relating to the various aspects of the Handsworth disturbances, and assumed the principal news topic in over 6 % of all riot coverage. Interestingly, the Police Report written by the Chief Constable of West Midland's Police, and the Independent Report sponsored by the West Midland's County Council, both received relatively infrequent news attention with the 'radical' Independent report receiving the least attention of all three riot inquiries.

Thereafter the availability of compensation, or difficulties of claiming insurance, combine with topics of the effects on

traders, as well as the community organised as traders to secure 18 % of all consequence news reports, with both the items relating to Birmingham's image, and commercial rebuilding also of germane commercial or economic interest.

Though granted principal news interest on those occasions when reflecting the institutional events of a funeral and inquiry into the deaths of the Molidina brothers, these events, as events received limited riot reference, though the deaths themselves as noted above under 'aftermath' have assumed an important presence within the coverage as a whole. In sum, it can be noted that while riot as consequence assumes the largest proportion of riot coverage, when considered in terms of its constituent and principal topics found across the array of news items, it is the incidents of court cases and trials, policing generally, and policing in terms of the issues surrounding a general 'tooling up' response towards the Handsworth riots particularly that have received the substantial form of riot news treatment. Thereafter, Local Authority and Central Government initiatives, and the findings of the Silverman Inquiry assume a second plank of news interest while concerns relating to trade, commerce and the local economy also receive some news attention and interest.

Table 7:17 **RIOT AS BACKGROUND**

Topic/Reference:	Frequency	Percent	Principal Topic Frequency	Percent
Unemployment	28	11.4		
Social deprivation	23	9.3		
Community Difference(Black-Asian)	20	8.1		
Community Police Relations	19	7.7		
Precipitator/"Spark"	17	6.9		
Villa Cross Drugs Raid	17	6.9	7	4.6
Extremists: Organised Criminals	17	6.9	1	0.6
Crime/Criminality	16	6.5		
Police Black Youth Relations	9	3.7		
Racism/Discrimination	8	3.3		
Tension Indicators/Intelligence	7	2.8		
Model of Community Policing	7	2.8	1	0.6
Police Harassment/Racism	7	2.8		
Economy/Recession	7	2.8		
Government Policy/Schemes	6	2.4		
Local Authority Policy/Schemes	6	2.4		
Insensitive Policing	6	2.4		
Black Disenfranchisement	6	2.4		
Black Presence/History	5	2.0	1	0.6
Government Policy/Deleterious Cuts	5	2.0		
Handsworth Carnival 1985	3	1.2		
Racial Difference(White-Black)	3	1.2		
Extremists: Political Radicals	2	0.8	2	1.4
Local Authority Policy/Cuts	2	0.8		
Extremists: Political Right-wing	0	0.0		
Other/Background	0	0.0		
	Total 246	100.0 %	12	7.8 %

[Element Percent 21.5 %]

Clearly from the extensive list of background references and topics listed above the array of background information provided is both considerable and varied. While the individual frequencies are indicated above, these various topics can be further considered if placed within groupings of related concerns. While such groupings must be considered as merely one means of ordering basic findings for discussion, these nonetheless appear to be particularly apposite given the identified concerns and issues informing the competing riot perspectives in play.

Table 7:18 **RIOT AS GROUPED BACKGROUND**

Topic/Reference:	Frequency	Percent	Principal Topic Frequency	Principal Topic Percent
Criminality:				
Precipitator/"Spark"	17	6.9		
Villa Cross Drugs Raid	17	6.9	7	4.6
Extremists: Organised Criminals	17	6.9	1	0.6
Crime/Criminality	16	6.5		
Sub-Total	67	27.2 %	8	5.2 %
Policing:				
Community Police Relations	19	7.7		
Police Black Youth Relations	9	3.7		
Model of Community Policing	7	2.8	1	0.6
Tension Indicators/Intelligence	7	2.8		
Police Harassment/Racism	7	2.8		
Insensitive Policing	6	2.4		
Handsworth Carnival 1985	3	1.2		
Sub-Total	58	23.4 %	1	0.6 %
Conditions:				
Unemployment	28	11.4		
Social deprivation	23	9.3		
Economy/Recession	7	2.8		
Sub-Total	58	23.5 %		
Race and Racism:				
Community Difference(Black-Asian)	20	8.1		
Racism/Discrimination	8	3.3		
Black Disenfranchisement	6	2.4		
Black Presence/History	5	2.0	1	0.6
Racial Difference(White-Black)	3	1.2		
Sub-Total	42	17.0 %	1	0.6 %
Political Administration:				
Government Policy/Schemes	6	2.4		
Local Authority Policy/Schemes	6	2.4		
Government Policy/Deleterious Cuts	5	2.0		
Local Authority Policy/Cuts	2	0.8		
Sub-Total	19	7.6 %		
Political Conspirators:				
Extremists: Political Radicals	2	0.8	2	1.4
Extremists: Political Right-wing	0	0.0		
Sub-Total	2	0.8 %	2	1.4 %
Total	246	100.0 %	12	7.8 %

[Element Percent 21.5 %]

The first finding from the above is that, once again, crime and criminality have assumed the largest group of background

references and topics included within riot news coverage. Moreover, while crime and criminality can generally be seen as providing the most prevalent forms of background consideration, this consideration in nearly half of all occurrences refers to the temporally proximate, and spatially restricted aspects of the 'precipitator' or assumed riot trigger. The drugs raid carried out by the police on the Villa Cross Pub is also referenced as of importance in the immediate period leading up to the Handsworth riots. In both cases, background therefore assumes not only a particular crime focus but also a temporally proximate aspect which does not involve a wider or historical reach.

The remaining forms of reference concerned with crime posit a particular group of criminals as of relevant background interest. These are assumed to take the form of an organised coterie of criminals, on occasions referred to as 'drugs barons'. Over three quarters of background crime references therefore, reference a particular understanding of crime generally restricted to the immediate period prior to the riot, an identified place, and an identified group of organised criminals controlling the specific practice of drug dealing. In these senses, the wider canvas of inner city crime, and Handsworth crime in particular is not substantially the focus of news interest, but rather a specific crime focus is presented which, in terms of a particularly dominant interpretative schema discussed below, furnishes the 'evidential' resources upon which a specific schema can weave its claim for explanatory acceptance. The fact that almost three quarters of all principal topics across the background narrative element are focused upon the prior event of a specific police drugs raid, clearly posits a strong inference that the 'Villa Cross Drugs Raid' is metonymically as well as geographically at 'the heart' of the Handsworth riots. This major aspect of furnished 'background' information can be seen as a further and substantially prominent resource for the furtherance of an essentially conservative interpretative schema advanced towards the Handsworth riots.

If an explicitly directed crime focus assumes the largest proportion of presented background information, the general concerns of policing also gain substantial news attention. Here reference is made to community police relations. Contrary to a

long line of academic and other research which has continued to indicate that community-police relations in Handsworth have for a considerable period of time been regarded as far from successful (see chapter one) these are nonetheless frequently asserted to have been good before the Handsworth riots. A reporter on the night of the riots, for instance, introduces a question to a senior police officer by claiming 'The police have gone out of their way to foster good relations in Handsworth, has tonight destroyed that ?'. Moreover, the phrase used by Lord Scarman in his 1981 report suggested that Handsworth was a 'model of community policing', while the successful Handsworth carnival at the weekend prior to the initial disturbances was taken as a further indicator of 'good relations'.

While references within nine news items have referred to specifically police-black youth relations, and a further thirteen to police harassment and insensitivity, nearly a half of all references appear to indicate that in so far as policing is of background relevance to the Handsworth riots, community police relations were considered to be of incidental relevance to the event itself. Indeed, the phrase subsequently employed by the police themselves suggested that the riots came 'as a bolt out of the blue'. Moreover, while policing gains substantial involvement at the level of individual references and topics it is striking that only one item can be identified as dealing principally with the issue of past policing within Handsworth. This, as indicated above, further endorses the notion that in fact past policing practice may be regarded as providing a 'model of community policing'. Unlike crime and criminality, policing is not the subject of media focus and attention, but is rather referenced while other topics assume the principal focus.

Some of the basic social and urban indicators provided earlier in the profile of Handsworth have gained some news attention. With nearly a quarter of all topics within the background element of riot coverage referencing such conditions, this broad area is found to be present to a notable degree. However while unemployment is particularly present, the manifold and various forms of all other forms of social deprivation receives slightly less attention, and the general informing background of recession is barely mentioned. While substantially referenced within the overall riot coverage, no items were

considered as specifically providing the principal news focus in terms of such concerns.

As already discussed issues of race and racism have assumed a central aspect within discussions of the inner city generally, and have been placed at the centre of one interpretative schema seeking to interpret recent inner city riots. The interesting finding in regard to the array of concerns gaining news attention in this regard is that the single most prominent topic is that of black-Asian difference and hostility. That is, it would appear that in so far as questions of race are raised as 'relevant' to the Handsworth riots it is the intra-community concerns of black-Asian difference and/or hostility that is proffered as the central 'racial' factor. Little over one percent of references have referred explicitly to white-black racism and discrimination, though just under three percent of background items have referred to general discrimination and racism, and a few references have occasionally referred to police harassment and racism.

Clearly, though receiving some limited attention these general concerns have not received substantial media involvement either in terms of general references and topics or in terms of assuming the principal foci of any news items. Given their centrality to a particular interpretation already mentioned and discussed further below, this can be seen as a particularly 'inhibiting' finding to the extent that the resources which underpin this particular interpretation are largely absent, and considerably overshadowed by 'resources' - both explicit and implicit - which may be taken as supportive of the competing accounts already indicated. While no news items have specifically focused on the concerns of racism and disadvantage, one item did involve an extended treatment of the history of Handsworth in terms of its Black community though concluding with a focus upon recent police drugs raids and the problems of the Villa Cross. The fact nonetheless remains that in so far as issues of race and racial antipathy have been involved these appear to have largely been confined to the portrayal of internal community differences and rivalries found within Handsworth itself.

In so far as the formal and institutionalised world of politics gains an explicit purchase within an extended period of

riot coverage which is of background relevance it would appear that though present, this is not overall a prominent feature. Central government is more likely to feature than local administration, and moreover when present at all it is in connection with positive interventions rather than general policies and the array of service expenditure cuts documented elsewhere as particularly impacting upon inner city life and environments. Once again, it can be noted that this relative absence of Political background (with a capital "P") is of particular note to some of the interpretative accounts of the issues and concerns of the inner city generally and the recent inner city riots specifically. Though occasionally present as background information, it can be noted that none of those items involving background reference to either Central Government or Local Authority involvement and impact have received principal news attention.

One last group of topics and references of background interest and concern was identified as political conspirators. In an earlier discussion of conservative responses to riots, it was noted how a predisposition was often evident (derivative from a particular understanding of the relationship inhering between the masses and elites, a faith in traditional and institutional arrangements accommodating different social interests, as well as an indigenous value system premised upon individual enterprise, achievement, tolerance and fair play) which frequently posited the 'cause' of social unrest and disorder as either the outcome of organised criminality or political extremists fermenting 'trouble' for political ends. In both cases the explanatory role focused in relation to such 'extremists' may be seen as identifying a coterie or elite of culpable individuals who have orchestrated such a criminal outburst for their own machiavellian ends; the 'cause' of the riots is therefore sought in the identification of such a devious and deviant group and its individual members.

Interestingly, it has already been noted how almost seven percent of all background references and topics have involved reference to an organised criminal group of 'drug barons', further possibly reinforced by attention to such news related events as the police raid on the Villa Cross; these also received nearly three quarters of all principal topic focus.

Moreover, though in a minority, some reference has also involved the identification of a group of political extremists posited as possible agent provocateurs behind the Handsworth riots. This was further briefly reinforced with items of principal news concern focused in such terms.

Once again it can be noted how such concerns firstly typically criminalise the events under consideration, and secondly posit the mass of people directly involved as effectively duped by the covert interests of an orchestrating elite. While in the first instance this criminal coterie is posited as within and emanating from the local community, in the second it is posited as a force manipulating from without. In both cases however an effective wedge is driven between the possibility of attending to collectively held grievances and communal action, and the sinister orchestrations of an extremist group.

Interestingly, though reference has been made within other published and mediated accounts of the existence of an extremist group of right-wing agent provocateurs fermenting black-police hostility along lines of racial hostility, no such references are found within the overall riot coverage where a radical 'anarchist' group was posited as possibly behind the events in question. Extremism when posited as relevant to the background context of the Handsworth riots is therefore either of a strictly criminal or radical political form, both of which displace attention from issues of mainstream racism, while the extremism of a rightwing group premised upon racial bigotry receives no attention whatsoever.

In summary it can be noted how the narrative element of background assumes a major prominence within the overall riot narrative while it also affords over half of all principal news topics. These however have tended to be focused in regard to criminal activities and policing concerns. Though issues of unemployment and social deprivation, and race and racism have been involved they are considerably overshadowed by the presence of 'criminal' concerns both in terms of general references and topics involved, as well as principal news interests. Political considerations also receive subsidiary prominence confirmed with no principal news interest topics, while it can also be noted that a specific form of criminal understanding of the riots has

been involved which, on occasion assuming the form of political extremism, has generally posited an identified group, activity and possible motive for orchestrating the Handsworth disturbances. To this considerable extent the resources found within this important element of background are significantly, if not exclusively, directed towards a particular form of law and order understanding of the riots.

Table 7:19 **RIOT AS FUTURE**

Topic/Reference:			Principal Topic	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Happy Vistas	15	27.3	11	7.2
Dire Predictions	12	21.9	3	2.0
Calendar Landmark	10	18.2	4	2.6
Future As Generalised Violence	6	10.9	1	0.7
Local Authority-Failed Promises	5	9.0		
Central Government-Failed Promises	4	7.3		
Other/Future	3	5.4	3	2.0
	Total 55	100.0 %	22	14.4 %

[Element Percent 4.8 %]

As discussed earlier, if background can be seen as a interpretative element of potentially considerable support to both liberal and radical accounts, and thereby of significance to the extent that such resources are not provided within this element of riot narrative, so the element of future may also be regarded as particularly susceptible to discursive mobilisation. Though not assuming a wide number of general references and related topics, the element of future does nonetheless receive a considerable amount of principal topic news attention.

While a riot may be regarded as offering little in the way of positive, affirmative and much less celebratory news, either in terms of the initial event or indeed longer term repercussions and expectations, previous discussions of the genre of regional news should have alerted us to the characteristic predisposition towards a form of positive news. This also finds expression within the coverage of the Handsworth riots. Whether involving the concluding news focus to the first week's riot coverage focusing upon the jazz band providing musical relief to local people in the streets of devastated property, a news item following the Handsworth and police

sponsored cricket team to the West Indies, the portrait of 'Ernie, the unsung hero of Handsworth' carrying out charitable work, or indeed the involvement of the Police in school schemes designed to break-down possible antipathies held by youth towards the local police, they all offer an essentially positive portrayal of the Handsworth riots in the longer term, with a postulated happy future scenario. With over 7 % of all principal topics this one aspect of 'future' secures not inconsiderable coverage. Moreover, as actual time proceeds so the incidence of such 'happy vistas' become increasing frequent suggesting, both by the substantive news interest and indeed, omissions of news concern, that Handsworth is returning to 'normal'.

Unfortunately, given the noticeable silences and omissions already found to characterise the mediated portrayal of Handsworth within past news coverage, 'normal' does not include serious attention devoted to many of the specific and interrelated collective concerns identified as including urban deprivation, disadvantage, and concerns of racism and discrimination. However, while 'happy vistas' may assume a prominent part within an extended period of regional news coverage (though also found within the first three days of riot coverage), this does not displace more traditional and established news concerns which are sensitised to the possibility of future repetition of the riot as event.

Dire predictions or warnings that such an event could happen again therefore also figure prominently within this narrative element, and further revitalise the significance of the event and immediate aftermath which are found to be referenced even some time after the event in actual time. In other words the event, aftermath and general consequences begin to assume a new significance to the extent that they may now effectively be positioned not as a past event, but rather as a contemporary sign pointing to future things to come. If the Handsworth riots has thus assumed both the possibility for celebratory news coverage as well as dire predictions, it can also assume the form of regular calender landmarks. Thus, whether the first or second anniversary, Chief Constable's annual reports, or end of year review of major news stories, the Handsworth riots can be repeatedly resurrected and put to work

within differing forms of news treatment.

Moreover if the Handsworth riots can assume different future prospects according to different news interests, so too can it be placed within a wider frame of news concerns. It has already been indicated how on occasion crime stories can be considered either as types of crime (mugging, vandalism, drug dealing etc.) or even as a general phenomenon, usually referred to as a rising tide of crime in general, or perhaps rise in violent crime. The Handsworth riots has also been placed within such news treatments aligned sometimes explicitly, sometimes by contiguous juxtaposition, with other forms of violent crime. Most notably the riots have on occasion been linked to increased street violence, football riots and general violence. In other words, the criminal and violent aspects of the riots have been pressed into the service of an overview which seeks to maintain that society is itself becoming increasingly violent and the riots therefore simply express such wider changes just as football hooliganism and street violence generally are expressive of such a supposed sea change.

The problem here, of course, is that a general descriptive effectively subsumes different social forms and pulverizes both their specificity and possible social origins under a blanket label of condemnation. In other words, a particular social form (violence) is abstracted, generalised and effectively posited as both cause and effect of these disparate social events, which may be more appropriately regarded as in need of considered investigation and social inquiry. 'Violence' assumes different forms, within different contexts, and is open to conflicting definitions. It is therefore obfuscating to weave a semblance of similarity between disparate events and processes under the guiding frame of 'violence'. However, for present purposes, in so far as such has on occasion been the case, it is apparent once again that the Handsworth riots is posited as a generalised criminal and violent trend which is seen to be steadily characterising both the present and future scenario of society as a whole. This may be regarded as demonstrating a further affinity for both the definition and wider understanding of the Handsworth riots which now become situated within a problematic of 'violence' requiring a law and order response.

The future has also been invoked on occasion when the

perceived failure of local authority and central government initiatives following in the wake of the riots have been seen to have failed or been inadequate. That is, a future scenario has occasionally been painted which extrapolates from failed policies and practices to a projected continuation of the problems and prospects already experienced by members of the Handsworth community. In relative terms these are not very prominent, and with no principal topic focus, they once again tend, if anything, to point to the lack of considered treatment relating to the politics of the inner city earlier outlined under the headings of political fragmentation, fracture and fissure. Two further items referring to the Handsworth riots, as well as future prospects principally focused upon a 'gang war' between rival drug dealers in the vicinity of the Villa Cross public house, once again establishing a connection between a specific place, identifiable group and criminal activity at the centre of the Handsworth riots.

In summary, the element of future though not prevalent when compared to other elements nonetheless enjoys a number of principal news topics which have tended to reflect both the criminal and law and order frame found to heavily characterise other elements while also involving something of the regional news genre predilection for 'happy news'. Handsworth though generally posited in media accounts as a place of crime and criminality can nonetheless by virtue of such a process of media labelling occasionally be reclaimed as providing 'another side to this troubled district'. It may be hypothesised the more salient the established news concerns (i.e crime, criminality, and riots) so the scope for human interest stories dependent upon a surprising, novel or unexpected aspect is increased. Happy vistas supply these as well as providing further news items which are in general sympathy with the genre disposition for affirming, positive and celebratory news. Demonstrating that regional news cannot in any sense be regarded as providing a unified and essentially closed perspective, it can also be noted that happy news can also rub shoulders with dire predictions. Logically contradictory and yet reflective of the complex form of regional news and its different and sometimes competing news interests, different types of appropriation can and do take place which provide differing resources for the establishment of

a wider understanding of the Handsworth riots.

However, while a wide array of interpretative resources may be regarded as having been furnished within the overall news narrative of the Handsworth riots, it has also been demonstrated that significant skews of news interests and concerns have tended to predispose such coverage to particular interpretations and not others. If attention is now confined to the 'core' interpretative element, 'explanation', this explicit interpretative resource has been found to be relatively silent across this portrayal.

Table 7:20 **RIOT AS EXPLANATION**

Topic/Reference:	Frequency	Percent	Principal Topic Frequency	Principal Topic Percent
Crime/Criminality	16	36.4		
Social Deprivation/Unemployment	9	20.5		
Racial Rivalry (Soft)	6	13.6		
Social Injustice	4	9.1		
Moral Decline	3	6.8		
Police Insensitivity/Harassment	3	6.8		
Other/Explanation	3	6.8		
Racial Hostility (Hard)	0	0.0		
Total	44	100.0 %	0	0.0 %

[Element Percent: 3.7 %]

What is immediately striking about this particular element, of course, is its relative absence when considered against some of the other elements already discussed. Journalists' claims about, and practices directed towards news objectivity and impartiality have long been the source of discussion and controversy both within the profession of journalism and without. However, while news accounts may largely eschew explicit interpretation, particularly when confronted with the inherently contentious understanding of a riot, it has been demonstrated above that 'interpretation' is already implicitly structured into the selection choices governing the agenda of news concerns, and can implicitly inform the various narrative elements as above.

However, if in part it is demonstrably the case that media personnel themselves rarely voice a personal interpretative account, of the order 'this is what the Handsworth riots were all about, this is their cause and this is there significance' it has been demonstrated that in effect this is very much

implicit to the forms of news coverage already considered, and which is arguably unavoidable given the social nature of both the riots and the journalistic news process. Selections, choices and final framing and packaging are all inescapable and inhere within the final news product. However, if explicit 'interpretation' is not always present from the voice of the news presenter or reporter this is not to say, of course, that other voices are not permitted to profer explicit interpretative and even judgemental or evaluative accounts. This, as noted already, is the very stuff of news, where news must be considered as in effect the account of the event, rather than the event itself given the array of social viewpoints which 'claim' or seek to discursively take possession of the event from different perspectives. To the extent that voices have been permitted access and explanations have been proferred the element of explanation can be usefully attended to.

Of the 44 explicit explanations advanced, over one third have firmly pointed to the riot as a criminal act perpetrated by criminals. Curiously, though in large measure demonstrating an affinity with crime news where discussion of motivation, reason or cause in either individual or collective terms is largely absent, so such accounts have invariably posited 'crime' as an explanation in and of itself apparently requiring no further explanation or underpinning justification. Crime is crime is crime, and the possible inquiry into its possible wider social cause is invariably regarded from within such a perspective as tantamount to excusing, or worse, challenging the very definition of what is regarded as a criminal event requiring a law and order response. However, within a minority of cases some wider underpinning has been advanced which is supportive of a criminal explanation, but which is further buttressed by reference to a deemed collapse or serious decline of social morality regarded as the last line of defence against the Hobbesian nightmare of 'all against all'. Together, then, these two criminal explanations assume the vast majority (43.2 %) of all proferred explanations.

Explanations which point to widespread social deprivation and acute levels of inner city unemployment have found expression in just over one fifth of all explanations. However when issues of race and racism are considered, concerns

identified at the heart of at least one available interpretation of inner city riots, it is found that rather than race being advanced as an explanatory factor invoking racial discrimination and disadvantage experienced by a black minority and perpetrated by a white majority, race in fact is invoked to the extent that intra-ethnic (Black-Asian) differences and hostilities are seen to be at the centre of the disturbances. In this regard, as with the criminal accounts offered above, the explanation of the disturbances is seen as very much inhering within the communities of Handsworth themselves, and does not therefore require consideration of wider parameters of concern. The problem has literally, in such accounts, been socially and geographically located, that is situated within the inner city confines of Handsworth itself. From the vantage point of a different perspectives this amounts to blaming and scapegoating the victim, involving what can appear as a sinister and cynical displacement of issues of race and racism onto the minority communities themselves.

Explicit reference to widespread racism and discrimination in terms which tend to situate such accounts within a general concern for the denial of social justice found to characterise the plight of racial and ethnic minorities living within the inner city have featured only within a minority of all advanced explanations. Also found within a minority, though of related concern, has been the positing of the police, and practices of harassment and insensitive policing as an explanation at the heart of the riots.

If issues of race and racism have been advanced only within a minority of all explanations, it is also noticeable that 'hard' racialist accounts which have sought to place the origin of such social disturbances firmly within a racist understanding of racial difference, inferiority and failure of an assumed immigrant population to assimilate to a traditional resistant and 'tolerant' culture have also been absent. In summary then, though within an overall minority of all narrative elements, explicit explanations have occasionally been advanced. The majority of these have sought to account for the riots as a criminal event requiring a law and order response. Nearly one fifth of the remainder of explanations have invoked issues of high unemployment and social deprivation as the principal cause,

while issues of race have tended to be posited as an intra-community difference existing between Black and Asian communities within the Handsworth area. Thereafter issues of social injustice, in part referencing minority communities, and police insensitivity and implicitly invoking institutionalised racism have only secured a minority of all explanations.

Table 7:21 **RIOT AS METAPHOR**

Topic/Reference:	Frequency	Percent	Principal Topic Frequency	Principal Topic Percent
World of Nature/Instinct	19	33.3		
Other Inner City Riots	14	24.6		
Handsworth Riots 1981	10	17.5		
Northern Ireland	6	10.5		
American 'Race Riots'	3	5.3		
War Time Britain	2	3.5		
Historical Mainland Riots	2	3.5		
Contemporary Acts of Disorder	1	1.8		
	Total 57	100.0 %	0	0.0 %

[Element Percent 5.0 %]

One last element deemed to be particularly instructive in terms of the analysis of riot coverage is the use of metaphor and allusion. With a third of all uses of metaphor the 'world of nature and instinct' secure the majority of all such instances. The world of nature and instinct may be regarded as particularly revealing to the extent that a riot can be likened to understandings of nature which invariably invoke a force, sometimes destructive, but always without conscious intent or rationality of purpose. Reference to instinct may also be regarded as particularly revealing in that it accords with conservative responses already discussed earlier where, either through the sinister design of others, or the inherent libidinous forces which are seen to generally inhere within us all (though some more than others) finally overrun consciously held forms of social and moral control. In this sense such use of metaphor can be regarded as a further endorsement of a particular means of making sense of the riot. A means moreover, which is not concerned to seek out the possible purposeful and collective character of such an event, but which rather sees such an 'outburst' as a form of uncontrolled mob behaviour satiating instinctive drives and immediate asocial

gratifications.

Nearly 44 % of all use of metaphor and allusions have referred to other inner city riots and contemporary acts of disorder, with reference to the Handsworth disturbances of 1981 assuming over 17 % of all such references. While such allusions may begin to situate the latest riots within a more generalised and relatively contemporary phenomenon, they do not in themselves of course necessarily provide any further degree of explanation. Frequently posited as similar to, or a further example of this generalised phenomenon, questions of interpretation though perhaps if anything more urgent, remain generally unanswered at an explicit level.

Allusion to Northern Ireland, particularly in connection with the ensuing debate over the introduction of baton rounds (plastic bullets), has provided a 'parallel' which, in so far as the differences pertaining to these two situations are diminished under the surface similarity of a particular form of State agency response, questions concerning either the appropriateness of labels applied to groups involved or the informing backdrop of competing interpretations involved become displaced from view under a generalised concern with 'controlling trouble-makers'.

American race riots have also been referred to on occasion, as has war-time Britain, indicating that though riots may not be entirely without precedence, in the former a geographical distance is indicated and in the later a similarity is forged to the extent that similarities of visible destruction have been invoked. The long history of mainland riots found both in the last century and the present, have largely been ignored. Such references could be seen as providing a further degree of historical contextualisation which would perhaps begin to counter the assumed 'unprecedented' nature of recent inner city riots while also providing a further element of support to interpretative schemes which seek to address the possible array of social causes that frequently inform historical accounts, but which are strangely absented within many current accounts relating to inner city disturbances. The passage of time apparently permits a wider degree of historical and social contextualisation to events of social disorder which may in retrospect also be seen as important harbingers of social

change. Such resources however, appear to be largely unavailable in terms of the deployment of metaphor and allusion across the twelve months of riot coverage, though as already noted other forms of 'potent' metaphor have been found. However, lacking either historical or social depth, these uses of metaphor and allusion have tended to concentrate on the immediate 'effects' or generalised similarities of recent inner city riots, and in the case of the deployment of 'nature/instinct' metaphors have tended to support an account which sees the Handsworth riots as essentially an irrational, and instinctual eruption of purposeless destruction and violence. To this extent the deployment of metaphor and allusion may be regarded as particularly supportive of a 'criminal' understanding of the events in question.

Summary Findings

It has been noted across the discussion above that the story of the Handsworth riot has unravelled over an extended period of actual time. Indeed, in so far as the Handsworth riots continue to be invoked within news items over five years after the initial events, suggests that the story of the Handsworth riots can continue to inform news reports perhaps indefinitely. The riots appear therefore to be in distinct danger of assuming the status of a contemporary 'myth', that is an established and condensed set of images, concerns and issues whose force and vitality lies not in the depiction of a past event, but rather in its potency as an organising set of ideas and images capable of providing 'insight' into the affairs of the present.

Attending to some of the fundamental narrative elements deployed across this mediated account, the riot story has been found to exhibit a structure which involves different elements in different degrees. These, it has been suggested, potentially provide differing degrees of explanatory and interpretative emphasis across the three interpretative frameworks discussed, as well as encompassing the substantive agenda of riot issues and concerns gaining expression across a considerable period of riot and post-riot portrayal. It has been demonstrated that while explicit explanations are relatively rare, though not entirely absent, the remaining narrative elements can be

regarded as providing the necessary infrastructure which, taken together, represent the resources which may be mobilised in the furtherance of particular interpretative schemas. These, though not entirely without competing resources and accounts, have been found to be clearly predisposing towards a criminal understanding either implicitly or explicitly requiring a law and order response.

An essentially conservative understanding of the riots has been effectively supported and sustained across the riot narrative, though a liberal concern with issues of social deprivation, disadvantage and unemployment have also found some sustenance within and across the elements discussed. However, if the radical interpretation is considered which has clearly posited a central concern with issues of race and racism, and specifically police harassment, then it is found that this interpretative account has received relatively little in the way of narrative resources which are required for the generation of an overall and adequate interpretative schema. The main finding here, then, is that while an array of resources are in fact present which may be taken as inherently supportive of the main contending interpretative schemas, these are present in differing degrees and, in the case of both liberal and radical accounts serious absences or silences undermine the possibility of forging a coherent and adequate interpretative position based on the media resources at hand. Such has not been found to be the case with the conservative and 'criminal' understanding of the Handsworth riots which has consistently been privileged across the various elements discussed above.

VI THE HANDSWORTH RIOTS VISUALISED

From the discussion above it has been maintained that the coverage of the Handsworth riots across a twelve month period, though involving aspects of the three main interpretative accounts mobilised in relation to the Handsworth and other inner city riots, has nonetheless tended to privilege aspects which can be taken as supportive of a conservative and law and order understanding of such an event. While other possible 'resources' are also involved these are seen as taking a decidedly subordinate role within the overall agenda of riot issues and

concerns. However, if this has been found at the level of verbalised narrative, what has the visual dimension consisted of, is it the case that a similar pattern of visual signification has been involved, and if so how can this be charted given the special difficulties associated with visual/film analysis ?

In the first stage of this riot analysis each separate news items was closely examined and each reference or topic as well as deemed principal topic were charted as either present or absent in each item across the twelve month period. On this basis an overview of the riot coverage as a whole was secured, rather than say, the multiple appearances of different topics within any single item. If a similar general approach is pursued at the level of visual analysis some of the difficulties of attending to moving visual images are also avoided while also enabling an overview picture to be gained.

For the purposes of the following analysis, then, each visual reference is noted if at any stage present in each of the 153 riot news items. After an initial pilot study it was found, contrary to many discussions of film, and even studies of news visuals [cf. GUMG(1980); Davis & Walton(1984)] that the visual news imagery employed tends to exhibit a high degree of iconicity. Indeed, reversing Barthes'(1987) emphasis (though not general sense of the 'complementary relationship' existing between text and image) it became apparent that the development of news stories rarely involved 'visual relay', where the story is significantly developed by visual (symbolic and indexical) indication alone.

Visual news imagery was found, rather, to be generally framed in close synchrony with bites of verbal track and, contrary to Barthes' analysis of photographs serves to anchor the text, as much as the text serves to anchor the visual dimension. Furthermore, it was also found that the repertoire of riot imagery was not extensive and tended, in the main, to closely follow the constituent topics already discussed within the overall narrative. Some possible visual distinctions have been allowed for within the visual track however and, following Monaco(1981), involved the following visual forms.

An iconic image, may be taken as a sign in which the signifier represents the signified by its likeness or similarity to it; it is a direct representation of that to which it refers. Or, in Barthes' terms when talking about photographs, 'no doubt the photograph involves a certain arrangement of the scene (framing, reduction, flattening) but this transition is not a transformation (in the way a coding can be); we have here a loss of the equivalence characteristic of the true sign systems and a statement of quasi-identity. In other words, the sign of the message is not drawn from an institutional stock, is not coded, and we are brought up against the paradox of a message without a code' (Barthes, 1987:36). Thus a film sequence, scene or shot (or equivalent accompanying still) within an item concerned with the Handsworth riots depicting say, a burning street, looted property, or injured police denotatively signify just these very things. In such cases, while not necessarily indicating how such visual imagery is to be aligned to a particular interpretative schema they nonetheless directly indicate at a denotative level the visual resources which are available, and may be regarded as exhibiting a degree of independence from the positioning force of the verbal narrative.

This is not to say however, that certain scenes are not, at a denotative level, more likely to be supportive of certain verbal accounts and not others in term of the overall interpretations advanced in relation to the Handsworth riots, but rather that in so far as the visual dimension exhibits a high degree of iconicity a relative independence is set up, which may be all the more 'supportive' or authenticating for that very reason. In this sense an affinity may be regarded as existing between certain narrative elements which pertain to riot as event, aftermath and immediate response for example, and their visualisation and which may be taken as consistently positioning the riot in specific terms - and hence not others.

An indexical image, which indicates by its relationship to, rather than direct likeness of an object, can be further broken down into two forms: synecdoche and metonymy. Synecdoche is here taken to refer to the visual practice of referring to an object by visually naming a part, or vice versa, while metonymy indicates an idea by its associated detail. Clearly, these may at times all subsist together. Thus, for instance, a police car

may indicate visually the actual presence of the police while also metonymically indicating the presence of the police understood as a social institution. These two forms of visual image are thus, in Barthes' terms more likely to 'work' at a connotative level, and in so far as this is found to be the case, the verbal track may well provide an increased directing role. 'When it comes to the "symbolic message", the linguistic message no longer guides identification but interpretation, constituting a kind of vice which holds the connotated meanings from proliferating' (Barthes, 1987: 39).

Even here, however, it may be ventured that when synecdochic or metonymic images are deployed they are of a highly conventionalised, and therefore immediately accessible kind which may appear almost iconic such is there immediate recognition. The visual scenes of the removal of bodies or burnt out ruins of the Post-Office for instance, in association with the verbal commentary, is immediately representative of 'the death of the two brothers'. Scenes of police officers searching through the debris of the post office is readily understood as depicting 'police investigations' and so on. While certainly working above a strictly iconic level such scenes may not be taken as constituting visual relay, though they do clearly involve a degree of indexicality (or, in Barthes' sense 'symbolisation') in their reception. On the infrequent occasions when such imagery has been employed, unlike iconic images noted above which may be identified without attending to the verbal track, such images have been captured in combination with the accompanying verbal line which arguably generally mirrors their reception.

Moreover, given the practice of 'talking heads' accessed into certain controversial news accounts, a further distinction was introduced at the visual level for the purposes of this news analysis which indicates through 'personification' the presence of some of the key protagonists within the story of the Handsworth riot. Personification is here taken to be a further sub-species of either or both synecdoche and metonymy. Thus, if a community is represented by a community spokesperson for instance, both the community as a whole as well as the idea of the community is arguably signified by the visual presence of a spokesperson, similarly with other 'key' institutions whether

'the government', 'local authority', 'police' etcetera. If these forms of visual involvement are now considered across the twelve months of news riot reports the following findings are obtained.

Table 7:22 **Riot News Visuals**

	Frequency	Percent
Icon	377	65.3
Personification	107	18.5
Metonymy	87	15.0
Synecdoche	6	1.0
Total	577	100.0 %

On this finding it can be maintained, in contrast to other visual tracks found within different television genres as well as other discussions of news visuals, that regional riot news visuals at least, involve a high degree of iconic redundancy. Images tend to work to the degree to which they depict at an essentially denotative level, while connotative associations and relatively sophisticated visual interventions which relay the overall narrative are not generally found within the bulk of all riot visuals. That is, in so far as meaning is conveyed this is accomplished principally through the involvement of iconic images rather than relatively sophisticated use of visual conventions found elsewhere and which 'work' according to established and generally understood filmic conventions (which should not be confused with visual news conventions). News imagery, it is maintained here, has few exceptions to a general prevalence of iconic and personified images. This is not to suggest however that the visual dimension in association with the verbal track do not combine to effect a synchronised narrative capable of carrying connotative meanings, but it is to suggest that the resources, both verbal and visual, are relatively direct and work by means of declared presences, and do not in consequence rely upon associated absences in the discharge of meaning.

From the discussion above it has already been indicated, and indeed constructed into the research design, that the riot narrative can be attended to as a series of interlocking elements each populated with a number of explicit topics and references which may be considered to privilege certain interpretations and not others. This can be deduced, however, from the presence and absence of substantive concerns and issues

germane to the discussion of inner city riots. However, returning to the high degree of iconic imagery found across the riot coverage, while this finding is of interest in that it may well point to a visual underpinning to a sought objectivist news 'stance', in terms of the riot narrative itself it is also of interest to locate where across these narrative elements the visual dimension is found. If the visual dimension is now considered in terms of the aggregated findings it is found that the basic narrative elements already considered receive the following visual representation.

Table 7:23 **Narrative Elements And Visuals**

Riot As :	Verbal Narrative Frequency	Percent	Visual Narrative Frequency	Percent
Event	228	19.9	184	31.9
Aftermath	131	11.5	73	12.7
Response	117	10.2	93	16.1
Consequence	266	23.3	140	24.3
Background	246	21.5	47	8.1
Future	55	4.8	25	4.3
Explanation	44	3.8	5	0.9
Metaphor/Allusion	57	5.0	10	1.7
Total Topics/ References	1144	100.0 %	577	100.0 %

With two major exceptions it is apparent that the visual references approximately follow the pattern already elicited in terms of the narrative elements considered. However it is noticeable that the event of a riot secures much increased visual reference, while aftermath and response also secure increased visual reference relative to the other narrative elements. Background is not visually as present and is considerably under-represented when compared to its verbal narrative presence. Explanation and metaphor, perhaps not surprisingly when considering the parameters of the news form when compared say to a feature film, are not significantly present. If this is the broad pattern across the narrative elements, which as we have seen appear to privilege relative to the other elements the immediate event and post-riot aftermath, response and consequences what is the exact composition of these visual references across the different narrative elements?

Table 7:24 **RIOT AS EVENT**

Topic/Reference:	Frequency	Percent	VISUALS Frequency	Percent
Rioting: Violence/Stoning	64	28.1	20	10.9
Property Destruction/Burning	57	25.0	80	43.5
Rioting: Looting	34	14.9	1	0.5
Police Operation/Amassed	25	11.0	29	15.8
Emergency Service Involvement	20	8.7	23	12.5
Police Under Attack	16	7.0	14	7.6
Police Advance	10	4.4	17	9.2
Other/General Event	2	0.9	0	0.0
Total	228	100.0 %	184	100.0 %

[Element Percent 19.9 %; Visuals: 31.9 %]

It is interesting to note that in terms of the visual dimension the event of the riot assumes a much increased presence across the riot narrative. This, as discussed earlier, is not confined to the mediated coverage following closely upon the initial events in actual time, but is rather found distributed across the entirety of riot news coverage. Thus, the tendency to involve exciting, dramatic actuality footage and stills either in introducing a riot related news items or within the bulk of the news item itself is a pattern found across the year's coverage. In so far as these visual references tend to depict the initial event in terms of violence and destruction, with the police posited as apparently an outside agency ill-equipped and under assault by an unidentified mob such scenes tend to continually reaffirm the riot as a problem of law and order, no matter the media time of news delivery within the unfolding narrative.

Clearly the event of the riot is visually referenced in such terms as above in nearly a third of all riot news items. As such, a consistent stream of riot items across the twelve month period resurrect, and in part at least, re-run the event of the riot with all the drama, violence and destruction that this entailed without necessarily advancing the overall understanding of such an event. Indeed, it could be maintained that in so far as such imagery is constantly invoked, with many of the limitations attendant upon a visual focus upon the immediate effects and devastated aftermath, the advancement of a wider frame of understanding, contextualisation and even interpretation is repeatedly narrowed for all, except one

particular interpretative account which happens to place the riot as event at the heart of its particular discourse.

Table 7:25 **RIOT AS AFTERMATH**

Topic/Reference:	Frequency	Percent	VISUALS Frequency	Percent
Death of Molidinas	45	34.3	22	30.1
Devastated Property	36	27.5	35	47.9
Costs of Damage	16	12.1	0	0.0
Injured General	14	10.7	4	5.5
Looted Property	12	9.2	8	11.0
Injured Police	6	4.6	4	5.5
Other/General Aftermath	2	1.4	0	0.0
Injured Rioters	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total 131		100.0 %	73	100.0 %

[Element Percent 11.4 % ; Visuals 12.6 %]

Once again the aftermath visual dimension is seen to increase slightly upon the relative presence of aftermath references and topics, which may already be regarded, given their compressed occurrence within actual time, to have assumed a remarkable longevity across the riot coverage as a whole. A longevity moreover which continually posits the Handsworth riots as the scene of two deaths, in addition to an outpouring of violence, criminal destruction and looting. It is notable that though the death of the two brothers found the next day within the burnt out shell of the post office was clearly not open to iconic representation the metonymic scenes of the burnt out post office and subsequent removal of the bodies was repeatedly deployed across the news coverage as evident in the 22 separate news items when used. With nearly 30 % of all aftermath visuals, it is nonetheless the effects of devastated property that have individually secured the most visual reference.

Table 7:26 **RIOT AS RESPONSE**

Topic/Reference:	Frequency	Percent	VISUALS Frequency	Percent
Police Response	37	31.5	28	30.1
Police Investigations	32	27.3	12	12.9
Status Visit/Proclamation	25	21.4	18	19.4
Local Authority Response	7	6.0	5	5.4
Community Representatives	6	5.1	6	6.4
Community Others	5	4.3	6	6.4
Clearing Up/Boarding Up	5	4.3	17	18.3
Other/Response	0	0.0	1	1.1
Total	117	100.0 %	93	100.0 %
[Element Percent	10.2 %	Visuals	16.1 %]	

Following the general hierarchy of response already noted in terms of references and topics, so the visual dimension also appears to broadly reflect this pattern with the police, followed by central and local government, community representatives and community leaders all being afforded a visual presence. The clearing up operations carried out after the riots have also secured an increased visual presence when compared to the verbal narrative. Once again such scenes can be taken as reinforcing the riot as a violent and destructive event. And in so far as such images are constantly replayed the development of understanding may be regarded as constantly inhibited given the return to the riot and its immediate destructive effects.

With nearly a quarter of all visual references the element of consequence may be deemed in terms of the visual dimension to be particularly pronounced. While the visual reference to courts is not as pronounced as the verbal line would indicate, if the general concern of policing is considered once again we find that the police are likely to be visually referenced twice as many times when consider in regard to 'tooling up' as opposed to 'community policing' consequences. If the number of separate visual references to court are included with the 'tooling up' police consequences found at the core of conservative law and order accounts it is found that over a quarter of all consequences are strictly situated within the judicial and law enforcement processes mobilised in the implementation of law and order.

Table 7:27 **Consequence as Judicial Process**

Topic/Reference:	Frequency	Percent	VISUALS Frequency	Percent
Court Case/Trial	38	14.3	11	7.8

Table 7:28 **Consequence As Policing: 'Tooling Up'**

Topic	Frequency	Percent	VISUALS Frequency	Percent
Police Equipment(Offensive)	19	7.1	9	6.4
Police Riot Tactics/Training	15	5.5	4	2.8
Police Manning/Resources	11	4.1	5	3.6
Police Equipment(Protective)	9	3.4	4	2.8
Inquiry (Police Report)	6	2.2	4	2.8
Total	70	22.3	26	18.4

Table 7:29 **Consequence As Policing: 'Community Policing'**

Topic	Frequency	Percent	VISUALS Frequency	Percent
Police Community Relations	23	8.6	10	7.1
Police Cmttee/Accountability	4	1.5	2	1.4
Police Recruitment(Black)	2	0.7	2	1.4
Community Policing Training	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	29	10.8	14	9.9 %

Table 7:30 **RIOT AS CONSEQUENCE : Remainder**

Topic/Reference:	Frequency	Percent	VISUALS Frequency	Percent
Local Authority Initiative	24	9.0	15	10.7
Effects on Traders/Trade	22	8.3	12	8.6
Central Government Initiative	21	7.9	9	6.4
Inquiry(Silverman)	16	6.0	11	7.1
Compensation/Insurance	14	5.3	7	5.0
Community Organised(Traders)	13	4.9	11	7.1
Community Organised(Other)	8	3.0	8	5.7
Impact on Birmingham's Image	8	3.0	5	3.6
Rebuilding/Redevelopment	6	2.2	6	4.3
Inquest	3	1.1	1	0.7
Funeral	2	0.7	1	0.7
Inquiry(Ouseley et al)	2	0.7	1	0.7
Media Response	2	0.7	2	1.4
Sub- Total	141	53.0	89	63.6
Total	266	100.0 %	140	100.0 %

[Element Percent 23.2 %; Visuals 24.3 %]

Overall, it can be noted that the visual dimension accompanying the verbal references and topics already considered in some detail, tends to visually confirm such an agenda of concerns and its internal prioritisation of issues. As such judicial and law enforcement 'consequences' have tended to take precedence over issues of 'community policing' and accountability, while concerns with the local economy in terms of the riot's impact upon local traders appears to also secure verbally and visually more news attention than does other community consequences, perhaps relating to the riots consequential impact upon community relations, and the various fault lines of political fracture, fragmentation and fissure discussed earlier.

Table 7:31 **RIOT AS BACKGROUND**

Topic/Reference:	Frequency	Percent	VISUALS Frequency	Percent
Criminality:				
Precipitator/"Spark"	17	6.9	5	10.6
Villa Cross Drugs Raid	17	6.9	10	42.5
Extremists: Organised Criminals	17	6.9	3	6.4
Crime/Criminality	16	6.5	2	4.2
Sub-Total	67	27.2 %	20	63.7 %
Policing:				
Community Police Relations	19	7.7	3	6.4
Police Black Youth Relations	9	3.7	2	4.2
Tension Indicators/Intelligence	7	2.8	0	0.0
Model of Community Policing	7	2.8	3	6.4
Police Harassment/Racism	7	2.8	1	2.1
Insensitive Policing	6	2.4	2	4.2
Handsworth Carnival 1985	3	1.2	0	0.0
Sub-Total	58	23.4 %	11	23.3 %
Conditions:				
Unemployment	28	11.4	4	8.5
Social deprivation	23	9.3	4	8.5
Economy/Recession	7	2.8	1	2.1
Sub-Total	58	23.5 %	9	19.1
Race and Racism:				
Community Difference(Black-Asian)	20	8.1	0	0.0
Racism/Discrimination	8	3.3	2	4.2
Black Disenfranchisement	6	2.4	2	4.2
Black Presence/History	5	2.0	1	2.1
Racial Difference(White-Black)	3	1.2	0	0.0
Sub-Total	42	17.0 %	5	10.5
Political Administration:				
Government Policy/Schemes	6	2.4	0	0.0
Local Authority Policy/Schemes	6	2.4	1	2.1
Government Policy/Deleterious Cuts	5	2.0	0	0.0
Local Authority Policy/Cuts	2	0.8	0	0.0
Sub-Total	19	7.6 %	1	2.1
Political Conspirators:				
Extremists: Political Radicals	2	0.8	1	2.1
Extremists: Political Right-wing	0	0.0	0	0.0
Sub-Total	2	0.8 %	2	2.1 %
Total	246	100.0 %	47	8.1%

[Element Percent 21.5 %; Visuals 8.1 %]

Interestingly, though the element of background receives relatively little visual reference when compared to the narrative verbal references and topics, which in itself perhaps can be taken as a visual reinforcement of the riot as event and immediate aftermath and impacts, nonetheless within this coverage nearly two thirds of all visual references indicate riot background to be concerned with issues of criminality and in particular, with over 40 % of all background references, the drugs raid on the Villa Cross pub. Visually, then, it can be suggested that the Villa Cross raid has indeed, in combination with verbal references tended to situate the Villa Cross at the heart of the Handsworth riots, clearly positing a criminal activity and associated group (drug dealers) as the most 'relevant' background consideration.

Issues concerned with policing and urban deprivation and unemployment receive approximately the same relative proportion of visual involvement as do their verbal counterparts, though much reduced in absolute terms, indicating that visual reference whether iconic, indexical or personified, are not entirely outside the realm of visual representation and possibility. Similarly is the case with considerations of race and racism and formal political background considerations. As such, then, it can be seen that visually though much reduced in overall terms the element of background, in so far as it is present has involved a similar dispersal of riot references and concerns while considerably heightening the mediated relevance of crime and criminality and the Villa Cross drugs raid in particular.

Table 7:32 **RIOT AS FUTURE**

Topic/Reference:			VISUALS	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Happy Vistas	15	27.3	11	44.0
Dire Predictions	12	21.9	5	20.0
Calender Landmark	10	18.2	4	16.0
Future As Generalised Violence	6	10.9	2	8.0
Local Authority-Failed Promises	5	9.0	0	0.0
Central Government-Failed Promises	4	7.3	0	0.0
Other/Future	3	5.4	3	12.0
	Total 55	100.0 %	25	100.0 %

[Element Percent 4.8 %; Visuals 4.3 %]

In terms of the visual representation of the narrative element of future it is found that the visual dimension mirrors

closely the relative frequencies of the narrative element overall. In terms of its internal visual composition the preponderance of 'happy news' (44.0 %) is visually increased which may be taken as further indication of the genre predilection for positive news indicated through the use of visual imagery, as well as verbal references. Indeed, in so far as the visual presence tends to outstrip the verbal presence, it may be suggested that there is at least some indication that visuals relating to 'positive' Handsworth riot coverage have taken precedence over a limited number of verbal references. That is, the pursuit of 'good pictures' though generally not felt to be as important as some news studies have suggested, can perhaps be made in qualified form in regard to certain areas of news subject matter.

Moreover, it can also be suggested that the verbal line is considerably relaxed in terms of its directing role specifically in those areas of Human Interest news where the visual dimension is permitted to subsist at a relatively 'unanchored' level. Though discursive possibilities are therefore present to the degree that both verbal and visual accounts may enjoy a degree of 'openess' within regional news, these as already indicated are restricted to particular subject domains.

Table 7:33 **RIOT AS EXPLANATION**

Topic/Reference:			VISUALS	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Crime/Criminality	16	36.4	2	40.0
Social Deprivation/Unemployment	9	20.5	1	20.0
Racial Rivalry (Soft)	6	13.6	1	20.0
Social Injustice	4	9.1	1	20.0
Moral Decline	3	6.8	0	0.0
Police Insensitivity/Harassment	3	6.8	0	0.0
Other/Explanation	3	6.8	0	0.0
Racial Hostility (Hard)	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	44	100.0 %	5	100.0 %

[Element Percent: 3.7 %; Visuals 0.9]

With a much reduced visual dimension, the element of explanation nonetheless, in so far as visual reference is involved has tended to confirm the prevalence of a criminal placing of the Handsworth riots, with concerns of deprivation, social injustice and racial rivalry (black-Asian) all finding some expression. However, given the absolute infrequency of such

visual expressions, the main finding must be considered as the relative under representation of the narrative element of explanation in both its verbal and visual dimensions.

