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MAKING LOCAL NEWS
JOURNALISM, CULTURE AND PLACE

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

City University, London

Department of Sociology

September 2005

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Two small pilot studies referred to in this text were used elsewhere: a survey of the coverage of the National Assembly for Wales by the local press in Wales was reported to the Wales Media Forum, and an interview with a local journalist in the west of England was included in a paper on press representations of refuge and asylum co-written with Tammy Spears. Neither was published. A small part of the literature review undertaken for this study was included in a separate small-scale research project on the reporting of the Australian federal election in October 2004, and published in the *Australian Journalism Review* (Bromley 2005a).

Brisbane

June 2005

Declaration

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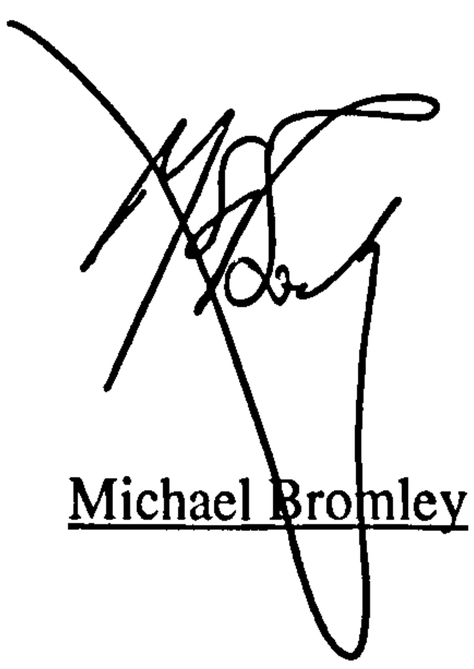

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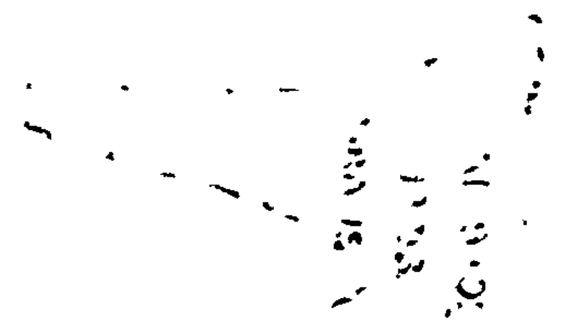


Abstract

In the closing decade of the twentieth century journalism was perceived to be in crisis, as profit-driven, corporatized media conglomerates seemed to enforce market-driven editorial approaches. What debate there was about such matters in the UK tended to focus on the national news media, particularly that section of the press colloquially known as 'Fleet Street'. Yet the impact of these tendencies was also apparently evident among local newspapers, which Tunstall (1996) said had suffered 'meltdown'. These titles supposedly contained less news and more newszak (Franklin 1997). One of the most notable consequences of this trend was an apparent decline in the amount of political information published. Yet at the end of the 1990s more politics was introduced into the UK with the establishment of devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Drawing on descriptions and analyses of the local press in the USA, Canada, Australia and elsewhere, as well as other parts of the UK, this study explores the contemporary making of local news by taking a snapshot of the local press in south-east Wales at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and against the backdrop of the introduction of the National Assembly for Wales. Interviews with a group of local newspaper editors and with a number of journalism educators; documentary and data analysis; *post facto* participant observation and a short non-participant observation, and thematic textual analysis of a time-based sample of fourteen English-language weekly, two evening, one morning and one Sunday newspapers were undertaken. Specific attention was paid to the reporting of politics. The persistent idea of proximity – the role of constructs of territorial and cognitive place – in journalism was taken as a starting-point to utilize the work of Aldridge (2003), Griffin (2002), Hartley (1998), Law (2001), Rossow and Dunwoody (1991) and Temple (2004) to suggest forms of journalism which were banal, precise, enabling and affiliated. These indicated that what was called 'news' was routinely scoped, mobilizing identity, utility and association, around what was believed to constitute territorial and cognitive belonging. Moreover, senses of belonging were often complementary rather than conflicting. These ideas challenge the orthodoxy that news is primarily scaled (from 'small' to 'big') and that journalism is essentially competitive. While it was found that these conditions were not exclusive to the local press, the ways in which they were configured were specific. The key aspect was the preparedness of journalists to concede their 'professional' claims to news-making to contributing members of the public. That this occurred far more readily in the local press led to the conclusion that local journalism was not merely a minor variant of journalism practised elsewhere, but a distinct emergent form more ambivalently related to press commercialism. Furthermore, it is suggested that formal press structures and the accepted hierarchies of journalism no longer express as precisely as they were once assumed to such distinctions in contemporary editorial approaches.

Abergavenny Chronicle

Penarth times

Barry & District news

Glamorgan GAZETTE

SOUTH WALES Argus

Hereford Times

WALES on Sunday

Campaign

Trinity Mirror

South Wales ECHO

Glamorgan GEM

NEWSQUEST

The Western Mail

Rhymney Valley EXPRESS

1

Introduction: 'meltdown'?

> The past year has been, I think, the worst year for American journalism since I entered the profession forty-four years ago
>
> — David Halberstam ('Preface' to Kovach and Rosentsiel 1999, ix)

That journalism was experiencing some sort of crisis was axiomatic at the end of the twentieth century (Hargreaves 2003, 5-6). The editor-in-chief of the *American Journalism Review*'s 'Project on the State of the American Newspaper' also ventured that 'The American newspaper industry is in the middle of the most momentous change in its entire three hundred year history' (Roberts 2001, 2). The veteran American journalist, Arthur E. Rowse (2000, 2), acknowledged that the 'destructive forces ... that plagued the press' in the past remained much the same, but, along with many others, he believed them to be 'stronger' and their consequences 'more serious' in the 1990s. Anxiety over the state of journalism was most evident in the United States of America (Hargreaves 2003, 75-6). The Washington editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* was among the more notable of several American journalists who tried to figure out 'what changed' (Fallows 1996, 47). The number of trade (rather than academic) books published on this general theme

indicated the plausibility of the argument. As well as Fallows and Rowse, the contributors to the debate included two leading *Washington Post* journalists, the same paper's press critic, a Canadian broadcaster, a former Associated Press correspondent, and a former editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, (Downie and Kaiser 2002; Kurtz 1993; Nash 1998; Rosenblum 1993; Squires 1994). Underlying these various critiques was a belief in the destructive force of the 'free' market, which, when left unchecked, weakened the constitutional First Amendment role of journalism in sustaining democracy by situating the media as private goods to be traded primarily for profit rather than as a public service for the general well-being (see Bromley 2000). This raised the spectre of lower levels of investment in the gathering, editing and dissemination of news (a unique output) in favour of a greater focus on entertainment (a universal product), produced, packaged and distributed as cheaply as possible (Hargreaves 2003, 76-83; Sparks 2000, 3-5). The most significant consequence was tabloidization (Glynn 2000, 6-8). In Fallow's (1996, 52-60) view a good part of the cause of this supposed decline in journalism was television: TV demanded spectacle, not explanation; on-screen personalities, not hard-working reporters; celebrity, not authority, and attractive material which could be paraded as news, not important information which had to be made interesting to reinforce its relevance. In newspapers, signature editorial (news) and titles (some dating back to the eighteenth century) morphed into generic 'content' and 'brands' (Auletta 2001, 238) – profits mattered not Pulitzer prizes. 'News was no longer the paramount value, simply a vehicle to achieve the paramount value, which was financial return' (Roberts 2001, 15).

By comparison, there was little such public debate in the UK, where what did occur was largely confined to the specialist sections of broadsheet newspapers (mainly, *The Guardian*) and political weeklies, the trade press and the *British Journalism Review* (Bromley 1998a; Rusbridger 2005 – for examples, see Krönig 2004 and Sampson 1996).[1] British journalists broadly shared the pessimism exhibited by Americans. In a 'state-of-the-nation' assessment made at the end of 2001, 16 journalists offered their observations to the trade magazine *Press Gazette*. There was a broad consensus that the main inter-connected challenges to journalism were:

[1] Hargreaves's (2003) book was a possible exception, as perhaps was Marr (2004). The latter was published too late to be properly reviewed for this study.

- 'to keep up quality with reduced resources' (the editor of a professional magazine);
- 'Having the courage to pursue more issues that matter as distinct from inflating more trivia' (BBC investigative reporter John Ware);
- 'to keep readers engaged' (joint editor of *Time* Europe) (Anon 2002a).

One stand-out from the tendency to limit such discussion to 'shop talk' was the work of the Australian journalist working in Britain, John Pilger (1986; 1992; 1997 & 1998; see also Bailey and Williams 1997, 363-5; Hargeaves 2003, 86-7). Somewhat against the general trend, however, when the editor of the *Financial Times Magazine*, John Lloyd, first in his book *What the Media are Doing to Our Politics* and then in the Reuters Memorial Lecture, accused journalists of acting like 'a bunch of hopeless hacks ... driven not by a consciousness of civic duty but by a compulsion to beat the competition, or be famous, or dish the dirt on someone' (Lloyd 2004a & 2004b), *The Guardian* (2005) solicited and published the views of 50 non-journalists on the perceived inadequacies of journalism.[2] Nevertheless, unlike the formal structures of the US media which laid an emphasis on a more localized press – a pantheon of titles, such as the *Atlanta Constitution-Journal*, *The Tennessean*, the *Orlando Sentinel*, *Des Moines Register*, *Sacramento Bee*, *Knoxville Journal* and *St Petersburg Times* (to cite some of the more prominent from those mentioned by Squires [1994]) – the focus in the UK remained on the large national media institutions. By comparison, in the US even what were classified as 'big' papers retained a level of provincialism, being based in metropolitan areas (Kurtz 1993, 67).[3] Few equivalent local newspaper titles in the UK were as recognizable (possibly to some of the British public) as the *Los Angeles Times*, or even the *Sydney Morning Herald*. As if troubled by their association with specific locations, a number dropped placenames from their titles – the [Belfast] *News Letter*, the oldest continuously published daily newspaper extant in the UK, in as early as 1962 (Bromley 1991, 62).

[2] See also, Leigh 2005; Lloyd 2005 and Sampson 2005.
[3] By the early twenty-first century there were only three national daily newspapers in the US – *USAToday*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the national edition of *The New York Times*.

Following the decision to establish a Scottish parliament, public attention was redirected somewhat towards the larger daily (morning) newspapers published in Edinburgh and Glasgow (the *Daily Record*, *Herald* and *Scotsman*) (Williams 1998, 244), and, arguably, after the establishment of a National Assembly for Wales/Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru (NAfW), the *Western Mail* in Cardiff (Mungham and Williams 1998). Nevertheless, where the local press seemed to intrude more noticeably into the wider public arena – even in Northern Ireland during the civil unrest in the 1970s – it more commonly engendered disdain and dismissal (Bromley 1989, 213; Bromley 1997b, 133-4). The local press was widely seen as being 'unprofessional' and largely inconsequential (Elliott 1977, 278-9). Unlike the situation in parts of the former Yugoslavia, where the local press was viewed as a key mechanism for sustaining post-Communist 'civil society, civil responsibility and engagement' (MHJU 2000; Udovicic 1997), no-one seemed to care over much about the numerous *Echoes*, *Stars*, *Gazettes*, *Advertisers*, *Recorders*, *Journals* and *Mercuries* which circulated throughout the UK. The press-scape was dominated instead by the national newspaper sector. Thus, the American concern with the state of the press, which included at its core consideration of local weeklies, independently-owned local dailies, the conglomeration of the local press, and so on (Bass 1999; Bissinger 1999; Morton 2003; Risser 1998; Walton 1999), barely surfaced in the UK. In the first decade of its existence (1989-1999), the *British Journalism Review* published ten articles on the UK local press (including the Scottish and Welsh press). By comparison, it published nearly 40 articles on national newspapers; a further ten articles on Rupert Murdoch alone, and 28 on the press and journalism in other countries, including twelve on US journalism (*British Journalism Review* 2000). By far the most sustained academic critical analysis of the UK local press came from Franklin and Murphy, both collaboratively (with each other and third parties) and individually (esp. 1991; 1997; 1998a, b & c). One of the few texts to examine both the national and local press more or less even-handedly was Franklin's 1994 study.

Two particular anxieties beset the press in general in a number of geo-political domains, and the local press in the UK in particular: falling readerships, and a failure to appeal to both younger people and women (Blankenburg 1992, 112; Bromley 2003b, 15-16; *World Newspaper Trends* 2000, 5). The accelerating circulation

decline was attested to by the example of the *Birmingham Post*. Mentioned approvingly by Hood (1972, 78) as one of only six 'quality' local dailies in the UK, its circulation fell by 30% over nearly 50 years (from 40,000 in 1945 to 28,000 in 1994), and then by a further 37.5% within the next decade (to 17,500 in 2003) (Seymour-Ure 1996, 46; http://icbirmingham.icnetwork. co.uk). This situation provoked distinctively different responses. The press, as commercial enterprises organized industrially, reacted by reaffirming the primacy of 'the market', overseen by voluntary self-regulatory mechanisms, for delivering public responsibility, while providing a defence against (State) censorship, and guaranteeing (financial) viability. Journalists, however, generally took a different view, many regarding self-regulation as a means of merely 'defend[ing] the press, and by extension the proprietors who funded it'; indeed, O'Malley and Soley (2000, 96, 119 & 141) argued that one of the groups against which self-regulation shielded the press was that of journalists themselves. One area where this appeared to be so was in the relative value placed on, first, advertising over sales (circulation) as sources of revenue, and, second, revenue-raising in its totality over the public good of journalism, prompting debates about 'the tension between the news instinct and the entertainment instinct' (Hargreaves 2003, 107).

The so-called glass wall which was supposed to separate the editorial and business functions in newspapers began to be torn down. In its 1979 report, *Changing Needs of Changing Readers*, which explored the decline of the US press, the market research firm, Yankelovich, Skelly and White, pointed the finger at 'the mind-set in the newsroom'. Many of the ideas in the report informed the editorial approach of *USAToday*, a market-driven national daily denigrated as 'McPaper' (Layton 1999; Pritchard 1987). Although the coming-together of editorial, sales, advertising and marketing, so-called 'total newspapering', had been evident since the 1970s, the most notorious case occurred at the *Los Angeles Times* in 1999 (Edge 2000). The seminal turning-point came, however, a decade previously – a newspaper marketing conference held in Miami in February 1989 at which targeting desirable consumers was prioritized over newsmaking (Blankenburg 1992, 112-5). The year previously, the chairman of Knight-Ridder, James Batten, initiated a 'customer obsession' in the newspaper chain (Hoyt 1992). In such an environment, one senior English local newspaper editorial manager argued, journalism ethics were an impediment

(Pritchard, Kelly and Ward 1993, 11). Journalists in the US mobilized a two-pronged defence, however. The Project for Excellence in Journalism, a research group, and the Committee of Concerned Journalists, an activist organization, were formed in 1997 with links to Columbia University's graduate School of Journalism and the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard (www.journalism.org). Reflecting this, the *Columbia Journalism Review* began publishing valedictory notices for journalists who were seen as making a stand against what was viewed as creeping commercialism; for example,

> Virginia Gerst, editor of Diversions, a section that appears in twenty-seven editions of the weekly *Pioneer Press* in suburban Chicago. Ordered to run an appetizing restaurant review concocted by the paper's marketing director to tempt the eatery's owner — and erstwhile advertiser — who reportedly had expressed distaste for an earlier review that was something less than a rave, Gerst raised strong ethical objections to no avail. And so, Gerst quit.
>
> Dan Cook and Sharon Debusk, editor and managing editor, respectively, of the Portland, Oregon, *Business Journal*. The *Journal*'s interview with the local Planned Parenthood's ceo was already at the printer when Craig Wessel, publisher of the Advance Publications weekly, stepped in and killed it. As reported by *Willamette Week*, Wessel's stated objection to the interview — an interview that, among other things, explored the organization's plans for expansion as well as its efforts at improving operational efficiency and cost control — was that 'it had no relevance to the business community.' The publisher also reportedly said (and reportedly denied) that (1) the piece was inappropriately positioned on a page with an important ad for a bank, and that (2) the paper 'doesn't cover extremist groups'. And so, with plenty of reasons to pick from, Cook and DeBusk quit. (Cooper 2004)

Finally, the whole scenario was greatly facilitated by the conglomeration of the local press (and much of the rest of the media) within a small number of corporations: by 2003 more than three-quarters of local newspaper circulations in the UK were controlled by four companies. 'Consolidation, consolidation, consolidation: that's the reality', Bell and Alden reported (2003, 27). In these circumstances commercial interests seemed to clearly outgun editorial sovereignty. Greg Dyke, the director general of the BBC, the largest news-gathering organization in the world, observed that 'news no longer makes ... money. That reality, that commercial reality has hit in Britain' (cited Hargreaves 2003, 173), while the US-based British editor Harold

Evans argued that the challenge for newspapers 'is not to stay in business; it is to stay in journalism' (cited Overholser 1998).

Meltdown?

Although the archetypal (British) tabloid newspaper of the 1980s was the largest selling UK national daily, *The Sun*, the local press played a role in processes of tabloidization, trivialization and the emergence of the advertorial from the 1970s (Bromley 1998a, 27-8; Elenio 1995, 12-15; Prochnau 1998). Tunstall (1996, 60-75) proclaimed that the local press in the UK had melted down, and was no longer comprised of (relatively) large circulation, orthodox, competing newspapers driven by news, but small-scale, monopoly advertising sheets with super-local information – all 'parish pump, ... job and property ads'. Larger papers acquired or started smaller 'satellites' (usually weekly freesheets) to mine the revenue seam at the lowest level (see also Prochnau 1998; Roberts 2001, 11). It was discovered that shopping was a major time-consuming activity for most people, so supermarket prices were leveraged into 'news' ahead of occurrences such as murders (Blankenburg 1992, 115-6; Elenio 1995, 9; Franklin 1994, 44). At the same time, between 1945 and 1994, in the UK twenty-seven evening and ten morning newspapers were closed, and local daily newspaper readership fell to 30% of the population by 1995 (Seymour-Ure 1996, 46-7 & 50). In London, where there had been six evening papers in 1920, the aggregate sales of the three remaining in the 1950s were 1.5 million: by 2004, the sole surviving title, the *Evening Standard* had a circulation of fewer than 400,000 (Alden 2004, 21; Seymour-Ure 1996, 16). The situation was much the same elsewhere. Between 1987 and 2000 News Limited closed ten daily titles in Australia (Lewis 2001, 101-6). By the mid-1990s the only surviving metropolitan evening title in the whole of Australia and New Zealand was the Wellington *Evening Post*, and its circulation fell by 36% in 23 years (Elenio 1995, 5; see also Roberts 2001, 13). In New York, Blankenburg (1992, 118) calculated, the twelve general circulation newspapers existing in 1949 with total circulations of more than 6.3m were reduced by 1990 to five titles circulating fewer than 2.8m copies.

Others took a different view of the situation, of course. Glynn (2000, 6-7) suggested that 'the popular tabloid media ... have learned ... to converse far more effectively with the subordinated classes. ... [and] thus serve generally as conduits for the circulation of *popular* (as opposed to elite or official) ways of knowing' (emphasis in original). Similarly, Lumby (1999, 203) argued that the tabloid media provided access to audiences for ordinary people to contribute to 'a new form of public speech, one which privileges experience over knowledge, emotion over reason, and popular opinion over expert advice.' Using television news as an example, Lichty and Gomery (1992, 3) noted, 'Predictable formats, epitomized by the authoritarian closing words of Walter Cronkite every evening ("And that's the way it is"), have given way to a cacophony of voices and images'. Moreover, contemporary trends in newspapers had mixed outcomes: in some cases, suburban titles newly satisfied a demand for local information which metropolitan dailies could not always meet (Bromley 2005a, 60-1), while a number of local dailies provided broader, relevant national and global news coverage. It was pointed out that journalists tended to respond subjectively to 'the change to group ownership ... new management styles and attention to market research' rather than to any noticeable deterioration in newspaper quality (Folkerts 1992, 128-9). Surveys suggested that group ownership had no effect on this quality (see also Greenslade 2004a), but did disturb the perceived relationship between communities and their newspapers. Even where newspapers appeared by consensus to improve, it was believed that they had nevertheless suffered a net loss through loosening their ties to the community:

> Group ownership changed the relationship of ... [newspapers] to their communities. As outsiders came in to run the family- and employee-owned papers, the lament was of a loss of individuality – of ... local values giving way to the values of a national or international media conglomerate. The feeling that a newspaper has become a little less a part of the community makes it easier to criticize chain ownership, even if it provides a viable, and perhaps even more aggressive, product. (Folkerts 1992, 134-5)

Summarizing much of the debate, Conboy (2004, 225-6) rejected the commonplace argument that journalism had somehow fallen from a state of grace achieved in some past 'golden age'. Rather, journalism was a permanently changing phenomenon, whose forms were largely unfixed and fluctuating. By the end of the twentieth

century 'heightened, accelerated and technologized' forms of inter-textuality emphasized the hybridity of journalism. While some saw that as representing its dissolution as a specific form of knowledge-making, he argued that there were instead 'many more opportunities to engage with the contemporary world through the existing range of journalism than ever before' (p.223). '[J]ournalism as a fixed practice has never existed but only ever as a discursive combination of a variety practices negotiated within power relationships which have shifted over time' (p.222).

One difficulty was a lack of empirical evidence to support the various theoretical stances, opinions, business theories, and even market research (Roberts 2001, 6). Readership survey methodologies in particular were suspect, and produced inconsistent and contradictory results (Blankenburg 1992, 116; Layton 1999). As a consequence, even so-called market-driven newspapers provided readers with content they didn't want, and omitted that which they did want (Bogart 1992, 89). At best, crude quantitative surveys demonstrated general trends over time across samples of titles towards more published photographs, more features, more 'soft' news, more sections, specialized advertisements, more sports coverage, more business pages, more columns, more lifestyle and entertainment sections, and standardized packaging (templating) (Bogart 1992, 96-100). They did not produce constant measures of key variables, such as the commitment to local news, however (Stepp 1999). Attempts were made to translate such findings into qualitative assessments – a 'news quality index' – based on giving weightings to factors such as size of circulation; relative size of the news-hole; the proportion of local news published; the amount of staff-generated editorial content; hard news story counts; the use of photographs and graphics; the number of syndicated features carried; the range of wire services subscribed to, and the space allotted to news background and analysis (Folkerts 1992, 129-32). However, the internal referencing of such exercises meant that they primarily measured the relative performance of papers only insofar as they conformed to past or current newspapering practices. On the other hand, McLachlan and Golding (2000) attempted to impose an external analytical frame on contemporary newspapers, using the following categories:

Range – the topics, institutional fields and actors covered (e.g., the number of international stories);

Form – the use of illustration, vocabulary, syntax and presentation (e.g., how many pictures, how much text);

Mode of address – the tenor of journalism (e.g., a dyadic or didactic tone);

Market structure – distribution and production (e.g., targeting of reader groups).

Although the project was incomplete, it was intended to get the measure (quantitatively and qualitatively) of any shift towards tabloidization (pp.76-8).

Elements of journalism

From within journalism, the most systemic analysis, produced jointly by the Committee of Concerned Journalists and the Project for Excellence in Journalism (see above) deployed the analytical frame of 'the culture of news' (Kovach and Rosenstiel 1999, 1). It was proposed that this had five characteristics, arising directly from a set of causal factors, and resulting in the degeneration of journalism:

1. 24/7 multi-platform news competition produced a 'never-ending' news cycle which demanded instant content, and which in turn led to less competent journalism done in a hurry;
2. a greater demand for news benefited the public relations business, as suppliers, and resulted in a shift in their power relations with journalists, with spin doctors gaining the upper hand;
3. consumer preferences were met by more specialized and targeted news outlets with little in common, including the 'professional standards and ethics' by which their journalists operated;
4. the need to fill the news-hole promoted an 'argument culture' based on commenting on the news, chat and punditry rather than reporting, and undermining the need to verify information;
5. in a highly-competitive environment news providers strove to grab the public's attention and over-relied on 'blockbusters', a form of 'cheap and

> easy' journalism which stripped resources from more difficult, and less sensational, reporting tasks (Kovach and Rosenstiel 1999, 6-8).

The same authors proposed a nine-point program of principles, which represented a consensual response elicited through more than 100 interviews with journalists, as a counter to these tendencies. Based on the notion that 'the purpose of journalism is to provide people with the information they need to be free and self-governing', they were

1. a first obligation to the truth;
2. a first loyalty to citizens;
3. an essential discipline of verification;
4. independence from faction;
5. monitoring power and giving voice to the voiceless;
6. provision of a forum for public criticism and compromise;
7. striving to make the significant interesting and relevant;
8. keeping the news comprehensive and proportional;
9. freedom to exercise personal conscience (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001, 12-3).

This work laid bare a contest over competing knowledge claims.[4] Journalists, who asserted a 'pure' form of journalism which relied on 'truth, independence and clarity', increasingly found themselves implicated in 'a whole entertainment-information industry', their imagined *pro bono* reciprocal relationship with the citizenry refracted through the prism of commercial enterprises intent on profiting from a one-way selling of advertising which turned citizens into value goods (consumers).[5] Journalists' 'natural' allies were no longer readers who bought newspapers but corporate entities who owned them. This was a 'new culture of journalism' only insofar as journalists clung to an imagined past in which journalism was somehow purer (Lawe Davies 1999, 54-7 & 63). McLachlan and Golding undermined this presumption by demonstrating the (dis)continuities over time of forms of journalism, and particularly tabloidism (see also Engel 1996; Stephenson

[4] The idea is taken from Turner (2000, 362), who used it in the different but related context of Australia's 'Media Wars'. See also McNair (1998, 6-7).
[5] The reified industry term was 'eyeballs'.

1998). The 'New News', as *Rolling Stone* magazine called it, was perhaps not so new, and in some ways represented a return to aspects of the 'Old News' (Taylor 1992, 38ff).

Problematizing the local

At the end of the twentieth century 'local' seemed to be less defined by commonsense. The process of globalization suggested that the world had become a single, culturally homogenized place, determined by both the supply of products and services, and a sharing of knowledge, which appeared to be invariable, and their consequent consumption as acts of identity-formation (Lie 2003, 102). This was reflected in ideas of the emergence of global media, tightly controlled by a small number of corporations, and inducing 'mass conformity' (Bagdikian 1996, 7). Gigantic media corporations 'wanted to take over government and society' (Rowse 2000, 5-6). These homogenizing forces were seen has having reached deep into so-called local life through the increasingly corporate ownership of the local press already mentioned. Where corporate organizations sought to maximize profits by building brands and routinizing the production of (editorial) content, they relied increasingly on reproducing the 'platitudes and clichés' of a hackneyed mix of elements which were advertorial or infotainment in style and approach if not always, strictly speaking, in genre (van Ginneken 1998, 210). On the other hand, precisely the same trends (of media collosuses straddling the earth) gave the impression that 'the world seem[ed] to be fragmenting' (Mowlana 1996, 185), as a second effect of the broad reach of news media was a resort to particularism – a disengagement from the complexities of contextualization, and a valorization of 'parochialism and isolation' – driven by market considerations such as demographic targeting (to address as efficiently as possible an audience that was as commercially rewarding as possible). Thus, at one and the same time, local news appeared to be much the same wherever it was produced and published, but also highly differentiated and exclusive (Entman 1992, 62-6).

Mediacentric perspectives, which privileged production and textuality, were themselves prone to the same tendencies (Deacon 2003, 214-5). The 'continuing

failure to integrate consumption into the equation leaves the ... debate stranded in mid-air: able to argue the causes and characteristics of ... processes, but poorly positioned to ascertain their wider social consequences' (p.216). Irrespective of the conditions of its production, or the constructions of its texts, news was re-shaped through reception, which acted as a normalizing prism, subjecting mediated views of the world to further cultural and cognitive refractions – levelling, sharpening and assimilating – to make them conform to 'our own world views' (van Ginneken 1998, 207). While production, regulation and representation tended to be globalized, this action was inclined to be localized (Lie 2003, 115). The 'local' in local news, therefore, was likely to be set less by the media which made it than by the audiences which consumed it, and the construction of local news in local newspapers was an outcome of continuing negotiations between producers, texts and readers over symbolic, structural, territorial and virtual boundaries (p.103).

Insofar as 'the local' was configured contingently and cognitively around the everyday, the production of news texts intersected with lived experience within and across those boundaries, and offered 'a space for information and advice on how to cope' (Eide and Knight 1999, 526-8). Through the mobilization of an array of traditional journalistic techniques – crusades, campaigns, guides, assistance – journalism extended its largely antagonistic articulation of the mundane life-world with the systems-world beyond the 'public sphere' and into the private realm (pp.528-30, 532 & 536). For Eide and Knight (1999, 543-5) the development of 'service journalism' was not a collapse into trivialization, 'parochialism and isolation', but a vital complement to sub-politics (civics), and 'part of the more fluid and permeable political culture that has arisen with the growing complexity and reflexivity of modernity':

> The growth of subpolitics at a distance from the conventional institutions of democratic government points to the importance of spaces such as the media where everyday life and its relationship with the political and economic systems are problematized, criticized and contested.

The replacement of the well-known idea of *public* service journalism with just 'service journalism' suggested a retreat from public engagement which Eide and

Knight (1999, 545) rejected. An alternative *community* service journalism (a version of the American public or civic journalism) (Romano and Hippocrates 2001, 185) attempted to bridge the gap between the increasingly globalized production and regulation of news texts and their representations, and their localized reception; and to fill the gap between *public* and an apparent nothingness (de Wall 2004, 35).

Nevertheless, competing and contradictory definitions of 'the local press' persisted. In a number of instances, 'local' was conflated with 'community' as a concept. This did not normally signal a major shift in the focus and purpose of the press concerned, but rather glossed adjustments at the margins, and the adoption of a term which was believed to have more popular appeal. At its simplest, 'community journalism' was no more than,

> the reporting of news and information for a certain geographical area ... a community, if you will, with the purpose to serve the best interests of that certain group. (Community Journalism n.d.)

Some regarded this as an opportunity to provide community leadership ('Facing the future' 2004). In other instances (for example, Fairfax Community Newspapers in Australia), the publication of news was demoted behind broader ambitions to provide generic 'information' (fconline 2002): elsewhere (the Canadian Community Newspapers Association [CCNA]), the emphasis remained on maintaining 'a powerful, effective and dynamic medium for news [and] opinion'. Within the domain of press operations, so-called community newspapers embraced both small- and large-scale publishing (from 1,000 to 100,000-plus copies a week), and corporate and group, as well as independent and single-title, ventures (BCYCNA 2003; CCNA 2004). Operationally, the term reflected a commercial concern with the non-metropolitan contexts of newspaper publishing, rather than with publishing itself. The Huck Boyd National Center for Community Media (nd) proclaimed that its ambition was

> to serve and strengthen the local newspapers ... that play a key role in the survival and revitalization of America's small towns. ...We seek to sustain and enhance the positive qualities of life found in small cities throughout America by nurturing and strengthening community media.

Although it could be argued that this approach went some way towards recognizing the Unesco definition of 'community' as 'the base unit of horizontal social organization', it stopped short of accepting the attendant description of community media as 'those media designed to encourage participation by a broad representative cross-section of socio-economic levels, organizations and minority or subcultural groups' (quoted Lewis 1993, 11-12). While many of these newspapers moderated some of the more extreme forms of one-way, top-down communication inherent in orthodox press publishing, they did not implement two-way, participatory communication models; nor could they be considered 'alternative'; and they remained resolutely market-oriented (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes 2002, 54-6). For example, Trinity Mirror interpreted its initiative to 'target reader groups', including families with school-age children, sports fans and businesses, in order to be 'of maximum value and interest' as one of supposedly '*Connecting Communities*' (Hold the Front Page 2003b). This rediscovery of community journalism reflected a belief that, having originated in territorial or cognitive communities, journalism 'shifted from community service tool to expertise and entertainment vehicle', substituting professional journalists for 'civic-minded citizen' contributors, and the situation had to be recovered' (Manafy 2004).

Modelling the making of local news

At best, 'participatory journalism' was said to be 'when a reader or viewer can walk into a country seat newsroom and tell off the editor or manager' (Waddle cited Slona 2004). From a more critical perspective, Deuze (1998-9) defined so-called community journalism as partly a form of civic journalism 'or local watchdog journalism' with, additionally, 'a strong emphasis on interaction with a specific audience and a service-oriented approach'. This operational logic – the more rather than less vague idea that journalism was somehow 'locked into the ups and downs of its community' (*Anniston Star* 2004) – was taken as the starting-point for a critical analytical examination of newsmaking, because the notion of 'the local' (and variant terms, including 'community') had particular meaning, and assumed such

importance, in predominantly Anglo-Saxon cultural contexts (the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, and so on).

The work of Kovach and Rosenstiel and of McLachlan and Golding provided the background to, and informed, the primary modes of analysis used in this study. Its importance lay in the ways in which it rendered tangible journalism as a textual system which attempted to order the world in order to know it (Hartley 1999b, 24). Their work was not replicated, however, because (a) this was not a comparative study, measuring neither historical trends, nor performance against normative standards, but a snapshot survey taken at one moment in time; and (b) the concern here was with the specificities of the local press, which were not the primary focus of either of the previous studies. Furthermore, this study relied primarily on textual analysis rather than an exploration of journalism production. Textual analysis permitted the confluence of historical, empirical and theoretical elements:

> textual analysis is not abstract, decontextualised or abstractly apolitical, but on the contrary is a form of historiography; a 'method' of demonstrating just how meanings are embedded in history, in a sense of who 'we' are, and in a network of other texts, contexts, meanings and dialogue without which they cannot be explained. ... analysis of [texts] ... has to be anchored in actual objects which can be recovered for analysis. In short, ... textual analysis is among the most empirical, 'objective' and real-oriented 'methods' available ... . (Hartley 1999a, 19).

The 'elements of journalism' foregrounded were neither the practices, characteristics and beliefs of news gatherers and disseminators, nor the techniques of news packagers (although all necessarily figured in the final equation), but were primarily the artifacts (the texts in the form of newspapers) they produced, and the relationships of those texts to 'the local', set within production and reception contexts. That meant that, at the outset, issues of what constituted 'the local press' needed to be resolved, outside of taken-for-granted and commonsensical definitions, before questions of what was 'local news' and how it was textualized could be confronted.

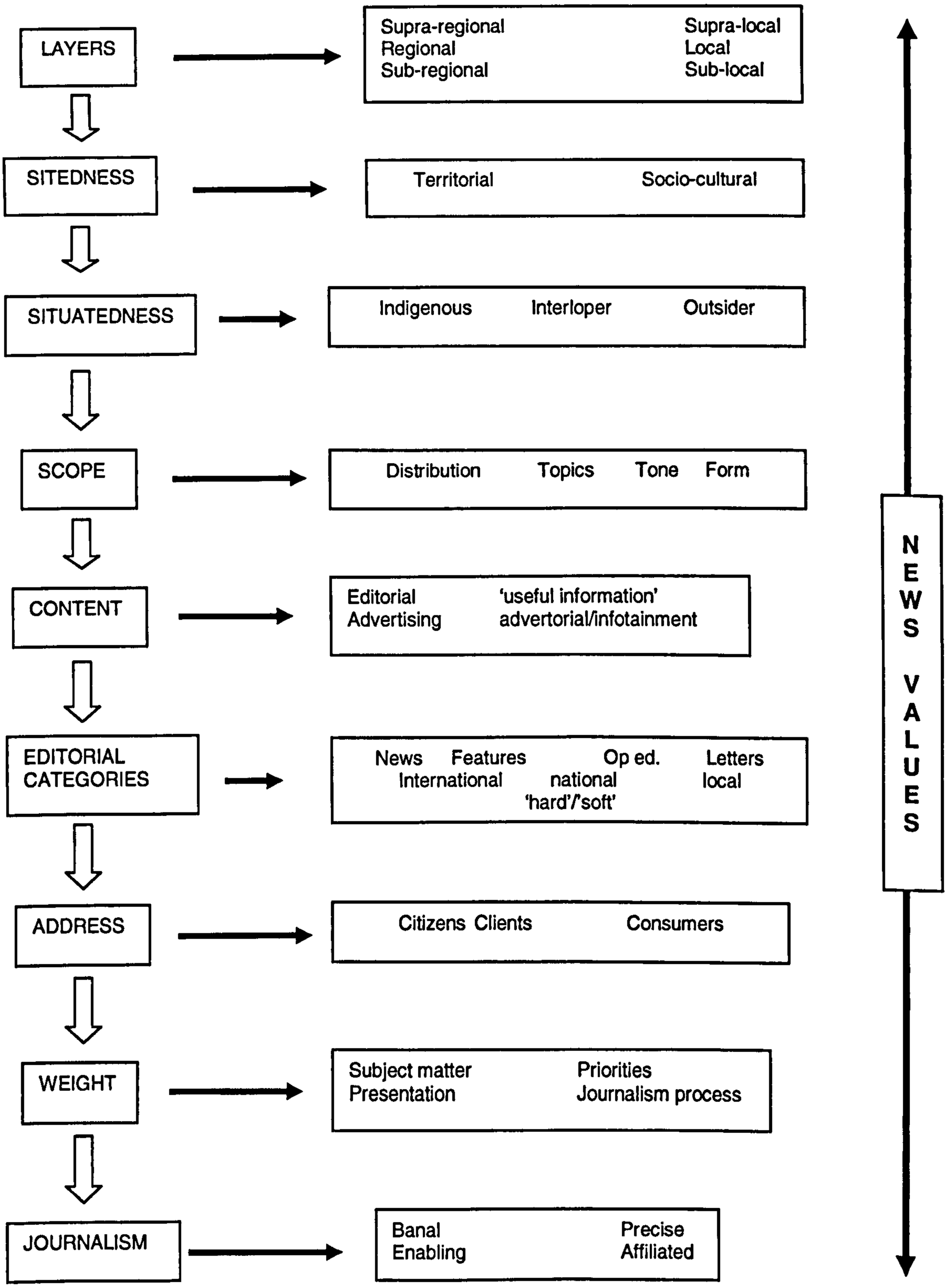
The local press

The local press was lodged in several layers within a general UK press- and media-scape, and as a participant in inter-layer competition and complementariness, both within these layers and across other (principally, national newspaper, but also broadcasting and digital) layers (Cho 2002). This local press was made up of several types of newspaper, displaying a complex matrix of attributes and characteristics, many derived from locale. Locale itself was defined as constitutive of both 'site' (*here*) and 'situation' (a relationship to *there*) (Rantanen 2003). Applying conventional terms, *regional* and *local* titles were sub-divided into additional supra- and sub- local/regional categories. The role of physical locality (geography) was acknowledged, and newspaper attributes included territorial, as well as socio-cultural, anchorages (Tŭser 1998). Titles might also be indigenous, interlopers and outsiders to any specific territorial or socio-cultural locale. As artifacts, these newspapers quantitatively and qualitatively scoped 'the local', giving it shape through mechanisms such as the reach of their distribution and the topics and tenor of their content (Law 2001). It was this content which was the chief focus of the study.

Newspaper content was divided and sub-divided into many components. At the highest level, distinctions were drawn between editorial, composed of news, features, photographs, etc. and advertising (principally, classified and display), although increasingly advertorial and 'useful information' blurred these category boundaries. At various lower levels these were further disaggregated; the news hole, to take a case in point, was disintegrated into 'hard' and 'soft' news, international, national and local news, and so on. One key question was whether such categories addressed readers as citizens, clients or consumers. This news was humanly produced, and the process of news-making, and its locatedness within territorial and socio-cultural communities – its connectedness – had importance, too.

The textual analysis of a purposive sample of local newspapers surveyed at the end of 2001 addressed these issues through four themes. Although the terms 'journalism' and 'news' were used, the analysis was applied to all identifiable forms of editorial

Figure 1.1: A model of local news making



Sources: Gant and Dimmick 2000; Griffin 2002; Gripsrud 2000; Kaszuba and Reader 1998; Law 2001;Lule 2001; McLachan and Golding 2000; Rantanen 2003; Rossow and Dunwoody 1991.

content. The themes were: *banal journalism*; *precise journalism*; *enabling journalism*, and *affiliated journalism.* These themes represented the ways in which editorial content imagined 'the local', scanned it, interacted with it, marked out its boundaries, positioned the press and journalism within it; and indicated how these journalisms, as instructional (democratizing) technologies within a increasingly individuated, consumer capitalism, constructed civic identity, and whether, through *broad-* or *narrow*-casting, they were liberating or disciplinary, cohering or fragmenting forces, as they negotiated diversity and difference within the context of citizenship (Costera Meijer 2001, 189-92). The various subjects addressed, the weight given to them, the forms in which they were presented and the journalistic techniques used, identified the types of journalism newspapers deployed (Gripsrud 2000, 293).

Overlaying much of this content was a sense of news value – the judgement brought to bear by journalists on the raw material they confronted, and then worked with to shape news output. News values (and news itself) were notoriously difficult to define, being ambiguous, amorphous, malleable and unfixed. Lule (2001) suggested, however, that underlying operational news values, and possibly the most significant influence on them, was the idea of 'the story' (pp.32-3). News dramatized the utopian and the dystopian to reinforce social order (Hogshire 1997, 47; Lule 2001, 35-6). News formation relied on the iteration of 'seven master myths' (Lule 2001, 21-5). The entire scheme is represented in Figure 1.1.

Structure of the study

Most of the various methodological and theoretical impulses on which this approach drew are explored in Chapter 2. However, rather than adopting a sectionalized approach, reporting components of the study – literature review, methodology, theoretical propositions, findings, discussion and conclusion – in separate chapters, this work is presented thematically. This groups primary and secondary evidence, reviews of the literature and research findings, and so on, together under thematic headings. The objective was to produce a synthetic critical analysis in the form of a

developing, single narrative which traced the dynamics of making local news across the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries.

Chapter 2 scopes the study from the perspective of the function of proximity in journalism – the so-called 'where' question. The research questions, the methodological approach and the theoretical constructs used have been included. It is proposed that in the latter half of the twentieth century a decentring occurred in the UK (as well as in other geo-political domains, such as the USA and Australia), which was not adequately captured by the notion of structural territorial shifts (for example, 'white flight' and suburbanization), although it included these, but which represented centrifugal cultural impulses that diffused identities, challenging the journalist's idea of 'local'. Four key journalisms – banal, precise, enabling and affiliated – are isolated to try to capture the relationship between journalism and place.

Chapter 3 looks at the local press in the UK, and particularly the English-language local press in south-east Wales (see Figure 1.2). The argument is put forward that the local press continued to construct 'the local' through the customary editorial activities of reporting, commenting, investigating, publicizing and providing a forum for debate. Nevertheless, the long-standing focus on politics was dissolving into a broader scoping of civics and consumption, reflecting a shift in public interest away from formal institutional local life towards individuated activities. This shift was complicated in Wales because in 1999 an additional tier of governance was introduced, responding to and impacting on a strong cultural sense of identity which had traditionally found expression in claims for discrete national institutions (Morgan, K.O. 2003, 136-9).

Chapter 4 explores local journalism, including the education and training of journalists, in the UK, tracing the transformation of local newsrooms in the closing decades of the twentieth century. While initially a function of the hyper-commercialization of the local press, the new local journalism which emerged was no longer quite so much the poor relative of national and international journalism (except, crucially, in terms of regular monetary reward), nor were its references always to supposedly more elevated forms of journalism. It was emerging as more clearly a practice in its own right. While this transformation was far from complete,

its crucial dimension was the change which was being effected in the staple of journalism – news.

Figure 1.2: The local English-language press in Wales: some front pages

Barry and District News
(12 August 2004)

Caerphilly Campaign
(12 August 2004)

Penarth Times
(12 August 2004)

South Wales Argus
(12 August 2004)

Note: Most of the English-language local press in Wales in 2001 was tabloid in format. The *Abergavenny Chronicle* was a rare exception. These front pages are for illustrative purposes only, and are not the front pages of the issues surveyed. They are not reproduced to scale.

Chapter 5 examines local news, its definition, production and presentation, set against a backdrop of wider on-going debates around news. It suggests that a contest over a form of knowledge – and control – was played out between commercial and

editorial (journalists') interests in the local press which found its expression in competing definitions of 'news', in which both sides claimed they directly addressed, and sought to mobilize, the public (readers, audiences) as citizens and/or consumers around ideas of what constituted news. Focusing on the publication of news about the NAfW, it is argued that, rather than thinking of news in blanket terms, such as 'serious' or 'trivial', a more nuanced approach more effectively captured the ways in which newspapers negotiated news to offer readers a contextualized package of information; and that competitiveness and complementariness – how newspapers managed their own material existence through the selection and presentation of editorial matter – impacted to configure news.

Chapter 6 traces the specific conditions of editorial production, and is based on interviews conducted with editors of the English-language local press in south-east Wales, and with staff of a number of journalism schools preparing young people for work in such newsrooms. It traces the ambiguous relationships between journalistic values and commercial practice, particularly the business of selling news in highly competitive markets, and claims to occupational autonomy made by journalists. The conclusion drawn is that journalists have altered their practices, complied with new processes and largely come to terms with changes in both newsroom contexts and, to a lesser extent, with those occurring in the wider culture. Problems remained evident, however, in the ways that newsrooms were managed by corporate newspaper owners. On the other hand, journalists were not totally absolved from culpability. Their ambitions for newspapers in the twenty-first century seemed to be so severely diminished that one writer felt it necessary to newly demonstrate a connection between the almost instinctive journalistic notion of 'quality' in news with the popular vitality of newspapers in order to prevent both from obsolescence (Meyer 2004).

Chapter 7 examines banal, precise, enabling and affiliated journalism as it appeared in newspapers circulating in south-east Wales. Examples of these journalisms were found in all of them, but not in the same configurations. The evidence presented is interpreted as demonstrating that, contrary to journalism orthodoxy, the news was not scaled hierarchically – from 'big' to 'small' stories – but was scoped. This scoping occurred at several levels, coalescing around identity: national, regional,

metropolitan and what was imprecisely called 'local'. How these interlocking and overlapping journalisms were operationalized was dependent primarily on the reach of 'professionalized' journalism. The (news) values of 'professional' journalists were such that they determined the making of news around acts of exposure. Where journalists shared the spaces for communication with others, editorial content was configured in ways which journalists could condemn as uncritical and even propagandist – not news at all. The lines between these extremes were blurred, however, not least structurally. Much 'professional' journalism was criticized for being uncritical, and the obverse of exposure was entertainment. While the (UK) national press contained large amounts of enabling and affiliated journalism, the more local press published far less. Much of this drew on cultures of consumption; both externally (fashion, food, cars, etc.) and internally (newspapers and news). The local press was more concerned with banal and precise journalism, establishing and reflecting identity, and drew more on self-representation. Some newspapers straddled these divides.

The *Conclusion* brings together the findings and analyses of the previous chapters. It contends that understandings of local news have depended too heavily on forms of professionalization which situated journalists as brokers of civic knowledge and facilitators of civic involvement, scaled to and from naturalized nation-State reference-points. This meant that national (and, occasionally, international) news was 'big' and of consequence, while local news was correspondingly 'small' and inconsequential (in England, parochial). Such concepts were problematized, however, by 'glocalization', in which heterogeneity and homogeneity, diversity and standardization interplayed each with the other. Furthermore, the strengthening of additional national identities and relationships through political devolution in the UK compounded the ambivalence of scaled concepts. Thus, customary categories – the national, regional, metropolitan and local press – were rendered less meaningful than what configurations of journalism revealed about the ways in which the press represented and negotiated identities and relationships with its imagined publics. When orthodox types of journalism (news, features; 'hard', 'soft', etc.) were substituted by the classifications of banal, precise, enabling and affiliated journalism, the press disposed itself differently. The (UK) national press was more reflective of a limited Britishness, even just Englishness, and found it difficult merely to scale this

to forms of Welshness. The press within Wales sought to contend with a potentially new context of Welshness which threatened to disrupt established notions of the national, the regional, the metropolitan and the local, and the habituated ways in which journalism related to place and culture.

While none of the local press simply ignored the new Welshness, representations of 'the local' were significantly varied, suggesting the primacy of cognition over territory in constructions of place. The frames included exoticized stereotyping; standardized consumerism; historical belonging, resilient regionalism, metropolitanism and localism, and combinations of these. Most pertinent of all, however, was the mode of representation – whether through the mediation of 'professional' journalism or more directly by popular contribution. Journalistic authority derived from exposure – the capacity to reveal that which publics might otherwise not be aware of – and one-way transmission to those publics. The alternative, 'unprofessional' model tended to boosterism and more open, dialogical transmission. Journalists' privileged status depended on maintaining this division, and demonstrating that 'professional' journalism most effectively satisfied social needs for surveillance of the environment. The conclusion of this study, however, was that this was not demonstrably so; that the focus on so-called 'serious' news – notably, politics – which characterized 'professionalized' journalism led to boosterism rather than exposure; and that the 'soft' news (or even no news at all) which typified more open, less mediated communication provided appropriate surveillance. This derived principally from scoping the environment (and the news); by applying banal and precise journalism (forms of knowingness) to the social. Where the press was less capable of doing this, it substituted alternative forms of knowing (enabling and affiliated journalism) to scope the material. Some newspapers attempted to straddle the divide. Nevertheless, it was a disconnect which gave local journalism a distinctiveness.

2
The 'where?' question

Sacharissa: "Are you *sure* of all of this, William?"

William: "Yes."

Sacharissa: "I mean, some bits – are you sure it's all true?"

William: "I am sure it's all journalism."

Sacharissa: "And what's that supposed to mean?"

William: "It's true enough for now."

— Pratchett (2001 edn., 394)

It may be ironic, but the local press in the United Kingdom has suffered a bad press for the past 30 years or more. The near-ubiquitous local newspaper was almost universally known as 'the local rag'; but in the past the term was used with a degree of affection (Hunt 1948, 112; Ruddick 1978, 2). People felt a sort of connection to the local press through a sense of occupying the same space – mental as well as physical (Jackson-Nelson 2004). Adapting the axiom of Arthur Miller, Colton (2004), a 57-year veteran journalist, characterized the local paper as 'a community talking amongst itself'.[6] Recalling his early career on a local weekly newspaper in east London in the 1960s, Greenslade (2001) argued,

[6] Miller's original observation was, 'A good newspaper, I suppose, is a nation talking to itself' (1961) (Knowles 2003).

> ... it was as if the paper existed independently of its staff. It was the glue that held the community together, a platform for sporting success, a place to celebrate births and weddings, or pay tribute to the dead, a forum for discussion about road safety or hooliganism, an information sheet.

The local press was supposedly comprised of 'good news' papers – 'infinitely more, positive, less critical, more sensible, less hysterical than the national press'. In 2003, resorting to a convenient political theme of national identity and national unity, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, mobilized the local press in support as 'rooted firmly in ... local communities'.

> Local newspapers remain a vital part of the fabric of this country. ... Despite our broad horizons, where you come from and where you live remains (*sic*) important to us. One of the great strengths of this country is our sense of community and it's ... [local] newspapers that help build and strengthen that sense of community (cited in Byrne 2003).

The local press was enlisted to play a highly visible role in the inauguration of a self-styled 'big conversation' with the British public ahead of an expected general election. Prior to the first stop on a projected prime ministerial tour – at Newport, Gwent, in December 2003 – Blair arranged to be interviewed by the political reporter of the *South Wales Argus*. The paper's editor seized the opportunity to promote the conversational nature of the local press's relationship with its publics (see Figure 2.1):

> Mr. Blair was in Newport to hear the views of local people but it was clear he also wanted to get his views across about the issues that matter to them. The best way for him to do that in our area was to talk to the *Argus*. (Hold the Front Page 2003e)

In many instances, local newspapers were a tangible presence in the city-, town- and landscapes of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (see O'Neill 2003). The use of the plural was justified, as many places had more than one local newspaper; for example, Burnley, a medium-sized industrial town in north-east Lancashire, had three penny weekly newspapers in 1860. More than a century later, it still supported a twice-weekly title and an evening paper. The offices of the *Burnley Express* in Bull Street were a notable local landmark, although of modest proportions compared to, say, the

building which housed the *Belfast Telegraph* in Royal Avenue, Belfast. Far more difficult to gauge were the affective linkages between the local press and communities. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that they existed, even if in forms of antagonism. They

Figure 2.1: The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, posing with the South Wales Argus *(December 2003)*

Source: Hold the Front Page 2003e.

were partly traced by Brian Moore – himself a former local newspaper reporter in Montreal – in his novel, *The Emperor of Ice Cream* (1966, 32-3), in which the autocratic father figure, 'prejudiced, emotional and unreasonable', scoured the [Belfast] *Irish News* 'until he found one [a story] which confirmed him in his prejudice'. 'Life in a provincial city or town,' the editor of the *Sheffield Telegraph* asserted, 'revolves around four central institutions – the cathedral (or parish church); the meeting place of industrial and business interests; the town hall; and the newspaper office' (Gardiner 1952, 204).

Defining 'local'

'Local' was defined, then, not simply in terms of spatial boundedness, but also as 'sharing, participation, fellowship and the possession of a common faith', which together constructed 'a world' of *here* (Rantanen 2003, 435-9), fusing 'geographical referent' with 'cultural stock' (Aldridge 2003, 503): 'the sense of belonging engendered by shared experiences, heritage, interests or expectations, within a given geographical space' (Scriven and Roberts 2001, 590-1). It was argued that public life was essentially mediated and that the public domain had shifted from territory to the media (Hartley 1992; Thompson 1995). Nevertheless, while the local press constituted part of this 'mediated public life', a material equivalent persisted in 'common locales': people met in the street, formed community groups, visited each others' homes, celebrated together, and so on (Craig 2004, 4-7). Its boundaries were symbolic as well as, or in some cases, rather than, geographical (Morley and Robins 1995, 1). This 'site', *here*, contained internal dimensions, too, equally comprised of place – landmark, symbolic, ritual, public, etc. – and people (Entman 1989, 342); what Kaniss (1991, 3) called more comprehensively 'the local environment', founded on webs of locality-based social power (Aldridge 2003, 493). Although the words 'community' and 'local' were commonly used interchangeably, *here* was to some degree heterogenous and more accurately described as 'a federation of different communities' (Scriven and Roberts 2001, 602). Place and people came together in social action, prominent among which were the 'ceremonies' of media consumption, which were in turn based on 'ritual behaviour' and 'the rhythms of …[local] life'. It was 'the level at which events are lived' (Scriven and Roberts 2001, 591). This found expression in distinctive linguistic forms, such as dialects, names, specific phrases and terms, and modes of usage (Aldridge 2003, 491-2; Gardiner 1952, 205). Thus, 'the federation of different communities' included a 'community of readers [of the local press]' (Aldridge 2003, 498).

A 'site' also had external relations – a situatedness – with other places and people, which were *there* (Rantanen 2003, 440). Newspapers provided a mechanism for addressing both *here* and *there*, and for connecting them (Rantanen 2003, 447). Local newspapers attempted to speak to 'a community of *interests*', defined as a self-identifying, active, communicative and participatory membership within a social system (Aldridge 2003, 493; Hippocrates 1988, 190). The most studied example, the US urban daily, played a crucial role in envisioning the city – materially, aesthetically, socially, politically, economically, culturally and psychologically – as both 'site' and 'situation', notably within the expansion of the USA as a federal nation-State with developing international relations during the long nineteenth century (Fairbanks 1999; Pauly and Eckert 2002). Urban dailies thereby constructed 'the local' through acts of reporting and recording, creating 'local identity', and produced 'local identity as much as they produce[d] news'; expressing *here* and *there* as they delineated categories of news (in spatial terms, metropolitan, regional, state, national, foreign; in cognitive terms, celebrity, human interest) (Kaniss 1991, 4). Over an extended period from the later eighteenth century, the local press evolved into '"community journals" ... whose contents bore a significant relationship to the communities where they were printed' (Kirkpatrick 2000a, 3).

The linking of *here* and *there*, the negotiation of 'site' and 'situation', was fraught with issues of 'Otherness', however. Insofar as the local press remained, as Rantanen suggested, not only in one or the other, but also between them, the question arose, *Who were <u>we</u> representing <u>them</u>?* In other words, what did sited representations of Others, made and received *here*, reveal about not only them (*there*) but also about the situated 'us' (Morley and Robins 1995, 133-4)? Surveying the populist issues journalism of a number of English evening newspapers, Aldridge (2003) argued that Others (*there*) were mobilized to shape a diversity of 'insiders' (of the 'site') into 'an imagined unity' of *here*: 'the looser the links between your "insiders" the more caricatured must be your "outsiders"'(pp.505-6). The local press, she concluded, attempted to construct its 'community' using familial references (p.503) – a theme echoed in the 1950s by the editor of the *Yorkshire Herald* (Cobham 1952, 217). Scriven and Roberts (2001, 590)

also noted that, when negotiating between *here* and *there*, the local media (in this instance, regional television in Aquitaine) tended to stress the idea of 'specificity under siege', reflecting an identity which, while presenting itself as oppositional to the nation-State, at the same time mimicked the consolidation of (national) identity around perceptions of external threats.

Such processes were historically located, and from the 1950s the 'local environment' in the US was subjected to waves of fragmentation and reformation – from suburbanization to communitarianism (Kaniss 1991, 3ff; Lauterer 1996; Pauly and Eckert 2002). The 'distinct space' which marked out the local was increasingly expressed in terms of interest, belief, social status, gender, ethnicity, and so on, as well as, or instead of, geography (Lauterer 1996). Local journalism was fragmented and reformed, too. In the late 1990s, prompted by these trends, the *American Journalism Review* initiated a 'State of the American Newspaper' project. It found that suburban weeklies, grouped into 'clusters' by corporate owners, large community weeklies and 'alternative' weeklies in urban areas had prospered at the expense of traditional small-town papers (Bissinger 1999). In the 1950s, the long-accepted phrase 'country journalism' – identifying a form distinctive from its urban counterpart, and applied to rural small-town weeklies – began to give way to the less precise idea of 'community journalism': by the mid-1990s this latter phrase was widely applied to any newspaper with a circulation of fewer than 50,000 copies an issue in urban and suburban, as well as rural 'sites', signifying the shift away from distinctive, independent publishing in specific territories (Lauterer 1996; Walton 1999). A community newspaper was self-defined: the US industry body, the National Newspaper Association (2004), argued,

> the distinguishing characteristic of a community newspaper is its commitment to serving the information needs of a particular community. The community is defined by the community's members and a shared sense of belonging. A community may be geographic, political, social or religious. … Any newspaper that defines itself as committed to serving a particular community may be defined as a "community newspaper".

A significant expression of this connectedness was evident in the ways in which local newspapers laid claim to geographical place (for example, the *Yass Courier* [New South Wales] of 1863 cited in Kirkpatrick 2000, 16). This helped to distinguish the local ('community') press from that which sought to meet the information needs of interest groups, whether based on activity (*Wall Street Journal*) or the (dis)location of the traveller (*USA Today*) (Waddle 2003, 12). It did not, however, address broader issues of what constituted 'community' and the 'community press' (see page 47).

Multiplying 'the local'

The developments described by Kaniss (1991, 31-4) – significant declines in metropolitan newspaper circulations, and increases in the number of titles and the reach of the suburban press – were broadly evident elsewhere, too. In Australia, the enhanced importance of the give-away suburban press was manifest in the presence of Rupert Murdoch's News Limited: in 1996 the company controlled nearly 49% of total circulations[7] and in 2004 owned or part-owned 55% of titles (94 out of 172) in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney (B&T 2004; ketupa.net 2003; News Limited 2004). The reformation of suburban newspapers in Australia began in the 1960s and accelerated in the 1980s (Mead 1997, 147-56). Between the mid-1980s and 2004 News' portfolio of titles expanded by more than half, from 62 to 94 (B&T 2004; Bullen 1987, 12; Hippocrates 1988, 189-90; 195-6). Over the period 1995-2000, suburban newspaper distributions rose by 6.7% (Lewis 2001, 104). By 2004 newspaper reading in Brisbane was dominated by News's 16 suburban titles which reached about twice as many people as the company's metro daily, the *Courier-Mail* (Bromley 2005a, 56). These suburban newspapers practised journalism which was different from the mainstream, including less of a focus on politics (Vines 2001, 38-9). In Australia, as in the US, distinctions between traditional urban, regional and rural weekly and twice-weekly titles and the newer suburban press began to dissolve.[8]

[7] By 2000 the figure had fallen slightly to 46.6% (Lewis 2001, 104).
[8] The Australian Press Council continued to distinguish between suburban and 'country' newspapers (Herman n.d.), while many others did not (ketupa.net 2003).

Suburbanization of the press was less a characteristic of the UK during this period, and attempts, notably by Thomson Regional Newspapers in places like Reading, Slough and Hemel Hempstead, to institute a more overly suburban-focused press in the 1960s were largely short-lived (see below). Fragmentation in the UK occurred both within urban locations, and between urbanized entities across national and regional identities, rather than between urban and suburban, or rural, locales, although suburbanization was not totally absent (Pritchard, Kelly and Ward 1993, 7). Competition within traditionally-defined geographical localities, established in the nineteenth century along partisan lines – a Liberal and a Conservative title in each place – continued from the second quarter of the twentieth century on a commercial, regenerative basis (Bromley and Hayes 2002, 198-200; Goulden 1952, 210; Goulden 1967, 7-9). A range of print media evolved – the street press, metro freesheets, pseudo-consumer magazines, guides, shoppers, community papers, hybrids – which multiplied and contested 'the local'. This rarely occurred on 'news' grounds, but rather on the bases of economics, lifestyles, politics, leisure, life-stage, consumption, etc. (Anon 2001a). Giveaway metro dailies appeared from 1995 in London, Birmingham and many other major cities (Peak 2002, 22; Stoney 2001)[9]. Within a decade, almost 50% of 18-34 year olds living and working in major European cities were reading such a paper every week where they were available: 26% read a free paper daily (Hold the Front Page 2004d).

At the same time and notwithstanding the presence of a national press and national radio and television, the rural local press continued to perform 'a different function' well into the second half of the twentieth century (Madgwick 1973, 28). Fragmentation of the local press was characterized from the 1970s by the rapid expansion of the number of freesheets in almost all locales, and the subsequent acquisition during the late 1980s and early 1990s of most of these weekly giveaway titles by conglomerates already owning

[9] By mid-2004 Metro International of the Swedish Modern Times Group (MTG) published 37 daily *Metro* editions in 54 cities in 16 countries in 15 languages across Europe, North and South America and Asia. The *Metro* title was owned in the UK by Associated Newspapers and used under licence by Trinity Mirror. MTG started commuter papers in the UK but by mid-2004 they had all closed (www.metro.lu).

daily and paid-for weekly papers in the same geographical areas (Peak 1993, 19).[10] The extent to which this was a function of re-territorialization, playing to the 'situated meaning and emotional belonging' of the local, rather than the imperatives of the corporate capital which lay behind such developments (Morley and Robins 1995, 17-8), was likely to be made apparent through the local press's response to devolution in the late 1990s. Changes in the UK local press, then, were founded less on structural shifts in territories and populations – 'white flight' – than on reformations of culturally-located 'communicative communities' (Connell 2003, 188).

The relationships between these various emergent forms of the local press, and across both 'sites' and 'situations', were highly contested. As journalists found it increasingly difficult to imagine 'the local environment' as a coherent entity, it was argued, 'marketing solutions and corporate management filled the [editorial] void' (Pauly and Eckert 2002). A specific form of 'community ascertainment' prevailed, based on market research and readership surveys (Allen 1996; Pauly and Eckert 2002). Such studies, like those carried out for the Newspaper Society (NS) in the UK by the Henley Centre (1988) and in the US by the Readership Institute (2001), suggested that local news remained newspapers' most significant draw (see Bromley 1998a, 28; Glover 1998, 118-9). The findings both reinvigorated journalists' beliefs in the fundamental importance of local news to journalism, and, at the same time, challenged the nationally-inflected news values which had prevailed among journalists in the closing decades of the twentieth century (Hallin 1996, 244-5). On the one hand, the chief executive of Regional Dailies of Australia, told the House of Representatives Select Committee on the Print Media (1992, 95), 'To sell local newspapers ... it is best to have local news. The names of local people in newspapers is (*sic*) what sells them'. On the other hand, the editor-in-chief of the *Hamilton Spectator*, a Canadian newspaper which adopted the recommendations of the Readership Institute impact study, argued that this meant publishing 'news from the rubber chicken circuit. The kind of news that we as journalists have too often been disdainful toward' (Zlomislic 2003).

[10] The tactic of combining established urban dailies with both traditional and new suburban weeklies through buy-outs of the latter came somewhat later and more patchily to the US, partly because American suburbs were both 'vast and complicated' (Morton 2000).

The local press appeared to be, at one and the same time, both driven by the same kind of 'strategic marketing' that went into the development of retail chain stores such as Wal-Mart (Walton 1999), and a victim of the Wal-Mart syndrome (Tezon 2003, 2-4). In 50 years the proportion of American daily newspapers in family ownership fell from three-quarters to a fifth, challenging the use of the appellation 'local', and signalling the substitution of idiosyncratic publishing with homogenized content (Risser 1998; Waddle 2003, 5; Walton 1999). Editing was supplanted by 'corporate news evaluation procedures' (Overholser 1998). Many of the new approaches were introduced by British newspaper executives through Thomson Newspapers, which in the early 1990s owned 233 titles in North America, in addition to 151 in the UK (Prochnau 1998). Comparing 'heartland journalism' in US papers across 35 years (from 1963/4 to 1998/9) Stepp (1999) found less local news, and fewer local photographs; a decline in 'unabashed embrace of community'; pages no longer 'overflowing with local names, places and activities'; 'far fewer oddities' – in sum, 'a loss in localness and personality'.

Territory and newspapers had been intricately and intimately intertwined for two centuries through the production, dissemination and consumption of 'intelligence', 'affairs', 'items', 'matters', 'talk' and 'news'. The relative decline of territory as a referent for identity impacted on constructions of social action, and especially politics, as spatially located. In simple journalistic terms, the key question shifted from *where* to *how*, or *what*, or *when*, or *why*, or even *who* itself, as spatial proximity played a smaller role in defining what was 'local' in journalism (Pauly and Eckert 2002). The idea of 'the local' was transformed into the reachable audience and its habits – what were known commercially as 'demographics' (Bromley 2003b, 16). Journalism's appeal, therefore, was more exclusionary and prejudicial – chasing the high end of town (Morton 2003; Overholser 1998). That challenged journalism's self-image as adversarial, enterprising and aggressive, dealing on-the-spot and objectively with the factual within commonsensical interpretations of the community and its values. Moreover, in a straightforward practical way, journalists worked primarily at the local territorial level, their activities drawing resources from media owners, on the one hand, while, on the

other hand, they gave journalists social status and provided them with a social purpose (Pauly and Eckert 2002). Corporate owners who cut editorial staffs and budgets, who reduced the number of 'competing journalistic voices', and who sacrificed 'the watchdog role' of journalism, all the while pursuing enhanced profitability through marketing and advertising (Bass 1999; Tunstall 1996, 60; Walton 1999), were seen as subverting the 'local' (Bromley 1998a, 27-8). Pauly and Eckert (2002) made the point, however, that historically local journalism had by-passed and marginalized sections of the community, privileging institutional and social hierarchies, and was inherently unrepresentative and unresponsive to the widest community, and that journalists sought disingenuously to revalidate 'the local'.

> The local, as myth, articulates the experience of newspaper journalists – their increasing subservience to media conglomerates, their diminished cultural authority, their yearning to connect with actual rather than merely theoretical readers, their collective sadness that a profession they love seemingly matters so little to their fellow citizens. In a sense, praising the local has become American journalism's way of whistling in the dark.
>
> ... News organizations invoke the local, in part, to lay claim to it, to control the meanings that others might attribute to it. The daily newspaper's conception of the local articulates a system of exclusions and prejudices. For the most part, professional journalists have accepted these exclusions as economically unavoidable. (Pauly and Eckert 2002)

Community journalism

Many of these key issues were played out in the dynamic of the evolution of the genre of community journalism, particularly in the US. Over a period of approximately 40 years, 'community journalism' became an increasingly ambiguous term, based largely on qualitative anecdotal analyses which equated newspaper size (measured by circulation) with community engagement: the smaller the newspaper, the more community-focused it was presumed to be (Kaszuba and Reader 1998; *cf.* Waddle 2003, 12). 'True community journalism,' the University (of Missouri) Outreach and Extension program (n.d.) ventured, 'is intensely local coverage provided by small newspapers'. Community was defined broadly as 'a college campus, a small town with one traffic light, or a

neighborhood in one of the ... most populated and diverse cities' (Hatcher 2004). In the 1990s, for some the idea came to embrace broadcasting, as well as print, and to some extent to encompass the public/civic journalism movement, too (Black 1997, vi; Kaszuba and Reader 1998; RTNDA n.d.; Southwest Regional News Service 2002; Tezon 2003, 19). The extent to which such community journalism met the standard for empowering 'group communication' as defined by Lewis (1993, 16) was debatable.