Table 7:34 **RIOT AS METAPHOR/ALLUSION**

Topic/Reference:			VISUALS	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
World of Nature/Instinct	19	33.3	0	0.0
Other Inner City Riots	14	24.6	3	30.0
Handsworth Riots 1981	10	17.5	1	10.0
Northern Ireland	6	10.5	2	20.0
American 'Race Riots'	3	5.3	2	20.0
War Time Britain	2	3.5	0	0.0
Historical Mainland Riots	2	3.5	0	0.0
Contemporary Acts of Disorder	1	1.8	2	20.0
	Total 57	100.0 %	10	100.0 %

[Element Percent 5.0 %;Visuals 1.7 %]

Perhaps not surprisingly, given both the mainly non-filmic quality of news visuals as well as its salient iconicity discussed earlier, metaphor does not readily find visual expression though allusion to other associated events does. Of these it is other inner city riots which receive the most visual presence, with Northern Ireland, American race riots and contemporary acts of disorder at least finding some limited visual expression. However, as with the visual element of explanation, it can generally be noted that this narrative element receives relatively little visual involvement.

Summary Findings

In summary it can be noted that separate attention to the visual dimension involved across one year's news riot coverage has tended, in broad outline, to confirm the agenda and priorities of riot news coverage already discerned across the verbal line found within and across the various narrative elements. However, in addition it has been noted how riot visuals have tended to involve a high degree of iconic and only limited involvement of indexical images; and where present at all have not been taken to involve a significant element of visual relay but rather a visual solution, both readily understood and conventionally assimilated, to the problem of an absence of specific iconic references. However in so far as this

preponderance of iconic signs is found to inhere within riot visuals, and to the extent that this has tended to privilege certain elements, most notably riot as event which visually comprises nearly a third of all visual references, and other elements concerned with the immediate effects of the riot then this finding may be regarded in itself as visually skewing the riot towards an event construed in terms of violent disorder.

Moreover, the argument concerning the posited role of such inner city actors as the police and, largely absented, rioters within such an event is visually reinforced in that the possible relationship between rioters and the police conducted over a period of time is also displaced from view. When individual narrative elements are considered in terms of their visual references once again it has been noted how these constituent topics have tended to privilege concerns of law and order response, consequence and explanation when compared to concerns of urban deprivation and questions of race and racism. It can be concluded that collectively the visual dimension both within its own and largely denotative terms, as well as in synchrony with the verbal narrative has considerably privileged the interpretative resources required by an understanding of the Handsworth riots as a problem of law and order.

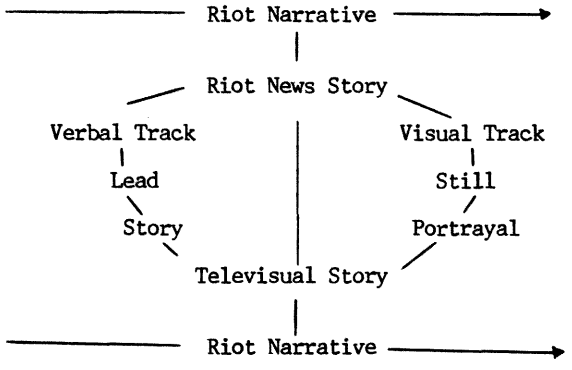
Finally, it has been ventured that contrary to other accounts of news visuals, it is exactly the heavy involvement of iconic images which, displaying a degree of denotative independence from the verbal line, help to secure the authenticicity of the verbal account. However in so far as these images, for reasons to be discussed below, have tended to concentrate upon the event of the riot and its destructive violent aspects, this has considerably assisted the possible public signification of the Handsworth riots as a criminal outburst requiring law and order measures.

VII Situating the Handsworth Riot: The Case of Stills

In previous discussions of the discourse structure of regional news stories it has been noted how, following Barthes' suggestive comments concerning the anchoring role of accompanying text to visual forms (photographs) it was noted how the element of 'lead' could be seen as performing a similar

'directing' role in terms of the subsequent delivery of the main body of a news story. That is, having informed the reader/viewer what the story was essentially about, the other discourse elements further embellished and elaborated upon the story while simultaneously confirming that the story was, as indicated, to be understood in certain ways, and not others. This process was indicated as being achieved by the verbal narrative or presented script. However, as the extended discussion above concerning the visual dimension has already indicated, the role of visuals may also be seen, especially when considered in terms of the high degree of iconicity found across the riot coverage, to play a similar and supportive role which effectively closes down possible ambiguities or confusions concerning the 'story' that is the subject of the news account, and that this is achieved not despite but rather by virtue of the seeming independence of the visual portrayal. Verbal anchoring, though present to the extent that a news lead seeks to position the story in a particular way, is not necessarily crucial to the visual portrayal, though introductory visuals may themselves provide a degree of anchoring in terms of the subsequent visual involvements. Diagrammatically this can now be depicted as follows:

Figure 7:35 Verbal and Visual News Tracks



In so far as riot coverage has tended to involve a high degree of iconic images, each displaying a degree of denotative independence, then in so far as 'anchorage' may be achieved between the verbal and visual tracks this is largely dependent upon the mutual 'confirmation' provided by both sources each independently confirming, and being confirmed by the other.

However, where anchorage in Barthes' sense is seen to be involved is in so far as the verbal lead 'anchors' or directs the reading of the subsequent 'story', while the visual use of stills or chromokey can also play a directing role in terms of the subsequent visual portrayal and overall televisual story. Both, of course, cohere into a single televisual story which in turn derives from, and supports the continuity of the riot narrative composed of a succession of news stories.

If the array of introductory stills are considered across the 153 riot items no less than 104 items included such a visual reference. These stills included the following limited array of pictures.

Table 7:36 **RIOT STILLS**

Descriptive:	Frequency	Percent
Caravaggio Blitz	31	29.8
Post-Office Ruin	14	13.5
In the Eye of the Storm	14	13.5
Portrait Gallery	14	13.5
Police General	11	10.6
Chiaroscuro Rioter	10	9.6
Other	8	7.6
After the Storm	2	1.9
Total	104	100.0 %

Given the number of separate riot items considered across the year's coverage a surprisingly limited number of different stills are deployed in introducing the respective riot news items. The still used repeatedly throughout the year, and which became, with two other stills the visual logo, signifying in emblematic or condensed form 'the Handsworth riot', was a shot labelled here 'Caravaggio Blitz' depicting in Caravaggio hues a street silhouetted by flames with a lone jet of water arching over burning roofs. The visual drama, redolent of war time Britain, which has itself been captured in a similar Picture Post type icon, establishes the Handsworth riots as a major conflagration, with possible parallels to the destructive force of the Blitz in war-time Britain. The point about this still and the other riot stills used, is that employed across the majority of all riot related items, many of which are not dealing in any sense with the 'event of the riot', the report itself is introduced by a visual reference which repetitively situates the Handsworth riots as either a violent and/or destructive event.

The second most frequently used still was one of two

versions depicting the burnt-out and smouldering ruin of the Post-Office in which the two brothers died, one of which includes firemen bringing the flames under control. Once again the destructive force of the riot is visually denoted, though this still has in the main been confined to items dealing in some way with the death of the two brothers, including the subsequent court trial and verdicts.

The third most frequently employed group of stills further references the night of the riot by reference to street scenes of blazing cars and buildings.

Portrait Gallery contains a number of stills with the faces of eminent dignitaries and politicians either visiting or proclaiming newsworthy statements about the riots. Thus the lord mayor of Birmingham, Julius Silverman, and leading politicians all figure within this select group of individuals privileged with still treatment. Thereafter the Police gain still recognition, often via synecdochic and/or metonymic images - a police car's blue light, a lone police constable etcetera.

A further and much used image referring to the night of the Handsworth riots in chiaroscuro terms depicts a street ablaze with flames pouring from overturned cars. The silhouette of a lone youth strides in front of the blazing cars, apparently a black youth possibly a rasta, possibly a rioter it is difficult to determine given his silhouetted form against the flame and shadows. Once again, this particular still introduces a number of disparate news items with this dramatic picture denoting a destructive conflagration while also providing visual resources possibly locating an actor and identified social group as responsible for such mayhem.

Other stills used include the Birmingham City council logo when referring to items reporting on the council's post-riot initiatives, and the items dealing with the worries attendant upon the city's bid to host the Olympic games, as well as scenes of building renovation and demolition. Two remaining scenes 'After the storm' depict the glass strewn streets and shopkeepers sweeping up'.

From these various stills it can be noted that 71 (68.3 %) visually reference the immediate events of the riot and its direct aftermath. That is, scenes of burning buildings, and general devastation and destruction accompany a wide range of

riot reports which may or may not explicitly be related to the immediate event of the riot. For the reasons already outlined such visual imagery may be considered as furthering a particular understanding of both the events and their wider signification. This, even when the substantive concerns of the various reports may be focused upon a much later, and in many senses unrelated concern, nevertheless visually introduce the riots as emblematically a 'destructive event'. In so far as a black youth becomes silhouetted against the flames of a devastated street the inference is set in place which not only labels the riot as event, but also identifies a possible criminal culprit and by extension an involved social group.

Once again the comments above are not intended to deny the evident reality of the riot as event, which involved violence, massive property destruction and loss of life. The point made is rather that the persistent signification of the riots in such 'event' terms, even long after the events themselves have past is to place within the public domain interpretative resources and emphases of particular support to one interpretative schema. Given that a conservative law and order discourse, positing inner city riots as inexcusable and unjustifiable criminality is the only interpretative schema disposed to fixate upon the events themselves labelled and interpreted as a criminal outburst, and therefore not inclined to pursue explanations involving social causation either in terms of liberal concerns with informing contexts and conditions or radical invocations of history, political process and structural inequality, such violent imagery exhibits an affinity (as does the narrative structure and agenda of riot topics discussed above) with the conservative perspective.

The interpretative resources found within the portrayal of the Handsworth riots, though not exhibiting a form of complete ideological closure, have nonetheless been found to substantially privilege the accounts and resources sustaining a conservative understanding of the events and their possible causation. While it is also the case that liberal resources and occasional accounts have also been verbally and visually referenced these are consistently overshadowed by the criminal preoccupations of news interests, while the radical interpretative framework has found few resources required by its

particular interpretative schema, and in terms of some of its key concerns has found no public exposure at all.

With these concluding comments concerning the news portrayal of an important inner city disorder the discussion can now briefly review other sources of inner city portrayal, including other accounts of the Handsworth riots found across the regional programming produced and broadcast by Central Television across the same seven year review period.

Chapter Eight

REGIONAL PROGRAMMES AND THE REGION'S INNER CITIES - SHIPS PASSING IN THE NIGHT ?

The study thus far has sought to systematically interrogate and appraise an extensive sample of inner city regional news portrayal, including an extended period of riot coverage, broadcast over many years. Though within an overall minority of all regional news coverage, the portrayal of the areas, issues and problems of the region's inner cities have nonetheless, due to the unequalled output of regional news programming, been found to be principally covered in terms of this particular programme form. Relative to the daily news interests and subject areas covered by the regional news genre the portrayal of the inner city has, in other words, generally been found to be of marginal news interest; when considered, however, within the prolific daily outpouring of the regional news programme investigated, where a major news programme is produced each and every weekday and routinely transmitted year in and year out, the portrayal of the inner city far exceeds in absolute terms any of the other regional programmes as possible 'vehicles' for inner city coverage. On this basis alone, momentarily placing to one side the theoretical reviews and discussions which have indicated the centrality of 'news' as of particular research interest, a case can be made for principally restricting research attention to the regional news programme.

In addition, it is also noteworthy, that while Central News regularly obtains the largest audience of all ITV regional news audiences which, according to BARB figures, routinely approximates one and a half to two million viewers, it also by far outstrips the sometimes relatively small audiences attracted by other forms of regional programmes identified as of possible interest to this project. In terms of absolute inner city portrayal, then, as well as routine mass audiences and guiding theoretical interests predisposed to inquire into the regional news form as an under-researched, under-theorised and yet potentially important contributor to the public sphere the study concentrates upon the broadcast material and, in subsequent chapters, the production processes and professional practices

routinely informing the news portrayal of the inner city.

However, an important theoretical lacuna was also identified in the opening review of news studies and inner city related mass communication research which has tended to concentrate upon national forms of news coverage generally, and national press news accounts especially. That is, when television has been subjected to research interest in relation to the inner city, it too has tended to be interrogated in terms of national television news coverage, omitting other forms of news, current affairs and documentary programming as of possible research interest. In terms of inner city portrayal, therefore, little research has been conducted into the possible diversity and differences of portrayal that may be found within and across the spectrum of factual, and other, forms of programming.

This chapter, in necessarily compressed fashion, seeks to supplement the focus upon news programming by briefly reviewing the array of different types of factual programmes that characterise Central's regional programme schedule and which may be considered as possible vehicles for inner city coverage and portrayal. Clearly, this chapter cannot hope to attend in detail to the complex forms and diversity of such programming collectively transmitted over the same eight year period reviewed in relation to news portrayal. What can usefully be achieved, in more modest fashion, is a general picture of the extent and forms of regional programmes produced and their general applicability to the public examination of inner city issues and concerns. The brief survey which follows is therefore necessarily more impressionistic than the quantitative analyses carried out earlier, though it does permit some findings of general relevance to be advanced.

Approached as a complement to the findings related to news production above and below, this more general level of inquiry will later be pursued into the domain of programme producers and the institutional and corporate setting characterising the environment of programme production. More specifically, following the detailed analyses of regional news portrayal of the Handsworth riots, this chapter will also draw upon a quantitative analysis of the three Handsworth riot programmes transmitted in the aftermath of these events and which mirrors that carried out in relation to news programming. As such, the

two types of current affairs and one documentary programme analysed furnish 'findings' of some interest to the debate concerning the possible differential openings and opportunities afforded by different types of programming. That said, the fact remains and has to be borne in mind, that the following discussion concerns, in the main, programmes with a strictly minimal involvement of inner city related issues, which moreover entertain significantly fewer viewers while, at most, enjoying a seasonal weekly presence in the schedules. Audience involvement, programme frequency and schedule placing as well as marginal interest in and involvement of inner city issues and concerns, outlined below, 'marginalises' in this instance both the public examination of the concerns and problems of the region's inner cities as well as the programme forms in which these issues infrequently, if at all, find expression.

If firstly a review of some of the main regional factual programmes produced by Central Television is carried out, the following major series of regional programmes considered of possible inner city relevance have characterised the regional programming schedule.

Central Weekend. According to the Company's recent 'Central Programme News', an in house promotional bulletin produced by the Public Affairs Department, 'Central Weekend' is described in the following terms 'It's live, it's controversial, and it keeps over a million viewers entertained and informed..ninety minutes of live discussion where anything can happen - and usually does'. Broadcast on a seasonal and weekly basis, usually on a Friday evening at 10.40 pm, this 'controversial' show enjoys perhaps the largest audience of all regional programmes and takes place in front of a studio audience selected from different parts of the region.

Interestingly, the format of the programme has undergone a slight change from its initial format where one 'topic' was typically subjected to a film report, chaired discussion between 'involved' actors, whether experts, politicians or 'ordinary' people and interventions from the studio floor audience, in addition to occasional telephone responses fed into this 90 minute programme. One of these earlier programmes transmitted in January 1986, four months after the Handsworth riots, devoted a

complete programme to these events, and their possible causes. Subsequently, however, Central Weekend has taken to involving three separate controversial 'topics' for discussion. The unashamedly populist appeal of the programme is found both within the types and range of 'topics' selected for programme involvement in over 300 'topics' transmitted in the period 1986 to 1989 as well as their form of 'lively' treatment.

The array of concerns finding public examination identified in programme content lists and here selected as 'representative' of recurring themes, frequently involve a concern with crime whether 'hooligans' 'lager louts', 'the Krays'; forms of sexual activity and minority dispositions whether 'prostitution', 'male strippers', 'Page Three girls', 'sugar daddies', 'toy boys' 'porn' or 'transvestites', 'homosexuality', 'nudism' 'sex change', and 'celibate priests'; the world of the paranormal including 'UFO's', 'astrology', 'hypnotherapy', and 'clairvoyants', 'mediums', 'witchcraft', 'aliens'; consumption and leisure interests and fears whether 'football','DIY', 'soap operas', 'fishing' or 'smoking', 'drink', 'food additives', 'fat people', and 'eggs'; the British concern for animals and animal cruelty 'fur trade', 'RSPCA', 'dogs', 'fox-hunting'; as well as more recognisably public, as opposed in the main to private 'political' concerns and controversies, already within the news headlines whether 'Salman Rushdie', 'The Poll Tax', 'student loans', 'race relations' or 'thatcherism'. The above provides no more than an indication of the prevalent interests and appeals pursued in 'Central Weekend', with many of the above reappearing in the programme contents for a second or even third time across the years.

As with the pronounced populist tendency within the regional news programme subjected to a more detailed analysis, so this programme clearly treads in the same 'private' waters of consumption and leisure interests as well as openly pursuing the inner sanctum of the private sphere normally not traversed in the 'tea time' family viewing of 'Central News', namely the intimate sphere of sexual relations, sexuality and sexual titillation. It is within this populist context conducted in the pursuit of 'lively' controversy that the exploration of such public issues of inner city relevance, whether 'racism', 'the police' or 'vigilantes', to take three of the infrequent items

of inner city relevance actually discussed, must contend. As the conventions of the regional news genre with its pursuit of particular news interests and appeals have been found to impact upon and inflect the treatment of the inner city so too the examination of the inner city within 'Central Weekend' is susceptible to a form of treatment courting the entertainment values and spectacle of live controversy, conflict and drama.

Nonetheless, though not possible to pursue here in detail, 'Central Weekend' provides one of the few arenas for engaged public debate where outside voices find at least some possibility to discursively interact in a relatively direct fashion with others, while occasionally permitting inner city related 'topics', especially those already placed on the public agenda in terms of the news value of controversy, to find limited public airing. In its earlier guise at least, Central Weekend appeared to be a more sober and genuinely open current affairs platform, where, as in the case of the 90 minute programme devoted to the Handsworth riots discussed below, a relatively informed and critical stance shaped the construction and public delivery of this particular regional issue.

Here and Now. If 'Central Weekend' regularly attracts a mass audience, Central's 'ethnic series' fares less well in the ratings and schedule placement of Sunday at, currently, 12.30 in the afternoon with an average audience of approximately 65,000. Again referring to Central's own in house publicity describing this particular current affairs magazine programme, the reader is told 'A Jewish American woman who has become one of India's leading classical dancers, a TV presenter who helps AIDS sufferers in her spare time and an adventurer who has travelled through forbidden territories of Asia. These are just some of the people who have recently taken part in Central's Here and Now, the 30 minute magazine programme which covers social and political topics affecting the country's ethnic communities. The programme also sets aside time for art, music and dance'.

To what extent this particular programme covers 'social and political topics affecting the country's ethnic communities' is not readily apparent from the list of contents above, though the emphasis upon individual 'success' stories and involvement of cultural forms, in terms of art, music and dance do not

especially resonate with any of the key 'inner city' themes and issues identified at the heart of the three principal social and political discourses organising public perspectives in relation to the inner city, its various ethnic populations or their particular and collective concerns, disadvantages and struggles.

A quick review of the subjects covered in the latest completed series at the time of this research reveals a similar pattern of subject appeal and involvement as promoted above. Thus, in a recent series of eleven weekly 20 minute 'Here and Now' programmes comprising, as specified by a programme researcher, 26 different items, 11 comprised performances of dance, theatre and music; 12 involved interviews with artists, writers, film actors and successful individuals with a remaining three items involving a studio discussion of the issue of 'same race' fostering and adoption, and film reports on black women in business and a woman photographer from Handsworth.

On these findings it is permissible to observe that 'Here and Now' though occasionally involving consideration of wider social issues, appears in the main to centre upon a particular understanding of 'culture' as exemplified in the performing arts while also typically seeking to interview successful and/or famous individuals. Though an 'ethnic magazine programme', this programme pursues a particular understanding of the 'cultural', while typically celebrating successful individuals of ethnic origin involved in the worlds of the arts as well as business and commerce. How this particular programme is visualised, with its evident emphasis upon ethnic and wider culture as performance arts, by its originating Executive Producer will be pursued in a later chapter. Here it need only be mentioned that in terms of the social and political issues surrounding and informing the contested site of the inner city, this minority programme is of less relevance than might ordinarily be assumed.

Central Lobby. The regular regional 'political' programme has been characterised in the following in-house publicity terms : 'The political issues that concern the Central region are tackled by Central Lobby when it returns this autumn to follow a new parliamentary session. The half hour programmes look at national issues from a regional point of view and focus on topical items which relate directly to the area - as well as

presenting portraits of the politicians in the central region'. Oriented within a restricted, and largely institutionalised notion of 'the political' and 'politics' where concerns of power are implicitly located within Westminster and the formal expression of political parties and politicians, this programme seeks to 'take the stuffiness out of politics and show how it affects everyone at every stage of their lives'. Deliberately seeking to appeal to a mass audience, the treatment of the formal worlds of politics is treated in an entertaining and often irreverent manner, while in addition to the monitoring of the happenings of Westminster and the region's MP's a number of items pursue consumer interests and concerns. Transmitted, at present, on a Thursday evening slot at 10.40 pm audience figures have averaged in the winter period of 1989 76,000.

The degree to which this programme has involved a number of the 'key' inner city concerns previously identified will be discussed further in a later chapter. However as the brief review of programme topics from the first quarter of 1989 indicates, the array of programme interests is not disposed towards inner city portrayal. Thus amongst programme items discussing the budget, labour party membership, and Euro grants, and a weekly 'Westminster Watch', consumer interests are appealed to in such items as 'pesticides' concerned with worries expressed by politicians and others concerning the increasing use of pesticides in food production, and the pros and cons of 'timeshare', while the 'private life' of politicians is also occasionally subjected to scrutiny as in the item concerned with 'stress' in political life, that is stress as experienced by politicians. Major political stories, such as the introduction of the poll tax, the health review, and the contrasting viewpoints expressed in relation to ten years of 'thatcherism' also feature within this selection of programmes.

Not claiming in any statistical sense that these subject references are representative of over 8 years of 'Central Lobby' programming, they nonetheless suggest something of the subject interests and appeals routinely inscribed within this popular construction of 'the political' which is unlikely to examine the political problems and viewpoints characterising the political nature and contest of the inner city. Given that 'politics' within the inner city, as discussed earlier, is characterised

precisely by forms of political disenfranchisement and effective exclusion from 'mainstream' political processes with 'the political', if anywhere, tending to be mobilised and enacted at a grass roots level this programme does not promise to be a significant vehicle for inner city 'politics'. As discussed later, even though the inner city became momentarily propelled to the top of the political agenda by Margaret Thatcher's post 1987 election remark 'we want them too, next time', this was not sufficient, either then or subsequently, to increase the likelihood of 'Central Lobby' explicitly focussing attention upon the region's inner cities and communities.

Cook Report. Though produced for network transmission 'Cook Report', as an investigative and expose form of current affairs journalism could be considered as a likely programme vehicle of inner city portrayal. Transmitted at 8 pm on Tuesday evenings 'Cook Report' has secured, in the spring of 1988, on average over a million viewers. Promoted in the following in house promotions material, an insight into the 'appropriate subject matter' and 'stance' of 'Cook Report' is gained. 'Award winning Roger Cook, scourge of conmen and swindlers,..goes after bigger villains in a series of six networked films..he's travelling the world seeking out the 'Mr Bigs' behind rackets like drugs, pornography, terrorism, smuggling, robbery and murder. It sounds dangerous - and probably will be - but Roger's already been hit, punched, knocked down and run over more times than he'd care to remember'.

While the entertainment value of filmed conflict, and personal assault upon the presenter, is not undervalued by central's promotions, the delimited array of investigated subjects, typically focussing upon forms of crime and criminals restricts the arena of programme subjects. Thus the first series included four out of five programmes 'investigating' crimes, with a sixth programme run as an update. While running to ground violent drugs pushers and loan sharks, included in the second series of nine 'Cook Report' programmes, has referenced the backdrop of inner city squalor, the fact remains that such 'conditions' are likely to remain of strictly peripheral interest to the imminent threat of conflict and violence at the heart of the programme design and delivery. Tending to typically

pursue, run to ground and thereafter 'doorstep' suspected criminals the logic of programme design and execution frequently results in a climactic finale of personal confrontation involving either the threat or actuality of assault. Popularly recognised as entertaining investigative journalism or simply 'good television', the public exploration, much less examination of important social and political issues takes a backseat in these expose' films keen to identify individual culprits.

Police Five. This mini-programme is mentioned here as a weekly five minute and independent News Programme insert which has run on Central and its predecessor ATV for over 25 years as 'an armchair detective series'. Once again, as a regular focus upon regional crimes inviting public response and assistance to the police, the inner city, in so far as it features in such mini-programmes is focused in relation to crime. These items, when included within the main body of central News programmes, and found within the sample of broadcast material analysed, have already been subjected to discussion.

Jobfinder. If Police Five appears in keeping with the news and current affairs values informing so much of the programme material considered, 'Jobfinder', represents a different, if highly marginalised form of public service announcement transmitted, currently, between 4.40 and 5 am. This service is mentioned not because it provides substantive programme relevance to this study but because it indicates a form of corporate involvement of some relevance to the issues, though not programme portrayal, of the inner city.

If the programmes above represent the principal regional programmes of possible relevance to this study, the following programmes illustrate the span of remaining factual programme types which may, on a highly infrequent basis across the years have involved programme items in some way related to the inner city. These, however, if featuring at all have been highly infrequent, and in the case of the majority of these programme forms effectively 'marginalised' to the small viewing figures found in the quiet backwaters of the schedules. Thus, **'Focus'** and **'Encounter'** two religious programmes have catered to religious interests, often catering to separate religious

interests in the east and west of the region and transmitted on a seasonal, often two weekly and monthly sunday basis at midday and monday afternoons at 3 pm. Programmes aimed specifically at the elderly, **'Getting On'**, and the disabled, **'Link'**, have also been commissioned and placed within quiet schedule times, while a regional arts programme, **'Contrasts'** and business programme, **'Venture'**, though enjoying improved schedule placements, also cater to particular audience interests which have not been found, with one arts programme exception, to involve features relating to the inner city.

An environmental features programme, **'Eco'**, has also enjoyed an established presence since 1984, though a review of its programme subject interests, indicates that subjects are confined in the main to environmental issues typically focused in relation to rural areas and concerns, notwithstanding that a broadened understanding of 'environment' would necessarily involve rural and urban concerns, as well as the social nature of environmental perspectives. A long running series of documentaries. **'England Their England'**, recently terminated, though not necessarily confined to a particular subject field in its documentary profiles and celebrations of the people and places of the region has tended to concentrate on the 'local customs and ways of life, before they disappear for ever', typically involving rural characters. Its latest, and independently produced, series of six successor documentary programmes, **'City Watch'**, though potentially of inner city related interest have not focused upon themes and concerns identified at the heart of inner city concerns.

The justified reputation of Central Television for producing and commissioning independent and high quality documentaries covering subjects of national, international and world importance has resulted in a steady stream of networked documentaries across the years including programmes transmitted under the generic **'Viewpoint'** title. One such title has been found to have been of direct relevance to this study addressing, as it has, the Handsworth riots and their aftermaths. This programme will be considered below.

These, then, are the main contenders as regional factual programmes of possible inner city relevance. While the above can provide little more than a generalised description of the

principal character and subject interests found across these existing programme forms, it has generally been noted how the spectrum of issues and concerns identified across the three main perspectives advanced in relation to the inner city, have rarely, if at all, featured within and across this expanse of schedule programming. Some occasional exceptions can be found however, with the seemingly ingrained interest of journalists in crime occasionally invoking inner city related presentations within the forum of public controversy 'Central Weekend', expose journalism of 'Cook Report' and crime fighting insert of 'Police Five'.

The pursuit of public controversy and expose entertainment has also, in the cases of 'Central Weekend' and 'Cook Report' resulted in a small number of programmes dealing, in characteristic form, with some of the wider social issues found concentrated in the inner city, whether debt and loan sharks, policing or racism. These items remain firmly within a minority however, and, as indicated above, are inevitably refracted through the particular programme forms and entertainment ambitions structuring their public delivery. Other programmes have also, albeit on a highly infrequent and often marginalised basis, tangentially or indirectly considered aspects of the inner city, though, as in the case of the delimited concern with 'the political' regularly invoked by 'Central Lobby', and the equally restricted notion of 'the cultural' celebrated by 'Here and Now' these programmes have not been found to be major vehicles for the public examination and exploration of the social and political issues and concerns of the inner city. If this general overview provides a general backdrop to regional programming and the portrayal of the inner city, the following discussion can scrutinise in more detail three factual programmes produced by Central Television concerned with the Handsworth Riots.

With three current affairs and documentary programmes attending to the Handsworth Riots it is apparent that this regional 'event' has attracted, when contrasted to the general silence found to characterise inner city portrayal in general, increased attention. In this sense at least, the similarity with news coverage is apparent where the Handsworth Riots both in terms of its immediate reporting and subsequent portrayal has

been found to be of prominent news interest, though reporting of inner city concerns and issues has generally been found, with few exceptions, not to be 'big news'. The following discussion is concerned to identify, in the general terms already elaborated in relation to news coverage, the range of issues and concerns addressed by these three different programmes and the extent to which they have placed within the public domain interpretative resources and accounts supporting or detracting from the principal inner city discourses outlined earlier. Similarly, as well as attending to substantive considerations, considerations of forum as well as the array of accessed viewpoints can also usefully be appraised within these different programme forms and contrasted with the general findings characterising regional news portrayal.

The three programmes dealing with the Handsworth riots comprise a special half hour 'Here and Now' programme, transmitted on a sunday at 1.30 in the afternoon, two weeks after the initial disturbances and attracting an audience of 190,000; a full 90 minute 'Central Weekend' programme broadcast on a friday evening at 10.30 nearly five months after the initial events and securing an audience of 496,000; and, finally, a 'Viewpoint' documentary titled 'After the Riots' broadcast eleven months after the riots and attracting a regional audience of 405,000, and subsequently nearly two million (1925,000) when networked. With the 'Here and Now' programme providing the first non-news treatment of the Handsworth riots, its schedule slot and audience size nonetheless place it as the least watched programme, while 'Central Weekend' and the 'Viewpoint' documentary with considerably increased audiences were placed within the public domain some time after the initial events themselves.

Interrogating these three programmes in terms of the narrative structures as elicited by the range of riot topics and references raised within each programme, earlier found to be revealing of news emphases differentially enabling three principal interpretative perspectives, the following findings result and can be contrasted with the earlier findings of news portrayal.

Table 8:1 Riot Portrayal: News, Current Affairs and Documentary

	News	Here and Now	Central Weekend	Viewpoint
Riot As Event	19.9	14.8	4.9	6.0
Riot As Aftermath	11.4	3.7	3.0	4.2
Riot As Response	10.2	9.2	6.9	6.6
Riot As Consequence	23.2	14.8	6.9	23.3
Riot As Background	21.5	42.6	47.5	40.1
Riot As Future	4.8	5.5	4.9	9.0
Riot As Explanation	3.8	7.4	14.8	4.8
Riot As Metaphor	5.0	1.8	10.9	6.0
Totals:	(1144) 100.0	(54) 100.0	(101) 100.0	(167) 100.0

The first evident finding of some interest is that all the three individual programmes in contrast to the news programme have, in a majority of all riot references and topics, invoked 'background' concerns and issues. Even 'Here and Now', a programme produced and transmitted within two weeks of the Handsworth riots has paid considerable reference to such concerns indicating that temporal proximity to the 'event' of a riot need not always result in the dominance of concerns relating simply to the 'event' itself, its immediate 'aftermath' and 'responses'. Such considerations, it has previously been maintained, are of vital importance in the marshalling of information and 'evidence' in the construction of an interpretative schema. Thereafter, it is noticeable that issues and concerns relating to the consequences of the riots also figure prominently in both 'Here and Now' and 'Viewpoint', as they do within the news coverage, though it is interesting to note that the 'Central Weekend' programme especially, and 'Here and Now' to a more modest extent have explicitly involved proferred 'explanations' for the riots, found to be relatively absent in news accounts. These, of course, directly seek to place an interpretation of the riot and therefore function as clear and unequivocal statements of causation.

With less attention paid to the event of the riot itself, its immediate aftermath and responses but significant attention paid to 'background' as well as increased involvement of 'future', and 'explanation' it is apparent at this general level, that individually the three programmes have sustained a different set of riot portrayal priorities. The interpretative resources informing these programmes can be generally said to offer increased scope for interpretation which need not be so

dependent upon the 'criminal' understanding of the events unleashed by the predisposing news emphases upon the violent activity, destructive effects, and immediate responses found to colour the generality of riot news reports across an extensive period of time.

However, if these general findings are suggestive of the different interpretative resources and accounts found within each of these individual programmes when compared to news findings, some attention must also attend to the composition of these different narrative emphases in terms of the exact topics and references finding public display. To take 'Here and Now' first, it is interesting that within the much increased attention devoted to 'background' equal reference, unlike news coverage, has been made to issues of race and racism as to crime, while reference to local authority schemes and retrenchment also figures prominently. Unlike the emphases placed upon background, understood substantially as a problem of crime within news reports, organised criminals and policing therefore, have featured less conspicuously. It is apparent, even at this general level that 'Here and Now' has tended to involve a different agenda of background concerns which, as discussed earlier, can be taken as providing different interpretative resources in relation to the public understanding of the Handsworth riots and their cause.

Similarly, when reference is made to 'consequences', none of these have included the 'crime and criminal' concerns of the news portrayal but rather have focused upon community-police relations and the impact of the riots upon traders and trade. Turning to explicit 'explanations' found within this programme, though one reference is made to crime and criminality, references to racial difference (Black-Asian), and social deprivation are also present. Again, the more 'balanced' range of interpretative accounts is thus noticeable when compared to news findings. Without going into elaborate quantitative and textual detail, these finding have indicated that 'Here and Now' has certainly provided a more encompassing range of interpretative accounts and resources than presented across news coverage.

If 'Central Weekend' is subjected to a similar review of such findings different emphases of interest are also clearly

apparent. Attending to the important interpretative resource of background references and topics, it is found that references are made almost twice as often to issues of race and racism, as to any other group of related issues including crime and criminality and policing, while background concerns of social deprivation and unemployment also figure prominently. In this instance, such findings indicate that interpretative resources mobilised within a radical discourse appear to be on the programme agenda in a way which was never present in news accounts. Turning to the second most prominent group of references and concerns, 'explanations', itself considerably more increased than found in news portrayal, it is found that the inclusion of explicit 'explanations' found to reference forms of social injustice is present more than twice as many times as any other proferred explanation. Moreover, with all identified 'explanations' gaining some entry, apart that is from 'racial difference and rivalry' (Black-Asian) which didn't feature at all, unlike its noticeable involvement in 'Here and Now', the range of remaining and competing explanations have been invoked in equal terms across the programme. Once again, it would appear that in 'Central Weekend' at least, interpretative accounts and resources are finding a presence conspicuously absent within news programming which, furthermore, have been identified as supportive of a radical interpretative schema.

Attending to riot approached as 'consequence' it is found that all references involve police consequences, including police-community relations unlike the news emphasis placed upon crime and the criminal consequences of the Handsworth riots. Turning to 'riot as metaphor', it is interesting to find that the majority of this much increased comparative aspect has invoked considerable reference to 'American race riots', with 'other inner city riots and the Scarman report' and even 'historical mainland riots' also finding a presence. Such comparative and historical interpretative resources, absented within the news accounts, and yet important to both liberal and radical accounts, have found some involvement within 'Central Weekend'.

Clearly, if 'Here and Now' has been found to offer a more 'balanced' array of discursive positions and interpretative resources evident across the principal inner city discourses

when contrasted to news portrayal, 'Central Weekend', even as intimated at these general levels, appears to have offered considerable involvement of both accounts and interpretative resources of direct and indirect support to a radical understanding of the Handsworth riots.

To turn now to the last programme concerned with these events, the 'Viewpoint' documentary, the following observations can be made from the same quantitative analysis. Turning to the involvement of 'background' references and topics it is interesting to find that of all references those concerned with social deprivation and unemployment are nearly twice as frequent as any other group of concerns as previously sub-grouped into the akin concerns of crime, policing, deprivation, race, and government. Issues of race and racism also figure prominently as do concerns with government provision while references to crime and policing concerns though present, bring up the rear. On the basis of these findings alone it appears that a more 'liberal' span of topics has informed this particular programme involvement of 'background' concerns relating to the Handsworth riots while references and topics of support to a 'radical' viewpoint are not so prominent, while a 'conservative' viewpoint appears to have fared worst of all. A similar pattern of emphasis is also found if the structure of 'riot as consequence' is attended to where issues concerning local authority response, and community reaction are salient, while issues relating to crime and criminality are almost entirely absent. Turning to explicit 'explanations' advanced within the programme it is found that though 'crime and criminality' are advanced these are present less than the combined references to 'social injustice', 'deprivation' and 'police insensitivity'.

Now clearly, such quantitative findings do not represent an exact science, they have merely provided a means of appraising and subjecting a considerable quantity of news material and now two current affairs and one documentary programme to comparative treatment. That is, noting the general tendency for competing interpretative perspectives to differentially invoke references and topics consonant or in sympathy with their underpinning schemas, this analysis has observed how such resources and accounts have been differentially present in and across all the programmes reviewed. It has been found, for instance, that news

programming, by and large, has tended to privilege those issues and accounts which are of direct support to a conservative discourse, while a liberal perspective has also found on occasion more limited support. However, it was also noted that the radical' discourse previously identified as providing an available public perspective has found little in the way of accounts and interpretative resources that could be mobilised in line with its understanding of both inner city riots and their causation.

While a detailed account and textual treatment of these programmes would further refine and support such findings summary attention to the introductory 'lead' statements of these different programmes provides further confirmation of the differing interpretative emphases found to characterise their general programme treatments. The 'Here and Now' programme was introduced by the programme host in the following terms:

> "Good afternoon and welcome back to a brand new series of Here and Now. Unfortunately we return under rather sad circumstances and all our thoughts have been dominated by the events of last monday week. So this afternoon's programme is not the advertised one but a special programme devoted to the tragic situation. Handsworth has always been held up as an example of good relations enjoyed between all the races, so what went wrong. Now nearly two weeks after the event in a somewhat calmer atmosphere we shall be looking at the causes of the trouble, but more importantly the future for all the people living in the area. "

Interestingly, this opening 'lead' statement encapsulates a concern which found prominence within the body of the programme. Appearing to suggest that 'the tragic situation' and 'the trouble' are in fact related to the 'relations between the races', the agenda has been set which seeks initially to fathom 'what went wrong'. While the accessed participants within the programme later dispute the interpretation placed upon the Handsworth riots by earlier news reports that suggested the cause lay in Afro-Caribbean hostility towards the Asian community this introduction appears to endorse such an interpretation. Assuming, that is, that a radical understanding of white racism as institutionalised and mediated by the police is not informing this position, and there is no evidence to support that such is in fact the construction placed upon the Handsworth riots. Indeed, the concern to move on from 'causes', notwithstanding their unexamined reality at this stage, to the future, suggests a liberal priority to establish normality and

order above the need for informed analysis and explanation.

What this statement and the programme as a whole doesn't do is to focus the riots in terms which mirror conservative preoccupations and viewpoints, though it is also apparent that interpretative resources and accounts more readily understood to be supportive of a radical interpretation of the Handsworth riots are also not prominent within this programme.

If the introductory studio statement by the programme presenter of 'Central Weekend' is now considered the following programme 'lead' or encapsulation is advanced.

> "Tonight we intend to find out what caused the riots in Handsworth. Those in authority tried to blame the situation on everyone but themselves. They said the riots in Handsworth, Brixton and in Toxteth were caused by criminals. Douglas Hurd the Home Secretary pronounced them 'not a social phenomenon, but crimes, criminality pure and simple'. They said the riots were caused by outside agitators. Kenneth Newman Commissioner of Police for London described them as 'probably trotskyists or of anarchist outlook'. They said the riots were caused by drug dealers. Geoffrey Dear, Chief Constable of the West Midlands said 'these people behind the riots were acting in defence of enormous profits'. They said the riots were caused by moral decline. Norman Tebbit, chairman of the conservative party, blamed the permissive society which generated today's violent society. They claimed the riots were unBritish and alien. Sir Peter Emery MP said 'Anglo Saxon standards must be maintained despite what other ethnic minorities want'.
>
> Tonight we say that the riots were not just the work of criminals or roaming anarchists but were the end product of racism and denying equal opportunities to black people will inevitably lead to disorder. But how do you prove that ? One way is to look to similar events in other countries and see if they had similar causes. In America 18 years ago they experienced the same problems that we face today.

Following a programme promo in which an American community relations advisor states 'the oppressed minority will not endure these conditions of racial oppression without striking out, and the extent to which they feel hopeless that is the extent to which violence will be expressed', the agenda of the programme is further set within the presenter's terms as outlined above. Adopting a challenging position in which the riots are posited as the end result of racism, albeit as well as the outcome of criminal or even political conspiracy and involvement with 'we say the riots <u>were not just</u> the work of criminals or roaming anarchists' (emphasis added) the programme proceeds to 'prove' its thesis with the help of film reports and interviews concerning the American experience and studio discussion methodically pursuing the issues of racism and discrimination in

various spheres of life. In sum, it can be noted that this programme has directly sought to advance an interpretation which invokes many of the key themes and issues found within a radical perspective. This is not to say, that the issues of race, racism and social injustice have necessarily been dealt with in a manner which offers a fully accomplished radical black perspective, but it is to suggest that this programme has, unlike either the extensive news reports reviewed earlier, or the 'Here and Now' programme considered above, sought to deliberately and methodically challenge conservative viewpoints and opinions.

If 'Central Weekend' has provided a programme in which 'radical' concerns have been raised, what about the 'Viewpoint' documentary 'After The Riots', what interpretative accounts and resources find expression in this programme and can it be situated along the range of inner city discourses ? The programme begins to the accompaniment of ominous music and scenes of moving armoured police convoys which, following the words 'and now the fuse is lit, is lit', audibly and visually erupts into scenes of burning buildings and riot destruction while an array of different inner city voices summarily declare their positions before the opening title 'After The Riots' is visually referenced. After this highly dramatic opening, a news report of an interview with Douglas Hurd follows, before the absent narrator begins as follows:

> "In Handsworth the events of the 9th and the 10th of september 1985 were known to some as the uprising, to the Home Office it was criminal activity which resulted in hundreds of arrests. Chief Constable Geoffrey Dear claimed 'the riot happened like a bolt from the blue, with no warning'. But Handsworth has been simmering for many years and like the rest of Britain's inner cities boils over with increasing regularity. Over the years the fifty six thousand people that live in Handsworth have become increasingly cynical about promises of a better tomorrow..."

Though not so strident as the position adopted in 'Central Weekend', this opening sequence and introductory narrative clearly 'contradicts' the official police and Home Office view and proceeds to provide alternative voices throughout its duration. This programme, as with the two above, deserves closer inspection than can be entertained here. However it is apparent from the quantitative findings and consideration of the opening statements alone that all these programmes have provided a considerably increased array of interpretative viewpoints. It is

all the more surprising to find that this last programme has relied heavily upon Central News items which are 'seamlessly' stitched into the unfolding of the documentary narrative.

Familiar with the news material used, no less than eleven separate news items, and hence established news priorities as opposed to independently produced priorities, have informed this programme in a manner which problematises the relation between the narrator, accessed voices and inserted news accounts and the realities they all lay claim to. As a piece of documentary it certainly opens the field of contesting views to public consideration, without simplistically directing public opinion. However, while this 'open' approach demands more from the viewer who is forced to ponder these different realities and the relations and interdependencies exiting between them, such a programme once again finds itself involving viewpoints and opinions previously found to dominate news reports. Programmes such as these, perhaps more than any, considerably problematise the moment of audience reception. All that can be said here, is that the interpretative resources and accounts placed within the public domain in this instance have tended, as noted above, to privilege liberal concerns though the presence of conservative and, to a more limited extent, radical interpretative resources and accounts are also found in the assembled montage of perspectives.

Interestingly, unlike both news and current affairs programmes where invariably news items or programme elements, whether a film report, discussion, studio presentation is introduced by a 'programme voice', that is the viewer is led through a series of thematic and structural arrangements by a 'link' narrator/presenter, this documentary programme frequently assembled its montage of film interviews, and accessed voices without any directing 'narrator' voice whatsoever. Now clearly such accessed voices are ultimately directed by the unseen hand of the film maker, assembling his montage, however it is also the case that frequently no verbal narration 'introduces' these voices with the result that they speak directly to the viewer with no prior 'anchorage' to an introductory lead statement for instance. The accessed voices therefore speak 'directly' to the audience without any initial 'directing' voice.

If these three riot programmes, even from the summary

findings noted above, offer a different spectrum of interpretative accounts and resources when contrasted to the substantive riot portrayal found within news programming, it is also interesting to attend to the range of inner city voices securing access across these programme forms.

Table 8:2 Handsworth Riots and Social Actor Access: News and Other Programmes Compared

Riot Actors	News	Other Programmes (Combined)
Police	29.1	15.7
Government	20.3	28.8
Community Voice	12.4	23.5
Individual Voice	10.4	9.8
Business	9.6	8.5
Expert/Report Author	7.2	4.6
Court	3.2	0.0
Emergency Services	2.8	0.0
Education	2.4	7.2
Government Scheme	2.0	0.7
Religious	0.4	1.3
Probation	0.4	0.0
Total	251 100.0 %	153 100.0 %

From the table above, it is apparent that inner city voices in relation to the Handsworth riots have gained different degrees of access and programme involvement across broadcast news programmes and the other Riot programmes. Most obviously, it is noticeable that police involvement, though still confined to very senior officers, and the Chief Constable in person in over half of all police entries, has nonetheless been reduced by almost half in terms of frequency within and across these different programme forms. It is also striking that community voices have almost doubled their presence across these programmes when compared to news involvements while such 'routine' and often institutional ports of call for the news programme, whether the courts, emergency services or various 'experts' have all been reduced in terms of their programme presence, if appearing at all. Interestingly the voices of government, both central and local, have increased their relative presence within these other programmes. Individual voices, that is, voices of witnesses and neighbours, individual suspects and offenders or simply residents, has diminished slightly when compared to news coverage, indicating perhaps that these 'supplementary voices' providing local colour and experiential accounts are not so prominent within the other

programmes where 'representative' community voices, voices speaking from a collective position and point of view have found a much increased involvement.

If substantive riot coverage and interpretation has fared differently between news, current affairs and documentary, and that inner city voices have also been found to be differentially present within these programmes it is also the case that such programmes have provided an array of different platforms or forums for the public examination and exploration of the issues and concerns involved. The special 'Here and Now' programme comprised film interviews, eliciting statements of some length from young community representatives aligned to a particular community organisation; a film interview with a leading black Afro-Caribbean teacher; and a studio discussion involving a senior police officer and an asian and a white councillor. Interviewees, though still dependent upon interviewer questions and the editing process have 'enjoyed' much increased opportunity to develop their positions at length while, in the case of the studio discussion, opportunities for direct engagement with opposing points of view, and agenda shifting.

The 'Central Weekend' programme began with a lengthy film report from America interviewing a number of 'radical' voices and others proclaiming the causes and lessons learnt from America's 'race riots' of the 60's, followed by a lengthy and structured studio discussion with an array of inner city voices. Though structured according to a set plan of substantive topics, relentlessly followed and directed by studio presenters, the live discussion enabled points of view to be developed in direct and indirect engagement with opposing viewpoints, while statements challenging the order and agenda of discussion were publicly stated. The documentary 'After the Riots', produced a wide array of voices often seamlessly juxtaposed and vying for public recognition and acceptance in a direct, albeit ultimately orchestrated and produced, series of orchestrated film statements, news interviews and film voice overs.

In summary, the review of Central's factual and features programming has found, notwithstanding the initial 'promise' of particular regional programmes, that the issues and concerns of the inner city have not featured prominently, if at all, within many of these programme types. Moreover, even at this cursory

level of review it has been noted how these different programme forms appear to entertain regular and identifiable programme interests expressed in terms of their respective 'appropriate subject matter'. Moreover general observations concerning the programme 'stance' of these different programmes have also been noted, where programme ambitions in relation to the subjects portrayed, their mode of delivery and audiences have all been seen to impact upon the selection and delivery of inner city related issues infrequently appearing within such regional programme forms. However, the fact remains, as observed at the outset of this chapter that the portrayal of the inner city features highly infrequently, if at all, within these different regional programmes which, furthermore, have often been found to be marginalised to the quiet hours and small audiences found at the periphery of the schedules.

If the issues, problems and general concerns of the inner city, then, have not been found, on the whole to be consonant with the programme ambitions and interests of other regional programmes, the Handsworth Riots at least generated three separate current affairs and documentary programmes. These have been reviewed in terms which mirror the analyses already carried out and have been found to provide a much increased array of interpretative resources and accounts than found within regional news portrayal of these same events and their aftermath. While all programmes reviewed, including regional news accounts, cannot simplistically be said to 'represent' a particular interpretative schema in relation to the Handsworth riots, it has nonetheless been established that the interpretative resources and accounts placed within the public domain by each of these programme forms have differentially enabled and sustained the three contending and principal discourses found to characterise the inner city debate. While news accounts have provided considerable resources of support and sustenance to a conservative understanding of the Handsworth riots and their causes, with much reduced attention to 'key' liberal inner city preoccupations and concerns, it has also been found, relatedly, that the issues and concerns as well as framework of understanding underpinning a radical viewpoint has effectively been silenced within such riot presentations.

When considering three different current affairs and

documentary programmes however, the range of interpretative resources and accounts has been considerably enhanced. In the case of 'Here and Now', a liberal span of concerns and issues was found to dominate the programme's portrayal tending to displace the erstwhile conservative preoccupations found elsewhere, though also only marginally invoking radical interpretative accounts. 'Central Weekend' though involving both liberal and conservative viewpoints was found to centre upon issues of racism and racial disadvantage institutionalised across an array of social institutions and thus placed on the agenda of public discussion the interpretative accounts and resources centred within a radical interpretative schema.

Finally, 'After the Riots', produced a wide spectrum of views, including heavy dependence upon 'secondary' sources of broadcast regional news items. The views expressed therefore included conservative views as well as liberal and occasional radical voices and preoccupations. The manner in which these were crafted into a single whole, with a plurality of viewpoints and issues publicly raised and to an extent remaining 'open' to public interpretation has also contributed to the diverse ways in which these three programmes tackled the Handsworth riots. If 'Here and Now' adopted essentially a stance of liberal 'concern' towards the Handsworth riots, 'Central Weekend' deliberately adopted a 'critical' and 'challenging' position towards conservative orthodoxies, with 'After the Riots' constructing a 'creative' play of different viewpoints leaving questions of judgement open to audience interpretation.

The fact remains, however, these three programmes, were the only non-news programmes commissioned by Central Television, while their relative audience size and schedule placing, though in two instances at least deemed 'favourable' by regional standards, nonetheless represent a drop in the ocean when compared to the endless tide of regional news daily washing over the Central region, day after day, after day. If this chapter concludes the first major part of analysis, having determined across a number of crucial lines of inquiry, the extent, character and forms of inner city portrayal within Central's regional news and other programming over an extensive period of time, the second part of the analysis will now seek to determine why this portrayal has assumed these particular forms.

Chapter Nine

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS AND THE REPRODUCTION OF THE REGIONAL NEWS GENRE

The preceding chapters have examined and interrogated a considerable amount of inner city portrayal broadcast over an extended period of time. Attending to the informing parameters of relatively established programme forms, general inner city coverage and detailed accounts of the 1985 Handsworth riots an overview of the extent, character and forms of this portrayal has been gained. More specifically, in line with the declared research objectives, particular attention has been paid to the substantive 'content' of inner city coverage, the different 'forums' within which this presentation has been delivered, the range and degree of differential presence of diverse inner city actors securing access within this portrayal as well as to the informing parameters of programme genre. This second part of the study seeks to pursue these same lines of inquiry into the production domain in order to gain further insight into the professional practices and journalistic processes which have helped to produce the particular range, extent and character of the inner city coverage already reviewed. Not content to infer possible motivations, reasons or explanations for this portrayal from an analysis of inner city coverage alone, the specific areas of research interest noted above have been pursued into the domain of actual programme mechanics, professional practices and journalistic understandings of the regional news genre.

Given the specific lines of interest already identified and attended to in some detail, this second part of the study complements this first discussion by deliberately delimiting its focus upon those same areas (for diagrammatic presentation see appendix 3). This is not intended, in other words, as a full-blown and comprehensive production study, perhaps in the tradition of those growing numbers of studies already reviewed, but rather seeks to further interrogate, and begin to account for the specific area of inquiry - the televisual presentation of the problems and issues of the inner city - by further reference to the immediate proximities of professional practices involved in producing the principal programme form responsible

for the most extensive coverage of the problems and issues of the inner city.

The following discussion will therefore primarily attend to the genre of regional news and the way in which an established programme form is conceptualised, produced and reproduced by professional programme makers from day to day and the manner in which this can be seen as impacting upon both the extent and forms of inner city portrayal. Secondly, and more explicitly, the coverage of the inner city itself will be subjected to examination by attending to professional practices and values which bear directly upon the selection, construction and inflexion of inner city news items. Thirdly, attention will pursue the range and character of different 'forums', or, in this instance presentational formats identified above and their connection to both production and professional journalist requirements. Fourthly, the concern with the accessing of others, in this instance inner city actors, is pursued and again the immediate production environment and professional journalistic practices are interrogated to the extent that these bear directly upon the accessing, and non-accessing, of inner city voices.

Each of these fundamental attributes to the portrayal of the inner city, and taken to be constitutive of the televisual public sphere receive examination and discussion. Their mode of interrogation follows in the wake of an extensive period of participant observation, a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with over 40 news programme makers and planners, and a small number of detailed case studies. Each of the following discussions will therefore draw on these different sources of information and insight as well as reflecting upon the various findings already elaborated in the first part of this discussion. Before these four lines of interest are embarked upon however, some general observations can usefully be advanced which provide a general overview of the production context and routines within which this analysis takes place. This first discussion provides, in other words, an introduction to the organisation, personnel and routines of the newsroom as well as its principal 'sources' of news as a necessary backdrop to the four lines of inquiry pursued below.

Central Television and the Programme Production Domain

Central News is transmitted simultaneously from the main production centres at Birmingham, Nottingham and, most recently, Abingdon each respectively serving the west, east and south sub-regions of the regional franchise area. Daily bulletins of approximately 5 minutes duration are transmitted throughout week days at, currently, 9.55 am, 11.35 am, 1.20 pm, 3.25pm and 10.30 pm with a major Central News programme of approximately half an hour duration transmitted each weekday evening, with occasional programmes of one hour transmitted on Friday evenings. In addition, weekend bulletins are also transmitted from Birmingham for the whole area over the weekend. Approximately 6 to 7 hours of programming is produced by each of these centres each and every week throughout the year. No other programme even remotely approximates the amount of broadcast programming generated by these news teams, and as such news can be taken as a major corporate and programming commitment. As a News Editor remarked 'a major documentary is an hour, runs for a maximum of an hour and half, they're prepared over 6 months of continuous work; we produce 6 to 7 hours each week !'

Collectively producing this considerable amount of routine output involves about 40 technicians (studio crews, sound and vision engineers, tape and film editors, transmission controllers) at each of the main centres, with about 20 at Abingdon; 3 teams of journalists, involving about 25 at the main centres and 12 at Abingdon; 5 video camera units at each centre and over 50 freelance correspondents('stringers') throughout the region. In addition to the main production centres news offices, manned by reporters, are also based in Stoke on Trent, Leicester, Derby and in the House of Commons, while at Swindon and Gloucester studio facilities are available for live contributions to the Central South news programme. Pictorial coverage is also supplemented by 8 freelance cameramen in towns across the Central region, while occasionally Central's Outside Broadcast Units can be called upon for the live transmission of major events.

Each centre also involves the services of sports teams and four specialist politics journalists, two of which are based in Birmingham and two at the House of Commons for the politics

current affairs programme Central Lobby and Central News. Occasional features and regular inserts into the main programme produced by freelance production units such as the crime watch insert 'Police Five' also supplements the news production effort. Major regional news items are frequently transmitted by ITN, with one or two major 'regional' news stories finding their way into the national news every week, and occasionally international news via satellite. Microwave radio links and British Telecom lines facilitate the exchange of items and pictorial material between other ITV franchise centres. With the introduction in January 1988 of a fully computerised news system, 'Newstar', the flow of communication both within and between the main production centres has undergone considerable change. With each journalist and reporter writing their copy directly into the system, not only is it easily accessed by other news personnel for further editing but it is also automatically timed at average reading pace and delivered to the autocue for final presentation.

Clearly, even from this cursory statement, the organisation and resources available to Central News West are considerable and indicate something of the complexity and effort which accompanies the production of regional news. The corporate structure and hierarchy of Central Television PLC can also be briefly indicated as a means of situating the programme personnel and planners of direct relevance to this study within a wider institutional and corporate structure (see appendix 7). The personnel sheets indicate the upper echelon of the corporate hierarchy and the formal hierarchy of general relevance to the organisation of factual programming, including the production of news, and features. However, while individuals within these upper echelons of corporate structure are occasionally involved in the discussion below, for the reasons outlined earlier the principal focus of attention is directed at the immediate proximities of news production and news producing personnel. A brief overview of the internal organisation, and key personnel of the Central West News room is therefore of general relevance as is the basic organization and routines found to structure the news production process. A diagram of the newsroom layout and key personnel is also provided (appendix 8).

The following description cannot give due weight to the

different permutations of these different professional roles and functions as carried out in practice and which inevitably colour all organisational relationships, but merely seeks to indicate the main lines of division and responsibility as institutionalised in the period when this research was carried out. Changes initiated towards the end of 1988 within the upper echelons of the corporate hierarchy and programme divisions will be briefly considered below, though the internal arrangements found within the newsroom itself remain relatively untouched by these major accommodations to the new commercial and political climate confronting commercial television.

Working to the Director of Programmes, the Controller of Factual Programmes has overall control of the production of regional news programming and is instrumental in setting the broad contours of programme policy and orientation while an intermediate managerial level including Managing Editor, Editorial Manager and Heads of News each perform various managerial functions including arranging staff contractual matters, the co-ordination and implementation of new technology and projects, and the supervision of independents and general policy concerns. In terms of the day to day running of the news programme however it is the Programme Editor who is in overall charge of the programme both in terms of the traditionally conceived 'input' aspects of news 'gathering' and production as well as news editing and final 'output' of broadcast material.

The Programme Editor therefore is in overall charge of the programme, implementing and carrying out on a day to day basis the general programme remit outlined by the Controller, while also responsible for maintaining IBA guidelines on balance and good taste and ensuring legal considerations are not infringed. The News Editor works directly to the Programme Editor, and is mainly involved in news gathering, finding out the stories that are breaking on the day in question, assigning and organising reporters, news crews and dispatch riders, generally checking out stories and ensuring the major stories are in fact covered while also compiling the Prospects list for the following day's stories. The Deputy News Editor and Desk Number Three, or stand in Reporter, also man the newsdesk and assist this general news gathering and co-ordinating process with the assistance of the camera crews' Co-ordinator. As well as a team of Reporters,

including Presenter/Reporters, working to the news desk a Forward Planning team, two reporters and a secretary, are involved in a constant process of sifting through incoming mail and other contacts while ensuring future possible 'diary' stories are logged and brought to the attention of the News Editors.

While these positions are the nub of the news gathering process, the Programme Organiser and Bulletin Editor, with a small team of sub-editors work to the Programme Editor and are responsible for editing and packaging the 'gathered' news material into the final news programme and bulletins. Attending to scripts, link pieces and visual elements the Programme Organiser and Bulletin Editor literally construct the programme into a split-second schedule which orders the final presentation technically implemented by the News Director from the news control room. In addition to these various positions productions assistants, and secretaries, copy-takers and film and video editors all populate the news room in varying degrees of frenetic, and occasionally frenzied activity reflecting the rhythms of the news production process and approaching transmission deadlines. If the above provides a brief overview of the key personnel arrangements found within the newsroom, the general rhythms and temporal processes of news production can also usefully be sketched.

At 7am the 'early Sub-editor' arrives and consults the hard diary (a folder of press cuttings, forward planning memos, notes, PR handouts) left by the late reporter and sub-editor from the previous night. This provides details of running stories, as well as new stories of likely interest on the day. The newsroom computer system, Newstar, is also consulted and the Provisional Prospects, compiled by the News Editor on the previous late afternoon, summoned up onto one of the many computer terminals positioned around the newsroom. Check calls are made to the Police and Fire services, and the feed in system to Newstar by the Press Association is also continually monitored. At 7.30 the News Editor arrives and begins to monitor various news sources and make adjustments to the prospects list. With the arrival of the early Reporter at 8.00 and the Deputy News Editor, Bulletin Editor and sub-editors at 8.30 and Programme Editor at 8.45 the news desk progressively comes alive

with editors busily preparing script typed directly into the newstar system for the early morning bulletin as the ring of telephones begins to fill the newsroom and compete with the sound of overhead televisions.

The early morning news services of all channels are constantly monitored as are the local radio bulletins. With the arrival of local and national daily newspapers all these sources of news are attended to through a growing smog of cigarette smoke assisted by endless cups of coffee. The banter of up-dating running stories, discussion of 'breaking' and diary stories begins to mix with the general cacophony of 'news' now permeating the news room as the Programme Editor and News Editor arrange the Prospects for the day's programme. The early morning atmosphere of activity continues throughout the day, only occasionally lapsing into periods of relative calm following directly upon the midday news bulletins and main evening programme.

Following the early morning bulletin, copies of Prospects are printed and handed out to assembled reporters, sub-editors and News desk personnel for the Morning Conference. The News Editor briskly runs through each two line summary, while comments and discussion usually involve questions of logistics, availability of camera crews and anticipated news developments. Occasionally some discussion concerning the news story itself and possible differences of treatment are broached by those assembled, while the Programme Editor occasionally intervenes with a gentle 'steering' touch especially in instances where stories may prove potentially difficult or sensitive. Some of the day's reporters are likely to have been assigned the previous night and already dispatched to locations, while the remaining are assigned at the morning conference and equipped with story 'briefs' before they set off on their various assignments.

Throughout the day the news desk constantly monitors news sources and up-dates news stories with the progress of reporters' assignments followed by phone and radio phone. Sub-editors prepare their scripts, running orders are printed, bulletin presenters rehearse their delivery from autocue, voluminous post is opened and the bulk of it is consigned to the rubbish bin, editors and the forward planning section consult,

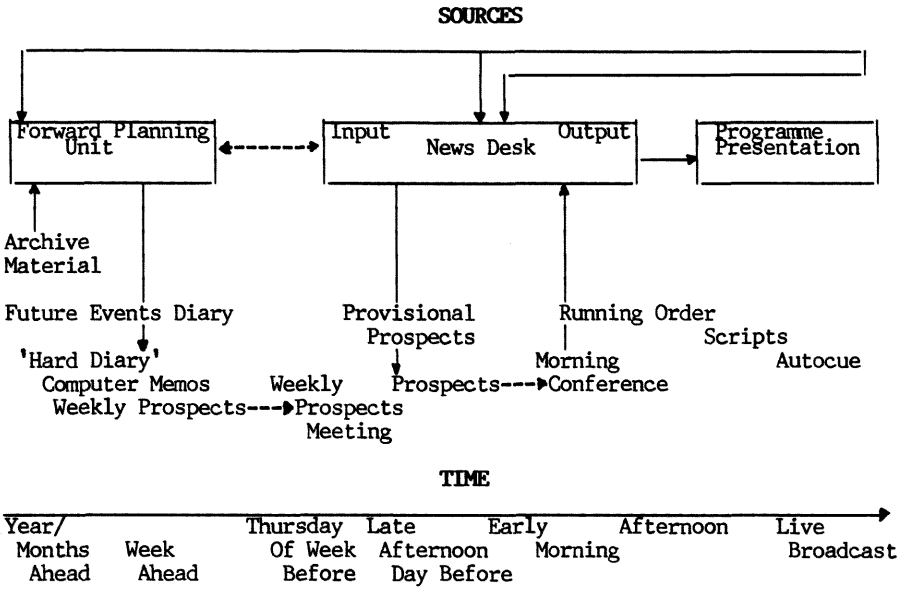
the crew-co-ordinator and deputy news editor jiggle the schedule of the crew roster on the wall, ENG video is delivered to the news room from location by dispatch riders, bulletins are transmitted, reporters return to write their scripts direct into the Newstar system and edit their ENG material as running times are dictated by the Programme Organiser.

And so the day runs its course accompanied by ceaseless telephone calls, humorous banter and occasional heated exchanges. With a lull after the midday bulletin, the pitch of activity reaches its peak after 4 pm as the remaining news items are finally prepared and packaged into the final programme. The News Editor prepares the next day's provisional prospects on Newstar and a hard diary replete with comments, newspaper cuttings and forward planning details is assembled for the late sub-editor. Following the early evening national news, the news editors and remaining reporters file into the Head of New's cramped office and sit back to watch their collective efforts with the live broadcast of the main evening Central News programme. With an eye for technical detail and general appearance the substance of the programme's items generally calls forth from those assembled less comment than does an inappropriate still, wrongly placed astems or weak presenter's link piece. The late reporter/presenter may watch the programme with special interest as selections for the late evening bulletin are considered, while the rest of the assembled company invariably indulge in quips and merriment at each others expense.

This daily cycle is repeated each week day though the level of intensity and activity can vary from day to day, depending on the occurrence of late 'breaking news', the availability of news stories on the day, numbers of available journalists and the duration of the programme to be filled. Once a week a Forward Planning Meeting is held on Thursday mornings in which normally the Senior Forward Planning reporter submits possible diary stories to the Programme Editor who then discusses these with the News Editor, Crew Co-ordinator, and Sports Editor. These are then finalised as definite news items, possible items requiring further investigation or possible 'fill ins' for sparse news days, or discounted entirely for a variety of reasons. If this organisational accomplishment is expressed diagrammatically in

terms which indicate something of the temporal process involved and key documents and meetings structuring this process the following provides a general overview.

Figure 9:1 **The Television News Process**



As the diagram above indicates, while news may well commonly be taken to be the latest, up-to-the-moment happenings and events, it can nonetheless be the result of a protracted, prepared and routine production process which can extend from anything up to a year in preparation. Certainly the Forward Planning Unit and News Editor are constantly in search of news items that can be 'placed on the shelf' and 'hard diary' items prepared and/or anticipated in advance of the day's transmission given the constant pressure to fill the programme and make best use of available resources on the day. However, if news can involve considerable pre-planning and preparation over a period of time, as the diagram above also indicates the process allows for flexibility with last minute and even 'on air' changes to the computerised running order and script sent to the autocue as the programme goes out live.

If the organisational processing of news assumes a highly routinised form, the dependence of the newsroom upon certain 'sources' of news is also a prominent feature of news production

and evident within the daily round of check calls and other routine contacts made with major sources of news stories. A review of all broadcast items and their respective sources across a sample period of two weeks, outlined below, confirms the highly organisational and institutional character of the majority of source interventions.

With nearly half of all broadcast items originating from outside sources the newsroom appears indebted to sources approaching the newsroom, or routinely making themselves available, as in check calls, with a regular supply of stories. Who exactly is involved in these approaches will be pursued further below. If nearly half the programme items are found to result from outside approaches to the newsroom, a further fifth of all news items, excluding sport, derive from other media sources. The original 'source' of such stories is therefore lost from view in such cases though the news 'immersion' referred to earlier as a general newsroom ambiance and practice finds its 'rewards' in the amount of stories gathered from these related media sources.

With less than a fifth of all stories actually originated by newsroom related personnel the golden days of investigative journalism referenced by the 'old school' of newsroom journalists if based in fact, appear well and truly superseded by the techniques and requirements of fast news processing. Moreover, given that the vast majority of all these newsroom related 'sources' originate from freelances or 'stringers', who in the main are undisclosed journalists working for the region's local newspapers, the number of news stories actually originated by Central West reporters from this sample has been found to be little more than 2 % of all broadcast items. With the remaining 'sources' difficult to determine given the presence and development of 'running stories' already within the news domain, it is apparent that the main source of stories originates from contacts originated by external sources.

Table 9:2 News Sources

General Sources :		
Press Release	22	
Organisation Call	14	
Routine(Check)Call	5	
Individual Call	3	
Individual Letter	0	
Sub-Total	44	(46.8 %)
Other Media :		
Central South	7	
Central East	6	
Newspapers	4	
Press Association	1	
Television	1	
Radio	0	
Sub-Total	19	(20.2 %)
Personnel :		
Newsroom Freelances	13	
Newsroom Personnel	2	
Central Personnel	2	
Sub-Total	17	(18.1 %)
In The News Domain :		
Follow-Up Item	8	
Running Story	5	
Multi-source	1	
Sub-Total	14	(14.9 %)
TOTAL	94	(100.0 %)

Breaking down these 'general sources' into their different organisational and institutional sites the following findings are obtained.

Table 9:3 General News Sources

Local Services/Administration	13	29.5
Business/Company	12	27.3
Pressure Group/Community Group	7	15.9
Police	6	13.6
Trade Unions	3	6.8
Fire Service	2	4.5
Individuals	1	2.3
Total	44	(100.0 %)

The breakdown into these basic groups indicates that organisational and institutionalised sources appear to routinely and successfully provide the impetus for regional news stories. Providing press releases, often couched in terms designed to

appeal to known news criteria and established interests, such sources routinely gain entry to the newsroom with items processed for final transmission. With local administration and services originating numerous items, followed by successful interventions by business and commercial sources, the plethora of pressure and community groups found across the region have established some presence as a news 'source' while the police force, notwithstanding the fact it is but one institution among many finds a similar news presence as a direct and originating 'source' of transmitted news items.

At this initial and in the main organisational level it is apparent that the originating sources of successful news items are themselves partially responsible in 'producing' news items of potential interest to the newsroom. However, as already intimated, a degree of circumspection is required before such a process is approached perhaps as a linear and one-way involvement of sources given the 'known' news interests of regional news and possible prior involvements with the media of various source organisations. In other words, 'the news culture' discussed below, cannot be assumed to be monopolised by practitioners and producers of news-making alone but is also monitored by readers and viewers, some of whom regularly seek to actively intervene from within an organisational setting into the news process and are likely to frame their interventions in terms which will maximise their chances of success. Once again, the point can be made that while the newsroom appears to be routinely and organisationally geared up to major sources of news, which no doubt eases and institutionalises the ever present need to 'fill the programme', such sources are nonetheless accommodated according to their perceived contribution to news expectations and requirements.

The above has only provided the barest of sketches of the organisation and process of news production as an introduction to the discussions below. Before embarking on these more detailed analyses however, three broad reflections can be broached on the basis of participant observation and interview findings which are deemed to be of particular relevance to this study. These observations while intimately connected to the immediate vicinity of production and professional routines nonetheless begin to go beyond those accounts which have sought

to explicate the organisational routines, professional hierarchies and formal production arrangements collectively 'resulting' in the news product. These three findings involve the degree of news 'immersion' practiced and expected of all newsroom journalists; the degree of role flexibility and interchange evidenced within the newsroom; and, relatedly, the collective nature of the news product. While all three can be discussed in terms of the general organisational imperatives and requirements of the news production process, they can also be discerned of particular significance to the extent that they provide the means of establishing a specific collective understanding of the particular news form reproduced on a daily basis.

While a general appreciation of the organisational parameters is both necessary and useful, perhaps as an antidote to conspiratorial or ideologically complicit 'readings' of news output, the tendency of some production studies towards a form of organisational functionalism, as reviewed earlier, fails to appreciate the specificity and differentiation of the news forms actually produced. A few general observations can therefore be usefully advanced before proceeding to the first of the four lines of approach indicated above.

Observing the daily routines and rhythms of the news room over a period of six months, it is apparent that the production of regional news is not carried out in something of a regionalised news vacuum. Rather the immediate working environment found within the news room is totally enmeshed within a much wider news net. Constantly impinging into the centre of the news room national and international, as well as regional and local news permeates the journalistic atmosphere in a ceaseless tide of breaking news and up-dates on running stories. 'News' within the Central newsroom, in other words, is not confined to the packaged outcome of this particular production process but rather represents a total working environment suffused with the collective outpourings of other news centres. This news immersion constantly plied by incoming media sources, whether the day's papers, radio and television news programmes, or regular updates from the Press Association, combine to produce a sense of 'news' as an impinging reality. Furthermore this extrinsic reality appears to demonstrate a

facticity constantly affirmed by the incoming 'news' from multiple sites of media information.

Moreover this immersion in the wider tide of ceaseless news updates, and breaking stories is both expected and pursued by all the journalists within the news room. Such is the professional commitment to keeping up with the latest developments, both work and non-work time appears to be geared to the ceaseless monitoring of news. Many of the journalists spoken to quite freely admit to having something of an obsession for news which fills their leisure hours as well as working environment while the programme editor concedes that 'If you're a journalist, you're a journalist and you accept it..I expect people to keep themselves up to date and keep themselves immersed'.

This feature of the news operation studied is important because it locates the production of regional news within a wider media news environment which, though differentiated, nonetheless constantly affords a reference point in which the specificity of the news product produced can be situated and defined, and which furthermore ordinarily has no need of recourse to external criteria of justification or validation. In an earlier chapter an inner 'core' of regional news values was discerned and briefly discussed, these however, as just that, can be seen to reside within a wider acceptance and understanding of news which is readily acknowledged and practised by regional news journalists. With only two exceptions, all the journalists and reporters interviewed have had past experience on local and/or national newspapers and constantly tend to define their understanding of regional news in terms of different types of newspaper journalism.

Thus, a News Editor stated before his departure that he would like the programme to be 'not as grand as the Washington Post, but like the old Daily Mirror under Cuddlip', while a Forward Planning journalist will refer to 'Daily Mirror type stories', and the Head of News state in response to a question seeking a definition of the regional news programme that 'we're sort of around The Mail, The Express, perhaps approaching The Sun, perhaps impinging on The Telegraph, I wouldn't say that we're near The Guardian or The Times, and we're certainly not as awful as the worst parts of The Sun and The Star', while the

Programme Editor maintains that the programme has to be 'somewhere between The Mirror and the Daily Mail with a little bit of The Telegraph chucked in as well, we'd never go as far down as The Sun'. Constant reference to newspapers though perhaps a useful shorthand for self-definition simultaneously locates the journalists' understanding of the programme within a wider and shared news environment. Journalists producing the regional news programme are not therefore hermetically sealed from wider professional understandings of 'news', though the specificity of the regional news genre, as discussed below, tends to be understood by reference to this wider news culture.

If the regional newsroom and journalistic enterprise is constantly immersed within a shared news culture, within which and in relation to which regional news programming is conducted the shared and collective understanding of the regional news genre is further reinforced by the high degree of role flexibility and interchange evident within the television newsroom. As the Programme Editor has remarked:

> "You need flexibility here and people are paid accordingly, it's that part of the job that is valued very much in all the agreements that have been made. The subs will act as reporters, the reporters will act as subs, the reporters might also sit on the newsdesk and act as news editors, the programme organiser will act up as news editor when the editor is away. All this sort of thing goes on a lot and it also provides more interest and more variety in their working lives and it also gives the reporters the opportunity to learn how to present by doing a bit of it on the main programmes or by doing bulletins, so it's something they can enjoy and get something out of it. It's far better for people to see its a continuous process from beginning to end and to understand having to relate. "

While the high degree of role flexibility undoubtedly 'oils the wheels' of production through better understanding and appreciation of the overall process, it also helps to ensure that the collective effort pulls in a similar direction with a common understanding of the nature and form of the regional news programme collectively produced. As the Programme Editor observes 'people in the news room know the general trend of what is expected by a general consensus, and by the fact that the Editors preach the same message constantly over a period'. Moreover, the fact that recently appointed Controllers and Programme Editors are known to build teams of personnel they have previously worked with also helps to ensure uniformity of collective purpose and programme consistency. It's commonly

acknowledged, for instance, that 'Any news editor, any news producer is only as good as the team he has around him'.

This aspect of engendering a collective understanding of the form of news product, while open to fine grained studies of journalist socialization, even at this general level intimates that while production routines and working arrangements may well exert their own form of determinancy upon the news product, they may also act to further the shared consent and understandings of the particular form of news product itself and which is daily reproduced. The following statement by an experienced reporter is revealing in this respect, in that not only does it assume the original question asked concerning the degree of reporter latitude was essentially about 'bias', a common finding of some interest, but so too does it encapsulate and affirm the double nature of news production.

> "I think identifying bias as such in news programmes at the point of origin if you like, is something which is very difficult because you're all working to a known result which is this particular programme. We know the way it works, so we're sort of working to a format formula, which might sound dreadful, people will think that's formulated news. Its not. Its simply that you couldn't go out and see how the mood takes you, this might be a 5 minute discussion on Islam, or it might just be a 2 minute piece on this demonstration. You have to go out because of the constraints of time to set the thing up, you have to go out with some idea of its shape."

Careful scrutiny of this observation reveals not simply that news production imposes certain constraints upon the news product, important as these are, but also that the programme is collectively known and pursued as a 'known result', an expectancy which is reproduced on a daily basis. How exactly this 'known result' is conceptualised and reproduced on a daily basis, and with what impact upon the portrayal of the inner city can now receive detailed consideration below. With these general observations in mind, attention will now turn to the first of the four areas of inquiry and begin to unpack something of the production practices and professional understandings of the regional news programme which gives it its distinctiveness as a vehicle of news.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE REGIONAL NEWS PROGRAMME: QUESTIONS OF GENRE

In earlier chapters it has been noted how the regional news programme approached as a species of television genre has exhibited certain characteristic forms and features which have limited the extent, and impacted upon the forms and character of inner city portrayal. For analytical purposes it was found useful to interrogate the genre of regional news by attending to aspects of 'appropriate subject matter', 'mode of formal composition' and general programme 'stance'. As analytical categories developed outside of the practice of news production these are unlikely to be immediately apparent or accepted by news producers themselves, though, as will be discerned below, they frequently find an identifiable expression within the elicited statements and positions of news personnel.

At a more detailed and quantitatively established level it has been found that regional news subject matter is severely skewed towards 'softer' news subject areas with 'consumer interest' and 'human interest' stories (as defined by specified categories) assuming a relatively consistent mainstay of the programme alongside a heavy emphasis upon crime stories. Both in terms of the possible displacement and the selection and construction of inner city stories these two planks of regional news programming have been found to have left their stamp upon regional inner city coverage as has a general 'human interest' inflexion attending many regional news items. News stories have frequently been found to resonate with an identifiable 'core' of regional news values which frequently 'individualise' and 'privatise' news accounts and events thereby simultaneously constructing and appealing to a particular and popular 'human interest'.

Pitched in the first instance at a relatively general level it is interesting to inquire how news producers themselves conceptualise the regional news programme, its roles, functions and appeals. Clearly, much can depend on who you ask, or, more precisely, the Corporate role and responsibility held by the interviewee in relation to news programming. The following candid statement of Corporate endeavour in relation to the early evening regional news programme provides therefore a wider institutional view than is either likely to be conceded or

uppermost in the thoughts of many newsroom personnel.

> "You want to get your audience in the early evening and hope they don't switch over. Its terribly important. Yes its a ratings grabber the regional news programme and always has been...The first thing that you look at every week is the rating for the programme. You have to. If the programme satisfies my ego but doesn't produce the rating, then the programme isn't very worth while. No, were very conscious of the rating and always have to be. Its the early evening hook, get them in at 6 o clock if you possibly can and put them through the rest of the night or at least the early evening."
>
> Controller Factual Programmes

If such a statement is grist to the mill for political economists keen to seek out the commercial imperative underpinning media forms, the recent opening of Central's third sub-regional news service also provides ammunition and support for a more politicised and instrumental approach to the provision of news programming. Accounting for the recent development of this latest and costly corporate investment in Central News South, two principal aims are outlined as follows.

> "There we would hope to persuade people that we are providing them with a better local service than anything they can currently get from HTV or anything else. That's one statement. But the other statement was a much bigger political statement saying that if you are a very large company you can nonetheless discharge your regional and local responsibilities, no matter how big you are, providing you can separate out lots of different news regions. And that was a major political statement we made and are still making to the government. That we can reduce the number of ITV companies down from 15 to 6 or 7 if they all behave as responsibly as Central does in setting up news regions you can still do all your local programming.
>
> Controller of Factual Programmes

The regional news programme, on these accounts, can appear simply as a corporate ratings 'hook', and/or as a means of winning political favour and pursuing general commercial goals of conglomeration. Moreover, the latter 'political' understanding of regional news need not be confined to the recent investment in Central News South as is apparent from the following reflection relating to Central News programming from the Head of News, a long serving news producer.

> "Its always been a ship that can earn you higher ratings, its always been that and its also usually a regional identity of the programme company. So there's two interests in it: ones the ratings the other is the fact, which may disappear, is that regional news suddenly becomes the flagship of the entire operation. When it comes to renewing the contract the board proudly start talking about regional news."

These frank observations from senior news personnel at first sight might appear to confirm and endorse perhaps political economy or instrumentalist approaches to the study of news. However, the fact remains, as both the interviewees above would be the first to maintain, that regional news can and does perform such commercial and political functions while also providing a particular news service within an identifiable form. While a fall in programme ratings would undoubtedly incur commercial pressures for change the long established and relatively high ratings secured by Central's regional news programme does not lead to a situation where ordinarily news programme makers are constantly pre-occupied with the rating and initiating changes to improve upon its audience size or composition. As the Programme Editor and other senior news producers and programme planners have maintained 'It's not a matter of pressure, it's a matter of your aim..It's professional pride. Of course if the ratings were to fall to what the Company felt was a danger level commercially there would be some pressure then; but we're not in that boat at all'. Ratings in short, though constantly monitored by senior Corporate personnel and ultimately crucial in determining the programmes long tern viability, need not be considered as pressing concerns for senior programme editors on a daily basis, while newsroom reporters and journalists are unlikely to be consciously aware of, nor unduly concerned with fluctuations in audience size or composition at all. In terms of the immediate proximities of programme production and conceptualisation found within the newsroom, the wider Corporate ambitions intimately tied to 'ratings' proves to be too blunt, and on a daily basis, too removed from the actual practices and preoccupations of news producers to offer much in the way of explanatory insight into the specificities and differentiation of regional news as an established cultural form.

Regional news, as with all forms of television programmes, can be approached from many directions all of which may find evidential support for their competing claims. If implicated within general corporate strategy as well as ultimately dependent upon commercial and economic success, regional news also assumes a particular cultural form, addresses certain issues and concerns in a particular way while appealing to an

identified audience. In these terms, the task of analysis has only just begun when wider commercial imperatives and political contexts are raised.

How then is the programme itself actually conceptualised by key news producers ? Asking the Programme Editor to describe what he would consider to be a typical regional news programme on a 'good' day, the following insightful account was offered and deserves lengthy quotation.

> "This programme on a typically good day would have a very up-to-date breaking hard news story at the top of it, whether it's crime or whatever something that grabs the attention of the viewer without being in any way sensational. So obviously a very good story at the top which is a straight forward actuality story. I would also want to see in the news mixture a lot of people led stories; its a popular people led programme. So you would want stories that would touch the viewer through involving an individual, being based on an individual - whether it's a granny whose involved in a mugging, or whether it's somebody who can't find work despite the all sorts of enormous attempts, whether its a child that's turned up on the doorstep of a hospital and there's a hunt for the mother. All that sort of story which is very much news linked which has preferably happened on that day which will have enormous appeal for the viewer.
>
> Now having gone through all that sort of thing there will be pictures as well. There will be stories that take us out into the region. That get us around the region and reflect the attractions or the problems of the region to the viewer. There will probably be a bit of sport towards the end of the programme before we get to the weather broadcast and so on, the pure public service area. I think its always quite nice to have a bit of leavening on a day that's been full of very morbid and very hard news, whether its from courts or road crashes, fires or whatever it's quite nice to have something, a sort of personality type piece, a bit of humour as well, a bit of humanising."
>
> Programme Editor

This overview, in compressed fashion, provides a reasoned description of the general character and constitution of the regional news programme and provides a statement of intent which, in large measure, can be taken as confirmed by the content analyses reviewed in earlier chapters. At a general descriptive level it has already been established across the years reviewed that the regional news programme does indeed modulate from so-called 'hard' to 'soft' news stories, and that crime news and disaster news tend to be treated in a fairly standardised way permitting little elaboration or contested definitions of events. In other words, 'actuality' in such news items is invariably presented as both incontrovertible and self-

evident. For the reasons already elaborated upon however, crime news, and even the reporting of certain disaster stories need not necessarily be accepted as beyond the bounds of interpretative disagreement and definitional contest perhaps reflecting wider social understandings of the 'actuality' involved.

The Editor's statement also pays reference to the important feature of regional news already confirmed via detailed quantitative analysis, which emphasises the popular, and populist nature of the regional news genre evident in its accessing of considerable numbers of 'ordinary' people. Indeed the Programme Editor readily confirms that the programme strives to be a 'popular people led programme', and provides examples representative of the numerous instances of 'personalised' and 'individualised' news stories already subjected to a degree of quantitative and qualitative analysis and criticism. Such stories are assumed to 'appeal' to the viewer and providing they can also bathe in the news criteria of recency they provide an important element within the regional news programme.

Regionalism is also referenced, not in the sense of fostering a parochial attachment or geographically based petty chauvinism, but rather as a means of 'reflecting' both the problems and attractions of the region. 'Happy news' as much as 'bad news' is therefore intimated, and again enough examples of the 'warm glow' of regional news have been indicated earlier to confirm this particular feature while the picture element of television news is also stressed as an important ingredient to a typical programme. The prevalence of sport, though diminished slightly under the present Programme Editor nonetheless continues to provide a regular presence which was also quantitatively examined within the initial analysis of general regional news content. Finally, both the inclusion of 'personalities', whether celebrities, eccentrics or public figures has been noted earlier as has the general 'humanising' inflexion and inclusion of humour within regional news programmes.

In short, the description above offers a statement which can be readily recognised and quantitatively confirmed from the various analyses already carried out. Indeed, to my mind this description provides an immediately recognisable, fair and

accurate account of the countless regional news programmes previously reviewed and analysed. To this extent, the description above is both of value in confirming many of the general quantitative findings and more qualitative impressions gained by an outsider, while also indicating that such are indeed intended and consciously pursued by professional journalists seeking to implement a particular understanding of the regional news programme. The only point at issue, albeit a fundamental one, is the exact interpretation to be placed upon these characteristic regional news forms and their impact upon the portrayal of serious social issues.

At this point it is therefore of use to pursue in more detail what exactly is meant and pursued by these various features of the regional news programme. To take the idea of a 'popular' programme, what exactly does this mean ? What is the substance and definition which 'fills' this particular invocation of and appeal to the 'popular' sought within the regional news genre ?

> "We are an unashamedly popular programme, we go out of our way to be popular, we mean to be popular. We don't mean to be a shadow of the Radio 4 programme 'Today', we don't really mean to be a reflection of News at Ten, we set out to be, I dislike the word down market intensely, it's redolent of class snobbery and bias, we're not down market we don't do any sleaze, we don't do any dirty divorce cases, we don't do anything the tabloids do except that we do look very hard for the human interest story. Something mum and dad and the nippers at home can watch in the safety of knowing they're not going to get either bad language or appalling people doing appalling things. They can have a giggle over some of the silly things people get up to in our region; and I think that's nice. And I think that's why we're watched because people know they're safe, that they'll get a giggle and they'll sit through the serious stuff as well."
>
> Acting News Editor

Once again we find that the professional news producer's understanding of the regional news programme tends to be situated within a wider framework of understanding of the news media generally while also seeking to disconnect its mass appeal from derogatory understandings of mass popular culture. That is, an attempt is made to make a claim for the popular basis of the programme while simultaneously distancing it from a felt and widespread public disenchantment with the perceived commercial and trivial forms of mass culture or, what has been termed within another context 'the ideology of mass culture'

[Ang(1985)]. Whereas, according to Ang, the 'ideology of mass culture' is an intellectual ideology: 'it tries to win over people by convincing them that 'mass culture is bad', the 'populist ideology' derives its appeal from its anti-intellectualism and direct appeal to people's 'common-sense' and functions at a 'practical level.'(p.115).

Interestingly, the position advanced above though centring the pursuit of 'human interest' with all its direct appeals to empathic response and populist 'common sense', nonetheless also wants to distance its claim to be popular from widespread understandings of popular mass culture. That is, a middle ground position is sought which neither succumbs to the perceived vulgarities of the tabloids nor the intellectualism of 'up market' journalism. Categories of class are actively eschewed as an organising basis of appeal and instead a 'neutral' middle ground of home-centred, family and domestic based ritual is thought to be the programmes natural appeal. However, as this position makes plain while oriented towards the family and domestic situation, this is a particular understanding of 'family' and 'domesticity' which is highly selective and partial. 'Something mum and dad and the nippers at home can watch in safety' implies a restricted notion of the family while also assuming that they need to be protected from some of the worst excesses of the world outside.

Indeed, 'the serious stuff' is felt to be an intrusion, perhaps necessary for a well informed democracy, but essentially a bitter pill that has to be endured before the 'silly stories', the 'funnies', that is, the sweets are handed out as a pleasurable reward.

> As journalists we say, this is important you really ought to pay attention to this. But our sort of contract is, OK were not going to give you half an hour of this, you're going to get three minutes, stick with us because there's a nice little story coming on about a 12 year old boy who's become a circus clown....You see we have to tell people so many horrible things about murders and deaths, tragedies and so on, and if you give them a diet of that you are going to lose them. Nobody wants half an hour of depression, sitting there with their fishfingers and chips. As I was saying earlier on the human interest story, the comical story is very important, very very important... It's actually very important, I think, and that people actually know its coming. You know, 'hang on, hang on there's going to be a funny at the end of this'".
>
> Acting News Editor

This statement is important, I think, not only for its admission that the news programme is a vehicle for much else besides 'news', indeed, almost implying that news is an unfortunate incursion speedily dispatched at the top of the programme, but also that an implicit idea of a contract is broached which clearly raises the idea of the programme as both an established expectancy and form of proferred relationship to its audience. In fairness to the range of opinion found within the newsroom however, it should at least be noted that something of a longstanding division is apparent to the extent that an 'old school' of regional news journalists lament what they see as the passing of the old-style popular 'magazine' news programme while a new school of journalists is keen to firm up the programme and establish a respectable journalistic 'hard news' programme. This division, though finding some evidential basis in the relative change of programme contours over the period reviewed, and discussed earlier, is apt to assume something of a newsroom mythology characterised by the 'entertainers' versus the 'informers'. The present Editorial Manager, originally employed by the present Controller of Factual Programmes, was taken on to implement just such a shift.

> If one goes back, say ten years ago to local news programmes, they were more or less that, they were what they call 'magazine' programmes, and it was the pop star in town today, bit of news bit of that. The policy which I was asked to implement, and therefore lay down, and a policy with which I agree, is that we are a news organisation. And therefore our job is to provide a news programme.
>
> Editorial Manager(Previous Programme Editor)

If the above is representative of the new breed of 'informers', and further endorsed by the present Programme Editor's claims that 'this is first and foremost a hard news programme', the following statement represents the considered views of the old guard of 'entertainers'.

> "On a 6 o'clock news programme nobody is really watching, the kids are screaming for tea, the cats fallen over, all hell's going on, nobody's actually sat watching so if you don't grab their attention and then hold them by entertaining they are not going to watch anyway...People will put up with the hard news, I'm not exaggerating, if they know there is going to be a Swallow or a Maycock or a something on the way, if you start to take it away, they won't put up with you hammering, hammering with boring news, They need to be entertained, its dead simple. You can go on about duty to the community and informing and all

> the other crap but if they are not fucking watching you're not going to tell them.
>
> Specialist Arts Reporter

If these two positions represent the old 'magazine' school of the 'entertainers' and the new 'hard news' school of 'informers' the reality, of course, is that while some changes have undoubtedly occurred in terms of the programme content and style across the years, it is nowhere as polarised as these two positions are apt to claim. Content analysis findings have revealed that the presentational formats have changed, with less use of studio facilities in recent years while 'gimmicky' items hosted by such professional entertainers as Chris Tarrant have ceased. However, it has to be said that the distinctiveness of the regional news programme has continued across the years and is characterised more by consistency of content and appeal, than it is is by any supposed dramatic shift from a 'soft' to a 'hard' news programme. Such terms are always indicative of essentially relative and marginal changes of emphasis and not, contrary to journalistic hyperbole, thoroughgoing change. Indeed, the essential continuity and stability of the regional news genre is conceded by senior news producers, while recognising a middle ground position between these two camps.

> "I think we set out to make an entertaining and informative programme at 6 o clock in the evening which has its own limits. A different editor might have more features on arts than the present one, another editor might want more sport. At the end of the day we're pretty much the same sort of animal though."
>
> Acting News Editor

> "There's an old saying in journalism that no story is new; and I think that's true to an extent and its also true that there's no intrinsically new format which hasn't been tried out already by people presenting news. People tinker with it..but all you are doing is a bit of window dressing, you're changing the style slightly so the viewers don't get bored."
>
> Programme Editor

The 'middle ground' of popular television journalism is therefore taken to be a fairly consistent terrain occupied by the regional news programme which deals in questions of information and entertainment, light and shade :

> "There's an old maxim that says television news has to inform, educate and entertain. I think a mixture of all three is found in a typically good regional new programme. The first job is to inform people as quickly as possible about the main events in

> their area on the day..the hard news events they just demand attention and you give it to them.. There's a little bit of education to be done as well and that's something we have to help our viewers with..Obviously a lot of the educating and the explaining will be done on the national news, but we'll still have to fit it into the regional picture a bit, to apply it to them, lead them through it a little bit. And the entertaining part of it is not to throw people such a morass of heavy, stodgy, indigestible material that the whole lot becomes grey. You need a bit of lighting here and there, a little bit of humanity here and there, which needn't take you into the realms of being silly, or into pure entertainment as such, but just help to relieve the gloom a little bit for them, that little bit of reassurance that there's a little bit of humanity at the bottom of it."
>
> Programme Editor

While the Reithian ethic that television should seek to inform, educate and entertain applied to the entirety of television programming, when applied as a specifically news ethic inscribed into the heart of the regional news genre the character and indeed general purpose of news appears to undergo a radical shift of purpose. No longer seeking to simply inform and explain, albeit perhaps within an entertaining mode of delivery, the purpose of the regional news programme appears to actively engage with the sympathies and emotional sentiments of its viewers. When a 'hard news' programme attempts to 'relieve the gloom a little bit', and seeks to offer 'that little bit of reassurance that there's a bit of humanity at the bottom of it', the programme appears to be actively embarked upon a form of social massage relieving the anxieties, worries and hardships of private existence. In this sense, while the programme may indeed not necessarily slide into the realms of 'pure' entertainment and silly stories, it nonetheless also exhibits a form of popular appeal which indelibly leaves its stamp upon the character of the regional news genre as a whole.

It is this character of the regional programme, as a familiar and familial 'reassurance' which threatens to suffuse the programme as a whole. This relational ambition of the programme, which in more analytical terms has already been referred to as an aspect of 'programme stance' is clearly discerned and acknowledged in terms of the key role played by regional news presenters. The Controller of Factual Programmes, is in no doubt of the importance and familial role played by programme presenters.

"Yes, they're much more developed in a regional programme because

> you have to have that family feeling; 'here's our presenter coming into your sitting room every night and you've got to be at home with him or her'. The presenters are probably more important in a regional news programme than they are in a national programme..the presenters are the absolute key to any regional news programme.

The Head of News, as a long standing regional news journalist and also having a special responsibility for programme presentation, is also in no doubt of the special role played by regional news presenters and offers further insight into the relationship sought with the regional news audience.

> "It is the feeling that the presenter is broadcasting to an audience of one, and that's what he wants to feel, he's not broadcasting to a huge audience. A good presenter is aware that he is a friend in the living room. He is broadcasting to people watching the set, and not to a public gathering or a large audience, he shouldn't feel that he is addressing a large audience. When he goes on, he goes to talk and relate in a friendly way and try to communicate easily with the people in front of the television. And they do, they strike up a relationship. People do stop and notice when they smile and say I like that, I like him or I don't like her...The regional presenters are having to switch from hard news, ie the IRA blowing up the barracks at Shrewsbury into a soft item say a John Swallow item about holes in the road in Birmingham, that newscaster has got to change pace and emphasis and in a way prepare the viewer for what he is about to deliver. So by his facial expression and the fact that he can relax, he actually relaxes the viewer to accept that he is coming to a softer item and that's pretty skilful stuff...your regional presenter in my view forms a closer relationship with the viewer, and need to, or else there is a danger of getting a cold product."
>
> Head of News

This general stance is further confirmed by a presenter in the following terms.

> "They always say when you are looking into the camera picture someone familiar in place of that camera, I think the nicest one to think about is the little old lady, sat at home for whom seeing Fred Bloggs on Central News is important to her because they are people she can identify with. And so you think of them sat at home, and you imagine that you are talking to them, that's the thing which makes it more human, that's the key to it."
>
> Central News Presenter

In short while regional news presenters are expected to command a sense of credibility and authority, itself an important relational ambition in the authentication and objectification of 'news' as a matter of factual certitude, so too are they also expected to assume a familial stance, ingratiating the audience into its friendly ambiance by

'humanising' the communication process. While it may be suggested that there is nothing intrinsically disturbing about wanting to offer a friendly and familiar stance towards the audience, it can nonetheless be maintained that this relationship seeks to address the viewer as essentially a private person, a family member situated within the domestic domain who is spoken to, and occasionally offered 'comfort' in the personal tones of pseudo-friendship. As such, it can be argued that this relational stance merely reinforces and complements the substantive subject matter of regional news which all too often tends to privatise, via the individualistic treatment and quest for 'human interest', serious social issues and concerns which are better approached as collective phenomena located within the public domain of political and social contest and difference. The ambiance of friendly intimacy, the projection of 'the friend in the living room' though implicated in the pursuit of popular appeal also represents a further relational twist in the 'privatising' of concerns and issues of the public sphere.

Moreover it is this search for popular interests which tends to gravitate towards the domestic and private interests of individuals and families situated within the domestic sphere. To return to the 'core' values discerned within regional news, it now becomes apparent that 'the private domain of family and home', 'the pursuit of consumption and leisure' and 'ordinary life and the realms of the experiential and affective', three underpinning values persistently informing a considerable amount of news content, have a basis within the professional perception of the regional news audience, its domestic situation and response to 'human interest' news stories.

> "Its a reflection of who your audience are, and what they are doing, and how they live their lives. They're sitting in their homes watching the programme, its not unsurprising that they should find it reasonably interesting to have domestic matters in the programme from time to time. There's no great conscious thing about that at all, not at all. We're familiar with the audience and they like to identify with the presenters..They like to feel they are in some sort of remote contact with these people who come on the screen every night.."
>
> Programme Editor

Similarly, 'individualism' and 'ordinary life and the realms of the experiential and affective' also find a basis within the 'popular' appeals of the programme which seek to directly

address and implicate the viewers within the life experiences of other 'individuals'.

> "People who sit at home need to identify with what they see on the screen to maintain their interest, and the best way to do that is to provide examples of situations which are affecting people so that they can put themselves in their shoes and at least be interested enough to at least take in the story. We're selling the story really, we have to do it in a way that is acceptable to them, and in a way that they appreciate, a style. I don't regret saying anything like that to you at all, because I really believe it. As far as I'm concerned its a peoples' programme for people by people and the issues are brought out not as a 'by the way' but here it is in microcosm and explain a little bit more around it...the more you do personalise things the more memorable they become to the viewer."
>
> Programme Editor

While it can be agreed that to 'personalise' issues, is not necessarily the same as individualising a story, it has to be said and following the review of countless inner city news items already discussed, it is apparent that the quest to provide news stories as 'examples of situations which are affecting people' in order that people's interest will be maintained constantly runs the risk of doing just that, and little else besides. That is, the pursuit of 'human interest', constantly threatens to displace 'issues' and occasionally swamp a wider framework of analysis within which such 'examples' can make analytical sense. As it is, an evident tendency to simply parade personal situations perhaps involving personal hardship or tragedy, or even enterprise, eccentricity and individual tenacity frequently appears to leave the 'issues' unexplored while the audience is simply invited to recognise the 'characters' and empathise with the 'human drama' played out on the television screen. Referring to the high incidence of stories focussing upon the region's characters and eccentrics, the category of 'human interest' is further fleshed out as follows.

> "It comes back to what I was saying about people being interested mostly in people, they might not identify with, and I certainly wouldn't choose to identify with some of the daft devils, but there's a certain amount of human interest in that, to use that ill-used term. In just wanting to see what people are doing and what makes people unusual and what make things unusual, its quite a high proportion of what news is about as well. I have told a few people that I don't want a regular nutter spot every night, bordering on total insanity in a zone of the programme, the real eccentric can be very amusing and entertaining and it can introduce some levity into the programme or on a more serious level it can serve some good".
>
> Programme Editor

The statement above also implicitly invokes a further 'core' value of 'deviance' which, if accepted not purely in terms of criminal transgression but diverse forms of activity and behaviour challenging or transgressing normative codes and expectations, is clearly found in the 'unusual', 'surprising' and 'unexpected' stories, tales and characters of the region. A concern with deviance, of course, is also and perhaps quintessentially involved in the prominence of crime news and can also be taken as frequently involving manifestations of conflict, a further attribute referenced by the Programme Editor below. To return to the the modulation of news, from so-called 'hard' to so-called 'soft' stories throughout the programme, however, it could be suggested that 'human interest' stories, as the category employed in the earlier content analysis may indicate, is confined to the latter parts of the programme and therefore it is illicit to generalise from these to the programme as a whole. However, while the category of 'human interest' stories referred to particular categories of news item characterised by their substantive content, typically involving children, pets and celebrities in a fairly entertaining manner, that is, they principally appeal to private 'human' sentiments typically directed towards the domains of family, home and leisure and do not pretend to be of public import, they principally celebrate and affirm rather than inform or explain, a 'human interest' inflexion has also been discerned which runs across the programme as a whole. And it is here that the comments above find their mark. Indeed, the search for a mass audience and sought popular appeal tends to inflect all 'good' regional news stories with human interest.

> "There are several elements that go into making up a good story, and probably the common strands are its appeals to the kind of audience that you are trying to reach, and to do that its got to be immediate, its got to have just happened, its got to be very fresh, its got to have an element of humanity, of human interest - an ill-used term - running through it, something with which people can identify to a large extent, and quite often a good story will have a degree of conflict within it as well."
>
> Programme Editor

On this account, and the findings already discussed of earlier content analyses, the 'human interest' inflexion is therefore not confined to the substantive 'content' of so-called 'soft' news subjects but actively informs the treatment of all

news stories and, as has been demonstrated earlier in relation to the portrayal of the inner city, this can be seen to have an impact upon the public communication of important social and political issues and contest. If asked what the principal responsibility of the regional programme is, news producers are apt apt to say that it should 'reflect the region'. The Controller for instance maintains that 'The news programme is to reflect what is happening in the region, it is dominated by the region' and the Programme Editor has said above that stories will 'reflect the attractions and the problems of the region'. However, as we have seen, on closer scrutiny the regional news genre and its professional conceptualisation and implementation significantly colour the extent, character and forms such a regional 'reflection' finally assumes. The professional conceptualisation of the regional news programme daily implemented and reproduced both constructs, and in a discursive sense constitutes the 'region' refracted through the prism of established genre conventions, expectations and relational appeals. How exactly the portrayal of an important social and political contest is practically 'mediated' through the programme of regional news can now receive more detailed discussion and consideration.

Chapter Ten

PRODUCING THE PORTRAYAL OF THE INNER CITY

In the last discussion a picture of the professional conceptualisation of the regional news programme, its character, ambitions and general relational stance towards its audience has been elicited and subjected to a degree of criticism as a vehicle for the portrayal of serious social and political issues. In this discussion some of these findings, in association with the general conclusions already obtained from the 'reading' carried out in the first part of this study, are pursued with explicit reference to the portrayal of the problems and issues of the inner city. To begin this second chapter concerned with the production of inner city news portrayal it is therefore useful to briefly review some of the main findings already gained from an extensive 'reading' of such material before embarking upon this particular interrogation of the production domain.