Originating among US state (i.e., non-metropolitan) newspapers in 1885, the National Editorial Association shifted focus in the 1960s from journalism, and, reflecting a commercial sectorial interest, was renamed the National Newspaper Association (NNA). This move coincided with the emergence of suburban and shopper titles; the formation of a sub-section within the NNA to represent their interests, and the eventual separation of the Suburban Newspaper Association in 1971 (National Newspaper Association 2004). As small newspaper publishing fragmented across different industrial sectors, the idea of community journalism was also diffused. A chief mechanism for this diffusion was journalism education. An influential text on community journalism was published in the early 1960s (Kazuba and Reader 1998)[11], reflecting the growing involvement among university journalism schools. The Center for Community Journalism (www.oswego.edu) at the State University of New York at Oswego trained community journalists, researched community journalism, and promoted community newspapers. The Carolina Community Media Project (www.jomc.edu) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill declared itself to be 'dedicated to the proposition that strong community media help strengthen communities'. Its founding director was the author of the current standard text on community journalism.[12] The NNA moved its headquarters in 2001 to the University of Missouri, Columbia (the site of the first journalism school), where an outreach programme focused on community journalism. The movement also drew back in some of the remaining independent local newspaper publishers. The Huck Boyd National Center for Community Media (http://huckboyd.jmc.ksu.edu) was established in the 1990s at Kansas State University through the endowment of the

[11] Byerly (1961).
[12] Lauterer (1995, 2000). The Australian equivalent was Hurst and Provis (2000).

eponymous publisher. The Ayers Family Institute for Community Journalism, with connections to the University of Alabama, followed in 2003, funded through the dedication of stock in Consolidated Publishing (Waddle 2003, 2-6). An International Center for Community Journalism, essentially a private philanthropic venture located in rural central Iowa and with links to Iowa State University, initiated exchange programs chiefly with Central and Eastern Europe during the mid- and late-1990s.[13]

The generalization of community journalism resulted in imprecision in its condition. Those who professed to practise it often occupied widely differing and apparently mutually intolerant contexts. (By 2003 the tabloid, freesheet *Palo Alto Daily News* [www.paloaltodailynews.com] which began circulating in Silicon Valley in California in 1995, had a second title and a Sunday paper, and a daily distribution of more than 55,000 copies, still claimed to be a community newspaper, although more than 80% of daily titles designated 'community newspapers' had circulations of less than 25,000 [Kaszuba and Reader 1998].) This was particularly so when the US model of community journalism was exported elsewhere. In Australia, 'community journalism' was equated to traditional regional and rural journalism with its focus on mundane social routine (Herman 1995; Kirkman 2001). While many so-called community newspapers extolled the virtues of publishing such social minutiae, the *Yarmouth Vanguard* in Nova Scotia (twice weekly circulations were 6,350 and 4,812) eschewed what its editor called stereotypical community newspaper 'crap' (MacInnis 2000). On the other hand, the *Evening Gazette*, which was selling nearly 70,000 copies a day in the mid-1990s in north Yorkshire, appointed 'community journalists', and invited readers to contact them 'about something that matters to you' (http://icteeside.icnetwork.co.uk). Elsewhere in the UK, a number of daily newspapers adopted a practice more generally evident in small weekly titles, and encouraged readers to supply their own items of news (Bromley 1997a, 343).

[13] The Center, which opened in 1993, changed focus in 1998-99 and was renamed the Iowa Resource for International Service.

One matter which divided journalists – as it did in relation to the public/civic journalism movement – was that of the role of journalism in 'community revitalization' (Rosen 1999, 32-3 & 267), and the propensity to confuse making news with other communicative acts (Winch 1997, 2-3). A community journalism course at Staffordshire University (2004), drawing on a history of public/civic journalism, proposed the study of journalism as 'a tool for community regeneration'. Community journalism practitioners advocated journalists 'helping to revive small towns' (Kuhr 2003; Kurtis 2001); adopting 'a tone that is positive and supportive' (Southwest Regional News Service 2002); being 'a positive force for social change' (MacInnis 2000); being more accountable to readers (Friedman 2003), and sharing news decisions with citizens. This posited community journalism as less institutional and more organically integral and interactive (Southwest Region News Service 2002), covering communities 'from the "bottom up"', and chronicling 'the daily lives of average citizens' (Friedman 2003). Indeed, the term 'citizen' was promoted ahead of ideas of 'consumers' or 'audiences' (Waddle 2003, 12). A community newspaper was 'the heartbeat, … the vein … the artery of the community' (Kurtis 2001).

> … community journalism is that bonding between reader and newspaper that occurs when a genuine caring relationship replaces the singularity of a publisher's impure profit motive. … community journalism makes mass communication into a 'helping' or 'caring' profession – journalists more like firefighters … police officers … doctors and nurses than like the old understanding of a cross between social historians of current events and business proprietors. … The caring profession of community journalism is healer, rescuer, civil guardian, and educator. (Waddle 2003, 14-5)

Some believed these roles could be combined with journalism's orthodox adherence to accuracy, fairness, objectivity and independence – doing 'the hard-hitting stories' (Kuhr 2003; Risser 1998; see also Korade 2002). The results of a survey of rural weekly newspaper publishers in the American Midwest prompted Tezon (2003) to argue that they acted simultaneously as 'cheerleaders, watchdogs and community builders'. Publishers not only edited and even reported, but involved themselves in civic projects as community leaders and economic developers, filling gaps resulting from local talent

shortages. They viewed their relationship to the community as akin to a marriage (pp.10-11 & 18-20). Similarly, young journalists found that working in community journalism met their ambitions of 'helping people and ... having interesting and exciting encounters with the people they cover'. Respondents to a survey told Landon (2003b, 9-10) they valued 'the impact my work has on the community'; making 'a difference in people's lives'; covering 'positive community events', and helping to 'shape the agenda in this town'. If anything, young reporters had higher expectations of the need for community involvement, in terms of knowing local history and geography and the names and roles of community leaders, than their editors did for them (Landon 2003a, 7-8).

Attempting to model a critical analysis of this operational community journalism, Kaszuba and Reader (1998) suggested a tripartite approach. Adding dimensions drawn from other contributions to the literature produced the following:

Scope – the quantitative definition of 'community' (Kaszuba and Reader 1998); and the qualitative definition of 'community' which transcended mere size (Hatcher 2004; Waddle 2003, 12);

Content – the balance struck between local and non-local news (Kaszuba and Reader 1998); but also between content aimed at 'citizens' and that intended for 'consumers' (Southwest Regional News Service 2002)

Process – 'the level of concern and involvement' in the community (Kaszuba and Reader 1998); accessibility and interaction ('How easy or difficult is it for the public to get in touch with editors, reporters and photographers ...? Are newsrooms ivory towers?') (Southwest Regional News Service 2002).

These operationally-driven characteristics required mapping against more theoretically-derived concepts of 'community journalism'.

The use of the term 'community' invoked a pre-existing media form originating around 1920, and with direct antecedents in the radical press which emerged in the UK in the late eighteenth century (Curran 1997, 10-21). Interest renewed in the 1950s and 1960s (Bareiss 2000, 221; Carey 1997, 3; Carpentier, Lie and Servaes 2003, 66; Lalley and Hawkins 2003, 3; Rushton 2003), and by the 1970s community and access newspapers, magazines, radio and television existed in many locations, although some broader structural developments – the formation of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) and the Community Radio Association in the UK – occurred in the 1980s (Batty 1993, 110 & 117; Crisell 1994, 36; Crisell 1997, 214-5; Dovey 1993, 165-6; Flew and Spurgeon 2000, 77-80; Miller and Turner 2002, 147-9; Thompson 1999, 23). In 1990 there were more than 500 community newspapers circulating in the UK (Marks 1990b). At the beginning of the twenty-first century more than a million volunteers in the US produced more community television (20,000 hours a week) than the four commercial networks and PBS combined (Alliance for Community Media, n.d.). Bareiss (2001, 217-8) expressed surprised at 'the plethora of non-commercial media', including public broadcasting, community radio, college radio and community-access television, available in 'a sparsely populated farming state' like South Dakota. Chicago alone was the site for the publication of 250 independent press titles (Lalley and Hawkins 2003, 3). The Independent Press Association claimed more than 800 members in the US. More than 250 community radio stations were licensed in Australia, where free-to-air community television was available in five state capitals and authorized in two regional centres (Flew and Spurgeon 2000, 78; Thompson 1999, 23). The Open Channel organization enumerated 600 access television channels in 21 countries, and AMARC listed about 3,000 community radio stations in 100 countries.

The idea of 'community' embraced a wide range of approaches, however – rural, co-operative, participatory, free, alternative, popular, educational, access, public, governmental, collective, associative, neighbourhood, ethnic and indigenous media, and open publishing/broadcasting, as well as those for gender, sexual preference, lifestyle and activist groups (Alliance for Community Media n.d.; Bareiss 2000; Carpentier, Lie

and Servaes 2003, 53; Crisell 1997, 214-6; Flew and Spurgeon 2000, 79; Saunders 2004, 66). They shared a number of key characteristics, however. They were,

- participatory, facilitating two-way modes of communication, and resisting diffusion approaches to communication;
- non-profit/non-commercial;
- accessible (and more often than not reliant on volunteers);
- territorially local in focus (more often than not, even when they arose out of communities of interest);
- creators of social capital;
- advocates of social change;
- social activists;
- promoters of social justice;
- enhancers of citizenship;
- community-builders;
- promoters of diversity (Agosta 2001, 248-51; Altschull 1997, 147; AMARC n.d.; Cox and Morgan 1973, 145-7; Dickinson 1997, 77-104; Ewart and Cokley 2004; Franklin and Murphy 1991, 25-6; Hewson 2005; Hughes 1998; Indpendent Press Association n.d.; Lalley and Hawkins 2003, 3; Moss 2002; Ruggiero 1999,17-18; Servaes 2002, 12-14).

A resurgent interest in community emerged in the US with the communitarian movement in the 1980s, and was reflected in experiments in civic/public journalism with the objective of 'getting back in contact with the public, finding out what their concerns are, and structuring news coverage ... so it addresses their concerns' (Jaehnig 2001, 108). It even went so far as to consider 'draw[ing] the citizen in at every step of the news process, from defining the news to determining the news sources to even helping to gather news' (Altschull 1997, 149). One advocate of public journalism described it as a bridge between communtarianism and a process of self-examination going on in the media and journalism as their audiences declined. Both were stimulated by a belief in

the rise of civic apathy and a decay in pubic services which undermined the mutuality underpinning democracy (Bertrand 1993, v). It was felt that the withdrawal from civic involvement was in part evident in declining demand for news and journalism, which, like the adversarial, party-based politics it relied on as the centerpiece of its reporting, seemed no longer to address the concerns of the public (Altschull 1997, 141; Rosen 1996, 1-2). While communitarians attempted to resolve the issue of what it would take to make democracy work, the public journalism movement sought to identify the role the media and journalism could play in that project (Rosen 1999, 268).[14] The case for communitarianism in journalism was made by Christians, Ferré and Fackler (1993), when they argued for an approach which countered contemporary atomism and emphasized the connectedness of citizens (p.7) through an integrative configuration of the 'dialogic self', 'community commitment', 'civic transformation' and mutuality (p.13). Readers, listeners and viewers were to be 'made literate regarding the sociopolitical text'; the media were to promote 'transformative social change', and journalists were to be 'committed to justice covenant, and empowerment' (p.14).

> Rather than drowning audiences with data and fattening company coffers, communitarian journalism engenders a like-minded world view among a public still inclined toward individual autonomy.
>
> A press devoted to the *telos* of civic transformation aims to liberate the citizenry, inspire acts of conscience, pierce the political fog and enable the consciousness raising that is essential for constructing a social order through dialogue, mutually, in concert with our universal humanity. (p.14)

Like many of the community media, public journalism seemed committed to social change (Altschull 1997, 140). Some viewed the 'bridge' as being one between journalists and the community – 'an enabler, helping the community articulate what kind of journalism it expects' (Miller 2000) – based on attributes such as 'citizen journalism' and 'caring stewardship'. There was considerable scepticism about this kind of 'community journalism', however, because of its easy conflation with commercial media responses to declining audiences and revenues, and its potentially seamless transformation from journalism to public relations (Harrison, Woolcock and Scull 2004,

[14] The first chapter in Rosen (1999, 19) was entitled 'As democracy goes, so goes the press'.

26; Jaehnig 1998, 108-9; Rosen 1999, 21-4 & 253-61). Saunders (2004, 66-9) argued that public/civic journalism fell short of empowering the 'socially unrepresented and politically marginalized' as *producers* of journalism texts, and de Wall (2004, 37-40) pointed out that it lacked the radicalism and theorization of a notion such as Friere's 'conscietization' – actually giving voice to the voiceless (Ewart and Cokley 2004, 109).

Notwithstanding the progressive globalization of the media over the long twentieth century, early newspapers were routinely identified with territorial place, and they strove to capture that relationship in the forms of representation they adopted (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 2; Jaehnig 1998, 108; Kirkpatrick 2000a, 3-5). Similarly, some of the first academic research in to journalism was concerned with its integrative effects on community (Killiby 1994, 276-7). In the 1990s much of the criticism levelled at the so-called local press was that, as a result of media business conglomeration and the rise of corporate journalism, its territorial connectedness had been severely weakened. Many local papers simultaneously suffered from declining sales (Greenslade 2004b; see Chapter 3). The corporate entities responded through a number of initiatives designed to stem the hemorrhaging of readers by reconnecting to 'community' – from Thomson Regional Newspapers' Project Key in the 1990s, through the Associated Press Managing Editors' Credibility Project, to Australian Provincial Newspapers' Readers First in 2004.[15] Such newspapers were seen as being 'market-oriented' (Beam 2002, 47-8). Beam found that orienting journalism to the market was most influenced by large corporate ownership and the adoption of strategic organizational goals, driven ultimately by bottom-line considerations (pp.58-9). On the other hand, diversifying editorial appeal to be more inclusive of otherwise marginalized groups could meet both journalistic and business objectives (Gross, Curtin and Cameron 2001, 23).

There were clearly overlaps between these three attempts at so-called community journalism, and hybrid forms which existed in each of them; for example, commercial enterprises which mobilized participatory journalism, and community media which

[15] The author participated, in a consultancy role, in part of the Readers First project in March-April 2005; see also www.apme-credibility.org, and Chapter 3.

acted as boosters for the locale, and consultants to its businesses (Manafy 2004; Moss 2002). The Canadian Community Newspapers Association (CCNA 2004) included in its membership both CanWest Global Communications and the [Conrad] Black Press. In some instances, community journalism was regarded as no more than fill-in for commercial services which were absent because they were not seen as likely to be profitable (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Transport and the Arts 2001, 106-8). Bareiss (2001, 238) found elitism and iconoclasm, which both militated against community connectedness, in the broad range of non-commerical broadcasting in South Dakota. Community media, he suggested, tended towards greater accessibility and egalitarianism, albeit often unstably so (pp.239-40). Refining the model of community media, Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2003, 53 *passim*) posited a typology of four approaches – those of 'serving the community', 'alternative', 'civil society' and 'the rhizome'[16], which were further characterised by their media- or socio-centricity.

In its least precise forms, 'community journalism', then, was both *of* and *for* the community, and either media- or society-centred, and producer- or receiver-centric (Servaes 2002, 14). Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2003) attempted to isolated the truer, socio- and receiver-centric forms of journalism of the community through its conceptualization as rhizomic. On the other hand, 'communitarian journalism' remained primarily media-centred, albeit at the same time becoming more 'receiver-centric', and was positioned as a resource *for*, rather than *of*, the community. The type of 'community journalism' practised in commercialized newspapers – what might be called *communi-commercial* journalism – was wholly media-centred, and while also relatively more receiver-centric, was clearly not *of* the community, and only incidentally a resource for the community as a function of the business profit motive. It was this last definition of 'community journalism' which was evident in the local press studied here.

[16] Community media embedded in a fluid civil society facilitating networking across domains.

Typologizing the local press

Determinations of the local press were problematical. A range of descriptions was in use across a wide variety of territorial and cultural domains (see Chapter 3; also Tušer 1998, 45). Nevertheless, the UK press was arranged in layers. Layering differed according to the geopolitical domain (Cho 2002, 59-60 & 67). In the UK, the layers were commonly believed to be:

1. National dailies and Sundays (UK)
2. National dailies and Sundays (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland)
3. Regional dailies (mornings – England)
4. Regional evenings (UK)
5. Regional Sundays (England)
6. Local weeklies (paid-for and free – UK)
7. Free shoppers, etc. (UK)

Interlayer competition could be either strong or weak, and titles in individual layers either acted as substitutes for, or complemented, those in one or more other layers. In some instances, interlayer competition led to reinforcement of a newspaper's perceived role (for example, in privileging local over national news), while in other circumstances it resulted in titles reassigning news-space (from local to national). In any event, competition seemed to propel newspapers towards seeking out unique positions in interlayer relationships through differentiating their editorial content (Cho 2002, 60-1).

After surveying local press layers in a number of central European nation-States, Tušer (1998, 45-7) proposed a typology which recognized that the local press existed on two axes, representing geographic and cognitive locatedness. This offered a schema of press types – regional, supra-regional and sub-regional, and local and sub-local newspapers of both 'universal' (generalist) and 'socio-professional' (particularist) interest. Some UK newspapers appeared to fit comfortably into these categories; for example, as the self-proclaimed 'national newspaper of Wales', the *Western Mail*, seemed to conform to the

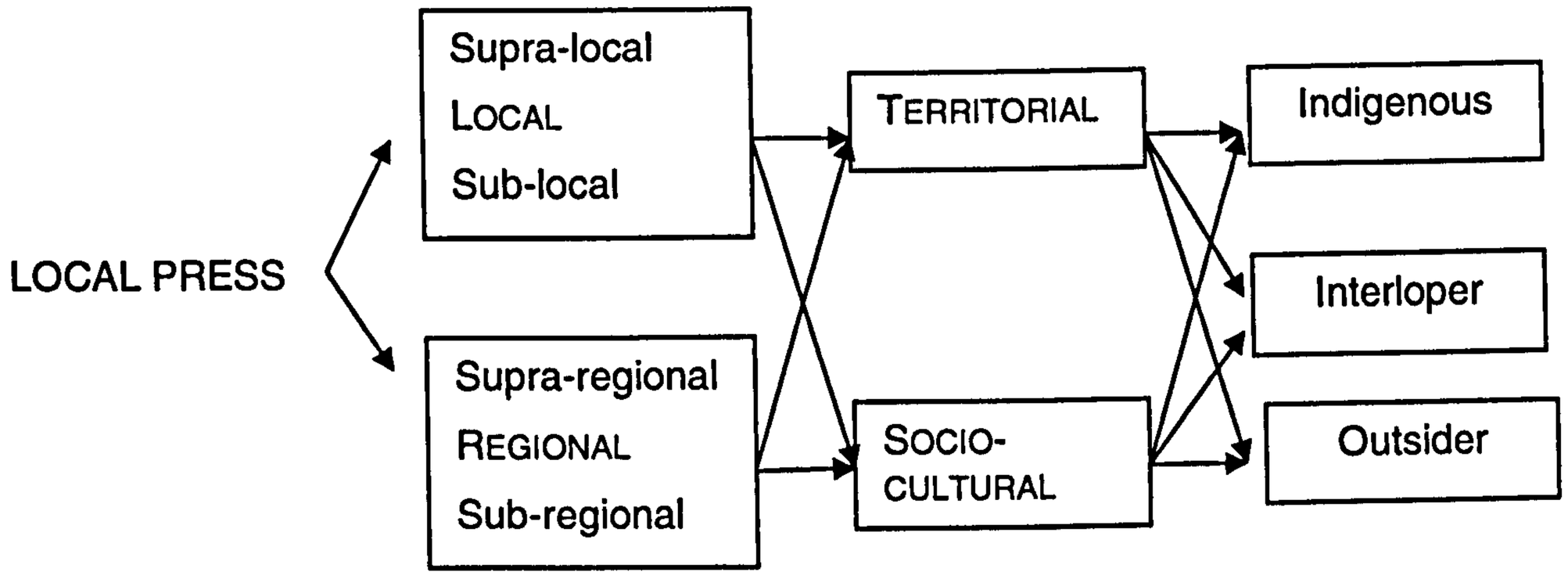
type 'supra-regional'. However, Tušer's typology constructed press categories closely aligned to administrative territories (counties, cities, villages), and, while allowing for socio-cultural and socio-information publishing, the category 'socio-professional' captured areas of publishing which extended beyond that normally associated with newspapers (company newsletters, political communications, etc.). In adopting Tušer's broad approach, I also adapted it to more accurately reflect the context of the UK press (a) by adding the category 'supra-local'; (b) by re-casting the 'generalist' category to reflect not simply a newspaper's content but the appeal it makes through a universalist approach to identity shaped primarily by occupation of a physical space (territory), and (c) by renaming the 'socio-professional' (see Figure 2.2). The adoption of the category 'socio-cultural' permitted a more subtle typing of newspapers; for example, insofar as it consciously addressed a readership located in contingent administrative areas (of England and Wales) but with an apparently coherent regional identity, based *inter alia* on a shared language, population distribution (large numbers of English émigrés living on the north Wales coast), and, not least, an interest in soccer, the (Liverpool) *Daily Post* might be called not only a truly regional newspaper but one whose claim to regionalism was founded primarily on socio-culture (that is, notwithstanding the generalist nature of its editorial content).[17]

A further dimension was added by adopting Law's (2001) categorization of the press, based on his analysis of newspapers in Scotland, as indigenous, interloping and outsider. This facilitated a more nuanced appreciation of an individual title's 'deictic centres', and its likely editorial attitude to spatial, temporal, political, social and cultural identity (pp.303-6). While this kind of maneuver did not necessarily capture the nature of the local press in the UK once and for all (nor were any of the category boundaries impermeable), it was intended to aid the process of re-thinking local press types beyond those categories to which local newspapers were traditionally consigned. Whereas the *South Wales Argus*, as an evening newspaper, was virtually automatically considered to

[17] As Williams (1977, 229) notes the Anglicization of north Wales extended to the renaming of territory; for example, Abermaw (Barmouth).

be a 'regional' title, given its close focus of attention on the city of Newport and its immediately surrounding geographical hinterland, it might more precisely be classified

Figure 2.2: Local newspaper typology



Source: Adapted from Tušer 1998 and Law 2001

as 'supra-local'. Although Law used his categories differently, it also could be suggested that the *Western Mail*, given its origins as an Anglican, Conservative, Royalist newspaper, and its corporate ownership, and notwithstanding its location in Cardiff since 1869, was an 'interloper' in Nonconformist, working-class, Labour Wales (Griffiths 1992, 589-90). A historical dynamic ensured that categorizations of the press – the relative 'national-ness' and 'local-ness' of newspapers – were unfixed, however (Connell 2003, 187-90).

'Local' in the UK press

From the 1960s two changes appeared to overcome the local press in the UK. First, the established ground rules of competition shifted as the corporate controllers of the chains of titles, which initially emerged in the 1920s, sought to establish extended localized dominance across adjacent geographical areas (Tunstall 1996, 68-70). One example of this was the development of Thomson Regional Newspapers (later succeeded by Trinity

Mirror) in to the largest local newspaper owner in and around Cardiff and the Valleys of south-east Wales and parts of north Wales, and then in Wales as a whole. While it is clear that this tactic gave rise to an overall reduction in the number of local newspapers in circulation, a second trend was the establishment of new titles (Seymour-Ure 1991, 48-59). The local press was swept up in a corporate dash for enhanced profitability (Armitstead 2000). The new papers were of a different order from the existing local press which had its origins mainly in the highly-politicized urbanization processes of the nineteenth century. They were self-consciously 'modern', not only internally, in terms of newspaper production arrangements and techniques, but also tapping in to the broader 1960s enthusiasm for efficiency and development; for instance, the first issue of the [Burnley] *Evening Star*, published on 11 October 1965, played on the notions of 'a boom time' (p.5) in a 'go-ahead community' (p.8). In line with these ideas, rather than occupying ostentatious, often purpose-built, premises alongside other institutional presences, such as banks, in prominent locations in town and city centres (displaying traditional values), many of the new titles were accommodated on industrial estates and in converted factories on the urban fringes, among the newer light manufacturing and service sectors (Maxted 2001).[18] Even the arch-conservative *Yorkshire Post* was moved out of its offices in the heart of Leeds – albeit only about a mile – in pursuit of so-called efficiency (Griffiths 1992, 614-5).

This trend reached something of a crescendo with the rapid expansion of free weekly newspapers in the 1970s and 1980s. These had few pretensions, being totally reliant on advertising, and were commonly either by-products of more general printing operations, or kitchen-table businesses whose production was contracted out, with little need for premises at all (Goodhart and Wintour 1986, 3-4; Tunstall 1996, 65). Finally, by the 1990s concentrated ownerships tended to detach production from content gathering, establishing anonymous regional centres where several titles were produced (from sub-editing to bundling for distribution), sometimes many miles distant from the nominal circulation areas. The *Penarth Times*, which was claimed by its owners, Newsquest, to

[18] It was folk lore in local journalism in the 1960s that the Thomson Regional Newspapers' evening paper in Slough was produced next to where Mars Bars were manufactured.

be 'a voice at the heart of Penarth for over 120 years and ... an integral part of community life, well read by local people and carrying high numbers of local advertisements' (www.thisisleaflets.co.uk/p11.html), was run from another town (Barry) and produced in a third (Newport). The paper retained only a meager shop-front presence on the fringes of the town centre of Penarth itself. Such arrangements were even more formalized in some instances: Independent News and Media, the owner of chains of local papers in Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, as well as the UK, introduced what it called 'concertina' newsrooms in which journalists provided content for several titles (Bloom 2004). Local newspapers in the US also shared editorial functions, and even entire newsrooms (Bass 1999). The local newspaper, it seemed, no longer aspired to be an eminent citizen but was a branch of a business more or less like any other with an outlet in a local shopping mall or a facility in a business park (Maxted 2001; Pauley and Eckert 2002).

It may have been accidental, but these changes coincided with what seemed to be a mounting disdain for the local press in the UK. This was not just a matter of declining circulations, but of loss of prestige, too (Peak and Fisher 2000, 64). For example, within journalism, the arrangement by which the national press relied on the apprenticing of journalists in local newsrooms for a supply of experienced editorial staff began to break down, in part because of a loss of confidence in local newspapers as effective and relevant training-grounds.[19] Furthermore, fewer entrants into journalism were content to spend time on local newspapers, despite the number of distinguished careers which had begun that way.[20] From an American perspective, the local press appeared to be 'the backyard of the trade, repositories for any piece of journalistic junk' (Bagdikian 1964). Jeremy Tunstall (1996) argued that in many respects by the mid-1990s the national and local press in the UK operated in quite different spheres. This was despite the structural connections through which a number of businesses owned both national and local

[19] Author's informal interviews with several national newspaper editorial executives (1992-1999).
[20] For example, Harold Evans (1994, 8-9), subsequently editor of both *The Times* and *Sunday Times*, left school at age 16 to work on a weekly paper in Lancashire before undertaking national service and then studying at Durham University. On graduating, he joined the editorial staff of the *Manchester Evening News* (see also Griffiths 1992, 223-4).

titles,[21] and the universal memberships of the main journalists' organizations, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Institute of Journalists (IoJ).

Indeed, the idea of a distinctive national newspaper sector – as opposed to a collective identity of London newspapers – was a relatively recent development. Until 1916 the publishers of national newspapers were members of the [Provincial] Newspaper Society, and in the 1890s, the proprietors of both the national and local press were members of the Linotype Users' Association, a body which addressed labour issues and negotiated national agreements with the trade unions (Bromley 1995c, 364-5). Michael Harris (1997) suggested that the concept of 'Fleet Street', as a symbol of and synonym for the national newspaper sector, was consolidated in the opening decades of the twentieth century. Although the circulations of Sunday newspapers published in London (the most obvious example was the *News of the World*) were huge and extended across the UK, the combined sales of the London daily (morning) newspapers remained less than the aggregate circulations of the local daily press until 1923. In the late 1940s a number of provincial daily newspapers had larger circulations than *The Times* (Seymour-Ure 1996, 20). In 2003, however, only four local newspapers which charged cover prices – three in Scotland (two of them Sunday titles) and the [London] *Evening Standard* – registered circulations larger than that of the least popular national paper. The combined circulations of the top 20 paid-for local papers (3,791,068) were not quite equivalent to that of the *News of the World* alone (3,875,857) (Bell and Alden 2003, 23 & 29). Indicative of the decline of the local press, in terms of circulation, was the performance of the *Belfast Telegraph*: selling nearly 220,000 copies a day in 1967, its circulation was only 49% of that figure in 36 years later (Bell and Alden 2003, 29; Bromley 1989, 225-6).

Researching the local press

While this is not an historical study, there are salient historical aspects to it, and historical references are made from time to time when they are considered pertinent. The

[21] These included Trinity Mirror, Daily Mail and General Trust and Guardian Media Group.

profile of the local press which emerged from contemporary accounts was almost unremittingly one of a watchdog whose teeth had been drawn (Franklin 1997; Franklin and Murphy 1991; Franklin and Murphy 1997; Franklin and Murphy 1998a; Murphy 1976; Simpson 1981; Tunstall 1996). Yet Finn (2002) identified the power of the local press to engage interactively with communities, even in the early decades of the twentieth century. In his revision of the historical theory of 'the gulf of perception', which supposed that the mass of the British public was kept in ignorance of the brutality of military action during World War One (1914-1918), not least by incomplete newspaper reporting and selective commentary, he demonstrated how local newspapers – in this instance, in and around Liverpool – offered tangible 'community-oriented' narratives of war which both augmented the more abstract discourses of the national press and provided ordinary people with opportunities to tell (and read) their own versions of events from the military and home fronts. While the national press may have entered into 'a conspiracy of silence to hide the truth from the public at large', he argued, the same could not be assumed, by mere extension, of local newspapers. This single but important example pointed to dimensions of the local press which required further critical examination beyond writing it off as merely 'the [toothless] local rag'.

In an echo of the role of the local press during World War One, local newspapers in America were found to be highly influential in articulating international incidents and everyday popular attitudes during the period 2000-2003: a study found that they provided 'a critical link between war and domestic politics' (Anon 2004). During the UK general election of 2001, as political parties sought to reach and influence undecided voters in key marginal constituencies, 'courting the local press' was identified as a crucial media strategy. Local newspapers were seen as honest brokers which had maintained or even enhanced their value to politicians (Byrne 2003; MacArthur 2001; Negrine and Lilleker 2003, 208; Younge 2001). Furthermore, in federal Australia, Shamsullah (2002) identified the way in which the local press shaped, through amplification, 'the distinctiveness of regional [election] campaigns' within the state of Victoria at a time when independent candidates were increasingly challenging the established political parties: 'the importance of the local media in reporting ...

[community] activities cannot be overstated'. A historical perspective, therefore, supported analysis which accounted for secular trends not always evident in contemporary contexts (Boczkowski 2004, 4).

Unfortunately, much of what was known about the local press in the UK was based on impressions. Those who studied the local press almost uniformly remarked on the extent to which it remained under-researched. (Cox and Morgan 1973, 1; Franklin and Murphy 1991, 3; Griffin 2002, 106; Jones 1993, 4). This study was concerned with the condition of the local press in the UK at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and it attempted a reappraisal of that local press. This task was approached by taking a snapshot[22] of the local press in November/December 2001, principally using a purposive sample of newspapers published in the south-east of Wales. No claim is made as to the representativeness of this sample. The local press in the UK was too diverse to be properly captured in one geographically-determined sample. Moreover, the site was chosen precisely because of the specificities of the condition of Wales in 2001 – namely, the devolution of political and administrative power to the NAfW. This interposed an additional layer of locatedness which was neither 'local' nor 'national' in ways in which those terms had come to be commonly used in the UK. In other words, the creation of an additional locus of power in the Assembly posed interesting questions about what constituted 'the local', and the relationship of 'site' to 'situation', in early twenty-first century Britain. This condition arose at a time when the nature of 'the local' was in any event being questioned. Theories of globalization problematized the idea of physical, material and cognitive local space and identity (Cvetkovich and Kellner 1997, 1-2; Morley and Robins 1995, 2).

At the level of lived experience, too, shifts occurred in human attachments from institutional anchorages (including local administrations) to looser concepts, such as that of a distributed democracy (civic groups), and the media recognized this by 'multiplying

[22] The term 'snapshot' is used here as it is in both social science ('an isolated observation') and in distributed computing (as a way of 'recording a consistent global state of an asynchronous system') (http://www.free-definition.com/Snapshot-algorithm.html; *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary* [1998])).

the social identities available' (Hartley 1998, 22; Turner 1999, 60). As a discursive concept, the public sphere was less centralized around formal institutions (such as local governance), and identity was formed through a wider range of actions, such as personal consumption (Couldry 2004). These tendencies were captured by Lumby's (1999) notion of 'a tabloid world'. The development of the Internet also undermined the role of local newspapers as 'the "glue" that holds together commercial activity' in geographically-specific locales, and facilitated the formation of new, virtual communities (McGookin 2000, 2001). The internet specifically threatened the local press's 'local information "franchises"', particularly by siphoning off classified advertising (Adam 1997, 10; Dti 2002, para 7.2).

On the other hand, in 2002 and 2003 the fourth largest publisher of local newspapers in the UK, Johnston Press, drawing on British immobility, devised the promotional slogan 'life is local' (also used by Rural Press [2004] in Australia). On average, people lived fewer than 13 miles from their parents' home; the average daily commute to work was just over eight miles; school was three miles from home; and almost all types of shopping took place within a 15-mile radius. These statistics prompted the company to focus on being 'community biased', adopting a strategic dependence on *local* markets for both readers and advertisers. The chairman argued,

> For most of us, what happens in our immediate local environment is of far more importance than more remote events. It is in the local community that we spend most of our time and in which we have our greatest interests. Most of us eat out, seek entertainment, go shopping, buy cars, look for a job and move house close to our homes. We have continued to do this even in recent economically uncertain times … . (Johnston Press 2003, 6ff)

A survey conducted in 2003 found that 90% of respondents believed a positive sense of community existed where they lived. The average rating for locales was 8½ out of ten, and 45% of women and 31.6% of men scored their home towns 10 out of 10 (Newswire 2003). The local press sought to combine this community focus with the new, evolving electronic capabilities to create what one local media director called 'the local online space' (Davies 2004; SMG 2001, para 2.0.8). More than 80% of local newspapers had

online operations by 1999; three-quarters carried classified advertising (House of Commons Select Committee on Public Administration 2001, Appendix 27). Many entered into collaborative arrangements with more specialized electronic companies. The internet was viewed as an additional channel of distribution and an opportunity to leverage value from the press's established reputation for publishing local news and information, and facilitating local commerce. The addition of electronic capacity extended local newspapers' functionality as brokers of opinion, too: more than a third introduced chat fora, and more than a quarter bulletin boards, to their web sites (House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee 2001, Appendix 27). The potential existed for the transformation of local newspapers from static, paper-based, broadcast, news-and-advertising artifacts into dynamic, multi-media, electronic, on-demand, interactive information nodes (Adam 1997, 20-1).

At a time when local High Streets were populated by chain outlets (and local High Streets were themselves replaced by more or less identical shopping centres and out-of-town malls); when international brands (Coca-Cola, Levis, Sony, McDonald's) and national markets (British Telecom, British Gas) were ever-present (for an Australian comment, see Jackson-Nelson 2004), and the media themselves were more trans-national (News Corp, Channel 5, Newsquest); when communities extended beyond physical boundaries using the web, e-mail and Internet chat rooms; but when at the same time, the overwhelming majority of people rarely ventured far from home, it seemed opportune to ask some questions about the nature of the local press in the UK. –

1. What constituted the local press?
2. Were current press categories which were chiefly reflective of geography – local, provincial, regional – accurate and adequate?
3. How was 'local' defined through the local press – structurally; in news texts; through journalism?

A critical eclectic methodology (Halloran 1998, 28; Jankowski and Wester 1991, 47) was used to answer to these questions, involving

1. semi-structured and structured interviews with local newspaper editors, and journalism educators responsible for training people to start work in local newsrooms;
2. textual analysis of local newspapers (within the context of a limited comparison with a sample of national newspapers);
3. textual analysis of local newspaper coverage of the NAfW, informed by brief non-participant observation of the work of the Assembly press service and some of the accredited lobby correspondents; and,
4. documentary, data and institutional analyses of local newspapers, their circulations, readerships, etc., and of journalism and journalists.

As is common in research into journalism, extensive use was made of administrative and the more ephemeral literature, including biographical and autobiographical notes of journalists; journalists' recollections; the trade press (notably, [*UK*] *Press Gazette*) and *The Guardian* Media supplement; official reports, especially those of the Competition Commission's inquiries into the local press; reports and documents produced by the three Royal Commissions on the Press; web sites; industry reports; publicity material; directories and databases. Restricted use was also made of personal experience and recollection of working as a journalist on a number of local newspapers in the periods 1965-1969 (*Lancashire Evening Telegraph*, [Burnley] *Evening Star*), 1972-1974 (*South Wales Echo*, Cardiff) and 1976-1987 (*Belfast Telegraph*); as a member of the staff of the Thomson Regional Newspapers editorial training scheme (1974-1975), and as a lecturer in journalism at City University, London (1992-1997), particularly while a member of the instructional staff for an NCTJ-accredited postgraduate course. This effort was contextualized through a more orthodox review of the scholarly literature in the field. While the primary focus of the research was the British local press – and specifically, a selection of local newspapers published in an area of south-east Wales – primary and secondary sources in a number of other geo-political domains (particularly, where what might be called Anglo-Saxon journalism was practicsed, such as the USA, Canada,

South Africa and Australia) were drawn on to illuminate and inform the analysis through a comparative perspective.

Certain problems attended to such a cross-sectional study, particularly in establishing causal relationships (Andrews and Edwards 2004). Furthermore, as a snapshot this study relied on miniaturism which did not straightforwardly translate onto the broader context (Stolte, Fine and Cook 2001). Consequently, the work was likely to make apparent incidences of prevalence rather frequency; of internal rather than external effects; of the particular rather than the generalizable, and to result in data which were static rather than dynamic: Riger (1997) usefully compared the rigidity of 'snapshots' with the more subtle technology of 'videotape' (esp. p.404). However, this study was concerned primarily with the status of the local press: it accounted for processes of change largely through their capture in a moment in time, and was not amenable to longitudinal research. Moreover, since the 1920s doubts have been expressed about the advantages of longitudinal approaches (Rajulton and Ravanera 2000, esp. 2-3). As explained below, these disadvantages have been addressed through the interpretive frame of investigation.

The research site

A geographical area in south-east Wales, extending, roughly, from Chepstow in the east to Bridgend in the west, and from Abergavenny in the north to Penarth in the south, was chosen as the research site (see Figure 2.3). Evidence was also drawn from the UK as a whole, and particularly Scotland, as well as from a number of other geo-political domains, including Australia, the USA, Russia, France, South Africa, Finland, Canada, Germany, Japan, Croatia and Slovakia, where the term 'the local press' had relevance, and there were occasionally structural and cultural overlaps. While it is not claimed that the primary purposive sample was necessarily typical, the site contained a variety of human environments, including (with estimated populations, where known, in brackets):

- Cities (Cardiff [305,353], Newport [137,011])
- Large connurbations (part of Bridgend [128,645], Caerphilly [169,519])

- Medium-sized towns (Merthyr Tydfil [55,981], Pontypool [36,064])
- Industrial centres (Bridgend [39,773], Newport)
- Ports (Cardiff, Newport, Barry [46,810],)
- Market towns (Abergavenny [14,000], Monmouth [7,379])
- Seaside resorts (Barry, Penarth [20,930])
- Rural areas (part of Monmouthshire [84,885])
- Suburbs (Llandaff, Lisvane)
- Semi-rural commuter belts (Caerleon, Vale of Glamorgan [119,292])
- A new town (Cwmbran [46,700])
- De-industrialized areas (Rhondda [56,200], Cynon and Gwent Valleys)

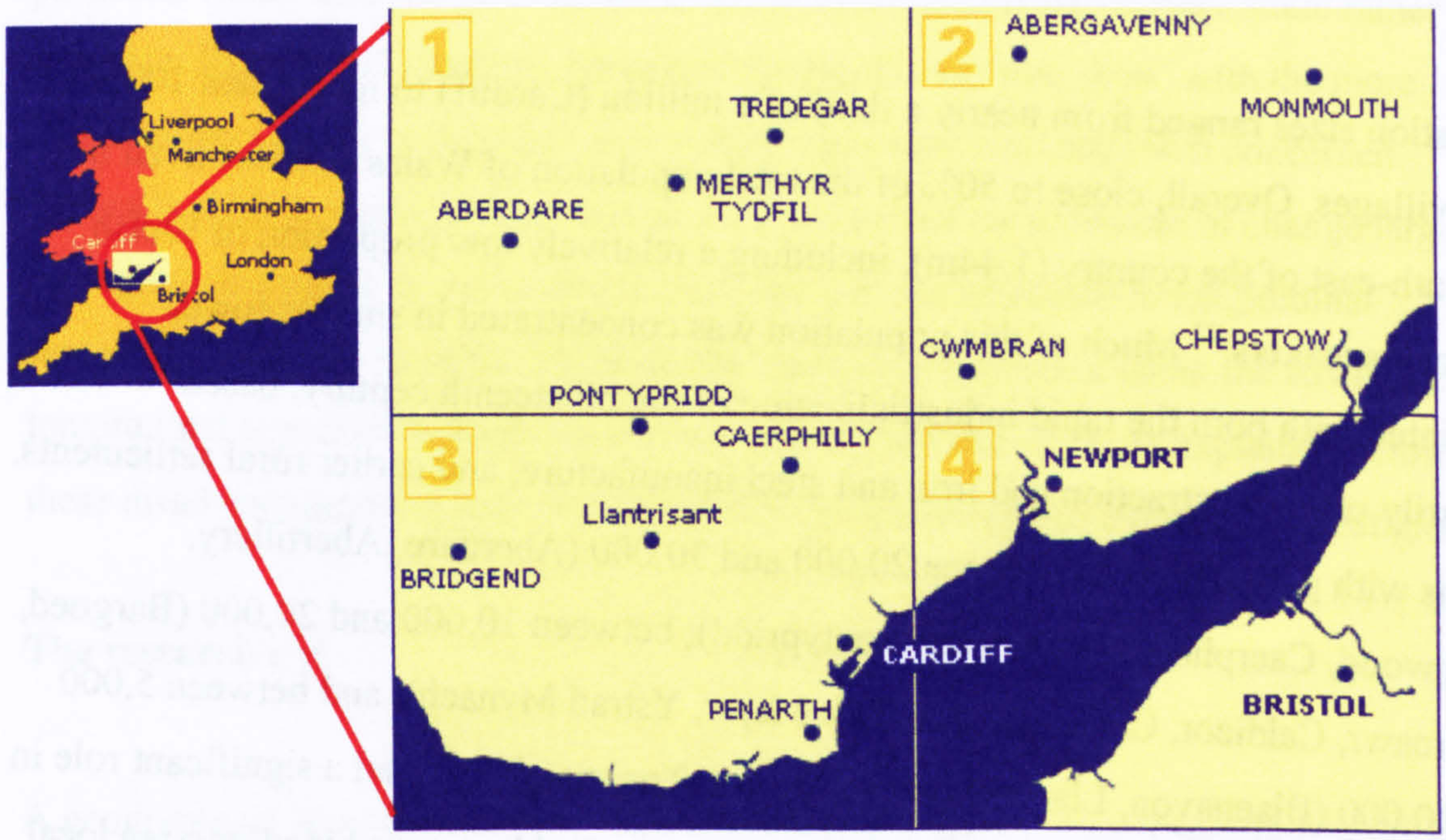
Population sizes ranged from nearly a third of a million (Cardiff) to fewer than 100 in some villages. Overall, close to 50% of the total population of Wales (2.95m) lived in the south-east of the country (1.44m), including a relatively low proportion of Welsh language speakers.[23] Much of this population was concentrated in smaller towns associated with both the rapid industrialization of the nineteenth century, based primarily on coal extraction and iron and steel manufacture, and earlier rural settlements. Towns with populations of between 20,000 and 30,000 (Aberdare, Abertillery, Blackwood, Caerphilly, Ebbw Vale, Pontypridd); between 10,000 and 20,000 (Bargoed, Brynmawr, Caldicot, Chepstow, Llantwit Major, Ystrad Mynach), and between 5,000 and 10,000 (Blaenavon, Llantrisant, Monmouth, Tonypandy) played a significant role in shaping human experience in this area. In 2001, these had been combined into ten local administrative areas (technically, counties) many with far larger populations than any individual location within them, indicating the scale of small town living.[24]

A search of the Newspaper Society database, Balsom 1997, Peak and Fisher 2001, the Virtual Wales web site, and twenty retail newsagent outlets in the area identified 30

[23] Basic statistics were taken from the Wales Office web site (www.ossw.wales.gov.uk).
[24] The counties (with populations) were: Blaenau Gwent (70,064); Bridgend (128,645); Caerphilly (169,519); Cardiff (305,353); Merthyr Tydfil (55,981); Monmouthshire (84,885); Newport (137,011); Rhondda Cynon Taff (231,946); Torfaen (90,949) and Vale of Glamorgan (119,292).

English language newspaper titles published at the time of the survey within this site.[25] These included the only daily (morning) and the only Sunday newspapers published in Wales (respectively, the *Western Mail* and *Wales on Sunday*); two of the four evening papers published in Wales (the *South Wales Echo* and *South Wales Argus*); 14 paid-for weeklies, and 12 weekly freesheets.[26] Configurations of titles varied: there were series (the Barry, Cowbridge and Llantwit Major *Gem* titles); editions (the Merthyr and Rhymney Valley *Express* titles); groups (Celtic Newspapers); subsidiaries (*South Wales*

Figure 2.3: The research site in south-east Wales



Argus and *Weekly Argus*); joint publications (*Barry & District News* and *Penarth Times*); common ownerships (the Western Mail and Echo published the *Western Mail*, *South Wales Echo* and *Wales on Sunday*), and combinations of these – for example, the Western Mail and Echo also published the *Post* series of freesheets. The AdWeb database listed 31 circulation areas used by this local press, based on cities, towns, rural

[25] The newsagent outlets were located in Abergavenny, Barry, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Methyr Tydfil, Newport, Penarth, St. Melons and Usk. A preliminary survey was undertaken of these outlets and others in Chepstow, Cowbridge, Cwmbran, Ebbw Vale, Llantwit Major, Neath, Pontypridd, Porthcawl and Rhondda.

[26] Such lists are rarely wholly comprehensive, as individual titles change regularly.

Table 2.1: Newspaper circulation areas in south-east Wales

Area	No. of households	Area	No. of households	Area	No. of households
Aberdare	13,079	Cardiff	138,690	New Tredegar	4,930
Abergavenny	10,937	Chepstow	9,062	Penarth	15,238
Abertillery	12,792	Cowbridge	3,619	Pontypool Abersychan	15,644
Barry	22,583	Crickhowell	2,209	Pontypridd	24,060
Bedwellty Bargoed	13,973	Cwmbran	18,772	Rhondda	37,147
Blackwood Pontllanfraith	9,750	Llantrisant	8,856	Risca	9,108
Blaenavon	2,614	Llantwit Major	5,804	Tredegar Ebbw Vale	24,188
Bridgend	16,349	Merthyr Tydfil	24,214	Usk	2,132
Bridgend Rural	20,665	Monmouth Rural	6,761	Ystradfellte	3,725
Caerphilly Bedwas	20,945	Mountain Ash	8,635	**Total no, of households**	**571,375**
Caldicot	5,479	Newport	59,415		

Source: AdWeb posted at www.newspapersoc.org.uk/database

districts, etc.,which were adopted as a basis for analysis of circulation and distribution. Statistical comparisons were made on numbers of households, and individual newspaper circulations within each of these areas (see Table 2.1). This list clearly did not identify individually every significant town.

The sample

A sample of eighteen local newspapers was selected for analysis. This included seventeen of the 30 titles published in south-east Wales (56.7%) plus the *Hereford Times*, published in England (see Table 2.2). The sample was based in part on

convenience, particularly regarding consistent access to the material across the sampling period. Quite simply, not all titles (particularly, the smaller freesheets) were always available either at the respective newspaper offices or through newsagents, and many free newspaper offices failed to keep copies which were more than a few days old. For the most part, however, the sample was selected strategically to contain a range of titles – those in a series (the *Gem* and *Post* titles); two in one group (*Glamorgan Gazette* and *Rhymney Valley Express*); two in partnership (*Barry & District News* and *Penarth Times*); one from both a series (*Caerphilly Campaign*) and a number of editionalized titles (*Rhymney Valley Express*); titles in common ownership but published by different subsidiary companies (Western Mail and Echo and Celtic Newspapers), and so on. This made it possible to maximize sample diversity by including newspapers which had both complementary and competitive relationships (either defensive or expansive) with each other, and with other newspapers outside the sample across layers 2-6 (see page 57).

In all, six paid-for weekly newspapers and eight freesheets were included. In relation to the total number of newspapers published in south-east Wales, paid-for titles were under-represented (six out of 14 [43%] were included), and freesheets correspondingly over-represented (eight out of 12 [66.7%] included). Furthermore, one of the paid-for titles was not published in south-east Wales, but in Hereford in England. If it was removed from these calculations, the paid-for weekly press was even less well represented (36%). However, the strategic purpose of the sampling was to offer (a) contextualized inter- and intra-layer comparisons across weekly (paid-for and free), daily (morning and evening) and Sunday local newspapers; (b) qualitative comparisons between paid-for and free titles; and (c) a snapshot of the local press available, purchased and read in south-east Wales, in order to build as comprehensive a picture as possible of the state of the local press. An unquantified number of English local newspapers circulated in Wales which were not captured in the official industry data. This was evident in retail newsagency outlets: for example, the *Hereford Times* was on sale in considerable quantity in a newsagency in the centre of Caerphilly throughout the sampling period. Additionally, all the morning, evening and Sunday titles (four) were

included in the sample.[27] This further skewed the sample, and the proportions of (a) paid-for weekly titles sampled was a third (47% of newspapers published in south-east Wales); (b) freesheets 45% (40%); (c) evening papers 11% (7%), and (d) morning and (e) Sunday titles 5.5% each (3% each). In accordance with the overall approach, eight national newspapers were also sampled (four dailies – *The Sun*, *Welsh Mirror*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*; and four Sunday titles – *News of the World*, *Mail on Sunday*, *Sunday Mirror* and *Sunday Times*). They were chosen because they were the (UK) national titles with the largest circulations in Wales. This permitted limited analysis of the interlayer relationships of the local and national press, as well as those of the local press alone, extending interlayer analysis to layers 1-7 (see page 57) (Cho 2002, 59-60).

The sample period extended over 28 days from 18 November 2001 to 15 December 2001, during which time one copy (of the edition most readily available) of each newspaper was collected on every publication day. That produced 24 copies of each daily (morning and evening) newspaper, and four copies of each weekly (Sunday and week-day) title – a total of 244 copies of newspapers (168 daily and 76 weekly) – for analysis. Of these, 60 were copies of local weeklies and 72 were copies of local dailies. The local press sampled was owned in its entirety by three conglomerates – Trinity Mirror, Newsquest and Tindle Newspapers. This concentration of ownership was representative of the state of the local press in both south-east Wales and Wales as a whole (see Chapter 3). Trinity Mirror's presence in south-east Wales was in the form of two local entities, the Western Mail and Echo and Celtic Newspapers, both based in the same building in Cardiff. Newsquest (Gannett) operated a subsidiary, Newsquest Wales and Western, from Newport (Newsquest Midlands South published the *Hereford Times*); and Tindle Newspapers had offices in Cowbridge (Glamorgan Gem Ltd.), Abergavenny (*Abergavenny Chronicle* and Cambrian News Ltd.) and Monmouth (Monmouthsire Beacon Co.) (see Figure 2.4). No reliable direct test of the sample based on circulations could be made, because the circulations of both the *Western Mail* and *Wales on Sunday*

[27] The newspapers not sampled were: *Abergavenny Free Press* (w-p); *Blackwood/Newbridge Campaign* (w-f); *Cynon Valley Leader* (w-p); *Gwent Gazette* (w-p); *Merthyr Express* (w-p); *Monmouthshire Beacon* (w-p); *North Gwent Campaign* (w-f); *Pontypridd Observer* (w-p); *Pontypridd/Porth/Mountain Ash Campaign* (w-f); *Rhondda Leader* (w-p), and *Weekly Argus* (w-f).

Table 2.2: The newspaper sample

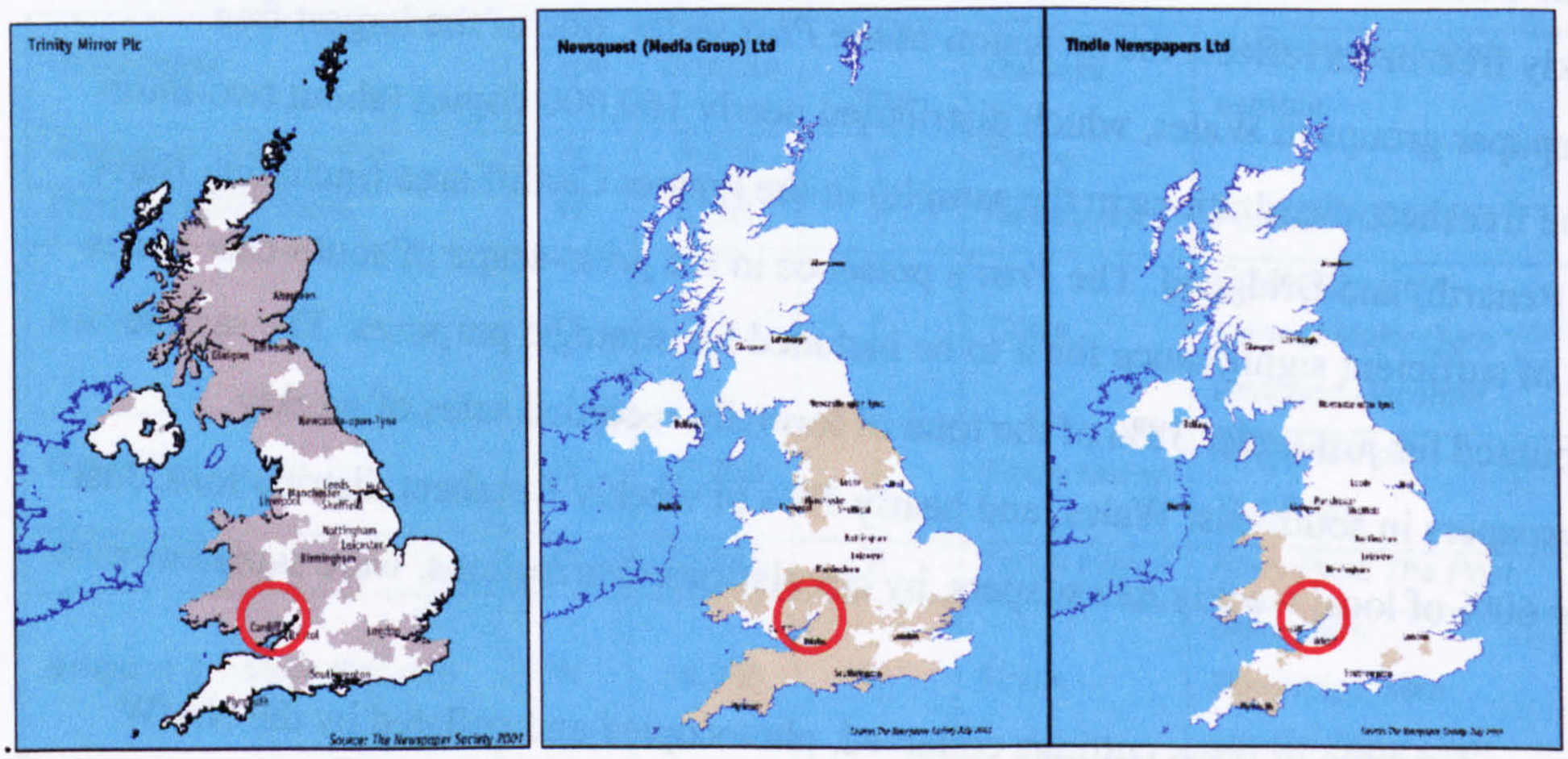
Newspaper	Type	Circ/dis	Paid/ free	Owners	Relationship within sample
Abergavenny Chronicle	W	9,405	P	Tindle	
Barry & District News	W	6,591	P	Newsquest	*Penarth Times*
Barry Gem	W	*	F	Tindle	*Cowbridge Gem* *Llantwit Major Gem* *Bridgend Recorder*
Barry Post	W	22,283	F	Trinity Mirror	*Bridgend Post* *The Post*
Bridgend Post	W	34,515	F	Trinity Mirror	*Barry Post; The Post*
Bridgend & Valleys Recorder	W	26,009	F	Tindle	*Barry Gem* *Cowbridge Gem* *Llantwit Major Gem*
Caerphilly, Ystrad Mynach & Bargoed Campaign	W	29,612	F	Newsquest	
Cowbridge Gem	W	*	F	Tindle	*Barry Gem* *Llantwit Major Gem* *Bridgend Recorder*
Glamorgan Gazette	W	23,013	P	Trinity Mirror	*Rhymney Valley Express*
Hereford Times	W	1,242§	P	Newsquest	
Llantwit Major Gem	W	*	F	Tindle	*Barry Gem* *Llantwit Major Gem* *Bridgend Recorder*
Penarth Times	W	5,621	P	Newsquest	*Barry News*
Rhymney Valley Express	W	n/a∫	P	Trinity Mirror	*Glamorgan Gazette*
South Wales Argus (Newport)	E	31,376	P	Newsquest	
South Wales Echo (Cardiff)	E	61,693	P	Trinity Mirror	*Wales on Sunday* *Western Mail*
The Post (Cardiff)	W	100,397	F	Trinity Mirror	*Barry Post* *Bridgend Post*
Wales on Sunday	S	33,125†	P	Trinity Mirror	*South Wales Echo* *W Mail*
Western Mail (Cardiff)	M	23,945†	P	Trinity Mirror	*South Wales Echo* *Wales on Sunday*

* = The combined distribution of the *Gem* series was 27,816. § = The only circulation figures recorded for the *Hereford Times*. ∫ = The circulation figure for the *Merthyr Express*, including the *Rhymney Valley Express*, was 18,940. † = Figures extracted from the total circulations of both newspapers. Source: MediaUK; JICREG

had to be extrapolated from returns which covered the whole of Wales. Circulation figures for the *Hereford Times* were recorded in only Abergavenny and Monmouth Rural. Circulation data are reproduced in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. The over-representation of weekly freesheets reflects the inclusion of the *Post* series, one of the largest free newspaper groups in Wales, which distributed nearly 160,000 copies (about two-thirds of the freesheet distributions in the sample) in the greater Cardiff area (including Barry and Penarth) and Bridgend. The *Post*'s presence in the press-scape of south-east Wales was of sufficient significance for it to be included for strategic purposes. The sample accounted for just under 38% of the total of formally recorded sales of weekly newspapers in south-east Wales, and nearly 70% of weekly freesheet distributions. Just over 60% of local weekly newspapers, by circulations/distributions, were sampled.

A second sample of press cuttings collected, photocopied and collated by the NAfW over five weeks (on 16 November, 23 November, 30 November, 7 December and 14 December 2001) was also used. A total of 696 cuttings were gathered. Of these, 46 were in the Welsh language; twelve appeared in specialist Welsh farming periodicals, and three were taken from English publications. All were excluded, leaving a working sample of 635 published articles which appeared in 41 different local newspapers in the period between 30 October and 14 December 2001. Of the newspapers, 40 were published and distributed in various parts of Wales: the exception, the *Oswestry and Border Counties Advertiser*, was published in England, but circulated in parts of Wales (Bell and Alden 2003, 51). The Welsh titles represented 57% (40 out of 70) of the English language newspapers published in Wales in 2001 as listed by Peak and Fisher (2001, 53-4). This was supported by a few hours of non-participant observation of the work of the Assembly press service and of some of the twelve accredited lobby correspondents undertaken on 20 November 2001. This included access to press officers and the daily morning news summary which they provided for internal use, principally by Ministers.

Figure 2.4: The presence of the Trinity Mirror, Newsquest and Tindle Newspaper groups in south-east Wales (July 2001)



Note: Shaded areas = local press holdings. Source: Newspaper Society.

Objective of the study

Wesker (1997, 186) observed that, while journalism was not a secret occupation, it was one with secrets. At the core of any such secretiveness lay the ways in which journalists defined and expressed 'news' (Hall 1973a, 85). Of themselves, news values were a function of 'the institutional apparatuses of news-making' (Hall 1973b, 179). Relationships between the producers of news and what appeared within the content category of 'news' in the media were described as being 'pivotal' (Gallagher 1992, 11). A 'first wave' of news production studies, conducted chiefly in the 1970s and 1980s, purported to demonstrate that closed circuits of interpretive communities, with shared professional (and sometimes, personal) ideologies – pre-eminently, objectivity – and existing within restricted organizational spaces characterized by bureaucratic routines, manufactured standardized forms of news which privileged élitist and self-referential modes, in which journalists and their socially powerful sources defined 'news' with little, if any, direct reference to the wider public (Boyd-Barrett 1995, 271-5; Cottle 2000;

see also Boyd-Barrett and Newbold 1995; Berkowitz 1997; Tumber 1999). Processes of socialization underwrote this *status quo*, not least in journalism training and education,

Table 2.3: Circulations and distributions of newspapers in south-east Wales

Newspapers by type	Circulation/distribution (south-east Wales)		Circulation/distribution (sample)		Sample as % of total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Weekly paid-for	130,061	27	50,436*	17	38.7
Weekly freesheets	349,004	73	240,632	83	68.9
ALL WEEKLIES	479,065	100	291,068	100	60.75
Sunday	54,424	100	54,424	100	100
TOTAL WEEKLY CIRCULATIONS	555,489	–	344,250	–	62
Evenings	93,069	100	93,069	100	100
Morning	47,138	100	47,138	100	100

Source: AdWeb. * = including estimate for *Rhymney Valley Express*).

where the accepted paradigm was 'quality print journalism – the first few pages of the local or national broadsheet of record' (Bromley and Purdey 2001, 111; Cottle 2000, 26; Hartley 1996, 36). These studies framed news production within categories of empirical sociology which were essentially structuralist-functionalist in approach, and which elided the dimension of 'the richness of everyday life' – research which was 'too formalistic, too sterile, too serious' (Boyd-Barrett 1995, 275; Morrison and Tumber 1988, viii).

Much of this approach derived from the methodologies adopted, which sought to expose and explore underlying social processes which controlled (formally or informally) individual actors, and framed them as 'operators of a system' rather than 'operatives within a system' – journalists as journalists (Morrison and Tumber 1988, x). The modes and objects of inquiry shifted between non-participant observation, interviewing, personal recollection and ethnography, and individuals and groups in a variety of settings which were accorded greater or lesser importance (Boyd-Barrett 1995).

Morrison and Tumber (1998) called for the adoption of a more humanistic perspective which paid attention to research objects as individuals, shaped by and resistant to pervasive immediate and remote contexts, and who were thus simultaneously brokers and victims of power, and how they both acted in given circumstances and conceptualized their actions. They proposed not methodological innovation as such, but rather the refinement and reconfiguration of the evidence gathered, connecting the practices of journalists, the production of news texts, and their reception within specific power structures, and a recognition of the worth of lived experience, as constituents of a system of news-making (pp.xi-xiii).

The manufacture of news, they posited, occurred cumulatively over these three inter-connected and inter-related sites (or *newsfields*), primarily populated by, respectively, journalists and their sources, the media, and audiences, each with its own power relations. Hall (1973b, 179-80) suggested that the commonsensical definition of news (by journalists) was inflected according to the ideological stance of the media, and through a broader societal prism of consensus or conflict.

> In practice, there is probably little or no distinction between these two aspects of news production. The editor not only looks at and selects the photo in terms of impact, dramatic meaning, unusualness, controversy, the resonance of the event signified, etc. (formal news values): he considers at the same time how these values will be treated or 'angled' – that is, interpretatively coded.
>
> It is this double articulation – formal news values/ideological treatment – which binds the inner discourse of the newspaper to the ideological universe of the society (p.180).

Moreover, while Morrison and Tumber had, as it were, a homogenous, captive object group (war correspondents on assignment in highly constrained circumstances), news production and news provision have been subsequently subjected to rapid change, diversification and differentiation, leading to a multiplicity of 'tribes' of journalists (Cottle 2000, 21 & 23). Hartley has proposed that integral to these developments have been shifts from a scowling to a 'smiling' profession (1992, 119ff); from a journalistic discourse of violence to one of pacification (1999b); from practices of origination and

investigation (agenda-setting) to revising, publicizing, abridging (redaction), with an associated reformation of readers as writers – from consumers of news to co-creators of the new (2000, 44-5 & 47). Reflecting these dynamics, Cottle (2000) urged 'further exploration of how news is professionally produced and differentiated' (p.32) which acknowledged 'the considerable textual variation and differences of forms within and across the news field' (p.31). These would seek to explore the intersect between the world of journalism, its practices and imagination, and its wider contextual settings (p.23).

This study was concerned with the first and second of the newsfields identified by Morrison and Tumber, with only partial reference to the third. The connections which linked these newsfields were explored through the adoption of Lasswell's functionalist schema: that journalism surveyed the environment; correlated responses to that environment, and transmitted the values on which the first two actions were based (Lasswell 1960, 118). In respect of the first newsfield, the work focused on the role of journalists and not news sources. Thus the overall analysis of the local press was arrived at from an investigation of the presentation of news (and related editorial matter), supported by inquiry into the roles of journalists and journalism, from which relationships with readers were extrapolated. The objective of the study was to explore the 'double articulation' of news values and ideological treatment within the specific context of the local press – that is, the formal news values of local journalism and the treatment of 'the local' within the local press, which was supposed to make such journalism distinctively 'local', and expressed through local press texts.

Method

Cottle (2000, 24) invited those with experience of both journalism and the academy to examine journalism reflexively (from the inside, as it were), while also calling for ethnographic studies which were both deeper and broader (pp.26 & 28); for the identification of journalists' imagined audiences as captured in practices and texts (p.29), and for explorations of the cultural forms of popular news (the 'mundane')

(p.30). Again, the plea was perhaps less for methodological innovation (Tuchman 1991, 79), than for a specific interpretive approach. This study addressed a number of these concerns through a multi-step methodology:

1. primary and secondary analysis of documentary sources and data held in public and private archives, chiefly to accumulate supplementary evidence (Deacon et al 1999, 15) concerning the structures of the local press: this involved qualitative and some quantitative analysis. Materials consulted included industry databases, company reports, official reports; surveys and directories. Data were also obtained from two journalism programmes in higher education, relating to the employment destinations of graduates;
2. semi-structured and probing qualitative interviews (Deacon et al 1999, 288-9) with senior local journalists and journalism educators, not for primary linguistic analysis and textual interpretation but as a integrated element of research (Jensen 1991, 32-3) to inform, test and/or corroborate data and interpretations of those data (Hansen et al 1998, 74-5). Interviews with editors and news editors were conducted mostly face-to-face in their offices, although one took place over the telephone and one in a local café. These interviews covered issues of the definitions of 'news'; the scope of editorial content, and relationships between journalists and readers, as well as the everyday structural arrangements in each newspaper (the number of editorial staff, etc.). Telephone and e-mail interviews were conducted, too, with instructional staff at five education institutions offering journalism programmes of study. Seven open-ended questions were put to the interviewees, sometimes in written form in advance. Respondents were encouraged to add comments. One responded by email 'Here's some food for thought ...' (see Chapter 6);
3. textual analysis of local and some national (interlayer) newspaper content which drew, broadly, on the approach taken by Deacon et al (1999, 174-9), particularly 'the formal staging of a news text', and its relationship to genre analysis concerning categorization, codification and exchanges (Hansen et al 1998, 167-

72), and was focused mainly on themes of presentation and representation (Kellehear 1993, 38);

4. brief non-participant observation of the press service of the NAfW, undertaken in November 2000, and textual analysis of a sample of newspaper reports and articles collected by the press service over five weeks in November and December 2000;
5. *post facto* reflexive participant observation based on recall of my own experiences as a journalist working for local newspapers (1965-1987) perhaps more accurately characterized as a form of Park's 'nosing around' (Deacon et al 1999, 253), as none of the systemic apparatus of participant observation research (design, data collection, etc.) were contemporaneously present (Hansen at al 1998, 35-65).

Indeed, the above could be interpreted as laying an academic gloss on what were essentially journalistic methods of inquiry (Hoffman 1979, 1-2). In any event, my background in journalism afforded me certain advantages, not only with respect to overcoming the notoriously difficult problem of access to journalists and understanding of newswork ('insider knowledge') (Deacon et al 1999, 251-2; Hansen et al 1998, 51-2), but also in rendering the implicit 'observable' (Tuchman 1991, 87-8). Certainly, the approach adopted was ethnographic-inductive and post-structuralist (Kellehear 1993, 27-8), and a heavy reliance was placed on 'the interpretive capacity of the scholar' (Jensen 1991, 31).

None of these methods was without its problems, of course. While recognizing the value of a holistic approach which sets the media and journalism within their broad socio-cultural contexts (Hansen et al 1998, 18-19), taking production processes as an area of study inevitably led to a degree of media-centricity, and to elision of 'the communication totality' (Deacon 2003, 215). Documentary analysis threw up issues of reliability, credibility and representativeness (Deacon et al 1999, 26-30). Archival material on the local press originated largely from one source – the regional newspaper industry, particularly the Newspaper Society – and it was clear that not all this material

accurately captured experiences on the ground (Kellehear 1993, 57); for example, local newspaper circulation statistics reflected the distribution intent of owners rather than the purchasing practices of populations (see page 72). In-depth interviews which might have been more revealing (Hansen at al 1998, 232) proved impossible to arrange, although many of the journalists interviewed were generous with their time; but appointments had to be shoe-horned into busy newsroom schedules. There were also issues of generalizability from a small interview cohort, as well as of authenticity and complicity, especially given the interviewer's known background in journalism (Wimmer and Dominick 1997, 100-1). Textual analysis tended to bring attention to bear on individual, often very small items within newspapers rather than newspapers as whole artifacts, much less as components within socio-cultural relations (Deacon et al 1999, 179-83). Participant observation in this instance particularly raised problems of recall and reliability: contemporaneous field notes were not taken (Hansen et al 1998, 55). Here again, it was necessary to temper the utility of the researcher's background in journalism with some awareness of its potential shortcomings (Newcomb 1991, 100). Moreover, as a method it best illuminated specific incidences (in this instance, viewed through the prism of individual experience) rather than institutional norms or frequency distribution (Jankowski and Wester 1991, 60). Finally, it was important to acknowledge difficulties in arriving at systematic procedures for the presentation and analysis of qualitative data (Jankowski and Wester 1991, 66). Nevertheless, and despite rejecting the notion of one best methodology, neither was triangulation mobilized facilely as a solution to this problem (Jankowski and Wester 1991, 60 & 63).

Recognizing the high degree of impossibility in news (and journalism) research (Berkowitz 1997, xi) was not the same as being methodologically careless. Halloran (1998, 10) argued that in mass communication 'research results can be produced in support of almost any contending position'. All the same, investigating 'news culture' (or 'new(s) times') (Allan 1999, 3-4; Cottle 2000) presented particular difficulties in reconciling micro- and macro-, external and internal perspectives which accounted for the multiple roles of news as forms of (popular) social knowledge, and for 'the journalistic field' (Bourdieu cited Allan 1999, 188) as a site of on-going negotiations

over social, economic, political and cultural construction. This study aimed to provide a strategic snapshot of one particular corner of that field to illustrate – and, hopefully, illuminate – the integrated nature of the specificities of the construct 'the local' through the institutions, forms, practices (and by extension, audiences) of journalism (Allan 1999, 2). The use of multiple methodologies helped to reduce background noise, distortions and inaccuracies, and to facilitate authenticity (Eggleston n.d.).

Theorizing the local press

Functionalist analyses stressed the correlation between the local press and community integration (Viswanath et al 1990, 899-900). Local newspapers were seen as 'reflecting the size and diversity of the larger social system' as control mechanisms which either avoided conflict and promoted consensus (in smaller, more homogeneous communities), or fed back dissent and disagreement (in larger, more heterogeneous communities) for them to be resolved. In the latter instance, the local press was viewed as a significant bolster for pluralist, liberal democracy (Jeffres et al 2000, 158-9). Newspapers in smaller, more homogenous communities, while avoiding internal conflict, nevertheless were found to promote consensual resistance to external threats (Rossow and Dunwoody 1991, 91; Taylor, Lee and Davie 2000). The local press played a 'leadership' role in substantiating the *status quo*, impacting to varying degrees and at different times on the majority of the population (Janowitz 1967, esp. 212-3). The press as a 'subsystem' was integrated into the larger (community) system which set 'the parameters for [its] behavior' (Tichenor, Donohue and Olien 1980, 220-1). In sum, then, a community got the press it deserved, which 'supported the values of the community and the maintenance of a local order' (McQuail 1994, 81). This approach underpinned arguments for newsroom diversity and for editorial support for pluralism, which were supposed to be more reflective of the ideals of liberal democracy (for a British example, see Ainley 1998). Studies of the local press in the UK suggested that monocultural newsrooms and concentrated ownerships contributed to a focusing of the 'watchdog' role of the local press away from investigative critiques of power towards arbitration of

disputes, compromise and 'system reinforcement' (Cox and Morgan 1973; Murphy 1976; Tichenor, Donohue and Olien 1967, 223-4).

Franklin (1994 & 1997; with Murphy 1991, 1997 & 1998a; with Richardson 2002) went further in arguing that an increasingly corporatized and uniform local press used its (unfair) market advantage to squeeze out more critical forms of journalism, especially the local 'alternative press', constructing a false consensus and veiling underlying conflict. Local newspapers adopted strategies which largely avoided confronting issues of diversity and pluralism as matters for investigation and debate, leading to the substitution of news by the more anodyne category 'newszak' (Franklin 1992 & 1997). Local journalists were disempowered in the traditional role of exercising 'news judgment', resulting in the diminution (even curtailment) of circuits of communication, and the privileging of 'distribution control' (Franklin 1992; Tichenor, Donohue and Olien 1967, 85-6). Applying the trope used by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, the local press in the UK so manipulated the thermostat of societal dysfunction that it failed to trigger any response, disproving Demers' contention that , 'As social systems become more pluralistic, news media within those systems become more critical of traditional ways and established institutions' (1996, 871). For Franklin, the local press became a community resource for the promotion and acceptance of 'controlling institutions and associations' (Janowitz 1967, 205; Viswanath et al 1990, 901). From a political economy perspective, it appeared that journalism was made subservient to advertising, and that the local press viewed its own role as primarily one of delivering readers to advertisers. Most recently, Franklin (2005) applied the concept of McDonaldization to local journalism, arguing that it had become a 'standardised site', driven by self-interested calculation, a desire for complete control, excessive efficiency and uniformity, producing news which was predictable:

> McJournalism delivers predictable and standardized newspapers... The reduced numbers of journalists, the influence of local advertisers, the increasing reliance on information subsidies from local government and other organizations with active public relations staffs means that, from Land's End to John O'Groats, McJournalism delivers the same flavourless mush. (p.148)

This critique implied that newsroom diversity and editorial pluralism were irrelevant as the local press was held in an iron grip of economic rationalism in which diversity and pluralism were regarded only as functions of markets.

Both of these positions have been challenged. Westerik (1999) argued that mainstream structuralist-functionalist analyses fundamentally misunderstood Janowitz's work, which stressed the key relationship between life-stage and both community integration and readership of the local press, rather than a direct correlation between the latter two (p.1). Other studies had demonstrated that variables, such as status, religion, gender, home-ownership, mobility and time management, influenced participation in both areas (p.4). His own survey conducted in The Netherlands suggested that life-cycle and social class were possibly the most influential (p.6). Griffin (2002, 110) conjectured (not incompatibly) that, rather than ideology or political economy, the consensus-building approach of the local press might be driven by the political conservatism of the consumerist socio-economy. Hartley (1998, 27) contended that 'distribution control' worked imperfectly because it could not be effectively policed as channels of communication multiplied and became more universally available, giving voice to the hitherto (conservative) voiceless. Groups, and more especially individuals, redefined 'diversity' in terms of (consumerist) identity – not least arising out of place, including neighbourhood and suburb (see also Jeffres et al 2000; Viswanath et al 1990). Such locales were all seen as hybrid spaces constitutive of the formation of cultural identity along the fault lines between the intimate and the global: 'cultural hybridity is the rule rather than the exception in that what we commonly refer to as "local" and "global" have long been hybridized' (Kraidy 1999). In any event, studies tended to ignore 'fragmented' communities, where small, homogenous and large, heterogeneous communities overlapped and intersected (Taylor, Lee and Davie 2000).

Griffin (2002, 111) called for a re-examination of the rôle of the local press in (re-) locating 'the local'. Undoubtedly, changes occurred in the conceptualization of 'the local' – 'from the traditional spatial emphasis to a social conception of community', and from uniformity to diversity (Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg 1994, 99-100;

Stavitsky 1994). Not surprisingly, then, what constituted local news was less fixed, although change occurred perhaps more incrementally than was often supposed (Byerly and Warren 1996; Slattery and Hakanen 1994). Contrary to many criticisms, corporate ownership was not a strong predictor of a lack of editorial diversity or support for pluralism (Griffin 2002, 107; Ploughman 1995). Finally, if local 'markets for readers' were differentiated, parallel advertising markets were similarly variegated, extending variably, and inter-connectedly, across global, national and local (social) spaces (Stavitsky 1994; Thomas 1987, 45). Much of the debate around these issues was characterized by a polarization between pessimistic and optimistic viewpoints – what Deacon (2003, 211-12) called the STOP ('So There's Obviously a Problem') and START ('So, That's All Right Then') positions – of developments such as tabloidization, dumbing-down, infotainment, trivialization, advertorials, sensationalism, prurience, 'reality', inaccuracy, and so on (Deacon 2003, 216; Sparks 2000).

The 'where?' question in journalism

The 'where' question exerted a powerful hold on journalists. At one level, simple physical proximity and contact – 'editors with their windows on Main Street' (Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg 1004, 97) – assumed a considerable importance (Andrews 1967, 44; Cobham 1952, 215). In the mid-1990s, the National Council for the Training of Journalists insisted that journalists in training should be assigned to a territorial 'patch' ('beat').[28] As a matter of routine, local journalists learnt 'the lay of the land' (Bryant 2001). The interest in so-called public journalism in the 1990s revitalized a sense of direct physical connectedness: journalists were urged to 'walk [...] down streets, through neighborhoods, asking questions, seeking directions and talking to people ...' (Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg 1994, 108). Proximity shaped news, and was the dominant news value (Cobham 1952, 214). In the 1960s a pseudo-formula, attributed to the former editor of the *Daily Mail* and then anchor of the BBC Radio programme *The World at One*, William Hardcastle (see Griffiths 1992, 290-1), was recited at and by many tyro journalists. At the BBC this was known as 'McLurg's Law'

[28] Author's personal experience at City University, London, 1992-97.

(Schlesinger 1978, 117-8). Such 'cynical ratios' were commonplace in journalism (Adam 1986; White 1991, 13) – 'callous little equation[s]' which continued to be used in the twenty-first century, albeit in more benign forms (Burns 2002, 51). They purported to capture the scaleable nature of news values in relation to proximity. In it, a human disaster of huge proportions (many thousands killed) was equated in a number of steps to a broken leg, based on the inverse relation to geographical proximity.[29] News values were so determined by proximity that the local press paid little attention to whether its news contained 'any startling or out-of-the-ordinary aspect likely to hit the headlines' (Hunt 1948, 112). This skew was associated with parochialism (a lack of prestige) (Gardiner 1952, 206; Goulden 1952, 213). Trainee journalists were expected to work, wherever possible, in a district office (bureau) as part of their apprenticeship, and were urged to familiarize themselves with the local geography (Evans 1963, 73-6; Harris and Spark 1993, 27). The mobilization of *where* within the news appeared to be part of the commonsensical expression of news values – the use of place as 'social connection', setting and subject (Hallin 1996, cited Griffin 1999, 18-9).

Hallin, however, suggested two further, less accessible categories of the use of place: as authenticity/authority, and as actionable information, while Zelizer (1993a, 269) argued that journalists more consciously operationalized place within a discourse of power: Washington and the White House (or, indeed, Westminster, Whitehall, the City, Buckingham Palace, Number 10, Wembley, etc.) were made to signify the close inter-relatedness of place and activity (geography and institution), with journalistic specialisms (beats) assigned on both bases of place. In these ways journalism contributed to 'the symbolic economy of space, place and planning' (Griffin 1999, 21).

Taken together, these analyses demanded a more nuanced approach to both 'the local' and the press to which the epithet 'local' was applied. Griffin (1999, 29) proposed a five-point research agenda into the journalistic representation of space, the totality of

[29] A version apparently in use in South Australian television journalism, and credited to Phillip Adams in Jervis (1998, 105), ran '1,000 dead in Indian ferry disaster equals 100 dead in Timor famine equals 10 dead in Sydney freeway pile-up equals one dead in South Australian freak accident equals the lady next door nearly being run over'.

which was beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, in attempting to reconcile functionalist and culturalist approaches to the local press, two of these challenges were taken up:

1. analyzing 'the ways in which journalism presents meanings that create, identify or reinforce specific and "unique" images, characteristics and values of the regions it serves'; tracking 'the re-emergence and reassertion of place and the politics of place within a local, regional, urban or community setting'; investigating whether the work of the local press has assumed 'new and changing meanings, significance and importance'; asking if local journalism is merely trivial and parochial;
2. assessing the local press' 'reinforcement of defensive, enclosed, communities or encouragement of community enriched and enlivened by difference and diversity'; whether local newspapers are preoccupied with narcissistic 'superficial lifestyle issues' and exclusivity, or are prepared to contemplate embracing and 'celebrating cultural difference and diversity' (Griffin 1999, 23, 27-8, 29 & 30).

In seeking to unpick the nature of the local press in late twentieth century Britain, it seemed imperative, therefore, to revisit the much-used metaphor of the local press as the glue which bound communities together (O'Neill 2003). The web site of the Newspaper Society (www.newspapersoc.org.uk) provided ample evidence of the prevalence of a 'golden age' approach, replete with a self-satisfying nostalgia for 'small-town America' (or England, or Australia, or Canada), in which the existence of the local press acted as a kind of guarantor of supposed traditional (integrative) community values (Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg 1994, 99; Griffin 2002, 108). Or was the local rag in tatters (Franklin and Murphy 1997)? Four theoretical constructs were referred to in an attempt to provide answers:

1. *Banality* Adapting Billig's notion of 'banal nationalism', Griffin (2002) applied the term to the 'taken-for-granted routine allusions to unifying myths and

clichés' of localism deployed by the local press (p.110). History, nostalgia, collective memory, iconology, imagery, self-identity, self-interest – a sense of 'us' – were used to build a repertoire and a rhetoric, which was reflective of the physical world, to distinguish a territorialized place (p.115);

2. *Precision* Law (2001, 314)[30] suggested that rather than scaling, local journalism scoped the news, clearly marking out that which was local and deserving of its specific attention. Neveu (2002, 56-8) noted the policing effect of proximity on local journalists, which one of his interview subjects said enforced 'precision and humbleness (*sic*)';
3. *Enabling* 'Enabling information' ('details about person, place or thing') is published by the local press with the intention that it should have utility for readers, and should enable them to act on it. Such an approach is 'grounded in journalistic practice' (Rossow and Dunwoody 1991, 98-100). While it was not restricted to the local press (Fox Television News employed the slogan 'news you can use'), its deployment implied a knowledge of locale;
4. *Affiliation* Media generally implicated themselves more completely in reporting and recording (news) as participants, activists and sponsors, indicating leadership in the renewal of integrative and/or loosely bound communities (Aldridge 2003, 499; Gant and Dimmick 2000) – 'direct involvement by the newspaper in community activities' (Kirkpatrick 2000b, 102). Temple (2004) noted that English 'newspapers are always keen to emphasise their role and power [and] ... like to publicise the praise their campaigns receive'.

These four attributes largely coincided with Hartley's (1998, 23) categorization of 'postmodern news', comprised of 'useful knowledge', cordiality, identity and the private – entertainment, lifestyle, so-called 'reality', consumerism, etc., much of which 'doesn't count as news at all'. While Hartley called this postmodern news, it might be categorized as 'no-news news', and which is more revealing of the 'background classifying and interpretative schemes' of journalism (Hall 1973a, 87).

[30] This is not to be confused with 'precision journalism', as defined by Meyer (2001). This latter category embraces the use of social science methods in order to more precisely refine the news-gathering techniques used by journalists.

This argument set out a challenge for those who scrutinized journalism from within to (re)view it as a textual system (Flew and Sternberg 1999, 9-10). More than that, by emphasizing the routinization and predictability of 'news' at the expense of the contingency of 'accidents', it appeared to eliminate the opportunities which existed for 'reporter autonomy' (as producers) and for journalism which 'challenges the dominant perspective' (Meyers 1992, 76). A fifth, coincidental theoretical concern of this study, therefore, was to explore journalistic autonomy in the local press; whether it had given way to 'market-driven' journalism (McManus 1994); and what resources – professionalism, 'interpretive community', individualism, identity, civic journalism, alternative journalism (Byerly and Warren 1996; Carey 2000; Zelizer 1993b; Voakes 1999) – local journalists turned to in order to mobilize what Philip Elliott (1979, 153-5) called 'the varying scope' of production in journalism. Much of the evidence was drawn from the interviews with local newspaper editors and news editors, and from data collected through interviews in December 2001 on a convenience basis from institutions of higher and further education.

Conclusion

Attempting to explain the value of news in a pragmatic, vocational way, the highly-respected production editor of the *Daily Mail*, Leslie Sellars (1968, 6-7) turned to geography. It offered the clearest example of the principle of 'news-in-context', he argued. This was based on the commonplace that news 'loses its impact the further it is from a newspaper's distribution area'. While not an absolute measure, place provided journalists with a 'sliding scale' of news values (Hodgson 1989, 10-11). Although produced around 20 years apart, these texts both resorted to similar examples, signifying the persistence of the specificities of role of place in journalism. Sellars posited that an incident in a particular town might be 'a big splash' in the local weekly newspaper; a smaller front-page item in the nearest metropolitan evening paper, and a paragraph in a national daily, suggesting a hierarchy of construction of place. 'Who in Surbiton cares a great deal about a dead child in Glossop?' he asked. Conversely, the *Glossop Chronicle*

would work from the proposition that 'civilisation ends at Broadbottom' (Sellars 1968, 7). World events were viewed through the same prism. The *Newcastle Journal* (apocryphally) reported the sinking of *The Titanic* with some relief that no local people had died. The privileging of geographically-determined identity did not always go unchallenged (White 1991, 12). Nevertheless, the symbolic territorialism of 'the local' was globally transferable (Burns 2002, 117-9; Gripsrud 2000, 289).

Furthermore, place imposed patterns on journalism, in which 'the symbolic economy of space, place and planning' (see pp.87) was situated not just in specialist 'beats' but in a broader journalistic approach which connected town hall, courthouse, (in Anglican England) church, stadium, historic site, and so on, with the local newspaper itself (Evans 1963, 70ff; Hodgson 1989, 14-5). While the press as whole shared certain news values, 'to locals the closing of a High Street shop, an Alderman's seizure, smash-and-grab in a local arcade, a local fifteen-year-old signed on by a Fourth Division football club, will certainly be hot as well' (Fagence 1963, 50). Behind such ideas lay the view that 'parish pump journalism' with its limited horizons was somehow inferior (Jervis 1988, 84) – even more so when it was associated with 'mundane, uninteresting clutter, consisting more of trivial information than news or persuasion' which characterized local advertising (Griffin 2002, 110; Spurgeon 2003, 52). In the late twentieth century, practice, content and relationships underwent change, however, giving rise to new identity formations and renewed senses of place, and challenging the supposed uniform blandness of small town or suburb (Spurgeon 2003, 53). It was argued that 'Local journalism is not a minor variant of national journalism' (Neveu 2002, 53-4). Indeed, drawing on more than 35 years of experience in local journalism in the UK, Newbery (2003, 21) concluded that the differences extended to 'the fundamental ethos of the job'. A case was made, then, for 'casting aside convention and seriously considering the possibility that a local journalist can make good by being a local journalist' (Griffin 1999, 32).

Commercially, attempts were made to leverage advantage from this by appropriating a form of media which, while still occupying the margins, had gained in popularity and

extent since the 1950s. 'Community' became a buzz-word in the local press in the 1990s. This also reflected a broader concern with human connectedness expressed through communitarianism. Individuals were perceived to be atomized and deprived of 'close and concrete human ties and ... collective identity' (Carpentier, Lie and Servaes 2003, 53). The local press presented forms of 'community journalism' as a potential antidote to this condition. However, while there was a case to be made for the local press having attempted to reconstitute 'the local' around ideas of 'community', it was clear that these initiatives did not embrace the highly-localized egalitarian and empowering *ethos* of 'community journalism', which emphasized not 'a dead child in Glossop' but the meaning of infant mortality, nor violence in and occurring to communities in specific locales but with shared experiences and expectations of abuse. The orthodox local press, it seemed, found it difficult to escape territory.

3
The local press

As secretary of state, I travel extensively throughout Wales and meet regional newspaper journalists keen to quiz me on my visit to their communities. Although courteous and well informed, the questioning is invariably sharp and penetrative, determined to deliver the best to the reader.
— Paul Murphy, secretary of state for Wales, ThisisYork.co.uk (2003)

Determining what constituted 'the local press' was not as straightforward as it might at first seem. Definitions, terminologies, classifications, uses, practices, data and analyses often proceeded from different bases (Peak 1993, 18). For example, Bogart (1981, 4ff) employed the terms *city*, *metropolitan area*, *town* and *local* more or less interchangeably, while at the same time somehow also distinguishing between metro daily newspapers (published in 'central cities'), and suburban daily and community weekly titles in the United States (p.15). The idea that a newspaper's 'size' – related directly to the community served (big city or small town) and circulation statistics – mattered was taken almost for granted (Loomis 2000, 133). On this basis, Henningham (1993) divided the Australian press into national, metro (sometimes called 'capital city') and regional dailies, and non-daily country titles, although Tanner (1994) noted that in Tasmania both metro and regional dailies, irrespective of size of city or circulation, adopted the same kind of regional approach. Killiby (1994, 81), moreover, argued that Australian regional (daily) newspapers had demonstrably strong presences in what he identified as *local* communities. Both Hawker (1987, 13) and Lewis (2001) additionally emphasized the importance of a suburban press in Australia. A House of Representatives Select Committee on the Print Media (1992, 55) accepted that Australian newspapers included national, metropolitan (capital

city), regional, country and suburban titles. McIntyre (2001, 75ff), moreover, noted the considerable overlap between the suburban and community press in Hong Kong; while Allen (1928, 1-20) conflated US community newspapers with the weekly, country (rural) press. Kirkpatrick (2001, 17) meanwhile worked from the premise that all non-daily suburban and provincial (regional) titles could be considered community newspapers in Australia, whereas Hindman et al (1999) included daily publications in their definition of US community newspapers (although the use of the term 'community' has been problematized in Chapter 2). Finally, in the UK, as in Australia, there was an additional, distinctive Sunday press circulating on a non-national basis (Lewis 2001; Tunstall 1996, 11). The third Royal Commission on the Press (1974-1977) included all newspapers other than the morning and Sunday newspapers published in London and (then) in Manchester for UK-wide circulation – but not the two evening titles circulating in London – in what it called the 'provincial press' (Hartley, Gudgeon and Crafts 1979, 1).

One local press group argued that local daily (morning) newspapers were national titles in 'concept', while local evening papers were genuinely local, and that the size and prosperity of towns and cities alone determined whether there was a local evening or weekly press, based on the availability of classified advertising revenue (Competition Commission 1991, 41). It was perhaps not surprising, then, that over a decade, the main UK media guide vacillated between accepting a customary division in the English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish press between 'regional' (daily and Sunday) and 'local' (weekly) newspapers;[33] at other times asserting that such titles as a whole essentially constituted a purely local press, whatever the size or publication frequency; and, latterly, regarding all these papers as 'regional' – down to the smallest weeklies (Peak 1992, 14; Peak and Fisher 1995, 38-68; Peak and Fisher 2001, 28-33; Peak 2002, 10).[34] To some extent this reflected the universal adoption by the UK's local press

[33] This distinction was in common use when the author began working in regional (then more usually called 'provincial') journalism in the mid-1960s.

[34] The unilateral decision to re-designate all but those newspapers with the largest and most widely distributed circulations as 'local' rather than 'regional' titles (Peak and Fisher 1996, 50) resulted in 80% being so classified, although some were included in both categories (Peak and Fisher 1996, 46 & 63-86). The argument was that the use of the term 'regional' was merely an act of self-aggrandizement (Peak and

industry of the description 'regional', although Tunstall (1983, 220, 232) pointed out that very few titles appeared to be properly regional. He drew a distinction, even among the 'larger' newspapers, between those which were 'regional' and those which were metropolitan, arguing that Scotland was 'Britain's only media region' (Tunstall 1983, 219, 226-29).

Others were strenuous in arguing that Scotland was not a region at all, but a nation (with its own regions) (Kemp 1994, 11-12).[35] Within the configuration of geo-political entities which comprised the UK, the ambiguous status of a relatively small number of newspapers in Scotland and Northern Ireland, notably in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Belfast, and to a lesser extent, Wales, was predicated in some measure on the far broader context of constitutionality (Seymour-Ure 1991, 19; Tunstall 1983, 218-9).[36] Of particular pertinence to this study was the process of political, legislative and administrative devolution embarked on in the UK after 1997, and its impact on senses of 'the local', and the place of the press as institutions of localism (McNair 2003, 203-4).

In Wales, Northern Ireland and, especially, Scotland, what were once categorized as metropolitan, regional, or local titles (within the UK) following devolution came to be recognized – or there were aspirations for them to be recognized – as national papers in their own right (Peak 1993, 14). By 2003 the National Readership Survey included the [Glasgow] *Daily Record*, *Sunday Herald* (also Glasgow), the [Dundee] *Sunday Post* and *Scotland on Sunday*, and the Audit Bureau of Circulations the [Glasgow] *Herald*, *Scotsman*, *Scotland on Sunday* and [Glasgow] *Sunday Mail* in their respective listings of national newspapers. This suggests that, contrary to a situation which prevailed for more than 70 years previously, newspapers in the UK which were not constitutive of the

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Fisher 2000, 64). Subsequently, the list of regional dailies was extended from 20 to 21, to 25, and finally to 50 (out of fewer than 100) (Peak and Fisher 1996, 59; Peak and Fisher 1997, 40-2; Peak and Fisher 1998, 44-8; Peak and Fisher 1999, 38). Simultaneously, the Scottish titles, the (Glasgow) *Daily Record*, *The Scotsman* and *Scotland on Sunday* and the (London) *Evening Standard* were intermittently included in national newspaper circulation audits by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (Peak and Fisher 1996, 46; Peak and Fisher 1999, 28 & 32-5).

[35] The Scottish Media Group suggested that daily newspapers published in Scotland were 'city state' titles (SMG 2001, para 1.0.3).

[36] Strictly speaking, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were never regions as such, but, respectively, two nations and a province, although in the case of Wales, it was more formally regarded as a principality, and Northern Ireland was made up of only six of the nine counties of the historical province of Ulster.

London daily and Sunday press (what was colloquially referred to as 'Fleet Street') were beginning to be defined less in negative terms – by the judgment that they were *not* national – even though the notion of a national press was always 'vague', 'something of a fiction', and 'woolly' (Seymour-Ure 1991, 18-21; Tunstall 1983, 220). Which external forces, if any, were impelling or following changes in press formations, and the exact causal associations of such factors, are less central to this study than the condition of the local press itself and the internal factors working on it.

Notwithstanding the myriad of inexactitudes and confusions around the size, publication frequency, scope, editorial policy, nomenclature, physical location, etc. of newspapers, and their meanings, in many geo-political domains – in Europe, north America, Australia, parts of Asia, South Africa and, certainly, the UK – something which was widely accepted as being a *local* press existed materially and conceptually (Griffin 1999; Hickethier 1996, 104; McIntrye 2001; Mikhailov 2003; Sartori 1996, 138; Thogersen 2000; Tunstall 1996, 60-75; Varela 2002).[37] In Norway, where newspaper reading was the most concentrated in the world, the local press was the dominant form, and in post-communist Ukraine most local newspapers had larger readerships than national titles (Gabor and Skoropadenko 2002; Høyer n.d.). Kaniss (1991) suggested that, rather than focusing on the institutional characteristics of the press, it was more productive to examine its competitive role in 'making *local* news' (pp.44-5 – emphasis added). It could be argued, then, that the local press was defined by its location within a 'market for readers', as well as a 'market for advertising revenue', each having its own boundaries, both coincidental and tangential to each other (Competition Commission 1991, 49).

The dominant analytical paradigm in approaches to the local press was that of privileging social and geographical proximity – identifying the physical 'neighbourhood' (Smith 1982, 21). The local newspaper proprietor and/or editor was situated literally 'surrounded by his (*sic*) audience' (Griffith 1989, 8; Moorhouse 1964,

[37] For overviews of the local press in Europe, see the European Journalism Centre's European Media Landscape (http://www.ejc.nl/jr/emland/index.html).

72-3). Yet historically 'community consciousness' extended beyond such boundaries, across differences as well as similarities, and non-spatially, linking cognitive as well as contingent neighbourhood(s), regions(s) and nation(s) (and, it may be argued, in the era of globalization, world[s] – Appadurai 1990, 9). Newspapers played a key role in helping give shape to these bounded and extended relationships, and replaying them, as brokers both of spatially specific social, economic, political and cultural attributes, and of distinctive but sometimes more dispersed mental configurations of locales, and countering the official tendency to homogeneity (Dennis 1984, 24-47; see also Bromley and Hayes 2002). Newspapers and locales intersected, as it were, to formulate senses of local identity, and to bolster local public spheres (Ray 1993, 46).

> With their "local intelligence" and gossip columns, their editorials and correspondence columns, they [newspapers] provided members of the ... reading public with an opportunity to discourse upon the kind of town they thought ... [it] had been, was now, and could be in the future. (Croll 2000, 20)

The press constituted part of the *scape* – the cognitive, as well as purely physical, view of place. As creative industries, newspapers figured both directly, as enterprises, and indirectly, as publicists and critics, in commerce, trade and industry, environmental development and planning, and a wide variety of public and private activities, contributing literally and metaphorically to the formation of the town-, city- or landscape (Dennis 1984, 270-88).[38] More germanely, they were part of an incipient mediascape, producing and disseminating 'images of the world' in a domestic setting. Over the course of the twentieth century, the means and capacities of production and dissemination, and control over them, were transformed in many ways, and the images produced and disseminated contained

> many complicated inflections, depending on their mode (documentary or entertainment); their hardware (electronic or pre-electronic); their audiences (local, national or transnational) and the interests of those who own and control them. What is most important about these mediascapes is that they provide ... large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscapes to

[38] One of the most striking examples of a newspaper's literal impact on the cityscape was the reconstruction of the *Glasgow Herald* office in 1893 by Charles Rennie Macintosh (Phillips 1983, 104-6).

> viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed. What this means is that many audiences throughout the world experience themselves as a complicated and interconnected repertoire of print, celluloid, electronic screens and billboards. (Appadurai 1990, 9)

It is within this concept of scape – landscape, cityscape, mediascape, press-scape, etc. – that the local press was located at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Locating the local press

The local press made claims to localism in five areas: distribution; 'licence'; the economy; content, and access. The press justified being 'local' when it

- circulated within spatial, cultural and social constraints which were in significant ways more or less identifiable with a socio-cultural, geographical community;
- established authenticity in that community through its acceptably localized ownership and operation;
- drew a significant proportion of its revenues from sales, subscriptions and advertising from, and contributed to other economic activities, within, or to the perceived economic benefit of, the same community;
- published culturally 'local' content associated meaningfully with the range of activities and ideas circulating within the community, and which met community expectations in terms of both quality and quantity; and
- facilitated interactive relations with and among those who regarded themselves as members of, having interests in, or being interested in, that community (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 3-10; Fuller 1999; Kleinsteuber 1992, 144-50).

Normatively assessed, the linkages between the local newspaper and the spatial community were strong, with the press assuming multiplex roles as member and outsider; mediator and manipulator; promoter and watchdog; interpreter and activist, and

not least as intermediary to the wider nation/world (Fuller 1999; Griffin 1999, 19-23; Griffith 1989, 3-9; Ray 1993, 43), promoting and reinforcing a more cognitive consensus around civicness – or 'the good of the town' (Bromley and Hayes 2002, 199; Cox and Morgan 1973, 141; Jackson 1971, 273). The beneficence included reflecting a 'community-mindedness' which emphasized a specific set of values privileging cohesion, friendliness, safety, and the comprehensibility of smallness (Griffin 2002, 108).

The functionality of the local press arising out of its situatedness was grouped around four areas:

- information – acting as a form of 'permanent record of community affairs';
- service – publicizing the availability of goods and services;
- cohesion – promoting a sense of identity, and
- debate – providing a space for discussion, disagreement and access (Jackson 1971, 279)

A former long-serving editor of a prominent English local newspaper suggested that the primary function of this press was the provision of news, out of which arose a commitment to democratic engagement; both of which required the financial support of an adequate income derived primarily from advertising (Isaaman 1994, 40-1). Griffin, whose approach did not originate in journalism, supplemented these with concerns with a broader 'sense of community engagement' – the development of 'a sense of place and citizenship of that place as well as the roles of all these sensibilities in the wider scheme of things' at a moment when place was assuming greater importance in an era of 'deterritorialisation'. The challenge was to trace the connections between the local press, politics, consumerism and community (1999; 2002, 110 & 116). These did not necessarily orbit around any fixed place: 'the so-called local community cannot be taken either as a starting-point or for granted' (Morgan 2001, 28).

The local press in the UK

The local press in the UK was a constituent part of a highly-developed and globally connected mediascape, and particularly of a sophisticated press-scape, the internal boundaries, as opposed to institutional demarcations, of which were not always obviously distinct and were often permeable (see Peak and Fisher 2000, 64-107). The widespread creation of local press monopolies (the establishment of a single local title in any one given geographical area) did not necessarily result in a monopolization of information transfers or public attention (Hartley, Gudgeon and Crafts 1979, 32). Paradoxically, Cox and Morgan (1973, 6) pointed out, 'The more "local" a paper is, the greater the probability of its readers having read other papers at other "levels", and that this will form an element of the overall context in which the local paper is viewed by its readers.' The local press was believed to lie 'at the foot of the news chain that feeds right through to ... the world of mass communications' (Isaaman 1994, 39).

In the UK the local press, as commonly defined, was itself quantitatively substantial and qualitatively diverse: in 2002 there were estimated to be 1,269 Sunday, week-day (daily – morning and evening) and weekly (sometime, twice weekly) titles, further sub-divided between those papers which charged a cover price and those which were distributed for free.[39] More than 90 per cent (1,149 titles – 509 with a cover price, and 640 freesheets) circulated once (occasionally, twice) a week in their immediate geographical and social vicinities, publishing news and information pertaining chiefly to those locales alone (Peak 2002, 10; Newspaper Society 2000b). Their primary focus was supposedly civic news, the local community and local commerce (Franklin and Murphy 1998b, 8). Individual readerships were on the whole small: the largest selling local weekly newspaper in the UK (*Kent Messenger*) had a circulation of just over 64,000 copies in mid-2002. The most widely circulated freesheet (*Manchester Metro News*) distributed

[39] All data are somewhat imprecise and occasionally contradictory as measurements and reporting conventions differ from organization to organization, and sometimes even with organizations over time. The best possible data have been used here.

some 300,000 copies of each issue.[40] Given the total number of titles, aggregate circulations were perhaps a more accurate measure of the weekly press presence: in the UK as a whole in 2002 more than 36 million copies were circulated each week (6 million paid for, and 30 million distributed free).

Twenty-five daily (morning), 74 evening and 21 Sunday papers occupied a more ambiguous (local) place in the mediascape (Peak and Fisher 2002, 10). The four largest daily and Sunday titles (by circulation) in the UK each had sales of around half-a-million copies or more per issue – equivalent to, or greater than, the sales of six national titles. Significantly, three were published in Scotland (the fourth was the [London] *Evening Standard*). Of the remaining 116 papers, only six (all evening titles) sold 100,000 copies or more each issue: five were located in major English cities (Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Manchester, Leicester and Liverpool) and one in Belfast. In 1974 22 evening newspapers had circulations of 100,000 or more (Hartley, Gudgeon and Crafts 1979, 2; Peak 2002, 22). Although published and/or circulated, respectively, in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff, the *Daily Record*, *The Herald*, *Sunday Herald*, *The Scotsman*, *Scotland on Sunday*, *Sunday Mail*, *Irish News*, *News Letter*, *Belfast Telegraph*, *Sunday Life*, *Sunday World*, *Western Mail* and *Wales on Sunday* with sales or distributions of between 650,000 and 32,000, made claims to represent the 'national' press of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. On the other hand, three English morning titles had circulations of less than 20,000 (Peak 2002, 20, 22 & 24). In aggregate, 37.5 million copies of daily newspapers published (with the sole exception of the *Evening Standard*) outside London were circulated every week (Franklin and Murphy 1997, 215; Peak 2002, 10; Newspaper Society 2000a; Newspaper Society 2001). Overall concentrations of the readership of the local press were correspondingly high: 84% of adults (79% in Wales) read usually one local paper of whatever size or type.

[40] These figures were to be compared with national daily and Sunday newspaper circulations of between 232,000 and 4 million. Ten of these 19 papers each sold one million or more copies of every issue (Peak 2002, 7-8).

A considerable nostalgia adhered to local newspapers in the UK, allowing them to be presented as 'the backbone of Britain's media ... an integral part of their communities, championing local causes, spearheading campaigns and fighting on behalf of their readers. ... [They] embody the identity of the villages, towns and cities they serve' (Newspaper Society 2000c). The structure behind this façade was made to tell a different story, however, in which the character of the local press was 'radically altered' over the last three decades of the twentieth century (Franklin and Murphy 1998b, 9). The weekly press appeared to be in secular decline: the numbers of both titles and copies in circulation fell by about a quarter between 1985 and 2000 (Franklin and Murphy 1998b, 10; Newspaper Society 2000b). For a while, this could be attributed to an imbalance caused by the rapid growth of freesheets principally as carriers of advertising with little or, often, no editorial content (Franklin 1998). In one case, a give-away title offered free advertising on the basis of saving up to a quarter of its costs by not employing any journalists (Anon 1989). By 1990-1991 more than 40 million copies of 1,165 free titles were being distributed (compared to sales of around 7 million copies of just over 400 paid-for papers) (Franklin and Murphy 1997, 217-8; Franklin and Murphy 1998b, 10). As significantly, in the twenty years from 1970, the proportion of local press advertising placed in these freesheets rose from a minuscule 1.4% to more than a third: the advertising share of local dailies and Sundays and paid-for weeklies fell correspondingly (from 62.9% to 45% and from 35.7% to 19.5% respectively) (McNair 1994, 194). Over the longer term, however, these 'tacky give-aways' (Franklin and Murphy 1998b, 13) and the paid-for weeklies declined at about the same rate: in the fifteen years from 1985 each by 25 per cent in circulation, and 21 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively, in numbers of titles (Newspaper Society 2000d). The two sectors seemed to effectively co-evolve, with the traditional paid-for local paper supposedly following the freesheet in its more or less single-minded 'pursuit of advertising' and its 'consumerist, depoliticised' editorial content (Franklin and Murphy 1998b, 13, 21; McNair 2003, 210-11). The ideal of a 'democratic editorial function' was viewed as having been largely abandoned for a skew towards 'entertainment with little [in-depth] coverage of the local community' (Franklin and Murphy 1998b, 14; Franklin 1998, 138). This was accompanied by a

growing concentration of ownership and localized monopolization which did not always distinguish between paid-for and free titles, and was wholly commercial (Murphy 1998).

In 1974 there were 187 publishers who controlled only weekly titles: in 2002, about 60 remained (Hartley, Gudgeon and Crafts 1979, 5; Peak 2002, 11-19). At the beginning of the 1990s there were 200 recognized publishers of all types of local newspapers. By 2000 the figure had almost halved to 106, and the largest twenty (19 per cent) controlled 67.5% of paid-for weekly titles and 87% of free weeklies, and 95% of all weekly circulations (Newspaper Society 2000b & c). In 2002 the number of owners had fallen further to 97, while ownership concentration had increased so that the 'top 20' owned 84% of all titles and 96% of all circulations: the four major corporations controlled 62% of titles and 72% of circulations (Peak 2002, 10). These trends indicated the extent to which the local press could be – and was – accused of having forsaken its traditional idealized role in the local public sphere, leaving 'the local rag in tatters', as the two leading scholarly researchers into the UK local press put it (Franklin and Murphy 1997). The editor of the [Belfast] *Irish News* argued,

> Newspapers should inform people about the events that affect their lives, they should help to stimulate debate about things that matter and they should hold public figures and public bodies to account for their actions. The British ... regional press have manifestly failed to discharge any of these duties. That is why I left England to work in Ireland, where people expect newspapers to provide news, informed comment and good writing ... . (Garbutt 1990)

The vitality of the local press was being sapped by monopolization, it was argued, which devalued 'the role of newspapers ... in the democratic process' (Hannan 1997, 55). News competed (often on uneven terms) with 'lifestyle' journalism (Morgan 1992b). To an extent, these views presupposed that there was a Golden Age of the local press which had passed, diminishing its public sphere function (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 55-75; Harrison 1998, 168). Yet the local press was also criticized (often by the same people) for being anachronistically tied to the repetitive portrayal of 'a comfortable conservative world of institutional stability' bounded by increasingly irrelevant spatial coincidences of residence, culture, government, bureaucracy and business (Franklin and Murphy

1998b, 8). It had long been seen as 'old-fashioned, fuddy-duddy ... [and] stuffy' (Beamish 1998, 140), commercially driven and complacent (Murphy 1978, 187), and even by the 1970s to be in a 'poor and deteriorating state' (Franklin 1998, 129). In 2001 at least one local weekly was still publishing no news on its front page (Lockwood 2001), and there was no female editor of a local evening newspaper until 1990 (Marks 1990a & d). In England especially, although less so in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the concept of the local (the 'parish pump') implied small-mindedness (Pilling 1998, 183-4). Murphy (1978, 187), who worked as a local newspaper journalist in England in the 1960s, argued

> My research and experience as a reporter leads (*sic*) me to believe that whatever claims the interested participants in the world of newspapers make for themselves as guardians of democracy, at the local level at least reporters and editors spend most of their time solving immediate organisational problems of news production and little or none on democracy.

The local newspaper was apparently a 'rag' before it was tattered.

This was not a unanimous view, of course. For its own part, the local newspaper industry stressed that the papers strove to address in a comprehensive way those areas of life which lay between the polar extremes of the 'super-localism' of supermarket special offers and pharmacy opening hours which appeared prominently in shoppers, and the 'super-national ... tabloid[ism]' of celebrity sex which characterized a significant section of Fleet Street (Tunstall 1996, 75). In doing so, it was argued by a former editor, they attempted to combine 'community pride and vested interest' with idiosyncratic partisanship (Glover 1998, 121). Even critics acknowledged that the dutiful, unproblematized reporting of local life by the 'reinforcer of the local establishment' was occasionally tempered by the exercise of the press's function as the idealized Fourth Estate in the form of outbursts of radical indignation, investigative journalism and editorial crusading (Franklin and Murphy 1997, 227; Franklin and Murphy 1998a, 13-4; Pilling 1998, 189). A survey of local newspapers with circulations over 50,000 found that a third (12 out of 35) had dedicated investigative journalists – about twice the number then employed on national titles – leaving the researcher to conclude: 'Local

newspapers have traditionally been dull, parochial and establishment-led: today they are generally less so' (Head 1995, 68 & 70). The local press saw itself as having been founded on a willingness to challenge 'local institutions' (Jackson 1971, 8). In 2000 recorded levels of public trust in local newspapers were higher than those for all other media in the UK (Newspaper Society 2000a; Alec Davidson, president of the Newspaper Society, cited Newspaper Society 2000e).

That accounts of the condition of the local press were highly contested was peculiar neither to the UK nor to the late twentieth century (Franklin and Murphy 1998a, 1; Bird and Merwin 1942, 372-94). They served, however, to draw critical attention to shifts which had occurred in the formation of the local press and the ways in which it had defined and performed its functions. In the model local press the four functions – information, service, cohesion and debate – were mutually supportive, and mapped out a space for the local newspaper's journalism as a non-revenue raising activity, which was separated from the paper's commercial interests by the so-called 'glass wall', a symbol of the institutionalization of editorial independence (Drok 1997, 176-8; Jackson 1971, 274-5 & 278). Journalists accepted primary responsibility for the information and debate functions, out of which the cohesion function was met more or less incidentally (Bromley 1997a, 336). Tensions existed between, on the one hand, the information and service functions and, on the other hand, the cohesion and debate functions because, together, they called for a balancing of investments in public and private goods. These stresses were likely to be particularly acute if any 'public service' dimension was realigned, through editorial cost-cutting, the introduction of advertorials, etc., more directly to serve the press's commercial purposes (Drok 1997, 204; Franklin and Murphy 1998a, 13).

As local newspapers increasingly assumed the guise of 'just ... any other commercial operation, so the analysis of organisational processes must rely on organisational theory, rather than some pre-conceived assumption of editorial power' (Simpson 1981, 204). At the very least, the localness of content and distribution (although that status was in some doubt – see Bromley 1997a, 344; Franklin 1997, 103) was juxtaposed with the typically

non-local control of the newspaper's economy within conglomerated media groups, which then called into question issues of access and 'licence' which traditionally embedded the local press in its (spatial and social) communities. As Simpson (1981, 200) observed, this shift in power was widely recognized as centrally encompassing place: 'those in authority are now the managers who gain revenue, rather than those who select the correct news' – the former owing their allegiance (and very likely their office space) to the corporate centre, while the latter operated on the local periphery. As a manifestation of this, the idea that coverage of politics in particular did not profit newspapers, and was therefore of little interest to corporate managers, attained a certain kind of orthodoxy, and the amount of political material published appeared to decline throughout the twentieth century, leading in the 1990s to the renewed debates about a wider 'dumbing down' of the press (Bromley 1998a; Negrine 1994, 46-7). The local press may have largely stood aside from such processes until the 1970s, mainly because of its close symbiotic relationship with local government – 'the modal source of news' (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 63-4; Murphy 1987, 91-3).

> The content of such papers, heavily reliant on the local government structure which then encapsulated the police, the fire brigade, the ambulance service and the medial officer of health, provided a construct of a local community as a neatly defined polity coterminus with the circulation area of the local newspaper. This local government structure was a source of organized events in terms of council meetings and elections which provided a regular supply of narrative accounts of the democratic process. It provided ritual events associated with the mayor, the mayoress's charity and the bench of aldermen which constructed the idea of a community as a basis for the polity; and through its minutes, its reports and the activities of its public relations departments it provided an account of itself which the press could then process into news. The local press and local government were thus both engaged in the production of the idea of a community for the differing but coincidental contingent interests of the personnel of each.
>
> (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 190-1)

By the early 1990s, however, the local press was coming under mounting criticism that it had sold the pass on this (Franklin 1994, 117-18). Editors tried to shift their papers' reporting away from their traditional focus on local politics (Pritchard, Kelly and Ward 1993, 39). Franklin (1997, 114) argued that the local press ought to 'articulate the

history and concerns of a local community and be central to local democracy by providing a forum for public debate'; but instead 'entertainment, trivia, sensationalism and newzsak' more routinely comprised its content. The evidence produced by a research project conducted for the Newspaper Society, the local press owners' organization, by the Henley Centre was more ambivalent. Respondents were not directly asked about their interests in local politics, but included in a list of five types of news was one which focused broadly on planning and services and embraced 'decisions made by the local council'. It ranked second among respondents' news preferences, after local crime, and ahead of 'practical information (sales and jobs)', local history and local business (Henley Centre 1988, 32-3).

The notion of 'tabloidization', as such, made no appearance in Franklin and Murphy's (1991) study of the UK's local press. Yet the process, it was argued, was already under way, and indeed that the local press eventually led the so-called dumbing-down of 'serious' newspapers in the 1990s, which eventually affected the national broadsheet titles (Bromley 1998a, 27-8). When consultants surveyed the public about the proposition of starting a new Scottish daily newspaper in 1974, the response was overwhelmingly in favour of the tabloid format (McKay and Barr 1976, 50). Far from distancing themselves from the UK's tabloid-dominated national press, local newspapers began mimicking it, becoming 'increasingly geared to the market with an editorial focus on entertainment, advertising and "lifestyle" journalism' (Franklin and Murphy 1998a, 2). Some local press owners consciously abandoned the 'traditional approach to news', preferring instead to produce newspapers which appeared 'bright' and 'cheery' (Pritchard, Kelly and Ward 1993, 11; *The Key* n.d.). One of the then major local press owners, United Provincial Newspapers, which controlled 120 newspapers, embarked on a two-year £1m-plus project to redraw the editorial strategy of its titles. Prior to the scheduled roll-out in September 1994, in an internal company presentation called 'Closer to the customer', the marketing department professed to show that its research demonstrated that readers wanted a more tabloid local press (United Provincial Newspapers n.d.).

At about the same time, another major local newspaper company, Thomson Regional Newspapers, initiated its own strategic review, Project Key, for which were produced four issues of a 'guide to best practices', directed at the its own employees. In the first 12-page tabloid-sized issue, in an injunction against 'boring papers', the journalism of the tabloid national daily, *The Sun*, was singled out for praise. In the following issue, Thomson's journalists were urged to 'minimise the effort required' to read a newspaper (*The Key* n.d.). In an article which appeared subsequently in *The Guardian* newspaper, Matthew Engel (1993) specifically traced the adoption of many tabloid news values by local newspapers, claiming that, confronting economic, demographic and political change which manifested itself principally in declining circulations, the local press had latched on to what appeared to be the only obvious contemporary model of success in newspapers, that of the tabloid national daily, particularly *The Sun* – although eschewing the sex (Franklin and Murphy 1997, 224). Four years later Franklin (1997, 113) recorded 'the emergence of a "tabloid" local press; newszak abounds and many local papers have literally changed size from broadsheet to tabloid format'.

A somewhat extreme example of the genre from this era was the *News and Echo* published in Manchester (Morgan 1992a). This Sunday newspaper was introduced when its first editor, Tony Livesey, persuaded the owner of the *Sunday Sport*, David Sullivan, that the London national press no longer reported on the more minor soccer clubs in the English regions, and that these teams had millions of supporters who wanted to read about their Saturday games. Sullivan had started the *Sunday Sport* as a national title in London in 1986 after selling a chain of 139 sex shops and divesting himself of the majority of 20 sex magazines he had owned. He still retained a residual interest in some of the magazines, in a number of X-rated movies he had made in the 1970s and in other sex services (Livesey 1998, 13). Livesey, who became the paper's editor-in-chief, described it as 'the world's weirdest newspaper', which specialized in the more outlandish type of supermarket tabloid journalism and sex, especially photographs of naked women (p.11). Not surprisingly, the *News and Echo* concentrated on sport: 20 of the 64 pages of the issue of 17 January 1993 were given over to sport. Four pages of the same issue, including page 1, were devoted to the supposed admission of a soap opera

actor that he had slept with more than 1,000 women. Another headline proclaimed about a day-time television guest, 'TV *This Morning* girl is a secret stripper'. The alleged transcript of a supposed telephone conversation between the Prince of Wales and Camilla Parker-Bowles was re-printed over pages 4 and 5. While the *News and Echo* was clearly exceptional, there is evidence that even the most 'serious' of the local press was prepared to ape the Fleet Street tabloids (Bromley 1997b).

The suggestion that over the last 30 years of the twentieth century the UK local press distanced itself (literally and figuratively) from 'the local' was persuasive but not utterly compelling (McArthur 1999). An audit, taking into account performance against the five definitional criteria introduced above, indicated this:

Distribution

It was clear that fewer copies of the local press were circulating at the end of the twentieth century. Between 1921 and 1985, two in every five local papers ceased publication (Curran and Seaton 1988, 251), and between 1985 and 2003, the number of titles fell by a further 22.5%. Moreover, over this period there was a shift from sales (which accounted for 100% of circulations in 1921) to free distribution which made up just over half of total circulations in 2003. Additionally, on average, each paper was selling (or distributing) fewer copies. As has already been noted, total circulations of weekly papers fell by a quarter in the decade after 1990-91. The daily and Sunday press, beginning somewhat earlier in the 1960s, shed about a half of their circulations in 30 years (Bromley 1995a, 22-3; Franklin 1997, 104; Pritchard, Kelly and Ward 1993, 5). Evening newspapers, which had been read in nine out of ten households in their individual geographical domains in the early 1960s, were reaching a third fewer homes by 1978 (Clark 1981, 6). The decline continued into the twenty-first century with a fall of 2.3% in sales in 2001 alone (Peak and Fisher 2001, 18). Did these figures add up to a simple net loss for the local press not only of distribution *per se* but also of validity?

The decline was uneven: while almost two-thirds of the weekly (and twice-weekly) paid-for papers circulating in 1921 had gone out of business by 2003, the much smaller number of Sunday papers tripled (from seven to 21); and although it was obvious that local press circulations more or less went into freefall after the mid-1950s, they also experienced cyclical upturns, too, the latest occurring from 1995 (Franklin 1997, 104; Peak and Fisher 1998, 36-7; Tunstall 1996, 61). As has already been suggested, 'neighbourhood' may only weakly capture the sense of localness. In the 1980s it was observed that

> The relative importance of the local and the non-local is becoming more complex. Increasingly, the fact the (*sic*) people's lives are no longer entirely bound up in the local community means that local news and issues are not necessarily of relevance and importance *purely because they are local*. ... the importance of a [newspaper] story is determined by how much it affects the individual. (Henley Centre 1988, 31 – original emphasis)

Demographic, economic and social change was accompanied by population movements away from older industrial and commercial centres to the suburbs and semi-rural areas; reorientations of identity away from primarily spatially-determined locales (the city, the nation-State) towards cultural connectivities (Europe, Manchester United, ethnicity); expanded and diversifying opportunities for leisure; employment patterns which were once comfortably captured by simple binary configurations (industry/agriculture, manufacturing/services) transforming into the more complex and amorphous 'knowledge economy' – in short, there was fragmentation and hetereogenization (Henley Centre 1988, 33; McNair 2003, 216-8). Recognizing these trends, Isaaman (1994, 39), who edited the weekly [London] *Hampstead and Highgate Express* for more than a quarter of a century, wrote of 'the chaotic way we live now'. It was perhaps necessary to rethink the notion of 'the local' dimension of the local press, and to abandon reference to the constancy and ubiquity of the paid-for weekly and/or daily, reflecting and bound by a sense of geography, in favour of evanescent combinations of differing types of newspapers which accommodated new configurations of locale and were more precisely described through more flexible and accommodating terms not

hitherto widely applied to the local press in the UK, such as *metro*, *suburban* and even *lifestyle*.

Licence

It is irrefutable that ownership of the local press was progressively concentrated within a small number of nationally- and internationally-based corporations, a process which actually accelerated after 1990. Some critics sought to deduce from this that the local press was no longer 'licensed' by the communities in which it circulated but was imposed on them (Franklin 1997, 108-9; Wales Watch 2000). Of the ten largest local press-owning companies in 2003, four were controlled from London, one ultimately from the Republic of Ireland and one from the US (Peak 2002, 11-19). Conglomeration intensified after 1995 with more than 60 takeovers involving in excess of £5bn taking place. One result was the closure of localized editorial offices and their consolidation in regional centres (Bell and Alden 2003, 27; MacArthur 1999; Milmo 2000; Peak and Fisher 2000, 66). One commentator asked,

> is the industry serving its shareholders better but letting down its readership? ... the regional press has evolved a long way from the locally-based groups, often family-owned enterprises of the past. ... while most people think of their local paper as a repository for such vital information as the timing of the next church fete and the availability of second-hand three-piece suites, their place in the new economy is making the industry's consolidation look financially very attractive. (Bell 2000)

Local press groups had 'made a fetish of driving up profit margins' and were convinced that 'not only must they be big, but huge, enormous, gigantic. Smallness and local-ness ... are no longer economically viable' (Greenslade 2000).

All the same, of the total of 96 different local press proprietors listed by the Newspaper Society (2003a), half (47) owned just one newspaper: close to two-thirds (63) controlled five titles or fewer. Only ten organizations owned 20 papers or more. Moreover, Tunstall (1996, 88) made the point that corporate owners – even the hands-on idiosyncratic

mogul type – depended heavily on local, on-site management and editors. When interviewed in the early 1990s, while some local newspaper editors believed their status to have been diminished ('Newspapers are now run by accountants and editors have a lesser role than they have had in the past'), others felt their authority had grown ('I'm responsible for the office as a whole. For the editorial, management and the budgets') (Pritchard, Kelly and Ward 1993, 22). Tunstall's (1977) survey for the Royal Commission on the Press rather debunked the idea of 'editorial sovereignty', particularly in the local press where editors had little, if any, strategic autonomy, a factor which tended to impinge on their tactical discretion, too (pp.315-7). The idea that corporate managements dictated local press editorial policy (down to individual cases of news content) may have been exaggerated, on the one hand (Pritchard, Kelly and Ward [1993, 11-14] found a mixture of antagonism and agreement among editors and managers – see also Franklin and Murphy 1997, 225-6); while, on the other hand, such a situation may have represented the long-established *status quo* (McNair 2003, 214).

Although it could be argued that declining readerships were indicative of a withdrawal of 'licence', there was little evidence of public hostility towards corporatized local newspapers. Rather, the falling interest in the local press was believed to lie in external readjustments to the relationships between local and wider issues and interests ('there is no more interest in stories about the closure of a local hospital ward than in those about national NHS [National Health Service] cuts'). If anything, the local press had been too traditional and unreflective of the changing contexts which surrounded it (Simpson n.d., 2-3). The Royal Commission on the Press found that even those it surveyed who were considered 'great readers of newspapers' in the 1970s read the local press relatively rarely, or even not at all, and two out of five professed that they would not miss the morning or evening papers, and more than half would not miss the weeklies (Social Commentary and Planning Research 1977, 175-6).

Economy

Secular falls in circulation and the shift from sales to free distribution undermined the extent to which the local press participated in the local economy as locally-produced goods dependent directly on creating and maintaining customer and readership bases (the 'market for readers' – see page 96). The proportion of local newspaper income originating in sales declined despite a relatively steep increase in cover prices (by 39% during the 1990s), resulting in an offsetting increased reliance on advertising income (Dti 2002, paras 7.1-7.2). In 1975 the mean sales figure for weekly paid-for titles was just under 17%; by the mid-1980s it had fallen 13%, and it then recovered to 15% in 1998. For daily and Sunday papers, 28% of their income came from sales in 1998 (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 35; Hartley, Gudgeon and Crafts 1979, 17; *World Press Trends* 2000, 223). In unadjusted money terms, local press income from advertising more than doubled from £1.28bn in 1987 to nearly £3bn in 2001: prior to 1996, it had taken 30 years for these advertising revenues to double (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 7; Peak and Fisher 1996, 59; Peak and Fisher 2001, 10). In 1999 revenues from advertising amounted to nearly £2.5bn (£1.074bn taken by the daily and Sunday press; £930m by the freesheets, and £487m by the weeklies) which was 56% of the newspaper total. Through to the end of the twentieth century local weekly papers received a steady flow of approximately 35% of all newspaper advertising; local dailies and Sundays accounted for almost a further quarter of advertising spend on newspapers. In 2001, the local press accounted for 20% of the total UK advertising spend (£2.77bn) (Burgess 2003; Franklin and Murphy 1991, 7; Hoath 2002; Peak and Fisher 2000, 65; *World Newspaper Trends* 2000, 223).

The local press traditionally depended on revenues raised from classified advertising, particularly that for property, recruitment, new and used vehicles, entertainment, trade services and shopping (Franklin 1997, 105; Peak and Fisher 1998, 37; Simpson n.d., 4). Recruitment advertising accounted for up to 30% of all advertising revenues (Competition Commission 1991, 30). In 2001 local newspapers carried 46.9% of all classified advertising placed in the UK. Nearly eight out of ten people looking for work used local press advertising to find jobs, and 57% of people seeking home services also turned to the classifieds in their local newspapers (Dorset Advertiser Series 2002; York

& County Press n.d.). Most of this advertising was generated and accessed locally. By 1999 two-thirds of local newspaper advertising was classifieds (*World Newspaper Trends* 2000, 223). Nevertheless, both display and national advertising always figured in local newspaper economics (Andrews 1962, 143). A growth in retail advertising fuelled both from the 1960s (Clark 1981, 84-6). In the fifteen years to 1975, expenditure on press display advertising increased by a fifth to a third of all advertising spend in local newspapers (Hartley, Gudgeon and Crafts 1979, 15). In 1998 national display advertising generated more than 10% of local newspaper advertising income (Peak and Fisher 2000, 65). Of the ten organizations spending most on local newspaper advertising in 1999, at least six were UK, rather than locally based, including the Central Office of Information, British Telecom, the Tesco supermarket chain and Vauxhall Motors (*World Newspaper Trends* 2000, 224). The mix of advertisers also changed with categories like the media themselves, travel, finance, computers and pharmaceuticals becoming more prominent (*World Newspaper Trends* 2000, 224).

Table 3.1: Sales and advertising revenue in the local press, 1994-2000

Date	Type of newspaper	Sales (£m)	Share of net revenue	Ad. revenue (£ m)	Share of net revenue	Classifieds as share of net revenue	Display as share of net revenue
1994	Daily/Sunday	421	35.6%	763	64.4%	39.4%	25%
	Weeklies	70	16.4%	356	83.6%	58%	25.6%
	Freesheets	-	0%	701	100%	54.8%	45.2%
1997	Daily/Sunday	391	29.2%	946	70.8%	46.4%	24.4%
	Weeklies	73	14.7%	425	85.3	61.5%	23.8%
	Freesheets	-	0%	804	100%	57.7%	42.3%
2000	Daily/Sunday	418	26.9%	1,137	73.1%	49.8%	23.3%
	Weeklies	89	14.6%	519	85.4%	63.9%	21.4%
	Freesheets	-	0%	1,030	100%	61.1%	38.9%
± 1994-2000	Daily/Sunday	-0.7%	-24.4%	+49%	+13.5%	+26.4%	-2.4%
	Weeklies	+27%	-11%	+45.8%	+2.2%	+10.2%	-16.4%
	Freesheets	N/A	N/A	+46.9%	N/A	+11.5%	-13.9%

Source: Competition Commission 1995, 34-5; Competition Commission 1999a, 57; Competition Commission 2002, 45-6.

In sum, the local press increasingly relied on advertising revenues rather than on sales of copies. Between 1995 and 2001 local press advertising revenues as a whole increased by 24% (at constant 1995 prices): revenues at daily and Sunday titles rose by 25.5%, at weekly newspapers by nearly 23% and at freesheets by 20% (Competition Commission 2003, 28). In unadjusted figures, advertising revenues increased by more than 50% between 1994 and 2001. The share of net revenue raised through sales by daily and Sunday papers fell by more than a quarter, and by more than a seventh among weekly paid-for titles. The relationship between local and national display advertising, measured by value, hardly changed, and while the proportion of total revenues from display advertising fell by nearly 10% between 1990 and 2001, those from classified advertising rose by only 5.5%, chiefly due to an increase of almost a third in recruitment ads. By 2001, three-quarters of the net revenue raised by daily and Sunday papers and nearly 86% of the net revenue of paid-for weeklies came from advertising (Competition Commission 2003, 25 & 112). Nevertheless, between 1994 and 2000 there was something of a resurgence in classified advertising (see Table 3.1) in conformity to a longer-term trends (Dti 2002, para 7.2).

Content

Franklin (1997, 113-4) dismissed local newspaper content as amounting to not much more than recycled public relations and media releases, advertorials and even propaganda. Local newspapers were found to contain as little as 20%, and commonly less than 30%, news (Franklin and Murphy 1997, 224), reflecting a sharply declining investment in editorial. The number of journalists declined dramatically in the 1980s, in some cases by as much as a half, continuing into the 1990s (Greenslade 1996; Pritchard 1993, 56). Moreover, journalism was merged in some instances with marketing, and editors became concerned with 'brand values, product planning ... and sources of competitive advantage' (Griffith 1995). Newspapers in different parts of the UK were given a common name in the interests of 'branding'. This kind of standardization included masthead design and common content (chiefly, so-called 'service' pages like the television schedules) (Competition Commission 1991, 31 & 38).

There was disagreement on this point, however, with McNair (1996, 197-9) arguing that the dismantling of the structural boundaries between media and media sectors placed competitive pressure on the local press, resulting in many titles – even freesheets – *increasing* their investments in journalism (McNair 2003, 211; see also le Duc 1997). Peak and Fisher (2000, 65) also noted a renewed commitment to editorial.

Politics: The demise of political news was well documented (Curran and Seaton 1991, 113-7; Seymour-Ure 1968, 66-8); but these analyses, focusing on the national press, elided the political origins and continuing political dimension of much of the local press, varying over time and space, and resulting in quite widely differing approaches to politics (Bromley 1989; Seymour-Ure 1996, 45; Jones 1993, 228). They also underestimated the impact of the involvement of the local press in politics and on the (local) public sphere (Harrison 1998; Osmond 2003, 7; Tiratsoo 1990, 89). In Australia, while up to three-quarters of voters asked professed that the media had little or no influence on them, about the same number turned to the 'town press' (a mix of paid-for daily and non-daily titles) during local elections (Ester and McAllister 2001, 29 & 36-8), while research in the US pointed to a shift in local newspaper foci from (party) politics to civics (Loomis 2000, 140-2). Surveying local press coverage of successive general elections from 1987, Franklin and Richardson (2002) concluded that local newspapers were both committed to 'political reporting' and highly likely to be influential in agenda-setting (pp.35-6).

Tabloidization: At the end of the twentieth century it was difficult to find a broadsheet local newspaper. Only two of the local papers sampled for this study were broadsheets – the *Abergavenny Chronicle* and the *Western Mail*. Even those which retained the broadsheet format into the twenty-first century began succumbing to the fad for the neo-tabloid compact size (This is York 2004). In 2004, the *Western Mail*, too, followed suit (Sargeson 2004). That was perhaps not surprising, given that, having experimented with a tabloid (technically, compact) edition in 2003, *The Times* abandoned the broadsheet format in 2004 (Cozens and Brook 2004). By then both *The Independent* and *The Scotsman* were also published as compacts/tabloids

(Greenslade 2003b; Timms 2004). A similar trend was evident elsewhere; for example, in the USA (*San Francisco Examiner*) and Germany (*Die Welt Kompakt*) (Wisdorff 2004). Nevertheless, the local press was warned that, while adopting the tabloid format would be advantageous, aping tabloid style could cost it readers (McNair 2003, 213-4). Being somewhat *less* tabloid was of advantage to some local papers in Germany in the 1990s (Schönbach 2000, 71-2). Greenslade (2001) concluded that tabloid tendencies were short-lived phenomena in the local press in the UK. Reader preferences for so-called downmarket, tabloid [London] national daily and Sunday newspapers also may not have transferred automatically to the local press: a 'double majority' existed for both entertaining tabloids and more politically engaging local papers (Bromley 1997b; Jackson 1971, 51-2).

In sum, news values – the subjective judgement of what constituted news – changed over time, and particularly in the twentieth century with the development of the tabloid (national) newspaper, and possibly allied to a widespread disillusion with the political process (Bromley 1999; Engel 1996; Sparks 2000, esp. 32). This was as much a movement of style as pure content (see Schönbach 2000); but it did not necessarily always betoken a withdrawal of professionalized journalists from engagement with their readers. 'The dialogue between readers and popular newspapers, whether literal, as in the letter pages, or part of the textualization of the readership in the layout, language and advertising of the newspaper, became a critical and a dynamic component in the legitimation of its popular appeal …' (Conboy 2002, 96). Moreover, even in the 1970s, no more than 30% of people surveyed by the Royal Commission said they got information about their locality from the local press (compared to twice as many who used 'personal experience' and 48% who relied on 'what people they meet say'). Nearly a half of respondents felt that local evening papers contained *too much* local news, and 42% believed the local press paid too little attention to the major local issues. Furthermore, some local newspapers were accused of concentrating too heavily on 'bad news' and invasions of personal privacy (Social and Community Planning Research 1977, 180-2, 195, 223). Particularly with regard to politics, what journalists defined as being of local interest may not always have coincided with community priorities

(Franklin and Richardson 2002, 50). The 'exhaustive account of [local] life' in which the local press ideally excelled (Hannan 1992, 10) may not have always reflected community interests. When the *Scottish Daily News* launched in the mid-1970s carrying 'a tired mix of ... formula journalism, but of another age ... sedate and outmoded', it failed not only to attract the numbers of readers it required to remain viable, but of those it did secure the majority were much older than the target demographic (McKay and Barr 1976, 68).