Overall it has been noted that the portrayal of the inner city is conspicuous, with a few major exceptions, in its near news absence. While categories of inner city crime news and germane issues of law and order have found considerable presence relative to other issues and concerns, other 'key' problems and concerns of the inner city discussion and debate appear to have been in the main absent across the seven years of broadcast material consulted. With the almost total absence of news relating to broad inner city political concerns and community affairs, and the relative absence of news items relating to the generalised concerns of inner city social disadvantage and urban deprivation such 'key' aspects to the wider inner city debate have been found to be notable in their relative silence. Moreover, in so far as inner city concerns, issues and problems have found news representation these have tended to be inflected within a particular regional news style of journalism keen to 'personalise' events and issues in a quest to maximise the 'human interest' appeal of such news treatments.

On the basis of these basic findings concerning the interpretative resources and accounts placed within the televisual public sphere, it has been maintained that an

informed understanding of the inner city problematic as a whole has been seriously disadvantaged while news coverage has tended to emphasise the inner city as problem of law and order. It will be remembered, for instance, of the three principal discourses organising discussion of the inner city the discourse of law and order has by far been the most privileged in terms of the inner city themes gaining regular and prominent news coverage.

It was also found that the structure of discourse embedded within the typical elements attending a regional news story have tended to provide a form, frequently highly individualised and largely decontextualised, which provides further interpretative support consonant to a particular framework of inner city understanding and interpretation and not others. A case has been made, especially in relation to crime news and the coverage of the Handsworth riots in particular, suggesting that this construction of the typical regional news story potentially offers support to a conservative interpretative framework of understanding which at best distances competing interpretative accounts, and at worst challenges or even undermines both liberal 'contextual' and radical 'structural' frameworks of inner city understanding.

These and other findings provide the backdrop to this part of the study and inform the following discussion. Before some of these specific findings can be pursued into the production domain however, it is useful to consider how practising regional journalists regard the contested semantic site of 'the inner city' as a possible source of news interest. The first question raised therefore concerns how the 'inner city' is conceived by professional regional news journalists and what, if any, is the perceived role of the regional programme in relation to the problems and issues of the region's inner cities ?

> "I don't do inner city stories, I'll do a story on bad housing which may be in Aston, it may be an Asian family, it may be a West-Indian family, it may be a white family ..So I tend to go for types of stories rather than inner cities..I don't go to do inner city area stories, except when some minister or opposition spokesman, or prime minister says this is an inner city area problem and I report it as a news story. I would rather, and I think we do, cover important stories which affect people's lives.. I don't think our policies towards the inner cities per se have changed because we've always done stories about problems that affect people."
>
> Previous News Editor

This statement and others elicited at an early stage of

research clearly intimate that as far as regional news is concerned the term 'the inner city', which as has already been discussed has been propelled to the top of the political agenda in recent years and invested with competing meanings, has been largely eschewed by working regional journalists. As a former Deputy News Editor has stated 'inner cities is a vogue term isn't it ?'. And in a sense, this can be readily recognised and agreed with to the extent that the semantic site of the inner city has recently been mobilized within competing political discourses and does not therefore refer to a stable or uncontested referent. However, if the lexical term 'the inner city' is not prevalent as an organising concept within regional news portrayal, previously established in Chapters 7 and 8 by attending to the lexical terms employed both within the general inner city sample as well as 12 months of Handsworth riot reporting, the range of issues and problems referenced by and across the principal understandings of the inner city as well as spatially defined inner city areas can still be regarded as possibly of regional news interest and potential candidates for news portrayal.

> "We don't think in tag terms we think in, may be if we do a story about a particular issue, it doesn't matter that much where it is, the story is the story as the journalist would say and an issue is an issue. Most of our area now that Central South has been taken away is an inner city area more than most places in the country. So what ever we do should reflect the area, and all those things come out."
>
> Programme Editor

As far as these journalists are concerned then, while inner city stories may not be explicitly labelled as 'inner city stories', the existing net of regional news reporting should capture those inner city issues and concerns because they are part and parcel of the region which is reflected in the regional news programme. As the former Deputy News Editor has stated 'we've been doing inner city stories for donky's years'. If the tag 'the inner city' is not prominent in the professional journalists' repertoire of working concepts, perhaps indicating that as such an inner city frame does not normally help to select, organise and construct regional news items, what is the perceived role or responsibility of the regional news programme to those inner city problems, issues and areas generally referenced by 'the inner city' ?

> "We have no responsibility as such, we are not solvers of problems, we are reporters and reflectors of states of affairs which is why we exist. So if you ask me whether we have a particular responsibility to that area any more than any other area I would say no, except that large numbers of people live in those areas with whom we should concern ourselves and they are also a very fruitful source of stories and news reports for journalists. So yes, we've got a general reflective role I think, not to allow stories that are difficult to report slip us by....we've got a responsibility not to ignore social ills generally, and in this area there are plenty of them.
>
> Programme Editor

If the regional news programme is regarded as a vehicle which should seek to reflect the region's social ills, the question is raised as to why this general responsibility has manifestly been failed in terms of the portrayal of the various social problems of the inner city which represent some of the most compressed, complex and potentially divisive social ills of present society ? A first step in answering this question I believe can be found in the working practices of journalists and the organisational parameters of news production itself. A brief sketch of the organisational processes and daily pressures have already been outlined, and it is within this pressurised and routinised context that all news production, including that of the inner city, takes place.

Reporters and journalists have frequently remarked to the effect that the programme represents a void, or a chasm which daily confronts the newsroom. Thus a previous News Editor has observed that 'we're constantly under pressure to try to build as much up as we can because you know it will help take some of the pressure off the day's coming up', and was overheard to say while viewing the live transmission of a one hour programme 'God, this one hour programme doesn't half gobble up news'. A Reporter more graphically described the daily quest for news as 'a constant battle to fill the programme up, its a great yawning chasm in front of you which has to be filled up every day'. Such practical concerns can readily be recognised as requiring organisational and routinised response. The Head of News, a senior journalist of long-standing, is in no doubt as to the basic parameters and limitations of the news process.

> "I think what we have become is almost a mini 'News At Ten'; we're treating the news in a very hard way, we're working off the Diary more than we used to, in other words the courts, the councils, the political questions, Westminister reaction.

> We're not doing so many of the features which reflect life in the region...The idea is fast response news gathering which is all very well but if we're not careful you can end up with a head count of death. You can end up giving the viewer a distorted view of life..really pretty tough, and the streets are dangerous and that everything is going wrong everywhere."
>
> Head of News

While this observation is advanced from within the perspective of the 'old-school' lamenting the perceived demise of the entertainment emphasis of regional news discussed earlier, it nonetheless also recognises the constraints of 'fast processed' news. In particular it observes that the process of news production doesn't allow for so many 'features which reflect life in the region'. In terms of the present concern with the news presentation of the inner city, it can be suggested that the pressures of news production to routinely fill the programme day after day results in institutionalised contacts and sources regularly contributing 'stories' to the newsroom. Interestingly, the Head of News identifies some of these as the courts, councils and Westminster while also recognising the importance of Diary stories planned in advance. Collectively, this organisational means of taming the news environment runs the risk of becoming increasingly dependent upon routine and institutional sources of news inputs while diminishing the capacity of journalists to either originate or pursue non-institutionalised news stories.

As far as the inner city is concerned two of the most prominent sources of news stories, the courts and the police, are likely to find routine and regular presence within regional news coverage of the inner city. And indeed this exactly mirrors the broad findings concerning the routine coverage of the inner city already reviewed. It has been observed above how routine 'check calls' are made to the region's police and fire services throughout the day, while court lists are routinely consulted to ensure cases of particular news interest are reported. This is not to suggest that journalists necessarily lose their professional independence in relation to such news sources, indeed as the discussion in the chapter after next concerning police contacts intimates this relationship need not always be regarded as harmonious, but it is to observe that the newsroom and general news process of necessity becomes tied to, and

organisationally dependent upon certain 'sources', and by definition, not others.

While the claim that councils, Westminster and politics generally secure prominence within regional news can be challenged on the basis of quantitative findings, the general observation made by the Head of News and now detailed in a number of independent news production studies reviewed at the outset concerning the routinised dependence upon institutional sources of news, holds as true for regional news as national forms of news production. Reference has also already been made to the general immersion of journalists into the news culture daily invading the news room from other news media and press agencies who likewise 'routinize the unexpected' via established and often institutionalised links with news sources. On all these fronts, the news process can be regarded as an organisational response to the exigencies of producing on a routine basis a daily news programme.

However, as previous comments have already intimated, this level of analysis though necessary to an account of any large news enterprise, are likely to remain insufficient as a means of accounting for the particular forms and specificity of the news product finally produced and disseminated. Here attention must, of necessity, also turn to the established expectancies of the programme constantly promoted by senior news editors and recognised as 'a known result' by newsroom reporters and sub-editors. This aspect of news production can most clearly be discerned in terms of the decision making processes surrounding the processing of inner city news items. These decisions involving the selection, construction and inflection of inner city news within the journalistic parameters of the regional news form can now be considered in more detail in relation to four principal features of inner city portrayal. These concern the dominance of crime news, the marginalisation of formal political concerns, the widespread tendency to 'privatise' important inner city issues in the quest for 'human interest' and the manner in which issues and concerns of the region's ethnic minorities have been portrayed.

These particular features of the regional news programme provide a means by which the characteristic forms and conventions of the regional news genre and their impact upon the

coverage of the inner city can be subjected to more detailed analysis. Other genre conventions and expectancies influencing the extent and forms of inner city portrayal could also be pursued into the production domain, but these four features are taken to be especially critical in the portrayal of the inner city. Moreover the three principal discourses ordering the discussion and understanding of the inner city can also be seen as either impaired or supported by these particular features which therefore deserve special reference in terms of the professional expectations and practices informing the regional news genre.

The regional news portrayal of the inner city as already indicated above is appropriated in terms of a pre-existing frame of established regional news values. And, as the Programme Editor and others have already indicated above, the operation of general news criteria are deemed sufficient for the 'reflection' of the problems and social ills of the inner city. However, as the discussion below will proceed to illustrate, far from these news criteria acting to ensure the adequate portrayal of the inner city, it is these same professional norms which actively select, and select out, as well as constructing particular and partial news presentations of the inner city. Talking to a group of senior news producers about their professional journalistic role in relation the inner city the following unprompted observations ensued.

Former Programme Editor : "So its a problem of definitions I find. And I find people could actually say you're not doing enough on inner cities, and I would say, yes we do stories on the inner cities, we do stories of great interest to the people who are living there.

Editorial Manager : Well I don't think that could be levelled against us, because I think we do a hell of a lot because most of our programmes are dominated by the major conurbations If people are living together, they run each other over, they shoot each other, they kill each other, they burgle each other more so than they do elsewhere.

Former Programme Editor: There's obviously more crime."

As this short exchange begins to illustrate not only is the inner city tending to be identified as a place of crime but so too is an underpinning framework of 'news' values revealed which clearly centres crime at the heart of regional news interests.

In raising the general finding of the prevalence of crime news found across the 7 year sample of regional news programming overviewed, the Programme Editor has also tended to confirm the prevailing journalistic identity of the inner city with crime in the following terms.

> "Its perhaps an old cliche but its a sign of the times, people are more and more worried about crime these days. Sociologically speaking it gets into every where these days, into everybody's area now. Criminals are less inhibited they go into areas where they never went before. We carried a story yesterday, for instance, about a raid on a house in Knowle in Solihull which is a white ghetto, but not only that, very middle class, very exclusive, and normally an enclave of the rich totally untouched by all the nastiness that might go on in the outside world. And yet there, people were being threatened by armed people..It gets everywhere, the abduction of a school girl from our own areas in Shropshire not long ago shows that crime is spreading out from the inner city areas where it was traditionally dominant."
>
> Programme Editor

What is interesting about this position is that in offering an account of the prevalence of general crime news found within the regional news programme as a whole, the inner city is indirectly referred to as a traditional site of crime, from which crime spreads out to other areas. Clearly, in such accounts an implicit identity between inner city areas and crime is assumed and informs journalist perceptions of the inner city. However, if crime news as a staple 'subject' of the regional news genre combines with associations of the inner city as a centre of crime in propelling to prominence the coverage of the inner city in terms of crime and general concerns and issues of law and order, the genre of regional news is characterised by much else besides.

The constant search for 'human interest' is clearly revealed in the preliminary stages of news story selection and construction. Consider the following extracts from transcripts of weekly Forward Planning meetings in which the principal Forward Planning Editor offers possible news stories for acceptance, partial acceptance or rejection by the Programme Editor and other senior News Editors. A Weekly Prospects List is compiled by the Forward Planning Editor with approximately 5 to 15 possible news stories for each day of the following week's news programmes, with each story introduced by an Identification term or 'slug' and a brief two line description. The transcribed

discussions therefore refer to the identification term and description found in the prospects list. The prospects' details relating to the news items discussed have been copied as written and placed directly above the following exchanges. Each of these stories while illustrating something of the speed with which decisions are made and possible journalistic 'frames' put in place, also reveal some of the most pressing journalistic values organising inner city coverage.

WALK. 5,000 walkers expected on 10 mile hike from Handsworth Park to B'ham City centre and back in aid of Jamaican hurricane disaster appeal.

Forward Planning Editor : " WALK - apparently they're expecting 5,000.

Programme Editor : That's a bit better than normal.

Forward Planning Editor : Yes its a 10 mile hike from Handsworth park it's in aid of the Jamaican hurricane disaster appeal.

Programme Editor : Now I must say, we've had a lot of phone calls from people locally about this Jamaican disaster fund, it was first of all people worried about relatives because the Foreign Office were playing silly buggers..I think its a good idea to cover it, obviously there's a lot of interest, there's a lot of relatives.

Forward Planning Editor : Yes, they've got Cyril Regis walking and they've got Bunny Johnson the boxer, he's walking and there's several others, they're hoping to get several other black superstars to do the walk."

The brief discussion above indicates a number of considerations in the selection processes and values of regional news. As well as the extremely compressed and fleeting consideration advanced towards 'possible' news items which often entertain even less time for decision making and verbal response, this exchange alerts us to a number of factors influencing the selection or non-selection of possible news stories, remembering that these Forward Planning prospects are themselves already the result of previous selections operationalised by the Forward Planning team. Firstly the anticipated numbers of people on the walk appears to be an attraction, as well as the amount of response already encountered by the Programme Editor and the numbers of local people indirectly affected by the hurricane. While the Forward Planning Editor is keen to emphasise the added attractions of attending 'superstars'. Together these afford enough news interest for the Programme Editor to speedily accept this provisional story.

WARM - Birmingham's campaign to keep the old folks warm.

Forward Planning Editor : "WARM Birmingham's campaign to keep the old folks warm. They've got Father Christmas going round delivering copies of a booklet printed in about 9 different languages.

Crew Co-Ordinator - Do they burn well ?

Forward Planning Editor : Its telling them how to keep warm in the winter. We haven't done anything on that at all, have we ?

Programme Editor : Well let's have a sniff around the subject and see if there's more to it; it might make a peg for us to do something else but in itself its deeply boring.

Forward Planning Editor : Yep, yes,

Programme Editor : They print almost everything in Chinese and Vietnamese these days, I don't think there's anything in that. That's a maybe thing."

The Forward Planning Editor identifies three elements which might enhance its attractions as a possible news item. Firstly the fact that Birmingham City Council has launched a campaign to help old people keep warm; secondly, given the christmas season they have enrolled the services of Father Christmas; and thirdly the fact that the leaflets are printed in about 9 different languages is also of possible news enhancement. The Crew Co-ordinator's cynicism/humour, frequently found to attend journalist discussions, is passed over, and the Forward Planning Editor emphasises via a rhetorical question that 'we haven't done anything on that have we', thereby producing a further possible reason to boost its chance for acceptance. Remaining unconvinced by the assembled reasons, the Programme Editor considers the item as a possible 'peg', on which a different story could be hung if found. However, the fundamental opposition is revealed as 'deeply boring', and proceeds to discount the variety of languages and implied heterogeneous ethnic composition of the region's elderly as of little intrinsic interest.

LONELY - 25th anniversary of the YMCA's Christmas Day Campaign

Forward Planning Editor : "LONELY -its the 25th anniversary of the YMCA's Christmas day campaign, they build up the campaign, how they look after people over Christmas, how they feed them, the work that goes into preparing Christmas day; they've got pictures, slides etc. and we can talk to people about how they prepare for looking after people at Christmas.

Programme Editor : Well that's possible, as we're getting nearer to Christmas.

Forward Planning Editor : I'll run some checks on it.

Programme Editor : If we do that its going to have to be widened out, we're going to have to get on the streets and track down the lonely and all the rest of it.

Forward Planning Editor : Yes I'm sure they could help us do that, if were interested in doing that.

Programme Editor : And presumably there isn't a cardboard city in Birmingham is there ?

Forward Planning Editor : No I don't think there is.

Programme Editor : There's too many hostels presumably.

Forward Planning Editor : There's that old dear who lives in the doorway down by Newstreet Station.

Programme Editor : mmm

Forward Planning Editor : She even has her milk delivered now.

Programme Editor : Yes, it would be interesting to find out, because even if we don't do it, then we might want to know where they are, a bit nearer or around Christmas. So we can do that sort of upstairs downstairs piece."

This possible item reveals other features of the regional news genre with its possible 'celebration' of the YMCA's 25th anniversary. In fact regional news is awash with anniversaries and annual rituals of one sort or another which provide an endless supply of ritual based items, which also, as intimated above, can be covered in highly ritualised news terms. However, interestingly, this exchange between senior news personnel also demonstrates how news 'sources' increasingly well versed in the needs of the news medium have come forward with a number of aids to encourage and assist the desired publicity and public exposure of the issues raised. Perhaps the most illuminating aspect of this exchange however is the manner in which the plight of homeless people can be rendered into a seemingly annual 'ritual' where the rehearsed 'Upstairs-Downstairs piece' can once again be deployed and help structure the news treatment. The tendency to personalise this feature by the Forward Planning Editor with his personal knowledge of a homeless 'old dear' who 'even has her milk delivered now', thereby finding a further 'quirky' angle of news interest, is also once again clearly apparent.

YOUTH - Drive for Youth, Charity formed to find jobs for unemployed youngsters, starts 10 day tour in Birmingham.

Forward Planning Editor : "YOUTH - its a drive for youth, its a charity

that goes round the country that tries to get kids jobs, They've started a 10 day tour from Birmingham on monday. It sounds very dull. But I'll give them a ring.

Programme Editor : Well again its something to humanise, you need to get hold of individual unemployed kids."

The Forward Planning Editor anticipating the Programme Editor's response, and also perhaps trying to head off an immediate rejection, declares that he's going to find out more about this particular story despite the fact that 'it sounds very dull'. The Programme Editor immediately suggests that its 'something to humanise' by finding 'individual unemployed kids'. In accordance with findings found time and time again, it is apparent that the issue of youth unemployment informing the charity's efforts is not of focal interest, indeed this is regarded as 'very dull', but rather the possibility of 'humanising' such a story is the key to its eventual inclusion or rejection as a potential news story.

COUNTRYSIDE - Conference on Crisis in the Countryside. The plight of the rural poor at Aldridge

Programme Editor : "COUNTRYSIDE that needs a bit of exploration, it sounds terribly worthy at the moment, plight of the countryside and all that.

Forward Planning Editor : Yea, what they're saying you know, they're saying all about the inner cities this and that other, there's a lot of poor in the countryside, but I mean its sounds very dull.

Programme Editor : Well lets explore it a bit before we chuck it, to see if it comes to anything."

Similarly this item is also considered 'terribly worthy' and 'very dull'. In itself, the plight of the rural poor appears to be of little news interest, though the Forward Planning Editor relays the organiser's attempts to link the issue to the public debate over the inner city. That is, a possible variation on an established theme is offered as increasing the unusualness of the news item and hence its chances of eventual inclusion. The Programme Editor not holding out much hope for its inclusion however, defers the final rejection decision just in case the story develops further lines of news interest which may increase its chances of eventual acceptance.

DIVALI. Hindu new year starts to-day.

Forward Planning Editor : "Right, we had some dancing which we didn't do earlier this week on Hindu, we just put it back to say the Hindu Divali new year, starts on the 9th. Whether there's anything going on I don't know.

News Editor : All the Temples are decked out, its a massive event, I mean bearing in mind there's about half a million of them in the patch.

Programme Editor : Well, were going to have to find something worth shooting aren't we ?

Forward Planning Editor : Yes.

News Editor : Usually there's the big temple in aa, its the biggest centre in the country, very colourful.

Sports Editor : Handsworth high street, Soho Road are normally quite pretty decked out with fairy lights and things.'

Programme Editor : What we need to do then is check on Tuesday night, I think we should do it.

News Editor : It helps with the old IBA gravy train doesn't it".

If items dealing with the plight of the elderly, unemployed youth and the rural poor are deemed in regional news terms as 'dull' and of little intrinsic interest, annual celebrations and rituals providing they involve enough local people and hold the promise of attractive 'pretty' pictures, always a consideration in regional news, clearly increase the chances of the items inclusion. Notwithstanding the Forward Planner's lack of knowledge about this event, the News Editor stresses the fact that 'there's about half a million of them in the patch' and the Programme Editor thus emphasises that 'we're going to have to find something worth shooting', implying that in this instance at least a determined effort will be made to actually find increased news interest. The comments of the Editors, couched in terms which stress the pictorial quality of the piece suggest the central appeal of the item while the concluding comment by the News Editor, delivered half in jest, also indicates that a felt obligation towards the reporting of the region's minority groups and culture, though occasionally implemented on regional news criteria alone, is also informed by a wider climate of institutionalised concern, though this may not be entirely accepted.

DIRECTORS - Duke of Gloucester and Eric Forth, Minister for Inner Cities at Institute of Directors' Conference on Making the Most of The Midlands

Forward Planning Editor : "This sounds fairly boring. The Duke of Gloucester and the Minister for the Inner Cities at the institute of Director's conference which is a sort of morning to lunch time one, but its sounds desperately boring.

News Editor : It could be very boring.

Programme Editor : it sounds as if there will be very boring people there."

Indicating that political and social elites are not guaranteed routine access within regional news programming by virtue of their status alone, this extract represents a not untypical deliberation concerning a ministerial visit or political statement. A general antipathy to the formal world of politics and politicians, which is regarded as 'boring' unless of major national prominence and/or direct regional impact and concern, militates against the inclusion of such items, despite the fact that a minister for the inner cities is present and the conference presumably addresses many of the region's inner cities and the possibilities for business development and expansion.

Taken together these extracts illustrate a number of features of the regional news genre which clearly impact upon both the selection and non-selection of inner city news items and also their form of eventual news treatment or inflexion. These include a revealed antipathy to the formal world of politics, a pursuit of stories which also include 'good' pictures, the quest for popular appeal and stories with either intrinsic, or which are capable of sustaining 'human interest', and an awareness of, and desire to reflect audience interests, rituals and activities if considerable numbers and/or attractive pictures are involved. When considered with the invariably direct news desk involvement and processing of crime news stories on the day, these features provide an established prism within which and through which the portrayal of the inner city is constructed.

The following discussion pursues further a number of these characteristic expressions of the regional news programme and begins to account for their presence in terms of the informing and, in the main, established journalistic expectations of the regional news genre. The discussion will then attend to a recent development within the organisation of Central News West which aims to overcome a discerned weakness in terms of its previous

portrayal of the region's ethnic minorities before providing a few general observations concerning the professional practices and regional news conventions continuing to impact upon the coverage of Handsworth in the wake of the Handsworth riots, now some four years distant.

Previous content analysis findings have already identified the patterns of news subject matter involved across the years within regional news programming. In particular Crime news and soft 'Human Interest' items have tended to routinely account for over half of the programmes news items, with other subject areas finding markedly less prominence. In particular, the subject area of Politics and Community Culture were found to be surprisingly under-represented. These areas of general subject orientation have clearly impacted upon the coverage of the inner city and need to be accounted for. To take crime news first, it has already been suggested that news forms traditionally involve a deep seated concern with deviance in many of its varied forms, and that popular styles of journalism in particular are attracted to individual crime stories.

Given the popular ambitions of the regional news programme and its desire to appeal to, and captivate a mass audience it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that crime news should be so prominent, especially when considered in terms of the routinised and institutionalised pressures to guarantee a regular supply of news stories in the constant battle to fill the programme. Moreover, when these features are considered alongside the journalistic assumption that the inner city is principally of news interest as a location of crime, then a potent mix of organisational routines and established programme expectancies combine with the pursuit of a mass audience as well as an underpinning set of 'hard news' values, themselves attracted to the conflict, deviance, negativity and human interest of crime stories in general, to result in a heavy emphasis upon crime within inner city portrayal.

However, while this general crime orientation is pronounced it by no means runs unchecked within the genre of regional news given a competing regional news disposition which actively seeks to 'temper', unlike some of the popular tabloids, the more sordid, sensational and sexually related crimes available for news treatment. Such considerations have already been indicated

in terms of the programme's sensitivity to the implicit 'family contract' of the regional news genre.

> "Crime is by its very nature sensational, for example last week we had a father who murdered his baby, we've had people who have conspired to murder somebody's husband, this sort of thing. We don't run them at great length. We only run them at perhaps 25, 30 seconds with maybe one picture. We don't do them long because we're aware that people are sitting at home and they don't want to be depressed by endless reports or rapes or indecent assaults, very rare that we run those stories. But those stories about a murder of a child or whatever, we think have an intrinsic interest and I think if you look at every newspaper in the country they too fill their pages up with crime, particularly the local evening papers."
>
> Acting News Editor

Interestingly, though the Central News West area is recognised by news producers as an unusually 'newsy' area, given its large conurbations and regional characteristics taken as generating a constant flow of potential regional news stories, the extent and types of crime news actually reported reflects as much upon the genre disposition as availability of crime stories generated within the courts and by the police. If crime news however, notwithstanding some of the tempering demands of the regional news genre, secures a prominent place within the regional news programme and can be seen as directly impacting upon the portrayal of the inner city, other genre dispositions militate against other 'key' aspects involved in the wider understanding of the inner city.

The pursuit of mass audiences and popular appeal have tended to eclipse forms of political news coverage traditionally found in so-called 'serious' forms of journalism and which underpin the notion of the press as a fourth estate. When it comes to regional news however, rarely are political questions and issues pursued in terms of the formal arrangements of political parties and local administration. This finding can be accounted for in terms of the perceived 'boring' nature of formal politics, already hinted at in some of the transcription comments considered earlier, with politics and politicians tending to be taken as distant from the mundane concerns and interests of ordinary people while failing to address, or involve a popular human interest appeal. Moreover, this pursuit of popular appeal is taken on occasion to actively eschew the interests of 'the establishment' while purposefully championing the interests of 'the common man'. A man or woman that is, who tends to be

individuated as an 'ordinary average viewer' and spatially located within the domestic site of the home.

> "I take very much then idea expressed by Mr Southgate to the police that, it applies to all officialdom really, they are there for the sake of the establishment and we are here for the sake of the punter. That's an awful tabloid expression, what it means is your ordinary average viewer at home, the man in the street in other words, we are here to represent them and to serve them. We're not here to represent MPs or interests of any other sort, so therefore everything has to be related to the man or woman in the street."
>
> Programme Editor

From the standpoint of a sought populist appeal to the 'ordinary viewer' the formal world of political parties and processes is conceived as too removed from the immediate interests and experiences of the regional news audience to be of direct interest, while politics also offers few occasions for the direct human interest appeal sought by the regional news producers. Referring to local government, for instance, the Programme Editor maintains that 'it's a difficult subject to make attractive to anybody, whether its newspapers or anywhere else..unless there something of interest to our viewers there's no point in attempting to tackle a lot of subjects..we've got to do stories that are of general interest enough, or can be personalised to make them of general interest enough to be interesting to the whole of the region'. Recognising that formal politics is not prominent within the regional programme the Programme Editor and News Editor have observed that 'there are other vehicles for that anyway. You've got Central Lobby'.

Clearly, given this general programme antipathy to politics, as well as the routinised production as opposed to investigative pursuit of news stories the centrality of politics within the inner city problematic previously referred to has signally failed to find expression within the coverage produced by regional news. It will be remembered for instance that at least three major political divisions characterise the politics of the inner city, and these were characterised under the three headings of political fracture, community fragmentation, and fraternity and the manner in which central-local government, local government-community, and intra-community relations have all been afforded a centrality in the wider inner city concerns of political determination and exclusion and yet such considerations have failed to secure any notable news attention

whatsoever. In terms of the various inner city 'silences' this could be seen as one of the most serious absences impacting upon the public understanding of the inner city.

If one of the major planks of regional news impacting upon the coverage of the inner city, crime news, has been discussed, and a further notable silence, political news, also questioned, the second major plank of programme subject matter and generalised inflexion found across regional new stories summed up in the phrase 'human interest', can now be considered. Throughout the previous analyses of inner city portrayal and found above in the Forward Planning transcripts as well as interview statements is the constant pursuit of 'human interest' professionally inscribed into the popular appeal of the regional news genre. Countless examples could be summoned up for detailed analysis, however given the examples already described throughout this study one further reference will suffice for this discussion. It has already been claimed that part of the specificity and sought appeal of the regional news genre involves its direct address to the 'ordinary' viewer and the realms of the experiential and affective, which in turn frequently turns on the focus upon individuals within news stories. Indeed this focus upon individuals often found at the heart of news items has led to the general conclusion that a deep seated individualism informs many regional news items, which on occasion has been found to actively individualise and personalise important and wider collective social issues.

The 'people led' nature of the programme, to use the Programme Editor's phrase, as well as invoking the domains of domesticity and family, and privatised pursuits of leisure and consumption also tends to focus upon people first, and issues, in so far as they are broached at all, second. Numerous examples could now be recalled, whether the issue of unemployment tangentially refracted through the focus upon an unemployed person's bid to become a knife thrower's assistant, or the level of supplementary benefits indirectly noted in the item concerned with the hardships faced by an ex-Falklands War hero, or the depressed environs of run-down Birmingham providing an alibi for a series of 'entertaining' street vox pops eliciting individual loyalties to the West Midlands. The examples of such 'individualism' are legion and have already been reviewed.

However, if regional news is populated with such items celebrating 'individualism' via the seemingly endless array of the regions's rich vein of eccentrics, celebrities and unusual characters weekly paraded across the news programme stage, it is the contention here that individualism can frequently effectively individualise important social and political issues. In such instances the individualised form of news treatment afforded to public concerns often 'privatises' their news interest by appealing directly to the sympathies and empathic dispositions of the viewers.

The following position outlined by a former Programme Editor advances stories which may be considered 'hard' news items each of which almost by definition can best be approached as a important public issues referencing collective and shared problems and difficulties. The style accompanying such news items, here referred to as an individualising inflexion, and conceded by the Programme Editor as purposefully inscribed into the regional news genre is graphically described and justified in the following account.

> "We're in television, we're not the Sunday Times that's got a whole page to do it. So we have to do two things: we've got to impart information in as fair a way as we possibly can, but we've got to tell it in quite a short time in visual terms. So therefore, to give you a perfect example, yesterday a unit which looks after children with heart troubles in the whole of the West Midlands is being reduced quite severely. We could have just told the story as it was, or we could tell people that its being reduced and the effect it has is THIS. So you always look for the consequences of the story. So you a get a family whose child has been told it can't have the heart operation.You find a bloke in Handsworth who says he's been badly beaten up by fascist thugs for instance. We did a story on the police opening up an anonymous telephone line for people who were victims of racial attacks rather than just go and have a boring black councillor talk about it, and turn people off, because they're just not interested. We found a woman from Wolverhampton who had been subjected to nasty telephone calls and she taped them. So there we had an example and we say to people 'Here's a new telephone service to stop racial attacks, it may not seem much to you, but this is the effect it has on people."
>
> Former Programme Editor

The 'examples' above, perhaps representing the strongest journalistic case for involving 'people led' news items, as opposed to the more vulnerable items which concentrate on individuals, whether eccentrics, celebrities or paragons of success and enterprise paraded within seemingly self-sufficient

news items neither explicitly invoking nor requiring wider reference to 'issues', illustrate the wider inflexion which attends many regional news items. Interestingly, the former Editor accounts for this particular journalistic style by indicating that it is a response to the restricted time available for the delivery of separate news stories. However, as the variations in running times of different items has already indicated it is not the case that all news items are invariably of short duration, while the manner in which such items are 'filled' is arguably open to different journalistic interventions. However it is the tendency to structure news items around the personal accounts and experiences of people, as opposed to the elaboration and involvement of wider social viewpoints and issues that is of particular interest here.

Thus, it is maintained above that the story of the closure of a child heart unit could have been 'told as it was' or the effects of this closure could be given added poignancy by 'finding a family whose child has been told it can't have the heart operation'. This technique however, constantly threatens to displace the issues by concentrating upon the 'human' plight of an individual family. It can be argued that to simply report the impending closure or cut back of a children's unit fails to contextualise such an 'event' within a wider political and contested debate about the State and the National Health Service, and that it is not apparent that by focussing upon the effects upon a particular family, perhaps involving the anguished and emotional appeals of those immediately involved, that the 'issues' are thereby covered in any more depth or with any heightened degree of adequacy. While the individualised 'consequence' in this instance is afforded some news treatment, the preceding 'context' or indeed wider 'structural' viewpoints informing this debate fail to be accorded similar news emphasis. The risk that such an item essentially appeals to an emotional response, privately 'felt' and sympathetically identified with the individuals and families in focus, and requiring little, if any, considered involvement of the viewer in the wider parameters of this state of affairs is a tendency constantly forefronted by the incessant quest for 'human interest'.

Similarly, to 'find a bloke who says he's been badly beaten up by fascist thugs' though graphically illustrating the

viciousness and human effects of personal violence, albeit apparently leaving room for doubt as to the validity of the claim and failing to pursue the possible racist motivation of such an attack, is also open to the charge that it tends to decontextualise and individualise the wider parameters in which such 'events' need to be placed before an adequate framework of understanding can be accomplished. That is, the 'boring black councillor' is likely to be in a privileged position from which a general overview of the frequency, patterns and possible motivations for such attacks could be gained. As it is, the use of 'fascist thugs' and the possibly empathic 'understanding' invited from the audience does little to promote either a 'contextual' or a 'structural' understanding of racial attacks.

Rather, the description of the news item apparently tends to provide an individualised account which runs the risk of establishing a possible cause in terms having recourse to individual pathology and the criminalised irrationality of 'fascist thugs'. The 'boring black councillor' in other words, may have been able to provide exactly the sort of wider overview unavailable to the individual attack victim, and by default now denied to the wider public. Moreover the belief that viewers are 'turned off' by a local politician 'because they're just not interested' can be found seriously wanting to the extent that it assumes the programme's viewers are unlikely to have been subjected to personal attack themselves or have second hand knowledge of such a phenomenon, or simply that the wider audience isn't concerned with the plight of others. The audience, in other words, appears to be assumed to be apart from, and indifferent to those sections of the community who have experienced personal attack. This begins to suggest that both the journalist's perception and popular pursuit of the mass audience can become complicit to 'concerns' based upon differences of race.

Again the third 'example', indicated by the Editor once again assumes that the audience is unlikely to have heard about, or be concerned with racist telephone calls, and feels compelled to bring home to the viewer the experience of such an event by drawing attention to a personal experience. Again, it remains unclear why it should be assumed that racist telephone calls 'may not seem much to you', though the possible remedy for such

a situation, involving an appreciation of the wider contours of racial tension, harassment and violence experienced by many inner city residents, is effectively denied in this same account which dwells upon the personal experience of one particular woman. Taking these 'examples' in their own terms as a means of accounting for the heavy human interest inflexion of even the most serious of social issues and events, it can now be suggested that the pursuit of 'human interest' has frequently individualised the portrayal of serious 'collective' social issues and realities experienced by groups of inner city residents and has thereby failed to invoke and provide the necessary degree of contextualisation and structural parameters frequently necessary for an adequate approach towards the understanding of collective social ills.

This tendency of newsroom personnel and reporters to think in 'individualised' terms is graphically illustrated in the following observation relating to the news interest found within the inner city.

> "People having problems with their rent, damp houses and things, there's so many of them unless they are exceptional they'll never make it, maybe the local paper - I mean the very local paper like the Redditch Indicator for instance would do the story about a Redditch person perhaps, but it wouldn't really be any good for us at all unless there was something astonishing about it."
>
> Reporter

The point here is that it is precisely the ordinariness, the commonplaceness of problems with rent and damp houses and all the other generalised ills of urban and social deprivation found concentrated in the environs of the inner city which is astonishing ! That is, if viewed in collective terms it is such widespread problems and difficulties which characterise an important part of the inner city situation, and yet it is this very reality which is likely to be passed over unless an exceptional individual case can be found to make it newsworthy. The limitations of such an individualised approach to the problems and difficulties confronted by social collectivities is all too apparent.

One significant development within the organisation and structure of regional news production however is worthy of further attention and this combines with the last major feature of routine inner city news treatment to be discussed, namely the

portrayal and presentation of the region's ethnic minority groups and culture. Coincidentally, towards the end of my period of observation and interviewing within the newsroom the Programme Editor initiated a change involving the charging of two newsroom reporters with special responsibility for initiating contacts and stories concerning the Asian and Afro-Caribbean community. Newsroom journalists have for some considerable period tended to specialise in relation to certain types of stories, though the changing dictates of the roster, staffing levels and constant career moves of personnel, as well as sought flexibility built into the organisation of the news process, have all tended to qualify any exclusive pursuit of fully-fledged 'specialist' reporters. However, reporters have in the past and currently tended to specialise informally in such areas as arts and culture, motoring and industry, health and education, agriculture and countryside, comic relief, and so on. This most recent initiative was prompted by the latest Programme Editor's recognition of something of a programme void. Keen that the programme should reflect the region's diverse cultures and minority groups, a gap was identified which appeared to be based upon the lack of contacts established with the region's different communities, and this needed to be remedied and the gap filled.

> "So what I'm going to do is pull some of the more seasoned reporters off the roster and send them down there to make contacts with people. And maybe as you find with all journalism once you start to do one or two stories people come out of their shells a bit more, and you tend to do more. So there's a definite gap there, a definite gap that needs to be filled."
>
> Programme Editor

Indeed it is an omission that has already been quantitatively identified and discussed in the earlier analyses. One of the reporters charged with this particular responsibility has herself noted this omission in the following terms.

> "If you look at our output, they're generally white stories about the white community, you've only got to look at the programme over a few weeks and I think most people would say that's true. And there are huge community areas in the cities of Wolverhampton, Coventry, Birmingham that are predominantly Asian, or Afro-Caribbean, They've got good stories too, that we don't necessarily hear from them. But I'm not talking about positive discrimination, I suppose I'm just talking about being aware of stories coming in and wanting to do them."
>
> Specialist Reporter

Clearly in so far as senior news personnel and reporters are themselves aware of a certain programme failing in relation to the coverage and portrayal of the region's different cultural groups, steps have recently been taken to counteract this situation. However, the inherent risk that such an initiative may result in merely further extending established regional news priorities, interests and appeals under the rhetoric of increased programme representativeness is a possible scenario already intimated in some of the observations offered by senior news producers. In accounting for this recent development, for instance, the Acting News Editor has maintained:

> "I think we are seeking bigger and bigger audiences, we make no apologies for that. If all of a sudden, I don't know how many people of Afro-Caribbean origin there are in the region but it must be getting on for a quarter of a million, half a million. And if half a million people out there took up knitting over night, we'd do articles on knitting. It's no different. And we'd also cover knitting in its full range of stories, from people being murdered by knitting needles to people knitting 25 foot long scarves. The absurd and the serious and I think that's exactly what we want to do by looking at these communities. To do the nice stories about the festivals, the holidays, the success stories about the kids doing well, the black businessman who has come from Handsworth whose now employing twelve other people besides himself as well as the hard luck stories of which there are probably an inordinate number. You know social security, immigration. If you're not careful you end up by doing those all the time, and that just gets depressing for everybody concerned. It doesn't reflect all the aspects of community life."
>
> Acting News Editor

This frank admission of the search for larger audiences is of interest, though it should also be noted that frequently reporters, including the Editor above have stressed the journalist's duty to 'reflect' all the communities within the region and there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of such claims. However, as the extract amusingly makes plain, the underpinning news values of regional news, pursuing both the 'serious' and the 'absurd' appears poised to selectively appropriate and inflect such stories in terms of established genre expectancies. And indeed the Editor supplies a list of just such 'representative' stories that he envisages of likely appeal and future involvement. It was such stories as these already occasionally encountered in the sample of inner city stories analysed in earlier chapters, that were noted as providing little in the way of informed insight into either the

daily difficulties and problems encountered by inner city groups, as opposed to individual circumstances, while the exotica of cultural difference provided a peculiarly superficial presentation of 'other' culture, both depoliticised and historicised into the past as an essentially attractive veneer, a traditional art form with little contemporary resonance and expressive force. Moreover, once again the journalistic tendency to reduce the collective nature of social problems to an inordinate number of individual 'hard luck' stories which are thought, in any case best left for sparing coverage given their depressive effect, portends badly for any hoped-for improvement upon the regional portrayal of the problems and issues of the inner city.

In broad outline then, the three principal discourses of the inner city, crime and law and order, the problems and issues of urban deprivation, and issues of race and racism, have all been found to be differentially refracted through the established prism of the regional news genre. In terms of some of the key news subject 'presences' and 'silences' and general popular inflexion summed up in the term 'human interest' the traditionally established conventions, appeals and expectancies characterising the genre of regional news have all been found to impact upon the extent and forms of inner city portrayal.

On this basis it should comes as of little surprise to find that the portrayal of the Handsworth Riots examined across a full twelve months of news reporting, has also reflected the characteristic forms, news interests and appeals gaining expression within the genre of regional news. Detailed analysis of the narrative structure and themes and references characterising this extended period of coverage have also tended to indicate that established news priorities have also dominated this coverage. The concerns with the 'event' itself and its placement within an interpretative frame of criminality, the reporting of subsequent judicial processes and 'tooling up' responses of the forces of law and order have notably dominated the coverage though periodically complemented by the search for the human side of this 'event' and its consequences, whether the tragic sense of loss felt by bereaved relatives and friends, the individual traders and their struggle to rebuild lost business, or 'happy news' items celebrating local characters and

activities.

The time for a detailed post-mortem of the production side of this portrayal has long past, though the reporting of the Handsworth Riots continues to be recalled by journalists. As one journalist has commented, 'Handsworth was the high point of my career' while even four years later the riots of September 1985 are still likely to form a point of reference to many Handsworth stories and reports. In established news value terms, of course, the Handsworth riots represented a dramatic and visually compelling outbreak of serious social conflict and disorder. And to return briefly to an observation already expressed by the Programme Editor concerning the elements that make a 'good' story, it is said that in addition to its immediacy, and freshness, its got to have an element of humanity, of human interest running through it, and then proceeds to say:

> "quite often a good story will have a degree of conflict within it as well, opposing points of view are always an attractive option for a journalist looking for a story. Controversy is something that's going to grab someone's attention rather than something which is a more passive experience..News to my mind, is about hitting people between the eyes and saying 'hey look'."
>
> Programme Editor

The Handsworth Riots on all these counts, of course, was a 'good', even 'spectacular' news story. A story moreover which, as charted across the course of one full year, promises to constantly return to inform and instruct present news stories relating to Handsworth. Clearly 'conflict' was at the heart of the Handsworth riots though, as the previous review and analyses have concluded, the various viewpoints in play were afforded differential opportunity and access to engage in this public forum of debate and difference. However while 'conflict' is often found to inform much of the Handsworth riot coverage analysed, situating the Handsworth riot by definition as an event of serious conflict, the competing news emphases found to inhere within the regional news genre always keen to celebrate, affirm and reflect the more positive and wholesome attributes of the human condition, frequently runs alongside this 'hard' news pursuit.

Such features have already been alluded to in terms of the riot coverage reviewed earlier, but it is also evident that the Handsworth riots continue to call forth these twin emphases of

news approach. Immediately prior to the 1988 Handsworth Carnival for instance, a newsroom reporter related how a memo was sent to all reporters to wear their bleepers 'in case of possible trouble'. And the Morning Prospect's List compiled by the News Editor confirms the continuing legacy of the Handsworth riots upon Handsworth reporting, while also demonstrating how the frame of conflict can be invoked even though conflict was not evident.

HANDSWORTH - One quarter of a million enjoy themselves over the weekend at Handsworth. No trouble, biggest and best yet.

However if the possibility of 'trouble' always looms large on the journalist's horizon of interests the regional pursuit of 'human interest' also continually informs the professional appropriation of inner city events and activities.

> "It's nice to get to the stage where you are not just on the hunt for the problems, the obvious thing here is to go down to Handsworth and see if there's anymore trouble brewing. Which isn't really a very rewarding brief to be given, it's just a sort of trouble shoot. It's much more interesting to take the thing over a longer period of time and say we'll meet people in a calmer mood and talk to them about what they are doing, see perhaps what the city council is doing to try and help the young Afro-Caribbean kids - they've got a scheme which I'm interested in which is where they are taking some of them back, they are being taken to their parents or grand parents roots and learning certain skills in the west indies. It might be carpentry or whatever and that's a lovely project to get involved in and have a look at. So those stories would be nice to do, and they've got a nice vehicle on Central news to put them out on. "
>
> Specialist 'Afro-Caribbean' Reporter

In relation to the portrayal of the inner city it is apparent that two principal news emphases of the regional news genre inevitably impact upon the issues portrayed. Firstly, the quest for 'hard news', attracted to conflict and controversy, and found in abundance in the dramatic events and effects of the Handsworth Riots constantly forefronts the possibility of 'more trouble', though without necessarily inquiring with any degree of depth into the possible causes of such 'trouble'. That is, 'conflict' in and of itself often appears as the news attraction and not its informing social bases of origin or derivation. The constant verbal and visual reference to the dramatically compelling events of the riot, as opposed to narrative concerns of background, explicit explanations, or even future scenarios

derived from informed extrapolation from the present, and discussed in an earlier chapter as providing support for a particular and limited interpretative framework, finds part of its explanation in such 'conflict' driven journalistic priorities. The observation of the specialist Reporter above concedes as much, confirming that journalist's cannot be regarded as professionally myopic to such considerations.

Secondly, however, the more differentiated stance of the regional news genre does and can allow for a 'wider' perspective which goes behind the scenes of some of the hard news reports of the day and inquire into the lives and activities of ordinary people in a 'calmer mood'. However, while such reports may appear to offer the possibility of a more 'reflective' and even analytic stance to some of the informing issues and difficulties negotiated and confronted by inner city groups, the pursuit of popular appeal constructed in terms of a particular understanding of 'human interest' offers little in the way of providing increased depth and understanding to the collective realities and structural conditions of inner city existence. Attending to such isolated instances of local government input, while providing the possibility for 'a nice' human interest item, replete with attractive pictures and no doubt a focus upon the individual characters involved and their experiences, essentially leaves untouched and unquestioned the wider reality which necessitates such projects in the first place. Now clearly, it cannot be maintained that news producers should be invested with the omniscient responsibility of professionally disclosing the nature of reality, though frequently the journalist's claim to 'reflect' things as they are can sometimes appear to offer just such a possibility. What can be maintained however, is that the regional news programme by its own declared ambitions can and should, amongst other objectives, give a voice to the major problems and social ills of the region, and this has manifestly not been the case in terms of the pressing concerns of the region's inner cities.

This chapter has provided further insight and explanation of the range, extent and forms of inner city coverage previously reviewed, and found to differentially support or detract from the three principal discourses found to organise public understandings of the problems and issues of the inner city.

Noting the routinised organisation and pressurised environment of regional news production these organisational responses to 'taming the news environment' have been found insufficient as a means of accounting for the extent, character and forms of the portrayal of a serious social and political issue. Rather, attending to the established expectancies, news interests and appeals of the regional news programme, and daily reproduced by professional news journalists, it has been found that news production though inevitably displaying organisational features formally delimiting and constraining the possibilities of news production, nonetheless permits the production of a news form which enjoys a degree of relative autonomy, and exercises its own determination via established and traditional news conventions.

Moreover such conventions have been observed and accounted for in the practices and accounts of the professional news journalists themselves as assuming a specific 'popular' form within regional news programming. In the pursuit of a mass audience, the programme purposefully appeals to, and inscribes into its news treatments, a populist form of 'human interest'. The range and extent of 'appropriate subject matter' routinely displayed by the regional news genre as well as the general inflexion accompanying such news treatments have been found to impact upon the portrayal of the inner city, and have differentially 'refracted' its contested issues and concerns.

If the substantive treatment of the inner city can usefully be pursued by attending to the professional practices and understandings of the regional news programme, two further attributes of the televisual mediation of the inner city can similarly be attended to. The following chapter therefore pursues the professional practices and production requirements determining the range of different 'forums' accompanying and impacting upon the formal possibilities of public debate and exchange of meanings around the contested site of the inner city. Relatedly the professional practices resulting in the differential patterns of access found to characterise the portrayal of the inner city will also be subjected to a similar interrogation in the chapter after next, given the unavoidable conclusion that 'who gets on', can dramatically determine 'what gets said'.

Chapter Eleven

PRODUCTION, THE INNER CITY AND QUESTIONS OF FORUM

Earlier four attributes of the televisual public sphere were identified and noted as critically impacting upon the public portrayal and examination of the problems and issues of the inner city. One of these features of the televisual public sphere as interrogated in previous chapters concerns the formal arrangements facilitating and enabling this coverage. If in previous discussions the programme genre has been found to impact both directly and indirectly upon the 'contents' of inner city portrayal, the formal arrangements characterising and enacted within the array of different presentational formats provide a range of 'forums' in which the public examination of inner city issues and concerns assumes different formal possibilities. Attending to the formal arrangements of different presentational formats in terms of verbal and visual inputs and the accessing of others it has been noted earlier in chapter seven how inner city themes have frequently been afforded differential news treatments related to such differences of 'forum'.

Noting how the 'inner city' can be considered a contested social and semantic site defined in relation to competing social and political perspectives, a case has been made that as such the presentation of the inner city is particularly susceptible to the array of different presentational formats formally ordering its delivery. Given the essentially 'contested' nature of inner city debate, discussion and struggle the formal arrangements either permitting the inclusion or exclusion of competing verbal and visual inputs, as well as the degree to which competing views are enabled to directly engage with each other and the audience in a relatively direct exchange of positions are crucial features to the public examination of the issues and problems of the inner city. In a situation characterised by competing viewpoints each seeking to mobilise and align conflicting definitions, interpretations, explanations and solutions in relation to the site of the inner city the formal possibilities enacted within different presentational formats is clearly of special significance.

Less concerned in this instance with the discursive substance of inner city portrayal therefore, and more concerned with the formal possibilities ordering, delimiting and enabling the public presentation of the inner city, previous analyses have noted the manner in which the inner city portrayal has been predominantly confined to the 'restricted' and 'limited' formats discussed earlier, while only rarely, in an extreme minority of all cases, have 'expansive' formats been found to order inner city presentations. The differential impact of such formats upon the three principal inner city discourses ordering inner city understanding have been noted, with nearly half of all inner city stories permitting no verbal interventions by non-news personnel, and the bulk of all other formats involving short 'packaged' interview clips. To the extent that nearly half of all inner city items analysed across the review period have been delivered in restricted formats permitting no direct access to outside voices, the predominating themes found within such newsdesk formats, establish a succession of inner city news priorities permitting no opposed or alternative voices to question or challenge the reporting of seeming inner city 'fact' delivered in the authoritative tones of the news producers. If nearly half of all inner city coverage across the period has been delivered in such newsdesk formats the increasing use of interviews across the same period has at least increased the numbers of outside voices edited and packaged into 'limited' presentational formats. However, the once found 'expansive' formats within the earlier period of general programmes and inner city items reviewed across an eight year period appear to have almost entirely disappeared in more recent years and with them the formal possibility of relatively direct public engagement of competing and opposing social viewpoints advanced in relation to the inner city.