Access

Local newspapers enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with their readers and communities, in which they ideally offered the public ready access to discussion and debate, as well as to the formulation of much of the material which gave rise to such discussion and debate (Bromley 1998b, 148; Franklin and Murphy 1991, 9; Social and Community Planning Research 1977, 199). Jones (1993, 7) observed how Victorians were 'anything but passive readers of newspapers', contributing to 'a public critical discourse that explored and contested the purposes and effects of journalism'. In the twentieth century the degree to which this was exploited to promote authentic dialogue, or to meet self-serving commercial interests remained largely a moot point (Bromley 1998b, 159-60). Research for the Royal Commission found that, among a group of 'influential' people selected for a survey, there was a generally comfortable and open relationship with the local (evening and weekly) press. While more than a half of respondents reported never speaking to local newspapers, of those, 31% said it was because they simply had nothing to say. A further 50% did not speak to the press out of some kind of mistrust ('paper would not report accurately', 'paper out of date', etc.), including directly derogatory feelings ('not worth speaking to'). Weekly newspapers were a third more likely than evening titles to be the object of this type of comment (Social and Community Planning Research 1977, 200). Although Murphy (1987, 91) argued that the structures of the local press militated against the kind of engagement which made it 'an important part of the process by which members of society define the nature of politics', local newspapers were found to distinctively provide 'a truly local forum' during the general elections of

1992 and 2001, when analyses of political content found 25% and 20% of it, respectively, was made up of readers' letters (Franklin 1992, 19; Franklin and Harrison 2002, 50). There was some evidence to suggest that newspapers which adopted a more partisan approach were inclined to allow more space for readers and others to participate in debate through the letters-to-the-editor columns (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 141-2). In the 1990s the editor of the daily *Oxford Mail* provided half a page every two weeks for any member of the public to fill (Morgan 1992c), and the *Birmingham Evening Mail* appointed a 'people's champion' who was available to the public (Morgan 1997). Rather than merely reproducing the same old story, the press could provide 'a legitimate alternative space for debate' (Kitzinger 1999, 61). Some believed

> The close relationship between local newspapers and the communities which buy them becomes particularly evident on these newspapers' letters pages. ... Readers' letters, then, are a particularly rich source of data from which to establish the perceptions which local newspapers have of themselves and their audience(s) ... . (Harrison and Franklin 2003, 184)

The issue had hardly been explored, though, and the extent to which the local press embraced or turned away ordinary citizens remained largely untested.

Summary

Local was clearly not just a matter of semantics. It could be argued that many local newspapers in the UK had ceased to be wholly local, although whether they were actually 'pseudo-local' is debatable (Franklin 1994, 108-9; Franklin and Murphy 1991, 54; Kleinsteuber 1992, 151-2). Ideas of localness (defined as 'keeping ... [people] well informed and encouraging them to think about and take an active part in the affairs of their community [homes, jobs, schools, environment, culture etc.]') tended to be implied rather than made explicit (Local Radio Workshop 1983, 59), and could be changed to incorporate more cultural, and less geographical, locatedness. By 2000 newspapers, whether self- or externally defined as metropolitan, regional, provincial, country, community, suburban or local, were urged to adopt the identifying notion of 'close to home' with its several layers of meaning, psychological as well as literal (The Future

Foundation 2000). A broader concept of 'civics' may have overtaken politics as a main object of reporting and comment in the local press as an expression of 'close to home'. After analyzing the main front-page stories in 100 weekly newspapers, Jackson (1971, 82-121) categorized 61% of content as addressing either 'community progress' (37%) or 'community controversy' (24%), while inside the papers, news 'concerning the community as a whole, or local institutions, organisations,, industries, etc.' formed two additional distinctive categories. Although the press formally considered the coverage of local government and politics of primary importance within these categories, Jackson argued that they lacked 'majority appeal'. In the 1990s many weekly newspaper editors believed that other civic activities were cementing otherwise fragmented communities and ought to be a focus of coverage (Ray 1993, 44-5). In Wales especially, the disjuncture between the nation-state centralized in England and the country meant that at its foundations in the nineteenth century the local press was situated at the centre of an array of civic organizations and activities representing social, cultural and religious movements (Jones 1993, 5-6).

The press in Wales[41]

There appeared to be little which exempted the press in Wales from such general UK trends (Franklin and Murphy 1998b, 17). Indeed, Jones (1993, 202) proposed that the Welsh press was in effect an 'extension' of the English system, while Williams (1999a, 94) was a leading proponent of the view that this had deprived Wales of its own national press. Nevertheless, it was widely accepted that the Welsh press was particularly influential (Jones 1993, 34). In 1959 Welsh morning newspapers were more widely read in Wales than all but two Fleet Street titles, and more than eight out of ten people in Wales read a local paper of some kind (Jones 1993, 221). By 1995 more than 80% of newspapers read in Wales (by 87% of people living there) were published outside the country, and the largest selling London daily, *The Sun*, outsold the Cardiff-based so-called national newspaper of Wales, the *Western Mail*, by nearly four to one. From the

[41] A very brief comparable analysis of the press in Northern Ireland in the 1980s, touching on many of the themes raised here, is in Bromley 1997b.

1960s Welsh newspaper reading habits were increasingly 'tabloid' (Williams 1997, 9). In the late 1990s, the household penetration in Wales of the biggest-selling newspapers was: *The Sun* 22.5%, the *Mirror c.*15%, *Daily Mail* 12%; the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post* 6% each. At the same time, economic, social and cultural change brought about 'a sense of dislocation rather than of continuity', which for some encompassed 'the relationship between newspaper and community' (Hannan 1997, 53-4). How the local press situated itself 'at the centre of Welsh life' became a key object of debate (Fowler 1997, 64).

The number of publishers of only weekly titles fell by more than a half between 1961 and 1974. Over the same period, the penetration of all local newspapers in Wales was reduced by between 8% and 14%. The number of towns with competing weeklies dropped by in excess of a quarter, from more than half to 40%. One consequence of such trends was that by the mid-1970s the concentration of local newspaper ownership, measured by the proportion of weekly circulations, was highest in Wales, with one corporation, Thomson Regional Newspapers (TRN), controlling 34% of all local circulations (Hartley, Gudgeon and Crafts 1979, 6, 14, 36, 41 & 52). By 1995 TRN's control of all newspaper circulation and distribution in Wales had grown to 38%, and it also controlled 43% of sales of all daily papers. Following the acquisition of these interests, Trinity controlled 57% of daily sales and 51% of the circulation and distribution of all papers in Wales (Competition Commission 1995, 42). In 2002 the entire Welsh press, except for three weekly titles, was owned by the three largest local newspaper conglomerates in the UK – Trinity Mirror, Newsquest and Northcliffe Newspapers – the fourteenth ranked Tindle Newspapers, and the indigenous group, North Wales Newspapers (16th). The Midland News Association (ranked eighth) circulated one paper in Wales, and the independent publisher, The County Press, two titles. The scale of the diminution of Welsh control over newspapers in Wales was evident in the relative size of the main groups. While North Wales Newspapers owned 13 titles (one of them English), Trinity numbered 24 Welsh newspapers and series of newspapers among its 234 UK titles; Newsquest included 16 Welsh titles and series of titles in its overall total of 212; Northcliffe 6 Welsh papers (105 in the UK) and Tindle

nine (42).[42] Of 67 newspaper properties owned by conglomerates, 55 (82%) lay outside Welsh corporate control.

The Welsh local press was relatively small in both scale and scope: in 1998 none of the 25 biggest selling or largest distributed weekly titles in the UK was published in Wales. The best selling Welsh weekly newspaper, the *Western Telegraph*, ranked only 36th in the UK (Peak and Fisher 1998, 45, 49, 51 & 53). *Wales on Sunday* had one of the smallest circulations of any regional Sunday title. Audited circulation and distribution figures for individual local newspapers in Wales in mid-2003 ranged between weekly sales of 1,385 (*Monmouth Free Press*) and a distribution of 100,000 copies (*The* [Cardiff] *Post*). Of 56 Welsh papers listed by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (some accounting for small series of linked titles and/or editions), 29 were circulating fewer than 20,000 copies of each issue. Twelve (the daily *Western Mail* and the Wales edition of the [Liverpool] *Daily Post*, *Wales on Sunday*, the evening titles, *South Wales Echo*, *South Wales Argus*, *South Wales Evening Post* and [Wrexham] *Evening Leader*, and five weeklies) had sales of more than 20,000 copies an issue, and 15 had free distributions of the same order (ABC 2003a & b). As a consequence, the Welsh press did not penetrate as deeply as the press in other parts of the UK (Osmond 1998, 1). This estimate does not take into account either the even smaller Welsh language press (Mackay and Powell 1997, 16) – the community press, *papurau bro*, had an estimated aggregate circulation of 70,000 in the mid-1990s (Williams 1997, 14) – or English local newspapers circulating in Wales (except the Wales edition of the [Liverpool] *Daily Post*).[43] The aggregate audited sales of the weekly press in Wales was about a third of a million copies. The freesheets had a total verified distribution of almost 700,000. Although small in number, evening newspapers achieved aggregate circulations of nearly 180,000. The two daily (morning) titles – the [Cardiff] *Western Mail* and the Wales edition of the [Liverpool] *Daily Post* – each had a circulation of more than 40,000, and *Wales on Sunday* 54,424 (see Table 3.2). (Unfortunately, these data were bound to be underestimations, as access was restricted to newspapers audited by ABC, which did not

[42] Data taken from the Newspaper Society web site on 4 December 2003.
[43] The ABC figures do include the Welsh language weeklies *Y Cymro* and *Yr Herald*, published by North Wales Newspapers, and therefore they are included here, too.

include every Welsh title; and not all titles were audited separately, but sometimes in series or small groupings, where the figures overlapped.)

Nevertheless, the structure of the local press in Wales was more nuanced and differentiated than might have been expected given assertions that it was merely a replica of the English system. For example, differences existed between north and south Wales, and in 1995 the Competition Commission (1995, 44) took the view that these represented 'separate newspaper markets', and accepted that there was minimal social interpenetration between them (p.59). The distinctions between north and south were predicated not solely on geographical separateness nor disparities in the use of the Welsh language, but on at least seven other factors:

- the continued presence of the last remaining significantly large Welsh publisher in the north;
- the predominance of evening newspaper publication in the south (three of the four evening papers were published in the major industrial conurbations of South Wales – Cardiff, Swansea and Newport: the fourth in Wrexham in the north);
- the failure of the self-styled 'national' daily, the *Western Mail*, to secure any meaningful readership in the north: its penetration of north Wales was less than 1%;
- the parallel lack of circulation of *Wales on Sunday* in north Wales: its penetration of this are was less than 2% (Competition Commission 1995, 42);
- the alternative circulation of the [Liverpool] *Daily Post* in the north (Williams 1997, 9);
- the publication of Welsh titles in the north by companies based outside Wales, and
- the circulation in the border areas of Wales of English local newspapers.

Moreover, the relative positions of the different elements of the local press were markedly different from the pattern prevailing in the UK as a whole. The presence of the traditional paid-for weekly press (measured as a share of total circulations within Wales)

was more than 50% greater than it was in the UK as a whole on the same measure (17% against 8%), and the position of weekly freesheets correspondingly weaker (27% rather than 41%). Moreover, not only were freesheet distributions lower, and paid-for sales higher, therefore, than the average proportionate circulations of the Welsh press as a whole, but freesheet distribution was proportionately lower in UK terms, too. The weekly press as a single entity had a smaller share of total circulations in Wales compared to the UK (40% to 49%). This meant that the number of copies of weekly newspapers in circulation was 18.75% below what would have been expected based on UK experiences. Both types of weeklies together were numerically under-represented, the 49 titles listed by ABC as audited in mid-2003 corresponding to 4.25% of the equivalent UK weekly press, the Welsh local press as a whole accounting for 4.4% of all listed UK newspapers. Freesheets (21 in number) were significantly so (3.3%). All other types of newspaper were over-represented – the Sunday press marginally (4.7%); paid-for weeklies and the evening press (each 5.5%), and the dailies (8%).

The aggregate circulations of daily, evening and Sunday newspapers could not be precisely compared, as the UK press included a number of free daily and Sunday titles, a category which did not exist in Wales, and the ABC data included some titles published in the Republic of Ireland. Nevertheless, the total circulations of all these papers in Wales, aggregated as a weekly figure, accounted for 60% of all local newspaper circulations compared to 51% in the UK. This was more than 15% above the proportional average. All in all, more than seven out of ten newspapers circulating in Wales was bought rather than given away. The corresponding figure for the UK as a whole was less than 60%. This pattern had historical roots. In the early 1960s paid-for weekly newspapers had a bigger share of the total of local press circulations in Wales than they did in the UK as a whole, and as the share of total circulations accounted for by weeklies fell in the rest of the UK, the gap widened. At the same time, the share of circulations claimed by evening titles rose closer to the UK average (Hartley, Gudgeon and Crafts 1979, 14). One study in 1997 produced data to show that more people in Wales read the *Western Mail* than all of the national broadsheets combined, and that the *South Wales Echo* was read by more people in its primary circulation area in and around

Cardiff than either *The Sun* or *The Mirror* (Tate 1997). Finally, the local press in Wales seemed not to have declined in terms of absolute numbers of copies in circulation, although the number of titles published fell (see Table 3.3).

These statistics point to a significant resilience among traditional, paid-for newspapers, most particularly weeklies, in Wales. They had conceded less ground to freesheets than in the UK as a whole. Much analysis of local newspapers concentrated on the experiences of titles, looked at either individually or collectively. Given the small net numbers involved, trends over time might be more accurately expressed in relational terms such as share of circulation. Looked at this way, it appeared that important national/regional variations existed in the formation of the local press. That is not to argue that the Welsh press was exempt from the general decline in local newspapers evident in the UK. However, while the number of titles in publication fell by more than

Table 3.2: The UK and the Welsh local press

Newspaper type	No. of titles		No. of titles – Wales/UK	Circulations		% Circulations		Circulations – Wales/UK
	Wales	*UK*		*Wales*	*UK*	*Wales*	*UK*	
Paid-for weekly	28	509	5.5%	332,462	6m	13%	8%	5.5%
Free weekly	21	640	3.3%	699,310	30m	27%	41%	2.33%
All weeklies	49	1,149	4.25%	1.032m	36m	40%	49%	2.86%
Evening	4	74	5.5%	179,897 [959,745]*	N/A	37%	N/A	
Daily	2	25	8%	88,842 [547,095]*	N/A	21%	N/A	
Sunday	1	21	4.7%	54,424	N/A	2%	N/A	
All non-weeklies	7	120	5.8%	1.56m*	7.5m†	60%	51%†	4.16%
All paid-for papers	35	629	5.6%	1.89m*	43.5m†	73%	59%	4.35%
All local papers	56	1269	4.4%	2.59m	73.5m†	100%	100%	3.52%

Source: ABC. * Daily and evening circulations have been aggregated into weekly totals by multiplying audited daily circulations by either 5 and adding separately audited Saturday sales, or by 6. † Includes the circulations of a small number of free daily and Sunday titles.

a third, total audited circulations actually increased by 28% over a 40 year period (see Table 3.3). The largest decreases in both numbers of titles and circulations were to be found in the paid-for weekly press. Nevertheless, the rate of decline eased. Over the ten or eleven years between 1976/7 and 1987, 38 weekly newspapers ceased publication, and weekly circulations dropped by nearly 200,000 copies, whereas in the 15 years following 1987, only eight titles were lost, and circulations fell away by less than 100,000 (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 5).

The Welsh-scape, including its mediascape, was also of specific note. The UK was characterized by a heavily metropolitan-centred mediascape. Although news output increased quantitatively over the last two decades of the twentieth century, it was far less certain that it maintained qualitative variety (Cottle and Ashton 1998: 29-34). National newspapers had more pages, but fewer localized editions, and less local reporting (Preston 2003; Williams 1999a, 96) – a factor only partly mitigated by the publication of a Welsh [*Daily*] *Mirror* from September 1999.[44] Radio and television broadcast more news (from 24-hour rolling formats to spot bulletins), but this was overwhelmingly supplied by only two organizations, which were both based in London (the BBC and Independent Television News/Independent Radio News), supplemented by regional news centres operated by the BBC and the Channel 3 independent television (ITV) franchisees. Regional and local commercial radio, which were in any event heavily committed to popular music formats, chiefly relayed London output, too. BBC Wales and HTV (Channel 3) provided basic television and radio news services for Wales in English, and Siannel Pedwar Cymru (S4C) TV news in Welsh. There were additional Welsh-language radio services (BBC Cymru radio and a number of commercial stations). The amount of news output in Wales increased following devolution (Davies 1999: 28). A preference for public service broadcasting – about 25% greater than in England – was evident (Bromley 2001, 131). Nevertheless, it was argued that overall a less diverse press circulated in Wales (Mungham and Williams 1998, 117, 121-2; Williams 1999a, 96-7), and that this reflected neither the contemporary regional and

[44] Publication of the *Welsh Mirror* ceased in August 2003 (Preston 2003).

local differences which existed *within* Wales (Bromley 2001, 131), nor the origins of the Welsh press in highly localized cultural settings (Jones 1993, 5-7).

There was also great sensitivity over the non-Welsh origin of much of the media. In addition to the perceived lack of a Welsh national press, and the concentration of ownership of the local press in non-Welsh conglomerates, 40% of viewers in Wales had access to English television programming. Only about a quarter of them chose to exclude Welsh TV, but half watched both. Radio signals were also picked up from England. Moreover, the access to, and use of, English broadcasting were unevenly distributed between the parts of Wales bordering England in the north and south (Bromley 2001, 133; Davies 1999, 7). Satellite television usage was particularly high: at 66% it was 10% greater than in any other part of the UK (Osmond 2003). It was often

Table 3.3: The Welsh local press, 1961-2002

Newspaper type	Numbers of titles			± No. (%)	Circulations in 000s			± No (%)
	1961	*1976*	*2002*		*1961*	*1977*	*2002*	
Morning	1	1	2*	+1 (100%)	102	95	88.8	-13.2 (-13%)
Evening	3	4	4	+1 (33%)	274	268	179.9	-94.1 (-34%)
Weekly	102	85	35	-67 (65.5%)	680	611	332.5	-347.5 (-51%)
Freesheets	n/a	n/a	28	+28 (n/a)	n/a	n/a	699.5	+699.5 (n/a)
Sunday	0	0	1	+1 (n/a)	0	0	54	+54 (n/a)
Total	106	90	70§	-36 (-34%)	1056	974	1354.7	+298.7 (+28%)

Source: ABC, Hartley, Gudgeon and Crafts 1979, Trinity Mirror, Northcliffe Newspapers, Tindle Newspapers, North Wales Newspapers and Newsquest. * = includes the Wales edition of the *Daily Post*. § = numbers of titles claimed by newspaper owners.

noted that the number of people living in Wales who were born outside the country (21%) was greater than for any other part of the UK, and that areas of Wales had

populations that were up to nearly 50% non-Welsh. Eighty percent of the people in Wales spoke English, however; yet only about a quarter of television output produced in Wales was in that language (Davies 1999, 7-8; Williams 1999a, 94). The Welsh media, Tunstall (1983, 228) opined, were less Welsh than the Scottish media were Scottish. Perhaps, more accurately, the 'Welsh media system' which emerged during the second half of the twentieth century was essentially weak (Williams 1997, 13-5).

The Welsh press appeared to be pulled in two apparently opposite directions at once – towards greater cosmopolitanism, and integration within Wales, and at the same time, towards higher levels of parochialism and disaggregation as Welsh entities. The sale of TRN's Welsh interests to Trinity resulted in the combining within one conglomerate of both the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post*, which the Welsh Office said amounted to a monopoly, and weekly newspaper chains in the north, central areas and south of the country (Competition Commission 1995, 64 & 68). Apart from the potential advantages of securing economies of scale and localized monopolization of markets, such aggregation was viewed as a source of liquidity for investment in development resulting from access to wider vistas (McNair 1996, 200; Seymour-Ure 1996, 54-6). However, at the same time, Welsh newspapers as a whole became more inward looking and focused on 'the parish pump' (Williams 1997, 18). A key question was whether this made the Welsh press more or less 'local'. On the one hand, there was the issue of a national Welsh media consciousness, and the extent to which it was advantageous to agglomerate a key cultural asset, and to redefine the geography of the local press as Wales, the imagined nation (Williams 1997, 9-14). The division of the Welsh press into many different entities could be seen as a barrier to national cohesion (Mackay and Powell 1997, 11). On the other hand, small partnerships and single proprietorships, the 'historical form' of newspaper ownership in the UK as a whole, perhaps more closely reflected Welsh culture and economics (Seymour-Ure 1996, 49).

The concept of a Welsh national press developed chiefly in the twentieth century and was mainly, but not exclusively, associated with the *Western Mail* (Williams 1997, 9), although Balsom (1997, 444-5) named 23 other 'national' publications, the majority

being periodicals and magazines rather than newspapers. National newspapers published in the Welsh language, initially in the nineteenth century, enjoyed considerable popularity: *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, a weekly, survived from 1857 until 1992 (latterly as *Yr Faner*). Attempts to produce Welsh papers – in both English and Welsh – from England had an almost equally long history (Jones 1993, 2 & 227). Was *Wales on Sunday*, published in Cardiff by an English conglomerate (originally owned by Canadians and overseen from Connecticut) for circulation throughout Wales, more cosmopolitan than Welsh (Jones 1993, 226-7)? Was it a tabloid imposition on Wales (Williams 1997, 17-18), or a genuine attempt to capture the 'regional identity of Wales' within the UK (Glover 1998, 123-4)? Was the *Western Mail*, published in exactly the same circumstances, more a local paper than a national one (Jones 1993, 16-19)? Finally, how much residual autonomy remained with the editors of the Welsh press? Could editors of conglomerate-controlled, highly commercialized newspapers hope to replicate the progressivism, radicalism and nonconformity of the independent Welsh press of the past (Griffith 1968, 59)? Could Welsh journalism maintain its reputation for vibrancy and vigour (Jones 1993, 239-40)? Was there a distinction to be made between newspapers *for* Wales (a promotional slogan adopted by the Liverpool *Post* – see Williams 1997, 17), and newspapers *of* Wales?[45] The answers to these question might resolve whether the Welsh local press had lost its capacity for distinctiveness, diversity and local colour (Jones 1993, 238; Mackay and Powell 1997, 11), and what that might suggest about the nature of the local press as whole.

Reporting politics in Wales

The classic statement on the relationship between the local press and (local) politics was made by Murphy (1976, 11-22), in which he argued that local newspapers were passive, supine, conformist, exclusionary and instrumentalist; driven by the mantra of 'minimum cost, maximum utility', and reined in by internal constraints to produce formulaic 'good stories'. Cox and Morgan (1973, 135-8) similarly found 'powerful inhibiting pressures'

[45] In 1990 the Wales edition was outselling the Liverpool (Merseyside) edition of the *Daily Post* (*Media Reporter* 1990, 17).

which militated against enterprising journalism. The local press, they concluded, found it 'better, normally, to play safe'. The scale and scope of any surveillance of local politics were severely limited by a range of factors. Political reporting was constrained by downward pressures exerted on editorial costs by corporate managements, giving journalists little time to originate, research and investigate material, and resulting in a dependence on the 'anodyne' reporting of official versions of events, and routine descriptions: local newspapers no longer offered their own, independent interpretations of local politics (Murphy 1987, 91-8; Negrine 1994, 57-70.) In the 1990s this situation appeared to intensify: the number of journalists employed specifically to cover local government declined, and local journalists' knowledge and understanding of, and interest in, local politics appeared to diminish (Harrison 1998, 164-5). It was noted how dependent political journalists were on official sources, the extent to which public and press relations (PR) figured in their work, and how they were institutionally based (Murphy 1987, 94-5; Tunstall 1971, 175 & 178-80). Even so, these observations pre-dated the explosion in PR and news management in local politics in the 1980s (Franklin 1994, 114-5; Negrine 1994, 125-6 & 134-8). By the late 1990s local political PR practitioners were pivotal in the 'special relationship' between local politics and the local press (Harrison 1998, 158-9 & 161-2).

As has already been noted, local politics was 'a staple' for the local press, but one which also had to compete for space in the paper. For the most part, local politics got into print erratically and in fragments – 'in the form of snippets, spread all over the news pages' (Cox and Morgan 1973, 71-2). The public found local government unattractive and 'boring' (Franklin 1994, 114). The response of the local press was twofold – firstly, and progressively from the 1970s, it reported politics less, and, second, what it did report came increasingly directly from local politicians and government in the form of pre-packaged press releases, official statements and pre-edited quotes, photographs, information (usually in the forms of digests and summaries), briefings, and access for interviews, etc. (Franklin 1997, 113-4; Harrison 1998, 164-5). At the same time, those in local politics both sought to command the attention of the local press through the mechanism of public relations, and simultaneously to circumvent it by issuing their own

material directly to the public, notably in the form of municipal freesheets (Franklin 1994, 114-8 & 122-6). Ironically, as the local press turned away from politics (at least partially), it assumed a greater importance in political activity, given that electorates were subject to the same processes of fragmentation and heterogenization as newspaper readerships, and could no longer be as effectively addressed collectively through traditional means. The liberal use of PR signified the so-called modernization of political parties, whose electioneering was publicity-led (Franklin 1994, 162-5 & 183-4). This altered the relationship between journalism and PR: as the status of journalists declined – political journalism, although not always strictly-speaking practised in the local press (see Cox and Morgan 1973, 138), was regarded as a prestigious and high status specialism (Negrine 1994, 125; Tunstall 1971, 89) – PR practitioners became more 'professional' and their status was enhanced (Harrison 1998, 163). Harrison (1998) argued that in the 1990s local political PR practitioners effectively controlled much of the political news appearing in local newspapers, and were generally successful in securing favourable coverage of their institutions. Franklin (1994, 166-9) found that political party press officers were also extraordinarily influential in setting the agenda for the local press.

Franklin (1994, 169-72) suggested that these developments prompted responsive forms of journalism, which arose less from the pressures of PR than from journalists' perceptions of the roles of local newspapers. The dependency of journalists on PR and press officers was rarely total: rather, the local press was regarded by political PR practitioners as being of primary importance to them, particularly when it could be identified as the main channel of communication of local electorates (Franklin 1994, 164 & 183). The local press had demonstrable value within formal political and government structures, too. For example, because the Committee on Welsh Affairs (CWA), unlike a more orthodox select committee of the House of Commons, had obligations beyond parliament to the public as a kind of 'surrogate for the [Welsh] Assembly', the (chiefly Welsh) press coverage of its deliberations and reports was a crucial element in its workings, and the Committee actively sought the attention of the press. The press was seen as playing an important role in establishing the CWA's role in setting the agenda

for Wales; in gathering information; in extending accountability in government, and in establishing its symbolic presence (Jones and Wilford 1986, 73, 76 & 82-5).

The CWA was a precursor to the institution of devolved government in Wales, which added a new dimension to the relationship between the local press and politics. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as Wales, issues of identity were of a different order from those pertaining in English localities, and were tied to the local media, especially the press (Allan and O'Malley 1999; Smith 1994, 2). There was also a distinctively high demand for political news (Bromley 2001, 131). The establishment of the NAfW was likely to be viewed by the press in Wales from two broad perspectives, therefore – the loose 'market view' and the commitment to a 'democratic culture'. The former would consider the Assembly in commercial terms as either a threat or an opportunity, reflecting the nearly two decades-long decline in the prioritization of journalism in the local press (Tunstall 1996, 67). As an opportunity, the Assembly would be a new source of relatively cheap editorial content attractive to local citizens; as a threat, it would demand the allocation of considerable additional editorial resources and produce news of only marginal interest (see Mungham and Williams 1998, 125). Alternatively, the Assembly could offer the chance of democratic renewal enabling 'a society to speak for itself, and so begin to define itself' (Jones 1993, 240-1). To that extent, the Assembly contained the potential to revitalize debate 'about the role the mass media should and do play in Welsh society' (Williams 1997, 7). Finally, it was pertinent to consider whether these two viewpoints were compatible, even complementary (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 226); whether ideals of a 'democratic culture' could be squared with the commercialism of the local press – whether notions of 'developing citizenship in Wales and promoting Welsh identity' were popular and 'modern' enough to be profitable (see Jones 1993, 240-1; Williams 1997, 47). The Assembly held out the promise of providing a new focus for the Welsh press and a catalyst for its re-invigoration (Mackay and Powell 1997, 9). As such, the Assembly and the press could be seen as working together to promote improved governance in Wales; to help create 'a Welsh civil society' (Osmond 1998, 14), and to address the issue of 'democratic disinheritance' in Wales (Day, Fitton and Minhinnick 1998, 291).

How the press in Wales reported local politics – local government, Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), the Welsh Office – prior to the establishment of the Assembly may have had an impact on its response to devolution. Alternatively, the need to develop new practices and approaches in a novel situation could have led to reforms in existing political journalism. These practices were undoubtedly 'highly variegated' (Harrison 1998, 163; Franklin 1994, 163-4). Nevertheless, they were set against a persistent backdrop of 'the growing tension between the market-driven editorial decisions of newspaper managements and journalists' professional commitments' (Franklin and Parry 1998, 209-10 & 215).

Reporting the Assembly – a pilot study

In September 1999, 30 Welsh newspapers were sampled under the auspices of the Wales Media Forum for their coverage of the NAfW. One title or edition published between 13 and 26 September was selected from 50 press 'entities' identified through a search of directories (esp. Balsom 1997). A significant minority of these papers (about a third) carried no items on the Assembly at all. Some major local stories were published without any reference to the Assembly, and others with only tangential references. There was virtually no direct reporting of the Assembly, although accounts of debates, questions tabled, etc. seemed to be collected from Assembly Members (AMs) both before and after the event. Where there was direct coverage, for many newspapers the point of interest was the Assembly's role in local planning (including the appointment of planning inspectors). There was also some recognition of the Assembly's function as an additional tier of government through the reporting of local public action (appeals and protests). Only one example was found of any detailed journalism on the Assembly in the form of a special feature on 'The Assembly at work', published in one series of weekly titles. The local authority (town, borough or county council) still assumed greater importance to the local press, providing an initial reference point for bringing the Assembly in to the story.

Personality appeared to play a major role in editorial decisions about Assembly material. Alun Michael, then the First Minister, was widely reported albeit exclusively in relation to his official activities. Some AMs seemed to develop close relations with local papers and received considerable amounts of publicity. A small number had regular columns in the local press. A large number of the papers carried information on AMs' constituency activities, including public surgeries and the opening of constituency offices.

This snapshot suggested that by the second half of 1999 the local press in Wales had not invested much in journalism to cover the Assembly. Newspapers appeared to be heavily reliant on AMs seeking publicity to provide them with material. The Assembly was reported far less comprehensively that the local councils, although the new body's remit in areas of traditional local concern (education, health, economic development, agriculture, housing, transport) seemed to provide it with leverage. This was most widely apparent in the domain of planning where contested, as well as administrative issues, were referred to the Assembly. The issue which generated most focus, although unevenly exhibited between rural and urban newspapers, was the agricultural crisis then besetting Wales, and in particular the agriculture minister, Christine Gwyther. This seemed to contextualize for some local papers at least the powers and responsibilities of the Assembly within existing and familiar political structures in Wales.

Conclusion

The local press made a significant contribution to a sense of locale – to the construction of localness; how the local was viewed contingently and cognitively. To that extent, the press played a role in attempting to identify communities and to hold them together. This could be seen in wholly positive terms, as a function of societal cohesion and consensus-building, and as an ultimately progressive objective; or more negatively as a mask eliding the fissures and conflict which characterized communities, and as an exercise in social control (Curran 1978, 71 & 73; Griffin 2002, 109). In any event, the local press as a constituent of a larger mediascape mediated localness within global settings which were both consciously and unconsciously acknowledged and juxtaposed: 'World-

shattering events could be happening in Devizes,' the editor of a weekly paper confessed, 'but not a line would appear in the *Salisbury Journal*, because our world ends at the village of Upavon' (cited Bromley 1995b, 92).

The chief means by which the press executed its role was through reporting and commenting on, publicizing and investigating, and providing a forum for debate around, what was considered to be, and thereby helping to define, 'the local'. Traditionally, this meant politics above all else. It was clear that the local press was enmeshed, therefore, in something akin to a public sphere; nevertheless, this extended beyond the simplest notion of 'mutual enlightenment' based on exchanges of information and opinion to incorporate, as an effect, a sense of identity, and the construction of imagined communities (Anderson 1991, 35; Habermas 1992, 195). It was doubtful that local politics successfully captured localness or local identity completely, and in the twentieth century at least, the local press paid attention to much more, covering a wide range of actions, activities, events and ideas. Moreover, the local press was also a financial and commercial presence, observing and promoting consumption. How these various, and often competing, even conflicting, aspects were represented qualitatively and quantatively (not least in relation to one another) was crucially important in establishing the press's authority, and authorizing its 'licence'.

In the 1980s extrinsic, primarily economic and social, shifts impacted on the local press as locales fragmented and heterogenized, de-emphasizing physical in favour of mental locatedness. Pritchard (1993), Ray (1993) and Franklin and Richardson (2002), among others, noted how the local press responded in a number of not always consistent ways. One was to substitute a focus on a wider range of more open bodies, groups and organizations for the traditional preoccupation with more closed governmental structures – replacing politics with civics. This might be seen as a response to what Hartley (2000, 43) has called 'direct communicative democracy'. On the other hand, the local freesheet represented a withdrawal from all forms of reporting, commentary and investigation, or striking any balance between the editorial and commercial aspects of the press. It was argued that intrinsically this further destabilized the local press by suggesting that the

generic category 'news' no longer warranted the valorization that local newspapers had historically given it. As one editor observed in the 1990s, no news story – of whatever import – would be allowed to commandeer space allocated to the lifestyle 'goodies' his paper offered its readers (cited Morgan 1992a).

A further, complicating dimension was the introduction in the late 1990s of an additional tier of government as a consequence of devolution in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This development crisscrossed heightened issues of identity in those places, with which it was closely associated, and which were discernible in the media. In Wales especially, identity varied with geography and culture. Furthermore, news seemed to command a higher priority among media audiences in Wales, and the local press in Wales was both configured in significantly distinctive ways, and was historically distinctive. The question was what this meant for news in the Welsh press.

4
Local journalism

He was the embodiment of local journalism, a tremendously energetic citizen on the pulse of his town, and a global citizen ...
–Lydon (2002) on the late Tom Winship

The local press occupied an important interstitial space between the meanings of policy, devised, administered or interpreted by local government and other agencies, and popular discourses, and assisted in shaping and interpreting both 'official' terminology and everyday voices, while at the same time negotiating among them (Cottle 1999b, 193, 197; Polk 1996, 486). Many local journalists resisted the persistence of a habitual repertoire of trivialization and sensationalism, which seemed to characterize the British press (Jackson 1971, 42-3, 50 & 52; Ray 1995, 240 & 254-5). It was contended that this type of journalism arose out of, and was circumscribed by, a conscious decontextualization which privileged conservative and hegemonic interpretations (Curran et al 1980, 303; Macdonald 2000, 253). The chief journalistic treatment associated with this approach was personalization, whereby 'the personal becomes the explanatory framework within which the social order is presented as transparent' (Sparks 1992, 39); through which 'popular knowledge' was constituted, and by which lay opinion was privileged over expertise (Sparks 2000, 10-11, 28). At least *in extremis* such journalism could be deployed to 'mobilize fear, hatred and subordination' (Dahlgren 1995, 150). Even those sympathetic to this form of 'popularization' acknowledged that such journalism sometimes worked in this manner when it was 'the

only way to tell a story ... [and] it becomes equally valid to pay attention to any and all personal views, no matter how uninformed, bigoted, or irrational' (Bird 2000, 224-5).

> It is clearly ahistorical, and it presents the world as if it were governed by moral and emotional values and forces: people and events tend to be portrayed as representations of an eternal mythic universe underlying all that happens. ...the typically sensationalist, heavily personalized forms associated with tabloid, melodramatic journalism simply cannot adequately handle more intricate political, social, and cultural issues. (Gripsrud 2000: 297-9)

Data collected from local press coverage of the 1987 UK general election suggested tentatively that these newspapers paid considerable attention to personalities (candidates) and 'gimmicks' (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 185-6). By 2001 more than a half of all such election coverage was dedicated to candidates (compared to a maximum of 8.5% devoted to any one issue); almost a quarter to 'quirky or amusing' news, and 'a human interest focus' was a major editorial strategy. It seemed evident that political news of all kinds had to be 'sufficiently attractive to entice readers', chiefly meaning 'lighter' and more 'entertaining' (Franklin and Richardson 2002, 38, 41 & 44-6). In the mid-1990s trainees on one accredited course in journalism were challenged, 'Why did we think that chasing and publishing the "scandal stories" was beneath us?'

> Backed into a corner, as we were, we had been forced to recognize that sex and scandal sell newspapers, and that the very word 'newspaper' was, in fact, something of a misnomer. ... We could be moralistic crusaders if we wished, but we couldn't hope for a huge audience. We could choose to work for a publication that didn't deal in sex or scandal, but we should not expect anyone to listen. (Ellis 1994, 39-40)

While it was not ineluctable that journalistic personalization equated to tabloidism, 'emotional indulgence' and trivialization, in practice the relationship appeared to be a symbiotic one (Brookes 2000, 197ff; Macdonald 2000, 251). The use of stereotypes assisted in forging the connection, and was often associated in occupational discourse with journalistic 'laziness', which may be translated as an unwillingness to confront a socio-culturally founded and shared occupational 'selective perception' which

determined as a form of reification the illustrative examples which were deployed in journalistic story-telling (Enteman 1996).

Taken together, these elements helped map the contours of the journalistic category of 'human interest' which was regarded, not least occupationally, as a defining characteristic of 'modern journalism' and particularly the tabloid form (Curran et al 1980: 303). Its epistemological purpose was to 'humanise' the news 'by reducing it to an old and familiar theme in terms of personal ambitions and passions' – to set 'the unfamiliar and the strange' within an understood moral frame (Hughes 1940: 125, 255-77).

> ... events are portrayed in terms of the actions and interactions of individuals, strongly governed by luck, fate, and chance, with a given, naturalized world, which merely forms an unchanging background. (Curran et al 1980: 306)

Thus, it consciously counterposed 'the human, on the one hand, and the traditional, the legitimate, and the institutional, on the other' (Hughes 1940: 284), privileging taken-for-grantedness and personal experience (Curran et al 1980: 311), appropriating as its chief narrative strategy the voice of 'the commonsensical, normal and natural order' which drew *inter alia* but fundamentally on place (Curran et al 1980: 312-3). The UK press, with its apparent tendency to increasing tabloidization, seemed to put 'good' journalism under pressure, and made it subservient to market considerations (see Bromley 1998a; Gripsrud 2000: 288; Sparks and Tulloch 2000). Journalism, as a quasi-professional occupation, however, bore responsibility for colluding with the media as institutions in this through the processes of news production (Curran et al 1980: 306).

Local journalism in context

The first Royal Commission on the Press (1947-79) criticized journalism as a 'ramshackle' occupation with few, if any, discernible and enforceable standards. Political and Economic Planning (1938) had made a similar complaint a decade or so

previously (Bromley 1997a, 333; O'Malley 1997, 150-1). Both were motivated by a belief that 'the structure of society in general '... [had] become more complex and that adequate comprehension of the complexity of social relations require[d] formal training' (Boyd-Barrett 1980, 309; Bromley 2003a, 211). Journalists were hardly trained at all although a myth persisted that work as a junior reporter on a local newspaper was the equivalent. Olga Franklin, trying to break into journalism in Fleet Street in the 1930s, was told by the 'legendary' editor of the *Daily Express*, Arthur Christiansen, that it 'was essential in our business ... to be properly trained on a provincial newspaper, for preference somewhere in the north' (Franklin 1968, 156; Griffiths 1992, 154). Yet when he joined the *Middlesbrough Gazette* at about the same time, at age 17, Dennis Hamilton, who later became editor-in-chief of *The Times* and *Sunday Times* and chairman of Reuters, found 'there were no training sessions or anything at all formal in the way of advice' (Hamilton 1989, 3). An 'apprenticeship' in journalism involved a range of activities from volunteering for assignments to making tea (Orr 1989, 13). James Cameron (1980, 28) 'entered the back door of journalism' in the Manchester office of the *Weekly News* 'filling paste-pots and impaling the other daily newspapers on the files'. James Kelly (1995, 35-6), who was taken on as a triallist by the [Belfast] *Irish News* as an 18-year-old in 1929, received 'no advice, no instruction ... It was a brutal case of the survival of the fittest.'

Dylan Thomas joined the *South Wales Evening Post* in Swansea as a copy boy in 1931 (Griffiths 1992, 557). Thomas (1963) ironically captured the mundane routine experience of a junior journalist on a local newspaper in the largely autobiographical broadcast 'Return Journey':

> Remember when I took you down the mortuary for the first time, Young Thomas? ... 'If you want to be a proper newspaperman,' I said, 'you got to be well known in the right circles. You got to be *persona grata* in the mortuary, see'. (p.106)

> Let's have a dekko at your notebook. 'Called at British Legion: Nothing. Called at Hospital: One broken leg. Auction at the Metropole. Ring Mr Beynon *re* Gymanfa Ganu. Lunch: Pint and pasty at the Singleton with Mrs Giles. Bazaar at Bethesda Chapel. Chimney on fire at Tontine Street.

> Walters Road Sunday School Outing. Rehearsal of the *Mikado* at Skewen' – all front page stuff .... (p.108)

For Thomas such a sojourn was no more than temporary. He sardonically compared the 'humble' status of the trainee journalist (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 8) with what he saw as the hopelessly grandiose aspirations of many of the young people attracted to the job:

> He worked on the *Post* and used to wear an overcoat sometimes with the check lining inside out ... He wore a conscious woodbine, too ... and a perched pork pie with a peacock feather and he tried to slouch like a newshawk even when he was attending a meeting of the Gorseinon Buffalos ... speaks rather fancy; truculent; plausible; a bit of a shower-off; plus-fours and no breakfast, you know ... a bombastic adolescent provincial Bohemian ... a gabbing, ambitious, mock-tough, pretentious young man; and mole-y, too. (Thomas 1963, 103-4)

What a junior reporter could aspire to within journalism was limited. Mr. Farr, the senior reporter on the *Tawe News* in Thomas's (1965) *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, was 'a great shorthand writer, a chain-smoker, a bitter drinker, very humorous' who was assigned to all the big stories, but whose life was essentially a disappointment (p.95). Another of the paper's journalists, Ted Williams, rather pathetically 'dreamed of Fleet Street and spent his summer fortnight [holiday] walking up and down past the *Daily Express* office and looking for celebrities in the pubs' (p.99). There were others, of course, who revelled in the opportunities offered by this kind of ground-floor journalism. As a young reporter, Hugh Cudlipp (1995, 11), who was appointed features editor of the national *Sunday Chronicle* at age 19, regarded his posting to Blackpool for the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* as 'El Dorado for a young newshound': 'It was in Blackpool at 17 that I took my degree in street wisdom, with Honours in creative journalism' (p.10), conniving with sources to set up elaborate 'human interest' stories in order to secure scoops. Roy Greenslade, who later became editor of the *Mirror*, professed

> In ... three and a half years at the *Barking Advertiser* I learned more about newspapers than I have done in the 35 years since. I didn't realise it at the time, of course. Like all young people in

> a hurry, I was desperate to escape from the parochialism of my local weekly to get to Fleet Street. Over time, I have come to understand the value of those years. I'm not talking about the formal training ... What really counted was the education by osmosis ... . (Greenslade 2001)

For most of the second half of the twentieth century it remained a strong belief that journalism was best learnt 'on a weekly or small evening paper where there is more time to supervise the work of the inexperienced'.[46] Day-to-day supervision came chiefly from experienced reporters, although editors were nominally in charge (Andrews 1962, 27-8 & 68). Cox and Morgan (1973, 117) observed 'a tiny handful of middle aged senior journalists supervising and directing assistants twenty years their junior'. In this way, Nick Pollard (by 2004 the head of Sky News), who started on the *Birkenhead News* in 1968, young people 'stumbled into journalism' (quoted in Brown 2004). Leon Pilpel (1990, 149), who edited the readers' letters page on *The Times* in the 1980s, recalled that 'The old tradition was that you built up a good solid reputation in the provinces, and at the age of forty or thereabouts, you came to Fleet Street'. In the 1960s an initial job as a (copy-) runner still provided a recognized route into journalism (Conroy 1997, 9), and could do so occasionally even in the 1990s (Harris 2004). It was also widely believed that journalism was an alternative to university – in the case of Mary Kenny (1990, 227) working on the [London] *Evening Standard* after leaving school at age 15. In the 1970s this remained the case: Rod Liddle, later editor of the BBC Radio 4 flagship *Today* programme after being a mature university student, joined the *South Wales Echo* as a trainee directly from school (Barber 2003). At this time, TRN recruited about equal numbers of school-leavers and graduates into journalism.[47] In the 1980s it was still relatively commonplace to enter journalism without first going to university: among the more prominent journalists who did so was the editor of the BBC's *Breakfast* show. The editor-in-chief of the magazine *Elle* did not even sit for A-levels, but took a job as an editorial assistant before advancing to a traineeship in journalism (Brown 2004).

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[46] The notion persisted into the twenty-first century. The editor of *The Independent*, who began work as a journalist in the *Neath Guardian* straight from school, argued in 2004, 'I think it still holds true that the best training is to be had on a local paper' (cited Brown 2004).

[47] Author's personal experience as a tutor in the TRN Editorial Training Centre, Cardiff (1974-75).

Training was largely a hit-and-miss affair at least until 1961 when enrolment in the formalized national training scheme became nominally compulsory (Andrews 1962, 72 & 79). Even then, what constituted 'training' continued to vary widely: Matt Smith moved from the Associated Press after only about a year of supposed training to the *Financial Times*'s television venture in 1991 (Harris 2005a). Similarly, Natasha Kaplinsky's 'training in journalism' constituted a year at Meridian television news, and included presenting the morning news show (Harris 2004). Moreover, some journalists continued to escape any form of training at least up to the end of the century (Harris 2005b). Originally, the National Advisory Council for the Training and Education of Junior Journalists merely offered guidelines (Bromley and Purdey 1998, 81). The idea of competitive entry gained ground only slowly, too: Jack Sayers secured his position as a cub reporter on the *Belfast Telegraph* as part of a deal with the proprietor to prevent his father, John, who was then editing the paper, from joining a rival publication (Gailey 1995, 5), and Roger Alton, who later edited the paper, found an entrée into *The Observer* through his parents' connections: 'nepotism,' he argued, 'is a bloody good way of getting in' (quoted in Brown 2004).

Recruitment increased in the 1960s until by the end of the decade, it was argued, local weekly newspapers in particular were being over-used for training: up to two-fifths of journalists on these titles were unqualified (Boyd-Barrett 1980, 315; Cox and Morgan 1973, 7; Tunstall 1971, 60). In 1960-61, seven out of ten trainees possessed only the supposed minimum educational entry requirement (formally introduced in 1965), O-levels. Twelve percent held no qualifications at all (Andrews 1962, 78; Stephenson and Mory 1990, 194). Perhaps not surprisingly, the data supported Thomas's instinctive response of 30 years before: the most common reason for leaving the editorial staff of a local newspaper was to quit journalism altogether (Cox and Morgan 1973, 7-8). More than half of the journalists interviewed in a survey in the late 1960s declared an intention to write fiction (Tunstall 1971, 61): some – for instance, Ken Follett, who was a junior journalist on the [Cardiff] *South Wales Echo* in the early 1970s – succeeded spectacularly (www.ken-follett.com), while others, like Tom Stoppard, who worked as a journalist on local newspapers in Bristol after leaving school at age 17 in the 1950s but

never became the foreign correspondent he aspired to be, enjoyed literary success in other areas (Griffiths 1992, 539; Hunter 1982, 3). Terry Pratchett, another school-leaver who joined his local newspaper as a trainee in 1965, published three novels while working at the *Bucks Free Press*, *Western Daily Press* and *Bath Chronicle*, and the first Discworld volume after leaving local journalism for public relations (Smythe 1999).

Journalism was a divided occupation: Franklin (1997, 40) called it 'the upstairs, downstairs profession'. As well as those who left school at as young an age as 14 to work in a local newspaper office, a minority went directly to Fleet Street from university (commonly but not exclusively, Oxford or Cambridge). The editorial staffs of even so-called popular newspapers were often made up primarily of middle-class public schoolboys and/or graduates (Bromley 1997a, 332; Bromley 2003c, 130). Nevertheless, these two worlds overlapped: as Cudlipp (1995, 9) made clear, some imagined that work as a local junior reporter was equivalent to a college education. This idea was sustained by the 'one journalism' model cultivated under the aegis of the national advisory council (later the National Council for the Training of Journalists [NCTJ]) from the 1950s, whereby all tyros were supposed to enter journalism *via* local newspapers (Bromley 1997a, 334-5; Stephenson and Mory 1990, 193). The experience of training on a local newspaper, however, was often far less comprehensive than entering higher education, and led in many cases to only relatively mundane white collar work (Cox and Morgan 1973, 117; Keeble 1994, 5; Tunstall 1983, 191). At its most extreme, the division was one between 'the educated gentleman journalist' and the workaday reporter or sub-editor. Not only did this distinction fade during the twentieth century, it never wholly applied to the local press, although there were notable exceptions, such as the *Manchester Guardian*, *Yorkshire Post*, *Northern Echo* and *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* (Tunstall 1977, 266-7, 272 & 274). All the same, graduate recruits in particular sometimes found the requirement to work a period of indenture of up to three years stifling. What they had learnt at university commonly bore no relationship to what a local newspaper reporter did. For example, Tom Evans, a CNN producer, joined the TRN editorial training scheme in the early 1980s after graduating from Aberdeen University with a master's degree.

A career in journalism seemed like a splendid idea after four years studying international politics and strategic issues. ... I went into the world of journalism thinking that in a matter of months, of not weeks, I would be able to apply all this great knowledge in my new career. Reality soon set in ... local newspaper journalism provided few opportunities to discuss the global issues that were shaping our planet. (Evans 2003)

More dramatically, Sue Arnold (1990, 239), a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, left the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* after only six months because 'I could see that if I stayed in Blackburn I would go mad'.

The 1960s brought both an expansion in numbers (by the end of the decade by possibly as much as 1,000 local journalists a year) and the wholesale 'gentrification' of journalism (Bromley 1997a, 338; Franklin 1997, 50). Tunstall (1983, 188) estimated that there were 20,000 journalists in the UK in the late 1960s, and that 48% of them (9,700) worked in the local press (Tunstall 1971, 13). The National Union of Journalists believed there were 8,500 local journalists in 1968 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – 55% of them on dailies and 45% on weeklies (Cox and Morgan 1973, 7). This growth in numbers was only just taking off: by the mid-1990s Franklin (1997, 52-3) calculated that there were nearly 40,000 journalists in the UK: double the late 1960s figure, although most of the expansion occurred disproportionately in the first part of the period up to the end of the 1980s. Of these, 53.5% were calculated to be working on local newspapers (40% on daily titles and 13.5% on weeklies), although the former figure seemed to be an overestimation. Expansion clearly had occurred, however. The number of registered trainees doubled during the 1990s to 900 a year (Stephenson and Mory 1990, 196). This expansion occurred both at an accelerated pace, as previously the number of journalists had doubled over 30 years, and unevenly. If the figures were taken more or less at face value, then the number of local weekly journalists probably increased by just under a quarter (from 4,365 to 5,400) while the number on local daily and Sunday titles rose by only 15% (from 5,335 to 6,100). However, the data were neither always comparable nor reliable.

These trends coincided with the rapid graduatization of journalism. While it has been posited that wider, social forces impacted on this (Bromley 1997a, 339), the presence of conglomerate ownerships was a significant factor: in the mid-1970s almost a half of the trainee journalists recruited by the large local press groups were graduates (Boyd-Barrett 1980, 317). All 20 graduate trainee journalists in 1960-61 (6% of the total) were recruited by local newspaper chain owners, two of them major conglomerates (TRN and Westminster Press, which had begun systematic graduate recruitment in the 1950s) (Andrews 1962, 78; Tunstall 1971, 58-9). By the mid-1960s companies such as TRN were regularly recruiting graduates, and the TRN editorial training scheme, operated in Newcastle and Cardiff, designed graduate and non-graduate courses which ran annually in succession. Somewhat ironically, given its location, the *Cambridge Evening News* hired its first ever graduate journalist in 1966 (Tunstall 1977, 308). In 1967-8 the porportion of graduate recruits to journalism was double the 1960-61 figure (at 12%) (Tunstall 1971, 60). It had doubled again (to 25%) by 1977 (Boyd-Barrett 1980, 317). Recruits – for example, the *Sunday Times* foreign correspondent, David Blundy, who joined the [Burnley] *Evening Star* in 1967 – were expected to continue the tradition of training on a local paper before moving to a national title (Boyd-Barrett 1980, 317-8; Griffiths 1992, 117).[48] Tunstall (1971, 98-9) found that 62% of newspaper specialist correspondents began their careers in journalism in the local press, although many of these jobs were located in the greater London area: less than a quarter took their first jobs in journalism 'north of Birmingham'. A decade later, many graduates sought to avoid, or at least foreshorten, the local newspaper 'apprenticeship' by studying for a postgraduate diploma in journalism at university.

The first authentic higher education course – the postgraduate diploma – in journalism began at University College Cardiff (UCC) (subsequently, Cardiff University) in 1970. Similar courses at City University, London, and the Lancashire Polytechnic (later the University of Central Lancashire) followed (Bromley 2005a; Tunstall 1971, 60). The idea that such courses were not a substitute for but a precursor to a local newspaper

[48] Author's personal experience as a TRN trainee journalist (1965-1969) and as a tutor on the same company's editorial training scheme in Cardiff (1974-1975).

'apprenticeship' was kept alive for at least 25 years, despite mounting evidence to the contrary.[49] For example, John Witherow, who was to become editor of the *Sunday Times*, embarked on a journalism career about a decade after Blundy, studying for a postgraduate diploma at UCC, after which he joined the Reuters international news agency as a trainee (Griffiths 1992, 603-4). Perhaps this attitude prevailed because newspaper editors' own backgrounds lay in local newsroom 'apprenticeships': in the mid-1970s the most common experience was to have started in journalism before the age of 25 on a weekly newspaper but outside a formal training scheme (Social and Community Planning Research 1977, 282). In the mid-1970s fewer than one in five newspaper editors held degrees (Delano and Henningham 1995, 13).

Hetherington (1989) provided very short biographical notes on 23 journalists at work on local daily newspapers in the late 1980s. While the sample was clearly not representative, it did offer a snapshot of a section of local journalism. Of the 20 whose educational backgrounds were unambiguously stated, exactly half were university graduates: of those, five (25% of the total) had been awarded postgraduate diplomas in journalism. Just as significantly, of 44 local broadcast journalists similarly surveyed, almost half (20) had started their careers as journalists in the local press. Only two of these, primarily older journalists (10% of the total) were graduates, however. An equal number had worked as editorial messengers/copy boys. Indeed, one person had started in the press in this way, then attended university and finally entered journalism. None of these 20 had postgraduate journalism awards. These data pointed to several developments in local journalism which occurred over a 20-25 year period:

1. the rapid graduatization of trainees: the proportion of graduates starting on local newspapers grew more than six-fold between the late 1960s and 1980 (from 5% to 31%), and then rose again by almost another three-quarters in nine years to 53% (Bromley 1997a, 339; Tunstall 1983, 190);

[49] Author's personal experience as a lecturer in the Department of Journalism, City University (1993-1997).

2. the establishment and expansion of postgraduate diploma courses in journalism: by 1990 45% of trainees entered journalism by this route (Stephenson and Mory 1990, 194);
3. the fragmentation of the 'one journalism' model; the introduction of separate training (including postgraduate diploma courses) in broadcast and periodical journalism, and a move away from shopfloor 'apprenticeships' (Bromley 1997a, 338);
4. the reduction in opportunities for journalists trained on the local press to move into other more rapidly expanding – and better paying – media , such as broadcasting (Tunstall 1971, 58; Tunstall 1983, 195): Television South West *Today* programme reporter Alan Cuthbertson (a chemistry graduate) recalled that he had received his training in journalism in a BBC local radio 'old style newsroom where everyone had done 20 years before the mast on newspapers, so a great experience' (Hetherington 1989, 175).

Twenty-two percent (five out of 23) of the local newspaper journalists profiled by Hetherington (1989) were women. This was an advance on the situation found by Cox and Morgan (1973, 111) who represented local journalists solely as 'men'. McNair (2003, 19-21) noted the progressive 'feminisation' of journalism, although without attaching a time period to it. Anecdotal evidence supported the idea that women journalists were still relatively rare in UK local newspapers in the mid-1960s, but far less so by the mid-1970s.[50] The director of the NCTJ estimated in 1967 that about a quarter of new entrants into journalism were women (Dodge 1967, 70). Their career expectations were limited, however (Eyre 1995, 9-10). A weighted sample collected for the Royal Commission in the mid-1970s, which, again, was indicative rather than representative, found that only 14% of senior journalists in the local press were women (Social and Community Planning Research 1977, 333). Twenty years later more than a third of UK journalists were women and it was forecast that the figure would exceed 50% by the end of the 1990s. Women journalists tended to be 'ghettoized', however,

[50] Author's personal experience as a journalist on the [Blackburn] *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* and [Burnley] *Evening Star* (1965-1969), *South Wales Echo* (1972-1974) and *Belfast Telegraph* (1976-1977).

with disproportionately more working in local newspapers than in the national press: for example, the number of female senior journalists in national newspapers in the mid-1970s, according to the Royal Commission data, was more than a third less than in the local press (a mere 9%) (Franklin 1997, 59-61; Social and Community Planning Research 1977, 333).

In 1989 a half of those entering journalism as trainees were women (Stephenson and Mory 1990, 194). This situation was reflected in newsrooms: in the mid-1990s, whereas more than 45% of journalists under 40 years of age were women, those in older age groups accounted for barely one in ten. Women were also more likely to be working on local weekly newspapers, and to be graduates (Delano and Henningham 1995, 7-8 & 14). Of 27 female local journalists interviewed by Aldridge (2001), two-thirds (18) were in the youngest age groups (20-39) but they accounted for ten out of 11 graduates in the cohort. When, two years after joining the *Leicester Mail* as a copyholder, Mary Stott ('one of the great campaigning journalists of the twentieth century') was asked to take charge of the paper's women's page, she believed she was being sidelined away from 'real' journalism (Jeger 2002). In the early 1980s, Amanda Platell (2005), working in Perth, Western Australia, found herself 'consigned to the backwater of fashion, hair and beauty. ... The macho ethos was then almost crushing for a woman.' Even in the 1990s, female journalists experienced discrimination in the form of assumptions that they would concentrate on 'soft' news (Eyre 1995, 15). By 1997 only five evening newspapers were being edited by women: the first was appointed in 1990. About 30 women edited local weekly titles (Christmas 1997a, 1, 38 & 47).

There was a broader process of diversification of local journalism at work, too. Journalists on the local press themselves were drawn less from the local population. Cox and Morgan (1973, 110) found local journalists to be a homogeneous group of local people. The most common career progression extended only as far as from the local

weekly to the local daily (Cox and Morgan 1973, 116-7).[51] The data collected for the Royal Commission also suggested that local newspaper editors were older and more settled. Nearly a half of morning newspaper editors had been with the same company for 21 years or more, and a quarter of both evening and weekly editors had been with the same firm for 25 years or more (Social and Community Planning Research 1977, 298). Two-thirds of morning newspaper editors were aged 50 years and older; the same proportion of evening newspaper editors were aged between 40 and 59 years. Weekly editors were considerably younger (half were aged between 30 and 49, and two-fifths 50 or older) and had shorter company careers (nearly a half had been with the same firm between seven and 20 years) (Social and Community Planning Research 1977, 305-6). As has already been noted, insofar as there was impermanence in local journalism it was overwhelmingly a trait associated with the young trainees processing through newsrooms. Even so, the idea persisted that it was preferable to hire 'local talent'; but this practice declined markedly (Guild of Editors 1996, 2; Keeble 1994, 7; Tunstall 1977, 335). Besides, although often presented as a local press tradition, the practice had largely developed during the later twentieth century. Earlier, experience in journalism was prized above 'local knowledge and connections' (Jones 1993, 47). In any event, Ray (1995, 360) concluded, after interviewing 55 local editors, that any inclination to favour local hirings had dissipated by the early 1990s.

A further, overlapping bifurcation in local journalism existed between editors and the majority of journalists. To some extent this represented a continuation of the situation noted by Cox and Morgan (see above) whereby editors provided a counterweight to the transience of the trainee and junior journalist population: Ray (1995, 360) found that editors, and some senior journalists, accepted responsibility for anchoring local newsrooms in their communities. Moreover, the structural differentiations in journalism already noted tended to work their way out in divisions between editors, specialists, correspondents, leader writers, etc. and jobbing reporters and sub-editors, although such distinctions were less marked in many smaller, local newsrooms (Elliott 1978; Tunstall

[51] This remained so into the 1990s in the highly specific context of their research: see (*Media Reporter* 1995, 17).

1977, 256). Nevertheless, two specific crucial and connected discontinuities occurred in the 1970s and 1980s.

First, the relatively rapid unionization of journalists (in the decade after 1966 membership of the National Union of Journalists [NUJ] increased by 50%), allied to the growth in the occupation, resulted in the NUJ membership being four times what it had been in 1937 (Tunstall 1977, 295). About two-thirds of journalists were members of the union in 1937: by the late 1970s the figure was 90% (Bromley 1995b, 111; Tunstall 1977, 290). Moreover, the union was internally divided with rival factions (the Journalists' Charter supporting 'maximum solidarity with other unions', and Allied Journalists Against Extremism opposed to what it saw as NUJ 'militancy') (Christian 1980, 289 & 296). Tunstall (1977, 336) presented to the Royal Commission the spectre of a radicalized corps of journalists. Editors, on the other hand, rarely found it in their interests to be members of the union (p.283). When the NUJ pursued a policy of instituting series of short-term industrial actions in the 1970s, editors almost never supported them. Indeed, they seemed to regard getting the paper out during journalists' strikes, in some cases literally single-handedly, as a matter of professional pride (p.331). More than that, local press employers (especially, the larger corporate entities) encouraged any editors who had remained union members to resign.[52] Of the local editors surveyed for the Royal Commission, fewer than a third at weekly newspapers, 15% at evening papers and none at morning titles were NUJ members. Editors, once appointed, tended to leave the union. This was truer of editors working for conglomerate newspaper chains than those working for independent owners (Social and Community Planning Research 1977, 307-8). Meanwhile, tensions arose between the mass of journalists, represented by the NUJ, and editors over more routine issues of hiring and firing, and, coincidentally, between managements and the NUJ over the Trade Union and Labour Relations Bills 1974 and 1976 (the 'closed shop') (Boyd-Barrett 1980, 312 & 325; Christian 1980, 259). Editors were progressively called on to act as managers (Tunstall 1977, 286-7 & 321). A fifth sat on the board of the company which owned

[52] Author's personal experience as a journalist on the *South Wales Echo* (1972-1974) and *Belfast Telegraph* (1976-1977).

their newspapers (Social and Community Research Planning 1977, 280). The result was that 'real conflict and deep antagonism' between editors and their journalists pervaded many local newsrooms (Tunstall 1977, 331).

The second wave of change came in the following decade when employers made largely successful attempts to generally de-unionize journalism (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 50-3; Tunstall 1996, 67). This accompanied a decline in employment and a rise in unemployment, and was associated with the routinization, casualization and marginalization (in freelance work) of journalism (Bromley 1997a; Keeble 1994, 3). Between 1989 and 1990 alone the payments made by the NUJ of basic benefit to unemployed members increased ten-fold (Keeble 1994, 3). In 1995 more than a fifth of the 5,000 employees of the largest local press group, TRN, were either part-time or casual workers (Competition Commission 1995, 20-1). In what he called a variegated process of 'meltdown', the local press, Tunstall (1996, 75) observed, even more than it had been in the past, was primarily a vehicle for classified advertising and highly localized information. Neither of these activities demanded much by way of input from journalists, and it was argued that there was no direct correlation between the size of editorial budgets and local newspaper success (Guild of Editors 1996, 2). As the local press digitized its operations, the bulk of the investment, research and development was channelled into systems used in advertising at the expense of editorial (Aaronson 1993). Delano and Henningham (1995, 4) noted 'widespread restaffing and destaffing' across the news media as a whole: in one year alone almost one in five journalists either changed jobs or lost their jobs altogether. Some local papers attempted to circumvent the need for reporters by recruiting amateur correspondents; others abolished the position of sub-editor, or even persuaded journalists to sell advertising. The local press was accused by a Member of Parliament of relying on 'cheap, inefficient and untrained journalists in order to bring down costs' (Bromley 1995, 43, 46 & 49; *Media Reporter* 1990, 15 & 22).

At the same time, various experiments in the reorganization of chiefly local newsrooms brought about the combination of previously separate departments (news, features,

reporting, photography, etc.) and the institution of new roles, such as 'head of content'. This led some to question 'what the function of a newspaper editor now is' (Bourne 1993). Similarly, the NUJ dismissed multi-skilling (journalists working simultaneously in more than one medium; reporters taking photographs, and so on) as a pernicious attempt to introduce 'do-anything journalists who can switch jobs and reduce staff costs. The result will be lower professional standards as well as fewer jobs'. This was the creation of Robohack – a dystopian reporter/editor/designer/presenter/researcher using desktop publishing systems, digital cameras, audio equipment, communications, and notebook and pencil (*The Journalist* 1993, 1 & 12-3; see also Bromley 1997a). Local printing ceased and rafts of newspapers were produced from regional centres, all supplied with 'the same copy and pictures and pages subbed and laid out by the same subbing team' (Bourne 1996). Moreover, a report by the investment bank Salomon Brothers urged local press owners to make additional cost savings by further 'pooling [editorial] resources and syndicating copy across a broader range of titles' (cited Morgan 1996). The retiring head.of the Newspaper Society, representing local press publishers, forecast that more journalists would work simultaneously for several outlets, and more commonly on fixed-term employment contracts as freelances (Marks 1996a). The flexibility, performativity and contingency which characterized journalism were drawn on to intensify work in local newsrooms – fewer journalists producing more pages of content, working across media, etc. (Aldridge 2001, para 1.3). For example, the *Derbyshire Times* published an average of 144 pages a week in 2003 with an editorial staff of 22 (two fewer than the complement in 1990) supplemented by 'grass roots correspondents' (*Media Reporter* 1990, 22; Newspaper Society database 2003; www.derbyshiretimes.co.uk).[53]

[53] While the *Derbyshire Times* provides only an illustrative example, it was typical of the local press in other ways. Founded in 1854 as part of a significant local printing centre, by 2003 it was conglomerate owned and its printing distributed around several plants owned by Johnston Press, the local facilities having been closed. Originally a broadsheet newspaper it adopted the tabloid format in 1986.

Local journalism towards the end of the century

By the mid-1990s it was no longer as necessary to endure a number of years in a local newsroom in order to claim credentials as a newspaper journalist. National newspapers, including *The Independent*, *Sunday Times*, *Daily Express* and *Mirror*, as well as more traditional employers of graduates, such as *The Times* and *Financial Times*, sought recruits directly from university, often using postgraduate courses for initial training. Students on these courses began eschewing the local 'apprenticeship' and seeking first jobs in the national press.[54] Individual newspapers and groups, led by TRN and Westminster Press, initiated their own training schemes more or less independent of the NCTJ, culminating in the (ultimately failed) *Daily Mirror* 'academy of excellence' in the 1990s (Hagerty 2003, 204; Stephenson and Mory 1990, 196). Delano and Henningham (1995, 4) argued that there had been a veritable revolution in journalism, starting with recruitment and training. In concert with this, editorial content was being determined increasingly by business concerns to cut costs and raise income to the extent that local journalists' status as 'professionals' with 'public interest' goals was severely undermined (Franklin and Murphy 1997, 224-6). The routinization of local journalism may have reached the point where there was no longer any need to recognize that it needed to be performed by skilled practitioners rather than undifferentiated white-collar workers (Bromley 1997, 333-4; Pilling 1998, 190-1). In the USA in the late 1980s and early 1990s especially, bureaucratic control over the newsroom was seen to be 'eroding the idealism and undermining the traditional values of the profession' to an unprecedented extent (Underwood 1993, 162-4). In the UK the contrast was noted between the apparently straightforward and 'flat' nature of newsroom structures and the increasingly complex administrative hierarchies in corporatized local newspapers (Aldridge 2001, para 7.1; Cox and Morgan 1973, 11-12). The prevailing commercial imperative to 'fill space [in the paper] quickly and cheaply' impacted on the local

[54] Author's personal experience as a lecturer in the Department of Journalism at City University (1993-1997).

newsroom where it remained enmeshed in the processes for reproducing the formal journalism workforce, to reinforce and boost its role as predominantly a temporary stop-over for the most junior journalists, an initial training-ground, and a launching-pad for a career in 'proper' journalism. Nearly two-thirds of news journalists surveyed in 1995 had started their careers in local newspapers (Delano and Henningham 1995, 4 & 16).

The news which appeared in the local press in the UK seemed to be declining in both quantity (less in the way of civic affairs, politics, justice) and quality (determined by the supply of publicity material from external sources rather than on-the-spot reporting, let alone journalistic investigation) (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 1; Franklin and Parry 1998, 263-6; Pilling 1998, 183-6). McNair (2003, 207) recorded the generally dismissive attitude taken towards the local press as being of 'low-status, second-class' with poorly paid journalists doing low-grade work. At the beginning of the 1990s senior journalists on a local weekly were in receipt of only two-thirds of the national average wage (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 53). A survey of its members conducted for the NUJ in 1994 showed that the 19.3% working in the local press were the worst paid. Using £30,000 a year as the benchmark salary, the survey found that the pay of close to 98% of local journalists failed to reach that level, compared to two-thirds of national newspaper journalists who received that amount or more. Nearly three-quarters of local journalists were paid between £10,000 and £19,999 (National Union of Journalists 1994, 20). Women were more likely to be paid less than £25,000 a year (p.27). In turn, the local journalism cohort contained proportionately more women, and was the youngest in newspapers (42% of editorial staffs in local weeklies were aged 30 years or less – Delano and Henningham 1995, 6). Across the board, women earned more than 30% less than male journalists, and were particularly poorly paid because of their youth and concentration in local weekly newsrooms. The median pay of local print journalists was only 47% of that of national newspaper journalists; 53% of that of journalists at the BBC, and 63% of that of journalists in independent television and radio (Delano and Henningham 1995, 6-7 & 16). 'Low pay, long hours and high educational entry conditions prompt feelings of being exploited' (Franklin 1997, 64). The general secretary of the NUJ claimed in 2003 that British journalists were the 'worst treated' in

Europe with some earning as little as £8,750 a year for a 60-hour working week, or more than £10,000 less than the national average annual wage for non-manual work (Anon 2003a & b). Almost a half of journalists earned less than the national average wage, and three-quarters less than the average professional salary (Greenslade 2004c).

Keeble (1994, 6-13) observed two local journalists at work over a week – a reporter on an evening newspaper and a trainee working for a freesheet. Each sometimes spent whole days working in their office, and on average up to 90% of their work time officebound. A considerable proportion of this work seemed to be consumed by essentially non-journalistic tasks (such as administration, letter writing, collecting prizes for competitions, writing advertising material). Neither mentioned any contact with other journalists outside their own newsrooms (except for a phone-call to inform another newspaper about a story). Drawing on this and other evidence, he estimated that trainee journalists earned between £7,500 (at age 18) and £9,500 (at age 20-plus), and young reporters between £12,000 and £15,000 (Keeble 1994, 3-4) – respectively 43%, 54% and 68.5-85.5% of the median salary for local journalists. Bromley (1995, 168) cited starting salaries of £8,200 and £9,100. The Guild of Editors (1995, 2 & 5), after consulting 420 editors and almost 600 trainee journalists, discovered that four out of five trainees earned less than £10,000, with one claiming to have started work on £6,500.[55] These latter figures meant that young journalists' initial pay was as little as a third of the median salary in local newsrooms, and only just over a sixth of the median wage paid by the national press. By 2004, young journalists earned between £11,000 and £13,000 a year – less than half the national average wage (Greenslade 2004c). Trainees told the Guild of Editors (1995, 5) that local newsrooms were 'sweatshops'; promoted 'the antithesis of what reporting should be'; and were the victims of corporate complacency. It was difficult to see how journalists working in such conditions were in a position to

[55] In the mid-1990s a prospective graduate of a university postgraduate diploma programme was offered a starting salary on a weekly newspaper in the north of England which was less than the research council scholarship which had supported her previous studies as a doctoral candidate in science (Author's personal experience).

contribute to, or evaluate, wider discourses founded on their own personal experiences of covering stories – of 'being there' (Zelizer 1993b, 224-5).

All the same, journalists routinely challenged the orthodoxy of a substantial scholarly literature which suggested that, either willingly or as naive dupes, they act principally as the 'agents for others', and that their occupational ideals were deflected in the interests of the commercial media (Underwood 1993, 168-9). They refuted the generally pessimistic tone of critical analytical accounts of editorial production, and focused rather on the formation and resilience of journalism's 'true values', and the willingness and ability of journalists to 'fight the good fight' (Underwood 1993, xix & 171-2). While the reflexive turn of journalists in the USA and the UK may have been different (see Bromley 1998a, 34), even in Britain, it was argued, old journalistic habits died hard (Franklin and Parry 1998, 226-7). Journalists, in asserting their occupational autonomy, held widely to the belief they were also engaged (often successfully) in 'keep[ing] the company off their backs' (Underwood 1993, 170). Analysing 'the commercial pressures confronting the local news firm' in 1980s Philadelphia, Kaniss (1991, 71) raised the prospect of 'the economic imperative' of press corporations being tempered by having to negotiate the well-known 'fierce independence of individual journalists'. The evidence, however, suggested the opposite – that the commercial interests of local newspapers were the filter through which the occupational and personal values of reporters had to pass. The result was a form of journalism which, in responding to those internal constraints, was distorting, decontextualised, inconsistent, closed and shallow (Kaniss 1991, 85-8, 100). To the extent that journalists' occupational and personal values (including news values) asserted themselves, they tended to exacerbate, rather than ameliorate, the newsroom's complicity with the newspaper business (Kaniss 1991, 91-5 & 222; Cottle 1999b, 194-7). Voicing a common criticism, Murphy (1978, 121) argued with respect to the UK local press that

> this is not a 'free' press in any real sense of the term. ... A fuller press freedom would be one which more genuinely represented a framework in which journalists were free to say what they wished, when, where, how and by what means ... .

Cottle (1999b) was among those who viewed this claim sceptically; he noted the expressions of personal prejudice common in newsrooms, and journalists' surprising alacrity for conformity. Summarizing a considerable literature, Wykes (1991, 3-4) concluded that the mainstream journalism culture ensured 'a process of selecting and producing news in ways commensurate with the terms of reference of dominance'.

So far, however, 'editorial vigor' has been construed as a function of the representation of external (social) diversity, confirming the normative shared news values of the journalistic interpretive community in allocating rankings of newsworthiness (Demers 1996; Demers 1998), rather than as a measure of internal diversity within and among a differentiated journalism formed across 'imagined' (spatial) communities in which different news values may be held. The commercialization of news, it has been observed, at times served even to enhance the journalist's traditional (interpretive) role in this evaluation and definition of what constituted news (Cottle 1999b, 194; Pilling 1998, 193-4). News values may have changed, but when viewed solely through the prism of the national press, they appeared to be changing uniformly within journalism, and with little reference to differentials in external relationships (Harcup and O'Neill 2001, 276-9). The primacy of hierarchical, industrial controls in shaping what was considered to be news had long been evident; for example, when 25 American working journalists were asked in the 1940s to rank 'whose interests were most important' in deciding 'what local news goes in and what stays out of the paper', their own personal views were listed only seventh behind the influence of their editors, the publisher and advertisers. The views of 'residents of the city' also took precedence over their own, however, suggesting that in mitigating industrial controls 'imagined' spatial communities could offer 'modes of interpretation' as strong as (or even stronger than) those of journalism itself (Swanson 1949, 493-4; Zelizer 1993b). While intra-national (occupational) journalistic narratives have been demonstrated as congruent to categories of 'foreign news', it cannot be assumed that they remain pertinent in all story construction (Harcup and O'Neill 2001; Pan, Chan and So 1999). The marginalization, as trivia, of variegated and particular popular experiences, understandings and

participation *vis a vis* 'professionally'-produced 'objective' accounts (journalism as a one-way conversation), while clearly a common tendency in many instances of the twentieth century, cannot be assumed to be either inevitable or universal (Kunelius 1994, 265-7). Journalists' claims to be the makers of news was only weakly exclusive.

Local journalism as precision production

Using the 1997 campaign around the referendum on establishing the NAfW to explore the working of the local press in Wales, Williams (1999a, 116-9) noted that local journalists came under pressure in three overlapping areas – from the news management efforts of primary political protagonists; from the commercial pressures arising out of an increasingly conglomerating press; and from the differentiated demands and interest levels of their various 'imagined communities'. Nevertheless, a more homogeneous press in general, responding primarily to the second of these factors and which reported Wales less 'precisely', also underscored the critical importance of specific instances of 'precision' local journalism, which took greater account of the other two dimensions which represented journalism's alternative 'clients' (sources and audiences).

The majority of studies and commentaries about journalism in the UK have taken as their primary research object the national press (for example, see Engel 1996; Koss 1990; Leapman 1992; Tunstall 1996). In what he has called the 'new(s) times' of a 'diversified news ecology and wider news culture', Cottle (2000, 21-4) argued that,

> given the differentiated nature of the journalist 'tribe(s)' nomadically wandering through today's news ecology, it no longer seems plausible to presume a generalized view of 'journalism' as an undifferentiated culture or a shared professional canon

Indeed, Pan (2000, 254-6) suggested that, while they may be conducted opaquely at the back and on the periphery of media systems, contestations over highly malleable journalistic practices are endemic and on-going. Broadening the research object to focus

on local journalism may help reveal the complexity and multi-layered nature of newspaper editorial production in which journalists negotiate for a measure of occupational autonomy (Cottle 1999b, 191; Kitzinger 1999, 61 & 66). Even Wykes (1991, 10), who was highly sceptical of attempts to break with 'the norms and values of journalistic practice', nevertheless recognized the potential for creating 'a strong alternative journalistic identity'. Similarly, Franklin and Murphy (1991, 75) posited that, among other factors, where 'the particular interests of a local editor or reporter is [*sic*] strong enough ... some elements in the traditional local press are capable of stepping outside the normal sheepfold that they inhabit'. Media counterflows have been identified as occurring intra-nationally (Downing and Husband 1995), and accounts of journalistic production ought to take notice of the 'precise' ways in which content was manufactured (Law 2001, 314). A richer understanding of the roles of journalism was likely to be arrived at if the 'processes of media production' were accounted for, offering some of the 'empirical evidence of *how* media coverage develops' (Kitzinger 1999, 67 – emphasis added). An awareness of how news was constructed in different media contexts could also help to make more apparent the ways in which journalists negotiated the 'human interest' imperative of contemporary journalism and media commercialism which impinged on their everyday work (Schudson 1996, 156) to assert their 'expertise' as definers of news (Zelizer 1993b, 220).

The 'pack' and 'the patch' in local journalism

A survey published at the turn of the century of much of the literature made clear how variegated the UK press remained notwithstanding the gradual acceptance during the twentieth century of a dominant paradigm of the (mass circulation) national (daily) newspaper (O'Malley 2000, 7-14). Specifically, the local press, it was routinely argued, was substantively different from the national newspapers which were known collectively as 'Fleet Street' (Evans 2000). The structural connections between local and national journalism (the 'one journalism' model) began eroding at least from 1980s as the local press employed fewer, less experienced (often untrained), and poorly-paid journalists

with little in common with the 'stars' of Fleet Street and television (Bromley 1997a, 332 & 345; Pilling 1998, 194), casting doubt on the assertion that journalists are 'united through their collective interpretations of key events' (Zelizer 1993b, 223). There was evidence of – and a strong occupational belief in – correlations between how journalists constructed news (their news values) and an array of inter-related structural factors, such as organizational location, type of medium, work routines, and relationships with audiences (Baldasty 1999; Henningham 1997; Peiser 2000; Purdey 2001). Those with a desire to change media performance in connection with a range of issues began to focus away from more generalized critiques of media 'products' towards intervention in particular production processes (Carlsson 1994; Van Dijk 1995). This relationship between the journalist and the audience, set within the structural specificities of the local press, was widely regarded as being highly influential in shaping news production (Peiser 2000; Pritchard 1993, 56-8), and in establishing journalism as a differentiated occupation (Voakes 1999; Wu et al 1996) with 'ideological flexibility' (Shah 1995), drawing on a horizontal, 'shared collectivity', as well as responding to more vertical, hierarchical, industrial controls routinized through editorial management, and professionalization (Hindman et al 1999; Soloski 1989; Zelizer 1993b, 221-22).

Local journalists in the UK appeared willing to concede 'professional' authority, and to open up editorial columns to other influences primarily when they believed this would in some way further serve their own prior ambitions of 'draw[ing] together the threads of community life' – for example, somewhat reluctantly in the case of politicians standing for office, but quite eagerly with letters from readers, and not always when newspaper managements simply demanded it for primarily commercial reasons (Franklin 1992; Fuller 1999, 37-8). Franklin (1992) found local journalists in West Yorkshire far more supportive of newspaper editorial strategies which promoted traditional 'even-handed' reporting, seen to be of value to the community, even where they offered some challenge to 'normal professional values', than they were of open partisanship which appeared to be directly opposed to them. Another survey identified 23 out of 35 of larger circulation provincial newspapers across Britain valorizing norms of journalistic 'objectivity' rather (Head 1995). Attempts by local newspaper managements to alter the concepts of what

constituted editorial content often met with open resistance from journalists (Pritchard 1993, 56). Local journalists appeared to inflect the discourse they used 'to discuss, consider and at times challenge the reigning consensus surrounding journalistic practice' with considerations which arose from outside their own 'community' (Zelizer 1993b, 233).

They were required to reconcile simultaneous existences in two horizontal communities with somewhat conflicting tendencies (as well as negotiating their place in the vertical hierarchy of the press industry, and within a (quasi-)professionalizing occupation). Local journalism in the UK attempted to blend the 'pack' characteristic of a broad, geographically non-specific, interpretive community, sharing an occupational discourse and a political economy situatedness, with a commitment to a 'patch' identified with particular 'imagined' communities with their own modes of generating shared meaning (Anderson 1991, esp.6-7; Fuller 1999, 39; Ray 1995; Zelizer 1993b). Nor should this journalism be wrenched artificially from its wider context: local journalists in the UK worked within overlapping regional, national and State domains, in which indexical markers were identical, proximal and distal (Law 2001, 303-4). Ultimately, local journalists struggled to make sense of a 'chaotic flow' of ideological power resulting from these arrangements, and to resist the manipulative strategies of those with opportunistic, alternative claims to 'how journalism works' (McNair 1998, 162-3). Journalists, it was contended, made 'human judgements' which contributed to the 'occupational ... understanding of what will and will not make news' (Morrison and Tumber 1988, 129-30). If journalists 'do what they do for the most part knowingly and purposefully' (Cottle 2000, 23), it could be expected that journalists' own reflections on the journalistic processes in which they participated would elaborate interpretations of content.

News organizations and journalism

Each newspaper, each newsroom, was comprised internally of a set of shifting relations. At the heart of these lay the commonality of occupational ideology evident in the

newsroom as a professional service department (Goffee and Scase, 1995, 137-57; Scarborough and Corbett 1992, 103-9). Journalists, editors and even proprietors felt they belonged to a single occupation (Christian 1980, 262). A typical newspaper had an open, 'internally consultative', editorial mode of operation, and functioned as a kind of federation of sections and individuals. Journalists were valued for their research, interpretive and subject expertise; their abilities to leverage information and to broker understanding for readers. The editorial department of a newspaper was thus broadly collegial in approach with the editor the first among equals (Smith 1980, 185-6). Given the distributed information systems which particularly characterized large newspapers, the editorial department, and sections within it, maintained their own internal logics, and functional cohesion, without much, if any, primary external reference (pp.189-90). Internal tensions, therefore, revolved around two axes – the relationships between corporate management and editors (representing the editorial department as a whole); and the relationships between and among editorial sections and individuals. How these tensions were resolved; the structures of relationships which emerged, shaped the news, as determined by each newspaper. 'News values are ascribed according to the need of internal governance, rather than from an attempt to perceive the order of interest in the readers' minds' (pp.187-8). As a consequence, news was a heterogenous collection of information located across many categories, and represented the 'collective judgment, knowledge and honesty' of the journalists (pp.191 & 206). The 'importance' (rather than 'interest') of news lay in its extrinsic worth on the level of subject matter, filtered through the competing intrinsic interests of the editorial department. Not surprisingly, some thought of a news operation as a kind of family (p.188).

As has already been noted, academic researchers recorded the existence of vestiges of these characteristics in local newsrooms in the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, the commercialization of the press throughout the twentieth century brought about changes which were inextricably connected to the construction of news (p.186). While this has been seen as a process of trivialization (factors such as the homogenization of news and the decentring of the subject matter are dealt with in Chapter 5), McManus (1994, xiii) made the point that 'market-led journalism' essentially replaced the journalist with the

Figure 4.1: A typical newsroom c.1960s

Source: unknown

consumer as 'the "gatekeeper" of what becomes news': customer care and news came to be two sides of the same coin (see below). Of greater interest here was how journalists responded to the changed context in which they found themselves.

Analyzing the interaction with the secular commercialization of the press from the end of the nineteenth century, Christian (1980) suggested that journalists reacted in ways which reflected their marginalized and fragmented occupational situation (p.268). Faced with a process of progressive proletarianization, as the press moved from pre-industrial (neo-artisanal) modes, which blurred the distinctions between small masters, craftsmen and hired labour, to industrial production, journalists as an occupational group straddled both. Pre-industrial relations, characterized by individualism, low pay, insecurity and broad communities of interest, persisted (pp. 262-3 & 265-6). Some practices evident in the late twentieth century were classified as feudal (Hartley 1996, 36). At the same time, from the late nineteenth century a conscious project of professionalization was embarked upon, based on journalism's status as the Fourth Estate, its collegiality, gentility, associations with literary endeavour, relative prestige, elitism and mutuality (Christian 1980, 266-7 & 274-7). This co-existed with a weaker parallel movement towards professionalization as a means of control, incorporating the introduction of entry qualifications, educational norms, standards of practice, ethics, self-policing and even

regulation (pp.277-80). Finally, the majority of journalists collectivized as white-collar employees engaged in forms of production work with a primary concern for wages and conditions of employment (pp.266-9) which extended hesitantly into a pan-labour allegiance (pp.291-8). None of these tendencies was mutually exclusive (pp.280-4 & 289-91).

Commercial pressures for change in newsrooms were met, therefore, by often strenuous but inchoate and inharmonious responses from journalists. Journalists were at times 'precious with their ethics' – to the obvious frustration of newspaper managements. At other times, they appeared to be quite malleable (Pritchard, Kelly and Ward 1993, 11-3). Status was derived (almost) equally from education, experience and knowledge, which made it possible to 'look politicians, publishers and editors in the eye', and from 'personal attributes (a nose for news, a winsome face)' (Hartley 1996, 36; Tunstall 1983, 190). Local journalism was buoyed by a 'delicate ecology of commerce and principle' (Armitstead 2000).

A pilot interview

A semi-structured telephone interview was conducted with the news editor of a weekly newspaper, the *Mercury*, in England on 9 August 2000 as part of a related (unpublished) study of journalists' working practices in relation to issues of refuge and asylum. The journalist's responses to questions provided evidence of the impact on her work of a mix of 'news policy', journalistic 'professionalism', 'durational discourse', and personal 'judgements', in which news was presumed to be a fixed, almost mystical entity, whose changing nature went unacknowledged as a dialectical historical process (Morrison and Tumber 1998, 129-30; Schudson 1996, 152-6; Soloski 1989; Zelizer 1993b, 225-7). This consigned the public to 'a kind of phantom existence' beyond the scope of newsmaking (Schudson 1996, 156). It was given a clearer role, however, if journalists' imagined the communities they worked in. Yet, while undoubtedly, journalists thought of their publics, or audiences, when making news, it was necessary to distinguish the sharing of

meaning from the unilateral creation of a 'local angle' which was driven by other factors (for example, see Salman 1997).

The *Mercury*, a conglomerate-owned, paid-for newspaper with a weekly circulation of 12,995 copies,[56] was read by 38,656 people (56.7% women) each week. It reached 49% of households in the small market town where it was located, and 27% of households in the immediate, surrounding rural district. More than 70% of its readership was in these two adjoining areas (almost half in the town alone), and 90% of its circulation was within the local government jurisdiction concerned with a particular asylum issue which attracted national media attention. Within the village in which the asylum story occurred, the *Mercury* reached about 30% of households. It was popularly regarded as *the* local paper, accounting for 84% of readerships of paid-for titles in its primary circulation area, and it had been published continuously since 1855, distinguishing it from less well-established, competing give-away titles. The publisher of the *Mercury* (then the second largest owner of local newspapers in the UK) also distributed a free weekly title to almost 97% of households in the town and to nearly three-quarters of households in the rural district. Its urban readership was only 300 fewer than that of the *Mercury*; its rural readership was 37% larger. A third (paid-for) newspaper published by the same source had a small readership of just over 5,000 in and around the town, reaching no more than 10% of urban and 6.45% of rural households. The *Mercury* had a small editorial staff comprising a news editor and three reporters (augmented to four during part of the period concerned). Prompted to reflect on her position of having day-to-day responsibility for the paper's reporting, the news editor, a ten-year veteran in journalism, saw herself as the inheritor of its supposed 145-year 'reputation for credibility, reliability'; for continuing a tradition of 'editorial integrity', and for working 'professionally'. It was 'our policy,' she said, 'to sit on the fence and to allow the readers to make their own minds up' on issues which the paper reported on. She regarded the specific refuge and asylum issue as a 'key event' (Zelizer 1993b, 223) which tested the journalists' abilities 'to stand up any story'; 'to be 100% sure of our

[56] Data in this and subsequent paragraphs were taken from the ABC DataBank, JICREG Data, the Newspaper Society and AdWeb: accessed through the Internet on 28 June 2000.

sources'; 'to get all sides'; to make sure 'the facts were presented fairly'; not to be 'pressured by activists', and, in the final analysis, 'to treat this like any other story'.

The news editor regarded only a local free-sheet, owned by a different conglomerate publisher (then the third largest local newspaper company in the UK), as the paper's main rival media outlet. This second paper distributed more copies, and had more readers in and around the town (32,467). It also reached more than twice as many people in the local government district. Nevertheless, the news editor dismissed it as part of the 'fringe press'. Based in another town, it hired 'untrained reporters' and it did not find its own stories, but especially with regard to the refuge and asylum story, 'it followed us [the *Mercury*]'. Other (national) media were also mentioned negatively – a Sunday newspaper and a BBC current affairs programme which were seen as contributing to 'the mistruths other media have put out'. The only medium she was prepared to give some credit to, because its coverage of the story seemed equal to that of the *Mercury*, was the regional morning newspaper published in the nearest large city. This paper had a circulation of 56,977, but sold fewer than 5,000 copies in the local government district in question, where it reached only 11% of the population. The *Mercury* was made aware of the refuge issue as a result of routine news gathering: it was included in local government notices which were checked weekly. 'It just jumped out [as a story].' The news editor was confident enough to undertake her own evaluation of the views of the small local community in which she worked. She claimed to have tested local opinion, and to have come to the conclusion that a majority supported the refuge project. She assessed the village to be a wealthy dormitory, 'not [really] a community', in which a minority of 'leaders' were 'organized', by-passing 'traditional villagers'. She constituted the small editorial group of four or five people as a kind of sounding-board of local opinion. At weekly meetings she felt she facilitated the emergence of a 'collective feeling' on the story which was then expressed *via* the paper's reporting.

It would be no more than conjecture to link the news editor's approach seamlessly to the actual content of the *Mercury*. Nevertheless, some connection can be assumed given the prevailing conditions of journalism production. The paper indulged in tabloid

journalistic cliché – and then only mildly – on no more than two occasions when reporting the refuge issue. Villagers, it reported on 29 September 1999, were 'furious', and there had been an 'outcry' (12 October 1999). Thereafter, it avoided applying epithets of any kind until, summarizing the evidence given by opponents of the refuge scheme to a public inquiry, it referred more mildly to 'worried residents' (20 June 2000). This reporting was set within a context of broader refuge and asylum issues (the administrative district expected to receive up to 400 refugees and asylum seekers under the UK's national dispersal programme) which the paper contrasted obliquely to the situation in the village (23 November 1999). It also took the opportunity to draw unfavourable comparisons with the discovery and subsequent treatment of ten Kosovar refugees discovered stowed away in a lorry (under the headline 'Terrible plight of refugees' – 5 October 1999). There were no direct references to the site as a village as such (a point of contention between those supporting and opposing the refuge proposal), and 'villagers' was used far less than 'residents' or just 'people' (four instances to 13). Moreover, from October 1999, the paper's reports, which adopted the journalistic convention of not using the definite article ('the'), routinely inserted the qualifying 'some' in front of both 'villagers' and 'residents'.[57] This more precisely reflected not only the engagement of the two sides with opposing views on the issue from a number of neighbouring villages and the surrounding area, but also the quantitative involvement of the local population. The local authority planning committee received letters of objection from fourteen people and one letter of support (16 November 1999). The following January the committee had in its possession a petition with 88 signatures, and two further letters (11 January 2000). The paper also made repeated references to the wider, local context (14 September 1999; 28 September 1999), and broadened the issue beyond one involving a single community.

This pilot study suggested that an individual journalist with some authority in the newsroom exercised discretion in the process of editorial production, in which 'professionalism' and 'community' were both factors; and that this required assessments to be made equally of 'professional' responsibilities and community sensibilities. The

[57] Dates in parentheses refer to the publication of the *Mercury*.

implication was that the references used by local journalists were not solely internal (the journalistic 'pack' extending from the smallest weekly newspaper to the international news agencies and broadcasters), but also external (the immediate community served) – a theme to which we return in Chapter 6).

Learning journalism in J-school

It was clear, then, that five primary conditions applied to local newspaper journalism at the end of the twentieth century:

1. the so-called feminization of the occupation, in the course of which women progressively formed a larger part of the workforce;
2. the division between a small number of (usually older) editors and some senior journalists, who provided a stable, continuing and 'local', quasi-managerial cadre, and the bulk of transient, often casualized, trainee and junior journalists, for whom the local newsroom acted as a staging-post;
3. the distancing of local press journalism from other forms (national newspaper, broadcast) journalism as a consequence of the diminution of the 'one journalism' model;
4, incursions by, on the one hand, media commercialism, and, on the other hand, community interests, into the domain of newsmaking; and,
5. underpinning all of these, the correspondence between local newspaper journalism and the training and education of journalists, an increasing proportion of which was taking place in universities and colleges.

Not surprisingly, the role of education and training attracted a large amount of attention in the mid-1990s (Bromley 2005b; Cole 1996). It was significant, therefore, that for 20 years the only approved higher education courses in journalism were for postgraduates (the first undergraduate programme in journalism not having started until 1991). In some journalism schools the students were, strictly-speaking, more qualified than the instructional staff, encouraging trade-offs between 'intellectual development' (the

student's domain) and 'employability' (the mission of the journalism school).[58] How the latter was defined was not always formally regulated, however, and thus difficult, if not impossible, to prescribe in curricula (Hartley 1996, 35-6; Purdey 2001, 162). The main function of journalism schools was role socialization - the translation of *ad hoc* workplace practices and learning schema into a curriculum in order to supply local newsrooms (directly) and national newspapers (indirectly, at first) with a controlled supply of cheap but effective labour (Boyd-Barrett 1980, 309-10 & 316; Bromley and Purdey 2001, 111). The 'sub-culture of the local newspaper office' prevailed (Boyd-Barrett 1980, 320), a situation which had barely changed by the mid-1990s (Hartley 1996, 36).

The development of a competing professionalization was weak and unsupported by the local press industry (Boyd-Barrett 1980, 310-11; Hartley 1996, 36). Boyd-Barrett (1980) argued that, expressed through the NCTJ, the skills requirements which formed the basis of the curriculum were kept purposely low and uncomplex (p.318); that entry qualifications were artificially deflated (p.317); that a rhetorical assault was kept up on the latent alternative influence of an educational sub-culture which was routinely decried as being 'too academic' (p.311), and that graduates were denounced both as 'potential subversives' in the newsroom, and as carpet-baggers interested only in exploiting local newspaper training in order to prepare themselves for more lucrative and glamorous careers elsewhere, particularly in television (p.316). For example, Richard Sambrook, who joined the Celtic Press weekly newspaper group as a trainee reporter in 1977 and later worked for the *South Wales Echo*, left in 1980 to join the BBC Radio newsroom as a sub-editor: in 2001 he was appointed director of BBC News and in 2004 director of the BBC's World Service and Global News division (BBC 2004).

Hartley's (1996) critique of journalism training and education – made, it must be said, in passing: perhaps a dozen pages in a book of more than 250 – ignited what were called 'the media wars' in Australia, the reverberations of which were evident seven or eight

[58] Author's personal experience. In the 1990s the Department of Journalism at City University enrolled students with doctorates at a time when none of the academic staff held one.

years later.[59] The thrust of his argument was that the centrality of journalism to modern societies as 'a product and promoter of modern life' (p.33), not least in diffusing popular democracy, and its 'salient features' (society, knowledge, politics, capitalist-culture) (p.34), was not simply missing from the orthodox training and education of journalists but was deliberately excluded from it, 'reducing news to a set of technical operations' (p.39).

> Journalism is taught not as a branch of learning nor even as a distinct research field, but as a professional qualification which foregrounds the technical skill of producing journalistic output in words and (sometimes) pictures. Rarely do journalism courses ask their students to consider the conditions for journalism's existence: where it comes from, what it is for, and how it works, in the context of modernity. Students are simply asked to *do* it without understanding it. (p.35)

Journalism was, therefore, 'a "profession" which cannot police its own boundaries, personnel, standards or price, which has no essential (defensible) body of knowledge and practice' (pp.37-8).

Delano and Henningham (1995, 4) argued that underlying journalism's status in the 1990s were changes in training and in 'the nature of recruits' which had not been fully accommodated. Although two-thirds of practising news journalists had received some form of 'apprenticeship' training (invariably in a local newsroom), only two-fifths had successfully completed the formal NCTJ qualification (p.15). Nearly 70% had some experience of higher education (p.3), and 15% were graduates of Oxford and Cambridge (p.14). More than a half believed journalism to be a profession of equivalence to accountancy, engineering, teaching, including university teaching, and part of the law (p.9). The researchers concluded that 'the fast-rising educational as opposed to training standards displayed by British journalists ... must be seen as the most significant element in the profile or the present-day British news journalist'. Moreover, they projected that

[59] The topic was addressed in *Media International Australia* 90 (1999). Author's personal experience in Australia (2002-).

> As on-the-job training become[s] less available, formation will increasingly be sited outside the arena of professional practice[.] [J]ournalists of the future are less likely to [be] socialised within their occupation and to retain their middle-class values, attitudes and expectations. (p.20)

Perhaps not surprisingly, the tensions apparent in the 1960s and 1970s resurfaced in the mid-1990s by which time entry into journalism was the almost exclusive preserve of graduates. Delano and Henningham (1995) had also noted that the majority of news journalists had professional and managerial family backgrounds (p.10), were predominantly in 'the upper brackets' of the ABC1 standard socio-economic classifications; and, that 'because the recruitment base has been shifted up the socio-economic ladder, a working class background will become less usual among journalists and a broadly middle-class one the norm' (p.20). Notwithstanding the potential for conflict between the sub-cultures of journalism and education (see above)[60], it was this latter issue of class which was directly pursued by the local press.

The Guild of Editors (1995, 8) suggested, somewhat vaguely, that 'changing culture and technology has (*sic*) underlined the need for a more formal training structure'. The observation was no doubt driven by the opening statement of its report of a survey of editorial training needs: 'Entry into journalism is in danger of becoming dominated by middle-class graduates' (1995, p.2). The Guild's prescription for the condition was to accommodate both the 'six GCSE school leaver' and 'the high-flying graduate' (p.8) with a differentiated, multi-tiered training programme based on its assessment that

> All too often there is an attitude which says that the new [journalist] ... should ... be qualified to tackle any job the newsroom cares to throw up – whether it be writing a wedding report or carrying out a three-week undercover investigation into the activities of the local mafia. Certainly the journalist entrusted to exposing the local mafia should be capable of writing a wedding report – but not necessarily *vice-versa*. Dare it be suggested that there are those [journalists] who might be happy to spend their days writing up wedding reports, village fetes, school sports days, retirement presentations *et al* – and do it very well – but would collapse into a bundle of nerves at

[60] It should also be noted that some university courses either did not apply for NCTJ accreditation or withdrew from it, the most notable example being the City University postgraduate diploma in newspaper journalism (Author's personal experience).

> the prospect of speaking into a microphone and/or facing a video camera whilst covering the aftermatch of a train crash [?] . (p.9)

TRN, then the largest local newspaper publisher in the UK, proposed a pre-training induction programme for school-leavers supposedly to counteract the trend (Slattery 1995). The chief executive of the NCTJ argued that the admission criteria set by colleges and universities for courses were unsatisfactory and served the purposes of the institutions rather than the press, and the head of a private, formerly Westminster Press, training centre, said that academics and retired journalists were not best placed to make crucial selection decisions about entry into journalism (Cullum 1996). The consultant placed in charge of the TRN scheme bemoaned the demise of 'the route from copy boy to editor' and the requirement for 'qualifications' (Geere 1995; Slattery 1995). Nevertheless, more than 90% of trainees chosen for the TRN course by the group's editors were graduates; many others were mature entrants with qualifications in other occupations: in early 1996, only two out of 18 trainees (11%) enrolled were school leavers (Johnston 1996). Others pointed out that training in local journalism had not progressed much since the 1930s, and was unattractive to graduate entrants. The press officer for the University of Wolverhampton argued,

> I meet many young people who get their baptism on the student newspaper and the university magazine. They become stringers for the press office, unpaid I might add, and their enthusiasm is impressive. Meet them after a year in a reporters' room and they are disillusioned, depressed and ready to leave. They cite penny-pinching, mind-numbing routine, petty bureaucracy, tired old writing styles and being anchored to their work stations. It isn't just the money. ... There used to be an allure, an excitement, almost a vocation for journalism. That image has worn so thin that even a journalist could see through it, never mind a graduate. (Branton 1995)

These suggestions implied that the bulk of what local journalism had become in the 1990s under the auspices of conglomerate-owned newspaper chains and the established NCTJ training scheme – if it had not been before – was something at least semi-detached from narrower, orthodox definitions of the role of journalists; that local newsrooms sought permanent 'jobbing journalists' of a certain type (Marks 1996b). Nevertheless,

the persistence of the ideas which lay behind the 'one journalism' model made it difficult to uncouple this kind of journalism from any other.

While journalism education and training fragmented from the 1970s into newspaper, magazine, broadcasting – later, separate radio and television, and then back to bi-media – and multimedia (Bournemouth University), online (University of Central Lancashire) and web journalism (Sheffield University) sequences; although the NCTJ catered specifically for photography and photojournalism; while investigative journalism (Nottingham Trent University), science journalism (Imperial College London) and fashion journalism (London College of Fashion) courses were introduced, and students could prepare for work in freelance journalism (Hulme Adult Education Centre) and international journalism (City University and others), in 2003 there was no recognized programme in local journalism (Bell and Alden 2003, 281-5; Bromley 1997a, 336; Purdey 2001). Within journalism programmes, 'local journalism is the second rate, the port of last resort ... UK journalism education is missing the point. Paradoxically, while claiming to be vocational, it largely ignores and even denigrates the professional culture of most young journalists' first work destinations' (Herbert 2001, 71 & 74).

From within the European journalism training community questions were asked about the appropriateness of 'a single curriculum ... address[ing] the needs of such a functionally differentiated workforce' (Bierhoff, Deuze and de Vreese 2000, 11). In Australia, it was recognized that the press as an industry exercised weak control over journalism schools; that suburban, rural and community newspapers practised peculiar types of journalism; that these newspapers were the primary employers of journalists in training, and any skew in higher education courses in favour of other forms of journalism resulted from their voluntary adoption by journalism educators (Romano and Loo 2001; Vines 2001, 38-9). The experiences of starting journalists in Australian suburban and rural weekly newspapers appeared remarkably similar to those of their UK counterparts: they were over-worked, underpaid, multi-functioning and provided with little support for development (Cafarella 2001, 10; Hart 2001, 35; Morgan 2001, 22). Cafarella in particular argued that local journalism was distinctive in five areas:

1. the communities, and especially newsmakers within those communities, were more 'ordinary' and less press-wise;
2. local journalism was less concerned with politics than with the pragmatics of the implementation of policy;
3. the principal source of news was the local council;
4. advertorials were a key routine of journalism; and,
5. the workforce was highly casualized (pp.8-10).

Hart (2001, 31) added another area:

6. the local press, at least in its rural guise, eschewed the role of 'watchdog'.

Surveying journalism education from a somewhat greater distance, Hartley (1996, 33) argued

> it can be persuasively argued that there's no such thing as journalism in the singular; nothing that unites all the things that may be associated with the term 'journalism' except the term itself. It seems to exceed any category that might be used to encompass it – it is found in so many different forms, media, times, places, contexts, genres and industries, with so many different styles of writing and representation, so many ways of presenting itself as true, addressing so many different types of reader, that any suggestion that something called 'journalism' even exists would be foolhardy, a totalizing projection of the false unity of a word.

Notwithstanding a nominal focus on local journalism, the NCTJ offered a generic 'basic training', which set benchmarks for and was reproduced in the overwhelming majority of programmes even where any 'local flavour' was avoided, in reporting, news values, newsroom practices, current affairs, sub-editing, feature writing, pertinent elements of law and public administration, and ethics (Herbert 2001, 70-1; National Council for the Training of Journalists 1989a, 1). The scope of the curriculum was national insofar as the public administration curriculum included central government, the British constitution and 'economic literacy' (National Council for the Training of Journalists

1992b). Where specifically local activities were stressed (for example, reporting the magistrates' courts, councils and committee meetings, etc.), the aims behind their inclusion in the syllabus were not (National Council for the Training of Journalists 1992a). Newspapers were treated as a single 'industry'. The aims of the newspaper journalism syllabus were

> To recognise, obtain and select important, relevant and newsworthy facts from either written or verbal sources, using appropriate skills or techniques.
>
> To write clear, vigorous and balanced reports in a form that will attract and interest the reader.
>
> To gain a general knowledge of the departments of a newspaper (for instance production, advertising, circulation and finance, etc. as well as editorial), and an understanding of the industry's structure and economics. (National Council for the Training of Journalists 1989a)

Students complained of the artificial nature of the Council's imaginary locale (the town of Oxdown in the county of Oxshire) and compared the NCTJ exercises based on it as poor substitutes for 'live' reporting.[61] Even those programmes which placed an emphasis on local journalism did not always find Oxdown attractive, but instead encouraged students to report 'live' in either their university or home communities (Herbert 2001, 72). Oxdown became a place that was increasingly by-passed.

The connections between local newsrooms, Oxdown and educational institutions delivering a growing proportion of the syllabus were built around instructional staff. At first, in the 1950s, the scheme was dependent on local journalists taking time out from work to contribute casually in the classroom on a sessional basis: from 1965 colleges appointed journalists as full-time staff instructors (National Council for the Training of Journalists 1989b, 4). The NCTJ maintained a requirement that instructors on accredited courses ought to have substantial experience as journalists. In the mid-1990s, however,

[61] Author's personal experience; for example, postgraduate students on the newspaper journalism course at City University in 1992-1993 described the NCTJ classroom work as 'boring' in comparison to reporting in and around central London. I have referred to my end of term review (dated 14 December 1993) for these observations.

the heads of the three most prominent journalism schools – at Cardiff, City and Central Lancashire universities – had no local journalism experience at all.[62] By 2003 all three were headed by broadcasters.

Drawing up a postgraduate scheme in 1991 for the Scottish Centre for Journalism Studies (1991), the University of Strathclyde and Glasgow Polytechnic argued that 'the education and training of *the most influential and talented journalists* in Scotland should take place in a higher education environment'; and that their proposed Scottish Centre for Journalism Studies would 'stimulate in journalists a professionally critical understanding of their role in the industry and of the industry's role in *the European and global information economies*' (pp.3-4 – emphases added). These ambitions seemed to mesh with those of a growing number of graduate entrants into journalism. In the three years prior to 1989, two-thirds (48 out of 73) of those leaving City University with a postgraduate diploma in newspaper journalism took first jobs in the local press: only two (less than 3%) went directly to national newspapers. This latter number equalled the total number of general or newspaper journalism diplomates who secured first jobs in the national press over the first ten years of the programme's existence. In the three years following 1989, the proportion entering the local press fell by nearly two-thirds to 28% (23 out of 82), while the number going to national newspapers increased to an almost equal figure of 18 (22%). The proportion of diplomates taking first jobs outside these two newspaper sectors (including national media such as the BBC, ITN, Reuters and the Press Association) also rose by a third (from 30% to 40%: 22 out of 73 to 33 out of 82). Of those entering either local or national newspapers only, the proportion taking

[62] Peter Cole (University of Central Lancashire) came closest, having started in journalism, after graduating from Cambridge, on the [London] *Evening News* (Griffiths 1992, 163). Hugh Stephenson (City University) began in journalism on *The Times*, and Brian Winston (Cardiff University) was a former television journalist. The first professor of journalism at Sheffield University, Donald Trelford, however, spent three years on the *Coventry Standard* and *Sheffield Telegraph* in the 1960s, although he was best known as editor of *The Observer* from 1975 (Griffith 1992, 566).

the former option fell by more than a third (from 96% to 61%) over the period. In 1990-91, only a fifth of diplomates (six out of 29) graduated into jobs in the local press.[63]

What appeared not to change was the centrality of news, and especially 'hard' news, in the training curriculum. Former newspaper journalism students tended to be offered as exemplars to current students when they were war correspondents (Bennett 1992; Hearing 1991), foreign correspondents (Crawshaw 1991) and political reporters (Assinder 1991; Low 1992); had handled the 'death knock' and covered 'spectacular' fires (Wilson 1992). Keeble's (1994, vii) textbook based on the curriculum delivered at City University contained five chapters (out of 15) about news, with one specifically on 'hard' news, and another on investigative journalism (Northmore 1994). He advised his readers that 'the dominant view in the industry' remained largely that,

> You may have great ideas about the nature of reporting, you may know all about ideology and the history of the press in 18th century Britain. But if you can't bash out a quick story on a murder you're useless. (Keeble 1994, 342)

Aldridge (2001) discovered that, despite the growing amount of space in local newspapers taken up by non-news items, local journalists' work routines, status and discourses were dominated by news, and in particular 'hard' news, to the extent that 'the traditional rhythms and mechanisms of collecting and processing hard news continue to rule daily life' (paras3.2-3.4). Traditionally, all trainees began as 'reporters' and aspirants were told that the job entailed 'reporting the news and commenting upon it' (Dodge 1967, 70-1). The NCTJ curriculum (fundamentally unchanged for 40 years, according to the Guild of Editors [1996, 3]) included 'accurate reporting .. the precise and cogent use of language and .. essential background knowledge of such fields as government, law and current affairs'. A 'nose for news' was *de rigeur*, and progression was achieved through being given 'more important assignments'. This 'training in reporting' was based on the accepted view that 'basic experience as a reporter is the best

[63] Data taken from *Newsletter* no.5 (pp.20-8) and *Newsletter 94* no.8 (pp.38-42), the annual magazine of the Department of Journalism, City University.

foundation for other newspaper work, either as a specialist, feature-writer or sub-editor' (Dodge 1967, 72-3). When the Guild, principally representing local newspaper editors, drafted a proposed revised training programme in the mid-1990s, it adopted a different focus on news. The tests of newsgathering and news writing (an interview, a report of a speech, a news story written from a handout), on which the NCTJ placed so much emphasis that they formed the basis of qualification in journalism, were excluded from the first level, at which some trainees could exit the programme. Instead, this stage, while acknowledging the presence of 'newsgathering and the role of the news desk', broadened both the scope of the curriculum (to include photography, sub-editing, design and broadcasting) and the definition of 'news' to incorporate 'customer care and grass roots news' which it assessed as 'the invaluable commodity' (Guild of Editors 1996, 12-3).

Journalism in Wales

Journalism developed relatively late but rapidly in nineteenth century Wales, and to some extent was isolated by geographical and linguistic specificities. Nevertheless, by the beginning of the twentieth century it was largely imbricated in a wider evolving 'world' of journalism which stretched across the UK, embracing England, Scotland and Ireland, and to Europe and even as far afield as Japan (Jones 1993, 41-8). This included the progressive replacement of amateur contributors with paid journalistic labour (pp.32-3 & 40). At the same time, within Wales the concentrations of journalistic activity shifted from market towns to the new industrial centres (p.6). The introduction of a form of professionalization (at least in the most mundane interpretation of the term, the systematic payment of journalists) led to the further disintegration of the fragmented and peculiar nature of journalism in Wales and its replacement by elements common to journalism as a whole (pp.7 & 48-55). Training was one such dimension, along with the pattern of beginning a career on a weekly title and then moving to a daily as a measure of promotion (p.43). So was the emergence of a collective identity within the NUJ (p.60). Nineteenth century journalism in Wales may have attracted a more middle-class recruit, and, therefore, the subsequent bifurcation along social fissures was more

attenuated (Jones 1993, 59). Yet underlying this tendency to uniformity was a nineteenth century experience of political, religious and linguistic diversity and social and cultural power which imbued Welsh journalism – as a 'moral machine' – with a significance which was not always evident in local journalism elsewhere in the UK (pp.4 & 202-3). A combination of a residual social influence and vibrancy within Welsh journalism, and contemporary economies of scale in the local press resulted in continued strong readerships for local newspapers in Wales into the 1970s (pp.220-1& 228).

Structurally, newspapers in Wales were further integrated into the wider British local press system with the construction of the Berry 'empire', Allied Newspapers, in the 1920s which expanded from control of newspapers in Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Pontypridd and elsewhere in Wales to take in at one time or another the *Financial Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Sketch* as well as local titles in Newcastle, Manchester, Aberdeen, Sheffield and Glasgow – and, ironically, eventually more titles in Cardiff. Meanwhile, Northcliffe Newspapers, the direct rival to the Berry brothers, and the other emerging local press conglomerate, established a foothold in Swansea and south-west Wales. Thus, Wales was part and parcel of a general 'carve up' of the British local press (Griffiths 1992, 105-7; Jones 1993, 210-12). In the 1960s TRN replaced Allied Newspapers and its successor companies as owners of the largest single chain of titles in Wales, and the promotion of Welsh executives to positions of power within the company led to suggestions that TRN was controlled by a 'Tafia' (Jones 1993, 222-3). Cardiff was an important site for the development of journalists, too. The three Cudlipp brothers (Hugh, Percy and Reginald), who all started in journalism on local newspapers in Cardiff and Penarth, left 'a lasting mark on the British press' as editors and managers over a period of three decades from the 1930s (Griffiths 1992, 178-9; Jones 1993, 212-3). Later Cardiff was the location for one of the two editorial training centres established by TRN. A significant number of journalists who progressed from local newspapers (often within Wales) to careers in the national and international media passed through this centre.[64] In the mid-1990s, with the training centre closed, TRN's Welsh interests were bought by Trinity International Holdings, which already

[64] Author's personal experience working in the TRN London office (1978-1987).

owned the Liverpool *Daily Post*, and in 2000 Trinity merged with the Mirror Group (Peak and Fisher 1995, 36; Peak and Fisher 2000, 66). Thus the development of Welsh journalism in the closing decades of the twentieth century might be seen as a matter of the progressive diminution within the mainstream press of any distinctiveness left over from its nineteenth century origins, and its replacement with the ordinary decent British average journalism.

Conclusion

Local newsrooms were transformed during the closing decades of the twentieth century. Beginning in the late 1960s, the growing presence of graduates among the legions of transient trainees and junior journalists coincided with the radicalization of local journalists as a group. Behind both of these factors lay the corporatization of the local press, which encouraged both – the former as policy, and the latter as a response to the commercialization which accompanied expanding chain ownerships by large groups. These developments, occurring chiefly in the 1970s, were followed by a corporate assault on the collectivism of journalists and attempts to reconfigure local newspaper content in the 1980s and 1990s. Simultaneously, the idea that the ranks of trainees and junior journalists would be filled unproblematically by a constantly regenerated flow of graduates began to wane. Graduate recruits into journalism ceased to regard the local press as widely as they once did as the default springboard into journalism as a whole. Nor was the local press necessarily that welcoming: professional aspirations were not encouraged in journalists, and women in particular appeared to be 'ghettoized' in local journalism, and in 'soft' news production. Underpinning all these tendencies was the movement of journalism education and training away from the 'one journalism' model and the shopfloor apprenticeship. Ultimately, a body like the Guild of Editors could propose that journalism was not a single occupation, lying along a continuum, at one end of which was local journalism, but a collection of more or less discrete employments defined by job specificities. Local journalism was no longer Cinderella, but someone who not only did not aspire to attend formals balls but unapologetically preferred discos. In these ways, local journalism became semi-detached, existing within its own sphere,

rather than at the bottom of a single journalistic hierarchy. This sphere continued to be inhabited by two tribes – a smaller number of editors and other senior journalists, and a larger group of transient casualized junior workers and trainees.

It was clear that not all of the tenets of 'one journalism' were simply swept aside (nor that attempts were always made to get rid of them). The core of the journalistic cannon, 'hard' news, proved difficult to dislodge. Graduates with postgraduate diplomas from university journalism schools continued to take first jobs on local newspapers and to progress from there to the national press, radio and television, albeit more erratically and in smaller numbers. The notion of 'the local angle', which merely duplicated accepted journalistic practices, proved resilient. Yet even within the framing mechanisms of a singular 'interpretive community', local journalism was differentiated by the 'precision' of its reporting and representation. This interpretive frame itself distanced local journalism from other forms of journalism, being drawn to a greater extent from the non-journalist world which surrounded its immediate contexts of production. By itself this raised the question whether local journalism was journalism *per se*, which happened to be local, or a separate genre.

The position adopted by local journalists, while undoubtedly influenced by the material conditions which confronted them, also reflected their location in the margins of professionalism and collectivism. It was crucial to understand the contexts in which journalists found themselves: to a large extent, they determined the grounds on which any 'battle' over journalism, whether material or philosophical, was engaged (Smith 1980, 160). The context of the local press at the end of the twentieth century dictated that the key issue was not status or even journalism ethics (professionalism); nor particularly pay and working conditions (collectivism), but the determination of news (the interpretive frame).

5
Local news

The news agenda has been understood – acquired like some Masonic faith, inculcated into the journalist over years and passed down through an oral tradition which has accepted little change in direction or belief. We all know what makes a story, don't we?
Well, no, actually, we probably don't
— *UK Press Gazette* (1992, 14)

One specific type of content was so self-evidently central to the newspaper press that an institutional category, 'the news media', entered into common language, linking media forms (print, broadcast and online) to distinguish them all from media primarily concerned with entertainment, and they were accorded specific attributes (Seymour-Ure 1996, 149; Silverstone 1999, 101-2). Yet from their inception in the late seventeenth century newspapers also contained advertisements and 'other matters of interest' beyond news (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1971, 120). Jones (1993, 7-9) noted how early newspapers in Wales 'embraced a very catholic definition of "news"', and printed general information, entertainment, market and shipping prices, readers' letters, poems, gardening notes and rumour. As we have seen, in the 1990s, as little as 20% of the content of the local press in the UK was taken up by editorial of any kind, including news. What constituted 'news' was also the object of processes of redefinition, and what were called 'intrinsic news values' were repeatedly challenged and de-emphasized (Franklin 1994, 44; Turner 2001, 51). This was part of a broader trend impacting on other sections of the press, other media, and in a number of other countries (Bromley 1998a, 28-9; Curran and Seaton 1997, 258-60; Hesmondhalgh 2002, 242-4; Lumby 1999, 54-6; McManus 1994; Squires 1994, 138;

Tunstall 1996, 200; Turner 2001, 46). News was defined succinctly, if not completely, as something intended to 'inform and engage', as contrasted to content which aimed to 'entertain and divert' (Franklin 1997, 113). Applying such measures, many newspapers published in the UK in the 1990s contained hardly any news at all (Rooney 2000, 91ff; Seymour-Ure 1996, 165). Seventeen of the eighteen titles in the research sample contained between 19% (*Western Mail*) and 92% (the *Campaign* in Caerphilly) advertising matter in issues audited by the Joint Industry Committee for Regional Press Research (JICREG) in December 2001 (see Table 5.1).[65] Some papers circulating in south east Wales (for example, the *Campaign* titles in Blackwood and Pontypridd) were 100% advertising sheets. Nearly half of the newspapers (eight out of 17) carried less than 50% non-advertising material in each issue. Excluding the three daily newspapers and the Sunday title, only five weeklies (38.5%) were predominantly *news*papers. News was more likely to appear in paid-for titles than in freesheets: on average paid-for weeklies carried more than twice as much news (55.5%) as the freesheets (26.5%). Only one paid-for title, the *Hereford Times*, carried as little news as the most news-oriented free papers (JICREG 2001).

Nevertheless, and at the same time, it seemed that a common set of news values were so profoundly central to journalism that they defined the practices of journalists, and resulted in the production of 'dominant news forms' (Meyers 1992, 77). Traditionally, journalists viewed the making of news as a kind of 'recurring accident' (Schlesinger 1978, 47). 'If a story is "newsworthy", goes the argument, then journalists are powerless to prevent themselves writing it' (Miller and Williams 1993, 136). News was remarkably similar, therefore, across media and across many cultures (Hage et al 1976, 7; Henshall and Ingram 1991, 2-8). News equated simply to 'new information', and acquired value by being 'the sort of news that the readers of the paper are likely to want to read' (Harris and Spark 1993, 3). The most notable schema of the structure and selection of news posited that twelve inter-related factors were at work:

1. Frequency

[65] The *Bridgend & Valleys Recorder* was not audited.

2. Threshold
    a) Absolute intensity
    b) Intensity increase
3. Unambiguity
4. Meaningfulness
    a) Cultural proximity
    b) Relevance
5. Consonance
    a) Predictability
    b) Demand
6. Unexpectedness
    a) Unpredictability
    b) Scarcity
7. Continuity
8. Composition
9. Reference to élite nations
10. Reference to élite people
11. Reference to persons
12. Reference to something negative

It was claimed that the first eight of these criteria were 'culture-free', and thus likely to be referred to by journalists everywhere. The final four were held to be 'culture-bound' and evident in western forms of journalism. By shaping news in this way, journalists worked to 'produce an image of the world different from "what really happened"' (Galtung and Ruge 1973, 65-66, 69-70). News was made by journalists rather than Providence (Ensor 1936, 314). In operational terms, journalists were said to choose news on the basis of a restricted list of criteria: perceived importance; impact on the community; stimulation of public curiosity, and demonstration of 'public interest', overlaid by calculations of its timeliness and proximity, and of its reflection of conflict and crisis (Hage et al 1976, 6 & 19; Roshco 1999, 34-6).

Table 5.1: The amount of editorial content in the sampled local newspapers, December 2001

Newspaper	Type	Paid/free	% of non-advertising
Abergavenny Chronicle	w	P	58
Barry & District News	w	P	62
Barry Gem	w	F	33*
Barry Post	w	F	19
Bridgend Post	w	F	36
Bridgend & Valleys Recorder	w	F	n/a
Caerphilly, Ystrad Mynach & Bargoed Campaign	w	F	8
Cowbridge Gem	w	F	33*
Glamorgan Gazette (Bridgend)	w	P	62
Hereford Times	w	P	32
Llantwit Major Gem	w	F	33*
Penarth Times	w	P	62
Rhymney Valley Express	w	P	58†
South Wales Argus (Newport)	e	P	70
South Wales Echo (Cardiff)	e	P	70
The Post (Cardiff)	w	F	23
Wales on Sunday	s	P	78
Western Mail (Cardiff)	m	P	81

* = Aggregated figure for the entire *Gem* series. † = figure for the *Merthyr Express*.

Source: JICREG (2001)

In attempting to move away from a predictive model which, in their view, revealed 'more about how stories are covered than why they were chosen in the first place', Harcup and O'Neill (2001, 277) offered a revised list of news values, which supposedly reflected news choices made by contemporary British national newspapers. They found that the following characteristics were what journalists looked for as ingredients in the manufacture of news:

1. the power élite – individuals, organizations, institutions
2. celebrity
3. entertainment – sex, show business, human interest; animals; drama, humour;

4. surprise
5. bad news – conflict, tragedy
6. good news – rescues, cures
7. magnitude – quantitative and qualitative
8. relevance – (to audience)
9. follow-up
10. newspapers' own agendas (p.279).

A subsequent attempt to aggregate all the components of these attempts to typologize the 'news judgment' which was brought to bear on raw data added categories, reinstated others and expanded some. Timeliness, proximity and internal competition between media for a 'scoop', it was suggested, were not completely captured in a sense of 'relevance'. The 'odd' and 'bizarre' demanded a separate category. Perhaps, most significantly, the list included entries under the headings '*Helpfulness*' - 'how-to stories that help people cope' – and '*Issues in the community*'. This latter category seemed to reflect a fusion of greater involvement of communities in making news in conjunction with enterprise reporting (Gibbs and Warhover 2002, 89-90).

These models went some way to answering the question, *What made news?* – which 'news factors' were privileged; what made some activities, actions, events and ideas newsworthy and others not (Tiffen 1989, 52-3). These were dynamic and changing (Squires 1994, 137), and, predictably, given their social constructedness, news and news values changed over time (Schudson 1996, 141ff; Tiffen 1989, 68). Adopting a simple definition of 'news', Stephens (1997, 4) proposed that it was what was 'on a society's mind', as shaped by collective experience. This chimed with the views of some journalists: 'Local news,' the editor of the Launceston *Examiner* in Tasmania, said, 'is what people are talking about.'

> We make choices about which facts and quotes to use, and we make choices about the order in which we use them. We make choices of emphasis. We make choices in the layout about which stories get prominence and which stories get length. Those choices are based on our training and our experience and our individual views of the world... I can't answer really the question of what

> is news, but if you read tomorrow's *Examiner* you'll see what our news team thought was news today. (Scott cited Kirkman 2000)

News might be defined, then, as the results of interactions between inter-subjective agreements on what was 'out there' (events, personalities, actions, etc. – the establishment of so-called 'facts'), and the interpretive processes of making news internally within journalism and the media, with or without conscious reference to a wider or narrower audience, which may or may not have understood and participated in those processes (Gripsrud 2000, 289 & 295; Harcup and O'Neill 2001, 261; Zelizer 1993b), offering an explanation of how advertising, public relations, hype, humour, entertainment, gossip, issues, trends, speculation, rumour (Bird 1990, 386; Bird 2000, 219; Harcup and O"Neill 2001, 265-7 & 276); fantasy, the bizarre (Hogshire 1997, 3-4), and 'out-and-out trash ...bogus stories ... [and] soft-core porn' (Sloan 2001, 15) were made into news – or , perhaps more ironically, 'pseudo news' (Gripsrud 2000, 287).

That meant that some news, while ostensibly failing one or more of the tests, could still qualify as such; for example, news which might not meet the 'threshold' or 'magnitude' test, if the experience were that of 'smaller communities, with smaller publics'. Thus news ranged from major political events, accompanied by all the apparatus of public interest and mass dissemination (the 2003 invasion of Iraq) to 'stumbling upon the fact that there was a burglary last night at a house down the street' (Stephens 1997, 303). Indeed, Weaver (1994, 198) argued that mainstream ('quality') journalism was at odds with everyday life in that it focused on crisis and 'the ad hoc autocracy of ... emergency power' rather than 'the values of normal life', which were defined as 'involvement in ... settled social frameworks'. The 'well-entrenched journalistic convention' was to emphasize the unique, the odd, the eccentric and the bizarre (Jones 1976, 244). It was commonly assumed, however, but only tentatively supported by a relatively small amount of research, that the smaller the newspaper (by circulation), the greater the reliance on the quantity of local news published regardless of its qualities (Kaszuba and Reader 1998). This news was concrete, everyday, often 'bottom-up', and commonsensical (Gripsrud 2000, 298-9). A journalist who started her own local newspaper in New South Wales, which over ten years expanded into a chain of several

titles, adopted the slogan 'proudly parochial' to capture the concept of a paper prioritizing local news (*Village Voice* 2004).

News in the late 20th century

Using a categorisation suggested by Hallin (1996, 244-5), journalism entered into a 'high modernist' phase in the long twentieth century. By the 1890s it was characterised by human interest ('sport, gossip, crime and sex') and '"brighter" ... writing' (Wiener 1988, 52-6; 1996). The so-called New Journalism was also concise, accurate and timely (Jones 1993, 28 & 37), and, in the American original, locally focussed (Allan 1999, 14). Accordingly, publication of the *Daily Mail* in 1896 was regarded by many as marking the beginnings of popular journalism in Britain (although newspapers such as the evening *Echo* and *Star*, the daily *Pall Mall Gazette* under the editorship of W.T. Stead from 1883, and the Sunday *News of the World*, *Reynold's News* and *Lloyd's Weekly News* had strong prior claims) (Engel 1996, 16, 43-6 & 206-7) These journalistic traits were overlaid in the 1920s with professional journalism norms of objectivity and a privileging of facts (Allan 1999, 24-6). The transformation of the press from a political to a commercial enterprise was thus completed, it has been argued (Golding and Elliott 1979, 26-8; Koss 1990).[66]

Anxieties over these popular forms were evident from the outset (Carey 1992, 6). They reached something of a crescendo in the 1930s, leading to the adoption of the National Union of Journalists' code of ethics and the formation of the first Royal Commission on the Press (Bromley 2003a, 213-14; Stephenson 1998, 17-19).

> 'Newshawks' in the American style were a new feature of British social life: they were trained to be completely unscrupulous in the matter of getting their news – bribing, lying, breaking confidences. Their loyalty was to their paper, and the paper's loyalty was to its news-hungry public. If the persons concerned in some newsworthy activity would make no intimate statement about themselves, there was always a neighbour anxious to earn money by telling what he knew.

[66] The dominant, progessivist Whig interpretation of this trend has been challenged by Curran (Curran and Seaton 1988), and is not implied here.

> The newspapers paid well for 'beats', as 'scoops' were now called, and could pay for the best possible legal advice in protecting themselves against any mistakes made or acts of trespass their reporters committed. ... It was next to impossible for a private person to get redress from a paper in the way of correction of, or apology for, factual misstatements. It was not that editors and proprietors did not regret any errors that were made, but that a paper would forfeit public confidence by any such retraction. The only test of libel was damage to reputation that could be assessed by a jury in terms of money ... But to sue for libel ... only led to still more damaging publicity; so that papers got away with it almost always. And since nearly everyone would give his or her ears to be the subject of even an incorrect mention in the Press, the public was on the whole very well served. Discretion in the matter of libel usually kept the papers from voicing popular indignation against know public enemies; only when a criminal conviction had been secured or when they were in possession of a cast-iron case could they comment freely. (Graves and Hodge 1940, 282-3)

The *Daily Mirror* was the first tabloid newspaper to be published in the UK: literally, in the sense that it was at its inception in 1903 in size half the physical dimensions of the standard broadsheet; after 1904 was pictorial in form, and, later in the 1930s, was tabloid in tone (Bromley 1999; Gripsrud 2002, 2336-7; Hagerty 2003, 10-12 & 38-49). By 1960, following the cessation of newsprint rationing, tabloid journalism had rapidly gained ground among the national press. The proportion of national daily newspaper circulations credited to the formal tabloid press – the *Mirror* and *Daily Sketch* – rose by more than 60% in the 15 years from 1945. Moreover, Williams (1961, 211-3) noted that the *Daily Express*, which was selling more than 4m copies a day, was the most tabloid-like of the broadsheet newspapers. The *Mirror* and *Express* together accounted for 65% of all national daily sales (Seymour-Ure 1991, 28-9). The purchase of *The Sun* by Murdoch in 1969 added a third tabloid title and expanded the tabloid readership by more than one million (Stephenson 1998, 20). By 1975, the two surviving tabloid papers, the *Mirror* and *Sun*, had secured a majority of national daily newspaper readers (Seymour-Ure 1991, 28-9). After 1971 all the remaining national newspaper titles outside the narrow band of so-called 'quality' papers adopted the tabloid format (Seymour-Ure 1996, 32).

Coincidentally, conceptions of news changed, too: *The Sun* preferred sex, sport and competitions, and in 1978, the *Daily Star* was started on the same basis (Bromley 2003a, 218). The symbol of this shift in approach was *The Sun*'s Page 3 photographs ('topless pin-ups') (Grosse 1989, 23-31), but it also included the bizarre and the fanciful ('Freddie Starr ate my hamster') (Hargreaves 2003, 114-5). This seemed to encourage the *Daily Star* whose foray into 'bonk journalism' was regarded as establishing something of a nadir in mainstream journalism (Stephenson and Bromley 1998, 5; Grosse 1989, 23). Finally, David Sullivan, whom *The Guardian* called a 'porn king', started the *Sunday Sport* in an attempt to 'out-*Sun The Sun*' (Livesey 1998, 13 & 20). These developments associated British mainstream newspapers with the supermarket tabloids in US (Hargreaves 2003, 115-18; Sloan 2001, 38 & 144-6; Windschuttle 1988, 41), and appeared to signal a 'retreat from the [established] news agenda' (Turner 2001, 52).

Debates about news up to the mid-1990s were covered by Franklin (1997), who proposed that a new dominant form, 'newszak', was to news what muzak was to music – an inauthentic substitute. Tumber (2001) regarded the case of the eventual demise of Independent Television's flagship *News at Ten* programme as illustrative of the vulnerability of public service news broadcasting as part of a broader tabloidization of the media. Stephenson (1998, 19) argued, however, that changes in news were part of 'a historic continuum', in which adherence to, and criticisms of, forms of news ebbed and flowed, and Sparks (2000, 35) believed that any given point in time contained the potential for the establishment of no more than 'a *transitory* equilibrium in a continuing process of transformations' (emphasis added), which glossed change negatively and posited it as crisis. Paletz (1988, 65-8) positioned all news media on a spectrum, publishing largely similar material, albeit in differing amounts and proportions, and with different perspectives. Drawing on this analysis, Gripsrud (2000, 293-4) suggested that the news media, therefore, were likely to each contain a 'mix' of material although with various emphases. Sparks (2000, 12-3) also contended that the news media ranged over 'two axes of journalism', representing at their extremes (a) the agendas of either journals of record or 'true' tabloids, and (b) concentrations on either public or private life. Windschuttle (1988, 9) pointed out that, rather than news being defined by some kind of

independent variable, such as 'editorial integrity', it was determined instead 'by what will attract the target audience that management wants to offer to advertisers'. Bromley (1998, 34-5) concluded, therefore, that, while what constituted 'news' might appear to be similar (for example, in supposed instances of 'dumbing-down' to the lowest common denominator), it actually held distinctive meanings, shaped by the media contexts in which it appeared, and the social contexts in which it was received. Finally, Bromley and Tumber (1997, 368-9 & 375-6) went so for as to argue that the differences between the 'news-sheet', originating in bourgeois rational culture in the eighteenth century, and the tabloid (news)paper, as a 'popular artifact' of the later twentieth century, were so pronounced that they drew their authenticity from discrete sources. Insofar as it could be categorized as 'news' at all, popular news was 'useful information', as well as the frivolous; stories which were memorable and which often existed outside the (news) media – in other words, popular culture (Bird 2000, 216 & 219; Flink 1997, 5).