Clearly, the impetus for this discussion of the different types of forums found across the regional news presentation of the inner city is concerned with the impact and influence such forums have had upon the interpretative resources and accounts placed within the public domain. However, while such consideration are at the forefront of our concerns, it is also clearly the case that such arrangements are the result of editorial decisions routinely enacted within an organisational

environment structured and routinised in certain ways. This chapter seeks to pursue the professional practices and conventions which have determined the form these different 'forums' have eventually assumed and the considerations which influence their use.

Previous findings have noted that the regional news programme has undergone a marginal shift across the period reviewed, though this is not as pronounced as some journalists are apt to maintain. It has been established in terms of content for instance, that across the period of 1982 to 1988 the programme has increasingly declined the 'human interest' stories of the more gratuitous entertainment type involving presenters in studio based 'fun and antics'. However, as content findings clearly reveal the proportion of 'soft' human interest items as a whole remains the second most prominent plank of regional content next to crime news, while the 'human interest' inflexion frequently placed upon all types of regional news story continues to inform the specificity of the regional news genre. The old school of magazine journalists, termed here 'the entertainers' may well lament the introduction of a 'hard news programme' by the new school of 'informers', but the fact remains that regional news is characterised more by a continuity of established news subjects and conventions of popular appeal than newsroom perceptions of decisive change and transformation have appeared to concede.

With this proviso in mind it is possible to say however that some changes have occurred across the period which are reflected principally in the decline of studio-based interviews and discussions as well as occasional direct presentations by non-news personnel, formats providing at a formal level some of the most open and expansive of arrangements. The inclusion of formats involving edited ENG interviews has also steadily increased across the period, increasing the 'limited' interventions of non-news personnel from nearly a half to just over two thirds of all inner city items assuming this format. The highly 'restricted' news desk formats though undergoing a relative decline across the eight year period nonetheless continues to deliver a significant number of general programme and inner city related items with just under a third of all news items assuming this form. If these changes in presentational

arrangements have impacted upon the possibilities of inner city coverage, why have such changes come about and how can they be accounted for ?

The Controller of Factual Programmes, in accordance with his general view of the news programme, points to the shift in news regime implemented by himself and his Programme Editor of the time which sought to transform the existing 'magazine' programme into a hard news programme.

> "It was a very popular programme but it had become dated, tired, it had become cosy, it needed someone to give it a shake up. And that was the shake up I gave it, to say you will become news oriented and be driven by news, driven by the events out there and you will report what's going on outside, and you won't create atmosphere inside the studio..It meant of course that we could get rid of one sixteen hundred square feet studio in Birmingham and do it from a little end of the newsroom no bigger that the average living room. It also meant that it was a lot more cheaper to work in this way funnily enough; instead of having a grand studio with all its panoply of people, we were able to cut it right down, we've cut it down so far now that in Central South we have 4 technicians doing what 18 do in Birmingham, 19 in Nottingham and formerly 30 odd used to do. When I first came here it took 30 odd people to put out a news programme. So yes, it's partly driven by a news imperative which is mine, it's partly taking advantage of new technology, but because you're driven by the news imperative you can actually reduce costs very considerably."
>
> Controller Factual Programmes

Interestingly while the shift in programme emphasis is said to be essentially driven by a journalistic 'news imperative', considerations of lowering costs via reduced technical personnel and expensive studio facilities, as well as taking maximum advantages of new technology are all indicated as implicated in the changing news programme regime. While political economists and others may suspect that the 'cost push' may, sooner or later, have been more heavily implicated in the changing facilities and arrangements of news production than the 'news pull' of a change in management philosophy, there is no doubt in this account that it is the 'news driven imperative' which accounts principally for the introduction of certain changes. Informing the declared pursuit of a 'hard news' programme it is interesting to note, is an empiricist notion that 'news happens out there', that is, news appears to be taken to be the event, the occurrence obtruding itself independent of the accounts and interpretations which may seek to define, interpret and discuss the importance of such happenings from afar. According to this

account, therefore, it is the journalistic understanding of news itself which is principally responsible for the decline of studio based discussions and interviews in its efforts to 'reflect' the immediate 'news' happenings and events outside the studio.

However, the development of new technologies also referenced have been noted by others as of particular and longer-term influence. With the introduction of ENG cameras for instance in the early 1980s, these portable lightweight cameras which use reusable, and therefore cheap, video tape as opposed to film revolutionised the possibilities of news production and indirectly influenced the changing fortunes of the news programme and its presentational formats.

> "We've got into the habit of using ENG cameras...You can do much more with the ENG camera, and so they're producing more material so you have less of a problem with filling your programme.. Before you had to be more inventive and to make the programme more entertaining, you had to use the studio. We rarely do that now.
>
> Head of News

The organisational pressure to constantly 'fill the programme' is identified in this account, as an informing pressure which led to the advance in news technology being readily ceased upon by news producers as a means of 'taming the news environment' and guaranteeing sufficient news programme material. The down side of such a development from 'the entertainers' perspective is that the programme itself becomes less inventive and more predictable in its form as it becomes increasingly dependent upon an unbroken succession of ENG pieces only interspersed by news presenter links.

> "The trouble is it becomes so repetitive with ENG stories constantly going back to the buffer of the studio for another link to the next ENG piece, with nothing to break it up. A few years ago we used to have some live studio events, they were good, they lifted the programme. Once we got some opening shots of the new Mini Metro driving down the main road before it drove into the studio which then formed the basis of an important local story which was important for the region; it broke it up."
>
> Reporter

Interestingly however, though the perspective of the newsroom 'entertainers' laments the decline of studio based items, this in not in terms of the increasingly limited opportunities afforded to participants to place and develop

their accounts and interpretations in a more substantive and discursively open format, but rather because it is taken as introducing a repetitive and potentially 'boring' shape to the programme's structure while displacing earlier 'entertainment' studio pieces.

> "My biggest criticism of our own programme is that we are inflexible. We go link ENG link ENG link ENG and although the end pieces are different in feel and so on, its monotonous. Its a sort of machine gun approach, no I'd love to slow it down on occasions and get in Mrs Jones whose 96 who is going to tell us what life was like making needles in Redditch in 1903 it would be rather nice. We can't do that anymore; we can do it on film, we can't do it in the studio."
>
> Acting News Editor

The loss of the studio facility, far from being seen as a possible constriction of the type of forum within which important social and political issues can find public expression, particularly important perhaps in those instances where fundamental conflicts and contests compete for public sympathy, is taken rather as diminishing the programme's potential to engage the viewers' interest and nostalgia by way of human interest accounts. Though Mrs Jones, in this instance, would be permitted to relay her memories of working class life at the turn of the century in the more 'relaxed' and expansive arrangements of a studio interview, the principal use of such a facility appears to be envisaged as confined to the nostalgic exploration of a depoliticised past, rather than engaging contemporary viewpoints actively involved in the contests and conflicts of the present. For one reporter at least, however, the use of the studio is not entirely seen as a useful forum confined to 'soft' human interest items. Referring to earlier programmes and the occasional use of studio interviews, discussions and even direct presentations by non-news personnel a slightly different emphasis is placed upon such presentational formats.

> "I don't think senior management would allow that now, it would certainly look out of place, the days for that sort of programme have gone. But it wasn't just the studio we also did more discussion and live interviews which I think brighten the programme considerably, and the journalists think it keeps them on their toes. You know, you don't always know what's coming next, and I think the audience feel that as well. If you get two politicians fighting it out it certainly gives the programme a bit of an edge, and a discussion also breaks up the programme a bit, it lifts it."
>
> Reporter

This position begins to recognise 'other' potential uses of studio facilities and discussions which are not entirely relegated to 'soft' regional news subject areas, though even here it can be noted that live interviews and the accessing of politicians is taken to be of importance principally to the extent that the programme is thereby given 'a bit of an edge', while the value of a discussion is seen to lie in its breaking up of a monotonous programme sequence. That is, such forms far from being recognised and appraised in terms of their possible impacts upon the public communication and expression of important social and political issues, are primarily regarded as servicing the 'needs' of the programme. Accounting for the present state of affairs where the newsroom rarely involves studio interviews, and even more rarely studio group interviews and discussions a view from the floor of the newsroom explains this state of affairs in the following terms.

> "Well even there it's like they are all in bed together, there's no room and the lack of depth also limits the number of camera angles. But I also think that lack of studio space and also perhaps an element of 'safety' combine to limit those sorts of input. There's a tendency to get everything lined up on ENG, it's all predictable, but if you have too much the programme can lose its bite."
>
> Reporter

Once again, the routine nature of news production is found to be implicated in the formal arrangements of news formats, with the constant pressure to 'get every thing lined up on ENG', though according to the views of the Programme Editor journalistic news criteria also enter into the 'forum' equation as follows.

> "For technical reasons, electronic pictures and all the rest of it have been able to take the news out onto the streets a lot more and I think that's to be welcomed. You bring back pictures and interviews with people in their own natural surroundings, much more than earlier days when things were a lot more rigid... We've got a very small studio set here, that does constrain us from having set-toos, with two opposing points of view facing each other. But you can do that on ENG anyway, you can intercut, you can juxtapose them right next to each other. You can get that same effect, with perhaps less of the wind you normally get with a set-to in the studio. But I think the key interview of the day can carry live very well in the studio."
>
> Programme Editor

The journalistic pursuit of conflict and drama discussed in the preceding chapter clearly enters the professional perception

of the advantages and disadvantages of studio based formats and, as has already been observed, it is the 'conflict' in and of itself that can appear attractive to news producers rather than the attempt to explicate and explore the social bases and origins of difference which inform such 'conflicting' positions. Thus, when considered in terms of studio formats, it is the 'effect' of a set-to rather than the substantive positions which is taken of primary interest and this is said to be achievable by intercutting and juxtaposing film clips. On this basis it is perhaps unsurprising that the professional viewpoint is not too concerned with the loss of studio facilities and accompanying presentational formats given that such are not approached from a position which is primarily concerned with the public delivery of discursively engaged viewpoints but rather the drama and conflict attending such differences. Moreover, if this professional perception is of primary interest, the development of positions and counter positions elaborated in engaged discussion and argument is likely to be regarded as so much 'wind', when all that is primarily sought is the edited 'high lights' which remain rhetorically isolated, immune from direct challenge and engagement with opposing points of view.

The professional journalistic value placed upon studio discussions and interviews, though allowing for the occasional and invariably individual news studio interview has been found generally to be minimal apart, that is, from the following qualifications already observed. The old school of 'entertainers' of course, lament the passing of studio based items as a means of accessing 'characters' and personalities thought to enhance the human interest appeal of the programme as well as the loss of entertaining studio-based items thought to be of direct popular interest. The indirect benefits gained from studio based items have also been noted as a means of breaking up the monotony of ENG link, ENG link programme sequences, while the creation of 'live' drama and increased audience interest through studio 'set-tos' , have also been noted of benefit to the programme, though the last of these continues to be pursued via different news formats.

In short, the benefits of such formats in the public communication of important social and political contests does not appear to figure prominently in the professional judgements

relating to studio based formats. Considered from the analytical interests informing this study it is apparent that to approach a discussion of the different public 'forums' in terms of the dissemination and elaboration of contested social viewpoints is not an approach shared by the professional perspective of practising journalists who are unlikely to consider these different formats as public 'forums' at all. Given the journalistic priorities and considerations already noted, news producers are apt to regard presentational formats more from the perspective of what they can offer the overall programme in terms of breaking up the predictability of forms, creating an 'effect' or offering increased opportunities for human interest and entertaining items rather than from the point of view concerned with what they may offer in the public dissemination and examination of important social and political issues. One last statement in this regard can usefully be cited which adds a further, and weighty nail into the coffin of studio based presentational formats.

> "Studio discussions were laziness anyway. I mean it was very easy to fill five minutes with a studio discussion if you've got nothing else and while you were doing that you were not recording what was actually going on out there. The function of a news programme is to report news and I changed that into a news programme, the function of a current affairs programme is quite different. There are very few occasions when I would actually want to see a live guest in the studio..."
>
> Controller of Factual Programmes

The value placed upon studio discussions and interviews is clearly deemed to be of less importance than 'recording actually what was going on out there'. However while certain types of news story present themselves as supporting this conception of news as physical 'happenings' and 'events', and disaster news or the latest up-to-the-minute pronouncement by a public person involved in an area of controversy perhaps spring to mind on such occasions, such a stance becomes questionable when news is regarded less from the standpoint that it is simply a matter of reporting 'something happening out there' and more a question of the frequently contested accounts, interpretations and definitions which seek to align and even mobilise 'events' in accordance with differing social viewpoints or perspectives. And indeed, if one considers the daily diet of news items and subjects found within both national and regional news programmes

a considerable amount of 'news' is in fact concerned with the public pronouncements and discursive positions articulated by social and political actors. Rarely are 'events', in this empiricist sense, the object of news coverage, but rather it is the social and political viewpoints which seek to assign meaning to events that constitute the substance of news programmes. In other words it is frequently found that news is the accounts and interpretations advanced and contested by others in the public arena seeking to win public assent, and on this basis the dismissal of such expansive 'forums' occasionally employed in the past in relation to the 'soft' interests of the regional news genre, represents a loss which, in the instance of the contested site of the inner city, has delimited and restricted its public examination and portrayal.

However, if studio discussions and group interviews are professionally taken as contributing little of worth to the regional news programme, occasional individual studio interviews and film(ENG) interviews especially are regarded as of special importance and this is reflected in the increasing use of ENG filmed interviews across the period reviewed. The choice determining which formats are eventually to be employed however remain an editorial decision informed by production resources and the professional understanding of the story and its requirements if it is to be satisfactorily reported to the viewers.

> "Sometimes it's about resources, sometimes it's about a cake and dividing it up in the morning or as the day goes on. There are some stories that stand out as in need of explanation, as needing an interview, as needing a bit of stretching, a bit of time to tell. There are other stories that are very simple, and can very easily be explained to people and which might have a bit of passing significance which might have no more than that.... There are other stories which benefit enormously from having interviews in them, by people having a chance to hear the issues and see the people for themselves who are involved. Interviews are much shorter in length than they used to be, in the olden days television interviews used to be in the studio and people talked endlessly because resources were limited, and that was all very well but that was radio not television. Interviews tend to be trimmed down so that the viewers can still see the person who is talking and still hear what they are saying and how they say it. But a lot of it can be paraphrased, and worked into explanation used with pictures around it. The packaging of news is the trend of the last 10 or 20 years where you hope this packaging is a more understandable and more acceptable means of explaining to the viewer what's going on."
>
> Programme Editor

Some stories are considered 'straightforward' and others in need of further explanation. What is of interest here is that though it is recognised that it is important for people to hear and see those involved, and the manner in which they speak, the conceptualisation of 'the story' entertained by the news producers produces and paraphrases viewpoints and 'explanations' into a final package which is entirely dependent upon the judgements and omniscient overview of the journalists themselves. Whereas accessed others are 'trimmed' and 'edited' into a final piece, the overall conception of the item and its substantive concerns remains firmly wedded to the journalistic understandings of 'the story' involved. This may or may not be accepted by the protagonists involved, but the opportunity to effectively realign the 'story' or agenda shift the issues is unavailable from the cutting room floor, unlike live studio based interviews and group discussions. This is not to necessarily imply that journalists and film editors consciously or purposefully 'slant' or 'bias' their final packaged news stories, but it is to suggest that journalists cannot be expected to have an intricate grasp of the multitude of issues and concerns that are routinely 'packaged' into certain story frames and presentational formats.

Moreover, given the expectancies of the regional news genre as 'a known result' by newsroom personnel it is more likely in such a routinised process that the 'known result', with all its conventions as well as limitations, is regularly produced and reproduced in such packages than when compared to the live possibilities and uncertainties unleashed in group interviews and discussions conducted and transmitted in their integral form. It has already been observed time and time again how the expectancies of the regional news genre appropriate and inflect important social issues and concerns in accordance with the established conventions of the form, sometimes resulting in the abandonment of issues while focussing upon the characters or other 'human interest' attributes involved. The routine production of such conventionalised 'stories' produced in accordance with the known conventions of the regional news genre, is also furthered in the hermetically sealed production environment permitting little or no involvement from others, apart from selected interview clips and paraphrase woven into

the final package. This finding is all the more ironic given that the news producers themselves frequently lay claim to the tradition of the fourth estate and purport to be advancing the case of liberal democracy via the public extension of information and opinions. Referring to the prominence of the interview within news formats the Programme Editor articulates a common rationale for their inclusion and contribution to the news enterprise.

> "Its one of the basic ways of getting information and opinions across, its also to provide the viewer with the means to gauge whether or not they find what is being said acceptable from that person. In other words whether that person is convincing or not, you can look at politicians and say I don't believe a word of that, and its very useful for people to do that. Its an essential part of democracy I think for people to see what's happening for themselves. And you can also look at other people and think, he's a great bloke or whatever. But it brings the thing to light much more; it personalises the news much more and helps the viewer to relate to the information that is coming out. If you get a flood of graphics or a flood of pictures with a narrative over all the time, it's very monotonous, it becomes tedious and the amount of information can flow too thick and too fast for the viewer to take in. In technical terms as well, its an important way of breaking up and making more digestible and making more acceptable the information that's being put across. A sort of human punctuation in the programme."
>
> Programme Editor

Supporting the increasing use of interviews in terms which recognise the importance of viewers seeing and hearing the participants themselves and the manner in which opinions and arguments are put across the Programme Editor also refers to the interview as a form of 'human punctuation' in the programme. That is, the general understanding of the programme as 'people led', is disposed to regard the interview as a means of personalising issues and information in the search for a popular based audience. The interview in regional news terms, in other words, performs diverse functions not all of which may be accounted for under a rhetoric of informing the public. Indeed, the highly truncated and trimmed use of interview clips packaged into the final item suggests that interviews are not seen as public platforms for the relaying of opinion and information but rather as performing a subordinate role in the overall story package. Interviewees tend to be positioned in a particular role and function within the overall item, placed in a framework in which juxtaposed and clipped enunciations spar in a mock contest conducted in accordance with

the overall story conceptualisation of the news producers themselves. The search for short interviewee statements and 'bites' of information easily packaged into the overall item is readily recognised by news journalists and endorsed as a matter of professional pride in terms of the techniques used to elicit such convenient statements.

> "A skilful television journalist ought to be able to get a self-contained answer from virtually anybody as to what their point of view is. There's a very easy way of doing it; when I used to be a reporter I used to say will you tell me why you are doing this ? Then the answer always begins 'we're doing this because we're furious about the way the council have treated us'. That's your edit you see, 'we are furious at this because'. Now you come back and you can cut that and say 'that's it !'"
>
> Acting News Editor

Interestingly, though the use of filmed interviews is inextricably dependent upon the news producers' final construction and packaging of the item, in terms of the on-screen presence reporters are encouraged to take a self-effacing stance. Interviewees make statements, though the questions eliciting such responses are invariably edited out of the final sequence while the inter-splicing of 'noddies' and 'two shots', shots of the reporter apparently absorbed by the flow of speech from the interviewee, while filling in the visual gaps resulting from use of a single camera, also contribute to the sense of visual veracity and completeness which is in fact contrived.

This is not to suggest that such techniques are inherently manipulative, but rather that the seeming integrity of verbal and visual inputs is in fact a highly manufactured outcome which is dependent upon the news producers overview of the story shape and purpose. Enough has been said about genre expectancies, established conventions and the pursuit of 'human interest' appeal to suggest that the production of packaged interviews, as opposed to some of the more expansive formats previously discussed, results in a situation where the participants and social perspectives in play render up their independence and can easily become subservient to the requirements of the genre itself routinely manufactured and processed within the production domain. The sense of visual and verbal 'completeness' of such items, notwithstanding their highly packaged form, provides a seeming authentication of the story depicted, which may in fact owe more to the determinations, techniques and

purpose of the news room than the issues and concerns as perceived by the news protagonists themselves. This point will be further examined in the following chapter concerning questions of access and news participation and the pursuit of 'balance'.

The discussion above has concerned the involvement of ENG interview clips and their packaging by news producers into a final 'story' or news report. However, it has also been observed that on occasions, notwithstanding the cramped confines of the present news studio, individual studio interviews are recognised as contributing to the programme and its news presentation, though the 'entertainers' are disposed to argue that the occasions on which such interviews take place are few too few and infrequent.

> "I think it gives the programme a particular authority if you've got instead of interviewing a chief constable or a minister at the scene of something, or doing him in his own house, or doing him in his office if he's actually in your studio, speaking to your presenter he gives that programme a completely different look, there's a different authority a different emphasis. People think 'oh blimey, they've actually got him in the studio' that increases the significance of the stories in itself; the very fact that he's there shows that there is something fairly big that's being talked about. Whereas, if you've just nipped down the road to talk to him, its not the same at all. It doesn't have the same weight."
>
> Head of News

Though the use of studio interviews, in this account, is advanced and welcomed it is interesting to observe that once again the benefits of such a state of affairs are not couched in terms of the furtherance of public understanding and debate in relation to important news issues but rather the authority which such occasions can lend to the credibility of the programme itself. The studio interview, in other words, appears to be professionally gauged in terms which reflect more upon the public standing of the news programme than the illumination of public issues. Story significance is approached as a means of attracting the attention and interest of the viewers, with accessed studio interviewees lending 'weight' to both the story and indirectly to the programme itself.

Once again, it can be observed that the professional perspective of regional news journalists when considering the array of different formats ordering the delivery of regional news generally and inner city items specifically, tends to be

more attuned to the programme ambitions and expectancies of the genre itself, than for a concern with the public communication of important social and political issues. The notion of 'forum', selected here for its inherent relationship to questions of public access and the forms of discursive engagement found to order or help structure public contest and debate, has not been found to be part of the professional repertoire of pressing concerns and priorities when considering the deployment of different formats. Rather, a particular conception of 'the news imperative' has been pursued within a changing technological and economic environment in which economies of production have been sought. More particularly, the organisational requirements and professional ambitions of the regional news programme itself have informed the different presentational formats deployed, and given the decline in studio based formats and increased use of news 'packages' the formal possibilities for engaged public debate and discussion directly between different social viewpoints has been almost entirely eclipsed by the professional 'packaging of news'.

These highly 'packaged' formats, previously discussed under the headings of 'restricted' and 'limited' formats, it is maintained here, depend upon the assumed omniscience of news producers who weave a 'story' from the assembled elements while the possibilities for social viewpoints to develop their perspectives and directly engage and expose counter positions have been severely curtailed. Organisational processes and the restrictions of time clearly figure prominently in such standardised solutions to the pressures of programme and item duration, but as already indicated above such 'determinations' cannot account for the particular journalistic forms and expectancies gaining expression within the regional news genre. Indeed, though tending towards a newsroom 'mythology' and caricatured here a little for the purposes of developing a general overview, the so-called news 'entertainers' and 'informers' with their competing philosophies of regional news pay ample testimony to the fact that regional news can sustain a degree of change and shifting emphases.

Countering the newsroom mythology of decisive change and transformation however, it has nonetheless been recognised that some marginal changes have occurred across the review period and

that these have afforded insight into the conceptualisation of the news programme and its shifting uses of different presentational formats. These different formats, deemed fundamental from the approach informing this study, have nonetheless tended to be deployed in relation to professional requirements and programme ambitions which place little emphasis upon such formats approached as types of public 'forum'. Issues and concerns defined in relation to opposing viewpoints and characterised by social conflict and contest, such as 'the inner city', though occasionally attractive in terms of appealing to regional news interests alerted to the visible manifestations of 'conflict' fail to provide a public platform in which such conflicts and contests can find engaged public examination and exposure.

Ironically, it is the genre appeal to human interest which has led news 'entertainers' to lament the decline of studio based formats including discussions and live interviews while news 'informers' have sought to banish such formats as contributing little of worth to a 'hard news programme'. In contradistinction to both positions, it can now be maintained that the entertainers advocacy of these 'expansive' formats if wedded to the 'informers' pursuit of 'hard news' in terms which stressed the public dissemination and examination of important social and political concerns of the region could logically lead to a reappraisal of the value of such formats. This however, as also indicated above, would require a shift from the informing and seemingly ingrained philosophical stance towards 'news', conceptualised as the media reflection of 'events and happenings out there', to a more discursive understanding of news approached as the accounts, definitions and interpretations mobilised by different social and political viewpoints, and frequently engaged in the struggle for public 'meanings' and assent.

If the range of presentational formats has been found to impact upon the portrayal of the inner city in terms which affect the possibility for informed, engaged and relatively unmediated examination and exploration of the problems and issues of the inner city, one last major and defining attribute of the televisual public sphere must also be attended to. This involves a consideration of the processes, practices and

professional values which permit access to the voices of non-news personnel. Once again the site of the inner city, as a contested social site, is clearly highly susceptible to the range of viewpoints which secure, and which do not secure, routine news presence. And it is to this last feature of the televisual portrayal of the inner city which the discussion now turns.

Chapter Twelve

PRODUCING INNER CITY VOICES

The previous three chapters have attended to the production practices and professional understandings of the regional news genre informing the production and reproduction of the regional news programme on a daily basis. Following an extensive and detailed quantitative review of broadcast news material selected from over a seven year period, a number of persistent patterns and continuities have been discerned which regularly inform the shape and character of the regional news programme and its portrayal of the inner city. This overview provides quantitative support for the observation that the news programme analysed is in fact 'reproduced', as well as 'produced' and that this daily reproduction of established forms, subject areas and news inflexion is of long standing and, to an extent, purposefully pursued by professional journalists working to a set idea of the programme as a 'known result'. Part of this conventional 'known result' is found to reside within the programme's popular appeal via particular patterns of subject matter and their form of human interest inflexion discussed earlier. Involved in such fundamental characteristics of the regional news genre has been an established pattern of non-news personnel access and entry which itself reflects something of this particular programme 'stance' while, in the case of an important social and political issue, such a pattern of entry has been found to have been instrumental in affecting the array of interpretative accounts and resources placed within the public domain.

This feature of the regional news genre has already been described and analysed in some detail following discussions of the general patterns of news access, specific patterns of access found across inner city portrayal, as well as detailed case studies of Handsworth reporting in general and the Handsworth Riots in particular. While it may be maintained that the explanation for the differential patterns of inner city actor entry across the inner city portrayal is reflective of the general subject areas characterising regional news interest already interrogated, this explanation though clearly of some

force cannot account for the particular patterns of access found both across and within different news subject areas. Previous findings, for instance, have revealed that though actors may possibly be germane to a news subject, this does not necessarily result in a corresponding degree of access.

Perhaps the most dramatic and obvious example of such a situation is found in the near total absence of 'criminal' and 'suspect' voices notwithstanding their 'centrality' to the hardy perennial of regional crime news stories. Other revealing and important absences include ordinary inner city constables who have frequently been said to be at the centre of inner city difficulties and tension but who have not been 'heard', except that is, via their commanding and invariably very senior officers well versed in the public relations aspects of media presentation. If ordinary constables rarely find a public voice, sections of the inner city community have also failed to find a voice either directly or via possible 'proxy' voices of professional helpers and agencies involved in the plight and struggles of the urban poor and dispossessed. Black youth could be singled out as especially under-represented, given its central location within the inner city discussion, while the near total absence of professional youth, community and social workers whose first hand knowledge of the difficulties and circumstances of inner city life and existence relating to youth, racial minorities and the poor and disadvantaged are also notable by their silence.

This chapter seeks to explore further and account for some of these notable silences and presences by attending to the professional practices and procedures of newsroom journalists in the accessing of others. Clearly, it is not possible to pursue each of the many different groups and interests identified and charted in the earlier quantitative investigations, and which in any case can in part be accounted for by general patterns of news interest already considered. That is, journalists are apt to pursue 'a good story' in the first instance which may involve, or may not involve the accessing of others, but it is the initial selection and conceptualisation of the 'story' which is of primary interest to working journalists. Discussing the hoary chestnut of news impartiality and objectivity the Programme Editor is in no doubt where the 'truth' resides while

also indicating the subordinate role of accessed others to the overall requirements of the news story.

> "The truth is in the sum of the parts, the overall appearance, the overall story. Its not within what one particular person said, even though he might be speaking the truth and speaking very much so right down the line, but in the general overall account...and the interviewees are put in as representative of the various points of view, and we're very careful to tag people to what ever point of view, both in terms of editing but also in terms of getting a reasonably clear account/reflection of what they are about, so that people can make up their own minds about whether they are biased."

While positing the news producers in a position of seeming neutrality vis a vis this 'truth', notwithstanding its dependence upon the conceptualisation of 'the story' informing its final production, the 'role' of accessed others is clearly subordinated to the requirements of 'the story'. Given the previous discussion of the established conventions and appeals characterising the regional news genre it would be surprising if these did not also colour the professional pursuit and final patterns of accessed voices.

> "What makes a good interviewee is someone who knows what they are talking about, that's the first thing, they've got to be relevant. So like the fire I was talking about it's got to be the neighbour who fought his way in, or the eye witness who saw something happening and can say something vivid and relay the passion and the excitement of the moment and that's quite enthralling. As far as issues are concerned we want someone who knows the issues very well, who represents a clear point of view and who can express themselves properly...Now it doesn't rule out the vox pop, the man in the street, that's a different category and entirely different way of saying things, that's a way of getting reactions to issues, or funnies or whatever. That's giving the ordinary viewer a chance to have their say as well and to feel that they are being represented."
>
> Programme Editor

It is apparent therefore, that a 'good interviewee' has to be 'relevant' but that such 'relevance' is intimately related to the disposition of the genre as much as the news 'event' itself, with the journalist's pursuit of immediacy, drama and general human interest, already considered above. Similarly accessed others must be articulate and 'represent a clear point of view'. However, whether a point of view is deemed 'clear' is liable to be influenced by one's own perception and understanding of the field of views in play which, in the search for 'representative' views appears to be at risk of being polarised into positions of

simple opposition. Interestingly, the use of vox pop, to be discussed below, is also mentioned and again it is apparent that such a form of involvement is in accord with the popular ambition of the programme granting the ordinary viewer 'a chance to have their say' and, perhaps more importantly 'to feel that they are being represented'. Questions of access, at this general level then, can be seen to be intimately related to the overall conceptualisation of the regional news programme as pursued and embodied within individual 'stories'. However, following previous discussions of newsroom routines and organisational practices it is also clearly the case that institutionalised contacts and dependencies existing between the newsroom and other sources of news are also deeply implicated in the processes of accessing others.

The routine reliance of the newsroom upon other organisational sources - most notably, the police, courts, local authorities, large businesses and corporations, other media, and organised pressure and community groups - has already been observed both in terms of the quantitative findings elicited in the first part of this study as well as an analysis of sources conducted across two weeks of broadcast news items reviewed in the opening discussion of the news production domain and practices. Maintaining that a consonance of news interests and organisational and institutional dependencies characterise the production of news, rather than a form of organisational 'need' simply furthering a predominance of certain sources over others, or indeed a journalistic conception of news entirely determining the routine and organisational form of news production, news has been conceptualised in this study as simultaneously a cultural form and outcome of production practices which are deeply implicated within and interpenetrate each other. The organisational tendency to routinize the contact and dependency upon certain new sources can therefore be found within the regional news room as much as any other large scale site of news production. The form that such a reliance takes however, is not necessarily without certain tensions and difficulties which relate to competing professional journalist practices and self-perceptions.

> "You mustn't get the wrong idea about institutions and journalists; journalists are very suspicious about what they are told by them and try to find out if they are telling the truth.

> They know, for instance, the West Midlands Police Press Office is pushing out guff all the time, propaganda, they come on the phone with it, they put it on the fax machine, through the post, they contact this man, that man, it's a huge propaganda exercise that's on. We're amazingly wary about that and dislike it intensely. And anybody else who tends to come too far over the top at us we stand along way back from them. It's easy for a journalist to have a soft option in going for regular calls to the fire brigade and all the rest of it, that's part of your job to do that, that's how you find out that something's been happening that way. Journalists are there not to represent the institutions but the punters."
>
> Programme Editor

This 'populist' view of 'representing the punters' is echoed throughout the newsroom and by senior managerial positions. It is all the more surprising therefore to find that the bulk of unsolicited, solicited and successful source interventions do in fact, as indicated above, emanate from large corporate and institutional organisations. However, while a routine dependency upon certain sources is evident within newsroom routines and arrangements, for instance daily check calls to the police and emergency services, this form of organisational dependency is, to an extent, resented especially if sources seek to unduly ingratiate themselves within or manipulate the professional practices of news production. An inherent tension between the newsroom and certain sources is therefore frequently not far from the surface and can on occasion threaten to damage the routine nature of newsroom-source contacts. That is, the organisational requirements as well as professional understanding of 'news' places the newsroom within a form of dependency which simultaneously threatens to undermine claims to journalistic independence.

Relations with the police may not in fact always be assumed to be either organisationally cordial or, and more importantly, as productive of a shared framework of understandings as some commentators have tended to claim. In other words while an undoubted reliance upon the police does exist, this can be as much a source of tensions as incremental acceptance of a police-led perspective upon the world of crime, criminality and general policing matters. Referring to the relations with the West Midland's and other of the region's police forces for instance, the inherent reliance and potentially resented dependency upon the police is intimated as follows.

> "We can't do anything without them, they keep us at a distance

> and stop all their officers below Chief Constable from talking to us unless the press office has approved. Its an astonishing way to go on. That's their problem, their 1984 situation of their own making, we work around that as best we can. Other forces are more average; Warwickshire are reasonable to talk to, but quiet so we don't have a lot of contact, West Mercia the relationship is a little better, Staffordshire has decided to open the doors a bit more.
>
> Programme Editor

While the day to day relations with the Police may not always be as 'cosy' as commentators have sometimes assumed, the fact remains that the police can and do regularly appear within the news, inner city news especially, and, in terms of the detailed examination of one year of Handsworth riots reports appear to dominate all other groups of inner city actors gaining entry. This state of affairs can be accounted for in terms of the consonance of regional news interests and its heavy interest in crime news and the practices and activities of the police. This established news expectancy however, as intimated by the Programme Editor above, can position the newsroom in a position of potential subordination and organisational dependence which can lead to a situation where the news organisation is highly susceptible to police misinformation and propaganda.

Numerous examples of organisational reliance upon the accounts and views of the police could be detailed, however one example of an important inner city 'story' will be included which illustrates in dramatic terms the full extent and costs of such an organisational reliance. Contrary to the ideal of 'the news story' described by the Programme Editor above, where 'representative' views are found and positioned within an overall account produced and presented by an independent news team, 'the story' in this instance can be found to be totally framed within and dependent upon the official police perspective.

When Clinton McCurbin, a member of the Wolverhampton black community, died from asphyxiation by an arresting police officer's 'arm lock' round his throat, the organisational reliance and dependency upon the police as both source of information and contending protagonist within a major news story enabled the police to establish an uncontested framework of interpretation while manipulating the media as a 'conduit' for its particular views. The transcript of the initial news report of this incident, taken from actual broadcast material, is

included as presented below.

News presenter: "Violence broke out in Wolverhampton this afternoon after the death of a man who'd been arrested by police. There were running fights in the town's main shopping streets involving one hundred youths. Several policemen were hurt, one seriously. Two hundred policemen are patrolling the streets but the town seems to be calm. From the scene Peter Brookes.

Reporter: The violence was a direct result of the death of a 22 year old man in this town centre boutique early in the afternoon. Police say two officers were called to the shop where the man attempted to buy clothes with a stolen credit card. As they tried to arrest him a scuffle broke out and the man collapsed and died apparently from a heart attack; police say he'd been taking drugs. The two officers tried to revive him with the kiss of life but to no avail. Shortly afterwards fights broke out up and down this street, 6 people were injured and 10 arrested. More than 200 hundred police officers are now in Wolverhampton town centre.

News presenter: And the police have just announced that an officer from an outside force has been called in to investigate the man's death."

[Rest of Programme News.....]

News presenter: We're going back now to the story about the disturbance in Wolverhampton involving a hundred youths. Several policemen were hurt, one seriously. It happened after a man collapsed and died soon after being arrested. A short time ago West Midland's Police explained what happened.

Supt.Martin Burton: Soon after this man had been arrested a large number of people collected outside this shop - It was quite remarkable where they came from but within a short space of time a large number of people, probably as many as seventy five to a hundred appeared - the word had got round very quickly. The atmosphere was not a very nice atmosphere to say the least. Soon after the ambulance arrived to take the body of the dead person away a senior police officer also arrived because the situation up to that time was deteriorating. Because of the action taken at the time that situation was defused and the ambulance managed to get away. But the people who had congregated spilled out into the surrounding area and disorder did take place. A number of shops were attacked, some looting has taken place and some police officers have been injured; an inspector has had a rather nasty injury to his eye and has only just been discharged from hospital, though I havn't got further details of that at the moment.

News presenter: We will of course bring you more details on that story as it happens in our news later tonight."

This first news report of the death of Clinton McCurbin is revealing. The dependence of the news producers upon the police

interpretation of the events in question clearly reveals how a framework of understanding is placed within the public domain which essentially locates the 'violence' as the ensuing disturbance with youths, and the 'serious injury' of a police inspector, though on the police account itself this officer had already been discharged in a matter of hours from hospital. The 'violence' which has framed the event, and caught the attention of the news producers thus appears to be the street disturbances and not the violence which has caused a man to loose his life while being arrested. Indeed, the deliberate misinformation, later conceded as expedient to the purposes of the police, concerning the claim that Clinton McCurbin had died from a heart attack, probably related to drugs abuse, and relayed by news personnel was found later to be entirely without foundation.

If considered carefully, the indebtedness of these news reports upon police information and the direct accounts presented by the police themselves clearly leaves little room for alternative or oppositional views to be formulated. Why exactly so many youths should feel compelled to congregate and engage the police in disorder is a question which fails to be posed in this news report which simply, and simplistically accepts the police 'version' of events and pursues a highly restricted frame of 'violence'. To say, for instance, as the reporter did, that the violence 'was a direct result of the death of a 22 year old man' is to postulate a partial understanding of the 'violence' involved in the afternoon's events while also making a causal link which apparently requires no further explanation or contextualisation. With constant reference to police statements and accounts as well as the introductory link statement 'the police explained a short time ago what happened' presented as a matter of fact, is to totally subsume the news report within the interpretative framework established by the police.

While organisational dependence upon the police as a source of information in such instances clearly reveals the costs of such a dependency when the police are central protagonists, as they invariably are, within major law and order 'stories', the subsequent career of this media 'story' also indicates how such a reliance is supplemented by the limited foci of news interest pursued within the regional news genre. Indeed the subsequent

reporting of developments and revelations relating to this major inner city story illustrate that while the newsroom is not disposed to champion the cause of the police, its repertoire of news interests nonetheless frequently fails to interrogate such 'events' with an informed awareness of some of the other available 'contending' perspectives in play. The McCurbin 'story' was therefore reported over subsequent months in terms of a mass demonstration following in the immediate aftermath of Clinton's death, the coroner's inquiry and verdict and police training methods in unarmed combat. As the Programme Editor observed at the time of the coroner's inquiry 'we're fascinated by the armlock and all that sort of thing. And I've got Peter to phone up the police and get them to demonstrate their unarmed combat training, which is a little story in itself, but it's hard to see where the story can go from there. It's a case of waiting'. A reporter similarly perceived 'the story'.

> "I think it was basically following on from the outcome of the inquest. And the job then was to get the official police response to the inquest ruling and also, as we did, we got the mother's reaction and the solicitor's reaction outside the court. So all those flowed very naturally...It just happened and you report the story as it is. I don't think the shape of it was altered or it wasn't shaped in any specific way..You just report the facts as they are."
>
> Newsroom Reporter

Following on from the initial report dominated as illustrated above by the police-led account, the 'story' follows official coroner's proceedings and becomes focused upon the question of police training tactics. Principal protagonists thus identified and involved are the police, relatives and their representatives and the coroner, and are all granted access accordingly. Once established as an important regional news event, the conceptualisation of 'the story' determines who is able to speak while ruling out possible other voices who do not fit into the established frame of reference. This is not to say that the frame of reference need be seen as static, indeed the constant search for novel developments or new twists continues to afford different possibilities.

> "You've got to find somewhere to take it, there was obviously still a lot of public interest about this story still going on today. As a news programme we have to try and find a lead, or something to follow up the next day to keep the story going because people want to know more, that's the assumption you always work with, to make it fresh, to make it interesting

> again. You look for something which is different, and today it was police training, because that has come under police criticism as well. OK how exactly are officers trained given that the police force admitted that the officers were not trained to cope with the situation ?"
>
> Newsroom Reporter

Though the story could have conceivably been developed in a number of different ways, in this case no attempt was made to question why the death of Clinton McCurbin should have caused so much street conflict and antagonism. Thus while a camera crew and reporter were consigned to the night streets of Wolverhampton (known in newsroom banter as 'the riot patrol') following police anticipation of further 'trouble' following the Coroner's verdict, nowhere was the possible cause of such widespread community tension and resentment investigated and pursued. Police training certainly attracted a good deal of media interest, implicitly accepting that the 'disturbances' following the death of Clinton were sparked by 'unfortunate' police practices, and yet exactly why such an incident could have sparked widespread disturbances which appeared to the police and newsroom alike to threaten to erupt into wide scale disorder failed to be questioned. Asking the Programme Editor why this wider 'community-police' question was not broached with accessed members of the Wolverhampton black community perhaps providing an enlarged contextualisation for an understanding of this 'story', the Programme Editor made the following observation.

> "No, no it hasn't, and that's difficult to tell. To get that side of the story, ummm you've got to make sure the people you are talking to are representative, and are more than, you know one man with an axe to grind, ummm we'll get that eventually, but that sort of story it seems to me has to tell itself a bit as well, there's got to be a reason for doing that other than the, aaa, I think we did the on the day thing alright, aa (sigh) what we might do eventually is we might just sort of sit around umm go out for a day, and sort of follow around one of the community guys and try to film them. The interplay between the two is hellish difficult thing to try and do. You've got to hide the camera terribly to do that. You've got to eavesdrop to get any flavour of that. Its easy to tell in radio, its easy to tell in newspapers that story, but in television its one of the toughest things to do."
>
> Programme Editor

While it would be supposition and simply unfair to interpret the Editor's loss of normal fluency in the face of such a direct inquiry in any particular way, I think it is fair to surmise

that this 'side of the story' was not at the forefront of the Programme Editor's or wider newsroom's interests nor was it likely to be pursued in the future. Indeed, across the whole eight years of programming reviewed no single news item has explicitly dealt with this key aspect to the 'problems' of the inner city.

This example of an important inner city story is illustrative of the way in which an organisational dependence upon the police initially helped the police to place a particular interpretative frame upon the McCurbin incident which displaced alternative and oppositional accounts. This was achieved both by the relaying of police accounts and also the direct accessing of a police spokesman. However, while this interpretative frame was gradually challenged and the role of the police officers involved and also wider concerns of police training subjected to a degree of media questioning, at no point was the wider context of this incident explicitly pursued by the news programme. That is, while community tension and the possibility of further street 'trouble' attracted news interest, the wider source of such tensions nowhere received explicit examination and discussion. Rather, attention shifted to the unarmed training methods deployed by the West Midlands police force.

Indicating that the police are not immune from critical news attention, notwithstanding their continual presence within the news as both source and subject of news stories, the McCurbin incident and its subsequent news treatment provides a dramatic instance of the way in which organisational dependencies and professional journalist understandings of such 'stories' fail to look behind the epiphenomena of 'conflict' and 'tension' to their possible social roots. Contrary to the reporter above therefore, it is possible to say that the McCurbin incident was 'shaped' in a particular way, and the inner city voices gaining access, and by omission excluded from this portrayal, were instrumental in shaping the story in a particular, and, it has to be said, partial manner. Noting the routine reliance upon the police as both sources of information and regular protagonists within a regular supply of 'stories', it has also been observed how the newsroom is wary of being used by the police and other 'interests' as a conduit for propaganda or self-promotion. It is

all the more interesting therefore that the regional news programme, and its portrayal of the inner city in particular, should be so dominated by concerns of law and order and the accessed views of the police.

This has been accounted for in terms of a routinised and organisational reliance upon the police which has been brought about as much by the pursuit of established regional news interests as by an attempt to 'tame the news environment'. Moreover, given the sometimes less than harmonious relations evident between the newsroom and different police forces within the region the predominance of police 'stories' and accessed spokespersons cannot be taken as a simple acceptance of, or organisational accommodation to the 'official police view' but rather the result of the pursuit of established regional news interests which, as already indicated, is traditionally attracted to the multiple news values found within certain types of regional crime news.

If the police represent an important regional institution of considerable news interest, politicians fare less well within the popular 'stance' of the regional news genre. A typical reaction to a press release received through the post by the Programme Editor concerning a ministerial visit publicising a governmental inner city initiative, 'action for cities', thus received routine consignment to the waste bin in the following terms.

> "This is part of the free publicity for Government Ministers doing nothing in particular campaign, so we won't be covering that, Norman Fowler doing something intensely boring."

Politics and politicians are liable to be perceived as 'boring' and offering little in the way of that sought after regional news ingredient 'human interest'. This has already been established in previous discussions. However, if enough regional interests are involved, perhaps either via the sheer numbers of people or regional businesses directly involved, the 'boring' nature of political visits are occasionally overlooked in the performance of a 'public service' role as illustrated in the following editorial decision arrived at during a Weekly Prospects Conference.

Forward Planning Editor: "Norman Fowler is opening the 'Midlands Means Business' exhibition at the National Exhibition Centre, where

there's lots of things about how we've done well in the Midlands, there's loads of things there, there's all the the top groups in Birmingham saying how well they're doing.

Programme Editor: It'll be bloody boring basically but we'll just have to fish a bit of a story out of it.

Forward Planning Editor: Yes, yes, I'll have a word, nearly every exhibitor has sent us a bloody press release on it"

The popular ambition of the programme tends to be interpreted in terms which eschew the formal world of politics and politicians, even when a government scheme no matter how insufficiently addresses the problems of the region's inner cities, though a large scale exhibition of the regions's business successes is considered of enough importance to attract at least some news attention. However if this particular construction of the 'popular' finds politicians and politics removed from the mundane concerns and preoccupations of ordinary people and therefore 'boring', this same pursuit of the 'popular' permits increased opportunities for the accessing of 'ordinary' people. Referring to the accessing of professional experts and ordinary people their value in regional news terms is contrasted in the following terms.

"Experts we use sparingly, some experts are articulate and can say things succinctly and they're ideal for us, because obviously we don't want everyone looking at this professor, or whoever he is, going on and on about something which is alright but its not all that riveting; its far better to get people who are involved, and people who are sitting at home being able to understand someone else's experience, its all part of keeping your viewer involved in what's going on....experts we use sparingly because often they are not very interesting, because we tend to use speech in bites, that's the style of it all, and the same applies to ordinary people they're cut down to the bone as well, keeping the better bits of what they say, the more lucid bits of what they say, and that's all part of the skill of editing and putting it together in an intelligible way. The experts are often cut down in what they say to make it more punchy and more to the point."

Programme Editor

However, while the programme stance is indeed disposed to access 'ordinary' people it is also apparent, as discussed earlier, that this same stance also tends to privilege the experiential dimension over the analytic, the individual experience over collective situation, and frequently appeals to a privatised realm of consumerism rather than public realm of political citizenship. Nonetheless, the pursuit of accessing

'ordinary' people continues to inform the stance of the regional genre and is recognised as an essential ingredient by newsroom journalists and senior managers alike.

> "The ordinary person tells a story a damn sight better than anyone else. The ordinary fireman will tell you what happened in a fire, the fire chief will tell you almost in officialese, in jargon. Immediacy from ordinary people, they're much more graphic, they don't weigh their words so carefully'.
>
> Controller Factual Programmes

The reliance upon professional spokespeople, though facilitating the fast production of news and providing the news reporter with his or her required sound 'bite' with the minimum of delay, is nonetheless a feature of the regional news genre which militates against the popular drive to involve 'ordinary people' and is recognised by newsroom journalists as a constant tendency in need of professional tempering.

> "What makes an interesting story is something that is happening which basically touches people isn't it, if it's a good big story like a plane crash everybody is interested in that or a disaster; but if you are talking about a slightly more manufactured story it seems to me that it's human interest. It's people that are interesting. And I'm not talking about that other thing spokespeople, there seems to be something of an obsession about professional spokespeople. Because they are very easy to interview, you don't have to edit them very much, you edit them in 20 second clips and say 'great !' - it's not very riveting. There's nothing like a good local person, that's why vox pops, you know out on the street with a microphone up peoples' noses, because people give better reactions. A good human interest story with genuine people talking not spokespeople, I feel makes a very good story...On occasion you have to use a spokesperson because of time really, you've no choice. But its nice if you are aware of that to at least try and also speak to members of, well like you and me, members of the public."
>
> Newsroom Reporter

The pursuit of 'ordinary' people in the hope of finding a common ground of appeal and interest with which to captivate the audience is deeply ingrained within the regional news genre. In the search for 'what touches people' however, the conception of the ordinary person frequently posited at the heart of a popular appeal is a highly restricted category, typically apolitical, based within the private realms of domesticity and family, leisure and consumption and appealing directly to empathic response and emotional involvement. This is the common ground where 'the public' is invoked only to be instantly dissipated

into a myriad privatisms. The idea that the 'ordinary person' could in fact be defined in terms of competing or even conflicting political allegiances and forms of engagement, or constituted by differentially shared life chances and collective conditions of existence, or even different cultural and sub-cultural allegiances and identities is not ordinarily thinkable within the curiously apolitical landscape of assumed common-denominator privatism.

If 'characters' do find news entry within inner city related items given their subordination to and function within the wider remit pursued within the regional news genre, what about the 'vox pop' (vox populi -'the people's voice') which has already been referred to above, what is its purpose, role and contribution to the regional news programme and inner city portrayal specifically ? Is this a means by which a differentiated 'public' is accessed and able to directly express its various views and opinions ? The first finding that can be referenced in this regard is that vox pops, in the main, tend to be relegated to certain subject areas and not others.

> "We obviously do meet a lot of ordinary people particularly on human interest stories; vox pops still seem to be mainly found in silly stories, you know, 'Do you wear socks in bed ?', 'How many times do you make love to your wife ?' rather than 'How do you feel about community relations in Lozells ?' You're less likely to go down Newstreet and ask people that, I admit."
>
> Reporter

The tendency to involve vox pops within 'silly' stories as opposed to 'serious' stories, within stories directed to the private life and concerns of 'ordinary' people, as opposed to the public concerns of 'citizens' is apparent across the review of general programme contents while the tendency to step outside the studio and interview people in the centre of the city, even though the issue may be related to the inner city ward of Lozells or the inner city in general has also been discerned on a number of occasions, implicitly undermining the 'representativeness' of accessed voices. The use of vox pop is also revealing according to the Acting News Editor however, because 'they're a good fast way of getting a straw poll and involving your viewers as well on the programme. So, you know, they can say 'yes, that's my daughter' or whatever, it does help'. Representation in these terms tends therefore to be both

oriented towards the private concerns of 'ordinary' people and a means of physically involving members of the public within the programme. In both instances access is granted in a highly restricted fashion and confined to the editorial requirements of the story. Vox pops in these terms then, are not about public 'representation' in any meaningful sense of political participation and public engagement but rather about 're-presenting' the public to the audience in a highly selected and individuated manner. Nonetheless, vox pops are perceived within the newsroom as an important means of 'representation' as well.

> "I think its a good idea, I think probably this is the best indicator of how the community actually feels, because you're grabbing people unprepared and you're probably getting their true feeling. And you're picking people at random, and you're obviously looking for a balance of viewpoints. You know you could have spoken to ten people and got the same thing so may be you look for a balance so in that respect perhaps a bit of selection."
>
> Reporter

Vox pops in this sense are perceived as a means of tapping into 'true' community feelings, while also recognising that a reporter seeks to find 'a balance of viewpoints'. This curious state of affairs where the vox pop is seen as a means of 'getting a straw poll' and a 'true' insight into the feelings of the community while simultaneously dependent upon the journalist's own judgements and final selections in the pursuit of 'balance' is a logical contradiction not readily recognised by practising journalists. The pursuit of 'balance' in such instances frequently overrides the suspect 'representativeness' of accessed views, where journalists are apt to employ vox pops as a means of constructing an alternative view with which to 'balance' the news story.