In line with this argument, many tabloid stories seemed to draw on the same limited popular culture repertoire, irrespective of the time or place of publication. What tabloid journalists referred to as 'the old classics' appeared over and over again (Hogshire 1997, 38; Sloan 2001, 12). A 'World War 2 Bomber [was] Found on Moon' according to both the *Sunday Sport* in the UK and the *Weekly World News* in the US (Hogshire 1997, 21; Livesey 1998, 60). While a '9½-Pound Fly Terrorizes Mexican Village' in the *National News Extra* in the US, 'Nazi Killer Flies Invade Britain' in the *Sunday Sport* (Livesey 1998, 76; Sloan 2001, 167). Other examples included: 'I Had Sex With An Alien – And He Stole Our Love Child' (*Sunday Sport*); 'Girl Raped By Abominable Snowman Gives Birth To A Hideous Beast-Child' (*News Extra*) and 'Married A Fairy' (*Midnight*); and 'Boy, 13, Eats Mum and Dad' (*Sunday Sport*), and 'Kills Pall & Eats Pieces Of His Flesh' (*National Enquirer*). Suggestions that dead celebrities were still alive was a recurrent theme, as in 'Marilyn Monroe Is Alive And Working As A Nanny' (*Sunday Sport*) and 'Marilyn Escapes From Government Asylum' (*Examiner*) (Livesey 1998, 52-3, 60, 62 & 64-5; Sloan 2001, 106, 175).

'News' in this sense was not information, narrowly defined, but 'primarily a form of storytelling' based on reworking and repeating (re-validating) archetypes and models in a mode for expressing society's (or a part of society's) 'prevailing ideals, ideologies, values and beliefs' (Lule 2001, 14-21). Binding news too tightly to a normative political functionality resulted in the identification of a narrow repertoire of motifs – altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, and individualism (p.35; also Gans cited Lule 2001, 32). Lule's (2001, 21-5) alternative of seven 'master myths' – The Victim; The Scapegoat; The Hero; The Good Mother; The Trickster; The Other World, and The Flood – were meant to capture the larger scale of social life publicly addressed by journalism, rather than the more closed world of politics implicating journalism in addressing public issues, and which sited individuals within a shifting social order (pp.33-4). This seemed to mesh, despite these papers' preoccupation with UFOs, sex, obesity and celebrity, with the supermarket tabloid themes identified by Hogshire (1997, 36-47): rags-to-riches/hard-work-pays; the high brought low; courage, generosity and charity; moral failings; victims-gain-revenge, and the supernatural. In this way, the chaotic, 'ambiguous and perplexing' were given structure (Rock 1973, 74).

Journalists, therefore, translated what 'news' meant as they also identified and named it. The category 'news' was so elastic that news production called for the establishment of spatial, temporal, schematic, institutional and resource boundaries to give it shape (Rock 1973, 75). Studies of news production (for extracted examples of the literature, see Berkowitz 1997 and Tumber 1999) identified personal, ideological, ritual, routine, bureaucratic, professional, interpretive, social, and organizational, among other, imperatives to boundary work. The project appeared to be solipsistic, constructing 'a social order which is made up of movement but no innovation', and which was made to be predictable and rational (Rock 1973, 77-8). Michael Frayn (1973), a former journalist, projected this as 'the complete stylization of news', in which a computer 'could be programmed to produce a perfectly satisfactory daily newspaper with all the variety and news sense of the old hand-made article' through the identification of variables in examples of published news. This implied that the constant moral message was one warning against transgression, and privileging linear, logical readings of news.

Applying this to the *Daily Express*, then a 'popular' broadsheet title containing redolences of the eighteenth century 'news-sheet' of the emerging bourgeois public sphere, Smith et al (1975, 232) concluded,

> The *Express* reader is ... assumed to see himself [*sic*] as a man who can take a fairly long view, who appreciates the arrival of events in an explicable, linear order, and who thereby feels himself to have some degree of control over his response. ... he disapproves of those whose behaviour is dissonant with their station ... . (pp.233 & 238)

The paper provided a welcome 'daily reassurance of a fixed order' (p.239).

Increasingly throughout the twentieth century this portrayal of order was disrupted, however. The key to understanding this shift lay in the nature of the relationship between newspapers and their readers as it developed from the beginning of the nineteenth century. The partisan newspaper press were 'organs of opinion' which primarily collaborated with their readers on the basis of a shared politics (Asquith 1978, 105-6). A more popular press, drawing on a tradition of popular literature, such as chapbooks, street ballads and penny novels, and developing illustrated and comic journalism, co-existed with this press but enjoyed fluctuating fortunes (p.99). Nevertheless, the proprietors of all types of newspapers published content outside of the strictly political, including sport, sensationalism, crime, scandal and gossip – 'every sort of devilment which will ... sell' (Hetherington cited p.107). This miscellaneous approach of bundling together snippets of information, stories, jokes, tall tales, 'human interest', gossip, competitions, readers' letters, services, stunts and cartoons formed the basis for the development of popular magazine publication in the final decades of the nineteenth century, which in turn led to the emergence of the popular daily newspaper, and a new form of collaboration with readers as citizen-consumers (p.108; Tulloch 2000, 139-42). The magazine-type daily, possibly beginning with the *New York Graphic* in 1920s (Sloan 2001, 26-7), was the outcome. In the UK, the *Daily Mirror* adopted this approach most comprehensively from the late 1930s, fusing it, at least initially, with some of the radicalism which had characterized the popular press since the nineteenth century (Asquith 1978; Smith et al 1975)

The *Mirror* was 'a simultaneous-mosaic paper', and 'volatile', emphasizing newness and 'nowness', human interest, illustration, accidents and gossip. Its readers were invited to respond intuitively to its portrayal of the everyday and the extraordinary (Smith et al 1975, 232-3), and to cross a 'threshold' marking the boundary of acceptable thinking about the rationality of cause and effect (Hartley 1982, 85). The *Mirror* consciously espoused sensationalism and addressed topics which were otherwise not considered to be 'nice' (Cudlipp 1953, 249-51). Fewer than one in five of *Mirror* readers said that they regarded news as the paper's main attraction: it was believed that the *Mirror* redefined what constituted 'news' (Bromley 1999, 100-101 & 104-5). Consequently, the typical *Mirror* reader

> see[s] himself (*sic*) in his private life and thought, more exposed to unforeseen events, both good and bad, less able to understand their origin and implications, less able to control them or keep them in cool, logical proportion, more emotional in his response to them. … success more typically arrives as a surprise, an unexpected jackpot. Working-class morality is interpreted not as a struggle to ensure a far share for everyone but as each man privately hoping for a change of luck, within a system that yields jackpots for a few, and is made tolerable for the unlucky by the cheerful note on which most human-interest stories close. (Smith et al 1975, 233)

Again, this skew directly connected mainstream British tabloid newspapers with their US supermarket counterparts (Hogshire 1997).

Localization of news

Franklin and Murphy (1991, 60-3) identified three ways in which specifically local news was made (nos. 1, 3 and 4 below), to which was added a fourth (no.2) suggested by Vinson (2003, 72-3):

1. the reporting of matter which arose indigenously within the specified territorial or cognitive locale – the simplest form of local news;

2. the reporting of matter which was indigenous but which arose outside the specified locale – the dislocation of local news;
3. the reporting of matter which arose outside the specified locale but which included one or more element which related directly to that locale – the local 'angle' in a non-local story;
4. the reporting of matter which arose outside the specified locale but which was 'localized' to include one or more element which related directly to that locale – 'the disaggregation of "national" stories' to insert a local 'angle'.

Vinson's (2003) phrase which captured the entire process was that of seeing 'through local eyes'. Local journalists used 'numerous' – and it may be added, often ingenious – ways to promote the local 'angle' (p.97). Nevertheless, this was not just a way of scaling the news, but also of scoping it: 'importance' was taken as a relative, rather than an absolute, measure (p.55-6). Yet as communities fragmented (decentred) the entire process gained in complexity: generalized approaches determined by territory were replaced by appeals to shared socio-cultural interests (p.62). Moreover, congruence between administrative areas and newspaper distribution patterns, established in the nineteenth century, weakened. In some cases in the UK, newspapers reduced their circulation reach, and sought to address niche audiences, while changes in local government resulted in activities taking place and services being delivered on larger scales (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 190-3; Vinson 2003, 60). Newspapers which attempted to embrace more heterogenous communities discovered that 'Finding common ground and areas of interest is likely to be much harder for media serving a diverse audience' (Vinson 2003, 56). These factors impacted particularly on process of localization (captured in items 3 and 4 above). The accepted methods of detecting the 'explicit impact' of, or what was 'inherently relevant' in, any matter became more problematical (pp.57 & 70-2). Issues (socio-culture) gained ascendancy over geography (territory), and were not necessarily reflected in events or the involvement of individuals (p.61). Focussing on local actors, a tried and tested tactic, was less effective, therefore (pp.75-9). Injecting localized data, or relying on local sources, too, were no longer as universal as they once had been (pp.63, 77-9 & 85-6). Looking for the local 'angle' (see

McLachlan's list below) seemed to present new predicaments which had not existed 30 years before (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 63).

Operationalizing 'New News'

Tulloch (2000, 133-4) drew up an historically-inflected schema for what he characterized as the persistent re-invention of news, consisting of:

1. the displacement of the 'old' with the 'new';
2. the adoption of novel, often imported, techniques;
3. changes in the management and production of news;
4. destabilization of professional norms and values;
5. challenges to ideas of 'quality' in news;
6. challenges to the purposes of news;
7. nostalgia for an imagined (better) past.

This suggested that three inter-connected trends were at the heart of the issue: marketization (the extent to which, and the means by which, news was disseminated); stylization and formulization (the ways in which news was constructed and presented); and technologization (the methods used in the production and distribution of news, and their management) (pp.139-45). This set up a contest around access to, and control of, the making of news.

A number of attempts were made, particularly from the 1970s, to rework the idea of 'news'. The most common were classified as 'market-driven'. (These tendencies have already been noted in earlier chapters.) Perhaps the most extreme case was that of the so-called commuter papers (see page 44). Described as 'scan papers', they placed a premium on brevity, the bizarre, illustration, 'fun stories', fashion, television, sport, celebrity and advertising (Stoney 2001, 239-41). Many of the titles – *Quick* (Dallas) and *20 Minutes* (France and Switzerland) – reflected this approach (AFP 2004). The discursive context was one of brevity and lightness: in 2004 the [London] *Evening*

Standard launched a giveaway early edition called *Standard Lite*, and the following year the *Manchester Evening News* also published a 'lite' version of the paper (Milmo 2005b). After surveying the first few issues of two such newspapers published in Melbourne, Stoney (2001) concluded that 'Genuine news, of the type we normally associate with newspapers, is incidental to this form' (p.241). Even in Switzerland, where local newspapers were traditionally closely tied to institutions such as political parties and the church, they began to be supplanted by a commuter press 'filled by reports of local shop openings' (Zarifeh 2001). In *MX*, published by News Limited in Melbourne, international disasters were listed in brief form under the heading 'Doom & Gloom', and world news – the US economy, Saddam Hussein, Israel, etc. – was headed 'Boring but Important' (cited p.240). 'The imperative to entertain', Storey argued, reduced news to 'Trivial Pursuit answers' (Stoney 2001, 243). The approach, he suggested, was taken from television:

> Newspapers traditionally were a place for reflection and analysis of events, as well as a way of bringing the reader the facts of those events. The question is, however, what happens to a culture when journalism becomes – in written and visual forms – simply a string of facts linked together by pretty pictures? (p.242)

Journalists' resistance to this kind of innovation was often couched in terms of traditional news values.

> No good journalists would argue that, if they have to choose, it would be better to write a feature story about a new breed of dog that's become popular in town than to write about safety problems with an aging bridge. (Gibbs and Warhover 2002, 83)

The editor of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* provided perhaps the most candid exposition of a systemic project to rework news. At the end of 2003 Gannett initiated its 'REAL LIFE, REAL NEWS' project at a meeting of its US editors. The project was detailed in an eleven-page memorandum to *Enquirer* staff, subsequently posted on the Poynter Institute web site (Callinan 2003). The project touched on many of the aspects of local newspapering already discussed – declining circulation and readership; a loss of appeal

to women and younger people; a reliance on market research and reader surveys; a belief that television and the internet had siphoned off the audience for non-local news; the institution of reader advisory panels and task forces, neighbourhood meetings, and, above all, a conviction that 'newspapers are falling short in delivering local-*news* content that satisfied our readers' (emphasis added), and an acceptance that 'many journalists have lost touch with the interests of the people they serve to the point that they write stories about things that matter more to various groups of insiders than to the average citizen' (Gibbs and Warhover 2002, 83). The changes proposed for the paper included:

- local news coverage skewed 'through the perspective of readers and their lives';
- daily key topics which were 'closer to readers' everyday lives';
- moments of life – 'the really important things people do every day';
- good news;
- neighbourhood and community news;
- 'real life' news;
- improved packaging and presentation;
- things to do;
- useful information
- calendars – the 'king of real life events';
- info-boxes, nuggets, briefs, 'short tidbits';
- getting people in stories;
- layering and chaptering;
- public service features;
- real life driven sourcing (referring news ideas to readers);
- 'perceptual scoops'.

Delivering this required the direct co-operation of editorial, production, advertising, circulation, marketing and human resource management departments in a 'total newspaper effort' which would determine reporters' job descriptions and the size and

scale of the news-hole. Each beat reporter would have readers to advise on stories and coverage. Examples of the type of news this would produce were cited:

- The first day of school
- Graduation
- Weddings
- Report card season
- Teacher in-service days
- Stories generated by reader advisors, including 'starting to get fit'; 'describe your style'; fantasy football; Cincinnati wildlife.

The project was defended vigorously:

> Real Life, Real News is about recognizing, valuing and publishing small moments of life, yes, that we may have held up our noses at for too long. But it's also about sophisticated, in-depth journalism about important community issues.... It's not about fluff. (Callinan 2003)

This reflected the conviction of some editors that market intelligence could be harnessed in tandem with traditional news 'instinct': one argued, 'we need both, research and intuition, but tend to rely too heavily on one or the other' (Edwards 2004).

What constituted 'intuition' were more accurately categorized as newsmaking routines; an array of internally- and externally-referenced benchmarks used to set the news paradigm, but in which the imagined audience was represented only weakly. In arriving at determinations of 'news', editors sought prior responses from their own superiors at work, colleagues (not always journalists), and a 'known' audience of family, friends, acquaintances, etc., rather than from the anonymous community-at-large.[67] This preference was shaped significantly by the respective methods of intelligence-gathering – qualitative personal 'conversations' and quantitative 'scientific' surveying: journalists

[67] The deputy editor (later editor) of one local newspaper on which the author worked routinely referred to his butcher as the exemplar of the imagined reader. Sumpter (2000, 341) mentioned the 'Hey, Martha!' factor used in many US newsrooms, and the variant, 'Hey, Montana', used in the newspaper he observed.

demonstrated a clear predilection for, and placed greater reliance on, the former (Sumpter 2000, 334-6; Layton and Walton 1998). Constructions of news were shared across journalistic communities through 'schemes of interpretation' (Fishman 1997, 215). News situations were typified to turn them into recognizable elements in a more or less fixed repertoire (Berkowitz 1997, 363; Sumpter 2000, 336). The universality of the repertoire was itself established through a 'collective discourse', which encompassed but also extended beyond formal processes of socialization – an adaptive 'frame of mind' (Zelizer 1993b). Sumpter's (2000) non-participant observation at a large daily newspaper in the US indicated that, in the specific conditions of newsmaking explored above, this 'frame of mind' was undergoing change in the 1990s to take account of disparate interpretations of what constituted 'news', including quantitative measures of community preferences (pp.343-4). The Gannett initiative followed the publication by the Pew Centre for Civic Journalism of a report written by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation which urged journalists to scope communities using concepts such as layer, range, type and place for news from the largely unreported in-between spaces of civic groups, informal gatherings and individuals outside the leaderships of major institutions (Gibbs and Warhover 2002, 83-5). Stepp (2000) audited widespread 'reform' in news across the US, particularly in smaller newspapers. 'Readers have become the newsroom's invisible giants, catered to on an unprecedented scale, elevated to the status of almost equal partner in decision making. ... Readers are the Big People ...'.

Ideas of what constituted 'news' were revisited and reworked in the local press in the UK, too, throughout the 1990s. There seemed to be no single preferred model: attachments were declared to 'grass-roots local news'; tabloidism; 'something different every day'; investigative/enterprise journalism; 'good news'; affiliation; accessibility; consumer news, human interest and 'old-fashioned journalistic values'(Anon 1992; Engel 1993; Greenslade 1995; Long 2001; *Media Reporter* 1990, 17 & 19; Shields 1993; Slattery 1994). There were, equally, professions of the need to redress a long-term trend of privileging news processing over news gathering (Bromley 1997a, 336-7; Morgan 1997). However, a retreat from news reporting of all kinds was evident (Davies N. 1999; Franklin and Murphy 1997, 215). Historically, the local press strove – not

always wholly successfully – to strike a balance between aggressive, investigative journalism and boosterism (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 73-4). Rather than being remote and detached, local newspapers were regularly criticised for paying too much attention to the 'small moments of life' (Engel 1993; Franklin and Murphy 1991, 81-2). On the other hand, their direct connections with their readers were generally weak (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 65). Franklin and Murphy (1991) found that this press relied on five main sources of news: local and regional government; voluntary organizations; the courts; the police, and business. While they could be accused to being in hock to institutional establishments, they also practised 'public responsibility' journalism, however (pp. 57, 63-4 & 74-5). They drew attention to, gave access for a range of voices to be heard on, and provided fora for debates around, the portmanteau category of 'local matters' (pp.6-7 & 9-10).

This began to change in the 1970s when the local press underwent transformation with the expansion of the freesheet sector. The reliance on advertising, rather than editorial, for revenue resulted in smaller news-holes and the recycling of old news (p.21). News gathering and reporting became more irrelevant (p. 80; Franklin and Murphy 1997, 215). Writing under a pseudonym, a trainee reporter on a weekly paper in London said that pious homilies about establishing 'interactivity' with the community were stymied by the reluctance of newspaper managements to invest the necessary resources. Journalists found it impossible to undertake even 'basic reporting', and on-the-spot coverage was regarded as a 'luxury'. Most journalists were office-bound and restricted to re-writing press releases (Pecke 2004). This trend coincided with a de-emphasizing of the traditional sources of local news, such as local authorities and the courts. The editorial which did appear seemed to be based on 'information subsidies' provided by public relations practitioners (Franklin and Murphy 1997, 224). The 'real issues' of news, as defined by local press proprietors, were increasingly consumption-oriented (p.225), and a news budget dominated by horror, celebrity and the bizarre in direct mimicry of the national tabloids (Engel 1993; Davies N. 1999, 5; Franklin and Murphy 1991, 96).

Franklin (1997, 114) opined that 'innovation' in local newspapers was often restricted to the development of advertorials.[68]

Yet research conducted by the Independent Television Commission found that nearly three-quarters of the UK population knew little or hardly anything about their local councils, and a large majority were in favour of more (broadcast) local news (cited Hargreaves and Thomas 2002, 21). Audiences demonstrated a high level of preference for news, with 93% saying it was their top choice of television content, putting news 'in a league of its own' (Towler 2002, 8). Factual programming came next (84%). Regional programming (mainly news, sport and current affairs) ranked fifth (71%) and current affairs sixth (68%) (pp. 55 & 57). Moreover, 48% of viewers used television as their main source of local news; by comparison, only 32% relied primarily on the press. Fifteen years previously, the relationship had been reversed, with between 50% and 60% of people turning first to newspapers for local news (pp.36-7). When it came to news about Wales, the situation was even more clear-cut. More than two-thirds of Welsh respondents said they used television to access news about Wales: only 14% turned to the press (p.40). As much of the local press sought alternatives to traditional forms of news, it seemed that local audiences' preferences for that news remained remarkably constant, and they in turn sought out alternative sources, by-passing the press. This consideration appeared to have little effect on the local press, however.

The diverse experiences of two newspapers epitomized the overall tendency within the UK's local press-scape. The [Newcastle] *Journal*, a morning paper in continuous production since 1832 with 'a strong reputation for straight, honest reporting', and appealing to a more affluent and better educated readership, followed the trend and was 're-launched' as a tabloid in the early 1990s (Griffiths 1992, 344; World Association of Newspapers 1999, 19). While its circulation rose by 10%, the 'shift downmarket' had other, knock-on effects: the paper's traditional advertisers were less interested in the new

[68] The advertorial approach appeared to spread more insidiously in the local press in the US. In the Thomson chain, not only were advertisers promised editorial in support of paid notices, but there were 'About a dozen ways to milk every last dime out of the "product". Getting married? Let us sell you a wedding announcement. Dead? Let us sell your kids an obit' (Prochnau 1998).

readers; and five years after the change to the tabloid format, it introduced more changes, based on reader surveys, to try to rectify the situation (World Association of Newspapers 1999, 19). The weekly *Hull and Beverley Independent*, on the other hand, a 'substantial-looking newspaper with lengthy articles, a local model of the serious, heavy national press', was started in 1989 with a minimum of 65% of its content dedicated to editorial matter, much of it contextual analysis of evident local trends. To fulfil its mission, it hired experienced journalists, fully-trained reporters, and no 'dogsbody trainees'. Nevertheless, the venture was founded on market research and an interpretation of the niche market opportunities for selling an 'up-market' newspaper to people in the higher socio-economic classifications arising out of the increasing tabloidization of the local press (Marks 1989; Wainwright 1989). Too many local evening newspapers in particular, it was argued, had adopted 'tabloid attitudes' and mixed them with an 'old-fashioned ... run-of-the-mill hard news' agenda focused on crime and tragedy (Greenslade 2003c). Publication of the *Independent* was suspended, however, after only 22 weeks, with the paper having secured an estimated circulation of no more than 5,000 copies against a target of 30,000 (Marks 1990c).

Concerned that local news was being influenced too much by the findings of reader surveys, the trade weekly, *UK Press Gazette* (1989) warned about

> a growing fear that the essential importance of what is produced – news – is beginning to get lost in the welter of research figures, targeting techniques and marketing strategies ... [which] makes utter nonsense of the responsibility of a newspaper to report accurately on what's going on. ... it is not the job of newspapers to create a false, cosy glow about their communities simply because that is what readers, and market researchers, would like to believe. ... one thing is not negotiable, and it is that the news agenda is set by events and cannot be pre-ordained.

Journalists continued to rely on an intuitive approach to news – 'a gut editorial feeling', the editor of the *Hereford Times* called it (Shields 1993). The distinguished former editor Harold Evans concurred: 'They're all [newspapers] frightened of losing readers, so they then forget what they are doing,' he told an interviewer. 'Although I respect market research, I don't think market research is the answer to journalism. I think

editorial conviction is the answer to journalism' (Anon 1997, 10). All the same, market intelligence promised to 'reverse the traditional process by which journalists decide what makes news and instead cover that which interests readers' and to institute reorientation on a 'massive' scale (Anon 1992, 14). The concept of the 'tailored newspaper', based on digital distribution and designed to meet the requirements of individual readers, began to take hold. The Chicago *Daily Herald* was widely cited as an exemplar of the 'tailored' approach in analogue form. Calling itself 'Suburban Chicago's information source', it published news for 88 different communities, and special and 'cause' sections, tied to advertising opportunities (www.dailyherald.com). In 2002 the *South Wales Argus* appointed a senior journalist to the post of 'reader relations manager' (Hold the Front Page 2002d). The following year the *South Wales Post* instituted 'reporters' surgeries' to make news staff more accessible (Hold the Front Page 2003b). In 2001 the *South Wales Echo* devised a 40-question 'State of the Nation' survey designed to elicit the views of Welsh publics (an exercise which was repeated in 2002) – and used the findings as the foundation for news and feature articles, including a 'Scrap the Assembly!' front-page headline (based on no more than 1,000 responses) (Hold the Front Page 2001h & 2002f). It was a veritable 'revolution' and adherents to research-informed changes in news spoke about it in terms of religious conversion (Zlomislic 2003).

Market researched news

Much of the market research effort was concentrated on focus group research, although other techniques, including surveys, interviews, fora and geodemographic mapping, were also used (Layton 1999; Morgan 1992b). 'Cluster types' replaced individuals as actual or potential readers (Gibbs and Warhover 2002, 82; Morgan 1992b). The result was that journalists were encouraged to 'think more like marketers' (Layton 1999). Nevertheless, the advance of market-led approaches to news were relatively slow in the UK: in 1990 the trade newspaper *Journalist's Week* conjectured that only a small number of newspapers had operationalized research results (Bankes 1990). Many journalists remained sceptical – although, to some, still not sceptical enough (Gibbs and Warhover 2002, 82; Layton 1999). Surveys found that local newspaper readers in the

UK wanted more leisure supplements, neighbourhood news pull-outs, local history and nostalgia sections, children's pages and humour. Citing a marketing executive who pressed for 'as much gossip as the libel lawyers will allow', Bankes (1990) asked, 'What about divorce columns?', and added sarcastically, 'Opinions flow out of marketeers like water'.

The most basic kind of reader research was that measuring the numbers and types of people reading newspapers. Between 1998 and 2004 the number of local newspapers in the UK undertaking such research grew from just over 30% to nearly a half. By 2004, nearly nine out of ten local morning newspapers; more than three-quarters of evening papers, and 50% of local Sunday papers carried out reader research. Almost a half of freesheets also relied on research. Only paid-for weeklies (38.4%) were reluctant researchers of their readerships. The research focused on readership numbers, geodemographics and measurements of the time spent reading newspapers (JICREG 2004a). All research was governed by a set of survey guidelines (JICREG 2004b). Even so, additional guidelines on the publication of reader survey results were introduced as a result of newspapers making 'claims which are untrue, ambiguous or misleading' (JICREG 2000). Simple demographics were progressively replaced by 'purchasing clusters' which were said to make up 'the local marketplace' (Newspaper Society 2004). Socio-economic identifiers, such as education, occupation, age and income, were of less interest than life-stage, life-style, aspiration and buying habits (Bromley 2003b, 16). The advantage of filling newsholes with low-key, predictable content (home decorating hints [Hoyt 1992]) was that it circumvented the unreliable nature of orthodox news (World Association of Newspapers 2000, 3). This led more or less seamlessly into the idea of 'editorial marketing', which was described as news shaped by market research.

> The main component of research is a closer relationship between editorial and marketing departments. Joint meetings, participation in research, cross-functional project teams … Journalists, though the core of their activity remains what it has always been, adopt new approaches to cover news. (World Association of Newspapers 1999, 5).

Local newspapers were singled out as early adopters of 'editorial marketing', and six in groups in Newcastle, Sunderland and Aberdeen were studied in 1997 for a WAN report circulated globally (World Association of Newspapers 1999, 12-23).

The most comprehensive venture reported was 'Project Generation' undertaken by Northeast Press, publisher of the evening *Sunderland Echo*.[69] Research identified six areas of 'interest' and seven 'attitude'(to the media) groups. Elimination of three of the 'interest' and two of the 'attitude' groups, because they were either convinced non-readers or their interests cancelled each other out, resulted in the isolation of an overlap area containing 50% of readers who shared a concern for four 'key subjects' (health, crime, jobs and education). Moreover, they expected the *Echo* to focus specifically on highly localized coverage (neighbourhood news) of these subjects. Finally, the research suggested three 'approaches' to news – as events, issues and campaigns (pp.12-14). As a consequence, the *Echo* was redesigned to appeal to younger people, women and lifestyle groups; to prioritize 'local community news' and editorial covering crime prevention, personal fitness and television listings; and to develop news beyond events into issues and campaigns (pp15-16). Such tailoring of news led to some newspapers imagining a single 'target reader' rather than a multiplex community (p.23). Approached as individuals, however, readers betrayed levels of self-absorption which minimized interest in 'the rest of the world' (Hoyt 1992). Moreover, reader surveys were open to multiple interpretations, although one – the corporate perspective – tended to prevail (Hickey 1998). As a result, a survey of US newspaper managers found them to be more satisfied than rank-and-file journalists with the way in which the change towards 'a more outer-directed and reader-driven newsroom culture' had developed (Gade 2004, 45).

To journalists, the marketing of news often felt like 'an assault on the basic values of the [news] trade' (Layton 1999). An early adopter of the marketing approach, the chairman

[69] In 2002-3 the *Western Mail* underwent a similar, research-based, re-branding 'major project' to produce a 'new and improved' paper; the *South Wales Echo* was redesigned to include a health and leisure section 'with a female bias' and full-colour community sport, entertainment and listings sections, and the Welsh *Daily Post* was re-packaged with new supplements and sections to be 'more modern, more stimulating, more opinionated and more fun' (Hold the Front Page 2003a; Sargeson 2003a; www.scquence.co.uk). In 2004, the same research was used to rationalize converting the *Western Mail* into a tabloid (see Chapter 1).

of Gannett and the figure behind *USA Today*, Al Neuharth, was said to have routinely 'belittled reporters and editors'. Yet Layton (1999) argued that the research newspapers most relied on was mainly 'subjective, unscientific and amenable to manipulation'. In 1978, the Newspaper Advertising Bureau's (NAB) more representative telephone survey of 3,000 respondents made little impact, compared to an American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) sponsored focus group research involving just 120 participants (*Changing needs of changing readers* – see page 17). While the NAB survey concluded that 'people read newspapers primarily for hard news', the ASNE report argued for

> more attention .. to their personal needs, help in understanding and dealing with their own problems ... news about their neighbourhood ... advice on what to buy, where to play, how to cope. ...help in handling emotional problems, understanding others, feeling good and eating well, having fun, and in general fulfilling oneself ... news about personally helpful subjects ... 'good news' ... [and] human drama with a happy ending. (Layton and Walton 1998)

The consultant commissioned by the NAB, Leo Bogart, later wrote: 'By proclaiming the message that the public wanted fun rather than facts ... [the ASNE report] legitimized the movement to turn newspapers into daily magazines ...' (cited Layton and Walton 1998). This set the tone for subsequent reader research. Key questions, such as the impact of enterprising and investigative reporting, were 'almost never asked', skewing the data; and, surveying newspaper marketing in the US in the late 1990s, Layton (1999) found no examples of editorial departments being unilaterally consulted about findings. Therefore, 'the real power' of interpretation, on which operational strategies and tactics were based, commonly resided with newspapers' publishers, corporate executives and marketing and advertising departments, but rarely, if ever, with their journalists. He accused newspapers of indulging in 'cynical practices', which were well known to market research consultants. Where the research findings consistently suggested that readers wanted 'better products', more news (local, national and world) and particularly 'serious' news, investigations of important issues and explanations of complex ones, they were interpreted to indicate a requirement to reduce the numbers of journalists, trivialize content and cut back on the scope of news coverage (Layton 1999).

Further reports which contradicted the ASNE findings were ignored. A follow-up to the ASNE research in 1983, which included telephone interviews as well as focus groups, concluded 'it's back to basics' with readers showing a preference for 'hard' news content. Yet other ASNE-commissioned survey in 1991 came to much the same conclusions (Layton and Walton 1998). Market research was merely 'a cover' for implementing already agreed corporate objectives for downsizing, and its results were inevitably predicted by the questions asked. It did not prompt responses to readers, whose requirements were complex and often contradictory – for example, in favour of more 'depth' in reporting, but also shorter reports; and for both 'important' news and content which was personally relevant. Given such data, Knight Ridder's vice-president for research said, 'Simplistic answers to content and strategy will almost always be wrong'. Layton (1999) pointed out that the outcomes of a flurry of market and reader research in the 1980s and 1990s had failed to arrest the decline in newspaper readerships generally, and that many newspapers which continued to do well, such as the *Washington Post*, *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Boston Globe*, were 'serious' broadsheets.

- The director of marketing research at the *Los Angeles Times* argued, 'A newspaper .... Is not just another consumer product' amenable to market manipulation.

Attempting to summarize the issues in terms of local newsmaking, the associate managing editor of a local newspaper in Ontario proposed ten 'rules' for local reporters to follow:

1. Fair treatment – every item of local news has importance;
2. Comprehensive coverage – 'from social teas and strawberry socials to fires and major crimes';
3. Localization – look for 'the unique local angle';
4. Avoidance of news snobbery – every story is of equal importance;
5. Exploitation of uniqueness – local papers are the only ones which cover their locales;
6. Identification of location – use placenames;
7. Reporting as a resource – include details of what happens next;

8. Diversification of news sources – widen the news gathering net'
9. Scoping the news – small stories are big news;
10. Knowledge of the readership (McLachlan n.d.).

Notwithstanding the obvious differences in approach and experience across both geo-political domains, and even individual newspapers, there was a consistency of underlying factors in concerns about the relationship between 'New' and 'Old' news which reflected issues of marketization, stylization and formulization, and technologization, driven by a conflict centred on whether newspapers were 'businesses which happen to be newspapers', and whether newsmaking was no longer 'a calling' (cited Stepp 2000). Newspapers which were effective monopolies were 'a marketplace pure and simple' (Dunn cited Engel 2003). The editor of the *The West Australian* saw his role as that of 'a cog in the wheel that helps maximise shareholder returns', and the newspaper's ownership as 'a manufacturing business making widgets called newspapers' (King 2004; see also Tyner cited Engel 2003).

Politics as news in Wales

> The press in Wales is highly monopolised and its political coverage is narrowly-focussed, staid, superficial and reactive. As we have argued before, there is not much analysis of trends, debates and tensions within and between the parties in Wales; little reflective comment; virtually nothing of a comparative nature (such as with Scotland or Ireland); no serious examination of the constitutional or economic limits, possibilities or implications of the devolution settlement.
>
> — Wales Watch (2002)
> 'Labour helps media monopolies because ... we just like to' (13 May).
> Posted at www.waleswatch.welshnet.co.uk.

The category of news which was most impacted by the move towards more market-led editorial content was institutional politics and administration: it became 'common wisdom that government stories bore readers'. At the core of Batten's attack on journalism (see page 17) was a denunciation of the concentration on politics, public

affairs, and government. The editor of the *Wichita Eagle*, a pioneer of so-called civic journalism, was quoted as saying, 'Nobody gives a damn'. The major effect was felt in American State capitols, where the numbers of bureaux and correspondents, and the resources allocated to them, were severely cut, particularly in the early 1990s. By the late 1990s in some US State capitols lobbyists outnumbered journalists by 150 to 1 (Layton and Walton 1998). A similar trend in the local press in the UK has already been noted (see page 130). Specific issues attended to the NAfW, however, as a new additional tier of government introduced in the late 1990s. We have already seen in Chapter 3 how the local press in Wales responded sluggishly to the introduction of the Assembly. Analyzing local press coverage of elections to the Assembly in 2003, Thomas, Jewel and Cushion (2003) concluded that news about Welsh politics was marginalized and ghettoized, and required readers to proactively seek it out. More attention was paid to the electoral process than to political issues: among the latter, health, the economy, education and the environment attracted most coverage. Personality was a common indicator of newsworthiness, with the majority of coverage focused on the main party leaders. Very few ordinary voters' voices were heard, reinforcing the characterization of the electorate as apathetic. Nevertheless, the larger daily (morning and evening) papers provided at least a 'reasonable' amount of election news (pp.4-5).

Political coverage was weakest among weekly newspapers which mostly failed to localize the election. Personalization was evident, chiefly in the form of biographies and profiles of candidates. This reached something of a fever pitch – the so-called 'Blair effect' – when the UK Prime Minister made a pre-poll tour of Wales. The *Rhondda Leader* carried text and photographs over two pages, concentrating on the human interest dimension of the visit; but was apparently so focused on this aspect of politics that it failed to mention the local Labour Party candidate. Thomas, Jewel and Cushion speculated that one reason for this style of coverage was the tabloid approach adopted by most local papers. By contrast, the 'sober, broadsheet' *Brecon and Radnor Express* published a more recognizably traditional range of political stories (pp.51-2). The researchers concluded that the local press adhered to modes of address which were

directed at two existing constituencies – what the Hansard Society identified as Political Junkies and *Big Brother* fans. The political junkies were catered for through the publication of at least modest amounts of political news, 'super-serving the already "knowledge rich"'. The *Big Brother* fans were chiefly accommodated by an absence of political news, which represented a failure to address issues of information poverty. No systemic attempt was made to popularize politics in news form (p.6).

A sample of 635 editorial items relating to the Assembly which appeared in 41 local newspapers between 30 October and 14 December 2001 (see Chapter 2) was available for analysis. The first obvious point was that 43% of English language newspapers published in Wales (30 out of 70) appeared to carry no editorial items at all on the Assembly during this period.[70] Of the 41 titles in the sample, five were dailies (publishing six times a week) and 36 weeklies. That meant that the 41 newspapers published 330 issues (180 weekly and 150 daily) over the five-week period, and that, on average, just under two editorial items on the Assembly appeared in each issue. This figure was the same for evening newspapers, paid-for and free weeklies. While this did not fully support the thesis put forward by Thomas, Jewel and Cushion (2003), it suggested that large tracts of the local press in Wales tended to be politics-free, at least as far as the Assembly was concerned. A total of 620 published items were assigned to newspapers identified by type (see Table 5.2). The sample could not be taken as wholly representative, and had to be treated with some caution because

(a) it was compiled by a third-party (the Assembly), and it was uncertain whether every item published relevant to the Assembly in the Welsh local press was collected, or if all the items collated were relevant. Certainly, the Assembly was not mentioned by name in a number. This may explain the surprisingly small number of items found in the *Western Mail* (n=9), which was described by Thomas, Jewel and Cushion (2003, 42-4) as the predominant newspaper source of political news in Wales, and which an Assembly audit of press coverage in

[70] One newspaper in the sample was published in England (see page 75).

June 2001 found published 22% of NAfW news.[71] Cushion (2002, 82) calculated that 14% of the *Western Mail*'s newshole was dedicated to politics, of which 42% focused on the NAfW. On the other hand, only 7% of the Welsh electorate

Table 5.2: Editorial items on the Assembly published in Welsh English-language local newspapers, Oct-Dec 2001[72]

Newspaper	Total no. of items	Industry	Health	Finance, Housing, Local Govt.	Education	Rural Affairs	Env't & Trans	Sport & Culture	Other
E. Leader	22 3.5%	5 0.8%	2 0.32%	2 0.32%	2 0.32%	2 0.32%	6 0.95%	0	3 0.48%
S.W. Argus	36 5.8%	11 1.75%	7 1.1%	2 0.32%	4 0.64%	3 0.48%	2 0.32%	2 0.32%	5 0.8%
S.W. Echo	140 22.6%	29 4.6%	17 2.7%	21 3.3%	23 3.7%	3 0.48%	10 1.6%	17 2.7%	20 3.2%
S.W. Post	85 13.7%	19 3%	16 2.5%	9 1.46%	18 2.9%	4 0.64%	3 0.48%	3 0.48%	13 2.1%
Total evenings	**283 45.6%**	**64 10.2%**	**42 6.7%**	**34 5.4%**	**47 7.6%**	**12 1.9%**	**21 3.3%**	**22 3.5%**	**41 6.5%**
Paid-for weeklies	252 40.6%	32 5.1%	51 8.1%	16 2.5%	34 5.5%	29 4.6%	61 9.7%	5 0.8%	24 3.8%
Free weeklies	85 13.7%	10 1.6%	12 1.9%	4 0.64%	10 1.6%	7 1.1%	27 4.3%	6 0.95%	9 1.4%
Total weeklies	**337 54.3%**	**42 6.7%**	**63 10%**	**20 3.2%**	**44 7.1%**	**36 5.7%**	**88 14%**	**11 1.75%**	**33 5.25%**
TOTALS	620 100%	106 16.9%	105 16.9%	54 8.6%	91 14.7%	48 7.6%	109 17.3%	33 5.25%	74 11.8%

Note: Percentages do not add up precisely because they were calculated to only one or two decimal places.

[71] This information was ascertained during non-participant observation of the work of the Assembly press service conducted on 20 November 2001.

[72] The *Western Mail* was excluded because a separate analysis of the content of the paper undertaken for this study found that between 19 November and 15 December 2001, the paper routinely carried a page or more of Assembly news (usually on page 2). *Wales on Sunday* was also excluded. No items were identified with this paper, but the same analysis of content found that it did indeed publish a small amount of Assembly items in November and December 2001. It was clear that the NAfW press service did not collect all this material.

got their election news in 2003 from that paper (Thomas, Jewel and Cushion 2003, 4). Because of these discrepancies, the *Western Mail* was deleted from the sample;

(b) no single short time period could be classed as 'typical' in the daily and weekly publishing cycles of newspapers, and no allowance was made for exceptional circumstances, including news events and issues particular to individual locations and newspapers. For example, a front-page news item and several further articles on pages 6, 7 and 8, as well as a commentary, were published in the 13 December 2001 issue of the *Rhondda Leader* on the findings of an investigation into tipping at a landfill site. This may account for some of the rather stark differences in amounts of content, such as that between paid-for and free weeklies. However, even though the absence of any item from *Wales on Sunday* concurred with the findings of Thomas, Jewel and Cushion that the paper expressed virtually no interest in Assembly politics (p.45), this did not reflect the newspaper's content during this period, and this paper was also deleted from the sample;

(c) the sample appeared to be biased towards identifying more items in the *South Wales Echo* than in the three other evening newspapers in Wales. Thomas, Jewel and Cushion found that the *Echo* and the *South Wales Argus* focused equally on 2003 election news, the *South Wales Post* about a fifth more, and the *Evening Leader* about 30% less (p.48). This distribution was not reflected in the present sample. That may have also been a function of the location of the *Echo* in Cardiff, where the Assembly met and where the First Minister had his constituency.

(d) individual items were measured only quantitatively, making no distinction between single paragraphs and illustrated feature spreads. Moreover, where a number of articles appeared together, they were counted as one item, as in most cases they were connected and addressed the same topic. Although the page on which an item appeared was noted, and the size and design of items was visibly evident, as only photocopies of the items were kept, there was no indication of their location within any page;

(e) no account was taken of the circumstances of production of Assembly news, such as the existence of a small number accredited lobby correspondents supplying a regular flow of material to mainly larger newspapers (the *Western Mail*, which maintained two correspondents, *South Wales Echo*, *South Wales Argus*, whose reporter also supplied material to about a dozen weekly titles, and *South Wales Evening Post*)[73];

(f) finally, the news categories – industry; health; finance, housing and local government; education; rural affairs; environment and transport; sport and culture, and other – were determined by the Assembly and corresponded to its own areas of primary activity and its portfolios. The Assembly press service, which collated the weekly compilation of cuttings, provided direct support to NAfW Cabinet members (WO1046 2001). The allocation of individual items into one or other of these categories by the Assembly was accepted, even though a number could have appeared in more than one category, and some may have been more accurately placed in a category different from that chosen.

The data generally confirmed the 2003 findings that industry (as an area of the economy), health, education and the environment were the main NAfW topics found in local news, accounting for 68% of all items (420 out of 620). Each of these categories accounted for about one in every six items published. However, the priorities of the types of newspapers were different. The evening press did not pay as much attention to environment news (21 items) as the weeklies: indeed, finance, housing and local government news (34 items), which also included economic news, was published significantly more frequently in the evening press. The top priorities of the paid-for and free weekly press were virtually identical. The aggregate proportion of environment and health news published was the same in both types of weekly newspaper (44.5% of all Assembly news in the paid-for press and 46% in the freesheets). However, the weeklies published more than four times the number of environment items as the evening papers (88 to 21). As might have been predicted, the weeklies also focused more on rural affairs (36 items to 12 in the evening papers). Correspondingly, the evening press paid

[73] See Note 71

particular attention to industry news (64 items to 42), to finance, housing and local government (34 items to 20) and to sport and culture (22 items to 11). The quantity of education news published was about the same in both types of paper. On a broader note, the importance of the weekly press in publishing Assembly news was evident, as these papers published more than 54% of all the items. The Assembly's own audit in June 2001 suggested that weekly newspapers accounted for no more than 35% of published NAfW news (Interview N). The paid-for weeklies published nearly three times the number of items appearing in the freesheets (252 to 85), however.

The differences within the different press types were significant, too. Among the evening newspapers the number of items published ranged from 140 found in the *South Wales Echo* to 22 in the *Evening Leader*. The three evening newspapers published in south Wales together carried 42% of all the Assembly items. In addition, 27 paid-for weeklies published a further 40%. By far the main publisher of this news was the *South Wales Echo* (more than 22% of all items noted). The only area in which it showed no real interest was, understandably enough, rural affairs. Among the paid-for weeklies, more than a quarter of all items were published by three newspapers – the *North Wales Weekly News* (28 items), *Brecon and Radnor Express* (21) and *Carmarthen Journal* (20). Similarly, just two titles – the *Bangor Mail* (17) and *North Wales Pioneer* (16) – accounted for nearly 40% of Assembly news appearing in freesheets. In sum, then, 30 out of the 70 (43%) English-language newspapers in Wales were responsible for publishing more than 80% of NAfW news. Nine titles (the *South Wales Echo*, *South Wales Post*, *South Wales Argus*, *North Wales Weekly News*, *Evening Leader*, *Brecon and Radnor Express*, *Carmarthen Journal*, *Bangor Mail* and *North Wales Pioneer*) published 62% of this news (385 items). Of these, the seven paid-for newspapers published more than 56%, and the five paid-for titles in south Wales 48%. By comparison, the four newspapers in north Wales carrying the most Assembly items, published only 13% of the total (83 items).

Drawing reductionist distinctions between north and south Wales was problematical; nevertheless, it was clear that news about the Assembly did not appear evenly

throughout the local press in Wales, and it tended to do so in the south of the country, and in the evening press, which was largely clustered in the south. No direct correlation could be established between the frequency of publication of NAfW news and public opinion of the Assembly, however. In December 2001 the findings of a survey, commissioned by the Assembly, suggested that public support for the new body was greater in north Wales than it was in the south (Lyons 2001). Newspapers applied news values which prioritized dimensions of news which seemed to be most relevant to their specific locales, while sharing a focus on other matters which were perhaps of broader relevance to Wales as a whole. Although their performance in this regard may have been underreported, the freesheets, while mirroring these general priorities (and particularly those of the paid-for weeklies) simply published fewer items both overall and in every single category. They demonstrated, as Franklin and Murphy (1991, 101) predicted, that they were largely uninterested in Assembly matters. However, that was not tantamount to demonstrating that gaining access to news about the Assembly through the local press was difficult.

The evening papers carried an average of 1.89 items per issue (six days a week). These papers were read by nearly 540,000 people (see Tables 2.2 & 5.4). The paid-for and free weeklies each carried an average of 1.9 items per week. Even though the readership figures for three of these newspapers could not be verified, the paid-for weeklies reached a minimum of more than 670,000 people and the freesheets a minimum of more than 560,000. The degree of overlap reading (individuals reading two or more papers) was difficult to gauge. The total local newspaper readership in Wales was approximately 2.6m. It was estimated that 79% of the 2.3m. adults (people aged 15 years and over) in Wales at the time of the 2001 census (http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/w.asp) – 1.8m – read a local paper. Therefore, on average, people reading a local newspaper in Wales were likely to read 1.44 newspapers. Consequently, around 1.25m. people (54% of all adults) in Wales had access through the local press to Assembly news at least weekly, and probably several days a week during this period. Distribution of publication was uneven, however. The three south Wales Evenings carried nearly three items per issue, but the *Evening Leader* fewer than one. Of the 27

paid-for weekly newspapers, 16 (60%) were published in the southern half of Wales. It seemed that not only were newspaper readers in south Wales potentially better informed about the Assembly, but that the main vehicle for this news was the traditional paid-for press (evening and weekly). By comparison, in the northern half of Wales, weekly freesheets were a major source of information on the Assembly.

Assembly news was highly personalized: the name and position of a member of the Assembly (AM) appeared in the equivalent of 89% of all published items, whatever their type or focus.[74] Contrary to earlier findings (see pages 133-4), AMs without any other formal political role were highly visible, appearing in a quarter of items (see Table 5.3). All the same, Ministers hogged the majority of the limelight: they appeared in 329 articles (52.5%). The First Minister alone appeared in nearly 100 items (15.5%). Other party leaders, spokespeople, etc. were given far less publicity in 72 items (11.5%). The extent to which the situation was determined by the activities of the formal Assembly press service, which primarily worked on behalf of Ministers, could only be guessed at. Assembly press officers were aware of, and strove to meet, newspapers' requirements for localized information.[75] In November 2001 the NAfW press service was supplying 31 local weekly papers with information. The main service was comprised of short paragraphs ('news in brief' collated from the week's press releases), sometimes tailored to highlight specific territorial interests. An example of this at work was the release of a Ministerial announcement that £25m. was to be spent on road repairs and maintenance. Articles highlighting the local dimensions of this appeared in eleven newspapers between 7 and 22 November.[76]

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[74] A single mention in any item of both a name and role in the Assembly (Minister, party leader or spokesperson, AM, etc.) was recorded. No qualitative distinctions were drawn. Of course, two or more names appeared in a number of articles.

[75] Information in the remainder of this paragraph and much of the following paragraph is taken from the non-participant observation of the Assembly press service (see Note 71).

[76] The papers (with dates of publication) were: *Wrexham Mail* (15 November); *Penarth Times* (8 November); *Powys County Times* (9 November); *Llanelli Star* (8 November); *Merthyr Express* (9 November); *Denbighshire Press* (8 November); *North Wales Pioneer* (7 November); *Barry and District News* (8 November); *Ynys Môm Chronicle* (22 November); *Brecon and Radnor Express* (15 November), and *Abergavenny Chronicle* (15 November).

Resource constraints limited the quantity and quality of direct contacts between the Assembly and weekly newspapers and their journalists. For its part, the local press rarely initiated contact with the Assembly: rather, journalists seemed to make use of the NAfW web site news pages on which press releases were posted. Between June and October 2001, these pages scored between 223,000 and 315,000 monthly hits (compared to a maximum of 30,000 hits for other pages on the site). The only weeklies with structured access to the Assembly were those in North Wales Newspapers group, including the *Wrexham Leader* and *County Times*, which subscribed to the Press Association service; and eleven papers owned by Newsquest, including the *Penarth Times*, *Barry and District News* and the Campaign series, which could draw on the work of the *South Wales Argus*'s lobby correspondent. The weekly press comprised the 'B'-list of Assembly media contacts – a largely disparate collection of uninterested titles, some of which were believed to be impervious to the Assembly's press relations. Press officers compared what they believed was the richness of the relationship with broadcasters (the BBC and HTV) and even the larger newspapers which maintained lobby correspondents, and the poverty of relations with the weekly press.

The understanding of the Assembly in the weeklies was thought to be 'patchy and superficial', and an internal review was undertaken between the summer and autumn of 2001 in an attempt to improve the situation (NAfW 2001, 1). It was suggested that

Table 5.3: Themes in NAfW coverage in the local English language press in Wales, November-December 2001

Topic	No. of items	%	% of all NAfW items (620)
First Minister	97	16.1	15.6
Other Ministers	232	38.5	37.4
Other political leaders	72	12	11.6
AMs	158	26.2	25.5
Process	44	7.2	7.1
Totals	603	100	97.2

Ministers should schedule interviews specifically for weekly journalists, with civil service briefings, to offer the weekly press genuine 'scoops' about their own geographical areas. The Assembly press service was urged to provide photographers at Ministerial engagements so that photographs could be supplied to the weeklies. 'Action shots' and human interest angles – Ministers photographed with children, elderly people and community groups – were suggested. Existing arrangements with photographers were described as 'ludicrous' and inadequate. Because weekly newspapers were found

Table 5.4: Publication of Assembly items, newspaper circulations and readerships

Newspaper	Type	Paid/ Free	No. of items	Circ/ Dis	Readers	Readers per Copy
Abergavenny Chron.	w	P	10	9,405	24,149	2.6
Barry & District News	w	P	1	6,591	16,808	2.4
Barry Gem	w	F	0	*	*	*
Barry Post	w	F	∫	22,283	24,227	1.2
Bridgend Post	w	F	∫	34,515	49,539	1.2
Bridgend Recorder	w	F	1	26,009	52,118	1.4
Caerphilly Campaign	w	F	0	29,612	47,691	1.5
Cowbridge Gem	w	F	0		*	*
Glamorgan Gazette	w	P	8	23,013	67,384	3
Glamorgan *Gem* series	W	F	n/a	27,816	39,054	1.4
Hereford Times	w	P	n/a	1,242§	3,230§	2.6
Llantwit Major Gem	w	F	0	*	*	*
Penarth Times	w	P	13	5,621	14,442	2.5
Rhymney Valley Express	w	P	0	n/a	n/a	2.5†
South Wales Argus	e	P	36	31,376	98,443	3.2
South Wales Echo	e	P	140	61,693	218,861	3.1
The Post (Cardiff)	w	F	9	100,397	185,873	1.8

* = Incorporated in the *Gem* series; † = Average reader per issue figure taken from *Merthyr Express*. ∫ = Aggregated into the figure given for *The Post*. § = Circulation for the south-east Wales area: readerships estimated accordingly. Note: Figures may not correspond precisely because circulation/distribution and readership figures were sourced separately, and average readers per issue were calculated to only one decimal place. Source: AdWeb; MediaUK; JICREG (2001).

to often use official press releases without editing them, it was argued that they ought to be 'short and snappy, free from jargon and official language and capable of being used verbatim' (p.2). The weekly press ought to be more efficiently monitored. Finally, five themes for press releases were identified: local interest; human interest; pictures; local issues, and style and content. The assessment concluded,

> There is huge potential for improving our coverage in the local press and media and this is where it counts for most politicians. If the Assembly is to succeed in winning hearts and minds, the local press is a good place to start. (p.3)

Indeed, Cushion's survey of twelve AMs found that the local press was both the medium most favoured, and most used, by Assembly members for publicity purposes (2002, 69; 75; 89 & 94). The tactic could be seen to have largely worked, with more local newspapers publishing Assembly news in November and December than in June 2001, and with a considerable focus on individual AMs and especially Ministers. Even weekly titles such as the *Abergavenny Chronicle* (10 items – see Table 5.4), *Brecon and Radnor Express* (21), and *Powys County Times* (16), which in June had been regarded as 'no-go' areas for Assembly news,[77] were publishing considerable numbers of articles.

A secondary analysis was conducted on newspapers which appeared in both this sample and the south east Wales newspaper sample collected for primary textual analysis (see Table 5.4). These newspapers published a total of 227 Assembly-related items. More than three-quarters (176) appeared in the two evening papers, however, and of the 16 Welsh titles, six published no items at all. Of the weeklies only the *Abergavenny Chronicle* (10), a traditional broadsheet, and the *Penarth Times* (13), also a long-established newspaper, carried two or more items per issue across the period. The combined readerships of these two papers were less than 40,000 people. Access to more than 87% of NAfW items was available to only the readerships of the *South Wales Echo*, *South Wales Argus*, *Abergavenny Chronicle* and *Penarth Times*, which amounted to slightly fewer than 356,000 people (about a third of the total readerships in south-east Wales of the Welsh English language local newspapers sampled). Around 70,000

[77] See Note 71

readers of the *Gem* series, the *Caerphilly Campaign*, and *Rhymney Valley Express* in south-east Wales (6%) had access to no Assembly news at all through those newspapers. The remaining 60% had access to no more than irregular coverage of the Assembly.

Competition and complementariness in news

A more precise plotting of the accessibility of published Assembly news was possible using JICREG data. Four locations were chosen for analysis – Cardiff, Abergavenny; Caerphilly and Barry (see Table 5.5). This rendered transparent the way in which the *South Wales Echo* made information accessible about the Assembly. In Abergavenny, where the *Echo* did not circulate, access to NAfW material was, on average, about a half of what it was in the other places. In Cardiff, the *Echo* and the freesheet, *The Post*, published 70% of the articles for readerships which added up to more than 80% of the city's population. The equivalent of nearly 95% of the people of Barry had access to Assembly information through the same newspapers. By contrast, in Caerphilly, where the *Echo* sold far fewer copies and the free *Campaign* was distributed to nearly seven homes in ten, three-quarters of the population had access to no Assembly news in local newspapers at all. The figures raised questions about the relationships between newspapers circulating among the same populations, and the ways in which each configured its editorial content.

Analyzing the performance of the local press in Scotland during the 1997 referendum to create a Scottish parliament, Greenstein (1999) concluded that, in relation to the reporting of politics, the differences between the editorial content of various types of newspapers was less than might be expected (p.3). The local press in particular published considerable amounts of political news. Even tabloids excelled in providing basic and practical information, such as voter guides. This provided readers with a spectrum of data about politics, ranging from policy issues to personalities (pp.17-8). The availability of political news and information was stratified by newspaper type, but not to the extent that some readers were deprived of meaningful data (pp.2-3). Journalists were able to arrive at informed assessments of their imagined audiences'

limited interest in politics, although local reporters tended to underestimate this (p.11). A stress placed on what was determined as 'local' news worked to de-emphasize politics as a whole (p.16). Examining the role of the local press in the debate over the establishment of a mayoral office in Stoke-on-Trent, Temple (2002) argued that, while local political news had changed, despite a greater tendency to sensationalism, it had not totally disappeared: some issues continued to attract the attention of the press (p.8). These tended to be 'high profile and exciting', such as campaigns and referenda (p.20). The commercial self-interests of newspapers conglomerated into large chains were shaping the political news agenda, therefore, away from the routine reporting of events and issues towards a great involvement in civic movements (pp.13-4 & 19-20). The local press sought to establish an image as 'an influential player' as a means of boosting its revenue, sales and reputation (p.20). For example, between July and September 1997, the *South Wales Post* published a series of articles, many of them on the front page, and editorials questioning the efficacy and safety of the measles mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine under the general heading 'MMR pareent's fight for facts'. Twelve months later, take-up of the vaccine in the newspaper's circulation area had fallen significantly more than in the rest of Wales, leading researchers to conclude that the *Post*'s campaign had had a 'measurable' impact (Mason and Donnelly 2000, 473). Greenstein (1999, 18), too, raised the issue of the quality, as opposed to the quantity, of (political) news published in the local press.

Not surprisingly, then, and notwithstanding the routine and mundane character of the majority of issues and actions reported – the administration of government rather than the politics of elections – a considerable proportion of the editorial space allotted to coverage of the Assembly brought together the 'hot topics' identified by Temple with newspapers' interests in leveraging news and events into issues and campaigns, into which they could interpose themselves. The *South Wales Echo* was the most prominent The sample reflected a broader 'campaigning' culture in the local press, which resulted in a dedicated section in the specialist web site Hold the Front Page (see Aldridge 2003;

Temple 2004).[78] The *Western Mail* was one of four newspapers which collected more than 92,000 signatures on a petition demanding a full public inquiry into the 2001 outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (Hold the Front Page 2001g). In July 2000, the

Table 5.5: Assembly news accessibility in Cardiff, Abergavenny, Caerphilly and Barry

Location	Adult pop.*	Newspaper	No. of NAfW items published	Readership*	% of pop. reading paper*
Cardiff	276,801	*Barry News*	1	371	0.13
		Penarth Times	13	872	0.31
		Pontypridd Observer group	4	966	0.35
		S.W. Argus	36	318	0.11
		S.W. Echo	140	109,233	39.46
		The Post	9	115,740	41.81
Total			**203**	**227,500**	**81.1**
Caerphilly	41,812	*Campaign*	0	28,501	68.16
		S.W. Echo	140	7,708	18.44
Total			**140**	**36,209**	**86.6**
Barry	43,165	*Barry News*	1	14,270	33.06
		Barry Post	9§	27,795	64.39
		Glamorgan Gem	0	29,252	67.77
		Penarth Times	13	516	1.19
		S.W. Echo	140	13,085	30.31
Total			**163**	**84,918**	**196.7**
Abergavenny	21,803	*Abergavenny Chronicle*	10	18,884	86.61
		Free Press group	12	3,260	14.95
		Gwent Gazette	16	2,589	11.88
		Hereford Times	n/a	2,162	9.92
		S.W. Argus	36	1,930	8.85
Total			**74**	**28,825**	**132.2**

* Figures are for 2003. § Figure for *The Post*. Source: JICREG.

[78] The site was established in 2000 as a resource for journalists by an arm of the local newspaper conglomerate Northcliffe. Between 2001 and 2004, three other major local press publishers (Newsquest, Trinity Mirror and Johnston Press) acquired equal shares (www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/aboutus.shtml).

Caerphilly Campaign initiated a campaign around a prohibition of elected local authority members speaking and voting in council debates (Hold the Front Page 2000). The *South Wales Argus* pursued a campaign for more than three years designed to speed up the payment of compensation to former coal miners suffering from work-related respiratory diseases (Hold the Front Page 2002e).

Repeated focus on some topics seemed to elevate them from the status of events to that of issues; for example, the combining of the First Ministership with the economic development portfolio (*South Wales Echo* [6, 11 & 12 December]), and the renaming of the Cabinet as the Welsh Assembly Government (*Evening Leader* [6 December]; *South Wales Argus* [4 & 5December]; *South Wales Echo* [6 December], and *South Wales Evening Post* [3, 5 & 6 December]). A proposal by the Health Minister for the reorganisation of the health service in Wales stimulated press interest in the politics behind the idea, because it was believed that the governing coalition partners (Labour and the Liberal Democrats) were divided on the issue (Richardson 2001, 62-6). The press also attempted to engage with readers in sub-politics. About one in sixteen items (at least 40) were identified in which civic groups were mentioned. These included,

residents' and ratepayers' associations – *Rhondda Leader* (13 December, p.7); *South Wales Echo* (9 November, p.10); *Carmarthen Journal* (31 October, p.4);
campaign groups – *County Echo* (7 December, p.18); *Wrexham Mail* (15 November, p.6); *Neath Guardian* (1 November, p.2);
charities – *Ynys Môn Chronicle* (13 December, p.8); *Pontypridd Observer* (13 December, p.22);
lobby groups – *Bangor Mail* (14 November, p.8); *Pontypool Free Press* (21 November, pp.10 & 14); *South Wales Argus* (22 November, p.19);
consumer and client organisations – *North Wales Pioneer* (21 November, p.15); *South Wales Evening Post* (14 November, p.9); *Pontypool Free Press* (12 December, p.1);
education groups – *South Wales Evening Post* (7 December, p.15); *Llanelli Star* (15 November, p.5); *South Wales Echo* (27 November, p.5);
political groups – *South Wales Echo* (5 November, p.5 & 6 December, p.19);
fund-raising groups – *Milford Mercury* (14 December, p.17); and,

(Welsh) language organisations – *South Wales Evening Post* (7 December, p.15); *Bangor Mail* (14 November, p.8)

Such groups ranged from the territorially determined (Rhondda Against Illegal Drugs [*Rhondda Leader* – 8 November, p.5]; Pen-y-bont Action Group [*Mold and Buckley Chronicle* – 16 November, p.1]) to localized national and international organizations (Oxfam [*South Wales Evening Post* – 10 December, p.6]; Countryside Alliance [*Brecon and Radnor Express* – 22 November, p.2]). Traditional civic groups reported on included a credit union (*Denbighshire Press* – 8 November, p.2); a Citizens' Advice Bureau (*Penarth Times* – 22 November, p.6), and the Civic Trust (*Glamorgan Gazette* – 1 November, p.2). On the other hand, self-publicity by AMs was not always obvious, although no doubt it existed (see above); for example, three AMs were reported in their respective local newspapers saying much the same about a scheme to introduce free bus travel for pensioners and people with disabilities (*South Wales Evening Post* – 7 December, p.10; *County Echo* – 7 December, p.6; and *Gwent Gazette* – 13 December, p.2), suggesting a party publicity machine at work. Three AMs contributed personal columns to various newspapers – Jane Davidson, the Education Minister (*Pontypridd Observer*), Ieuan Wyn Jones, the Plaid Cymru leader (*Bangor Mail*, *Holyhead Mail* and *Ynys Môn Chronicle*) and Geraint Davies (*Rhondda Leader*). The Minister for the Environment, Sue Essex, appended her name to a front-page article in the *Cardiff Post* urging public support for recycling (see pages 316-7). She was also one of two Ministers to have letters to newspaper editors published: hers appeared in the *Evening Leader* (2 November, p.2), and the other, written by the First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, appeared in the *South Wales Echo* (23 November, p.34). No further attempt was made to trace the connections between AMs and the local press. Finally, it was clear that the direct reporting of the Assembly had declined to almost nothing. Reports of meetings, etc. accounted for only one in fourteen items published (see Table 5.3).

Conclusion

That concepts of news, and their expression in concrete ways in newspapers, had changed was axiomatic in the 1990s. This was evident in the wider espousal of popular

journalism forms (tabloidization, personalization), which de-emphasized traditional political reporting, and their location in newspapers which increasingly appropriated the concept of 'community' (see Chapter 2). This represented a contest over knowledge – and control – which was played out between commercial and editorial (journalists') interests in the local press, and which found its manifestation in competing definitions of 'news', both sides claiming to directly address, and seeking to mobilize, the public (readers, audiences) as citizens and/or consumers. A parallel and related contest was occurring around citizens as clients of (local) government. Analysing the ways in which a section of the local press reported successive general elections, Franklin (2003) concluded that between 1987 and 2001

> ... instead of providing a public forum where local communities of readers and voters might debate electoral issues of consequence, local newspapers ... have become a public space where readers' and journalists' (*sic*) conflicting agendas clash or, more accurately, where these two communities 'talk past each other' ... .

Behind this disjuncture lay the single-minded (commercial) pursuit of 'local' news, and the belief that 'boring' politics had to be enlivened by means of trivialization and personalization. It was significant, Franklin noted, that over the period ownership of the newspapers surveyed had changed substantially: in 1987 half were independently owned – by 2001 none was. While politics was construed as being 'boring', that did not mean it was of quantitatively less importance, however. The introduction of the NAfW in 1999 generated considerable amounts of coverage in the English-language local press in Wales. Its quality was variable, however. What was published was more likely to be shaped by the press as part of its attempt to appeal to the civic involvement of publics; as clients wanting basic useful information, or the stimulation of issues and campaigns. This constructed citizens as both consumers and clients, and reflected the commercialized nature of the local press (and its dependence on generating advertising revenues).

The allocation of space to 'ordinary' political news itself appeared to be a commercial function: some newspapers (notably, the give-away weekly press) seemed prepared to

leave this kind of editorial activity to other elements of the press. This gave rise to less duplication, less across-the-board dutiful reporting of the political process. Cushion, too, found that concentration of ownership did not lead directly to uniformity of approach (2002, 74; 79 & 81). Rather than thinking of news in binary terms, such as 'serious' or 'trivial', therefore, a more nuanced approach more effectively captured the ways in which newspapers negotiated news to offer readers a contextualized package of information; and that competitiveness and complementariness – how newspapers managed their own material existence through the selection and presentation of editorial matter – impacted on configurations of news.

Callinan (2003) argued that 'exclusive enterprise' helped to 'set the newspaper apart from competitors and give readers special reason to read the newspaper'. Competition in reporting was believed to be particularly pertinent to 'civic life' – 'the real world of politics and power, the stuff of proper journalism' (Hartley 1996, 23; Lanson and Fought 1999, 157). The journalistic scoop – acquired by accident or diligence – was ages old and a hallmark of an occupation characterized by extraordinarily high levels of internal competition (Daly 1999, 277; Jervis 1988, 51). Such reporting was seen as muscular (Stepp 2001). It led, however, to defensive assessments of journalistic performance based primarily on denying advantage to competitors rather than on independent editorial standards, potentially sacrificing the 'public service' dimension of journalism (McManus 1994, 70). The public was seen as being served by journalists disowning their role as 'information presenters' or 'information workers' because both appeared to be inextricably tied to commercial self-interest (Tapsall and Varley 2001, 9). Yet the complementary nature of the local press-scape suggested that brokering information flows was a key aspect of journalism (Ripley 2003). Collaboration (whether deliberate and formal, or accidental and informal) resulted in journalism characterized by 'more thoughtfulness' and the development of 'measured agendas for coverage' (Stepp 2001).

6
The view from the newsroom

> One reason I was drawn to my chosen career is its informality, in contrast to the real professions. Unlike doctors, lawyers or even jockeys, journalists have no entrance exams, no licenses, no governing board to pass solemn judgment when they transgress. Indeed it is the constitutional right of every citizen, no matter how ignorant or how depraved, to be a journalist. This wild liberty, this official laxity, is one of journalism's appeals.
>
> I was always taken, too, by the kinds of people who practiced journalism. ... [They] seemed more vital and engaged than your normal run of adults. They talked animatedly about things they were learning – things that were important, things that were absurd. They told hilarious jokes. ...
>
> I felt I'd like to hang around with such people when I grew up. Much later, after I had been a journalist for years, I became aware of an utterance by Walter Lippmann that captured something I especially liked about life in the newsroom. 'Journalism,' he declared, 'is the last refuge of the vaguely talented.'
>
> — Carroll (2004)

Insofar as there were changes in news, as well as in journalists and journalism, and specifically in the press, these were likely both to be most acutely felt in newspaper newsrooms, and to be reflective of the ways in which those newsrooms were structured and operated (Josephi 2000; Smith 1980, 185-206; see also Chapter 4). Breed (1997, 120) argued that the strongest influence exercised on individual journalists came from 'the newsroom group', and any changes could be expected to be important in the making of news. Culminating (at least temporarily) in the editorial skew adopted by the Fox News Channel at the time of the election of George W. Bush to the US presidency

in 2000, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the re-election of Bush in 2004, ownership seemed to decide newsroom culture (Allan 2005, 9-12). A combination of the supposed power of the press and increasing concentrations of ownership of that press gave rise to renewed concerns,[79] previously evident throughout the twentieth century, that the 'institutional structures' of the media unduly influenced the practices and processes of newsmaking (Doyle 2002, 19-22 & 146-8; Eldridge, Kitzinger and Williams 1997, 29 33-6 & 39; Schudson 1996, 145). From the inside, a small number of journalists in the British press argued that the very nature of oligopolies curtailed editorial vigour (Pilger 1992, 6-8 & 63-9). Foot (1991, 8) claimed that what resulted was 'an atmosphere of abjectness, which is the most deadly poison for invigorating, challenging or entertaining journalism'. Finney (1990, 41) complained,

> The question of hierarchical power in newspaper management needs to be addressed. Journalists [interviewed] ... collectively spoke of their concern about self-censorship. ... a deep form of self-censorship is created through unspoken guide-lines and presumptions. ... Bias raises its head through a subtle filtering process, down from the proprietor to executive to editor to staff.