When the American group of self-proclaimed vigilantes 'the Guardian Angels' arrived in Handsworth, Birmingham a political storm erupted with the local MP Jeff Rooker leading a campaign for their return to the United States. The story was of great interest to the newsroom and reported at some length. However, the problem remained, contrary to the claims of the Angels themselves, that nobody could be found from Handsworth who would support their arrival and intent to combat street crime. The following discussion at the Morning Conference illustrates the journalistic imperative to find a 'balancing' point of view with

which to justify the news attention afforded to the Guardian Angels.

News Editor: Yes, a reporters trying to get a line on this this morning.

Programme Editor: And we must try to get some comment from a community group that will say they want them here.

News Editor : The problem is Rooker whose been in contact with all the community groups in Handsworth says nobody wants them here. None of the community groups have said they want them here.

Reporter One: What about getting comments from the street. We've got comment from local 'worthies', police, politicians, what about getting some reaction from people on the street.

Reporter Two: We had a vox pop in that piece yesterday. The 'community' is different from Joe Soap on the street, I'm sure if we could get some reaction from someone in a local street saying I'd like them at the end of my street.

Programme Editor: Yes O.K I can have a certain amount of that stuff but we must find someone who is prepared to say they asked them here.

News Editor : When they were in london six months ago some diverse asian group had asked them.

Reporter One: The problem is, probably an Asian youth group asked them here before the community leaders could get hold of them and tell them to put a stop to it, it'll cause too much trouble."

This exchange between journalists keen to make the 'story stand up', illustrates a number of key features impacting upon the accessing of inner city voices. Firstly, an almost desperate bid to find someone, anyone, who will say they invited the Guardian Angels is pursued in order that two sides of the issue can be presented and the story thus presented as a 'balanced' piece of journalism. Secondly, reference to vox pops is made indicating that perhaps the sought viewpoint could be found, even suggesting the actual form of comments that could be elicited by vox popping local residents. Thirdly, though vox pops are countenanced as permissible and of some use in this instance, a suspicion of 'community representatives' is voiced which implies that grass roots comment, and reaction is likely to be at odds with the 'community view'. Nonetheless, the Programme Editor is determined to find a group who will admit to inviting the Angels over as claimed. A reporter assigned to this

particular task recounts his involvement in the following terms.

> "What we desperately needed, and didn't have at the end of the day, was any group saying that we need them. And we really tried to get hold of a group because otherwise it could seem incredibly unbalanced. But we really tried to get hold of one of those residential groups, or one of those community groups and I tried umpteen times phoning various organisations that wanted the Guardian Angels but just couldn't. But they just weren't there to be had."
>
> Reporter

More intent upon 'balancing' the story in order to safeguard the credibility of news impartiality than to reflect the evident grass-roots and community opposition to the idea of vigilante groups patrolling inner city streets, tremendous efforts were applied to finding someone who would voice support for the vigilantes. In such cases, the possibility that the strength and near-uniformity of community feeling and opinion is artificially 'represented' by selecting and presenting opposing sides of opinion which less than indicate the true nature of community feeling is readily apparent. While vox pops offer the possibility of providing a quick means of 'balancing' a story as the reporter so graphically indicated above, by getting 'out on the street with a microphone up peoples' noses', the felt need to find community representatives is also evident and reflects more than the simple organisational ease with which such viewpoints can be gained.

Referring to the evident lack of black youths found across the entirety of the Handsworth riots coverage, notwithstanding the important role played by black youths within these events, the search for 'representative' figures is conceded as an inherent news practice.

> "Yes I have to admit as you know, its standard procedure. One of the problems is that its one of the tenets of the media, unless you can describe someone as something then somehow they don't carry any weight. And therefore simply Winston Smith, black youth as a caption doesn't carry any weight. But Winston Smith community leader does carry weight. And that in itself is a reason for talking to him if you can put that as a caption."
>
> Reporter

Interestingly while 'ordinary' people and their reactions are taken to be the stuff of vox pops, and the regional news programme as a whole places great popular store upon accessing 'ordinary' people, when it comes to a contentious issue, an

issue going to the heart of existing inner city social and political conditions, the views of 'ordinary' black youth are not considered 'weighty' enough for public expression and examination. The search for community leaders and representative figures in this account, is therefore more than an organisational requirement reflecting the pressures of time and limited resources involved in finding appropriate sound 'bites'. It reflects the pursuit of representative figures, spokespeople, who can speak with a degree of authority for others. Within the often fractured and fragmented social and political context of the inner city this in itself presents journalists with certain problems as discussed further below. However, while the search for 'representative' figures is based within a journalistic need to 'balance' a story by accessing opposing or different sides (though much depends, of course, on the conceptualisation of the story itself, as illustrated in the Clinton McCurbin news 'story'), the routine and organisational pressures encouraging a few 'representative' inner city contacts and spokespeople should not be underestimated.

> "In everybody's field of work there are short-cut approaches to people and institutions to get things done or to find out information, and whether we like it or not there are certain spokesmen, spokeswomen, people who speak for groups, say they speak for groups who you go to and you can't be the eyes and ears of everyone or the street, and so that does happen."
>
> Reporter

In the case of the reporting of the Handsworth riots, an involved reporter recounts some of the difficulties encountered and reactions engendered by those community representatives gaining news access.

> "The Handsworth Riots was a classical case of, immediately after it happened who do you get to talk about it ? This television station staged through the day special half hour programmes and they included representatives of the black community. Each time virtually one of these programmes went out the phones started to ring with other members of the black community saying, why weren't we offered the opportunity, they don't represent us, and that's the problem. Bit by bit they were on, they did get on but you wouldn't find one lot that would say the other lot was representative. We had some on, of what the younger generation would call uncle toms, who were virtually apologising for what had happened there and that upset others. It wasn't easy at all. There isn't an agency that you can go to who says, black community Handsworth, he's the one, you've got to speak to him.
>
> Reporter

Interestingly, in a situation characterised by a plurality of political viewpoints, cultural identities and allegiances and organisational forms the difficulties posed to news producers intent upon finding 'representative' views with which to 'balance' an item are keenly felt. In such a circumstance it might be assumed that some attempt to chart the contending positions would be outlined and the possible 'common ground' or shared perspectives, as well as points of difference, characterising the inner city landscape would be marked out. However, the pursuit of 'representative' voices permits little explicit reference to differentiation of community views in the attempt to 'balance' the portrayal of issues by typically structuring the public expression of difference into simple and invariably binary oppositions. In such a situation, the necessity for accessed community 'representative' voices to be supplemented by the voices of 'ordinary' people is all the more important provided such voices can find genuine involvement and portrayal across the spectrum of inner city concerns.

In terms of the coverage of the Handsworth Riots, for instance, the evident silence of black and white youth, and the limited access afforded to certain community 'representatives' seriously undermined the possibility of informed public 'understanding' of the events, their aftermath and antecedents. Indeed, the very fact that some sections of the community could refer to accessed spokespeople in terms interpreted by the reporter as 'Uncle Toms' indicates that at least alternative and opposing views did exist which were not receiving public expression. The review and analysis of one year's Handsworth reporting has detailed exactly who did gain access within this portrayal as well as the predominating themes and concerns characterising this news coverage. Moreover, detailed lexical analyses concerning the repertoire of key anchorage points relating to the discursive positioning of the event, the actors involved as well as the social framework placed upon the riots have all indicated that, contrary to the views of reporters and general news team, the spectrum of inner city perspectives contending for public expression were not granted equal opportunity to place their particular interpretative frameworks of the events, their causes and future repercussions within the public domain.

A key feature in the public mediation of the Handsworth riots and general understanding of the problems and concerns of the inner city relates to the array of interpretative resources and accounts placed within the public domain. A central component within this public expression and contest for public assent concerns the array of inner city voices securing, and not securing, a position from which to articulate such viewpoints. The patterns of inner city actor entry and their indebtedness to routinised news practices, established contacts as well as professional understandings concerning news 'balance' and 'representativeness', have frequently been observed to impact upon inner city portrayal in a way which limits and restricts the spectrum of views currently seeking to align public understandings of the inner city. Though 'ordinary' voices can and do play an important part within the overall cast of voices securing entry within the regional news genre, these have been found to perform diverse functions and roles which rarely approach a participatory and political understanding of public 'representation'. Moreover, it has been suggested that on occasion far from such voices 'representing' public opinion, they have rather been sought and strategically placed within a news item constructed according to the journalists own conceptualisation and understanding of 'the story' where 'public opinion' is invoked and 're-presented' according to limited 'story' requirements.

To conclude this chapter and general discussion of the production practices impacting upon and informing the portrayal of the problems and issues of the inner city one last case study will be explored as a means of illustrating many of the points developed across this and the preceding three chapters. The news story selected for extended discussion happened in a two week period when I was available to accompany news crews on the road as well as observe the final ENG editing and scripting process undertaken in preparing news items for final transmission. In a sense therefore, this particular item chose itself given the infrequency of inner city items across the two week period set aside for this part of the participant observation exercise. However while the 'story' is arguably of germane interest to the inner city, the point here is that it serves to illustrate something of the more general processes and practices involved

in story construction and the role afforded to accessed others.

Seeking to delve behind the accounts of the news producers and examine the final product, and its indebtedness to informing journalistic practices and editing processes both the final script as well cutting room floor remnants have been attended to. While this may appear cumbersome at first, it is only by contrasting the final broadcast material with the discarded material that the editing process and journalistic practice becomes revealed in the complex of detailed selections and decisions informing an actual instance of inner city related reporting. The inclusion of both broadcast, and cutting room floor transcript is therefore a necessary feature of the following analysis and enables an informed appreciation of the journalist's craft, pursuit of 'core' news values as well as the secondary and subsidiary role afforded to accessed others. The news story examined, though originally pursued by journalists as a likely 'ordinary' news report, in fact developed throughout the course of the day to become the programme's lead story.

Informed by phone, the forward planning team alerted the newsdesk of a major rally and demonstration by Birmingham's Muslim population in Small Heath Park against the continuing publication of Salman Rushdie's 'The Satanic Verses'. Though previous demonstrations had taken place, a reporter was assigned to this belated demonstration given that it appeared likely to involve considerable numbers of Birmingham's Muslim population in a weekday protest, though the exact form this 'story' might assume was as yet unknown. The assigned reporter attended the rally with a 'brief' containing technical and logistical details only. Directing the ENG crew in relation to the shots sought at the mid-morning rally at Small Heath Park, the reporter and crew later rendezvoused at the march destination, the public square outside Birmingham Council House and Central Public Library where a further demonstration was held and a petition delivered to a council meeting. An interview with the march organiser in the park was followed by an interview with a Muslim councillor outside the Council House and this report was then dovetailed with a second reporter's piece involving an interview with the city's Librarian and number of impromptu vox pops. The following is the full transcript, detailing the actual words and commentary broadcast in this leading item to the main evening

news programme and includes the introductory 'teases' to the programme as a whole.

Evening Programme Transcript: RUSHDIE

Teases: "Council set to ban Satanic Verses after thousands march in protest. A breakthrough in the fight against food poisoning. And, taking to the air in the battle against crime.

News Presenter: Good evening, Central News this Tuesday. Salman Rushdie's controversial book 'The Satanic Verses' looks set to be banned from schools and public libraries in Birmingham. The Council's ruling labour group has voted to consider the ban after thousands of Muslims marched through the city to hand in a petition. The National Union of Teachers has deplored the move, calling it a form of censorship.

Reporter: The vote is the first step on the way to a ban on Rushdie's book. It followed a march through the city by thousands of Muslims. Scuffles broke out between pro and anti-khomeni groups but march marshals quickly dispersed the rival gangs before the police were needed. Organisers said they wanted the book banned and were against the death sentence issued by the Ayatollah.

Interviewee [Yusuf Qamar - march organiser] I cannot agree at all. That may be an excuse for the British government to come out and not accept their responsibility. What we are asking for is the British government is, first it owes allegiance to the British Citizens. We are all Muslims living in this country for the last 20 years and we have a right over the government to ask them to protect our rights.

Reporter: The Rushdie affair had disappeared from the headlines recently but an action committee has been formed to keep pressure on politicians.

Interviewee: In our minds the book has to be banned. The book must be stopped from circulation.

Reporter: In order to do that a change in the law would be required; a change in the defamation laws. Do you think that is a realistic objective ?

Interviewee: That is the only realistic objective. We are asking the government to change the law to include Islam as one of the religions to be protected from such vilifying attempts which are made against any religion.

Reporter: The march gathered more support as it was shepherded through Small Heath and Balsall Heath. Eventually an estimated four thousand converged on the Council House, police flanking the demonstrators throughout.

Reporter: Inside the city council meeting a petition was handed in and a motion carried to consider banning the book from schools and public libraries. Muslim councillors deny the ban would be an infringement of civil liberties.

Interviewee [Councillor] The community at large need to understand, I think that under the banner of the freedom of the press the freedom does not give anybody licence to abuse or insult any religion. The situation here is that the author as well as the printer have misused the freedom of the press. And what we are asking is that this book should be withdrawn. That is the only solution if we want race relations and we want to live peacefully and in harmony.

Reporter: The city council encourages links between all ethnic groups. Some labour councillors say the decision to consider a ban is simply meeting the demands of the city's 70,000 Muslims.

Reporter 2: Birmingham central library has 36 copies of The Satanic Verses, between 50 and 80 people are waiting to borrow the book although it is not on public display. The senior librarian says popularity of the book has come with publicity. But he believes in people's right to choose what they read.

Librarian: I personally have an opinion that freedom of expression is important for everyone. I don't know what the circumstances, as I say, at this time I don't even know what the city council decision is.

Reporter 2: Today it seemed anybody prepared to comment strongly opposed a ban in libraries or schools.

Vox Pop 1: Well, I think the consequences will be with the Muslims in this country being totally alienated in our society and years of work of integrating Muslims into our society will be destroyed.

Vox Pop 2: I think people should be able to read what they want. Given a choice of opinion about what they want to read, I don't think it should be banned at all.

Vox Pop 3: If people want to read it they should be allowed to. I don't think there is any harm in it. Its allowed to be published so I don't think, so people shouldn't be allowed to read the book.

Vox Pop 4: Unless we can express our mind it's the end of democracy.

Reporter 2: Have you read the book ?

Vox Pop 4: Parts of it, I've been told the relevant parts.

Reporter 2: And what do you think about it ?

Vox Pop 4: It doesn't seem that important to me that anyone reads it.

Reporter 2: Meanwhile copies of Salman Rushdie's book are in short supply at city centre shops. Hudson's had sold out and W.H.Smith had only a couple of copies under the counter. A spokesman said, sale of the book had provoked some threats which are being investigated by West Midland's police.

Observations on the Production of Public Opinion : "Rushdie"

The first observation that can be made about this 'story', is that, contrary to the impression promoted by the item, it didn't happen. Amazingly, the story as depicted by the journalist and news team bore little relation to the events unleashed on the day in question. Already conscious of the public interest generated around the 'Rushdie affair', the reporter assigned to the march believed he was in possession of something of a news scoop, that is, a story which would both

regionalise and augment the undoubted interest already existing around the Rushdie affair with a development which would prove both controversial and conflict-laden. However, if the 'story' and its evidential base is attended to carefully what is found is that the pursuit of a significant and 'controversial' news story led the journalists involved to considerably exaggerate the events of the day and misconstrue their likely importance.

Attending the early morning rally, an 'ordinary' news story was filed and duly broadcast in the lunch-time bulletin. The essence of this 'story' is revealed in the news presenter's opening 'lead' statement as follows : 'Thousands of Muslims are in Birmingham for a rally over the Salman Rushdie book 'The Satanic Verses'. Minor scuffles broke out between pro and anti-Khomeni supporters but were brought under control by rally organisers'. This particular 'trouble' frame, discussed further below, though a particular construction of the event, was later superseded by the notion that Birmingham City Council appeared set to ban the book from public libraries and schools. At this point the interest generated within the reporter and the news desk was considerably increased, and the standing of the story promoted to a contender as the programme's lead news story of the day.

The fact of the matter was that a petition had simply been delivered to a council meeting and a decision had been taken to refer the matter to the meeting of the Leisure Services Committee. At no point had the council appeared 'set to ban' the Satanic Verses, much less 'decided to ban' the book as the second reporter informed her numerous interviewees before eliciting their reactions. The lead story, in other words, was the result of a collective journalistic pursuit of the latest Rushdie development and news scoop which failed to attend to the actual details of the developments set in train. As the Chief Librarian's office later confirmed, the decision to refer the matter to the Leisure Services Committee for discussion could not conceivably be interpreted, contrary to the opening 'tease' statement, as 'Council set to ban Satanic Verses after thousands march in protest'. This however, was exactly the 'story' as presented by the news account. If the general conceptualisation of 'the story' as pursued by the newsroom and involved reporters is based upon flimsy foundation, some of the

detail of this item can now be considered. To take aspects of the visual imagery attending this news item first.

Unfortunately the transcript above does not provide the means of attending to the visual component of this major news item. However, the following general comments can be made. In the main the visual component of this item involved two aspects. Firstly, the close-up shots (head/shoulders) of interviewees when interviewed by one of the two assigned reporters, and secondly selected shots of the assembled crowds at both the initial rally and march destination point. Concerning the filming of the interviewees no general observations are thought to be especially revealing other than their highly reduced visual involvement given the selected verbal 'bites' finally transmitted. However, concerning the scenes of the rally and demonstration broadcast, which were witnessed in person, as well as reviewing all the ENG material shot by the camera crews or 'rushes', an obvious disparity between witnessed scenes as well as available scenes from the rushes and broadcast scenes becomes plain. While the rally was generally peaceful, characterised by assembled groups of Muslim men and youths occasionally breaking into led chants and shouts, march organisers and speakers addressing the crowd, reporters mingling with the crowd and each other, and with small groups of police officers standing or on horseback at a distance, the scenes noticeably dominating this aspect of the news item are close-up scenes of an evident dispute between two demonstrators surrounded by onlookers and shots of the police in attendance.

The close-up on the faces and shoulders of this 'disagreement' convey the distinct impression that the wider crowd may itself be similarly locked in disagreement despite the fact that this was an isolated, and highly insignificant incident at the fringe of the assembled demonstrators. It is all the more interesting therefore that this visual image should dominate the opening scenes. However, when this scene is compared with another scene, the burning of a flag by a demonstrator at the march destination point, it is apparent that such shots have been selected according to their perceived contribution to the 'news story' as conceptualised by the reporter. Only one flag was seen to have been burnt on that day, as was only one disagreement witnessed within the crowd. Both

incidents however dominate the imagery juxtaposed alongside the sights and sounds of chanting youths holding aloft Khomeni posters, and police marshalling the crowds on their way to the march destination point.

Arriving at the rally separately from the ENG crew and witnessing the internal disagreement within the crowd the reporter made the point 'where's the crew we need some pictures of this'. Asking the crew later what scenes they were after they candidly stated 'we're after shots of the march, the banners, any trouble that there might be'. Relying on the 'news sense' of the film crew, both in terms of visuals and sound recording of Islamic chants and choruses of shouts the pursuit of conflict finds a visual and vocal reference notwithstanding their marginal involvement within the general events of the day. Such are enough, however, to enable the reporter to 'frame' his initial report in terms of 'a scuffle' which supposedly broke out between 'rival gangs'. The fact that a march steward was involved in the 'scuffle' referred to, did not deter the reporter from describing 'rival groups', later changed to 'rival gangs', because, as he suggested in the editing room later that afternoon 'it sounds better'.

Remaining for the moment with the visual dimension attending this news item it is also interesting to note that a conscious editing decision was taken which sought to increase the sense of urgency and possibly even threat conveyed in the visual images selected. Abandoning a selected shot of the first arrivals of small groups of demonstrators to the city square this front shot of ambling protesters was replaced by a side shot of groups entering the square thereby introducing a considerable sense of movement and pace. When combined with the words 'an estimated four thousand converged on the Council House, police flanking the demonstrators throughout' the impression given is that the march was both determined and constituted a massive presence purposefully taking up position outside the Council House. While the march may have according to police estimates approximated 4,000 at its height, on arrival the assembled number could not could reasonably be said to be more than a few hundred and these included lunch-time shoppers and curious passers-by normally traversing the central city square.

The constant pursuit of conflict and 'trouble', which

arguably informed the initial interest in the Rushdie demonstration and is found to be followed through in the selective construction of the mornings events between so-called pro and anti-Khomeni supporters, is later transposed to the considerably expanded conflict supposedly poised to be unleashed between the muslim community who we are told seek to ban the book and the wider 'public' who would resent any such imposition. The head Librarian of Birmingham Central Library is introduced as believing in 'people's right to choose', while we are told that 'anybody prepared to comment, strongly opposed a ban in libraries and schools'. These comments, including the initial response sought and gained from the National Union of Teachers who 'deplored the move' by the City Council are all effectively marshalled into an aggregate 'public' which is assumed to be opposed to the ban while 'balancing' the item's earlier focus upon the demonstration and its declared aims as 'represented' by the two accessed spokesmen. None of what follows need necessarily be taken to imply that a genuine and widely held antipathy to the proposed banning of the 'Satanic Verses' does not characterise much public opinion. What is suggested, and established below, is that such 'public' expressions are artificially invoked and re-presented in terms which, by and large are undifferentiated, simplistically positioned, and presented and packaged according to the journalists' own conceptualisation of the story and its requirements.

To establish that such is in fact the case, the edited interview 'bites' woven into the final story package can now be individually considered. In addition to illustrating something of the selection choices informing the final edited interview 'bites' woven into the final package, the transcripts also indicate lines of journalist inquiry and interest, sometimes dropped or abandoned, which nonetheless furnish further insight into the journalist's craft and practice of story construction. The full transcript of each interview conducted for the purposes of this piece are now included, the actual words edited into the final item have been underlined while the rest remain consigned to the cutting-room floor. The first interview with the march organiser was conducted as follows.

Interview: March Organiser

March Organiser: I am member of the Muslim Action Committee of Birmingham

Reporter: OK Why on this Tuesday morning are we faced with another demonstration regarding Salman Rushdie ?

Organiser: So far in Birmingham all the demonstrations have taken place on a weekend and we just wanted to show to the people that on a working day all the Muslims will shut down their shops down, they will take their days off from their work, they'll close their offices and they'll still come to the park and participate in the march.

Reporter: What good will this march do for the community ?

Organiser: This march is the first of its kind because all the uslims of Birmingham have joined into the Muslim Action Committee, an umbrella organisation representing all the Muslim organisations of Birmingham. This I hope will make it clear to the British government that we are determined to fight until the end.

Reporter: You say you're going to fight until the end, what end do you have in mind at the moment ?

Organiser: Well, the end in our minds the book has to be banned. The book must be stopped from circulation.

Reporter: In order to do that a change in the law would be required; a change in the defamation laws. Do you think that is a realistic objective ?

Organiser: That is the only realistic objective. We are asking the government to change the law to include Islam as one of the religions to be protected from such vilifying attempts which are made against any religion.

Reporter: You have been arguing your case for many weeks even months. Do you think you're getting anywhere ?

Organiser: Well we've achieved at least one objective so far, that is Muslims after every day that's passing are more determined to come out and express their disgust at the publication of the book and demand from the British government and ask for more support from our Members of Parliament and our representatives.

Reporter: It could be said that you've lost the broad sympathy of the British people because of the death threat which still lies over Mr Rushdie. Do you agree with that death threat ?

Organiser: I cannot agree at all. That may be an excuse for the British government to come out and not accept their responsibility. What we are asking for is the British government first owes allegiance to its British Citizens. We are all Muslims living in this country for the last 20 years and we have a right over the government to ask them to protect our rights.

Reporter: And do you think you will get any support from the Lord Mayor to whom you are handing in your petition today ?

Organiser: Of course, this is why we are doing so.

The interview above illustrates something of the generally

compressed nature of 'typical' news report interviews and even more the severity of the editing process. The final transcript reveals that the response to the journalist's concern with the death threat over Rushdie, though elicited towards the end of the interview, forms the initial frame of reference and is introduced accordingly by the reporters 'link' statement. This aspect, as opposed to the organiser's attempts to claim 'citizen rights' for the established British Muslim community is introduced as the main issue. This interview also illustrates the way in which interviewee statements can be 'clipped' from their surrounding context, with the consequent loss of the reporter's questions and even parts of the interviewee's initial, and as documented below, concluding parts of an integral sentence. The near-total dependence of the interviewee upon the reporter's line of questioning and subsequent editing decisions is further illustrated in the second interview with a Muslim, Labour councillor.

Interview: Muslim Councillor

Reporter: You've managed to hand in your petition and indeed the council has agreed to discuss withdrawing the book from public libraries. Do you think you will succeed ?

Councillor: Well I hope so because I think the situation is, the community at large need to understand, I think that under the banner of the freedom of the press the freedom does not give anybody licence to abuse or insult any religion. The situation here is that the author as well as the printer have misused the freedom of the press. And what we are asking is that this book should be withdrawn. That is the only solution if we want race relations and we want to live peacefully and in harmony.

Reporter: Do you think that withdrawing the book from schools and public libraries would not actually add to the discord between the races and ethnic minorities ?

Councillor: Well I don't see, I think the message is, I think the host community should try to understand that this book is not a literary work; it's just a filthy book, a fictional book and the author as well as the printers have sought to publicise this book simply for financial reasons. This is not an authentic book and therefore I can't see the need why this book should be available in schools and libraries.

Reporter: According to British law its a legal book, do your, does your community not follow British law ?

Councillor: Well for example this government only a couple of months ago had banned a certain political party in Northern Ireland that their interviews cannot be broadcast on television and radio. Where is the freedom of the press in that instance ? Why are we two million muslims being lectured about the freedom of the press - we are in favour of the freedom of the press, but what we are asking is that the freedom of the press should not give anyone a

licence to print money by insulting other religions.

Reporter: Final question. There have been calls recently from the community in Small Heath and Balsall Heath for Roy Hattersley to change, if you like, his colours and come out in favour of banning the book. Do you think he will lose votes if he doesn't ?

Councillor: Well that depends upon the residents and voters of Sparkbrook. What we are saying is, that there is a need for people to understand our stance, our logic. And our logic is that the book is a very filthy and insulting book, not only to our religion but to Christianity as well because it abuses prophet Abraham and so many other prophets. So therefore there is a need for the host community

Reporter: Do you believe that..

Councillor: to understand this. Its a fictional and filthy book.

Reporter: Do you believe that, Do you believe that the Muslim Community should stop voting for Roy Hattersley ?

Councillor: Well, I think there when the general election comes along it is up to the Muslim community how they feel they have been supported in this

Reporter: Would you vote for him, as it stands ?

Councillor: hour of need by their Members of Parliament.

Reporter: Would you vote for him, as it stands ?

Councillor: Well, I'm a Labour Party member

Reporter: So you'd vote for him ?

Councillor: Being a Labour Party member I'll still fight with other Labour Party members to get this book withdrawn.

Reporter: Thank You, (to crew) I'll need a two-shot very quickly.

Interestingly, the reporter in this instance, selects and edits an initial statement introducing and qualifying the idea of 'the freedom of the press' advanced by the councillor in support of his claim to have the book banned, though the subsequent reference to the Government's restrictions placed upon the reporting of Northern Ireland are not also selected. The three principal questions posed to the councillor concern the degree of 'discord' possibly unleashed if the protestors' demands are implemented, a direct invitation to the councillor to respond to the challenge 'does your community not follow British law', and finally a sustained and persistent attempt to elicit a statement concerning a possible Muslim-Labour Party rift involving Sparkbrook's MP, Roy Hattersley. This last line of questioning, pursued with some vigour, seeks to draw the

councillor on this particular issue and if successful would have been instrumental in raising the political stakes involved while adding a further dimension of 'discord', between the region's 'races' and ethnic minorities. The persistence of this line of questioning did not, on this occasion, furnish the results sought and in the editing room was dropped by the reporter claiming that 'can't use it; it won't hold up, he didn't go far enough'. The attempt to actively help an interviewee 'to go far enough', in providing a statement guaranteed to cause further controversy and division - all key ingredients to a 'good story' is further illustrated in the second reporter's interview with the City's Central Librarian.

Interview: City Librarian

Reporter: Brian Caldan what has demand been like for Salman Rushdie's 'The Satanic Verses' ?

Librarian: We have 36 copies of the book, and to my information in excess of 50 reservations for it at the present time.

Reporter: What has demand been like since you took the book in ?

Librarian: Well the demand has accelerated since the publicity. When we first had it, it was just bought as any ordinary book. But since this of course, we've had a considerable increase in publicity.

Reporter: Has this caused you to take on extra copies of the book.

Librarian: We havn't bought any extra but in the normal course of events it follows an increase in demand, we would do that. Yes.

Reporter: How unusual is it to have 50 to 80 people on a waiting list for a book ?

Librarian: Not necessarily so unusual, but for a book by a modern novelist perhaps that is unusual, yes.

Reporter: What is your reaction to the decision of Birmingham City Council to ban the book from this library ?

Librarian: I don't know of that decision. I can't comment on it I'm afraid.

Reporter: On the basis that the decision has been made what is your reaction ?

Librarian: My reaction is that this City Council will do, what they believe is the best thing to be done and I presume this is what they have done on this occasion.

Reporter: Do you support that decision ?

Librarian: I'm not here to have an opinion on that matter. I'm here to support the city council in their decision.

Reporter: So whatever you think you are sticking by the city council ruling ?

Librarian: That is the case, yes.

Reporter: How do you feel about the fact that Birmingham city council has become one of the first authorities to ban the book from the library ?

Librarian: I'm not in possession of that information that they are amongst the first at this time.

Reporter: A lot of people feel they have the right to choose what books they borrow from a library. What do you think about that ?

Librarian: I personally have an opinion that freedom of expression is important for everyone. I don't know what the circumstances, as I say, at this time I don't even know what the city council decision is. But I believe they act in the what they believe to be the best interest of the city is.

Reporter: On the basis that you believe in freedom then, do you umm

Librarian: Sorry, you told me you weren't going to ask me this sort of question. I'm sorry I shan't answer any more.

The second reporter having been assigned early afternoon, following the evident animation of the newsdesk concerning the erroneously 'perceived' imminent ban, interviewed the principal librarian and all subsequent vox pops under the illusion that The Satanic Verses had in fact already been banned by the City Council. This was information that the City's Librarian was, wisely enough, not prepared to comment on until confirmed, though the subsequent vox pops were in no position to challenge the reporter's assertion of fact. The interview, having established a few 'facts' concerning the public's apparent interest in 'The Satanic Verses' in terms of the library's waiting lists and so on, proceeds to elicit a response concerning the Council's 'ban' and clearly seeks to secure a statement of opposition to the ban. With the librarian firmly maintaining a position which is not prepared to challenge the Council's right to decide upon such matters, the best that the reporter can achieve is a 'personal' statement yielded after many attempts to get the librarian to commit himself to formally disagreeing with the Council.

Interestingly, this 'personal' statement is the only statement finally used and is clipped from its subsequent qualifying statement and numerous preceding statements concerning the City Council's efforts to work for the interests of the city as a whole. The librarian's edited statement, in

other words, has been produced and appropriated to suit the reporter's own conception of 'public opinion' assumed to be uniformly opposed to 'the ban', notwithstanding the librarian's evident dismay at this persistent line of questioning. The interview abruptly ended, with the transparent efforts of the reporter to elicit a statement of condemnation towards the ban 'On the basis that you believe in freedom then..'. The interviewee refused to answer any more questions and walked off.

If the Librarian managed to maintain a degree of formal control over the interview and refused to be drawn on the matter, thereby only providing partial support to this construction of 'public opinion', the use of 'ordinary' people via a series of vox pops provided the reporter's conception of the sought 'balance' to the demonstrator's aims. Of the eight individuals approached outside the city library, four refused to comment. All the sought interviewees, with one exception, were white, none were Asian and none were asked, or declared, that they were Muslim. 'Public opinion' at the level of the vox pop was not considered to include the ordinary voices of Muslims, but was actively sought in terms consonant with the reporter's prior preconceptions concerning public opposition to 'the ban'. It needs to be remembered in the following discussion that all the street interviewees were approached under the opening question 'Could I ask you for your reaction to Birmingham City Council's decision to ban Salman Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses' from public libraries and schools'. The fact that no such occurrence had taken place, and that the item was broadcast under the still exaggerated claim 'council set to ban The Satanic Verses' did not temper the use of such interviews.

Vox Pop As: Selecting Verbal 'Bites', Editing Out Discursive Positions

Reporter: Can I ask you about your reaction to Birmingham City Council's decision to ban 'The Satanic Verses' from libraries and schools ?

Vox Pop : Well, I think the consequences will be with the Muslims in this country being totally alienated in our society and years of work of integrating Muslims into our society will be destroyed because the British people have always been very evolutionary rather than revolutionary and this kind of protest doesn't do anything for the Muslim cause and doesn't do anything for the minorities in this country at all.

This first interview illustrates how the reporter's questions have been edited out, and only the interviewee's initial part of his response has been used. The informing base of ideas to this reaction has also been edited out from the final 'bite' used, notwithstanding the fact that such formed the latter part to, and justification of the proposition offered in this integral sentence. The ambiguous sounding claims offered in the first part of the sentence - is the interviewee concerned with the Muslims themselves or rather the 'work of integrating Muslims' ? - becomes clearer in the second part of the sentence where an opposition is set in place between 'British people' and Muslims. That is, the opinion offered appears to be dependent upon a wider view of 'tolerant' British people seeking to 'integrate' minorities. While differing interpretations and criticisms currently may challenge or support such a viewpoint, the public engagement with such a position is effectively denied by the editing process.

Vox Pop As: First-Hit Success - 'It's In the Can'

Reporter: Can I ask you about your reaction to Birmingham City Council's decision to ban 'The Satanic Verses' from libraries and schools ?

Vox Pop: I think people should be able to read what they want. Given a choice of opinion about what they want to read, I don't think it should be banned at all.

With the desired 'bite' in the can, this particular vox pop was not pursued, and the interviewee was permitted to go on his way without further ado.

Vox Pop As: Constructing an Informed Confident Stance

Reporter: Could I ask you for your reaction to Birmingham City Council's decision to ban 'The Satanic Verses' from the libraries and the schools ?

Vox Pop: I didn't actually know they had. What they're banning it from schools and libraries ?

Reporter: Schools and libraries in the city,

vox pop: Well I think that's very bad.

Reporter: Why ?

vox pop: Well I think it should be allowed. I know a lot of people are against it and so on. But everyone's got a right to read it if they want to,

I don't think there should be any sort of banning of it.

Reporter: So what do you think about the fact that the city has given in to pressure from the Muslim community ?

Vox pop: Well I don't really know the whole sort of story of it so its difficult to comment, but I think if people want to read it they should be allowed to. I don't think there is any harm in it. Its allowed to be published so I don't think, so people shouldn't be allowed to read the book. That's all I can say really because I don't know a lot about it(laughs) OK ?

The woman interviewee, not surprisingly unaware of the ban, is encouraged to react to this situation and declares her opposition to the ban. Interestingly however, her admitted lack of knowledge leads her to make provisional and qualifying statements to her position both preceding and following the final edited 'bite'. These have been edited away, notwithstanding the fact that her words are edited mid sentence. If a position on the public banning of The Satanic Verses is to be publicly aired, it is important that the informing base of such an opinion is also heard if rational deliberation, debate and public discussion as well as genuine 'representation' is sought. This clearly hasn't happened in this instance, while the reporter's assumption, stated as 'fact', that 'the city has given in to pressure from the Muslim community' is unlikely to elicit a more considered viewpoint. It is likely however, to produce the desired 'public opinion' actively sought by the reporter. The last interviewee edited and used in this part of the report is of particular interest because it clearly illustrates something of the extremes, not to say idiosyncratic, positions characterising 'public opinion' and yet even here the reporter's desired viewpoint can be obtained

Vox Pop As: 'Cranks' and Creative Editing

Reporter: Can I ask you about your reaction to Birmingham City Council's decision to ban 'The Satanic Verses' from libraries and schools in the city ?

vox pop: I feel very sorry for what will happen in the future.

Reporter: What do you think will happen in the future ?

vox pop: We'll have to fight them you know. I think there will be a war.

Reporter: Why ?

vox pop: I study the human race you see, I have all my life. I think there will be a war.

Reporter: As a result of this ?

vox pop: No, not as a result of this. I think it's the inevitable consequence of what's happening. It's the profoundest tragedy that's happened to the English race is the sudden arrival of tens of thousands of people. It's damaged the very heart of what it meant to be an Englishman.

Reporter: So what about the banning of this book from libraries and schools ?

vox pop: It'll be a great mistake.

Reporter: Why ?

vox pop: Freedom of speech. Unless we can express our mind it's the end of democracy.

Reporter: Have you read the book ?

vox pop: Parts of it. I've been told the relevant parts.

Reporter: And what do you think of it ?

vox pop: It doesn't seem that important to me that anyone reads it. Have you read the book ?

Reporter: I haven't There's a huge waiting list for the book inside the library.

vox pop: But wasn't that bound to have happened; wasn't that the inevitable consequence of the whole charade. You see its my own opinion that they've got their big stick now. It's what they wanted all along. We've just seen the tip of an iceberg.

Reporter: You think Birmingham City Council has given in to pressure which they shouldn't have given in to ?

vox pop: The whole of the English nation has collapsed. It has for a long time. I've written poetry on this.

Reporter: Thank you very much.

If public discussion, debate and 'representation' is genuinely pursued by the use of vox pops, as occasionally claimed by professional journalists noted earlier, 'opinion' cannot be divorced from its imbrication within an informing interpretative schema which organises and directs the views and opinions advanced. In this instance, the fact that the interviewee apparently holds just such a frame of reference which informs his 'opinions' is conveniently edited away from the final selected 'bite'. Seemingly based within a colourful, and some would say racist, invocation of 'Englishness', the

reasonable sounding opinion 'unless we express our minds it's the end of democracy' takes on a different connotation and meaning when presented in the context of its original formulation. Ironically, this same statement 'unless we express our views its the end of democracy', has itself been subjected to the imposed requirements of another author and placed in the service of the journalist's own conception of 'the story' and its need for the 'balance' of a particular form of public opinion. This public opinion, as documented throughout the above discussion, was artificially manufactured and may have served to further increase the possibilities of racial 'discord' previously laid at the door of the Muslim community by the reporter earlier.

It has to be remembered that this particular 'story' was itself based upon the erroneous foundation of, 'Council Set To Ban Satanic Verses', which acted as the springboard for the selective construction and orchestration of 'public opinion' both within the item and beyond. As the lead item the major regional news story of the day, the pre-existing interest and public disquiet surrounding the Rushdie affair was given a further twist which contributed little to the public examination and debate of the complex issues involved. While it would be supposition to claim that this media portrayal resulted in further misunderstanding, not to say antipathy, between the region's communities it certainly provided little or no evidence of an attempt to unravel and explore the informing bases, and differentiated nature of public opinion - understood as the competing perspectives and viewpoints seeking to organise public understanding of the so-called 'Rushdie affair'.

Observing the development of the 'story' throughout the day, it was apparent that both the journalists directly involved as well as the newsdesk generally became increasingly the victim of their own sense of 'news', as well as collective dismay at the presumed 'banning of the book'. Clearly dismayed and outraged at the presumed banning, the story developed in the manner of a rumour within the newsroom reaching its height with the dispatch of a reporter under the impression that The Satanic Verses had in fact been banned. Keen to capitalise upon pre-existing news interest already generated around the Rushdie affair, while developing possible new lines of conflict and controversy [anti- versus pro-Khomeni supporters; Muslim Labour supporters versus

Sparkbrook Labour Party; Muslim voters versus MP Roy Hattersley; city librarian versus city council; freedom of the press versus censorship; 'public opinion' versus Muslim demands] the final story transmitted though serving many of the requirements of a 'good story', offered little in the way of explanation, clarification and elucidation of the complexities and issues involved. In fact, as suggested, 'the story' as broadcast was itself based on an insecure foundation, and on that basis merely served as the vehicle in the manufactured orchestration of public controversy and conflict.

As a major story, journalists pursued the story in terms of established news values and interests. Clearly, the story was manufactured under conditions of pressure relating to time and item duration involving the necessity to secure and package both visual and verbal elements into a final item ready for broadcast that evening. Reporters had to work speedily and in a highly selective manner to achieve this end. However, though constrained by time if not resources, the fact remains that this item was pursued and produced according to an overriding news sense of what 'the story' was all about and it was this which ultimately led to a situation where the news reported was substantially the manifestation and product of the journalists themselves.

Interesting as the detail of this particular news item is, to the extent that it has permitted a 'recovery' of certain journalist values and interests, it has also served to illustrate something of the dependencies and subordinate role afforded to accessed others within the editorial process and final 'package' constructed by news producers. Initially selected as 'representative', directed in interview, subsequently 'clipped' and edited into 'bites' and finally juxtaposed and 'packaged' into an overall verbal and visual narrative, interviewees render up their words to the journalist's craft and professional practices. Informing and directing the various selections, decisions and choices which inform the production and delivery of all news items is a journalist's conceptualisation of 'the story' which, though open to change and even transformation through time, will nonetheless be framed in terms of perennial regional news interests. Such news interests, as discussed earlier, have failed to provide

extensive, and comprehensive portrayal of the issues and problems of the inner city, and inevitably impact upon the choices and manner in which accessed others are permitted a voice within news presentations.

With these final comments concerning the accessing of outside voices this particular discussion is brought to a close. However, as the last of four chapters focusing upon the professional practices of news journalists interrogated along lines of properties of genre, substantive inner city portrayal, forum and inner city access major findings for this part of the study as a whole can now usefully be reviewed.

Professional Journalists and the Reproduction of the News Genre: Summary Findings

To briefly review some of the main findings established during the course of the previous four chapters, it is clear that the regional news programme can fulfil different and even competing expectations and functions at one and the same time. Approached from the guiding theoretical framework of political economy it is apparent that the upper echelons of corporate hierarchy are well aware of the commercial significance and ratings delivered by the regional news programme, and are also not averse to proclaiming its flagship role if thought useful to wider corporate strategy. Presently seeking to win political favour in a competitive arena where franchise boundaries post-1992 are, in all likelihood, to be combined into extended geographical domains serviced by fewer competitive concerns the expansion of Central's regional news service with the development of a third 'local' news programme has consciously been promoted as a means of demonstrating that a territorially expanded franchise could continue to service regional requirements. So much is apparent, and represents a development of pre-existing commercial considerations circumscribing television news production readily conceded by senior corporate personnel, as noted earlier.

However, as this study has consistently argued such levels of analysis though ultimately implicated within the institutional and organisational context of news production, remain too distant from, and insufficiently nuanced for the job

of analysing the day to day production and reproduction of an internally differentiated and complex cultural form, much less the mediation of a specific social and political concern. Further levels of analysis are required if the integral and complex reality of an established programme genre is to be opened up to a more adequate and subtle understanding of its principal character and form and the manner in which these may impact upon the portrayal of an important social and political concern. Seeking to find a level of explanatory purchase involving a closer view of the day to day production of a particular television news form the four 'production' chapters have attended, in some detail, to the four principal attributes of the news portrayal of the problems and issues of the inner city.

Overviewing the general personnel, newsroom organisation, production processes, daily cycles and source inputs and contacts three general observations were advanced in support of the approach adopted in this study. While observing the highly routinized and organisational accomplishment of news production carried out on a daily basis within the newsroom, it was observed how the constant 'immersion' within a generalised 'news culture', evident degree of role flexibility and interchange between newsroom personnel as well as the collective and interdependent nature of news production all combine to not only 'routinize the unexpected' or 'tame the news environment' as a matter of logistical and organisational expediency but <u>also</u> effectively help to define, inculcate and reproduce a shared and collective understanding of the specific form of news programme daily constructed and pursued by the news team. In other words, and not wishing to dispense with the organisational expediency of routinizing the production of news - including the consequent degree of dependency upon certain news sources, such organisational features can also permit and give expression to a particular and professionally pursued understanding of the programme form daily enacted. In other words, though a necessary feature to understanding the general news process, organisational factors alone cannot begin to account for the differentiation of the news product but need to be approached in terms which are sensitive to the specificity of the news forms produced. Furthermore, it has been suggested on the basis of

such general observations that rather than organisational requirements resulting in a standardized news product, they may effectively help to further a particular and professionally known understanding of the news form reproduced which is differentiated from the news outputs of other news organisations.

If the regional news programme can be characterised by a particular form, approached in this study in terms of the three dimensions of appropriate subject matter, formal mode of composition and stance, it is also clearly the case that the regional news variant of 'news' is not hermetically sealed from the wider, and constantly monitored, news culture impinging into the working and leisure hours of newsroom journalists. In this regard the specificity of the news product, and news sense acted upon by the journalists responsible for the regional news programme represents a continuation with, rather than a strict departure from, established journalist norms and practices. Indeed, it is this feature of regional news both differentiated from and yet clearly indebted to wider professional practices and values of journalism which led to the identification of a set of recurrent 'core' regional news values, operationalised within a more general journalistic understanding of 'news'. In this sense, the discussions and findings relating to the specificities of the regional news genre above have been disposed to talk about 'tendencies' rather than absolute qualities given that the regional attributes purposefully pursued by news producers are enacted within a wider news culture which, as already indicated, inevitably informs the practice and product of the news form under discussion.

That said, discernible differences, characteristics and patterns of subject matter and forms have been quantitatively and qualitatively established and been found to represent the purposeful outcome of the pursuit of an established news programme form. In terms of general subject matter, deemed appropriate by regional news producers therefore, the established expectancy and popular ambition of the regional news form has been found, in part at least, to account for the heavy predominance of the two main planks of programme subject matter: crime news and human interest subjects (as defined previously).

Similarly the pronounced tendency towards a discernible individualism, earlier quantitatively established by means of an extensive sample of inner city news items subjected to a discourse structure analysis, which found in sympathy with general observations concerning the individualism and individual foci of so many items, that this feature of regional news has a basis in the professed ambitions of the news editors to popularise and attract the interests of 'ordinary' viewers.

Seeking to establish a 'popular, people led programme', the particular understanding of 'popular' and the definitional content of 'the people' has contributed not only to the particular patterns of access found to differentiate regional news from national news forms, but also to the heavy predominance of items focusing upon individuals and individual circumstance as opposed to collective and/or structural conditions and contexts. Within this particular conception of 'the popular' a number of explicit dispositions have been observed. These, as previously discussed concern the pronounced tendencies to focus upon individual circumstances and celebrate individualism as opposed to collective conditions, circumstance or contexts; relatedly, to privilege the private domains of domesticity, leisure and consumption as opposed to the 'public' domains of work, labour, and citizenship; to actively seek to appeal to the viewer through feelings of personal empathy and/or the shared dimensions of the experiential rather than an invitation to actively engage in terms of an analytic understanding of the issues involved; to position the 'ordinary' person as a private, individual consumer, and not as a public citizen and relatedly to invoke a populist dismissal of the irrelevance of politics in favour of commonsense and the seemingly universal rituals and celebrations of 'ordinary' existence expressed in the region's diversity of 'characters' and individuals. The bases of these pronounced tendencies, by the admission of interviewed news producers themselves, tend to be inscribed as a 'human interest' inflexion across the different subject areas and should characterise all 'good' regional news stories in the attempt to captivate and engage the 'ordinary' viewer in the search for popular programme appeal.

The direct and indirect consequences of this particular construction of a 'popular people led programme' has been found

to dramatically impact upon the portrayal of the issues and problems of the inner city. Taking four fundamental characteristics of inner city news coverage previously established and documented in the first part of this study: the predominance of crime and law and order concerns; the marginalisation of inner city politics; the limited portrayal and involvement of the region's racial and ethnic minorities; and finally, the tendency to 'privatise' inner city concerns via the heavy human interest inflexion frequently inscribed into inner city items, each of these have been found to be critically dependent upon the general character and forms of the regional news genre.

The massive predominance of inner city crime and general law and order news was found to be accounted for principally by four main features of the regional news programme. Firstly, given the general news values seemingly underpinning news journalism in general, the multiple interests in deviance, conflict and negativity, as well as the possible attributes of drama and/or violence established in other news studies of crime news appear also to be of prominent interest to regional news journalists. Secondly, it became apparent on a number of occasions, though often indirectly through impromptu and unsolicited remarks and statements in conversations and interviews that, within the newsroom at least, the idea of 'the inner city' was likely to be invested with associations as a place of crime, criminals and deviance and therefore liable to news inspection and interest in such terms. Thirdly, the organisational and routine reliance upon the region's police forces and courts as a constant source of 'stories' has inevitably contributed to the predominance of such inner city crime and law and order stories, when compared for instance to news items relating to the issues and concerns of urban deprivation or racial discrimination and disadvantage - concerns with no comparable 'source' institutions. Finally, it was observed how crime news, though of general news interest has historically been noted as of particular popular news appeal and interest. The reasons for this are perhaps not difficult to see with an endless supply of stories easily inflected with certain 'human interest' characteristics - whether the human drama involved in the public pillorying of known and/or local 'miscreants', the possible indulgence of prurient interests

legitimately revealed to public gaze, the emotive feelings engendered by 'crimes of passion' as well as the empathic responses elicited by crime victims and those friends and families innocently touched by the events in train. The elaboration of such appeals to popular forms of journalism could be considerably fleshed out, here it is merely noted as a further contributing factor to the heavy predominance of inner city crime and law and order stories within the established popular conventions of the regional news form.

When combined with the tendency to personalise and individualise news stories, perhaps failing to inquire into either the particular circumstances, and unlikely to invoke a wider contextual, much less structural understanding of the collective realities of crime, the portrayal of the inner city when focused through this prism of established news subject interests and the particular inflexion attending such portrayals, has been positioned in terms consonant with the limited interests and explanatory horizons of the conservative discourse seeking to organise public understandings of the inner city. If the portrayal of the inner city has been informed and appropriated by established news conventions as a substantial 'presence', the impact of the regional news genre upon the portrayal of the politics of the inner city has equally been massively informed to the extent that it has been marginalised into a near total news 'absence'.

If the selection choices daily enacted within the newsroom have, in the instance of crime and law and order stories, been observed in the institutionalised source contacts via regular newsdesk check calls and routine contacts with the police, the selection processes impacting upon the formal possibilities of inner city political news have been revealed in the 'snap' decisions typically enacted by the forward planning team and news editors when processing incoming press releases. Here a number of examples were offered which indicated something of the programme antipathy to all but the most 'newsworthy' of political stories. Typically dismissed as 'boring', or 'of little interest to our ordinary viewers', the formal world of politicians, party politics and general politics is perceived as too remote, and even on occasion irrelevant to the preoccupations and interests of 'ordinary' people.

The politics of the inner city, whether addressed in terms of inner city political fragmentation, party political fracture or fissures evident between inner city communities and local authorities, or even wider fissures evident between local authorities 'handicapped' by central government policies have all been noticeable by their conspicuous absence. The explanation for such a silent state of affairs can be found in the particular construction and pursuit of 'the popular' which, if anything, actively eschews the notion of collective struggle, opposition and difference in favour of a depoliticised common-denominator world of 'ordinary' existence.

The fact that such a constant stream of items actively celebrating and affirming the private worlds of home, family, leisure and consumption may in fact be deemed highly 'political', is not a position that can readily be thought in the forms of populist appeal characterising the regional news genre. If however, a senior minister should visit, perhaps announcing a major inner city investment, or a local authority introduces a new inner city scheme consonant with established news interests, the likelihood that such 'political' stories will then attract news attention are increased, though the wider politics informing such decisions are not likely to be explored. It is the 'event' of a political 'walkabout' or opening ceremony, rather than the backdrop of power, contest and distribution of resources that forms the news focus.

Similarly, the news prism is likely to be attracted to a demonstration or protest if enough numbers or unusual antics are involved. Once again, the politics informing such struggles are vulnerable to a news prism attracted to conflict or the possibility of violence or even the 'human interest' angles that may be invoked on such occasions and not the wider political context or social conditions informing the collective life chances of those involved. The real possibility that demonstrations and protests can easily be addressed in terms of a law and order problem, or even crime story are all too apparent. Even when the news frame concedes that little or no violence took place, the interpretative frame is likely, as witnessed in the anti-Rushdie demonstration, to be focused in such terms.