The political editor of *The Independent*, who had worked on local as well as national newspapers, wrote about 'The crippling of the scribes':

> ... it is daft to suggest that individuals can buck the system, ignore the pre-set 'taste'of their newspapers, use their own news-sense in reporting the truth of any event, and survive. Dissident reporters who do not deliver the goods suffer professional death. ... Such a fate is not always a reflection on professional ability. ... I have known fine journalists broken on that wheel...
> (Bevins 1990, 15)

A decade later, when the events of 9/11 put 'news [back] in charge, temporarily', particularly in US network television, where news divisions, after several decades of being sheltered from the profit-driven commercialism of most of TV, had been integrated into entertainment conglomerates, an opportunity arose to reassess the performance of journalism in this political economy. Several critics argued that global

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[79] For a counter-view, see Rushkoff (1996).

conglomeration had destabilized the making of news because companies responsible to stockholders viewed it as a poor profit generator existing on the margins of their operations (McChesney 2002, 95 & 99-100). News claimed support only insofar as its public service function (as after 9/11) served to legitimate the wider commercial direction of the press (Rosen 2002, 28-31). While many saw the period following the attacks in New York and Washington in terms of a journalistic revival (Bromley and Cushion 2002, 165-6), others believed nothing had fundamentally arrested 'the erosion' of the press which had been engulfed by 'entertainment and information industries which market commodities', and which viewed newsmaking in terms of a balance-sheet of 'profit expectations and opportunity costs' (Carey 2002, 89). At the end of 2000 the Poynter Institute attempted a reconciliation between journalism and business – product and profit (Christie and Campbell 2001; Petty 2001, 16). Any 'golden age' when quality of news underpinned business success was seen by many as long gone: 'Once a newspaper owner gains domination of a market, ...the motivation for quality becomes less straightforward' (Meyer 2004, 202-5).

At a more mundane level of functionality, the emphasis in newsrooms shifted from news-gathering to news processing: in 1994, Westminster Press in the UK quantified more than 60% of the effort of its journalists as devoted to the latter (Bromley 1995b, 5). In 2003, the editor of a daily newspaper in Australia estimated that this had grown to 75%.[80] Moreover, much of this work was not traditional editing ('supervising content and upholding professional standards') but focused on layout and design – 'making ...sections seem light and bright and attractive to advertisers' (Waterford 1999, 13). As has already been noted in earlier chapters, newswork was elided with marketing (Rusbridger 2005). News editors morphed into 'news finders', heads of content and content directors (Cheches 2003).[81] Newsroom structures changed, too (Bromley 1995b, 44; Graham and Thompson n.d.); as did newsroom personnel, which was probably younger and more female, although hard evidence was difficult to come by (Deuze

[80] Personal conversation with author (April 2003).

[81] Personal communication between the author and the executive editor of a regional newspaper group (April 2005).

2001). The established distinctions between reporters, sub-editors, specialists and photographers were blurred (Bromley 1997a, 341-2). Team-based reporting replaced traditional 'beat' coverage (Gade 2002; Gade and Perry 2003); or 'beats' were redefined – for example, from police to 'public safety' reporting (Lundy 2002). Teams were often inter-departmental, with members drawn from advertising, marketing and promotions, and circulation, as well as the newsroom (Gade and Perry 2003; Readership Institute 2003). The publisher of the *Tampa Tribune* argued: 'Gone is the day – if it ever existed – when editors could do their jobs in splendid isolation. Today we've got to mix it up with the mercenaries' (Ashe 2001, 4). In some cases, the word 'newsroom' disappeared altogether (Cottle 1999).

Technology interacted with existing forms of news work organization (Christopher 1998). It was proposed that reformed ways of constructing 'news' culturally (in the so-called knowledge society) would also impinge on news production organization (Quinn 2002). The director of the Centre for Advanced News Operations concluded,

> ... tomorrow's newsroom has got to be a different place than today's, to take advantage of new technologies, to make the best use of a new generation of journalists, to compete in the broadening information marketplace, and to serve the public's expanding and changing need to know. (Northrup cited Anon 2002c)

Boczkowski (2004, 179 & 185) found that, while newspapers in the US posting online content conformed to no single, technologically-determined configuration of organization, communication and technology, nevertheless news online was significantly more 'user centered' than its hard copy counterpart. The editor of *The Guardian* stated that, universally, 'The readers are in the driving seat' (cited Anon 2002a). This orientation was evident far more widely in market-driven and communi-commercial journalism (see Chapter 5), where the journalistic orthodoxy that news was what was defined internally as the big event or issue of the day no longer held true (Rusbridger 2005). As we have seen, many newspapers involved readers as part of the news-making process (Schaffer 2002). The Southern Newspaper Publishers' Association (2004) in the US changed the name of its editorial committee to the readership

committee. Ninety-seven percent of US daily newspaper editors polled in 2001 believed the press should adopt a community role broader than just publishing news (Cheches 2003; Gillmor 2003; Peck 2001). Summing up, it was argued that,

> the dual roles of community stewardship and serving as a catalyst for community conversation now outrank investigative reporting as one of the top two roles that newspapers should play in the community. That, I submit, is a sea change from the Watergate era of journalism. (Peck 2001)

Indeed, traditional newsroom organization and structure were blamed for a perceived persistent failure of newspapers to 'connect' with citizens, and, therefore, for falling circulations and readerships (Green 1999). They were believed to be ready for revolutionary change (Underwood 1993, 112), and the Harwood Institute (2003) established a programme of 'newsroom transformations' in the US. Most changes were based on (re)aligning 'core' and 'timeless' journalism values with twenty-first century 'civic life', and included 'designing story planning processes, mechanisms and systems to support their [newspapers'] work'. The editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* argued, 'if you aren't in a newsroom that's trying to change, you should be worried' (Lundy 2002).

Newsrooms

After surveying daily newspaper newsrooms in the 1970s, Engwall (1978) characterized them as hierarchical, routinized, relatively isolated and exuding a generally negative atmosphere (pp.103-5; 107; 109-13; 117 & 133-56). Some, if not all, of these characteristics were mechanisms used organizationally to integrate news staffs (with relatively high levels of individual autonomy and specialization, which led to extensive horizontal differentiation) into the overall newspapering effort (pp.99-101). Summarizing what had happened in US newspapers over the subsequent twenty-year period, Underwood (1993) suggested that marketing and managerialism had been imported into newsrooms to further (perhaps, fully) integrate newswork, resulting in direct conflict between the domains of business and journalism (p.120). The key changes this wrought were the introduction of more aggressive forms of management and more

reader-friendly journalism, the former reinforcing the latter (pp.118-9), and the diminution of independent journalistic inquiry, of protection from advertiser pressure, and of the prioritization of public issues over private concerns (pp.124). There was little room for investigative, enterprise or aggressive reporting (p.132); but there were new opportunities for advertorials (pp.139-40). For their part, journalists worked with reduced resources and less support (pp.112-3), and were confined to routine, non-creative, bland, formulaic reporting which undermined any occupational autonomy which might have existed (pp.30 & 152). This further exacerbated the effects of understaffing, low pay, a lack of professional development, the labour-saving deployment of technologies, and an oversupply of labour (pp.30-32). Perhaps not surprisingly, morale among newsroom staff was poor (p.26-8). Journalists appeared to have lost their power over the definition of what constituted 'news' to readers, advertisers, marketers and managers (pp.33-4; 109 & 133-7). The approach was

Figure 6.1. The news desk (left) and the newsroom of The *[Glasgow]* Herald *(n.d.)*

Source: www.assesstheherald.co.uk: accessed 7 September 2004.

essentially anti-journalism (p.121). It became commonplace (at least in the US) to conclude that 'Wall Street will shape what Main Street sees, hears and reads' (Armstrong 2002).

Engwall's (1978) reading of newsrooms, however, suggested that such developments were perhaps less novel than Underwood proclaimed. In the 1970s he recorded high levels of interest among newspaper owners in influencing the content of the press,

including the introduction of advertorials (pp.217-8), and (in the local press) in curtailing critical reporting (p.216). The business side of newspapers was also more adept at imagining the readership, largely because it had more contact with readers (pp.118-9). Journalists, on the other hand, relied for the most part on 'guesses and hypotheses' (p.8).[82] The implication was that newsrooms were disadvantaged when it came both to mobilizing public interest in, and support for, existing news agendas, and to resisting commercial imperatives to change those agendas. Esser (1998) identified seven significant characteristics of British local newspaper newsrooms which contributed to this:

1. the primacy of a division of labour among journalists rather than multifunctionality (p.381)
2. the elite status of reporters (p.384)
3. the separation of news gathering from news processing (p.389)
4. the separation of news (production) and editorial comment (p.389)
5. the separation of news production and features production (p.390)
6. a division of journalists' relationships with, on the one hand, sources (the job of reporters), and, on the other hand, readers (the work of sub-editors) (pp.381-2)
7. central, open-plan offices (p.380)
8. surveillance of, and even interference in, journalists' work (pp.395 & 397).

Esser, who conducted fieldwork at two large local evening newspapers (the *Birmingham Evening Mail* and *Wolverhampton Express and Star*), concluded that these factors led to an 'organizational bias' which curtailed journalistic autonomy (pp.398-9). Perhaps not surprisingly, many journalists merely declared newswork to be a 'miserable' job, and left (Engwall 1978, 153-4).

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[82] At about the same time, a *Sunday Times* journalist told Wesker (1977, 12), 'Journalists write for other journalists, the people they have lunch with rather than the reader. ... Who knows what the reader wants?'.

Despite an expanding literature on the topic, and a tradition, particularly evident in the US, of undertaking newsroom studies (Reese and Ballinger 2001), researchers found gaining access to newsrooms difficult (Schlesinger 1978, 11; Underwood 1993, 114). Wesker (1977), who was given more or less open access to the (London) *Sunday Times* editorial departments, found the situation intimidating (p.15). In the newsroom, he felt 'a little foolish and exposed' (p.46). In large measure, this reflected the closed nature of newswork (p.104; see also Walker 2000, 237; Figure 6.1). On the surface newsrooms were not dissimilar from other sites of white-collar work (White 1991, 23). Beneath that, however, their processes and practices were often peculiar (Josephi 1998, 167-8). A key feature was their reliance on tacit knowledge. This drew on intrinsic understandings of the finely graded distinctions of roles and responsibilities which were not always evident to outsiders (pp.164-5 & 170). As we have already seen, relationships among members were more often than not antagonistic, notwithstanding the appearance of team working. Newsroom culture was 'rooted in individualism that values personal resourcefulness, skill and creativity as measures of professionalism' (Gade and Perry 2003).

Attempting to sketch the idealized organization of newswork, Mims Rowe (2000, 4-5) suggested that it displayed several essential qualities, including 'the passion to bubble and boil with ideas'. Newsrooms were ideally places of debate and discussion; leadership; learning; standards; thinking; values; training, and craft; but at the same time were highly dependent on investments of money and time. The overall newsroom 'environment' acted as a barometer of the state of journalism. This was reflected in the newsroom systems – the daily routines of news making – among them,

News budget meetings
Story development processes
'Post mortem' meetings
Contact and expert lists
Diaries
Planning (Geisler 2003).

Initiatives such as civic/public journalism (see pages 53-5) challenged many of the ways in which newsrooms were organized and operated because, it was argued,

> the dominant newsroom culture bred a generation of journalists detached from the very communities they serve. The successful journalist was often portrayed as a hired gun who rode into town, cleaned up its scroundrels and then rode off into the sunset … . (Peck 2001)

Civic journalism privileged 'interaction with readers' over newsroom concerns with the practices of journalism. By 2001, 'community stewardship' and 'serving as a catalyst for community conversation' outranked investigative reporting as activities among the US's 512 newspapers with circulations over 20,000. This led the editor of the Spokane *Spokesman-Review* to venture that newsrooms were places where readers were invited 'to play a role in the work of journalists'. Young people, in particular, 'want a voice. They want to be heard' (Peck 2001). In 1993, the paper began a community engagement programme which led to 'a general rethinking' of newsroom organization, including restructuring beats, total-content editing and the tailor-making of news (CPN n.d.).

Communi-commercial newspapering seemed to take matters further: the Gannett Real Life, Real News initiative (see pages 198-9) involved newsrooms co-operating with newspaper marketing departments; consulting advisory groups; working across internal boundaries, and handing over columns to readers, as well as identifying advertising and sales opportunities (Clark 2004). After conducting non-participant observation at the daily *West Australian* in Perth, Josephi (1998, 173-4) concluded that newsroom organization and practices represented the operationalization of the construction of the artifact, which by the late 1990s amounted to the prioritization of visual elements, entertainment, design, sport, and so on – and the relative demotion of news. When the *San Francisco Examiner* was redesigned as a tabloid in 2002, the change integrally encompassed newsroom culture and organization – structure, communications, practices and processes (Garcia Media n.d.)

In attempting to discern 'order' in newsrooms, the most commonplace (perhaps, commonsensical) referent was that of *organization* (Schudson 1996, 142-3). Newsrooms

were said to exist across four inter-dependent, overlapping, layered and inter-connected dimensions:

> *Context*
>
> Both internally and externally (in relations with others, primarily sources), newsrooms were shaped as and by organizational goals, bureaucracies, economics, social structures, routines and relations (pp.142-4);
>
> *Practices*
>
> Newsrooms were locations of practices, from the origination of concepts of journalism, through sourcing, to production, which were both routinized (reflecting their contextualization), and determined by internal aims (pp.147-9);
>
> *Processes*
>
> Newsrooms were circumscribed by amalgams of context and practices, and the specifics of the media, technology, personnel, time and space, etc. (pp.149-51);
>
> *Culture*
>
> While, taken together, the contextual, practical and procedural could be viewed as constituting systems which were more, rather than less, 'unified, intentional and functional', it was not apparent that newsrooms could be so described (p.153). Outside this relatively closed circuit lay broader cultural affects – 'the unquestioned and generally unnoticed background assumptions through which news is gathered and within which it is framed' (p.154).

It was this last dimension which pointed to newsrooms as historically dynamic, and which suggested that their organizational contexts, practices and processes, although rarely considered as such, were also subject to change over time (pp.155-6). Insofar as histories were constructed, however, they tended to focus, at least until the 1970s, primarily on 'a media elite of owners, editors and star reporters' rather than rank-and-file journalists, treating 'media institutions as representations of media workers' (Hardt 1995, 7 & 17-19). Much of the history-from-blow was rendered opaque by journalism's own day-to-day 'fixation' with the present, making 'the task of keeping track of incremental developments in journalistic independence, practice, ambitions and

techniques particularly fraught'. Even 'experienced and well-informed researchers' could be taken unawares by 'the similarities between past and present practice' (Schultz 1999, 260-1) Schultz recalled an incident in 1997 when the noted Australian journalist Jana Wendt used the annual Andrew Olle lecture to accuse journalism of many of the failures subsequently addressed by Murdoch (see below). 'Much of what she said fitted in to debates about newsroom practice and priorities that have been around for years – even decades'. Nevertheless, Schultz, then a journalist on the Brisbane daily *Courier-Mail*, found younger colleagues dismissive.

> 'Don't you realize that the relative independence of journalists changes all the time [?],' I protested. 'What may be unpopular today could be greeted with enthusiasm in a few year's (*sic*) time in a different environment with a different boss ... .' (p.261)

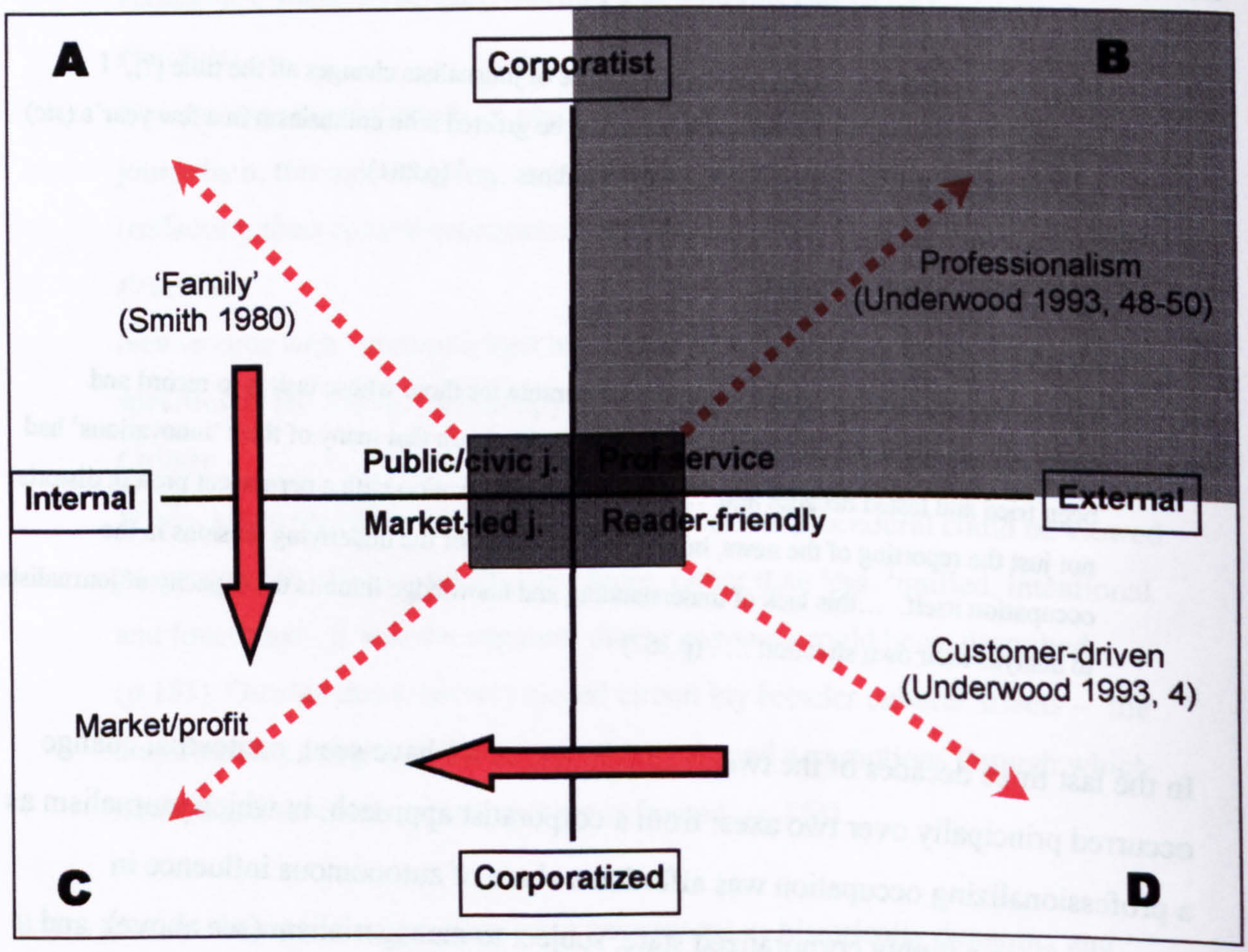
More analytically, she concluded,

> The burden of learning the past is almost unbearable for those whose task is to record and construct the new news, most would be astonished to learn that many of their 'innovations' had been tried and tested decades ago. ...the occupational fixation with a permanent present distorts not just the reporting of the news, but an understanding of the underlying tensions in the occupation itself. ...this lack of understanding and knowledge inhibits the capacity of journalists to analyze their own situation ... . (p.262)

In the last three decades of the twentieth century, as we have seen, contextual change occurred principally over two axes: from a corporatist approach, in which journalism as a professionalizing occupation was afforded a share of autonomous influence in newsrooms, to a highly corporatized state, subject to managerialism (see above); and from primarily internal referencing (exemplified in Smith's [1980] characterization of newsrooms as familial entities – see page 163) to primarily external referencing (Underwood 1993, 4). (This is represented graphically in Figure 6.2.) Such tendencies were evident in newsroom organizations and operations prior to the 1970s, of course, although the 'one journalism' model ensured that all newsrooms (at least in the mainstream media in the UK) were very similar, and clustered around the intersecting point of the axes, more often than not overlapping and laying broad claim to 'public

service' or 'social responsibility' objectives (Bromley 1997a, 338). Moreover, the variant forms of journalism of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (market-driven, public/civic and reader-friendly), while distinctive in some ways from the established, orthodox professional service model prevalent in the 1960s (Hallin 1996, 243-4), nevertheless initially remained close to the core of shared perceptions of what constituted journalism.

Figure 6.2: Changes in newsrooms, c.1970s-2000s



Over time, however, the forces at work were centrifugal, drawing newsrooms towards the outer edges of at least three of the quadrants, as newsroom organizations and operations were increasingly influenced by often mutually reinforcing imperatives to generate profits (q.C) and to provide customer service (q.D) by reducing investment in the quantity and quality of journalism (Meyer 2004, 83-104). In some instances where readers were not treated as consumers, the newsroom 'family' was extended to include

them as (quasi) producers in forms of 'participatory journalism' (q.A) (Bromley 1997; Manafy 2004). A number of established news organizations experimented with 'user generated content' and contributions from 'citizen journalists' (Sambrook cited Hypergene 2005). This was seen as having direct impact on newsrooms: the director of the BBC's global news division argued

> It will change the way we report the news and how we find and develop news stories. New technologies now allow our audiences to become part of our production teams, generating and adding their content to conventional sources. They will enable us to inform and connect people in new ways. We want to engage our listeners, viewers, readers and users, harnessing their contributions, ideas, opinions, photos, stories, videos and feedback to generate new agendas, new angles and new content. (cited Hypergene 2005)

In other cases, newsrooms were reformed into voluntarist, participatory community spaces (q.B) – the most obvious example being Indymedia. In each instance, the survival of newsrooms as distinctive spaces was far from assured. Innovations, such as 'stand-alone journalism', offered alternatives. One noted,

> I don't know if stand-alone journalists will replace traditional news outlets entirely. They're more likely to supplement the work of cash-strapped established news outlets. ...there aren't enough people (and there aren't enough talented people) inside news organizations today. It's bad now. It's going to get worse. Payrolls, cut to the bone in many papers, are going to shrink even more as ad revenue falls, as circulation hits new lows. Newspaper owners decided long ago that they were going to push down costs by cutting staff. ... they have destroyed their product – reporting and writing. (Nolan 2005)

Attempting to assess 'newsroom culture', the Readership Institute (2000) surveyed 100 US newspapers (Cunningham 2000). It found that, while newsroom culture largely reflected newspaper cultures as a whole (see Table 6.1), newsrooms displayed a range of distinctive characteristics which set them apart from most of the rest of the business. On the whole, newsrooms were

- isolated from other departments

- stressful places to work
- full of conflict
- without a clear sense of mission
- not service oriented;

and journalists were

- unrewarded
- unmotivated
- deprived of training opportunities
- dissatisfied with their jobs
- uninvolved
- undervalued.

Table 6.1: Newspaper cultures

Source	Primary style	Secondary style	Strongest extensions
News-editorial	Perfectionist	Oppositional	Aggressive/defensive
Advertising	Perfectionist	Conventional	Passive/defensive
Circulation	Oppositional	Perfectionist	Passive/defensive
Marketing	Avoidance	Perfectionist	Passive/defensive
Executives	Humanistic	Achievement	Constructive
All newspapers	Perfectionist	Oppositional	Aggressive/defensive (30%) Passive/aggressive (28%) Passive/defensive (23%) Constructive (19%)

Source: Readership Institute (2000).

In sum, newsrooms were far from being dynamic, ideas-generating communities of practice, but were focused rather on sustaining their 'status, security and turf', and were resistant to change (Anon 2001b; Cunningham 2000; Readership Institute 2000).

> ... people are expected to persist and endure, to appear competent and independent, to keep on top of everything. They are expected to look for mistakes, stay detached and perfectly objective, and to point out flaws. ... [they] tend toward confrontation, competitiveness and jockeying for power. In short, our national newspaper culture reflects all the 'mean' things readers have said about newspapers for years: we find fault with everything; we never get involved; we are aloof; arrogant and absolutely sure we are right. (Cunningham 2000)

Newsroom autonomy

The kind of changes proposed and implemented particularly seemed to threaten traditions of newsroom autonomy (Gade and Perry 2003). Corporate managements, in seeking 'to produce better newspapers for our readers through better organisation of our editorial operations', sought even to quantitatively measure 'a reporter's nose for a story' (Houghton 2002, 2). This seemed to give rise to 'a professional identity crisis' among newspaper journalists (Schultz and Voakes 1999, 36). Gade (1996) concluded

> Many journalists believe management is asking for basic and fundamental changes in the practice of journalism. ... Journalists feel increasingly less autonomy and freedom in their work, and they feel economic pressures threaten their professionalism. ... journalists remain committed to a core of professional values they feel embody journalism. Prominent among these values are the freedom to determine the contents of the news product, the sense of performing a public service and the desire to improve society.

Yet this autonomy could also detach journalists from society itself (Scholl and Weischenberg 1999). Scholl and Weischenberg argued that 'responsibility for "deciding what's news" should not be monopolized by journalistic professionals'. Rather, journalists ought to align their own internal referencing (with other journalists, colleagues in the newsroom, and journalists working for other media – see also Zelizer 1993b) with external references (for example, with the public's service and entertainment needs, public views of journalistic practices, and sources, including public relations). This relationship with the broader 'environment' was still viewed through the prism of journalism, however – the 'selection of which external impacts are allowed'. In their study of German journalists, Scholl and Weischenberg found that, while journalists

who were largely auto-referential were more inclined to act in the role of the Fourth Estate, as such were more tolerant of the use of aggressive reporting techniques, and were more hostile towards public relations, they were nevertheless no more inclined to be dismissive of their audiences or of those audiences' requirements for entertainment and 'useful' information rather than news. A former editor of the *St Louis Post-Dispatch* argued: 'We don't protect our independence by rejecting the counsel or input of our readers, viewers, listeners, or browsers, and we don't give it up by seeking that input' (Campbell 2001, 7). In other words, contemporary developments in newsroom organization, processes and practices did not present journalists with a stark choice between binary opposites (preserving or destroying their autonomy, and defending or abandoning journalistic standards), but suggested routes towards more complex and multidimensional expressions of journalistic autonomy – not 'either ... or' but 'as well as'. The case seemed to be that many newspaper journalists either eschewed allo-referencing, or selected inappropriate external references. Summarizing much of the argument, Rupert Murdoch (2005) claimed

> Unfortunately ... too many of us editors and reporters are out of touch with our readers. ... Studies show we're in an odd position: we're more trusted by the people who aren't reading us. And when you ask journalists what they think about their readers, the picture grows darker. According to one recent study, the percentage of [US] national journalists who have a great deal of confidence in the ability of the American public to make good decisions has declined by more than 20 points since 1999. ... it is distburing. This is a polite way of saying that reporters and editors think their readers are stupid. ... As one study said: '...how can journalists work on behalf of a public they are coming to see as less wise and less able?' I'd put it more dramatically: newspapers whose employees look down on their readers can have no hope of ever succeeding as a business.

On the other hand, it was to be expected that not all journalists would exhibit the same attitudes towards readers, nor the same responses to newsroom change.

Over a three-year period (1996-98) journalists at the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* remained open-minded about, and (variously, strongly to mildly) optimistic and positive-to-neutral towards, proposed newsroom changes introduced there. Generally, they viewed such

changes as providing an opportunity. By 2000, however, their attitudes had themselves changed, and they regarded the innovations negatively. The evidence suggested that change was acceptable, maybe even to be welcomed, if it met the journalists' expectations – chiefly, in delivering 'better' journalism – but rejected if it didn't (Gade and Perry 2003). Gade (2002, 149-50) found about equal numbers of pessimists and optimists, and positive and negative attitudes towards change among US newspaper editors, too. In both instances, a key variable was the perception held of change management: where change was regarded as having been carefully planned, communicated and implemented, with rank-and-file participation, it met with more positive responses (Gade 2002, 151; Gade and Perry 2003). It also seemed possible that a failure to provide additional training, especially to reporters, impacted on how change was received (Pew Research Center 2004, 19).

The existence of a 'widening gulf' was detected between journalists and corporate newspaper managements, therefore, based in part on differing perceptions of the state of newsrooms. Journalists were more likely than newspaper managers to believe that newsroom staffs had been cut (54% of local journalists in the US felt this way), and that bottom-line pressures were 'eroding journalistic quality' (Kovach, Rosenstiel and Mitchell 2004, 29; Pew Research Center 2004, 18). Those journalists who reported that their newsrooms had experienced reductions in staffing were in turn more inclined to feel that journalism was not just changing but hurting – dumbing-down, more prone to error and less assertive, as well as more sensational and too concerned with audience ratings. Journalists with a more pessimistic outlook on the future of journalism were more inclined to hold these kinds of views (Pew Research Center 2004, 2, 12 & 19).

Schultz and Voakes (1999) found an underlying lack of faith in newspapers among newspaper journalists (p.29) which suggested the existence of a general pessimism, which was in any event unlikely to be greatly affected by newsroom change (p.38). More than this, research by the Pew Center in 2004 revealed a lack of confidence in the future of journalism as a whole (Kovach, Rosenstiel and Mitchell 2004, 27).

Even declining newsroom budgets (Schultz and Voakes 1999, 33), or feelings that their newspapers were performing poorly (p.31) were found to be only weak indicators of pessimistic feelings. '... many journalists lose faith in their enterprise even when they *are* satisfied with what they personally do and how their newspapers are doing' (pp.36-7 – original emphasis). Over the five years between 1999 and 2004, US journalists felt they had gone some way towards addressing the key failures previously identified by journalism's critics. They believed they had moved closer to the public and their audiences, and had reduced their tendency to be cynical: 42% of local print journalists reported themselves satisfied with the quality of coverage they were providing (Pew Research Center 2004, 9-10). They shifted much of the blame for their perceptions that, notwithstanding these shifts, journalism remained in a parlous state, therefore, onto 'the economic behavior of their companies' – areas which they felt lay outside their control to influence. In local journalism in particular this was reflected in reports by journalists of mounting and 'pernicious' pressures on newsrooms from corporate owners and advertisers (Kovach, Rosenstiel and Mitchell 2004, 27-8). It remained an open question, however, whether journalists had done all they could to embrace change, and that the corporate conglomerates which controlled the press harboured alternative, short-term commercial ambitions to leverage as much profit as possible out of a declining, mature business (Kovach, Rosenstiel and Mitchell 2004, 32), or if somehow 'newspaper journalists in general lack the spirit to face future challenges and to engender enthusiasm in their readers' (Schultz and Voakes 1999, 37).

The weight of this evidence from the US suggested that, while tracing precise causal relationships between even the apparently commonsensical notions of proprietorial control of the press, or the adoption of new technologies by the media, and newswork was problematical (Schudson 1996, 144-7), nevertheless significant change had been endemic in newsrooms since the 1970s, although the degree of novelty was debatable. It was widely believed (not least by journalists) that such change either led to, or was driven by, changes in journalism; that altered contexts, practices and processes produced 'news' which was also different. The greatest change was often felt to be the transfer of authority over deciding what was 'news' from the exclusive domain of journalists – the

diminution in journalistic autonomy. Such feelings were perhaps based on an understanding of newsrooms as ahistorical, self-referential, functional and uniform spaces with fixed standards (Hallin 1996, 244-6). Yet newsrooms could be equally viewed, however, as historically dynamic, responsive to wider cultural influences (including those of their audiences and advertisers), and holding impermanent values. So, what happened in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s which raised such alarms, particularly among journalists? One coincidental answer seemed to be the occupation of newsrooms by forms of late twentieth century corporate managerialism, which were perceived to be inimical to the 'professional' or 'interpretive' aspirations of journalists: change management, rather than change itself, appeared to be the problem. Journalists believed that in the opening years of the twenty-first century they had done much to accommodate cultural change, and had addressed contemporary concerns with what constituted acceptable quality in journalism. What lay outside their control, however, were the commercial objectives of newspaper conglomerates and the ways in which those impacted on newsroom contexts, practices and processes. Nevertheless, a still largely unexplained malaise affected newspaper journalists, which transcended even traditional dissatisfaction with newswork: they seemed to believe that newspapers – and presumably, newspaper newsrooms – were headed for obsolescence. This raised the possibility that the 'problem' lay not just in the changes brought about in newsrooms over three decades, or the ways in which those changes had been operationalized, but also with many of the journalists who worked in some of those newsrooms.

Newsrooms in Wales

In the (still) relatively closed environments of newspaper newsrooms mapping the descriptive and analytical elements detailed above on to the specificities of newsrooms in Wales presented obvious difficulties. At one level, it was to be expected that journalists in Wales were exposed to developments evident elsewhere. Close to 60% of the Welsh press was owned at some time during the closing years of the twentieth century by conglomerates with global media interests, including newspapers in the US. In the case of Thomson Regional Newspapers, the transference of local newsroom

management and organization practices to and from the UK and the US was traced by Prochnau (1998). Journalists working for Newsquest clearly felt that the US parent company Gannett exercised influence over how newsrooms worked in their UK local papers (Alden 2004, 20). There was evidence that UK local newspaper newsrooms as a whole experienced many of the changes discussed above (see Peak and Fisher 2000, 64; Peak and Fisher 2001, 46-8). Moreover, direct proprietorial influence also surfaced on occasion; for example, when Sir Ray Tindle, the head of the eponymous local newspaper chain with nine titles in Wales, told editors to refuse to publish articles or letters opposing the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Bell and Alden 2003, 29). Evidence of the intrusion of commercial interests into newsrooms, not least in the form of the advertorial, has been presented in earlier chapters. Finally, local editorial executives communicated[83] the extent to which they accessed information and ideas either in person or by use of the worldwide web, formally and informally, through organizations such at the Poynter Institute. These influences showed themselves in the local press in the UK; for example, through

> a greater reliance on market research, and the imposition of news agendas based on interpretations of the findings (Hold the Front Page 2002f);
> a focus away from traditional ideas of news towards themes such as 'health, education, family and leisure' (Poole 2002);
> recoil from 'Long grey stories with dull headlines' in favour of 'lively, dynamic presentation ... graphics and photos' (Hold the Front Page 2002f); and,
> more editorial campaigning (Poole 2002).

In some instances, Welsh newspapers were transformed over a period of less than 50 years, as in the case of the *Carmarthen Journal*, from being 'rather Victorian ... [with] stories written in an old-fashioned way' to full-colour tabloid format (Sargeson 2003b). In 2004 Wales's so-called national daily, the *Western Mail*, adopted the 'compact' format for its full-colour content introduced in 2003 (Sargeson 2004). Such 'bright' papers were intended to appeal as much, if not more, to advertisers: the *North Wales*

[83] Through a number of informal interviews with the author (2001-2004).

Chronicle, a freesheet, surveyed advertisers before introducing new advertising 'platforms' – property, motoring, leisure, careers – with editorial playing a supporting role, which suggested the wholesale adoption of an advertorial approach (Hold the Front Page 2004b). Some believed that these developments were at the expense of traditional local news. The veteran *South Wales Echo* reporter Wayne Nowaczyk noted: 'I think that society in general would probably prefer to talk about David Beckham rather than the validity of Tony Blair's invasion of Iraq. I think that's sad, but we are more entertainment oriented nowadays' (Turner 2004). Welsh papers also seemed to rely more on leveraging local news into opportunities for affiliation and community engagement: the *County Times* simultaneously inaugurated a 'Highlight the Plight' campaign to bring attention to the impact of the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in mid-Wales, and undertook to donate 10p to support businesses in difficulties from every issue of the paper sold over a period of four weeks (Lay 2001). There appeared to be more publication of useful information: when 2,150 redundancies were announced at steelworks in Ebbw Vale and Newport, the *South Wales Argus* set up a helpdesk for those affected and printed answers to readers' questions (Hold the Front Page 2001b). Such signs indicated changes were occurring in the Welsh local press along the lines already discussed.

Of course, as has been previously argued, it was not possible to assume that changes in local newspaper forms and content were directly related uni-causally to any changes in newsrooms. In order to better understand how local newspaper newsrooms operated at the beginning of the twenty-first century, seven journalists with some responsibility for the editorial function of eighteen local weekly newspaper titles in south-east Wales, were interviewed in November and December 2001. Six were designated editors; one was a news editor. The interviews addressed the operations specifically of ten newsrooms which provided content primarily for twelve titles and incidentally to six others.[84] All the news staffs were small. In one instance, even the editorship was itself a

[84] The six other titles were in series associated with some of the twelve. In some cases, the editor interviewed did not have direct responsibility for these other titles which had their own newsrooms. In other instances, the titles were no more than slightly amended editions of other newspapers. At no time did

part-time appointment. Another editor had only a trainee as his sole full-time member of staff, and he relied on recruiting interns from local journalism schools. One editor refused to disclose how many journalists worked in his two newsrooms, although he hinted (and it was believed) that none was employed full-time. One newsroom included an untrained assistant (a high school graduate working before going to university). Only four journalists (on two newspapers) were identified as being 'senior' in status. In five cases, however, each newsroom had at least one full-time reporter.

The largest staff comprised four reporters, a part-time sports reporter and a photographer, in addition to the editor. This sports reporter was the only regular part-time journalist identified. Most of the papers depended on community contributions, which comprised up to 50% of the editorial space of any issue. One had a budget to pay up to twelve correspondents. Another was looking to increase the number of such contributors from the current 'two or three'. Most relied on the bulk of such contributions being supplied voluntarily by members of the public. All in all, the editorial content of twelve newspapers (plus larger or smaller amounts of contributions to up to six other titles) was the responsibility of sixteen reporters (including the trainee), two photographers and one untrained assistant working full-time, supplemented by an unknown number of part-time staff and casual contributors, as well as the six editors and one news editor. In other words, the average full-time editorial staff of each title was a maximum of fewer than two-and-a-half, and in all likelihood closer to two, people.[85]

Three of the seven editors interviewed were women. Although, as has already been established (pages 148-9), women were more equally represented among local newspaper editorial staffs, this figure was still significantly high. Moreover, the women both were younger, and their appointments more recent. One had been appointed to her editorship eighteen months previously after only five years working in journalism. The second had been in her role for about a year. The third had been promoted and given an

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any of the interviewees indicate that practices and processes in any other related newsrooms differed from those they described during the interviews, although they were given opportunities to do so.

[85] The best guess was that almost all the content of thirteen titles was produced by this cohort.

editor's responsibilities on a part-time basis only some weeks before. Two of the women had worked exclusively in the local press. These experiences mirrored what was occurring more broadly in the Welsh local press. For example, in 2001 Nicole Garnon was appointed assistant editor of the *South Wales Argus* after several promotions over thirteen years with the paper (Hold the Front Page 2001c), and the following year Fiona Phillips became the first female editor of the *Western Telegraph*, after joining that paper as a trainee in 1980 (Hold the Front Page 2002c). Two of the women in the sample were graduates, and one had a postgraduate qualification in journalism. This was different from the profile of the male editors. Although one had been appointed within the past year, the others had been in their present positions for several years. One had been a journalist for 30 years, one for 25 years and one for nearly twenty years. Three had experience of working for the national media. Not unexpectedly, two of the women had succeeded men who had previously held those positions for 25 and fifteen years.

In terms of personnel, then, these newsrooms seemed to conform in some ways to patterns already identified in earlier chapters. They appeared to be understaffed (even in one of the larger newsrooms five people were responsible for producing twenty pages of news and four pages of sport, as well as contributing to a second newspaper) with much of the editorial work casualized. In one case, when an editor had retired, he had not been replaced. At another paper the deputy editor and chief reporter positions were unfilled. One editor said that three casual contributors he employed also worked full-time as journalists elsewhere, and another said he could do no more than merely aspire to hiring full-time journalists. Two relied on interns and work experience volunteers. Three encouraged older people trying to break in to journalism to work as regular contributors to get around staff shortages. In some respects, the make-up of newsroom personnel had not changed much in the 30 years since Cox and Morgan (1973) completed their survey. More than half the editors were by their own definition 'old hands'; most of the newsroom staff were younger and less experienced. 'For me, to hire a journalist with experience is a luxury,' one editor confessed (Interview E). Another said he depended on two 'old-school' journalists working alongside younger reporters (Interview F). The editors felt that they bore responsibility for a large amount of the newsroom work. One,

whose only employee was a trainee, said he saw through 95% of the copy each week (Interview C). Another said his roles, as well as being the editor, included news editing; copy tasting; doing rough lay-outs; overseeing the centralized sub-editing, and seeing the paper off-press (Interview F).

None of the editors expressed a preference for hiring graduates as journalists, or for university qualifications in journalism. Typically, they looked, as one said, to balance their newsrooms with 50% graduates (Interview G). Of the eleven newsroom staff whose training was identified, only one had a university journalism qualification. Five had accredited industry qualifications; one had non-accredited industry training; three were currently undergoing training, and one had no journalism qualifications at all. All the same, graduates outnumbered non-graduates by almost two-to-one. The most common route into local journalism seemed to be from university to an NCTJ-accredited (possibly postgraduate diploma), or company-based training course. Furthermore, there was evidence to suggest that such recruits were more likely to make rapid career progress. Just over a third of graduates from a degree programme in multimedia journalism in 1999 (n=21) were sampled in March 2001, almost two years into their employment careers. Of those, and notwithstanding the nominal orientation of the course, 57% were working in the print media. Three (14%) were in local newspapers.[86] Two of the three were appointed following internships undertaken during the course, and both had been subsequently promoted from their starting positions as reporters to news editor and chief reporter (Graduate Survey 2001). Newsroom staffs in the Welsh sample were generally equally balanced in terms of gender. In these other ways, the make-up of local newsroom personnel had changed since the 1970s to include more graduates and more women, and to offer more career opportunities for both.

[86] The figure for the 2000 cohort was six graduates (out of 53) working in the local press as journalists (11%).

Local news values in south-east Wales

Any connections between newsrooms and news content might be traced in attitudes to news values – not only what made news but also who made news, and the role journalists believed they played in that process, as well as perceptions of the place of news in the local press. As we have seen, many journalists made that connection, asserting that changes in newsrooms and in news values were mutually reinforcing, and were driven by the internal requirements of newspaper conglomerates to generate profit returns for stockholders, dressed up as projects in 'community engagement'. The sample of seven Welsh local newspaper editors, given its age, experience and gender characteristics, was expected to provide a reliable response to questions of change and continuity in news values. Responses were mapped thematically across the four theoretical categories of journalism introduced in Chapter 2 – banal, precise, enabling and affiliated (although none of these terms was used in the interviews).

Banal journalism

Six of the interviewees made some kind of reference to elements of banal journalism (the expression of a sense of 'us' through history, iconology, imagery, place, etc.), although only one directly mentioned one of them (nostalgia – Interview H). Two specifically called the news focus 'parochial': one said it was 'parish pump' (Interviews B, G & H). Such news was supposed to reflect what was imagined to be the identifiers of the local community – from the arts, to village life, to what the neighbours were doing (Interviews C, D, F & H). One editor said that it was important to acknowledge place because the paper relied on the continuity of its relationship with its readers (ensuring 'repeat visits') through a shared sense of location (Interview G). Three editors said their papers had faced the challenge of the changing image of their communities and the creation of new senses of place as economies and populations underwent transformation (Interviews B, D & F). However, some dimensions of identity and image were fairly common – domestic preoccupations with home, school, life stages, celebrations, etc. (Interviews B, F H). As one editor said, 'It's what people want to know. It's people.

...Gossip. ...We need to get it right. Where the street is. The spelling. ...The community reflected back at them'. She characterized parts of the paper as a 'scrap box' for the community (Interview H). News, another interviewee responded, was 'community not area' (Interview C).

Precise Journalism

While only one editor specifically raised the issue of 'precise' journalism (Interview G), there was evidence of scoping (rather than scaling) the news. Another editor said she would not cover a story which appeared in the edition of the local evening paper which circulated in the town when she believed 'it genuinely doesn't fit with the [town] scene' (Interview B). Another gave the example of a rape case which had attracted several pages of coverage in a different local evening paper, but which 'we wouldn't print normally' (Interview H). A fourth said he was regularly challenged to answer the question, 'What's a good story?' for his paper. 'I have in the back of my mind the reason for the newspaper being there, and what interests the community' (Interview C). One respondent acknowledged the differences between 'what people regard as important in [the paper], what is likely to be a bit of a kite-flyer and what is genuinely newsworthy' (Interview D). The editor of a number of titles said that he strove to provide 'grassroots news', 'bread-and-butter journalism' and a view of 'the wider world'. His advice was: 'Pay close attention to your area, but have your eyes focused upwards and outwards' (Interview E). Only one editor argued that news values were the same in this local press as in daily newspapers, scaled to size (Interview G). The others expressed concern with scoping 'what impinges on the local' and 'aspects of everyday life', and which were not themselves confined to the immediate locale. A 'big story' did not equate to 'village news' (Interview D). One editor suggested that while news sense was 'universal' (in journalism), 'knowledge' was local (Interview B).

Enabling Journalism

Again, only one interviewee specifically used the phrase 'information you can use' (Interview F), but most said their papers routinely published information on which readers could act – from What's On listings to community notices (Interviews B, F, G & H). One editor said, 'I want the paper to be seen as interactive in concept. ...We don't seek to lead public opinion' (Interview E). Four editors especially raised the issue of the ubiquity of advertising, but none viewed it as a problem (except in the technical sense of impacting on page lay-outs) (Interviews C, E, F & G). 'We are not a public service,' said one editor, 'but we try and be as amenable as possible. We try and give them [the community] what they want' (Interview H). Another believed that his readers 'want to be informed [about] what is going on', as opposed to reading 'big stories' (Interview F).

Affiliated Journalism

The editors were more divided on this question. As we have seen, at least one editor believed that a commitment to publishing enabling journalism precluded editorial affiliation: 'we don't express an opinion as a paper' (Interview E). Another said he eschewed 'polemics and issue campaigns' (Interview C). On the other hand, one editor spoke of 'supporting the community' and another of being editorially 'aggressive' (Interviews D & H). Two editors translated 'community involvement' explicitly as being, in part, campaigning newspapers (Interviews D & F).

A set of operational news values emerged through these responses. Only one of the editors argued that 'A good story is a good story is a good story'. When she read the community news submitted by voluntary contributors, she was moved to ask incredulously, 'My god, are people really interested in this?' (Interview G). On the other hand, one respondent believed that no more than a 'basic grasp of what news is' and some of the techniques of news-gathering were applicable, because local news values were so 'different' (Interview H). One editor went so far as to say that such journalism had turned his ideas 'upside-down'.

> At first this shocked me. I was stuck in my ways. We have younger reporters with far more modern ideas. You tend to see this stuff as trivia and soft. All kids and pets and quirky stories. Stuff that is not important. ... The idea is to entertain rather than force-feed them [the readers] ... to offer an all-round package and not just hard news. ...This challenged my sense of news values. (Interview F)

Another respondent agreed, 'You can be a bit precious about what you do. By-lines and big scoops. ...Some reporters take a long time to work this out. ...A lot of reporters don't connect – don't care' (Interview H). A third editor described the relationship as 'a marriage of news and journalism and the paper. Sometimes it is difficult to marry them. It's a compromise' (Interview D). Another expressed this in terms of 'journalism *versus* the community' (Interview E), and a fifth felt there were differences between 'real news (which is my job)'and 'community news' (Interview C).

Attention had been paid to resolving these tensions. Only one editor said that his paper conducted formal surveys of readers and non-readers. He sat in on some of the interview sessions.

> I learnt a great deal from that. I changed the paper to fit in with what they [the interviewees] wanted. ...We need to respond to change. We mustn't be insular. We have to change with the readers. ...I changed because I went to these reader surveys. ...We consult readers and we are listening to readers. (Interview F)

Another reported that, with the general manager, she had used 'unsophisticated' market research to 'change the papers considerably'. This seemed to consist largely of pooling their own knowledge of the locale with some basic, publicly available data and informal reader feedback (Interview B). Others relied on their own various interpretations of community expectations – from the simple dictum that 'We are writing for people other than ourselves' (Interview G) to 'making assessments all the time on what Jo Public wants to read. This is not my decision or my view, but theirs' (Interview C). In just one instance, this sharing of news evaluation extended across internal boundaries within the newspaper with the editor consulting with the circulation, promotions and advertising

departments in 'product development' meetings (Interview H). At the other end of the scale, one editor acknowledged (perhaps gratefully) that what would be considered traditional 'strong stories ...sometimes just don't appear to be there', and he was not called on to decide between his 'professional' judgement and readers' interests (Interview D).

One theme which recurred was that of the papers belonging to the community – the idea that each paper was 'their' paper. As one editor remarked, 'I am told if I do something they [the community] don't like' (Interviews C, D & E). While some editors adhered to journalistic orthodoxy in seeking out and prioritizing 'hard' news, believing, as one said, that 'real news has general appeal' (Interviews C, D & F), others were prepared to preference community contributions (Interviews B, C & H). In any event, several editors spoke of the lack of fixity of the idea of what constituted news. One said, 'I have no hard and fast rules ... everyone's news is valid' (Interview C), and another believed that news values emerged 'organically' through disagreements (Interview E). One favoured way of managing community access to the press was through letters to the editor. Five of the editors made a point of mentioning this. One had used readers' letters as part of the re-focusing of the paper as a whole. He regarded the flow of letters as a 'barometer' of the paper's connections with the community, and as a way of pursuing politics by other means, and published as many as possible (Interview H). A second editor dedicated as many as four pages on occasions to letters (in a paper in which news content extended to only seven pages) (Interview B). Another editor viewed letters from readers as providing a platform for debate, 'exciting people to take part' (Interview E). Finally, one editor simply bemoaned the lack of letters she received, and said she had tried in vain to generate more (Interview H).

If change in journalism equated to journalists sharing control over deciding what was news more widely with communities at large, then it seemed clear that this group of editors had embraced change to a considerable extent. To be sure, they still inclined to reserve some occupational prerogative in this area. As one said, 'I have got to decide what sort of paper it's going to be in the beginning' (Interview D), while another

worried that reporters with strong ties to the community could get 'too close' (Interview B). Moreover, a significant part of reader involvement was corralled in the margins of the newspaper, in its traditional space in the letters-to-the-editor columns. Only one editor formally consulted the community about its requirements, although others said they did so informally, even 'organically'. There was evidence that these editors provided opportunities for the representation of the self-identity of the communities in which they worked, sometimes even at the expense of, and certainly alongside, occupationally-determined notions of 'news', particularly in the form of community contributions. They also supplied enabling 'news you can use'. There was more hesitancy, however, in adopting affiliated journalism, and something of a division of opinion over the role of the local press in engaging in community campaigns. There seemed to be some preference for deflecting such issues back to members of the community. Finally, there was no more than weak evidence that editors believed that local news was a matter of scope not scale. The journalistic orthodoxy that essentially when it came to news, 'decision-making was no different' from paper to paper seemed to be resilient, if not unanimously held.

These responses suggested that, while as a whole the editors were more open to community influences in determining what news was, and notwithstanding the increased presence of younger, more female and more formally educated journalists in newsrooms – or staff shortages – or so-called new technology (mentioned by no-one) – or centralized sub-editing (Interviews B & F) – all of which implied changes in the contexts, practices and processes of newsrooms – the greater impact arose from interpretations of wider cultural shifts. Several editors mentioned what they identified as the rising expectations of audiences – more 'sophisticated', in the words of one (Interviews C, D, E, F & H). Some pointed to major transformations which had occurred in south-east Wales – the development of Cardiff as a major administrative and service centre, leading to indistinct boundaries as the city expanded; the demise of coal mining; the introduction of new industries and businesses, including tourism, and associated changes in demographics as new housing projects were developed, and existing locales were gentrified or went into decline (Interviews B, D & F).

The view from J-school

If the average age of local newspaper journalists was indeed falling; if these younger staffers were more likely to be university graduates, and if their career opportunities were enhanced, then a critical aspect of changing local newspaper newsrooms might be found in the education and training young journalists received. Although far from all of the journalists working in the sample newsrooms in south-east Wales were graduates of university journalism schools, the importance of those schools, particularly from the 1990s, was established in Chapter 4, where it was also explained that no programme in a UK university formally specialized in local journalism. The expansion of university programmes in journalism continued while this study was being undertaken: at one of the institutions surveyed the programme was in its first year of existence when the data were collected (Interview J). Other education-based routes into journalism were available through colleges offering pre-entry NCTJ courses (Bromley 1995b, 142-3): these were open to anyone with a minimum of two A-level passes. Three of the four institutions from which responses were elicited reported that their successful students mainly found work in the local press. One respondent described the local press as 'still our staple' destination for these students (Interviews K, L & M). The fourth estimated that 20% of its graduates found first jobs in local newspapers (Interview I).

Five members of the academic staff of leading journalism programmes at higher and further education establishments were interviewed. Each held a leadership position in those programmes, and three of the respondents were nationally-recognized journalism educators and trainers. The programmes represented a cross-section of those available at school-leaver, undergraduate and post-graduate levels. The interviews were structured around seven questions which were sent to the interviewees in advance. They addressed

(i) the institutional context of journalism programmes;

(ii) the aims, objective and content of curricula in news and news values;

(iii) definitions of news adhered to and expectations of students' development of news values;

(iv) views of the strengths and weaknesses of the NCTJ syllabus aims;

(v) whether 'local news' was approached differentially;

(vi) if so, what role, if any, specific community contexts were regarded as forming the basis of differentiation; and,

(vii) whether news was treated as basically the same phenomenon, irrespective of context.

Opportunities were given for open-ended responses and respondents' comments. Data were also gathered from research undertaken by others into the workplace destinations of graduates from journalism courses.

All the institutions offered programmes accredited by the NCTJ. The students included a small number of experienced journalists returning to school to update their skills and qualifications, as well as school-leavers with A-levels, undergraduates and graduates. The sample contained two universities; one higher education college offering degrees validated by a nearby university, and two further education establishments. The certification awarded comprised first degrees, NCTJ certificates, postgraduate diplomas and a master's. Three programmes awarded named journalism degrees (in each case, BA [Journalism]), and two provided opportunities for students to enroll in individual journalism courses within non-journalism degrees. Programmes lasted for between twenty weeks (NCTJ certificate) and three years (BA). All the programmes were strongly vocational. Claims were made for extremely high employment rates for graduates: one institution said its data showed that over ten years the figures fluctuated between 92% and 100%, while another put its graduate employment level at 83.5% (Interviews I and M). The numbers of students studying journalism each year were difficult to pin down, often because those taking individual classes, rather than complete programmes, fluctuated: in one case, this figure was estimated to be three times that of students enrolled in the BA [Journalism] programme. Respondents provided statistics which suggested that close to 500 students were registered in journalism programmes alone in the five institutions. The largest single programme was a BA [Journalism] at one of the universities which had an annual intake of 100 students. This university

recruited far more students than any of the other individual institutions – totals of 140 in named journalism programs[87], and at least 85 in undergraduate programmes in which journalism was a component (Interview L).

Questions concerning the curriculum and learning strategies were confined to aspects of training and education related to newspaper journalism, and specifically focused on the relationship with local journalism and the role of the NCTJ. Interviewees were directed to NCTJ newspaper journalism training: they were asked about what they perceived to be the relevance of the NCTJ syllabus (question iv) and whether 'NCTJ ideas of news work at every level' (question vii). Because of accreditation, all the programmes contained substantial elements of newspaper reporting, as defined through the NCTJ syllabus. All the respondents noted (however reluctantly) the key role played by the NCTJ in securing external validation of the programmes, which in turn led to successful employment outcomes for graduates, and assisted with the recruitment of students. One said: 'Evidence of our own research among local editors has established that most are reluctant to hire any candidate who has not completed the NCTJ syllabus successfully' (Interview J). Two of the programmes delivered NCTJ pre-entry training where the aims were unambiguous: 'We concentrate on helping students acquired the skills required by a trainee on a provincial newspaper' (Interview M).

All the programmes featured news centrally in their curricula, and students were introduced to concepts of news and news values from the outset. The higher education institutions in particular described learning strategies which mapped on to Biggs' (1999, 40-41) taxonomy:

1. the declarative (more theoretical explorations of news drawn from examples analyzed and discussed in class; 'understanding what is newsworthy' – Interview J);
2. the procedural (developing skills in 'gathering and writing' – Interview K);

[87] Figures for only the PGDip in newspaper journalism (and not those for postgraduate diplomas in broadcast and online journalism) were included.

3. the conditional (applying knowledge and skills to specific circumstances, such as reporting for college publications; doing 'the real stuff' – Interview I);
4. the functioning (undertaking internships).[88]

Echoing the ambition to make journalism programmes vocational, one respondent said: 'We are as keen to help students improve their levels of professionalism (motivation, commitment and enthusiasm, etc.) as we are their story gathering and story writing skills' (Interview M). Two said that they aimed to encourage students who could reflect on, as well as write, 'news' (Interviews I & L).

Such approaches to learning elevated the importance of models, derived from critical analysis, from examples of practice, and from the interactions between them (Interview J).[89] Where those models were drawn from offered clues to the ideas of news which were presented to students, perhaps valorized, and which they were invited to emulate, if not mimic. Overwhelmingly, for newspaper journalism students the model was that of the local press (weekly, daily, or, usually, evening). Students in one programme were introduced to 'a range of newspapers' in order to explore variations in approaches to news at both the declarative and procedural levels (Interview J). A second said that cross- and multi-media models (specifically, radio and online) were used at the procedural level (Interview I). At the conditional level, all respondents referred to local press models, even where students were also contributing to college publications, although there was some acknowledgement that audiences differed (Interviews K & L). One said that students were required to write in the style of one each of weekly, daily and national press models (Interview K), and a second indicated that, at the cross-over between the conditional and functional levels, students were encouraged to 'produce' (rather than just write) material which they could then offer as contributions to television

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[88] I am grateful to John Cokley for introducing me to Biggs' work and its utility in schematizing learning in journalism programmes.

[89] References in this paragraph are to newspaper journalism programmes and students specializing in newspaper journalism. Students in other programmes and with other specializations may have been introduced to different models.

and radio, and nationally as well as locally (Interview M). Conversely, in one programme alternative models (of tabloid national daily journalism as practised at *The Sun*) were held up as abhorrent (Interview K). This construct undoubtedly meshed with experiences at the functional level, where students gravitated towards internships, and eventually jobs, on the local press. All the respondents referred to the close ties which they maintained with local newspaper journalists and editors.

The one overarching source of modeling for local newspaper journalism was the NCTJ syllabus. It was, said one respondent, 'both a constant and a "gold standard" which editors recognize and trust' (Interview J). Another suggested that this amounted to 'professionalism' (although he acknowledged that in the local press it 'did not always win out') (Interview K). The NCTJ model was seen as being flexible enough to accommodate the obvious differences which characterized the local press in the UK (Interview K):

> ...in my view, the news 'model' remains consistent in terms of establishing the core aims and values linked to newsworthiness, but the application of the model to produce a newsworthy treatment must be tailored to the specific needs of different audience groups or 'communities' (which will probably, of course, overlap). So the editorial practices remain the same – to establish interest and relevance – even where the size of the editorial patch and range of the editorial agenda are quite different. (Interview J).

Community, one respondent said, was viewed as a 'sub-set' of larger entities, most naturally the national (Interview L).

The situation seemed to be dictated by the NCTJ apparatus which culminated in examinations in news writing, and led to emphases on simulated news activities, coursework exercises, and the use of practice papers in the classroom based on the syllabus (Interviews I, K & L). Of course, this shaping of curricula derived functionally from the process of accreditation (see pages 175-6). As I have argued in Chapter 4, the NCTJ's definition of 'local' journalism referred essentially to scale: size of community also figured in several responses. News was amenable to sizing (down or up), too, and to

being angled, or 'spun' as local (Interviews J, K & M). Another respondent said that the NCTJ syllabus engendered a 'different dynamic' from either his university's own journalism curriculum or work in local newspaper newsrooms (Interview I). Perhaps less consciously, one drew a distinction between 'news value' (as taught through the syllabus) and 'reader interest' (as discerned by interaction with readers) (Interview M). The crucial issue, it was argued, was whether there were 'basic rules', and if there were, how to apply them in local communities (Interview L) without losing the capacity to help communities 'see themselves' (Interview K).

The answer suggested by one respondent was to adopt a 'middle-of-the-road' approach to journalism which reflected what he believed to be its unchanging virtues. What local newspapers were in need of, he argued, were newsroom staffs with 'a stronger background in journalism'. This meant adhering to 'professional' attributes, such as being objective, exerting influence, reporting on the activities of authorities and elites, and concentrating on news; rather than succumbing to community pressures, ingratiating oneself, or publishing 'publicity material dressed up as news …just to whip up a decent crowd'. News did not equate to 'helpful information', and many local papers did not print news at all. Although news and advertising went 'hand-in-hand', news was 'stories' with only 'information spin-offs'. A community newspaper was 'something which appears via the [photo] copier'. Even so, he recognized the tensions which existed between this approach and contemporary local newspaper practice. 'They [local papers] don't see it like this. They'd say we ruined the paper if we did this' (Interview K).

A second respondent argued, on the other hand, that the NCTJ definition 'news' was too restrictive. He told his students 'never [to] dismiss anything. They should read the world the same as a newspaper. … Get under the skin of a community'. He encouraged students to 'scope further' and to make contact with 'what's out there'. News was indefinable, and news values 'very individualistic'. If journalists were proactive and thought laterally, they would discover the 'creative possibilities' inherent in journalism, and abandon the formulaic approach embedded in the NCTJ syllabus. He admitted that this was significantly different from the journalism actually practised in local

newspapers, where his students reported they were often prevented from even leaving the newsroom (Interview I). The harshest critic of the NCTJ syllabus in the group condemned it as 'neolithic'. It reflected the state of journalism in its high modernist phase of the 1950s and 1960s (see Hallin 1996), he argued. Its purpose was to train journalists to arrange facts in hierarchical order without reference to 'the imagined audience'. Yet the local press had more or less 'given up on the big stories', and was far more focused on 'writing about people – people you know'. The print journalism programme which he directed had taken a lead in breaking away from the NCTJ syllabus to adopt a 'more fluid' approach, but it had not received any formal feedback from local newspapers since doing so (Interview L).

In sum, the evidence gathered from these interviews indicated a degree of confusion endemic in journalism schools (a factor which has been noted elsewhere – Bromley 2005b) over how to approach local journalism. The dominance of the NCTJ syllabus and its declarations regarding the nature of news was to be expected, given the institutional arrangements between the Council and the education establishments surveyed. This may account for the weak levels of recognition detected for banal and precise journalism. Two respondents raised questions of local journalism mirroring the self-image of communities: identifying 'whose voices' were being heard (Interviews K & L). Only one specifically referred to scoping the news (Interview I). The only attitudes towards enabling journalism evident were negative (Interview K), and affiliated journalism did not figure in any of the responses. Although student views were not canvassed, selected responses from the Graduate Survey (2001) introduced above suggested one likely source of the indecision evident among journalism schools over the direction local newsmaking was taking. On the one hand, students singled out their success in NCTJ examinations as a decisive aid in landing first jobs. Second, functional skills were also highly valued: more graduates (43% of the total) rated shorthand instruction as one of the most important parts of their programme. On the other hand, a number of students wanted 'more imagination and creativity'. One said,

> I think we should have been encouraged more to develop our own styles and ideas and be a bit daring. ...Does [the university] want ...to be known for churning out people who are employable

> and fit straight into media jobs that exist today, or does it want to be a place that fosters the sort of people who are going to change the face of the media world and turn it all upside-down with new ways of doing things? (Graduate Survey 2001).

Furthermore, as journalism migrated into higher education in undergraduate programmes, it was compelled to adopt the forms of universities. Courses in postgraduate diploma programmes, which had previously been only loosely constructed under portmanteau descriptions, such as 'practical journalism', which were believed to be reflective of actual practice, had to be made to conform to the structures of degrees with modules and units measured in terms of study hours, learning outcomes, assessment regimes, progression, etc., which were often seen as alien to practice.[90] These arrangements had to be reconciled with the NCTJ's less modular approach, and the availability of alternatively structured journalism training opportunities. Journalism schools were pulled in several directions by several forces, therefore (Bromley 2005b). Moreover, while all the respondents reported enjoying good relationships with local newspapers, only one said his school was involved with the local press, through consultancy activities, in development work (Interview L). It seemed that the accusation could be leveled at British journalism schools that they were somewhat out of touch with local journalism as it existed at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Their approach, while perhaps not fixed in the 1950s, was nonetheless largely uninformed by journalism's own history. As they tried to address a dynamic journalism, the association with the NCTJ appeared to consolidate the requirements of an otherwise diverse press – to act as the one 'boss' of the present.

Conclusion

It was clear that in many respects change had become endemic in local newspaper newsrooms by the beginning of the twenty-first century. If nothing else, journalists (at

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[90] Author's personal experience of journalism programmes at City University, London (1992-1997); Queensland University of Technology (2002-2004), and The University of Queensland (2004-). Interviewees I and L also referred to aspects of this.

least in the local press in south-east Wales) seemed on average to be younger, more female, more formally educated, and advancing more rapidly into positions of authority in newsrooms. There was also evidence that those newsrooms were more open to community influences, particularly in balancing priorities between 'professional' constructs of news and wider public interests. While it seemed that this shift was founded on editors' interpretations of broad cultural change, it was also suggested that the presence of younger journalists with more 'modern' ideas contributed. Change, then, was to some extent initiated from the inside. Journalists, however, often expressed feelings that most of the changes to newsrooms were imposed from outside by corporate newspaper managements interested in leveraging profits out of appealing to audiences at the level of the lowest common denominator. Such changes did not always gel with journalists' own views of their purpose – primarily, to improve journalism. As a consequence, the manner in which change was implemented was a major point of contention. The editors interviewed did not raise this as an issue: rather, they viewed the management of change as associated with shifting ideas of news values – a recognition (however unconscious) that newsrooms were historically dynamic spaces.

The collapse of the 'one journalism' model underscored the diversity of even the local press and its journalisms. Functionally, the NCTJ acted as a unifier, smoothing out these differences, and it presented a single exemplar of journalism, based on the prioritization of news, for learning by students and trainees as 'professionals'. With journalism education and training moving into the academy, journalism schools faced problems of aligning traditional modes of learning journalism with the institutional requirements of colleges and universities. Thus, while most schools appeared to adhere to the NCTJ model as the 'gold standard', others identified opportunities to explore and present other, alternative models. As a result, students could be exposed to three models of local journalism – those of the NCTJ, of the specific journalism programme, and of any local newsrooms in which they served internships. Even those educators reluctant to dilute (let alone abandon) the NCTJ model recognized that journalism at it was practised in local newspapers often did not conform to this ideal. To stray too far from the NCTJ model, however, could be seen as an abrogation of professional duty. Journalism educators

displayed a lower level of knowledge about and interest in forms of journalism – banal, precise, enabling and affiliated – which might succeed news as the staple editorial content of the local press than did the editors of those papers.

It would be tempting to dismiss journalism schools as out of touch, and their programmes to be of declining relevance to local journalism.[91] Yet their graduates were acknowledged by one editor as the instigators of novel approaches to journalism. Moreover, universities accepted responsibility for assuring validity and the reliability of temporary fads originating outside journalism by explicating the historical nature of change and continuity. The greater structural problem was perhaps the inability of journalism as a whole to understand its own changing contexts, practices and processes. If journalists viewed journalism as a unitary, functional 'profession', they would be inclined to regard change as a threat if it did not itself bolster 'professionalism' in journalism (for example, by eradicating poor practices). The responses elicited from the editors and educators interviewed for this study demonstrated the existence of another position: that change was occurring to the very nature of journalism, taking it away from its didactic mode towards a more dyadic relationship with its communities, undermining its 'professionalism'.[92] This may go some way to explaining why so many journalists felt so pessimistic about the future of newspapers and newspaper journalism: a significant part of journalism – local newspaper journalism – was beginning to no longer resemble what journalism ought normatively to be. While commercialism may have acted as a catalyst (although that was by no means certain), the fundamental disruption of journalism, therefore, occurred internally.