However, if regional news interests are found to share

general journalistic interests in the pursuit of conflict, drama and negativity, to name only three recurrent and generally accepted universal 'news values', the analyses above have also witnessed the specific regional news interests that can attend major eruptions of conflict. The Handsworth riots, an instance where a serious outbreak of conflict and violence was clearly focused as a major 'crime story', was nonetheless also, as time progressed, open to a regionalised news interest which tended to look for the 'human' stories behind the violent events. Once again, the politics at the heart of the Handsworth riots was sacrificed to the perennial pursuit of human interest, celebrating and affirming the 'ordinary' lives and successes of local characters, or empathising with the human tragedy of those who lost their lives and livelihoods. The politics of youth unemployment, political disenfranchisement, community-police relations and wider questions of social justice failed to be addressed through this particular prism. A more recent instance of an inner city occurrence, the death of Clinton McCurbin, once again illustrated how the news interest was attracted to the street disturbances and threats of major disturbance while the informing backdrop of community-police relations and distrust failed to be addressed through the limited news horizons informing this particular 'story'. If such stories as the Handsworth riots, the Clinton McCurbin episode, and even the anti-Rushdie demonstration and protest all referenced above have indicated the centrality and pursuit of conflict at the heart of regional news interests, they also illustrate one of the few avenues through which the region's ethnic and racial minorities gain news entry.

As documented above, the general omissions and silences concerning the news coverage of the region's ethnic minorities is recognised by the present Programme Editor and many of his news team and recent initiatives have been put in place in an endeavour to increase the number of stories reflecting both the lives and the problems of these different communities. However, it has also been observed that a strong likelihood exists which will simply increase the number of established types of stories rather than opening up different forms of involvement and news presentation. The tendency to focus on community celebrations and rituals as a form of pictorially colourful, and culturally

exotic display, as opposed to inquiring into the social and political resonance of such cultures represents a failing found to characterise the selection and inflection processes documented in a number of forward planning meeting exchanges as well as elicited interview statements.

The tendency to focus upon individual success stories as a means of fulfilling the programme's popular ambitions has also been established in the previous review and confirmed in a number of interview statements where editors have stressed their predilection for the 'serious' and the 'absurd', ('the nice stories about the festivals, the holidays, the success stories about the kids doing well, the black businessman who has come from Handsworth..as well as the hard luck stories'). In these terms, it is apparent that though 'the community' is likely to be represented in collective terms when involved in annual celebrations and cultural rituals, the individualistic manner in which both 'success', and 'hard luck' stories are envisaged tends to shatter any collective understanding of a community confronting and negotiating the differential experiences and realities of shared life chances. In these terms, the problems and difficulties confronting the region's minorities are unlikely to find increased coverage, assuming that is, that the perception of the 'depressive effect' of such stories is occasionally put to one side in favour of the informing role of a 'hard news programme'.

The final aspect of inner city portrayal selected as of particular importance to the coverage of the inner city has, in part already been addressed in the three findings reviewed above, namely, the tendency to 'privatise' via the pursuit of 'human interest' issues and concerns which are best approached and understood as collective phenomena requiring a wider frame of reference than the individualistic and empathic news treatments frequently found to characterise their portrayal. Attending to Forward Planning selection decisions and discussions concerning the possible news treatments that could be deployed in certain stories, as well as interview statements it is apparent that the search for a popular-based programme, involving and appealing to a particular conception of 'ordinary' people frequently results in a news treatment where the collective realities of inner city conditions and existence are

displaced in favour of 'personal' stories.

This construction of 'the popular', indicated earlier, is disposed towards the individual and private experiences and feelings of 'ordinary' people who, by their own force of character and individual tenacity or enterprise, rather than force of circumstance, are celebrated as individual success stories. The pursuit of 'happy news', a longstanding and ingrained feature of the regional news genre, represents a felt need to balance the 'gloom and doom' with a 'bit of warmth', a 'bit of humanity' and can frequently result in the apparent paradox of the portrayal of the inner city as a social domain of individual success and enterprise, rather than a social space of compound, and collectively shared social, economic and political ills.

While journalists are inclined to state that the regional news programme aims 'to reflect life in the region', it has become clear that when interrogated in closer detail, the objectivist, and therefore illusory notion of the news programme as a regional mirror, is in fact daily enacted and pursued through the established prism of a particular news genre. News producers actively seeks to balance the 'gloom and doom' with 'happy news', so-called 'hard' informative news, with so-called 'soft' entertaining and celebratory news. In addition, the pursuit of, and appeal to, an established conceptualisation of a popular, people led programme has resulted in a pronounced tendency to inflect regional news stories in a way which is likely to personalise and individualise issues. On all these fronts, when the issues and concerns of the inner city are subjected to the editorial processes involving initial item selection, and subsequent story framing and inflection the portrayal of the inner city has become refracted through a prism which entertains its own established conventions, expectancies and appeals. These, as documented above, have been found to differentially impact upon, enable and disadvantage the competing interpretative resources and accounts currently mobilised within public understandings of the inner city.

The evident subjection of inner city portrayal to the requirements and traditions of the established genre of regional news has been most clearly indicated in the discussion concerning the array of presentational formats delivering inner

city news treatments. Here discussion of the varying discursive possibilities facilitated by these different 'forums' was found not to be on the agenda of newsroom concerns, but rather, it was their contribution to programme pace, credibility and authoritativeness or public engagement via live conflict that informed their final choice of involvement. Underpinned by the newsroom 'informers' sense of news as 'happening out there', the more expansive forums, involving live studio debate and discussions, recognised by newsroom 'entertainers' as of considerable programme (though not discursive) enhancement, have been drastically reduced in recent years, while the increase in ENG and subsequently clipped, juxtaposed and generally packaged interviews have done little to enable the free flow and public engagement of competing discursive positions collectively seeking to define the inner city. In this sense the public representation and participation of competing social and political viewpoints, so central to the contested site of the inner city, has been dependent upon, and mediated within a forum which exerts its own requirements and conventions. Given the ulterior expectations and conventions exercised by programme makers through these established formats, it is perhaps unsurprising that when approached in terms of their discursive possibilities they have been found to impair and restrict the public engagement and development of issues and concerns surrounding the contested site of the inner city.

Finally, it has also been seen how the regional news programme affords a particular spectrum of social actor access and participation which again reflects its general stance and claim to popular appeal. In the first major part of analysis it was noted how the increased role afforded to 'ordinary' people not only qualified the usual tendency to assume that news is dominated by political, economic and social elites but also that popular forms of news may well tend to authenticate their claims to news veracity not only by involving the 'objective' statements and pronouncements of authoritative figures but also via direct appeals to the commonsense sentiments, feelings and empathic responses of viewers by accessing increased numbers of 'ordinary' people relating their particular experiences. This general content analytic finding has subsequently been reinforced in this latter stage of production analysis where the

statements and practices of the news producers have lent considerable support to such a view. Purposefully pursuing a popular people led programme, the involvement of increased numbers of non-elites and a much enhanced appeal to the emotional and experiential dimension of viewer engagement, the regional news genre has permitted a different array of social actors to gain entry. However, as the detailed investigations of inner city portrayal have demonstrated, the frequent claim that the regional programme represents 'the punters', and not 'the establishment' cannot be taken at face value.

Noting the privileged position afforded to senior police representatives, and the significant absences of particular inner city voices (black youth, the poor, the elderly and the dispossessed, political radicals, inner city professionals - youth workers, social workers, probation officers etc.) it is apparent that the police do in fact enjoy a degree of access which is not afforded to other inner city voices. The exact reasons for this state of affairs have been accounted for in terms of the consonance of popular news interests with the activities and role of the region's police forces, as well as an organisational dependence upon the police as a constant source of stories. Here, however, it has been maintained that it is fact the sense of a 'good' story which dictates organisational reliance and, as detailed in the case of the McCurbin incident, newsroom vulnerability to police manipulation.

Interestingly, while a definite antipathy has been found to exist between newsroom journalists and various of the region's police forces it has also been documented how a dependency upon the police can, in the event of a perceived breaking crime or law and order story, lead to a situation where the newsroom is little more than a conduit for official police views. The example of the McCurbin 'story' is illustrative of such a dependency as an extreme case. It also demonstrated how, in time, the police themselves became the subject of critical news interest and interrogation, indicating that the newsroom is not inherently inclined to genuflect towards the police, though its popular interest in crime and organisational reliance upon the police can, on occasion, considerably undermine its claims to formal and critical independence.

If in general it can be noted how different social actors

are likely to be accessed according to genre dispositions in terms of 'appropriate subject matter', it has also been demonstrated how accessed others are liable to incorporation in terms of journalist's perceptions of 'the story' and the need for 'balance'. This notion of balance, related to the canons of journalist impartiality and objectivity, is actively pursued as a means of safeguarding journalists claims to be neutral and faithful reporters of 'events'. The fact that 'balance' is itself a construct of a particular conceptualisation of the issues involved and the wider understanding of 'the story' is overlooked by journalists following what they take to be the self-evident 'story'. Thus, journalists in the 'McCurbin story', conceptualised the issue essentially between the West Midlands police force, and the family and representatives of the family involved, and tended to 'balance' this running story by accessing representatives of each 'side', with little involvement of community spokespeople, and no involvement of 'ordinary' street comment, and black youth in particular.

The detailed case study of the Rushdie demonstration has illustrated how in this instance the journalists' own conceptualisation of the story led to a situation where 'balance' was obtained by the deliberate and persistent efforts of the reporters involved to find the views deemed appropriate in order to 'balance' the story as they interpreted it. The fact that 'public opinion', in this instance, was artificially manufactured via lines of questioning, and subsequent editing which failed to 'represent' either the diversity or complexity of the views as originally expressed indicates how 'balance' far from ensuring journalistic neutrality and independence can, on occasion, be the means by which journalists actively construct 'the story' according to preconceived conceptions. Inner city voices, in this instance, rather than representing 'public opinion' became the means by which a preconception of 'public opinion' became publicly manufactured. As a case study, the representativeness of the Rushdie 'story' must be left in abeyance. However, it does strongly suggest that 'voices' are likely to be selected according to prior journalist conceptions of 'the story', and that, in such instances claims to neutrality or at least impartiality via 'balance' are relatively insecure given the subordinate role of 'balancing'

voices within the overall story conceptualisation.

Once again it can be noted that the practical processes involved in the heavy use of ENG material involving the editing procedures of clipping interviewee sound 'bites', their subsequent juxtapositioning within the overall script and final packaging into 'the story' transmitted permits no discursive 'comeback' from the cutting room floor and, as such, interviewees are entirely reliant upon journalists' own conception of the important issues, telling remarks and general shape of 'the story'. Interestingly, it has been observed how the use of ENG film interviews has steadily increased over the years as the involvement of studio interviews, group interviews and discussions, as well as direct presentations have all declined. When approached from a position which takes as its starting point of inquiry the discursive array of positions currently seeking to mobilise and align public opinion in terms of the social and political realities of the inner city, such 'discursive' considerations are found to be poorly served by the refracting prism of regional news.

In summary, it can be maintained that the public mediation and engagement of conflicting social and political viewpoints centred upon the inner city have differentially been enabled and disabled by the established conventions, interests and popular appeals of the regional news genre daily enacted and reproduced by professional journalists. The portrayal of the inner city, in short, has been found to carry the hallmarks of the particular genre in which and through which it finds expression.

Chapter Thirteen

Regional Programming and Inner City Portrayal: The Changing Institutional Context

If the explanation of inner city news portrayal, its forms and contours of coverage, has been found to substantially reside within the programme conventions and ambitions of the regional news genre itself, as pursued by regional news journalists, regional news programming and other forms of regional programming also subsist within a corporate and institutional environment itself circumscribed by and dependent upon wider economic forces, technological developments and political pressures and contexts. This penultimate chapter seeks to briefly situate regional programming within its corporate or institutional environment. While regional news could not realistically be thought of as escaping such wider institutional contexts and pressures, indeed on a number of occasions such contextual 'pressures' have already been alluded to, it can nonetheless be maintained that this programme form in many respects is something of a special case.

Traditionally regional news has served many functions at the institutional level including: 'company flagship', useful in constructing audience loyalty and company image; 'franchise claim' or political statement concerning the merits of the company as a responsible public-service broadcaster promoted in the competition for franchise/licence renewal/expansion; 'prime-time ratings grabber', instrumental to the building of early evening audiences and advertising revenue; as well as a vehicle for wider institutional and political contacts, and connections advantageous to the company as a whole. These have previously been discussed and openly acknowledged by senior corporate personnel. However, given the established presence of regional news programming, as well as its success as schedule 'hook', a case has been made that the forms of regional news programming are relatively established and entrenched both at corporate and professional levels, and unlikely to undergo radical change or transformation in the foreseeable future. The review of programmes selected across the period 1982 to 1989 has indicated even when 'a radical shake-up' has been implemented by

senior news producers such changes have, on closer inspection, proved to be of marginal import alongside the established and continuing conventions, forms and popular appeals found to characterise the regional news genre.

Traditionally, then, regional news appears to have enjoyed something of a special, and to a degree at least privileged position within the corporate scheme of things. While the failure to win/buy the licence in 1992 could jeopardize the continuity of the present regional news service, as could the total subsumption of Central Television to the concept of 'company as publisher', that is 'buying in' and transmitting, but not producing and making programmes, the commitment to the regional basis of Channel 3 licences appears assured. Both the White Paper and subsequent Broadcasting Bill(1989/90) maintain in broad continuity with the Broadcasting Act(1981) that 'the regional basis of what will become Channel 3 is crucial' and that all licensees will be required 'to show regional programming, including programmes produced in the region'.

However, while a formal declaration of 'regionalism' continues to inform ITV/Channel 3, structural changes in the organisation of broadcasting in line with technological developments and political de-regulation have substantially altered the statutory requirements placed upon licensees to provide specified forms of programming, both regional and networked, as well as the stipulation of times when such programmes are to be broadcast within the schedule. The Independent Television Commission soon to replace the Independent Broadcasting Authority will not have the IBA's responsibility for detailed approval of scheduling or prior clearance of particular programmes. Referring once again to the government's declaration of intent it can be noted that 'It should be for the operators to decide what to show and when to show it subject to general regulatory requirements'. Regulatory requirements in this instance, refer to established 'consumer protection requirements' including news impartiality and accuracy, as well as considerations of public taste and decency. Moreover, while 'regionalism' may well continue to structure the geographical 'licence' areas, the increased opportunities for company conglomeration strongly suggests that 'regional' boundaries are likely to be considerably expanded. Taken

together, 'regionalism' as specified both within previous Broadcasting Bills and, less precisely, in the latest Bill, fails to indicate exactly what 'regional programming' should entail while simply defining regions according to franchise areas.

However, if for the reasons already mentioned regional news programming has secured an established presence within the schedules and exists as an instantly recognisable 'traditional' news form, a news form moreover which has been found to be relatively immune from fundamental programme transformations or radical changes, other forms of regional programming are demonstrably less secure whether in terms of their schedule tenure, programme formats, substantive subject concerns, or style of delivery and subject inflexion. While the news portrayal of the inner city, in other words, is unlikely to depart from the broad patterns, subject priorities and forms of news inflexion discerned across a considerable period of time no such continuities characterise the changing face of regional current affairs and documentary programming.

This chapter seeks to situate regional programming within this wider and changing institutional context since it is here that the broad parameters of corporate policy and schedule design impact upon the non-news regional programmes at a general level, and it is these programmes that have already been found to be of marginal, and marginalised, relevance to the regional portrayal of the inner city. In seeking to account for the general paucity of inner city coverage found within non-news forms of programming attention can usefully attend to the respective programme ambitions and forms purposefully pursued and articulated by programme makers as well as the wider institutional context within which such forms are produced. At the time of writing it is apparent that many of the processes and tendencies discerned across the research period (1982-1989) have more recently received a considerable impetus which threatens to further diminish and marginalise what limited openings for inner city discussion, debate and portrayal once existed.

The following discussion will first concentrate upon some of the regional current affairs programmes that may have been considered, given their subject interests, as potential vehicles

for the public examination and portrayal of inner city issues and concerns and the manner in which these have increasingly adopted a more populist orientation, before proceeding to chart the demise of regional documentary - two tendencies discerned as contributing to the diminished opportunities for non-news examination of the region's inner cities. Finally, these general observations can be related to the changing institutional context in which regional programming is presently produced.

Regional Current Affairs Programmes: Schedule Slots and 'Sexy' Television ?

In the review of 'current affairs' programming discussed in chapter nine, it was found that the lively 90 minute programme 'Central Weekend' by far attracts the largest audience, is transmitted within a peak viewing slot, and moreover occasionally considers controversial topics of germane relevance to the identified issues and problems of the inner city. It was also noted however, that the unashamedly populist stance of the programme is inclined to address concerns of immediate personal and emotive appeal, while the deliberate pursuit of 'controversy' frequently overrides the possibility for sustained rational debate and enlightenment. Moreover, the programme has undergone a considerable change in its short history where three 20 minute topics are now addressed in contrast to the previous programme format where one topic occupied the full programme.

Concerning the 'regional' identity of the the programme this is generally only apparent to the extent that topics already thought to be on the national agenda of 'pub interests' may find a regional bias in terms of a regional impact or importance, with accessed guests largely, though not exclusively, and studio audiences drawn from the region. However, other than the fact that the programme is produced in, and transmitted to the region, the programme rarely seeks to appeal to a regional constituency, given its populist pursuit of 'universal' preoccupations and concerns. This indistinct 'regional' aspect of programmes which are otherwise simply noted as 'programmes produced in and transmitted to the region' is a feature that many programme producers readily concede as discussed further below. According to the Executive Producer 'Central Weekend' strives to take three issues each week which

'are worth arguing about in a pub'.

> "serious issues all the time, presented in a lively a manner as possible not relying on the personality of the presenter; we rely on the personalities of the punters in the audience who have experiences to tell and anger to express. In my book we never cross the line into entertainment. I do not seek to entertain, but inform. I changed to three subjects a week I did this deliberately on the carrot and stick basis. This friday night we're doing a thing whether we can trust Gorbachev we're going to offset it in terms of the carrot and stick with 'sugar daddies'. So now it is always a three subject programme, we always get a very high audience for what we do, this in turn generates a very high advertising revenue and I would be loathed to go back to one subject because I know one subject would disenfranchise a lot of people, any one subject does."

With a generous working definition of 'serious', related to an impression of the agenda of popular concerns rather than the substance of issues and topics in themselves, 'Central Weekend' pursues lively discussion, typically founded on controversy, and in the terms of its producers is deemed a failure if such is not generated within the friday night studio.

> "We discuss what people discuss in pubs. We never discuss anything which doesn't affect people, the premise of the programme when its working is very lively discussion. You only get lively discussion when people care about it, if we don't get lively discussion its because we were lazy or misguided in our choice of subject. We only do subjects that touch people and we rely very heavily upon their experiences, and the most successful items are when we put the ordinary people, I don't mean this in a demeaning way, against experts, out front. If it isn't punter oriented we've failed....the only reason that people talk about things in pubs is because they actually fascinate you, in which case they are new or because there is a bit of controversy there at some level. We are saying to our audience 'please stay in your seat and watch us to midnight because we believe what you will learn from the debates is worth it'. You can only do that if you present it in a lively manner.. I don't think its entertainment at all, because it does concern us when, you know, it crosses over into fisticuffs as happened on one night, but that's the nature of live television."

Interestingly, a number of the populist appeals already discerned within the successful regional news programme are also purposefully pursued in 'Central Weekend' including: the selection of topics which directly 'affect people', this tends to privilege personal consumer, and even 'intimate' preoccupations and interests as established in a previous review of subject items; a heavy reliance upon personal experiences or the level of the experiential; and a celebration of 'ordinary' people and 'personalities' especially if confronting

'experts' and officialdom; while the pursuit of controversy is also deeply embedded into the programme design and execution. The point to be made here is not so much whether the programme can legitimately be termed 'entertainment' or 'informative' but rather the extent to which these consciously sought characteristics impact upon the public examination and exploration of important social and political issues.

In terms of the initial selection of subjects to be publicly discussed as well as the form in which these subjects are thereafter treated it can be maintained, notwithstanding the fact that 'Central Weekend' provides an exceptional opening for live public debate, that subjects are handled according to overall programme ambitions which need not be seen as furthering public understanding and engaged debate but rather 'lively discussion'. These two 'ends', though undoubtedly in a relationship to each other, in so far as 'lively discussion' would appear to attract significant audiences fundamental to public involvement, can, at a more substantive level of public engagement and debate, be found to be in some tension.

Professionally inclined to attract large audiences, as a matter of professional pride and success, the Executive Producer is also keenly aware however of the increasing pressures with which regional programmes will have to contend if they are to survive.

> "I think its important that we inform as many people as possible and get a wide as possible audience to watch. We are all becoming more cost conscious and I did refer earlier to the advertising revenue that central weekend attracts, that is part of a process that is going on because we are all going to find it harder and harder to survive not only in our jobs but with our programmes certainly at the current expenditure levels in the future. But if you understood how it works inside, your whole aim is to produce the right programme."

To what extent such sentiments and programme ambitions can be considered simply a reflection of the changing realities of commercial reorganisation and increasing financial constraint or perhaps the outcome of a particular professional mission to 'inform' a mass audience is difficult to determine. What is apparent however, is that 'Central Weekend' appears to have embraced the challenge to become a populist, mass audience programme which leaves its stamp upon those occasional public airing of issues and concerns of relevance to the inner city.

Moreover, at the wider institutional level with which we are concerned, according to the Executive Producer and confirmed in interviews with more senior Corporate personnel below, the future of 'Central Weekend', unlike some other regional programmes, appears relatively assured.

> "'Central Weekend' is probably a protected species because a commitment as far as Central can envisage at the moment is strong regional programming if they want the next contract and with the high audience that we get we represent strong regional programming. At the moment, and the IBA who still have a say, believe that 'Central Weekend' still serves a purpose..it's also fairly cheap telly, it's not cheap compared to bought films for two thousand quid it's fairly cheap because its 90 minutes."

Not all regional programmes however enjoy the same degree of schedule placing, resourcing or capacity to generate a large audience. The magazine programme 'Here and Now', broadcast on Sunday afternoon at 12.30 pm to a relatively small audience has been found to be principally a cultural celebration of ethnic arts and achievement. As such, though occasionally social issues affecting the region's ethnic minorities are included these are strictly within a minority of all programme items. The Producer/Director of the programme has deliberately taken the decision to construct the programme in such terms and expounds his reasons as follows.

> "The philosophy certainly is to deal or to reflect the timeless and the more cultural. And there is so much of that, fortunately there's so much that is happening, not in the art world, but in drama, in literature, in poetry which I think should get an airing...I think it is important that somehow the achievement angle should be highlighted rather than, it's very easy to highlight or to pinpoint or to even underline the negative, the non-achieving, the naffness of it all. God knows there's enough of that. But it gives a bit of a boost, a moral boost if you like.."

Consciously eschewing the 'negative', the programme purposively pursues positive images, stories of achievement and a general celebration of minority arts and culture. Referring explicitly to the conflict-laden nature of inner city politics which, as discussed earlier can be characterised according to the three basic dimensions whether political fragmentation, party and local authority fractures, or possible fissures operating at the local-central state levels, such difficulties are not in line with the positive images sought.

> "Strangely enough its nothing but wrangles, nothing but bickering and I felt that if you want to show or reflect the degree of bickering it's very, very counter productive.

Additionally, given the production constraints imposed by limited access to studio and editing facilities, where two, three or even four programmes may be pre-recorded, as well technical dependence upon 16 mm film as opposed to betacam which involves processes of lengthy editing, the programme is unable to respond to the latest, or most 'topical' of issues. Moreover, as far as the Producer/Director is concerned important issues should be dealt with in mainstream programming.

> "The other thing is in order to discuss issues, which I do not think should be discussed on 'Here and Now', they should be discussed on Central News, they should be discussed on mainstream programmes because they are issues that concern the lives of all communities and life generally."

While 'Here and Now' may legitimately suggest issues should be discussed on Central News and mainstream programmes, unfortunately news producers are apt to maintain, as ventured in interview that 'current affairs is the area of television where people talk about the issues and look at the issues in great depth' or 'we can't go into the issues as much as a discussion programme or a documentary' and specifically in relation to the silence concerning news portrayal of inner city politics 'there are other vehicles for that in Central anyway'. Clearly, something of a void remains untouched between these two expectations each identifying other areas of programming as the arena for the examination and discussion of serious inner city issues and concerns.

In relation to the different forms of racial disadvantage, discrimination and racism experienced by racial minorities living within and without the inner city, and placed as of central importance to at least one principal interpretative schema outlined earlier, such issues receive differential treatment.

> "Immigration and immigration laws is something we've covered quite extensively going right back; whenever there is a new clause or a new law because that does affect a lot of people, though you cannot expose and expand and discuss all its ramifications. I mean the day to day racial prejudice, racial bigotry thing, no I haven't touched that, but I have touched issues like 'to what extent are we determined by racism in literature, in school textbooks' and things like that."
>
> Director/Producer

The magazine programme 'Here and Now', then, is not a contender as a regional programme where the problems, issues and concerns of ethnic minorities are, by and large, publicly aired and examined. Consciously distancing itself from the conflicts and tensions of inner city politics, as well as the daily occurrences of 'racial prejudice' and 'racial bigotry', much less forms of institutionalised racism, this ethnic magazine principally seeks to celebrate cultural and individual achievements. The 'regionalism' of 'Here and Now' consists in being a programme produced in and for the region, though subjects and accessed voiced are not necessarily confined to those found within franchise boundaries, celebrating as they do ethnic arts and culture at a more generalised level.

Originally producing 12 programmes, then increased to 33 programmes and more recently reduced to 24, and rescheduled from its original 10.30 Thursday evening slot to 12.30 Sunday afternoon with a reduced running time of twenty minutes 'Here and Now' may be considered both marginalised and of marginal relevance to the public examination of inner city issues and concerns. Programme ambitions as expressed by the Producer/Director and more senior corporate personnel, practical and technical constraints of production, as well as the belief that important inner city issues should find programme coverage within mainstream programming, including regional news, have all contributed to this outcome. The pressures confronting this, and other minority audience programmes will be further considered below, one further regional current affairs programme can briefly be considered to the extent that it too may have been considered a possible vehicle for inner city coverage and portrayal.

'Central Lobby', the political current affairs programme as intimated earlier strives to be a popular political programme where, according to its Editor, there is a 'conscious attempt to make it more entertaining to a general audience'. In frank terms, the pursuit of a popular based audience as much as the constraints of the medium, are noted by the Editor as shaping Central's political programme.

> "There's nothing more interesting than people, personalities and people, their excitements and traumas it nearly always making compelling television...I think the worst crime is not to make it interesting, that's the worst crime of the lot. Television, by definition of the number of words that we can squeeze into the time span allotted to us, is not a broadsheet

> medium, its a tabloid medium. It's three words a second, and 'my god' the minutes burn those three words a second up. Your doing a twenty second strip, it's as short as a Sun story.

In relation to the programme's coverage of, or interest in some of the political concerns and issues of the region's inner city, whether defined in terms of formal and institutional politics or more community based, and grass roots initiatives, 'Central Lobby' is not, according to its Editor inclined to involve such concerns.

> "We have not done to my recollection a single item about the inner city, despite Margaret Thatcher's pronouncements on the stairs after the election. And every one then said 'ah, Margaret Thatcher, inner cities', but look what happened after that, not a lot. OK I get a few glossy brochures through from various government departments about partnerships schemes, and we're doing this that and the other, but it's pretty dull I have to say. You'd really have to twist my arm to get me to do an item about the inner city as such I must admit, because I have a feeling that the subject to most of our viewers is dull. I think they think its worthy and it's dull just to say the inner city. We've done items looking at aspects of the inner city. But I would never do a cerebral analysis of that because I think anybody who lives in the inner city would say, 'oh my god I don't want this, it's like the open university, no thank you very much' and switch off. And also I notice how small the electorates are in many inner cities.."
>
> Editor

With the deliberate involvement of 'consumer items', personalities and often irreverent look at the world of formal politics and individual politicians 'Central Lobby' seeks to appeal to a popular audience. Ironically, though the formal world of government inner city pronouncements, plethora of schemes and projects could have been seen as a means of contrasting the formal claims of government politicians to the lived experience and daily realities of 'ordinary' inner city dwellers the pursuit of 'the popular' has failed to be invoked in such terms. Of the programmes reviewed, and running orders consulted, though issues of inner city relevance have occasionally been invoked at a generalised level, say changes in health care or supplementary benefits policy, the political conflicts, contradictions and contests of inner city politics, has not attracted programme scrutiny. Consciously seeking to increase its audience 'politics' is pitched at a 'popular' level and the tendency to invoke populist concerns and story treatments is also apparent.

Regionalism, as interpreted by the programme editor simply

consists in consulting the IBA transmitter map and deciding whether an 'issue is relevant in the region'. Given the popular ambition of the programme this frequently results in topics of national political and/or general consumerist interest being focused through the vantage point of regional spokespeople and situations. Recently this long running programme, as with 'Here and Now', has been reduced from 33 programmes to 24 per year.

The three programmes discussed above have been identified as the principal contenders or vehicles for non-news regional programming which may have produced inner city portrayal. What has been found at a generalised level is that programme ambitions and forms have been found to be generally antipathetic to all but the most controversial of inner city issues, while the concept of regionalism is interpreted as little more than 'programmes produced in and for the region'. In other words, the franchise area though nominally constituting 'a region', is rarely invoked as the source of regional interests which are peculiar to the region itself, rather than as wider issues and interests focused through the region. While the former may have provided the possibility of increased attention to the different constituencies of 'the region' including inner city areas and concerns, the latter is less disposed to focus upon the particular circumstances and communities found within the region's boundaries.

Marginalised schedule placings, small audiences and delimited minority 'cultural' concerns in one instance, and delimited 'political' interests, small audiences and popular ambitions in another have combined to severely restrict the portrayal of the region's inner cities, and inner city issues and concerns. In the third programme considered the unashamed pursuit of a mass audience, live controversy and populist interests, though combined with peak-time scheduling, and occasionally raising issues of topical relevance to the inner city has pursued such 'topics' in a manner which places a premium upon controversy rather than enlightenment.

The tendency to deliberately popularise programme forms and contents is a tendency which will be discussed in relation to the changing face and demise of regional documentary below. However, it is also apparent from statements above and other regional forms of programmes currently produced by Central that

changing institutional arrangements and commercial pressures are beginning to bite. Even in the most unexpected quarters programmes have sought to engineer increased audiences through populist appeals. Here typically a number of recurrent populist forms, appeals and interests can be identified. These can be considered as including the following appeals: consumer and leisure interests, the dimensions of the experiential and affective, the world of the supernatural, the private domains of home, family and pets, the intimate sphere of 'personal' relationships and sexual proclivities, as well as the lives of stars, celebrities and the constant pursuit of 'natural' characters and personalities. Consider the following Producer's summary of the contents of a regional religious programme and how even here the ethereal claims of religion can be made to incorporate the decidedly more corporeal, materialistic and earthly preoccupations, pleasures and pains of ordinary existence.

> "The sorts of subjects that we've looked at over this year. January we looked at the way individuals experience some sort of radical change in their lives, the religious thing would be a conversion, going from one religion to another. February we were looking at astrology, the Chinese New year we picked up on that. March we looked at child abuse...she was able to talk in graphic detail we almost had to cut her down in what she was saying. April, loosely a suicide programme and the 'compassionate friends'..obviously its something that is very painful and yet has a slightly ghoulish human interest quality in it, there's a little bit of the voyeur in all of us I think... May, the question of religious dating agencies - its a sort of rising phenomena there's a new one in Leicester for the Hindu community which is really a bit on the iffy side, there's a Jewish one costing two thousand pounds to just get on their book so we've got Claire Raynor coming and picking up on that question. June we're looking at something lighter, we're looking at food and the way food is used by different religions and the different aspects of it. July in the west were looking at death and the way people approach death, in the east were looking at the Kegworth disaster on the M1 and the people who go into action helping these people and the emotional pressures that poses for the people helping. In August were looking at alcohol, it's in the region that the Catholic organisations have launched alcohol free bars... September we're looking at adoption and particularly where someone is adopted into a family and religion which isn't the one they were born into..Later in the year we'll be looking at evil and the satanic wicked side.
>
> Producer

While it is only possible to marvel at the ingenuity with which a religious programme has been fashioned to simultaneously resonate with discernible populist appeals and interests, it is

a tendency which the Producer both acknowledges as necessary for survival within an increasingly competitive and ratings led schedule while also recognising its restrictive impacts. If surviving the Broadcasting Bill's directives or silences concerning regional religious programming, unknown at the time of interview, the producer candidly made the following observations concerning his future role as a producer:

> "I suspect that I would be less inclined myself to go for issues which I would acknowledge would have a lower rating, but I felt were important. It probably would have to feel more populist oriented. Psychologically moving from three pm to one-thirty pm I've had to say to myself, 'I have to get on people who the audience will want to watch and therefore begin to target celebrities in a way that we didn't before and, as I say we've got Claire Raynor coming on in May; we're looking for other people who are relevant to other issues to come into and tap into what we're saying. So there's already a slight change at the moment by just moving time. I'm conscious of being placed next to 'Neighbours' where, if our rating got indescribably low people would say 'let's axe it anyway'. So at the very least I've got to get a modest rating, the programme's got to have a slightly more glitzy and glamourous appeal, it's got to become more populist."
>
> Producer

Such sentiments, and strategies for survival can be found across many regional programmes and, as the following discussion concerning regional documentaries indicates, the changing context of regional programming has already impacted upon a number of programmes in ways which can be seen as diminishing and restricting the limited opportunities for non-news involvement of inner city issues and concerns.

The Demise of Regional Documentary

The definitive history, changing forms and fortunes of television documentary has yet to be written. What is certain, is that documentary of all television forms has always been involved in a process of flux and development. The very difficulty that surrounds the term 'documentary' suggests in itself that this is a form, technique or enterprise with both a history and contemporary relevance whether for programme makers, researchers or viewers. Technological capabilities, social purposes and questions of aesthetic form and composition are generally invoked in discussions of the documentary [Corner(ed)1986]. These are interesting matters and deserve detailed discussion, however what is of more immediate concern

to this study is the general recognition that 'documentary' offers something which other television forms do not. This is generally recognised by practitioners, commissioning executives and media researchers alike. Even from the limited discussion of documentary in chapter nine, it can be suggested that documentary programmes frequently offer different discursive opportunities when contrasted to other programme forms. According to the Controller of Features, the definition of documentary can be stated 'as the ability to make subjective programmes as opposed to objective programmes'. While it is doubtful that many media researchers would accept this particular formulation at face value, it can be agreed that documentary frequently provides an opportunity for different voices to be heard, while their 'story' is composed according to different programme conventions and general aesthetic.

Though difficult to generalise about documentary programming given its extraordinary elasticity of concept and practice a strong tradition can be discerned which, whether informed by mass observational techniques, tenets of social realism or pursuit of verite, have involved a 'naturalistic' stance towards its subject matter which in turn has frequently permitted subjects to present their personal views often at some length, and within the idioms and environments with which they are familiar. This 'creative treatment of actuality' has often allowed 'voices', frequently not otherwise heard, to publicly express opinions, perspectives and understandings in a manner which is qualitatively different to other forms of television 'actuality'. As already found in terms of the different treatments of the Handsworth riots found across news, current affairs and documentary it can be strongly suggested that though these forms of programming have all involved at least some examination of these events and their possible causes, each programme reviewed offered discernibly different treatments and placed differing interpretative accounts and resources within the public domain. The demise of regional documentary, then, can be regarded as a qualitative erosion of the formal possibilities of inner city portrayal and public examination, notwithstanding the claim that such 'subjects' can find equal or even increased involvement within news and current affairs programming.

> "I don't think you can talk about regional documentaries on their own serving the region, you have to see them as part of a total output including news programming, local magazine programming and regional documentaries and they're all part of a local network of which documentary is just one part..."
>
> Associate Producer

This statement, not untypical of viewpoints challenging any 'purist' notion of documentary, correctly identifies the necessity to attend to all forms of regional 'factual' programming, but fails to recognise the qualitative and distinctive contribution that documentary alone might offer. Recognising the demise of documentary the Controller of Features, for instance, suggests that:

> "I think they are undoubtedly under threat..I think there will always be room for minority subjects, the only thing then is whether or not the documentary area of that will survive...But that original regional programming is now covered much more by the regional news team and current affairs team than it is by documentary...But inner city related subjects have as good a chance of thriving regionally as they have ever had within current affairs, within that area of factual programming.

Such viewpoints have suggested that documentary programmes though perhaps on the decline, the subject areas traditionally finding documentary expression will find portrayal within regional news and current affairs programming. However, while the openings of news and current affairs programming have not been found to be substantial in relation to the problems, issues and populations of the region's inner cities, this perspective also underestimates the possible effects of the populist tendency increasingly inscribed into current affairs programming. Some regional documentary programmes have experienced both the demise of documentary and the necessity to popularise their forms and selected subject interests.

Central's environmental regional documentary programme 'Eco', for instance, has been rescheduled from its 10.30 pm slot to 7.30 pm while changing its format to that of a magazine programme.

> "I think we will make it lighter and more accessible and we'll probably make it more magaziny and were thinking about taking it to parts of the region...and we'd probably include more natural history because people like that too...
>
> Producer

However, the costs of such a transformation are not lost on the producer.

> "One thing we could do at 10.30 in half an hour was actually analyse quite seriously and responsibly, that can make it quite inaccessible for some people and that makes it quite hard for us to come down to reduce something when we already thought you needed an hour to weigh up the pros and cons of certain issues. To now reduce it to ten minutes and make it meaningful is harder, though nothing is impossible. The hard edge we would probably try to keep not least because it makes for more exciting television for those people watching and contentious. It's not going to be easy to do it at all.

Similarly, Central's business documentary programme 'Venture' has also been rescheduled to a 7.30 pm slot and found itself having to radically rethink its programme forms and audience appeal.

> "Taking account that people are walking around at 7.30 making cups of tea and not concentrating we decided to make the programme a lot more consumer oriented. So although our programme was concerned with business our ordinary audience had to see what its relevance was. They had to be able to make some connection with it..any subject we did now should have some direct relevance to ordinary people lives, that's one thing and secondly they should be fairly short items, so that people might not feel that just because they're not interested in that item that the whole programme might not be of interest."
>
> Assistant Producer

While 'Eco' and 'Venture' are not programmes that have dealt with any of the identified 'key' inner city issues and concerns the long-running series 'England Their England' had, occasionally, produced programmes of inner city relevance. Initially producing 26 programmes per year, this was later reduced to 18 and finally 12 before the programme was discontinued in 1989. According to the Controller of Features this reflected as much upon the gradual expansion of other forms of regional programming fulfilling franchise requirements especially news programming which, with the introduction of ENG in the early 1980's could more adequately reflect the entire region, than the simple displacement of documentary due to commercial costs, and programme ratings.

Additionally the Controller of Factual Programmes has observed that audience viewing patterns have also changed across the period with a consequent decrease in the range of available schedule slots for regional documentary. With the traditional regional documentary slot of 10.30 pm now becoming part of 'peak-time', regional documentaries have been rescheduled up against such mass audience programmes as 'East Enders' on BBC where the remaining ITV audience for these sorts of programmes

may still be found. However, even here it is noted that 'the half hour documentary won't sustain itself at 7.30 pm but the magazine show will' hence, according to senior decision-makers rather than lose these programmes entirely, they have to adapt.

While 'England Their England' was progressively reduced and finally discontinued rather than 'adapted', an independent series of 'City Watch' programmes was commissioned, with possible further series in the future. Noting the increased constraints of budgets and filming time permitted within this new arrangement, the programme's independent producer observes how a different programme appeal is pursued in line with new schedule requirements.

> "There is a certain stringency of budget, which means that you have to film within a certain week on a day, but it has to be a certain week because everything is booked..You're not really riding in with fire in the belly to right injustice, your living through someone else's experience to get their sense of what is right...you are hiding behind someone else's skirt, I suppose. I think it makes it easier to sell, I think we would go into situations inside Central if we wanted to do something about, in the next series, urban community care which is a subject we would very much like to do, I can hear them saying just now 'absolutely not', 'boring'".

Referring to a particular 'City Watch' proposal and the type of treatment anticipated by an independent producer economically dependent upon gaining commissions, the producer describes the kind of programme treatment likely to be accepted and, in this case, successfully delivered.

> "'The rat catcher', you are presenting a very 'sexy' treatment with nice photographs with three pages of words of not more than three syllables, so you find that what you are doing is selling, because it's a foot in the door, without Roger Cook, it's real people doing it. So you find that you are locked into a system, its a way of making films for the next six months. The hype becomes more important."

The humanist tradition of documentary perhaps summed up as the revelatory documentation of everyday life, appears to be under threat at a regional level and perhaps beyond. Lamenting the demise of 'England Their England' a programme conceived by its producer as an attempt to represent the distinct and separate ways of life found within the region, in contrast to the generalised interests focused in relation to the franchise area, he observes 'There's no longer room for that carefully prepared poem'.

What has been discerned so far, then, is a progressive shift away from regional documentary and an increasing popularisation of regional current affairs programming. Both tendencies, it can be maintained, have considerably narrowed the limited openings for inner city portrayal and discussion. Regional current affairs programming has been found to have generally been of marginal relevance to the concerns and issues of the inner city, and often marginalised within the quiet backwaters of the schedules. More recently, these forms of programmes have found it necessary to increasingly seek out larger audiences, often in re-scheduled slots where a felt need to popularise programme contents and means of subject delivery have furthered a reliance upon populist concerns and preoccupations. These, as discussed in more detail in regard to regional news programming, have been found to be oriented within an essentially consumerist sphere of generalised interests, frequently 'privatised' within the domestic and intimate spheres. As such, the political and social concerns, issues and problems of the inner city rarely find public expression within such forms, and on those rare occasions when gaining some involvement, run the risk of co-optation to ulterior programme designs and ambitions. If the populist tendency of regional current affairs programming represents one major shift of direct impact upon the limited openings for non-news inner city portrayal, the demise of regional documentary represents a second fundamental change.

Noting the steady decline of regional documentary programmes across the period of research interest, it has more recently been observed how such forms of programmes have been re-scheduled to early evening slots in a bid to find increased audiences within the residual audiences available when set against alternative successful prime-time programmes. Popularising both programme subject interests and forms of delivery, including the deployment of an increased number of short items within a magazine format, these programmes have sought to escape the real possibility of being discontinued by radically transforming their appeal. Once again, it can be noted how these transformed programmes offer, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, increasingly restricted opportunities for inner city portrayal and discussion. The unique possibilities characteristic of the different programme forms collectively

known as 'documentary' are incapable of being realised within the different programme forms of regional current affairs programming, notwithstanding the argument which as yet remains unsubstantiated, that inner city issues and concerns will find increased coverage within other forms of regional programming.

So far these two trends, the increasingly populist orientation of regional current affairs programming and the demise of regional documentary have been discussed in so far as they represent the curbing of formal possibilities in the coverage of the inner city. Regional programming however cannot be discussed in isolation from the institutional context of independent television and programming in general. This last discussion therefore briefly seeks to situate these discerned trends within the wider corporate context, which itself is constrained to respond to impinging external realities relating to technological change, market pressures and political de-regulation.

Corporate Restructuring: Change in Progress

A full account of the changes and radical restructuring of British broadcasting will one day be written which seeks to discern the longer trends evident over a considerable period of time and those more conjunctural forces impacting upon the structures of broadcasting as well as the opportunities won and opportunities lost. Of more immediate interest to this study however, and concerning the changing institutional context of programme making within Central, is the manner in which such changes have already, within the study period, been seen to impact upon the organisation of programme production and commissioning which in turn is of importance to regional programming generally and the portrayal of the region's inner cities and concerns specifically.

As one of the 'big five' independent ITV contractors Central is an established and dynamic Company which seeks to maximise its opportunities within the changing broadcasting environment. Galvanised into action by the prospects of imminent change and commercial self-interest the company has systematically set about re-organising itself in order to take best advantage of the changing broadcasting climate. As the Chairman of Central

has publicly stated 'We have planned for an environment in which efficiency and competitiveness will continue to be of increasing importance, while protecting our ability to produce quality programmes of wide appeal'[Annual Report(1988),pp3/4]. At the centre of this new corporate strategy is the re-organisation of the company into 'profit centres'. These 'core' activities have now been re-organised into the Broadcast division: 'commissioning and acquiring programmes to construct, promote and transmit a schedule to fulfil Central's undertaking with the IBA, and to obtain an audience size and mix which maximise the revenue-earning potential of operating the Franchise'; Programme production division: producing the programmes required by Broadcast division using the resources of the Facilities Division and independent producers; Central Television Enterprises(CTE): marketing Central's programmes and the Central film library to other broadcasters; Facilities Division: maintaining studio facilities and promoting them within Central and to programme makers world-wide; Air-Time sales division: absorbed into a new joint venture with Anglia Television' [Central Annual Review(1988)p.8]. The commercial logic behind this re-structuring as well as the setting up of a number of in-house services and functions, and subsidiary companies as independent, self-supporting units competing within the market place, is to convert 'Central from a single large organisation into a team of lean, fit, competitive and customer oriented profit-centres' [Annual Review(1988)p.7].

Such radical re-structuring takes place in the wake of new technologies and particularly the technological capabilities unleashed and anticipated by the development of satellite, cable and micro-wave television and the first signs of an expected proliferation of television channels. The increased competition for sources of revenue, predominantly advertising though increasingly involving other sources whether from the production and selling of programmes, production services and facilities, regional, national and international programme re-sales or the reduction of costs through company and programme 'rationalisation', sponsorship and collaborative ventures, or even amalgamation of services and corporate conglomeration have all reflected and contributed to the dramatic changes characterising the broadcasting market place. Political de-

regulation, soon to set in place a new framework of altered broadcasting structures which seeks to both respond to many of these dramatic changes as well as contributing to and accentuating the dominance of market pressures provides the third fundamental development directly impacting upon independent television.

Central's response, as noted above, has been to re-structure in a manner which will enable the Company to maximise its advantages within the market place while safeguarding its various 'profit centres' if the bid for the licence should prove unsuccessful. The restructuring of the Company into distinct, and formally separate 'divisions' has been a major feature of this 'gearing-up' process while the application of a stringent cost-cutting exercise, 'priority based budgeting', has also furthered the processes of corporate streamlining to corporate and commercial ambitions. The intricacies of these various changes, their exact derivation and impact upon the forms of programming produced/commissioned by Central, to name only three fundamental areas of inquiry, are beyond the reach of this study. What is of direct interest is the extent to which such changes have already begun to impact upon regional programming and the openings for inner city portrayal.

The Corporate importance placed upon the regional news services, now delivered to three 'local' areas within the franchise region suggests, in tandem with the regional structure continuing to inform channel 3 embodied within the Broadcasting Act(1989/90), that regional news programming will continue to provide a spearhead role to the company's bid, and possible expansion of, its franchise/licence area. As the Chairman of Central has recently indicated, news programming is held to be of instrumental importance to the Company's future success.

> "Our news programmes held their position as among the most-watched of any on the ITV network. These are the best possible indications of our success in fulfilling our primary duty as a franchise-holder, which is to provide a diverse, popular and high-quality service to viewers in the region...Central South demonstrates our commitment to the Region and our determination to provide the finest possible broadcasting service to all our nine million viewers."
>
> [Chairman's Statement, Annual Report and Accounts(1988)]

If the continuation of regional news programming appears to be relatively assured at least for the foreseeable future, given

its centrality to a Corporate strategy premissed upon a franchise/licence structure of regionalism, other forms of regional programming, as indicated above, do not enjoy the same degree of corporate commitment within this changing commercial environment. In this respect, it is interesting to observe that with the restructuring of programming according to the 'divisions' noted above, regional programming now falls under the Deputy Director of Broadcasting within the Broadcasting Division, while the Controller of Features is responsible for documentaries, features, current affairs and non-regional education, religion and arts programming within the Programme Production Division [see appendix 9]. In other words, in line with the demise of regional documentaries and their increasing adaptation to forms of regional current affairs programmes, so these programmes have been aligned to the 'journalistic' led department within the Broadcasting Division and not the 'creative' commissioning department of Features.

The different perspectives informing news and current affairs programmes and documentary have already been indicated earlier, where documentary is frequently deemed to enjoy a degree of licence and editorial freedom not countenanced by senior corporate personnel in terms of current affairs and news programming. That is, understood as a personal essay, an authored account or independent point of view, documentary has frequently enjoyed a degree of licence not found within other programme forms. Indeed, it is this difference which can in part account for the different substantive interests, voices heard and form of audience engagement which characterise documentary programming. The Controller of Features at Central has declared such a commitment in the following terms:

> "I see my job as creating the right conditions for producers and directors to achieve their best work. First of all, this means commissioning the ideas that each person wants to make, rather than foisting a project upon them. It also means that, for the best results, the individual producer should have the dominant say on the editorial line of his own programme..We should advise on possible legal problems but, at the end of the day, give the producer - 'the author' - the maximum freedom to get on with the job."

However, with the assigning of regional programmes to the Broadcasting Division, and, in the case of regional documentary programmes their transformation into forms of current affairs

programmes, such authorial independence is likely to be considerably reduced within the journalistic environment of news and current affairs programming. The incorporation of regional programmes within the Broadcasting Division follows in direct decent from Central's ambitions to win/buy the next licence.

> "It is just that the Broadcasting Division will be the one that applies for franchise next time round. We have a commitment to regionalism and the White Paper asks for it, so we'll demonstrate it by having our own team. Others may well bid for this licence and say 'we'll get our regional news and regional programmes from there or there', we're saying 'we have the people on board, this is the team'."
>
> Deputy Director Of Broadcasting/Controller Factual Programmes

Moreover, as already indicated, regional documentary appears to be an endangered species with fewer schedule slots considered appropriate to the audience appeals of this particuar form of programming. The increasing use of independents in line with government proposals, as well as Corporate benefits accruing from the 'flexibility' permitted by commissioning independents combine, as instanced above, to lessen the opportunities for creative and risk-laden programmes perhaps requiring considerable periods of research, programme production and therefore resourcing. With the introduction of the 'profit centres' concept and the exposure of programme makers to a form of 'total costing' budgeting where company facilities are now charged to individual programme costs rather than absorbed by the company as whole in 'below the line costing', regional documentary, represents a 'cost' to the company, and according to senior personnel offers little re-sale opportunities.

Conclusion

On all these fronts, then, regional programming has been found to have been exposed to the technological, commercial and political winds currently blowing their way through the independent television sector and broadcasting industry in general. These appear to have differentially impacted upon regional news, current affairs and documentary programming. While regional news remains a spearhead to the Corporate strategy intent upon demonstrating regional commitment and local news service capability in its bid to secure the next licence

and claim for territorial expansion, other forms of programming appear to have fared less well.

Regional current affairs programming has come under increasing pressure to adapt itself to the project of securing popular-based mass audiences. While advertisers and programme makers have become increasingly aware of the segmented nature of audiences and the possibilities of targeting specific 'market' groups, the broad thrust of ITV programming remains wedded to the need to produce mass popular based audiences.

> "We want a very large share of the audience, if you get that large share of the audience you will get the elusive ABC1's that the advertisers cry out for. But remember advertisers aren't just selling brands to that group, they're selling housewife brands too. The bottom line for all ITV companies is to get the largest share of the available audience at any time, and within that you will be able to sell ABC1's too...ITV is a popular channel, it has to be populist to survive. We cannot go down the Channel Four route, we cannot be a movie channel. We have to be a broad based popular entertainment channel..The emphasis should always be to maximise the audience, maximise the audience, and I don't see how on ITV anyone could argue much different...You can't put constraints on a beast that you throw into the free market and tell it to survive..We really do have to be a lean and hungry animal to live."
>
> Controller of Programme Planning and Scheduling

This general statement of position, though advanced from a particular institutional location and responsibility appears to be generally accepted within the upper decision-making echelons of the Company. Though senior programme-makers are still inclined to invoke a vocabulary of 'programming' and 'public service' rather than 'markets' and 'sales', there is no doubt that a 'new realism' pervades the industry where both Controllers of Features and Factual Programmes, the two domains of actuality television of immediate concern to this project concede to the necessity of appealing to larger audiences, and embracing a more popular form of programming.

> "The challenge that we've got is to take the range of programmes that we've got and make them more universally acceptable."
>
> Controller Factual Programmes

How certain regional current affairs and remaining documentary programmes have sought to become 'more universally acceptable' has been discussed earlier and typically involves in the case of current affairs programming an increased array of shorter items packaged within a magazine format while deliberately addressing the generalised interests and concerns

of 'ordinary' viewers. The populist inflexion which often attends such programme ambitions has also previously been discussed to the extent that this typically involves an emphasis towards consumer interests, the private world of home, family and leisure, intimate sphere of sexual relations, and celebration of 'ordinary' personalities and individuals as well as 'stars' and celebrities. Regional documentary programmes have also been reviewed and found to have begun the process of radical transformation and adjustment in line with rescheduling and wider commercial ambitions. Attending to a 'replacement' documentary series for 'England Their England' it has been observed how choice of subject as well as treatment have been deliberately constructed according to the felt requirements for 'sexy', that is populist, television. Indeed, the demise of regional documentary is acknowledged by the Controller of the Features Group as an inevitable reflection of the wider scene of broadcasting.

> "Now we are looking at 26 channels, one of those channels may be for documentaries, and we know only a small number of people are going to watch them and therefore you don't have to make them as popular. ITV audiences, unquestionably you want to get the biggest number of people and make it as popular as possible, which basically means pretty populistic, pretty bland programming. But what we mustn't do is think too much about ITV..As ITV makes makes less and less of the personal view, inner city type documentaries so you will find Channel Four saying 'that's a vacuum, that's where an audience is, let's go and do it'."
>
> Controller Features Group

Whether succour can be taken from the presence of other non-regional channels and their ability, or inclination to reflect the problems and concerns of the nation's inner cities and the perspectives of the poor, the dispossessed, the marginalised, the angry and unemployed, the underclass of disenfranchised, or, in short the residuum of the 1990s is a question which can only be addressed within a much wider consideration of broadcasting in general. All that can be ventured here, is that the processes presently underway and examined to the extent that they have been found to have already impacted upon the limited opportunities for regional non-news inner city coverage and portrayal within the context of independent television do not hold much promise for the future.

While regional news programming appears poised to further

consolidate its centrality to corporate strategy the particular programme forms, conventions and audience appeals daily reproduced within the regional news genre, and discussed extensively above, have been found to provide a repertoire of concerns and images which frequently reflect more upon established news priorities and programme ambitions than the substantive 'lived conditions' and discursive struggles experienced within and mobilised around the inner city. While the portrayal of the inner city found within regional news programming has itself contributed to the public mobilisation of meanings in relation to the contested political and social understandings of the 'problems of the inner city' these, as documented above, have been found to provide a predominance of interpretative accounts and resources which, though not exclusively, have nevertheless largely pointed to the inner city as a 'law and order problem'. While this portrayal has not been found to provide a complete 'ideological closure', the differential involvement of 'conservative', 'liberal' and 'radical' interpretative accounts and resources strongly suggests, in combination with the general paucity of inner city portrayal finding public examination and discussion elsewhere within Central's regional programming, that the problems of the inner city have failed to find sustained, wide ranging public examination and discussion within the medium of regional television. Moreover, on the available evidence of corporate trends and processes witnessed within and across the research period and attended to in this chapter, the portrayal of the region's inner cities and associated concerns, issues and problems are unlikely to find more extensive and wide-ranging coverage in the future.

Chapter Fourteen

Regional Television, The Inner City and the Public Sphere

Conclusion

At the outset of this discussion it was suggested that the study of the media and mass communication processes can best be approached from a number of complementary levels of analysis. The embedded social nature of media industries, their disseminated forms as well as contexts of use and consumption, as much as the social nature of 'theory' itself, all combine to undermine the search for a position of theoretical exclusivity. That is, no single theoretical approach has as yet managed to secure a vantage point from which a monopoly, or even near monopoly, of explanatory insight has been won into either the forms or practices of the mass media and their interrelationships; and indeed, recognising the competing claims of different social theories it may be considered naive to presuppose that such could be found. Nonetheless, though sometimes the more generalised claims of different theoretical approaches may not always sit comfortably alongside each other, frequently the substantive interests empirically explored have been found to coexist. If political instrumentalist understandings of media decision-making can, on occasion at least, be found to address a similar terrain as political economy approaches, and while culturalist 'readings' of media texts may sometimes be supplemented by studies attending to the social composition of journalists, and if organisational production studies attending to professional practices have sometimes usefully supplemented the findings of content, discursive, linguistic and other forms of textual analyses so such 'insights' have all informed the overall understanding of the practices and products of the mass media that are presently available to us. Such gains have been won notwithstanding, and perhaps even because of, the competing theoretical perspectives informing these, and other approaches found within the mass communications field.

Not seeking to establish a contender as a self-sufficient theoretical approach, but rather identifying a discerned lacuna within the midst of these competing and sometimes complementary

approaches, this study has primarily devoted attention to an 'intermediate' level of analysis and theorisation. Recognising the contributions of different approaches and levels of analysis attention, in this instance, has nonetheless principally been confined to an analysis of inner city portrayal and the immediate proximities of the production domain, professional practices and conceptions of programme form impacting upon the portrayal of the inner city. If the above provides a brief re-statement of the informing position adopted throughout this study, the following discussion brings this study to a close by firstly reviewing some of the main findings outlined across the two parts of empirical analysis before proceeding to discuss the theoretical departures and possible advances associated with the approach adopted in this study. Finally, considerations of the television portrayal of the inner city are attended to in relation to the concept of the public sphere.

With detailed discussions of the research findings found within the body of the thesis here only a brief review of some of the major findings will be outlined. The portrayal by a major independent television company of the problems and issues of the inner city has not been found to be extensive within the seven year sample of regional 'factual' programming reviewed. Finding that regional news programming provides by far the most opportunity for inner city portrayal, such coverage in absolute terms has nonetheless been found to be within a strict minority of all news coverage. Furthermore, the portrayal of inner city concerns and issues has been found to heavily reflect established properties of the news form or regional news genre in which and through which it gains expression; attending to patterns of 'appropriate subject matter', 'mode of formal composition' and 'stance' the regional news genre exhibits a distinctive character which in turn has impacted upon the portrayal of an important social and political issue.

Prominent and established news subject interests have resulted in particular inner city concerns and issues finding heavy involvement within inner city news reporting - the coverage of crime and general concerns of law and order for instance. Conversely, concerns of urban deprivation and issues of race and racism, with few exceptions, have found relatively little news exposure. On the bases of detailed examinations of

news subject contours found to generally inhere within the regional news genre as well as general subject patterns of inner city portrayal it has been concluded that the interpretative resources and accounts found to organise three principal interpretative schemas or discourses publicly seeking to account for the problems of the inner city have not found equal support and sustenance within such news portrayals.

Moreover, it has also been suggested on the basis of quantitative and qualitative analyses that the constitutive elements or typical discourse structure attending such news items frequently focuses upon news 'events' with little or no contextual, background or historical detail necessary to the evidential bases informing both liberal and radical interpretative inner city schemas. What has been found to frequently characterise regional news reports however, is a delimited concern with a particular event, invariably focused in individual and individuated terms. In so far as social agency and causation are invoked the resources are at hand for an individualist understanding of social action and responsibility. Routinely and most clearly evident across regional crime news reports, this particular structure of news reporting has also been found to characterise other areas of inner city related news interest.

If attending to the formal properties of news discourse structure has enabled a descriptive overview of regional inner city news items, close attention to the substantive concerns and journalistic inflexion of particular inner city issues and themes has revealed a pronounced tendency to concentrate upon the private interests and preoccupations of 'ordinary' individuals. This populist tendency to 'humanise' a story by appealing to the private emotions and sentiments of ordinary individuals frequently addressed as consumers, has been further observed to inflect news treatments in a manner which frequently 'privatise' issues of wider collective concern and public importance.

Impacting properties of genre have also been considered in terms of the different types of 'forum' or presentational formats ordering the public examination and delivery of inner city news portrayals, as well as the particular 'hierarchy of access' found to characterise the regional news genre. On all

these fronts, then, a detailed review of inner city material has been found to indelibly express the conventions, appeals and popular ambitions of the regional news genre. Even when attending to a detailed examination of twelve months of inner city riot reporting it was found that established news interests and the tendency to seek out 'human interest' stories has also featured across this extensively reported inner city episode otherwise dominated by the key issues, concerns and general interpretative emphasise favouring a law and order and criminal interpretation of the events in question.

Attending to the agenda of issues and concerns, at both verbal and visual levels, as well as narrative emphases found across this extended period of riot coverage, it was found that the interpretative resources and accounts publicly made available have unquestionably, if not entirely, privileged this particular interpretative framework. Disposed to locate social causation and explanation within the criminal activities of those individuals directly involved while fixating upon the violence of the event itself and its destructive aftermaths the conservative framework has found ample resources for the construction and/or confirmation of its particular schema within and across this extended period of news riot portrayal.

Identified liberal concerns and interpretative resources though finding some limited involvement across this portrayal has not found extensive support for its particular interpretative viewpoint keen to identify preceding conditions and contributing social factors. If the liberal interpretation of the events in question at least finds some support for its particular interpretation, though still dwarfed by the 'criminal' and law and order emphases found to characterise this portrayal generally, the radical viewpoint seeking to invoke considerably expanded historical resources and structural references as well as key issues of political disenfranchisement, institutionalised racism and police harassment has found few resources and accounts thought consonant to or supportive of such an interpretative framework. Such an interpretation, in short, appears to have been almost entirely eclipsed in such news accounts.

If these general findings summarise the portrayal of the inner city news coverage and begin to point to the necessity of

attending to properties of the medium in the examination of mediated social and political issues, a brief review of other forms of regional programming has found inner city portrayal to be generally of both marginal interest, and marginalised within programmes situated within the schedule backwaters. Again, the distinctive character and forms of the programmes reviewed appear to differentially impact upon the formal possibilities of inner city coverage, while three non-news programmes focusing upon the Handsworth riots have lent further support to such a view given the significantly different treatment and portrayal of the events in question and their possible causes found across these different programmes.

These findings have been elicited in the first major part of empirical analysis using a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and attending to the four constituent aspects of the public sphere - means of communication, substantive portrayal, forum and access. These same aspects have all been pursued into the production domain of professional news producers and corporate context of programme making. Deliberately focussing upon the immediate proximities of programme production and professional conceptions of the regional news programme, considerable explanatory insights have been gained in attempting to account for the forms of inner city portrayal previously examined. Seeking to considerably refine the sometimes generalised statements and even blunt determinisms offered by other approaches to the study of news, this approach begins to critically consider the conceptualisation of the news programme daily pursued and enacted by journalists. Purposefully pursuing the idea of the regional news programme and collectively reproduced according to journalist's as 'a known result', the public mediation of the problems and concerns of the inner city have been found to assume a particular character and form when refracted through the established conventions of the regional news prism. This prism, constituted by journalists' understanding of the regional news programme and both related to and differentiated within a wider acceptance of professional canons of journalism, constructs a daily news programme exhibiting established news subject interests, conventionalised formats of delivery and an identifiable stance of popular appeal.

These characteristics have been found to profoundly impact upon the portrayal of the issues and concerns of the inner city. Established regional news priorities and interests have considerably privileged certain forms of inner news concern, particularly relating to the reporting of crime news and concerns of law and order generally, while other areas of inner city concern, whether issues of race and racism, political disenfranchisement or the collective realities of urban deprivation and extreme social inequality, have been found to be relatively under-reported. Moreover, the pronounced tendency, previously elicited by qualitative and quantitative readings of news output, which inflects the reporting of issues in a manner which both individuates and individualises the concerns involved while privatising their appeal has also been found to diminish the public examination and exploration of inner city concerns. Such concerns, it can be maintained, are by their very nature best approached as of public concern and relate to the collective realities daily endured and negotiated within the political and social confines of the inner city.

If such conventionalised forms of the regional genre exert profound impact upon the public examination of the inner city, an established repertoire of news forums have also contributed to the restricted opportunities for public engagement and debate. The deployment of certain presentational formats have curtailed the opportunities for relatively direct and engaged public dialogue and discussion. Such findings when related to the inner city, an arena which by definition can only be understood as a site of social and political struggle and contest, has been found to exert serious repercussions for the public exploration of the problems and issues of the inner city. Underpinned by changing technology and financial savings but above all a shift in current regional news philosophy where news is typically regarded as 'the reporting of the events out there' rather than the elaboration of discursive positions in relation to, or even constitutive of 'events', the mediation of the inner city has remained dependent upon the editorial priorities, cutting room decisions and overall control exercised by the newsroom.

Attending to the public sphere attributes of means of communication, substantive inner city portrayal, considerations

of forum and range of accessed viewpoints have all indicated that professional news practices and, above all, the collective pursuit of a 'popular, people led programme' has considerably impacted upon the public examination of inner city issues. Unpacking the professional understanding and practice of 'popular' and 'people led', the regional news genre has been found to order such programme ambitions within a particular form of populist concerns and appeals. These have been elicited both at the level of quantitative and qualitative textual examination as well as declared positions volunteered across numerous interview statements and observed in terms of professional newsroom practices and decisions-making meetings.

On all these fronts, then, the public examination and portrayal of the multiple issues and concerns of the region's inner cities have been found to reflect the programme ambitions and established forms. These, as already charted, have profoundly ordered the agenda of inner city concerns in accordance with established regional news interests particularly attracted to crime news, law and order concerns and issues involving the visible manifestations of conflict. However, if such predispositions have been found to indirectly privilege both the resources and interpretative accounts found to be supportive of a conservative interpretative schema, the regional news pursuit of human interest and even positive or celebratory stories has also resulted in inner city news coverage of a particularly distinctive kind. Celebrating and affirming individual or group successes as well as the region's achievements and cultural diversity has occasionally resulted in the seeming paradox that, far from drawing attention to the collective plight of the region's poor, dispossessed and discriminated, inner city news has tended to celebrate the individual achievements of those very groups most oppressed within the problematic of inner city conditions. The invariably individualist focus found within such items, however, has also been found to be in basic accord with the underpinning individualism of conservative viewpoints keen to locate achievement and success as well as evident personal failings or inadequacies within the responsibility of the sovereign individual.

If the particular ambitions of the regional news programme

have directly and indirectly impacted upon the issues and images of the inner city, other regional programme have also been found to express their particular programme ambitions and forms through the selected array of programme subjects and their mode of delivery. Whether the populist appeals and pursuit of live studio controversy found within 'Central Weekend', the running to ground of individual miscreants and criminals within the expose journalism of 'Cook report', the cultural celebration of ethnic arts and individual achievements of 'Here and Now' or the populist and often irreverent look at the formal world of politics and politicians of 'Central Lobby', all these programmes and others reviewed inevitably impact upon the selection of programme subject matter and their subsequent forms of programme treatment.

Interestingly, while these programme identities have been found to determine the extent, character and forms of inner city issues and concerns occasionally gaining expression via such regional programmes, a wider overview of the changing institutional context of independent television has complemented this line of inquiry by situating these programme forms within a wider force field of pressures and constraints. Attending to economic and technological factors and, relatedly, the changing structures of broadcasting the pressures to popularise regional current affairs programmes, and revamp or entirely discontinue regional documentary programmes has indicated that these programme forms can usefully be situated within a considerably wider context open to multi-layered analytic investigations. Regional news programming, though inescapably situated within such an institutional context has, for reasons outlined, been found to exert a relatively established genre presence as well as enjoying a high degree of corporate commitment. With these final observations once again indicating that no single theoretical approach, much less single level of analysis is likely to exhaust the complexity of determinations converging within any particular cultural form the study has been brought to a close.

Following earlier literature reviews and theoretical discussions these analyses, then, have deliberately been pitched, in the main, at intermediate theoretical and analytical levels. Interrogating the practices and professional

understandings of the news producers themselves the immediate proximities of the newsroom have been the focal point of interest. At this level, attention has principally been confined to the daily activities, routines and source contacts informing the regional news programme as well as the collective understanding of the regional news programme pursued and reproduced by journalists.

Perhaps a final note of caution should be entered at this point which once again emphasises the exact theoretical line of interrogation adopted, and implicitly not pursued across this particular production study. Restricting attention, in the main, to the practices and professional values of the news producers themselves it is the collective nature and established conventions daily enacted and reproduced within the regional news programme which assumes a focal point of explanatory interest. This approach has not, in other words, sought to recover or pursue individual journalist's 'attitudes', much less to enter into the increasingly unproductive debates concerning so-called news 'bias'. While individual and even group attitudes no doubt have their part to play in any full account of news output, for the purposes of this analysis attention has been deliberately confined to the routine and collectively pursued understandings of the programme form under consideration. The fact that journalists can on occasion display different attitudes and opinions, as well as work for different news media and organisations each characterised by a recognisably different news 'identity' should alert us to the fact that individual attitudes though of possible influence are not generally likely to hold much explanatory promise when confronted by differentiated, and yet organisationally standardised news outputs.

Though interview testimony is, amongst other sources of information and insight, extensively drawn upon this should not be considered therefore as a means of locating individual, or even group 'attitudes', much less collective sources of presumed news bias; rather, interview statements have been marshalled as a means of establishing and subjecting to critique established regional news conventions, practices and appeals which are collectively known and professionally reproduced on a daily basis. While interview testimony cannot simply be taken at face

value or be assumed to be sufficient as an 'explanation' adequately accounting for the complex (and theoretically multi-layered) cultural phenomenon under study, such sources of insight nonetheless deserve increased attention, theoretical respect and explanatory emphasis, since it is here that established approaches can be appreciably augmented and complemented.

Such gains have hopefully been demonstrated in this second major part of analysis which has sought to explicate the professional practices and pursuit of an established news form in this particular 'case study' of one news organisation within a differentiated news medium and its public mediation of a specific social and political concern. In short, it has been demonstrated that the professional conception and enactment of the regional news programme has been found to impact upon both the range of inner city issues and concerns finding public expression and examination while also inflecting their portrayal in ways consonant to the popular appeal and ambitions of the regional news programme daily pursued by regional news producers.

Noting the tendency found within other approaches to the study of news to displace, discount or seriously undermine the accounts offered by professional news producers themselves other sources of explanatory insight have been offered by the news theorists. These have included attending to the economic, commercial and directly political imperatives and pressures impinging upon news producing institutions; the organisational and routine nature necessarily attending large scale, regular news production, including increasing dependence upon 'convenient' source contacts; the professional enactment of, and socialization into the established canons of professional journalism including the daily pursuit of deeply impregnated 'news values'; and the social composition and political attitudes of practising journalists and their possible alignment within and importation of a wider force-field of cultural values, opposition and struggle.

In other words, apart from occasional claims which posit a lingering conspiracy at the heart of explanatory accounts relating to the perceived ideological forms of news output, most approaches have sought to locate explanatory insight

independently of the professed roles and professional claims of the journalists themselves. Ideological forms, it will be remembered from earlier theoretical discussions, have frequently been accounted for not by reference to the individual attitudes or political biases of journalists but rather the determination of economic and market imperatives, organisational necessities or cultural affinities unconsciously held by newsroom journalists. On all these counts, the debate has considerably moved on from positions which have sought to locate 'news bias' within the attitudes of individual journalists.

The research orthodoxy at the moment appears to run the risk of underestimating professional journalists as a potential source of insight as well as the purposive agency daily pursuing and enacting established news forms. In other words, the search for wider levels of determination and institutional process which may be held accountable for the ideological forms produced by journalists has tended to eschew attending too closely to the accounts of journalists themselves, assuming such is likely to be based within the search for news 'bias' as the product of consciously held and deliberately pursued attitudes and opinions. Ironically perhaps, the position advanced in this study in contradistinction to both political economy and organisational approaches is that the purposeful intentions and practices of professional journalists can and do offer explanatory insight into the news forms finally produced, while simultaneously challenging the explanatory centrality of political instrumentalist and cultural hegemonist positions which have sought to recover either the ideologically complicit or ideologically expressive motivations and meanings of the agents involved in the news production process.

That is to say, it is maintained here that it is both permissible and incisive to suggest that news producers can and do consciously and purposefully pursue a programme form as 'a known result', while simultaneously declining to construe such an activity as ideologically partisan to the extent that it simply reflects attitudes and/or wider cultural references of the journalists themselves. In this sense it can be suggested that the established conventions, forms and appeals of the regional news genre as pursued by professional journalists provide an intermediate level of analysis and interrogation.

Recognising the purposive role played by newsroom journalists the approach nevertheless does not succumb either to forms of political instrumentalism and culturalist accounts finding journalist ideological complicity along fault lines of surrounding cultural struggle and contest, and also qualifies the explanatory emphasis focused in relation to forms of economic determinism and studies tending towards a form of organisational functionalism. However, as repeated throughout this study the position adopted here refuses to take up a position of theoretical exclusivity and does not wish to challenge the insights and gains that have been won by all these, and other more textually and discursively oriented approaches. Indeed, elements of all these approaches have, to some degree, informed the various discussions above. A degree of theoretical 'openess' is deemed appropriate to the complex nature and processes that surround the phenomenon of 'news'.

Qualifying the centrality of ideological analysis placed at the heart of many critical media positions this study has sought to inquire into a number of impacting 'properties of the medium' which may not necessarily or even usefully be taken to be simply and directly ideological in any substantive sense. That is, if the social viewpoints seeking to align public understandings of the inner city may be taken as the 'substantial' issues, concerns and meanings mobilised in relation to the inner city, it is also apparent that other features and properties attending such public communication are inescapably involved in, and yet removed from the discursive positions securing public exposure and contest.

At the level of the immediate portrayal of the issues and concerns relating to the inner city it is apparent that the 'forum' in which such public communications takes place can exert profound constraints and limitations, as well as potentially enabling and facilitative impact upon the public exploration of such issues. Considerations of established genre conventions and expectancies perhaps relating to established patterns of programme composition and general populist ambitions may well be found to impact upon the particular issues and portrayal of the inner city because such features are routinely inscribed within many or all news treatments. Similarly, considerations of access may well reflect wider genre

dispositions which, as has been demonstrated in relation to programme stance, is predisposed towards an identifiably regionalised and populist variant of Becker's 'hierarchy of credibility'. Now certainly all such features can be taken as exerting profound impact, both directly and indirectly, upon the discursive positions gaining expression in relation to the inner city, though it is perhaps unhelpful to simply label such engrained features as 'ideological'.

The possible insights won from attending to the established properties of the medium in which and through which the public portrayal of the inner city has taken place has tended, then, to qualify the centrality of ideological analysis by focusing attention upon the established features and character of the genre in question. On this basis, though ample support for a culturalist interpretation for an evident public dispute and contest over 'meaning' can be found in the discursive positions found vying for public acceptance across news texts, it is also apparent that not all features informing such public displays need necessarily be taken as directly and immediately expressive of the social viewpoints in play. That is, it would appear that traditional and engrained genre characteristics pre-exist the public claims for interpretative acceptance waged in relation to specific issues and concerns and inevitably impact upon such issues when mediated within the public sphere. Consideration of established cultural forms is once again, therefore, indicated as a necessary adjunct to any analysis which seeks to account for the public mediation of particular social issues and the play of discursive positions gaining public expression. However, contrary to recent 'cultural forum' theorists, it has been found that the portrayal of an important social and political issue has not simply focused on 'our most traditional views, those that are repressive and reactionary, as well as those that are subversive and emancipatory' but has tended, if anything, to exclude those very voices which may be taken as subversive or emancipatory and that moreover such exclusions have been enacted as a result of the character and form of those very cultural forums deemed by others to hold such expressive force.

At this point, the argument returns to the idea of the public sphere which has helped organise the discussion and empirical analyses conducted across the study. Recognising

liberal-democratic claims concerning the informational function of the news media necessary to democratic involvement and process while also acknowledging critical positions which identify the news media as principal agencies involved in the securing of legitimacy and wider consent, the implicit idea of the public sphere underpinning both theoretical orientations has been explicitly pursued in relation to the mediation of an important social and political issue. That is, the concept of the public sphere has helped organise discussion of the public portrayal of the inner city and has provided directing lines of inquiry which go to the heart of current concerns of media theory and research.

Critically elaborating upon Habermas' concept, the mass media have been found to be principal institutions in the mediation of important social and political concerns while nonetheless serving diverse, and sometimes competing objectives. Observing the commercial and economic imperatives currently re-ordering the structure of independent broadcasting, the public sphere has been found to be susceptible to a diversity of pressures and constraints, while the enactment of the public sphere as a public forum, available to all in which important social and political issues find public examination and exploration has been found to be intimately dependent upon, amongst other factors, the cultural forms in which and through which such features gain public expression. Recognising, the importance of the public sphere in relation to the public exchange of information, rational debate and deliberation, the cultural forms conveying such communications have been found to critically impact upon the character of such public communications.

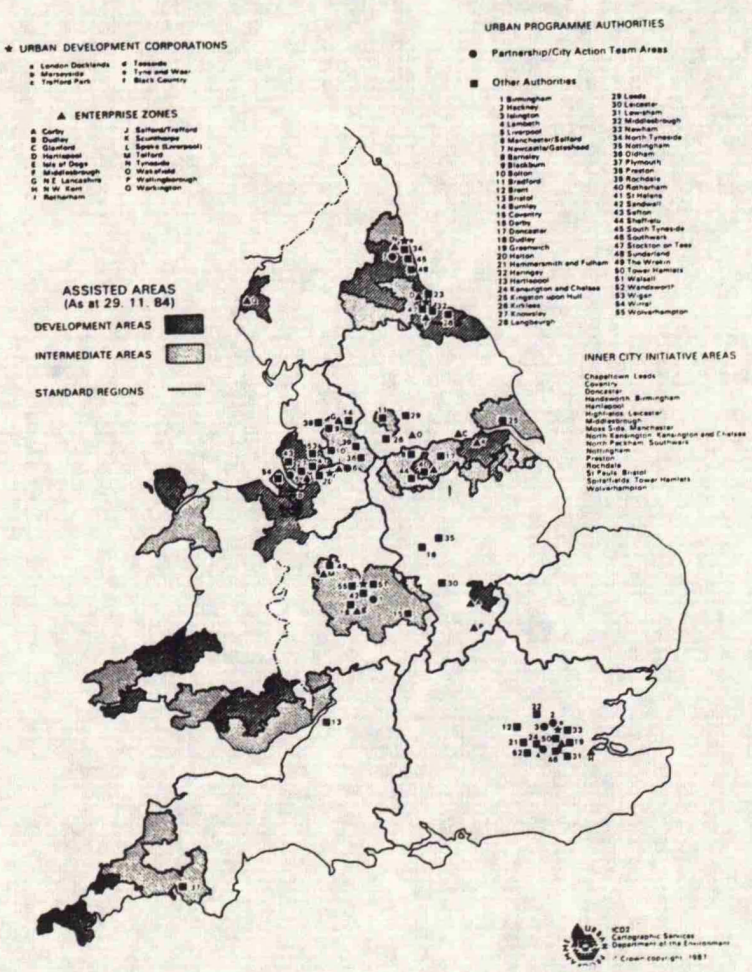
Public communication, in the widest possible sense of that term, is susceptible to the mediating forms of programme genre where, as in the case study involving a detailed examination of the regional news programme, it has been found that such established features appear to frequently give expression not simply to rational public engagement and debate, but to empathic private appeals celebrating or affirming a populist conception of 'ordinary' existence. In short the regional news programme may be construed not simply as a means of communicating public information but as a ritualised expression celebrating and

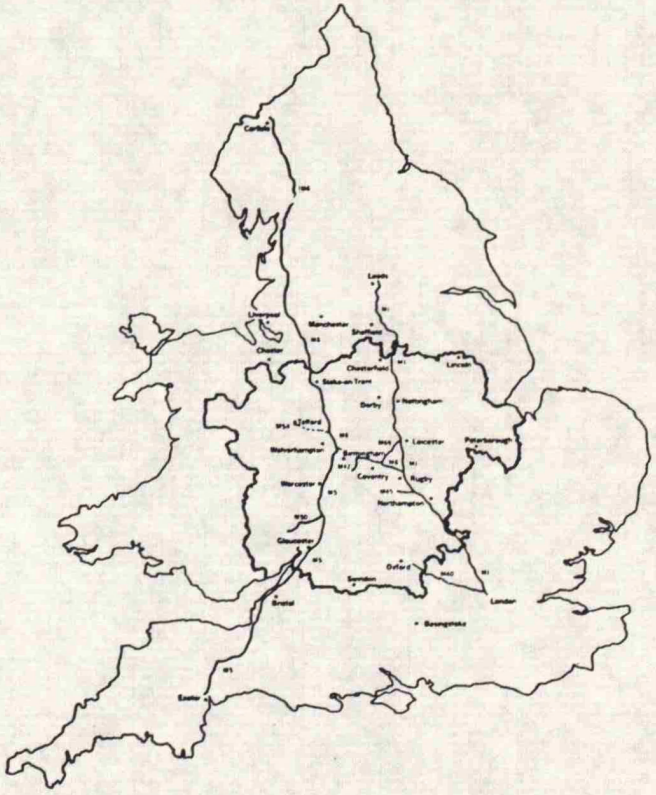
affirming a form of privatised existence. To this extent, the constituent attributes of the public sphere involving the public communication of information and understanding, within an accessible forum which permits the accessing of social and political viewpoints has been found to be intimately dependent upon and liable to characteristic incorporation by established cultural forms and conventions routinely enacted with the programme genres under discussion. While certainly it may be the case that the examination of a regional news programme cannot be taken as representative of all news media and forms, it has nonetheless alerted us perhaps to important features and dimensions of a particular news form which promises to offer new insights into the understanding of news forms in general.

Finally, if such theoretical gains have been won from an approach which has sought to attend to impacting 'properties of the medium' as well as the substantive portrayal and public mediation of an important social and political concern the principal finding can only be that the region's inner cities, associated problems and range of social and political viewpoints have found precious few opportunities to engage public interests and sentiments in the concerns of those daily confronting the realities of inner city existence. More specifically the voices from the inner city, as opposed to the voices advanced in relation to the inner city, have been presented with peculiarly restricted openings to publicly engage and contest the dominant images and interpretative frameworks mobilised by others. When inner city issues, concerns and voices have found public expression in the medium under scrutiny it has been found that such portrayals are apt to reflect as much upon established programme conventions and ambitions as the issues, concerns and conflicting perspectives collectively constituting the problems of the inner city.

However it has also been revealed via a serious of analyses pursued under the programme distinctions of 'appropriate subject matter', 'formal mode of composition' and programme 'stance' that on those few occasions when the inner city has been the subject of news interest, such portrayals have been found by and large to offer interpretative resources and accounts of direct support to a conservative perspective and understanding of the problems and issues of the inner city. Though such depictions

have not been found to operate a form of complete ideological or discursive 'closure' around such a dominant perspective, other important issues and concerns, as well as direct interventions by liberal and/or radical voices have been highly infrequent and overshadowed by the dominating concerns of a conservative 'law and order' perspective. Interestingly, while other programme forms have clearly demonstrated marked differences and increased opportunities for alternative and oppositional viewpoints these have been both marginal and marginalised within programme schedules. With the recent institutional restructuring and programme changes currently underway, earlier found already to impact upon the coverage of the inner city, the future holds little if any promise for increased and improved portrayal of the region's inner cities, its complex social and political problems and those disadvantaged, discriminated and deprived living within its shadow.



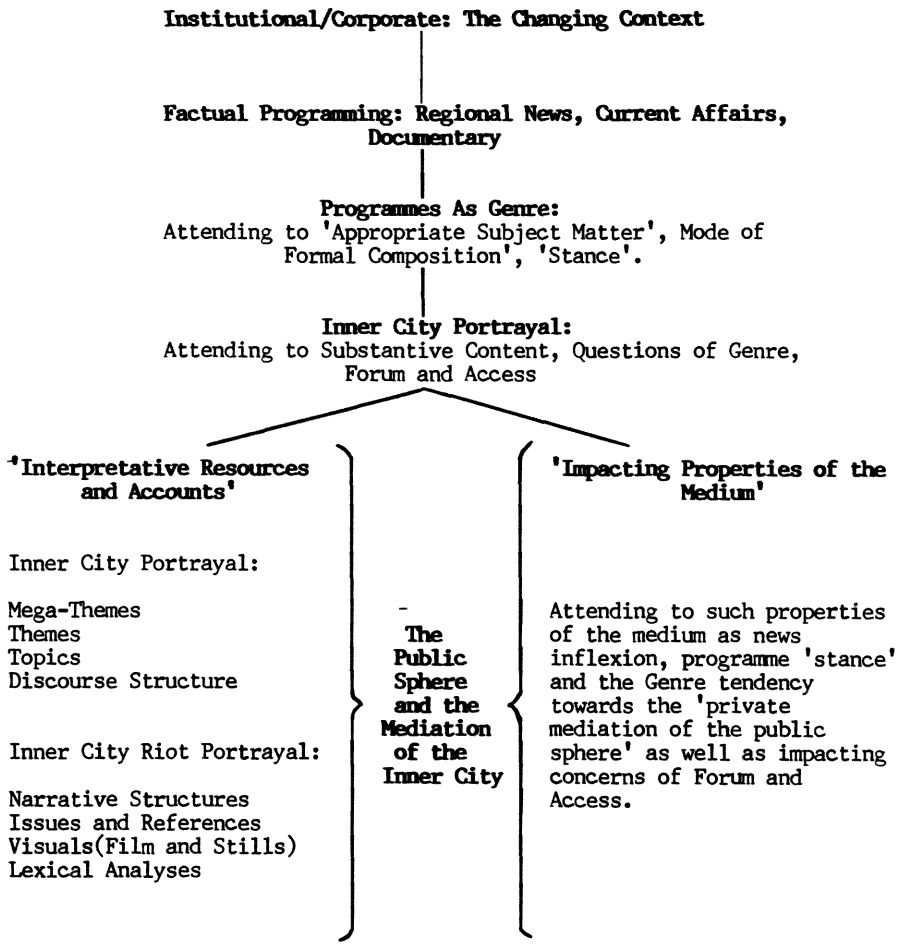


CENTRAL TELEVISION'S REGION

Source: Central Marketing Manual
1985 Edition.

Appendix 2 **Television Portrayal of the Inner City:**

Levels of Analysis



Nb. The route of research, as well as methods employed across these various levels of analysis at both 'reading' and 'professional production' stages is presented in diagrammatic overview overleaf.

Television Portrayal of the Inner City:

The Research Design: An Overview

Stage One : The 'Reading'

(1) The Regional News Genre

(2) Regional News and the Mediation of the Inner City

(3) Regional News and the Mediation of a Riot

(4) Other Factual Programming and the Mediation of the Inner City and Inner City Riots

(5) Professional Practices and the Reproduction of the Regional News Programme

(6) Producing the Portrayal of The Inner City: Professional Practices and Inner City News Production including questions of Forum, Access and Genre

(7) The Changing Institutional Context and Inner City Programming

Stage Two : Professional Practices And The Production Setting

Television Portrayal of the Inner City:

The Research Design, Analyses and Methods Used

Stage One : The 'Reading'

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
The Regional News Genre	**Regional News and the Mediation of the Inner City**	**Regional News and the Mediation of a Riot**	**Other Factual Programming and the Mediation of the Inner City and Inner City Riots**
Content Analysis: 7 year sample, 78 Programmes, 1120 news items. Attending to patterns of Genre subject matter, programme composition, 'stance' and access. **Literary Criticism:** On basis of above a series of 'core' regional news values are elicited as characteristic and impacting 'properties of the medium'.	**Content Analysis/Discourse Analysis:** 351 inner city news items from 300 programme, 7 year sample. Patterns of mega-themes, themes and topics elicited as are patterns of inner city news access, news forums and a characteristic regional news discourse structure. **Linguistic Analyses** further pursue impacting 'properties of the medium' and 'the private mediation of the public sphere'.	**Content Analysis/Lexical Analysis/Discourse Analysis/ Narrative Analysis:** From one full year of programmes 153 separate riot news items are analysed. Discursive resources are analysed at levels of lexical terms, narrative structures, substantive issues and references as well as film and 'still' visuals. Access, Forums and other 'properties of the medium' are addressed.	**Regional Programming Reviewed** Overview of Programmes and Subjects, discussion of different and impacting programme 'stances'. **Comparative Content/Discourse and Narrative Analyses** of news, current affairs and documentary riot programmes, attending to substantive issues and questions of access and programme forums. **Secondary Data:** in-house audience figures.

Television Portrayal of the Inner City:

The Research Design, Analyses and Methods Used

Stage Two : Professional Practices and the Production Setting

(5)

Professional Practices and the Reproduction of the Regional News Programme

An examination of the production setting, professional practices and programme conceptualisation daily enacted in the reproduction of the regional news programme. Methods used: **Participant Observation, Semi-structured Interviews,** and a two-week sample **Sources' Study.**

(6)

Producing the Portrayal of The Inner City: Professional Practices and Inner City News Production including questions of Forum, Access and Genre

An examination of the production setting and professional practices and news conceptualisation pursued in relation to inner city portrayal. Three empirical examinations pursue the substantive aspects of inner city presentation, forums and inner city access as well as impacting properties of the regional news genre explored at (1) and (4). Methods used include: **Participant Observation, Semi-Structured Interviews, Newsroom Meeting Transcripts, Case Studies and Secondary Data: Newsroom Documents and 'Cutting Room Floor Edits'.**

(7)

The Changing Institutional Context and Inner City Programming

An examination and discussion of the changing institutional and corporate context of commercial television and its impact upon the 'inner city' programme vehicles of news, current affairs and documentary. Methods used include: **Participant Observation, Semi-Structured Interviews and Secondary Data: Annual Accounts and Review.**

Appendix: 6

Sample and Sub-Sample Details: An Overview

[Nb: Detail of subject categories etcetera presented in text.]

The Regional News Genre Sample:

A sample of 78 programmes selected on a rolling weekday basis across the period 1982 to 1988. Sample comprised 1220 separate news items, 1142 items excluding sport items.

For the purpose of this general analysis 8 subject categories, comprising 68 sub-subject categories are analysed across the sample of 1142 different news items. Similarly, 1142 presentational formats are analysed on the basis of three major types of presentational formats.
Across the sample 1012 different actors appear and these are analysed according to 10 identified basic social actor groups.

The Inner City News Sample:

A sample of 357 inner city items selected from a seven year sample of 300 programmes, or nearly 3000 news items, taken from annual 6 weekly blocks of news programmes.

These 357 items are analysed according to 16 major inner city themes and 70 inner city topics and are also aggregated into three 'mega-themes' of relevance to contending inner city discourses. Similarly, these 357 items are analysed according to, firstly, the three identified and major presentational formats, and then further analysed according to 12 refined variants of these same formats.

Across the sample 14 different types of inner city groups are identified and analysed in relation to the 571 actor appearances. The most prominent of these 14 groups are then analysed further according to the 90 plus internal groups of different inner city actors identified.

The sample of 357 items are also analysed according to their collective characteristics when approached as a form of discourse structure. This quantitative analysis is then pursued in relation to the characteristic 'private' or 'public' forms evident in and across these discourse structure elements comprising the inner city sample.

The Riot News Sample:

Following the first news presentation of the Handsworth Riots of september 1985, one full year of news broadcasts was scrutinised for all subsequent riot reports. This elicited a sample of 153 riot relevant news items. A sample of 153 presentational formats are thus briefly discussed in the same terms outlined in the inner city sample above, as are the 251 appearances of inner city actors according to the 14 main inner city groups already identified.

Selecting all lexical references to riot participants, the event, and social location of the riot samples of 123 event, 427 participant and 268 social location terms are gained across the 153 separate news items. These are then analysed according to whether advanced directly by the media, community representative, police or politician, or 'other' agency. This lexical analysis is then followed up with detailed quantitative analyses of the discursive associations found across these 'keywords'.

Identifying 8 narrative structures composed by 1144 issues and references from 100 plus different riot issues and references evident across the sample of 153 news reports, both narrative structures and the array of issues and references are quantitatively appraised in relation to contending inner city discourses. A complementary visual analysis is also conducted across these narrative elements, issues and references following the

Appendix 6 continued:

quantitative identification of 577 separate visual references (whether icon, personification, metonymy or synecdoche) across the year's riot portrayal.

A subsidiary visual study of the 104 riot news 'stills' employed across this coverage is also carried out.

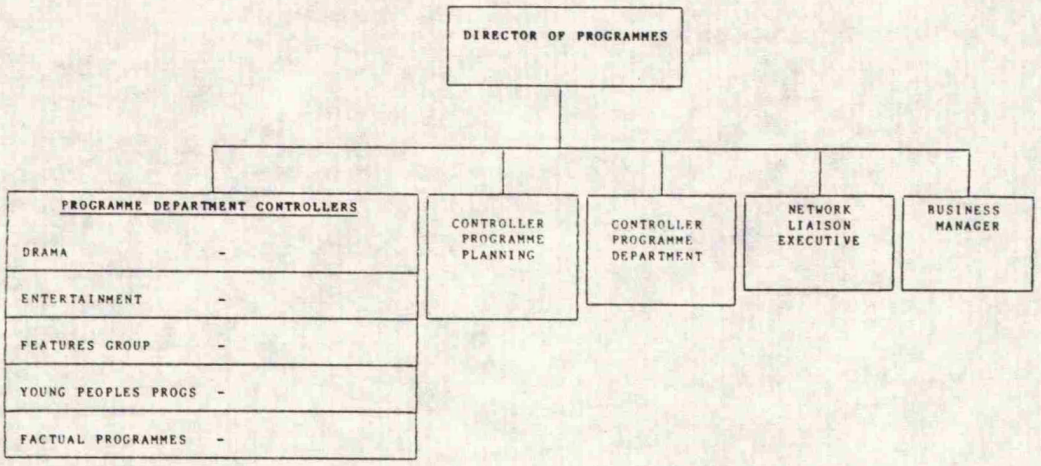
Other Programmes

Given the extent of non-news programming produced across the seven year sample period, this part of the discussion is necessarily more descriptive and impressionistic. That said, insight into the extent, range and forms of different current affairs and documentary programmes is gained from an overview of different series contents.

Other Riot Programmes

For the purposes of comparison three 'riot' current affairs and documentary programmes are subjected to a similar quantitative analysis to the riot news analysis. Attending to narrative structures, issues and references as well as different patterns of access and presentational forms this data provides suggestive insight into the degree of discursive closure and openess found across these different programme genres.

Appendix 7.



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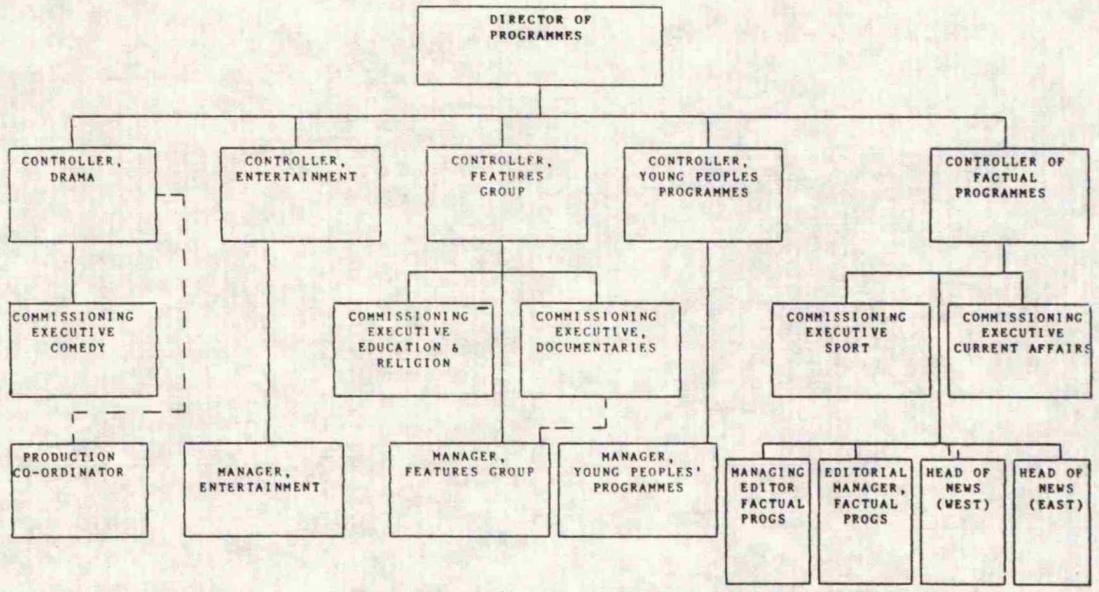
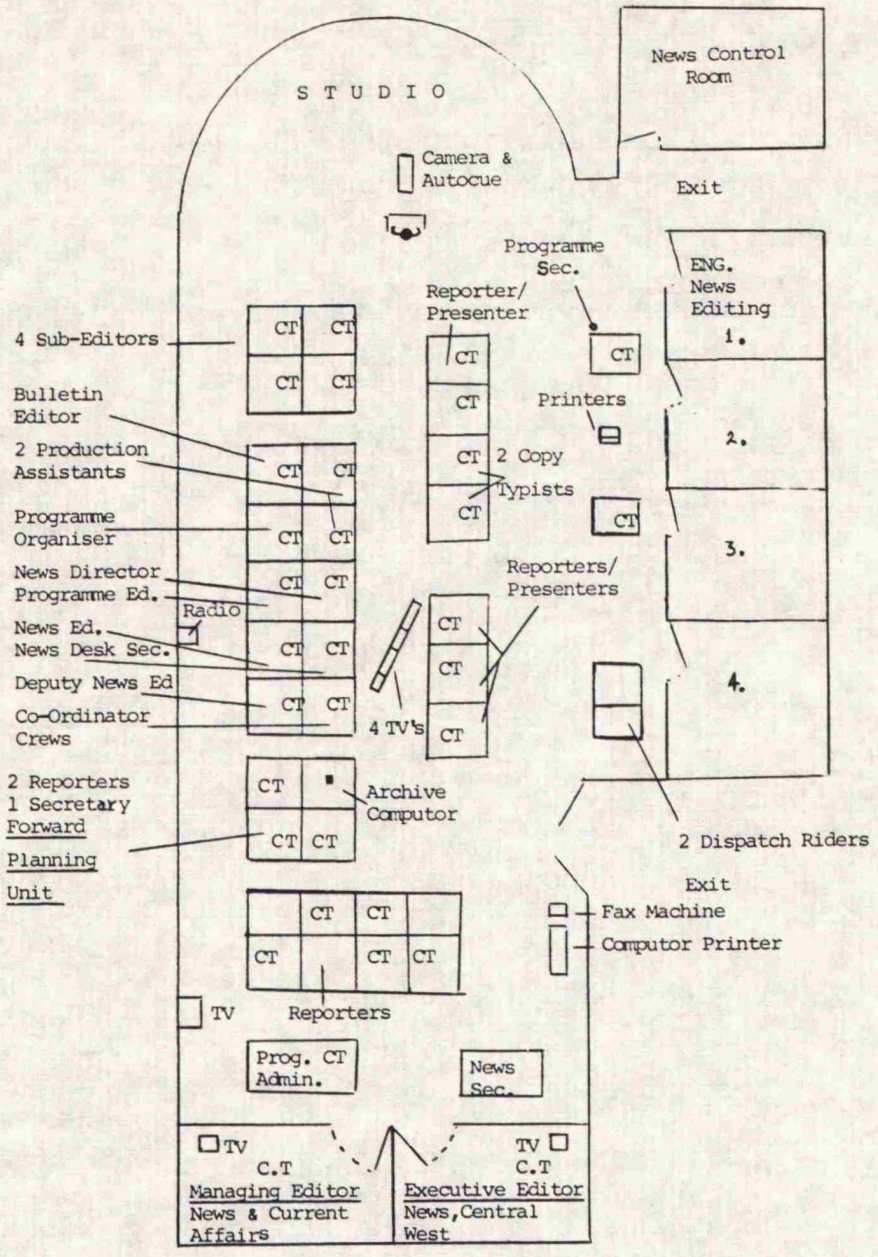
October 1988



(Relative position on page does not indicate status)

October 1988

Appendix 8.



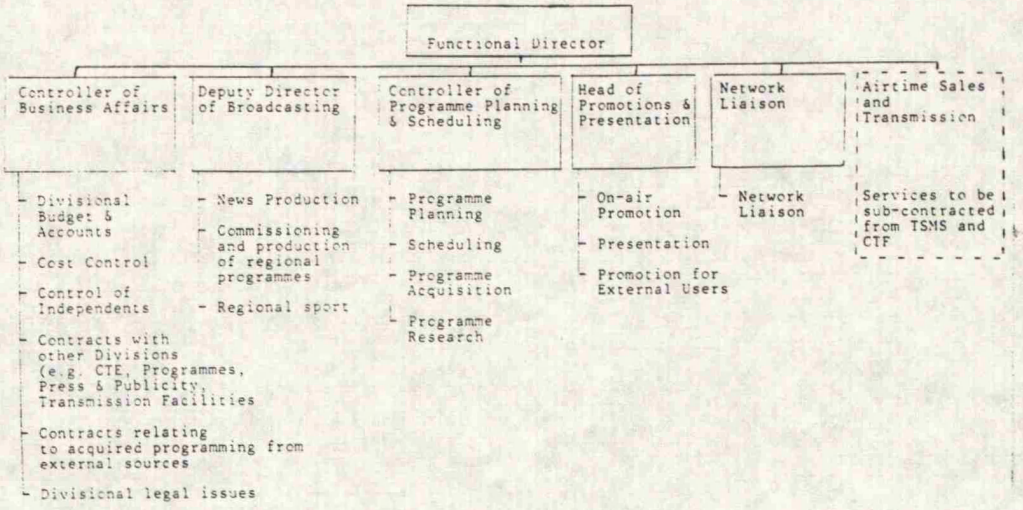
CENTRAL NEWS WEST : NEWSROOM LAYOUT AND PERSONNEL

Appendix 9.

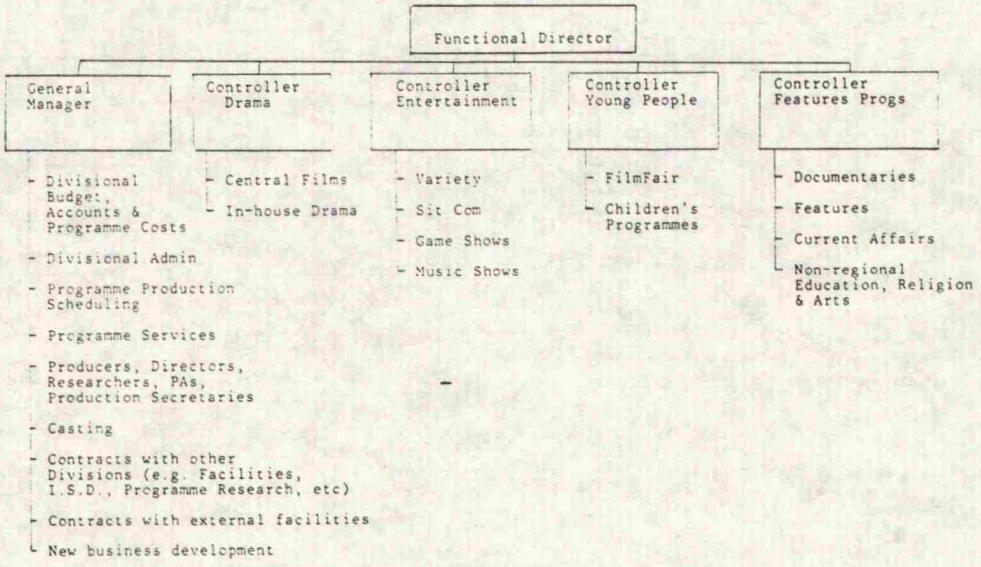
CENTRAL

BROADCASTING AND PROGRAMME PRODUCTION DIVISIONS

BROADCASTING DIVISION



PROGRAMME PRODUCTION DIVISION



A more detailed plan will be issued when the current re-organisation is complete.

ANDY ALLAN
Director of Broadcasting and Programme Production
22 March 1989

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