This was sometimes difficult to recognize. A researcher who visited several newsrooms argued that 'newspaper journalists have difficulty imagining non-traditional, even bold

[91] One major local newspaper group in Australia indicated in 2004 that it would cease recruiting cadet (trainee) journalists from university journalism programmes because the focus of the education was on orthodox, 'professional' forms of news rather than community engagement. This information was conveyed to me by a member of the academic staff of an Australian university, and confirmed in an informal interview with an executive of the company concerned.

[92] The idea is taken from McLachlan and Golding (2000, 77), although it is applied differently.

answers' to their own problems. These included 'the vocabulary of newspapers', such as what constituted 'a story' (Porter 2005). Manoff (1987) pointed out that such constructs drew on the wider culture (p.218), and were thus subject to change over time. The principle vehicles for capturing this relationship were the conventional narrative resources used in journalism (p.214). The 'facts' were made to fit the narrative ('the story') (p.197-8). Alongside the complaints by journalists of the under-staffing, under-resourcing and under-servicing of newsrooms by newspaper conglomerates, there sat the problem of 'the way we tell it' (Damazer cited Bromley 2003b, 13-4).

7

Banal, precise, enabling and affiliated journalism

Sacharissa: "Go and find things that people want to put in the paper."

"And things that people don't want put in put in the paper," William added.

"And interesting things," said Sacharissa.

... William: "Look, we are *not* interested in pet precipitation, spontaneous combustion, or people being carried off by weird things from out of the sky – "

"Unless it happens," said Sacharissa.

... William: "News is unusual things happening – "

"And usual things happening," said Sacharissa ...

William: "But news is mainly what someone somewhere doesn't want you to put in the paper – "

"Except sometimes it isn't," said Sacharissa.

"News is – " said William, and stopped. ... he stood with his mouth open and one finger raised.

"News," he said, "*all depends*. But you'll know it when you see it Clear?"

— Pratchett (2001 edn., 434-5)

If there were a tendency for local journalism to be recast, then evidence might be expected to show itself in the editorial content of local newspapers. A thematic textual analysis of fourteen local weekly newspapers, two evening newspapers; one

daily (morning) and one Sunday newspaper published and/or circulating in south-east Wales[93] was undertaken, using the four journalism themes already identified – banal, precise, enabling and affiliated. In order to test for the adoption of all, any or none of these journalistic approaches specifically in the local press, and whether these journalisms applied to any extent to other types of newspapers, the sample was separated into 'layers' (see page 57). Four national daily newspapers, and four national Sunday newspapers were also sampled, therefore, as a kind of control. Throughout the sampling period, however, the edition of national daily newspaper, *The Mirror*, circulating in south-east Wales was called the *Welsh Mirror*. This represented a deliberate attempt to trial the viability of publishing a Welsh national edition of a UK paper (see page126). As such, the *Welsh Mirror* was taken to occupy an additional inter-layer space. For three weeks of the sampling period, the national (UK) Sunday title, the *News of the World* (18 & 25 November; 2 December 2001), carried the slogan, 'Cymru ymlaen – Forward Wales', along with a segment of the Welsh flag, on its titlepiece. The *News of the World* was also assigned to this inter-layer space. These conditions did not apply to the *Sunday Mirror*. Finally, the titles in the sample were categorized as 'indigenous', 'interlopers' or 'outsiders' (see page 58). The press sampled, therefore, was schematized as indicated in Table 7.1.

The newspapers were read as a series of texts. Attention was <u>not</u> paid to imposed relative news values of the content – the merits or demerits as news of 'POP IDOL'S MR NASTY TURNS ON OUR NOEL' (*Wales on Sunday* – 9 December)[94] or 'Extra NHS cash raises prospect of higher taxes' (*Western Mail* – 28 November). In each instance, the newspaper's own internal classification system (what constituted categories such as news, features, business, sport, etc.) was accepted. To make the task manageable, only the main paper was analyzed in detail: inserts, supplements, blow-ins, and so on, although sometimes noted, were not closely examined. Within the main body of each paper, specialist sections and pages – particularly, those assigned to business and

[93] The *Hereford Times* was circulated but not published in south-east Wales.

[94] All the dates in the following sections are in 2001, except where specifically noted.

Table 7:1 The newspaper sample schema

LAYERS	NEWSPAPERS	
Layer 1 – UK national daily and Sunday titles	*Daily Mail* *Daily Telegraph* *Mail on Sunday* *Sunday Mirror* *Sunday Times* *TheSun*	OUTSIDERS
Layer 1a – Welsh national title of a UK national daily	*News of the World* *Welsh Mirror*	INTERLOPERS
Layer 2 – national dailies and Sundays – Wales	*Wales on Sunday* *Western Mail*	INDIGENOUS
Layer 4 – Regional evenings	*South Wales Argus* *South Wales Echo*	INDIGENOUS
Layer 6 – local weeklies – paid-for and free	*Abergavenny Chronicle* *Barry & District News*; *Barry Gem* *Barry Post* *Bridgend Post* *Bridgend & Valleys Recorder* *Caerphilly Campaign Cowbridge Gem* *Glamorgan Gazette* *Hereford Times* *Llantwit Major Gem* *Penarth Times* *Rhymney Valley Express* *The Post*	INDIGENOUS

sport – were also usually no more than noted.[95] Analysis of the national press, including the *Welsh Mirror*, was intended chiefly to address the issues at the UK level, albeit one perhaps at times inflected with Welshness; analysis of the Welsh national press the

[95] Headlines are reproduced as they appeared in the original, whether capitalized or in upper and lower cases. The titles of sections, supplements, categories, etc. have all been placed in small caps to avoid confusion and the over-use of inverted commas. Where lower case was used in the original, it should still be discernible.

Welsh dimension; analysis of the evening titles the south-east Wales metropolitan context, and the local weekly newspapers the territorially local situation.

The (UK) national press

While this was a study of the local press, it was evident that banal, precise, enabling and affiliated journalism was to be found in the (UK) national press. Insofar as such journalism did not count as news (see page 188), debate about the alternative foci of the national press extended beyond consideration of the red-top tabloids (see page 195; Milmo 2005a) in an effect described by the neologism 'broadloid' (Bromley 1998a; Rusbridger 2005):

- Press partisanship dated to at least the eighteenth century (Harris 1996; Koss 1990), and the renewed use of the term 'viewspaper' harked back to the nineteenth century (Rusbridger 2005; Tunstall 1983, 76). This tradition was linked to an established proclivity for newspapers to interpose themselves into the editorial agenda they addressed ostensibly through the genre of news. From the late nineteenth century, this embraced not just politics but campaigning on a range of topics. Northcliffe, perhaps the pre-eminent 'boomer' (to use the contemporaneous term for a promoter) of his age, ensured that the *Daily Mail* 'could hardly report anything without getting in on the action. Just relaying the news wasn't enough; it had to be at the centre of it, flexing its muscles, proving its potency' (Engel 1996, 71).
- Enabling journalism, too, could be found in the nineteenth century, especially in weekly (Sunday) newspapers aimed at the newly-emerging consuming working-class (Berridge 1978; Bromley 1998b, 148).
- Banal journalism was most evident in the ways in which elements of the national press were particularly apt to signify characteristics they presented as supposedly typically British, such as pluck, heartiness and fearlessness (Engel 1996, 68-9, 76 & 78). This extended beyond simple chauvinism to include alternative constructs of what it was to be 'British' (Hartley 1996, 220-8). Although

describing the documentary film-making of Humphrey Jennings, rather than the press, Hartley (1996, 221) summed up the approach as presenting a 'vision of Britain as a community of different but purposeful people, fighting for what was already theirs – freedom, culture, tradition, socialism, work, countryside, schools, music, each other'.

- Precision journalism could be found in an often random mix of investigation and 'background', notably in the 1960s, from INSIGHT at the *Sunday Times* to the appropriately named TELESCOPE at the *Sunday Telegraph*. This scoping of topics beyond a reliance on the scale of so-called news was also routinely managed into affiliated journalism, too (Leapman 1992, 24-6).

The use in inter-connected ways of banal, precise, enabling and affiliated journalism by the national press was exemplified from the mid-1930s in the *Daily Mirror* (Engel 1996, 158-201; Hagerty 2003; Smith 1975; Williams 1959, 222-32): the paper's editorial make-up was founded on journalism which was

- Banal – the paper reflected its readers' own views (not least of themselves) back at them, as well as appealing to national self-identity (Smith 1975, 63ff; Williams 1998, 144)
- Precise – Williams (1959, 170-1) believed the *Mirror* redefined 'news' by tailoring it to a new working-class readership, and, in another form, in the 1960s MIRRORSCOPE was an attempt to do the same (Engel 1996, 200; Hagerty 2003, 104)
- Enabling – the paper published advice and guidance on etiquette and 'everything from boyfriends to the latest fashions', and especially sex (Hagerty 2003, 42-3). Its 'agony aunt', Marge Proops, was celebrated for dispensing personal advice (Hagerty 2003, 235)
- Affiliated – the *Mirror*, like the *Daily Mail*, interjected itself into its own editorial agenda, and was a notable campaigning newspaper (Hargerty 2003, 44; Bromley 1999)

Hagerty (2003, 44) noted admiringly that

> This was human interest journalism in its purest form, recording the interests of the increasing number of humans who were beginning to regard the *Mirror* as a friend and confidant with whom it could enjoy a cup of tea and a chinwag on six mornings every week.

From the 1970s the *Mirror* was largely succeeded in this kind of journalistic formation by *The Sun* (Engel 1996, 253-5; Grosse 1989, 18ff), albeit in quite different wider contexts, and with different internal objectives (Bromley 1998b, 151-2). The self-image of 'Britons' represented; the scoping of topics of interest and relevance; the manufactured relationship between the paper and its readers, and the usefulness of the editorial content formed the core of what was called in many quarters 'the problem of *The Sun*', which, according to some, played a leading role in 'the right-wing cultural and political revolution of the 1980s'. The supposed demotion of traditional news, in favour of content generated by banal, precise, enabling and affiliated journalism, was seized on by critics as an inherent weakness of *The Sun* as a newspaper. Neither this, nor that the *Mirror* and *Sun* promoted diametrically opposed politics, however, was the point. At the centre of the journalistic approaches which became the hallmarks of tabloid journalism in the UK was the notion of the historio-socially determined popular (McGuigan 1992, 174-85).

Tunstall (1996, 163-7) noted that, from the mid-1980s, national newspapers, driven by an abundance of advertising and cheaper production costs, expanded paginations to include a range of sections, supplements, magazines, blow-ins, etc. until they were themselves more magazine-like. This development did not so much displace traditional news as reduce its quantitative importance: by the beginning of the twenty-first century, the majority of newspaper content was published after the opening pages of the main section which contained what was traditionally considered to be news (see also Bromley 2003b, 11-12). All the papers in the sample were multi-section titles. The most sectionalized was the *Sunday Times* (11 sections); some issues of *The Sun*, however, were made up of only the main paper and contained no additional sections. Given the above analysis, the expectation was that traditional news would continue to be paramount in the main sections of the broadsheet titles – *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday*

Times – less so in the *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday*, and least of all in the red-top tabloids (*The Sun* and *Sunday Mirror*); and less in the Sunday papers than in those published on weekdays.

The first thing noted was the relative absence of Wales as a topic or source from the news pages of all the UK national press. This coincided with the findings of Ferguson and Hargreaves (1999) following a survey of (UK) national television news. In hundreds of pages published in 84 issues of six newspapers over four weeks, a total of 59 items appeared from or about Wales – an average of about two in every three issues. The *Mail on Sunday* (two), *Sunday Mirror* (four) and *Sunday Times* (five) published reasonably equal, and minimal, amounts of material about Wales.[96] At a time when the invasion of Afghanistan, the WAR ON TERROR (*The Sun*), the FALL OF THE TALIBAN (*Daily Telegraph*), escalating violence in the Middle East, the death of George Harrison and a number of domestic court hearings filled the news pages, only two events with a Welsh connection warranted general coverage: a crash which injured four people during the Network Q car rally near Carmarthen in November, and the death of the Welsh MP Sir Ray Powell in December. There was little evidence anywhere of overt stereotyping, although on the whole the attention paid to Wales was 'shallow' (Ferguson and Hargreaves 1999, 25). Wales was more often than not incidental to published news items; for example, the *Daily Telegraph* (14 December, p.8), reporting the outcome of the universities research assessment exercise, noted that Cardiff University (which was placed ninth and in the paper's so-called Premier League of universities) was among the 'provincial' institutions which had scored best. The *Daily Mail* carried more items on or about Wales (twelve), although these included more references to celebrity (for example, Charlotte Church – 20 November, p.21; Anthony Hopkins – 24 November, p.16, and 'Richard Burton's daughter' – 24 November, pp.32-3).[97]

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[96] The details were: *Mail on Sunday* (25 November, pp.4 & 9 December, p.17); *Sunday Mirror* (18 November, p.12; 25 November, p.2 & 9 December pp. 2 & 34); *Sunday Times* (25 November, p.30; 2 December, pp.4, 5 & 26 & 9 December, p.30).

[97] *Daily Mail* (20 November, p.21; 23 November, p.5; 24 November, pp.16, 32-3, 43 & 46; 26 November, pp.24 & 29; 30 November, p.11; 4 December, p.33; 7 December, p.27 & 15 December, p.19).

Perhaps not surprisingly, given its 'capacious' broadsheet news pages (Engel 1996, 248), the *Daily Telegraph* published the most about Wales – nineteen items.[98] Far more unexpected was the extent of the attention paid by *The Sun* to news from or about Wales – seventeen items published over 24 days.[99] The paper's news agenda was not significantly different from those of the other papers, when it came to Wales, however: it just published more. Measuring only those items deemed to be 'Welsh' – the daily press ran proportionately fewer (an average of two-thirds of an item per issue: n=48) than the Sunday papers (an average of almost one per issue: n=11); the distribution between the broadsheets (average 0.625: n=35) and tabloids (average 0.86: n=24) was similar.

As a whole, the national press appeared to be focused on presenting a sense of unitary Britishness, rather than any distinctive Welsh (sub) identity. Unsurprisingly, *The Sun*'s journalism was both banal and precise in this regard, and the military action in Afghanistan provided opportunities to practise this kind of journalism. A plan to prosecute Britons who had supposedly joined the Taliban allowed the paper to point a finger at 'BRIT TRAITORS' (20 November, pp.20-1). SAS troopers wounded in Afghanistan were identified as 'heroes' (27 November, pp.1 & 4-5 & 28 November, pp.6-7). The Parachute Regiment, stationed in Kabul, was said to have a global reputation as 'world policemen' (8 December, pp.6-7). The *Daily Telegraph* more precisely identified Britishness with Englishness, exemplified by the status of the England cricket team (30 November, p.28). The television historian, Tristram Hunt, was presented as displaying 'quintessential Englishness' (30 November, p.23), and a feature on 'great British art' mentioned only English examples (3 December, p.18). Similarly, the *Daily Mail* illustrated a news item on exceptionally warm weather 'all across the country' solely with examples from southern England, and a photograph taken in Surrey

[98] 20 November, p.8; 23 November, pp.3 & 5; 24 November, pp.5, 9 & 19; 27 November, pp.12; 28 November, p.10; 30 November, p.7; 1 December, p.21; 3 December, p.7; 4 December, pp.3, 9 & 14; 10 December, p.21; 11 December, pp.4, 5 & 6 & 14 December, p.8.

[99] 19 November, p.12; 23 November, pp. 5, 21 & 25; 24 November, pp.17 & 27; 27 November, p.21; 29 November, p.21; 30 November, pp.19, 27, 30-1 & 37; 1 December, p.21; 10 December, pp.11 & 17; 11 December, p.23; 14 December, p.24 & 15 December, pp.12 & 39.

(20 November, p.3). The references to which the press adhered most centrally were those of a middle-England which ranged from the gritty to the bucolic, infused with implicit dimensions of class which readers could be expected to decode for themselves.

The most apparent example of affiliated journalism was the widely-noted and public disagreement between *The Sun* and *Mirror* over the invasion of Afghanistan. The *Mirror* initially warned against military action as a potential Vietnam-style quagmire (Morgan, P. 2003, 222): *The Sun* was gung-ho for the war (Morgan, P. 2002). This divergence of opinion reflected both a personal animosity which existed between the papers' editors, and the commercial competitiveness which characterized the relationship of the two titles (Hagerty 2003, 214 & 216-7). While commercial competition between the papers had been evident since the 1970s, this particular outbreak of hostility began the year previously over the 'Mirrorgate' scandal (Hargerty 2003, 206-10 & 211-2). In mid-November 2001, with the military action in Afghanistan appearing to have been successful, *The Sun* chided the *Mirror*, which had engaged Paul Foot and John Pilger to write against the war, in a two-page editorial (15 November) which branded the paper as treacherous (Morgan, P. 2002). The following day, the *Mirror* (16 November) responded by publishing together photographs of Hitler, Stalin, Osama bin Laden and the editor of *The Sun*. Finally, the spat was reported on by the *Sunday Times* under the heading 'MEDIA WARS' (Woods and Brooks 2001). Keeble (2001 & 2004, 51), in pointing out that all the national press broadly supported the invasion of Afghanistan, implied that this disagreement was carefully concocted. The (UK) national press seemed not to have lost its capacity for artfully interjecting itself into the news agenda on which it also reported.

By and large examples of enabling journalism were found on features, not news, pages in all six titles. *The Sun*'s proclivity for this kind of journalism has already been noted (above). In the 1970s papers like the *Daily Mail* and even the *Daily Telegraph* began to encroach into this arena, and by the mid-1980s *The Times* had joined them (Leapman 1992, 180-2). The *Daily Telegraph* made much of the running in producing multi-section issues, especially on Saturday, which featured 'useful' information (motoring,

personal finance, and so on) (Tunstall 1996, 164-5). In 2001, for example, the *Telegraph* carried a weekly fashion page within the main paper with advice on what was 'the must-have for the Christmas party season' (18 November, p.12), and what to wear for the 'perfect' wedding (10 December, p.15). The *Daily Mail* dispensed advice and information – from 'THE GREAT TOOTHBRUSH TEST' (4 December, pp.42-3) to 'Style blunders of the stars' (6 December, pp.52-3) – through a plethora of special sections, also in the main paper, among them FEMAIL, GOOD HEALTH, MONEY MAIL, IT'S FRIDAY, CAREER MAIL and SELF. Readers, Tunstall (1996, 217-8) argued, showed a remarkable consistency in preferring newspaper content which was 'not really part of journalism as traditionally understood'. He noted: 'The daily newspaper has become a guide to life and consumption in general ...' (p.224).

This analysis was not intended to be comprehensive but to establish in outline the existence of a broad newspaper context of banal, precise, affiliated and enabling journalism, as it could be found in the (UK) national press at the end of 2001. It was clear that these types of journalism populated the news pages on occasion, and at other times, the features pages, as well as the pages of themed sections. All the examples cited were found in the main parts of the papers surveyed, however, indicating the extent to which they represented the 'normal' state of national newspaper journalism. The referential modes of these journalisms were territorially specific only in that Britain (far less than the UK) was treated as the 'natural' locus of interest and belonging. Within that system of referencing, there were tendencies to privilege England and Englishness. If, as the journalist Andrew Marr argued, representation in the new UK was 'about belonging ... about identity' (cited Ferguson and Hargreaves 1999, 6), then the national press presented a disposition which was largely homogeneously Anglo-Saxon 'British'. Wales remained 'on the edge of the mental map ... of the British Isles' (Williams 1999b, 14).

The special case of the *Welsh Mirror* and *News of the World*

A quantitative difference existed between the (UK) national press, analyzed above, and these newspapers. Both shared the broad news agenda of the (UK) national press,

including THE WORLD AT WAR (*News of the World*) and the WAR ON TERROR (*Welsh Mirror*). Nevertheless, in three issues the *News of the World* published 24 items on or about Wales, plus fourteen pages covering Welsh sport (soccer and rugby).[100] This was more material than was found in any single UK title. Even so, the amount was far exceeded by the *Welsh Mirror*, which published a total of 227 items referring to Wales – nearly three times the number published in all the other titles together.[101] Qualitatively, the *Mirror* stood out, too. The *News of the World* shared the preoccupation with celebrity already identified. Thirteen articles (54% of the total about Wales published) concerned Welsh singers, actors and athletes; for example, the footballer Ryan Giggs (18 November, pp.1 & 3); Charlotte Church (18 November, p.22); the Manic Street Preachers' Nicky Wire (2 December, p.11) and a number of television presenters and soap opera cast members. Kylie Minogue was mentioned twice (18 November, p.3 & 26 November, p.27). Numerically, the *Welsh Mirror* also carried plenty of articles on many of the same celebrities: Charlotte Church appeared in its columns on no fewer than seven occasions (21 November, p.19; 23 November, p.17; 29 November, p.23; 30 November, pp.1 & 6; 1 December, p.16; 4 December, p.7 & 12 December, p.21), Catherine Zeta Jones three times (19 November, p.19; 21 November, p.22 & 8 December, p.6), and Kylie Minogue twice (19 November, pp.3 & 21 & 26 November, p.15). In all, the *Mirror* published 29 articles – more than twice the number which appeared in the *News of the World* – on various Welsh celebrities. However, this accounted for only 13% of the total number of items related to Wales.

Both titles devoted considerable space to Welsh sport in the main papers in addition to material carried in special sports supplements. The *Mirror* averaged two pages a day, Tuesday to Friday, and four pages on Monday, and the *News of the World* four or five

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[100] No Welsh items appeared in the issue of 9 December. It was possible that this issue, although circulating in Cardiff, was not a Welsh issue. Newspapers occasionally experience circulation problems. It was discounted from the sample, therefore. The articles which did appear were: 18 November, pp.1 & 3; p.3; p.22; p.22; p.22. p. 23; 26 November, p.9; p.9; p.21; p.21; p.27; p.27; p.27; p.27; 2 December, p.1 & 11; p.11; p.11; p.11; p.23; p.27; p.27; p.27; p.36. Sport appeared as follows: 18 November, pp.76-80; 26 November, pp.66-7 & 70-1 & 2 December, pp.82-5 & 86.

[101] Too many to itemize here.

pages each Sunday. As with *The Sun* (noted above), broadly-speaking, the news agendas of the two papers did not differ significantly from those of the rest of the national press: they merely published more Welsh material. The major exception to this was the attention paid by the *Mirror* to Welsh politics. It published 22 such articles, amounting to nearly 10% of its Welsh news content. The paper employed a political editor, Paul Starling, in Cardiff (Cushion 2002, 88), and many of the items were drawn from the NAfW and Welsh Ministers, addressing issues such as the Welsh economy (20 November, p.2), health service reform in Wales (27 November, p.2), the control of the Welsh language television channel S4C (6 December, p.2) and the future of the Welsh Conservative Party leadership (14 December, p.20). This mean that the *Mirror* published, on average, a story on politics in Wales almost every day, occasionally even placing them on the front page (24 November; 5 December & 10 December).

In addition, Starling contributed a weekly column, 'keeping an eye on the powers that be' (23 November, p.13; 30 November, p.17; 7 December, p.6 & 14 December, p.6), as well as commentaries accompanying political news stories (for example, 24 November, p.2). Starling's style was dyadic. Noting the publication of the third volume of the autobiography of a senior Plaid Cymru politician, he referred to him as 'old Wiggers' and began his article, 'What a silly, silly boy Dafydd Wigley is!' (3 December, p.16). This kind of assumption of a shared identity seemed to be transferred from references to celebrities: Kylie Minogue was 'one of OUR great women' (*The Welsh Mirror* – 18 November, p.21; see also Figure 7.1), and, in the *News of the World*, 'our Welsh great' (18 November, p.3). Starling also contributed what was ostensibly a news item on Valleys First, a group formed to pressure government into support revitalization of the south Wales Valleys, under the heading '*OUR* CRUSADE TO SAVE VALLEYS' (emphasis added), and the paper attached its support, too, for what it called 'Justice for the Miners', a campaign demanding the pay-out of industrial compensation for former coal workers (29 November, pp.16-17).

The *Mirror* attempted to scope its particular skew on Welshness with the column CYMRU CONFIDENTIAL: readers were invited to join in by letting the paper know if they

had 'spotted anyone famous'. The items were mostly about people known only in Wales (24 November, p.11; 1 December, p.16; 8 December, p.11 & 15 December, p.19). Otherwise, even the *Welsh Mirror* either scaled its coverage to localize it (a feature on young women's drinking habits included a report, among others, from Cardiff – 15 December, pp.24-5), or more commonly simply ignored it (for example, a report on commuter travel times in British cities presented evidence from only London, Manchester and Birmingham – 28 November, pp.17-19).

In other respects, the two papers followed the (UK) national press model. 'Useful information' was published in themed sections and supplements – among them, M, MONEY, HEALTH ZONE, HOMELIFE and MIRROR WORKS in the *Mirror*, and HOLIDAY WORLD, MONEY MATTERS, FAST LANE, DIG and LIFESTYLE in the *News of the World*. The businessman Alan Sugar offered advice on business matters and the lawyer Gary Jacobs JUSTICE WITH JACOBS in the *Mirror*, while the *News of the World* had CASH AND PARRY, 'the people's champions', and RUTH THE TRUTH, a psychic. These seemed to be features provided centrally from London, and which were probably common to all editions of the papers.

What marked these papers out, then, from the rest of the national press sampled was the way in which they primarily scaled the news simply to publish more material about and from Wales. This created its own identity reference points: Welsh celebrities were publicized alongside those who were not Welsh, and the Welsh context of celebrity was privileged, providing opportunities for asserting a shared perspective which claimed such Welshness as 'ours'. Sport undoubtedly contributed to this sense of belonging, too. The *Mirror* went further in attempting to overlay an enhanced interest in Welsh politics with the same kind of attributes. It imported into the reporting of Wales and Welshness the tendencies to sensationalism and personalization, which characterized it as a national tabloid newspaper (Cushion 2002, 87-8). Its effective intervention into Welsh life was very limited, however: the paper may have been able to claim it was 'OUR CRUSADE' but it did not identify them as 'our Valleys'. In many respects both papers adhered principally to the (UK) national press agenda noted above, inflected with a degree of

Welshness captured in the traditional newspaper way – with more localized editorial content. The *Mirror* went further in this regard, and extended this approach into its mode of address. Beyond that, however, these papers remained principally non-specifically 'British'.

The Welsh national press

The existence of two (UK) national newspapers publishing greater volumes of Welsh editorial material, with the potential of occupying a space between the established press layers, could be regarded as challenging to the Welsh national press. That would be particularly so, if these Welsh papers merely scaled the news, too, relying on the quantities of editorial material of and about Wales they published, rather than scoping the news to be representative of more ambiguous community formations and identities. A key question to be asked of these papers, then, concerned not the numbers of Welsh items they published (which were taken to be the dominant proportion of their editorial contents), but the ways in which they represented, addressed, enabled, related to and constructed specificities of Welshness through the making of news.

The *Western Mail* was the self-proclaimed 'Papur cenedlaethol Cymru/the national newspaper of Wales', and *Wales on Sunday* was 2001 'Welsh newspaper of the year'. In line with most UK newspapers, both were multi-section publications, the *Western Mail* publishing five sections on Saturdays. The paper also published a weekly 56-page magazine and supplements covering sport, country and farming issues, business, motoring, homes and education, as well as a small number which were specially themed. *Wales on Sunday* published three supplements with the main paper each week: SPORT, LIFE and MOTORING. In both cases, the total numbers of pages in the main papers comprised less than half of all the pages published. In *Wales on Sunday*, only 45% of the pagination was made up of the main paper each week (52 pages out of 116). Over the four-week period, the proportion of pagination accounted for by the main paper in the *Western Mail* was even less – 38% (536 pages out of 1,418), although it should be noted that many of the supplements, etc. were tabloid in size.

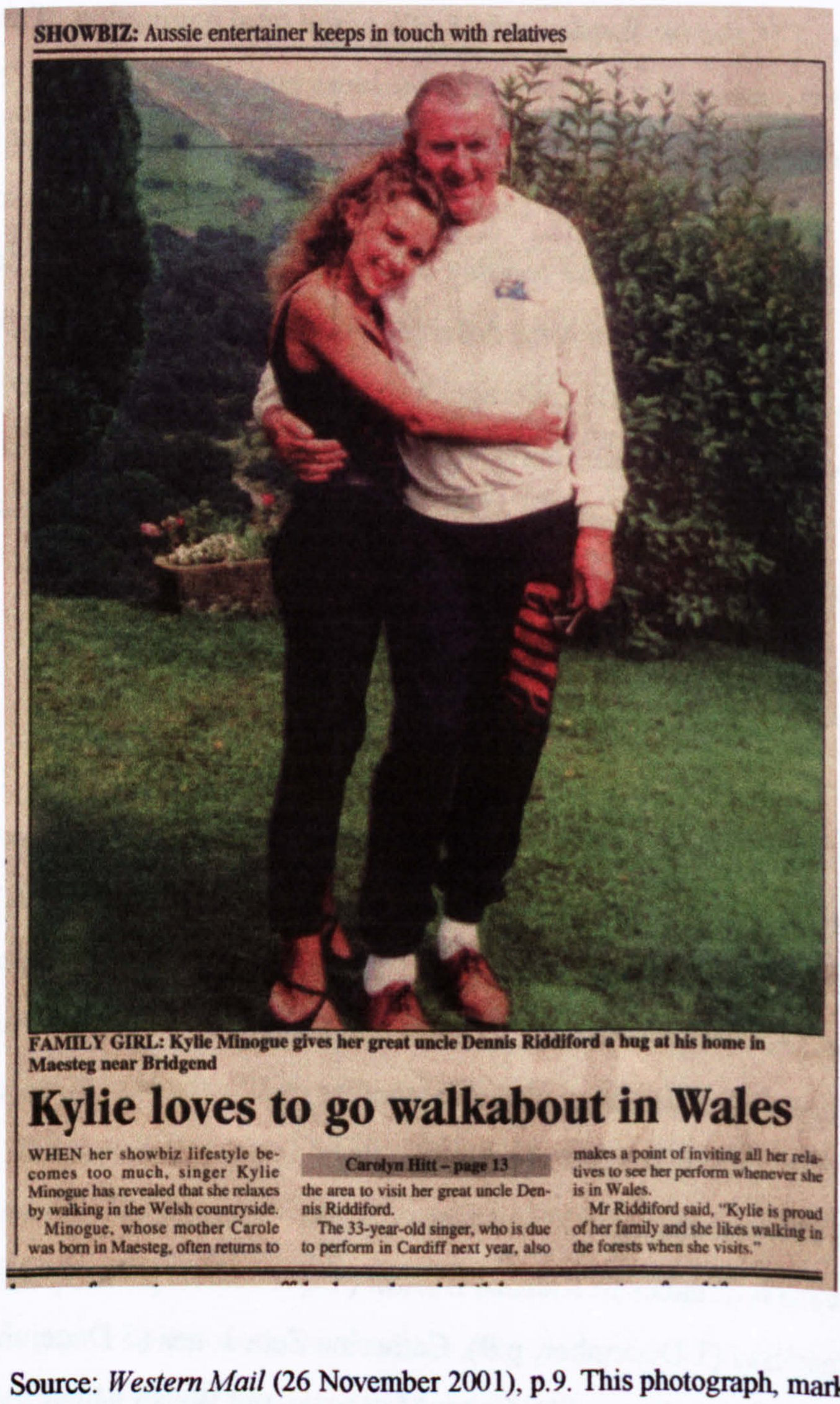
Of the main 52-page *Wales on Sunday* paper, 55% was taken up by general news and features (29 or 28 pages per issue, including advertising). In the *Western Mail* general news and features were clearly identified, and, measured by pagination, comprised only 49% of the main paper. In sum, general news and features pages made up 24.75% of the total pagination of *Wales on Sunday* and 18.6% of the total pagination of the *Western Mail*. In the latter paper, specialist coverage business and the arts (26 and 29 pages, respectively) amounted to a further 4%. These topics attracted a total of only three separate pages in *Wales on Sunday*. Thus the proportion of general news and features in the main papers of both titles were roughly the same: 'roughly' because the configurations of the two papers were different, not least in that the *Western Mail* regularly included routine sports coverage in the main paper, while *Wales on Sunday* did not. Nevertheless, the differences between the two in regard to the number of pages devoted to general news and features were perhaps not as great as their distinctive broadsheet/tabloid formats may have suggested.

Banal and precise journalism

That the *Western Mail* published so much on the arts (5.5% of the total pagination of the main paper) itself seemed to speak to the way in which the self-image of Wales was represented. Yet among an eclectic mix of film and theatre reviews, notices of exhibitions, and coverage of television, there were relatively few references to banal iconic Welshness – Ivor Emmanuel (12 December, p.12); the Welsh language music group Hogia'r Wyddfa (10 December, p.18); Bryn Terfel (19 November, p.16 & 26 November, p.18); and the artist David Nash (22 November, p.12). Elsewhere in the news pages there were references to Richard Burton (4 December, p.7), Noel Sullivan of the pop group Hear'Say (1 December, p.9), Catherine Zeta Jones (5 December, p.8), the Stereophonics (6 December, p.11), Cerys Matthews, the Welsh Music Awards (both 7 December, p.9) and 'Roald Dahl's widow' (7 December, p.10 & 12 December, p.9). Despite the lack of any references to them in the text, the paper chose gratuitously to illustrate a news item on the potential development of a Welsh media academy with

photographs of Anthony Hopkins and Zeta Jones, which were captioned, respectively, 'STAR' and 'ICON' (14 December, p.12).

Figure 7.1: Kylie Minogue as a Welsh icon



SHOWBIZ: Aussie entertainer keeps in touch with relatives

FAMILY GIRL: Kylie Minogue gives her great uncle Dennis Riddiford a hug at his home in Maesteg near Bridgend

Kylie loves to go walkabout in Wales

WHEN her showbiz lifestyle becomes too much, singer Kylie Minogue has revealed that she relaxes by walking in the Welsh countryside.

Minogue, whose mother Carole was born in Maesteg, often returns to

Carolyn Hitt – page 13

the area to visit her great uncle Dennis Riddiford.

The 33-year-old singer, who is due to perform in Cardiff next year, also makes a point of inviting all her relatives to see her perform whenever she is in Wales.

Mr Riddiford said, "Kylie is proud of her family and she likes walking in the forests when she visits."

Source: *Western Mail* (26 November 2001), p.9. This photograph, marked 'PICTURE EXCLUSIVE' also appeared in the *News of the World* (25 November, p.27), and in the *Welsh Mirror* (26 November, p.15).

While *Wales on Sunday* leveraged column inches out of similar Welsh icons (Tom Jones – 18 November, p.25; Richard Burton – 2 December, p.8; Anthony Hopkins – 2 December, p.19), and the Welsh pop music awards (9 December, pp.20-1 & 31), as well as the careers of Welsh performers (9 December, p.23), the paper's focus was more clearly on celebrity, which encompassed Welshness as incrementally noteworthy (the *Coronation Street* actor Charles Dales – 25 November, pp.6-7; the film actress Georgina Mackenzie – 9 December, p.11; the scriptwriter Andrew Davies – 2 December, p.19; the band 3SL – 9 December, p.13), but which reflected a broader context of Hollywood, British television and popular music. The paper published relatively large amounts of material, including photographs, about Kylie Minogue (25 November, p.9 & 2 December, p.13); Danii Minogue (25 November, p.8); Cilla Black (25 November, p.12 & 2 December, p.16); Paul McCartney (25 November, p.18); Mariah Carey (2 December, p.17); Joan Collins (2 December, p.16), and Madonna (9 December, p.12). However, the paper also sought to establish, where possible, the Welshness (no matter how tenuous) of such celebrity: the Mingoues' mother came from Maesteg (25 November, p.8 & 2 December, p.13); Russell Crowe's grandfather was born in Wrexham (25 November, p.8).

The *Western Mail* was less inclined to do this, although it, too, noted the origins of the Mingoues' mother (19 November, p.3 & 26 November, p.9; see also Figure 7.1), and, more obscurely, that the actress Ann Beach had spent much of her childhood in Cardiff (21 November, p.3), and that the actor Michael Sheen grew up in Port Talbot (10 December, p.3). Overall the *Western Mail* published significantly less material on celebrity and show business.

The most striking aspect of both papers, perhaps, was their preoccupation with sport. It figured, in one way or another, on all four front pages of *Wales on Sunday* and on 21 (87.5%) of the front pages of the *Western Mail* sampled. On 18 November, more or less the entire front page of *Wales on Sunday* was given over to rugby union. The distinctive red uniform of the Welsh rugby team adorned the front page of the *Western Mail* on four occasions (19, 21 & 24 November & 13 December). Formally, a 32-page sports

supplement published each week made up 27.5% of the total pages of *Wales on Sunday*. Sports supplements published by the *Western Mail* accounted for nearly 29% of that paper's total pagination (although it must be recognized that most of these sports pages were tabloid in size). However, the *Western Mail* also included sports pages in its main paper – a total of 71 over four weeks (a further 13.25%). Sport appeared regularly in the general news pages of both papers. When Wales beat Tonga in a rugby union match (*Wales on Sunday* – 18 November) – and when they lost to Australia (*Western Mail* – 26 November) – it was front-page news. The Sunday paper also extracted the autobiography of a former international player (18 November, pp.1-3), and printed his wife's comments (25 November, pp.2-3). The recollections of a former senior Welsh Rugby Union official ran for three weeks (18 November, pp.4-5; 25 November, p.25 & 2 December, p.17). Other stories informed readers about the athlete Colin Jackson's wardrobe (2 December, p.9); Ryan Giggs' love life (25 November, pp.26-7) and the soccer career of the daughter of a former Welsh international footballer (25 November, p.16). The *Western Mail* told its readers of the impending marriage of the daughter of the iconic Welsh rugby union player J.P.R. Williams (24 November, p.3).

A specific focal-point for self-identification through sport was the still relatively new Millenium Stadium in Cardiff, which had been commissioned for the Rugby Union world cup in 1999. The prolonged and often controversial planning, building and operating of the stadium was referred to several times (*Wales on Sunday* – 18 November, pp.4-5 & 25 November, p.25 & *Western Mail* – 19 November, p.1 & 27 November, p.9); while the *Western Mail* reported the re-hanging of the Gwyn Nicholls memorial gates as a kind of act of reconciliation (the building of the stadium had led to them being dismantled at the old Cardiff Arms Park) (22 November, p.10). Sport also figured in the most explicit example of banal journalism in the *Western Mail* – a weekly page or half-page of nostalgia called 'Retrospective Wales'. It was one of five themes addressed: specifically, a recollection of the appointment of Tony Lewis in 1972 as the first Welsh cricketer to captain an MCC touring side (11 December, p.8).[102]

[102] The other topics covered were: the anniversary of the foundation of Rolls-Royce in 1906 (20 November, p.8); the 110th anniversary of the birth of the writer Kate Roberts (27 November, p.8); the

The history, nostalgia, symbols and rituals which these two papers drew on to represent a sense of 'us' were significantly, if not overwhelmingly, sporting, and, to a lesser, degree, artistic. It was perhaps surprising that two of the national newspapers of Wales should present such a clichéd sense of Welsh identity – one of singing and rugby playing.

By scoping the news, these papers could establish a distinctive editorial agenda (producing what were called 'perceptual scoops' – see page 184) rather than scaling the news agenda of the (UK) national press. Measuring that distinctiveness began with an initial mapping how the papers constructed Wales, and it territorial and cognitive boundaries. The *Western Mail* published about a half-page of brief items under the label AROUND WALES each day. The paper also labelled news it seemed not to consider to be Welsh as UK & WORLD. *Wales on Sunday* had a similar arrangement: it headed columns of brief items NEWSFILE (for local topics) and GLOBAL NEWS. Elsewhere, it labelled coverage of some non-domestic events, such as WAR ON TERRORISM.

These proved to be highly porous vessels, however. In *Wales on Sunday* news from outside Wales was not contained within these special columns only, but it spilled out into the general news pages. This included the paper's versions of national events noted above (for example, the death of George Harrison – 2 December, pp.2-3). Apart from the paper's interest in celebrity (also already referred to), items from the USA, Israel, Brazil, Northern Ireland and Scotland, as well as various parts of England, appeared alongside news from and about Wales. Indeed, on occasion, no attempt was made even to scale this news: for example, a report on house price trends in England and Wales cited figures from London, Berkshire, Surrey, Derbyshire, Nottingham, Lincolnshire and Staffordshire – but not Wales (2 December, p.23). Nevertheless, scaling was the paper's more usual tactic, through vox pops (2 December, p.16), or localization (18 November, p.9 & 2 December, pp.10-11). A notable characteristic of such items was the

passing of 25 years since a Sex Pistols concert in Caerphilly (4 December, p.4), and remembrances of Christmas (11 December, p.8).

transference of a dyadic tone from the paper's own original (Welsh) content: 'Are you the best kisser in Wales?' (9 December, pp.12-12) – to 'Is it good to grow old gracefully?' on an item about celebrity behaviour (2 December, p.16).

A similar situation was evident, with regard to the range of topics covered and their sources, in the news pages of the *Western Mail*. Even where the pages of the paper were labelled NATIONAL, they routinely contained material which related to the UK as a whole, England, Scotland or overseas (for example, 22 November, p.21; 23 November, p.5; 26 November, p.11; 28 November, p.9; 29 November, p.7 & 30 November, p.7). Coverage of many of the major international and national stories (mentioned above) was not confined to the UK & WORLD pages. (The paper's interest in celebrity has also been already noted). Sometimes this news was localized (21 November, p.21; 27 November, p7 & 4 December, p.9). In other instances, Welsh dimensions of the story were highlighted; for example, a UK announcement of funding for youth sports initiatives included the information that £230,000 would be spent in Wales (27 November, p.9). It was less than clear, then, what 'national' was intended to signify. However, the most notable aspect of the paper's news pages was the labelling it used within the broader categories of news, particularly that attached to individual news items. These drew heavily on intimate understandings of Wales and Welshness.

This labelling schema worked at four levels: 1. collections of brief items were identified at the top of the page as coming from AROUND WALES (see above); 2. within that category, individual items were headed with the name of the relevant local authority (Ceredigion, Conwy, Gwynedd, Torfaen, and so on); 3. in the news-in-brief columns, collections of items were sub-headed 'South Wales', 'Mid Wales', 'West Wales' and 'North Wales'; 4. finally, it was the paper's house style to label many of the stories published in the general news pages. Some referred to the simple event or theme of the item; but a large number of these labels utilized the territorial and cognitive setting of Wales and Welshness; for example in

- Place names – not just the major towns and cities (CARDIFF, SWANSEA, NEWPORT, WREXHAM) and smaller ones (MAESTEG, MOUNTAIN ASH, NEWTOWN, HAVERFORD WEST), but also villages, etc. (YSBYTY GWYNEDD, TUMBLE, NANTYGWYDDON, LLANHARRY)
- General colloquial place names – the VALLEYS
- Places names with particular associations – LLANARTHE (the site of the National Botanic Gardens of Wales); BUILTH WELLS (the Welsh agricultural showgrounds); SNOWDONIA (national park); SNOWDON (the mountain); LLANDAFF (cathedral)
- Names associated with specific activities – MORRISTON (hospital); OGMORE (parliamentary constituency); CORUS (steel manufacturing)
- Places of activity – PARC PRISON.
- Organizations – CYMUNUD
- People – DAFYDD PARRY (the author); MAURICE TURNBULL (the cricketer)

Furthermore, the paper used both HISTORY and HERITAGE as news story labels (19 November, p.9; 3 December, p.11 & 6 December, p.2). Such an approach assumed a knowledge of Wales and Welshness, and the utility of its history and heritage.

Enabling and affiliated journalism

The scoping of Wales and its communities rather than the news agenda, through modes of address – the matey-ness of *Wales on Sunday* and the cultural knowingness of the *Western Mail* – was central to the construct of the papers' relationships with their readers, of course. Perhaps no single item exemplified this more than Patrick Fletcher's article in the *Western Mail* on the fashionable and high-price area of Cardiff, Pontcanna, which because of its administrative association with the neighbouring area, Riverside, one of the most socially excluded in Wales, was included in a Treasury decision to exempt property sales of up to £150,000 of stamp duty in poorer areas. It was 'quite obvious,' Fletcher wrote, that Pontcanna did not qualify as poverty-stricken, or socially

deprived. 'Mr Brown [the Chancellor of the Exchequer] hasn't been there. Otherwise, he'd know' (29 November, p.9).

If the *Western Mail* reached out to its readers through knowingness, Wales *on Sunday* mobilized its readership through anodyne participation – 'Vote for your top Harry [Potter] lookalike' (18 November, p.9); 'What would you throw out of your partner's wardrobe?' (18 November, pp.10-11); 'Vote for your favourite Ms & Miss *Wales on Sunday*' (9 December, pp.14-15); 'What's the best sound by a Welsh band in 2001? You can decide …' (9 December, pp.20-12). It addressed its readers via appeals to a precise commonsense associated with place: the anonymous columnist VALLEY BOY was billed as 'THE STREETWISE KID WHO LOVES HIS MAM' and Suzie Brewer was 'THE CHEEKIEST GIRL IN HER CLASS'. Their topics were predictably a mix of personal comment and the celebrity news of the week. This tone translated uneasily to politics, however. *Mirror*-like (see above), the paper published another anonymous column entitled THE SPIN DOCTOR who purported to be 'lurking in the corridors of power'. The tenor of this surveillance of Welsh politics was not dissimilar from that of the other columns – a mixture of playfulness (suggesting that the UK Arts Minister might reinvent himself at Sid Vicious) and tittle-tattle. Where VALLEY BOY nominated his 'CHUMP' and 'CHAMP' of the week, THE SPIN DOCTOR named his 'TURKEY' and 'TOAST' of the week. By contrast, the *Western Mail*'s engagement with politics was far more straightforward, and conducted principally through orthodox reporting of parliament, politicians and the NAfW. Clive Betts' weekly columns were characterized by analysis rather than banter (for example, 23 November, p.13) (see also Cushion 2002, 77-8).

As might have been expected (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 56), neither paper injected itself into the news agenda. The closest that *Wales on Sunday* came was through the investigation of a land deal concerning the sale of the former Mid Wales Hospital (18 November, pp.6-7). The following week, the paper reported on the repercussions of its original article (25 November, pp.30-1); but then it seemed to lose interest in the issue. For its part, the *Western Mail* went no further than co-sponsoring the Welsh Woman of the Year award, and then reporting on it comprehensively over three days (23

November, pp.12-13; 24 November, pp.1 & 36; 26 November, p.13). It also opened its op. ed columns to the First Minister to allow him to promote the NAfW economic development strategy. Both papers seemed to take a traditionalist view of not getting involved in news-making through affiliation.

The *Western Mail* was equally reticent in providing its readers with 'useful information'. It ventured into that arena only twice – with a weekly fashion feature and an associated item on shopping (20 November, p11; 27 November, p.11; 4 December, p.11 & 11 December, p.11), and through some rather tentative advice on Christmas shopping (15 December, pp.10-11). The Sunday paper was slightly more active in this respect, covering the effects of alcohol abuse (2 December, pp14-5); testing toys for Christmas (9 December, pp.18-19), and proffering advice on Christmas fashion (9 December, pp.26-7 & 44). While no doubt much enbabling journalism was to be found in the various supplements published by each title (see above), *Wales on Sunday* also had more sections in the main paper, including GO ZONE ('things to do for all the family'), READER CLUB (offers) and THE WORK STATION (employment). Nevertheless, it was surprising to find a considerable number of 'advertising features' (advertorials) in the main paper of the *Western Mail*. There were eleven in all – a publication rate of almost one every two days. Four were headed SHOPPING WALES and offered information on shopping in Brecon (23 November, p.15), Carmarthen (30 November, p.14), Swansea (7 December, p.14) and Rhyl (14 December, p.17). By this means the paper could perhaps prevent such enabling content from more conspicuously invading editorial space.

The evening press

As was noted in Chapter 3, there was a relatively heavy concentration of evening newspapers in south Wales. Two, the *South Wales Echo* (Cardiff) and the *South Wales Argus* (Newport), were published in locations which were only nine miles apart. Although it was believed that an informal agreement existed between the two publishers

(Trinity Mirror and Newsquest) not to encroach on each other's circulation area,[103] both papers were available in many places, particularly along the M4-A48 corridor in the south, and in the more easterly Valleys to the north, in places like Abertillery, Cwmbran, Ebbw Vale, Pontypool and Tredegar. The *South Wales Echo* was identified by Franklin and Murphy (1991, 43) as 'prestigious'. However, as we have seen, the evening press suffered particularly noticeable circulation declines in the 1990s. Between 1992 and 2001, the *Echo* lost nearly a quarter of its sales, with more than 95% of those losses accruing between 1995 and 2001. The decline in the *Argus*' circulation was similar but quantitatively less: down 18% between 1992 and 2001, with 78% of that decline coming in the period since 1995 (Peak 1992, 23; Peak and Fisher 1995, 43; Peak and Fisher 1999, 38; see also Table 2.3 on page 75). During the 1990s the two papers adopted different tactics for dealing with the circulation decline. In particular, during the editorship of Steve Hoselitz, the *Argus* concentrated on local content, eschewing the traditional role of the evening press to publish national, regional and even international news (Franklin and Murphy 1991, 60).[104]

The two papers, as sampled, appeared to be remarkably similar in many ways. Although the *Echo* published 222 pages (16%) more than the *Argus* over the sample period, the proportions of those pages devoted to general news and features were comparable (38% for the *Echo* and 33% for the *Argus*). The main paper, which was most closely analyzed, comprised 74% of the pages published by the *Echo*, and 69% of those published by the *Argus*. Some of the material which appeared in the main paper in the *Echo* was to be found in supplements in the *Argus*, most notably business news and features. Both papers included sport both in the main paper and in supplements published on Mondays. They each included only one themed section (48 pages of TV WEEK in the *Argus* and 24 pages of FRIDAY LIVE in the *Echo*) in the pagination of the main paper. Both papers published property supplements on Thursdays and motoring supplements on Fridays. The *Argus*, with six weekly supplements, published one more than the *Echo*, although

[103] I am grateful to various sources, whose anonymity is protected, for this information.

[104] Personal knowledge of the author. I spoke informally on a number of occasions with Hoselitz about this during the later 1990s.

the latter paper published two supplements which each appeared only once during the four weeks. The slight differences between the two papers, as measured by paginations, were accounted for by variations in configurations of many of the elements within categories such as news. For example, the *Echo* published nineteen pages of separately identified business news in the main paper over the period, whereas specialist business coverage was confined to a weekly 16-page supplement in the *Argus*. These distinctions were analyzed further.

The *Echo* applied a schema to its general news and features pages (see Table 7.2). This worked, broadly-speaking, at three levels: page categories, sub-categories within pages, and sub-sub-categories within those. It was hardly precise: what the paper called POLITICAL FOCUS appeared under the page headings LOCAL NEWS and POLITICAL NEWS at different times. The paper's op ed page (ECHO COMMENT) sometimes appeared under the page heading LOCAL NEWS (22 November). The sub-category WORLD IN BRIEF also appeared in pages labelled LOCAL NEWS (24 November), as well as more commonly as a sub-category of 24 HOURS. The sub-category ANALYSIS appeared as both LOCAL NEWS and in a separate page category, NEWS ANALYSIS. Business coverage was labelled both BUSINESS NEWS and occasionally LOCAL NEWS. INTERNET NEWS appeared both as a page category and under the page heading LOCAL NEWS. CRIME FOCUS appeared at least once as a page category (7 December). It was assumed that, rather than indicating a conscious attempt to categorize and re-categorize elements of news and features, these inconsistencies more likely represented accidental failures in daily production to label pages correctly.

The *Argus* utilized labels far less extensively than the *Echo*. As with the *Western* Mail (see above), the paper more frequently integrated labels into headlines, although they tended to be more functionally connected to the news item; for example, 'Assembly' (27 November, p.11) and 'Foot-and-mouth' (30 November, p.12). The most logical scheme of categorization from the *Echo* was used to produce Table 7.2. The *Echo*'s categories

Table 7.2: South Wales Echo news and features schema and South Wales Argus equivalents

Page category	*Argus*	Sub-category	*Argus*	Sub-sub-category	*Argus*
Page 1	Page 1				
LOCAL NEWS	✓	ABOUT WALES (BRIEFS)			
		IN BRIEF			
		TIME TO REMEMBER	NOW & THEN		
		POLITICAL FOCUS	BAYWATCH	POLITICS IN BRIEF	
		PROFILE	THE SATURDAY INTERVIEW		
		DEAR LINDA ...			
		HEALTH FOCUS	HEALTH CHECK	HEALTH IN BRIEF PHARMACY FOCUS THANKS FOR ALL YOUR HELP	LEGAL HEALTH CHECK
		ANALYSIS	LIFE THROUGH A LENS		
		EDUCATION FOCUS	SCHOOL OF THE WEEK	EDUCATION IN BRIEF	
		CRIME FOCUS	CRIME FILE	SAFE AND SOUND CRACKDOWN ON CRIME	
		YOUR CELEBRATIONS		PARTY TIME YOU'RE A WINNER	
		INTERNET NEWS			
		COMING UP			
24 HOURS	NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS ROUNDUP	WORLD IN BRIEF STARS IN THE NEWS	WORLD BRIEFS		
INFO CENTRE	✓	WEATHER	✓		
ECHO COMMENT	✓	CARTOON ECHO COMMENT SOAPBOX	✓		
POLITICAL NEWS	✓	POLITICAL FOCUS	COUNCIL AGENDA		

NEWS ANALYSIS	BEHIND THE HEADLINES	ANALYSIS	BEHIND THE SCENES		
BUSINESS NEWS/ BUSINESS DAILY	BUSINESS SUPPLEMENT	BUSINESS DIARY BUSINESS BULLETIN	BUSINESS FOCUS BUSINESS NEWS	MARKET REPORT	MARKET REPORT
FAMILY FINANCE					
VIEWPOINTS	✓	SWEET & SOUR			
COFFEE BREAK	COMPETITIONS				
WHAT'S ON	WHAT'S ON	REVIEWS	REVIEWS		
CAPITAL CITY					
TAKE 5					
STUDENT NEWS		CAMPUS COLUMN STUDENT FOCUS STUDENT SAVERS	SCHOOL OF THE WEEK		
IN MEMORIAM		OBITUARIES			

provided a useful schema for directly comparing the general news and features pages configurations of the two papers. Where the papers contained the same editorial content, this was indicated with a check (✓); otherwise, the equivalent category has been entered for the *Argus*. While this was hardly a rigorously scientific comparison, it did suggest that the *Echo* penetrated more deeply than the *Argus* into the realm of enabling editorial content. This was especially apparent in the area of sub-sub-categories, where it was difficult to discern much *Argus* presence at all. It was at this kind of level that newspapers tended to publish information which they indicated, by its very categorization, they felt did not constitute 'news' as such but was rather 'useful information'. An example was PHARMACY FOCUS, a column contributed by a community pharmacist, advising on treating winter ailments (28 November, p.16).

Banal journalism

Reporting on the publication of a local history of the village of Machen, the *Argus*'s Mike Buckingham wrote, 'Unlike many South Wales towns with an industrial past, Machen has not sunk into a self-pittying despair of litter, vandalism and neglect' (29

November, p.21). The same day, the paper recorded comments made during a debate about the effectiveness of policing that poor housing, urban decay, societal breakdown and 'unrest and despair' were inter-connected (p.9). Elsewhere, in the same issue, the *Argus* pointed to a 'yob culture' which pervaded much of Gwent (p.23). This, and related themes, formed a persistent repertoire and rhetoric in the paper, which was reflective of the physical world, and sought to distinguish Gwent as a territorialized place. Arrayed around this central idea of degeneration were counter-ideas of regeneration, achievement and resilience. While much of this focused on economic development, there was also room for assertions of traditional forms of success, and for allusions to the area's past. The paper gave its support to an endeavour to attain city status for Newport (29 November, p.7 & 13 December, p.19), which, it had pointed out some months earlier, required establishing claims to both a past and a future. Given that the city status was to be conferred by royal assent as part of the Queen's golden jubilee celebrations, it was necessary to stress the essentially conservative nature of both past and present (15 August).[105]

The territorial place which comprised the *Argus*'s circulation area (the dismantled county of Gwent) included not only former coal mining and iron and steel making towns, such as Ebbw Vale and Brynmawr, and the port of Newport, but also the new town, Cwmbran, commuter villages in the south, and rural parts of Monmouthshire, along the River Usk to Abergavenny and as far east as the Wye Valley.[106] The main points of reference for the paper – the taken-for-granted routine allusions to unifying myths and clichés' of localism (see pages 88-9) – however, came predominantly from the area's industrial and labour movement past.[107] For example, in the weekly nostalgia

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[105] The lobbying for city status began in July 2001, and the official campaign was launched in September. Newport was granted city status on 19 March 2002. The archive of material on this published by the *Argus* can be found at the This is Gwent web site.

[106] The paper formally circulated in all or parts of the unitary local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen.

[107] In 2001, every parliamentary constituency in the paper's main circulation area (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Islwyn, Monmouth, Newport East, Newport West, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and Torfaen)

feature NOW & *THEN*, in which photographs were published with invitations to readers to send in their recollections, both pictures and reminiscences were replete with brick yards, wire works, steam engine sheds, steelworks and gasworks (20 November, p.13; 27 November, p.13 & 4 December, p.13). By 2001, much of this industrial past had been either demolished, as many readers noted, or fossilized: Blaenavon's 'big pit' became the National Mining Museum of Wales, winning two tourism awards from the *Good Britain Guide* (5 December, p.9). Nevertheless, the decline and neglect did not abate: 2001 was 'Gwent's year of misery', the paper reported, in which more than 5,000 jobs – in both traditional staple industries, such as steel, and even the new 'high tech' sector – had been lost (5 December, pp.1 & 4-5; 6 December, pp.1 & 4 & 12 December, p.1). In addition, the paper reminded its readers, rural areas had endured the foot-and-mouth outbreak which had only recently come to an end (13 December, p.12).

The paper drew on equally 'traditional' sources of optimism, however (6 December, pp.8-9). A symbol of decline – the Newport County soccer team, which had been relegated from the Football League, evicted from its ground and wound up in 1989 – enjoyed an unexpectedly good run in the FA Cup (19 November, pp.1 & 12; 22 November, p.12; 28 November, p.1; 29 November, pp.1 & 4; 1 December, p.3 & 3 December, pp.14-15). Where other papers, as we have seen, focused on celebrity, the *Argus* recorded the successes of performers who were more (stereo)typical of south Wales – a male voice choir (23 November, p.16); a brass band (27 November, p.3), and Welsh singing (6 December, p.19) – and the re-establishment of a youth eisteddfod in Abergavenny (23 November, p. 10 & 27 November, p.7). On the other hand, Gwent encompassed a rustic dimension, too – 'the very stuff of picture postcards' – and the paper eulogized villages like Trellech which it presented as remaining almost unchanged since the 13th century (28 November, p.16).

The paper attempted to unite these disparate histories, experiences and contingencies by mobilizing a shared sense of community derived from a notion of decency. It identified

returned Labour MPs. Although Monmouth was a marginal constituency, others had enormous Labour majorities.

what it called 'Heroes of the community' – recipients of awards it sponsored itself (6 December, p.18), and it offered advice on 'What you can do to help your community' by listing activities and calls for volunteers (26 November, p.9 & 10 December, p.8). It reported on community achievements – from the winner of the Welsh 'Loo of the Year' competition (24 November, p.3) to the nomination of a nature reserve for a Royal Town Planning Institute award (24 November, p.6). The paper looked to highlight examples of communities fighting back against vandalism (19 November, p.9 & 22 November, p.13); against what it called 'mini terror-gangs' of street children (20 November, pp.1 & 7 & 21 November, pp.4-5); against public drunken-ness (22 November, p.4); against illegal street drag racing (26 November, p.4); against truancy (13 December, p.7) and against youth crime (27 November, p.5). Although the achievements of young people were not completely ignored (19 November, p.3 & ll & 4 December, p.3), they were recorded far less frequently. Most of the examples of community 'problems' posited young people as the source, giving the reports a generational dimension.

By contrast, the paper reported how a redundant steelworker studied business to open a skateboard shop (21 November, p.16), and on a local firm which was the fastest-growing in Wales (10 December, p.6). New businesses and job creation were featured regularly (28 November, pp.11, 12 & 18; 29 November, p.15 & 3 December, pp.11 & 13), as was investment – from £34m in a local college (15 December, p.11) to the opening of a new supermarket (20 November, p.6). Large-scale, formal regeneration schemes, with state financial backing, were highlighted, too: a £400m science/business park (8 December, p.10); £10m for a pit village which was 'one of Wales' most deprived communities' (22 November, p.7, 23 November, p.3 & 1 December, p.12); the transformation of a derelict colliery site into a business park (23 November, p.31), and the development of business units in another coal town (4 December, p.4). Finally, tourism was recognized as a key successor economic activity to staple, heavy industry (12 December, p.12; 21 November, p.3; 28 November, p.5 & 3 December, p.6). In all, more than 30 articles were found on this theme of economic revitalization. A report of the founding of a Communities First partnership programme in Newport captured the *Argus*'s approach: it was, the paper said, 'A scheme boosting community spirit' by encouraging people 'to

take an active role in improving their area' and using state funding to do so (13 December, p.13).

Much of the approach of the *Echo* was similar to that of the *Argus*. As might have been expected, a number of the news items were the same, although they were more often than not given different treatment and weight. The paper, too, recognized its own 'Community heroes' (28 November, p.18), and focused on Cardiff City football club (19 November, p.3; 21 November, p.13; 23 November, p.2; 26 November, p.9; 29 November, p.1; 1 December, pp.1 & 2; 3 December, p.2; 4 December, p.3; 5 December, p.2 & 15 December, p.4). It carried items of nostalgia – regularly, in the form of a TIME TO REMEMBER feature; a special pull-out, and more occasionally (21 November, pp.13 & 19; 29 November, p.27; 2 December, p.14; 5 December, p.23; 11 December; 14 December, p.12 & 15 December, p.15). Where the *Argus* supported the attempt by Newport to achieve city status, the *Echo* put its weight behind Cardiff's bid to be the European capital of culture in 2008 (29 November, p.10; 12 December, pp.6 & 18-19; 13 December, pp.26-7 & 14 December, pp.3 & 27; see also Figure 7.2).

The distinction to be drawn between the two papers was qualitative. Reporting the publication of the *Lonely Planet Guide to Wales*, the *Echo* noted that it represented Cardiff as 'a refreshing city in the process of reinvention' (21 November, p.5). The *Echo* talked up the city: after contestants on a television game show won a trip to Cardiff (rather than Barbados) as a prize, they supposedly told the *Echo* that, despite their initial disappointment, their three-day visit turned out 'just great' (1 December, p.3). The view gelled with those of Cardiff's own citizens, the paper reported: the 'vast majority' of those asked in a survey conducted by the city council felt it was 'a great place to live'. Moreover, more than six out of ten believed the city was improving (5 December, p.5). A scheme to spend £25m converting brewery vaults into a city centre development, which promised 'loft-style living & lifestyle shopping', was greeted as a 'symbol of the changing city', helping move it from the nineteenth into the twenty-first century (10 December, p.18). Testing of an urban light transport system, due to go into service in 2005, was seen as being 'space-age' (10 December, p.5). It was in this spirit that the

paper supported the 2008 bid: 'The city is becoming increasingly known as a diverse, bilingual, cultural and sporting centre, with an emphasis on participation and excellence' (12 December, pp.18-19).

Figure 7.2: The South Wales Echo *supports Cardiff's bid to be Euro culture capital*

Source: *South Wales Echo* (12 December, p.1).

While the Millenium Stadium featured as an icon for the campaign (14 December, p.3; see Figure 7.2), the *Echo* preferred to emphasize Cardiff's credentials as a place of consumption. The paper gave considerable space to proposals to spend £40m on developing Cardiff's 'biggest ever shopping and leisure development' (11 December, p.2). Meanwhile, the opening of another such space, called the Millenium Plaza, was greeted as 'THE PLACE TO BE' (30 November, pp.24-5 & 1 December, pp.10-11 &19). A decision to open an outlet of a chain of restaurants in the city centre was seen as confirming Cardiff's status as a major city (4 December, p.3 & 7 December, p.29). It was a city of 'Culture, gossip and lifestyle', which was supposedly reflected in the weekly page CAPITAL CITY.

The idea of Cardiff as an emergent place was reinforced by the paper's focus on young people: dozens of items recorded the experiences and, often, the triumphs of the young –

from the plight of children in divorced families (26 November, p.15) to *Pop Idol* hopefuls (24 November, pp.8-9). Less well-known local performers (15 December, p.13) provided a bridge to the reporting of celebrity, provided by famous locals like Noel Sullivan (24 November, pp.8-9; 1 December, p. 15 & 5 December, p.3), Charlotte Church – 'our Charlotte' – (21 November, p.23; 27 November, p.4; 30 November, pp.10-11 & 4 December, p.5), the Stereophonics (8 December, p.11) and Catatonia (8 December, p.3).

This emphasis was accompanied by a shallow and skewed sense of history, which glossed over the industrial past of Cardiff and the Valleys, which hardly differed from that of Gwent.[108] Although the issues collected for the sample were those circulating in Cardiff, and the *Echo* published a number of daily editions, almost no mention was found of the industrial decline of Merthyr or the Rhondda, or even of Barry docks or Cardiff's own Butetown (the so-called Tiger Bay). The four TIME TO REMEMBER columns addressed the legacy of the philanthropist businessman Harry Sherman, who died in 1961 (19 November, p.18); a murder which was discovered in the same year (26 November, p.14); the draining of the Glamorgan canal with its associations with swimming in the 1940s (3 December, p.16), and the abdication crisis of 1936 (10 December, p.16). Another feature recalled the Sex Pistols' Caerphilly concert in the 1970s (see above). An eight-page TIME TO REMEMBER supplement (11 December) had items on Shirley Bassey and 'My 60s' (p.3); pantomime (pp.4-5); the singer Tony Etoria and rugby union and soccer (p.6) and theatres in the 1950s and 60s (p.7). An item commemorating the centenary of Cardiff's buses went back only as far as the 1940s (20 November, p.27). Reporting on the reproduction in the form of a calendar of a series of photographs of Grangetown, a dockside area, the paper made note of 'the white glint of a row of Panama hats in the sun' (3 December, p.14). The *Echo*'s version of history

[108] Although the circulation area of the paper extended as far west as Carmarthen, it was chiefly concentrated in an area co-terminus with fifteen parliamentary constituencies – Aberavon, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff Central, Cardiff North, Cardiff South and Penarth, Cardiff West, Cynon Valley, Islwyn, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, Newport West, Ogmore, Pontypridd, Rhondda and Vale of Glamorgan. In 2001 all were held by Labour. Cardiff Central was taken by Liberal Democrats in 2005.

elided the grittiness of dockyards, coal mines and iron works, and rarely stretched back beyond the Second World War. The image it projected back at its readers was one of consumerism, affluence, youth and ambition with an eye on the present and the future, not the past. The *Echo*, it seemed, was embracing a 'new Wales' in place of 'the old, long gone Wales' (Williams 1999b, 15).

Precise journalism

In both the *Argus* and the *Echo* local news was what the papers claimed it to be. Only twelve UK stories were published in the *Argus* outside the NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS ROUNDUP. The only non-local story published on any front page was the death of George Harrison (30 November). These local items were inflected with a broader sense of Welshness, but even that was limited. The local news included just 28 items which referred to Wales outside Gwent. Nineteen of these had as their topic the NAfW, politics or politicians. There was very little localization: only four examples were found. Like the *Argus*, the *Echo* reserved the pages it identified as carrying local news for that kind of content, too. The bulk of any other items which appeared related to Wales as a whole, and especially to Welsh politics and the NAfW. The only exceptions were the death of George Harrison (30 November, pp.1, 4-5 & 23 & 1 December, pp.4-5), a news item on the Home Secretary (5 December, p.1); the conclusion of the trial of two Leeds United footballers (14 December, p.1), and features about the introduction of the Euro (5 December, p.14 & 6 December, pp.22-3). As we have noted (above and in Chapter 5), the *Echo* published more pages overall than the *Argus*, and published far more material about the Assembly. It also published a page of political items five times a week under the heading POLITICAL FOCUS; so an essential difference between the two papers in this respect was one simply of volume. Like the *Argus*, the *Echo* localized few stories: only four examples were found. It seemed clear, then, that these two papers had news agendas which were significantly different from those of the other papers whose contents have been analyzed.

To arrive at a closer determination of the extent to which they scoped the news, one facet of each was selected for more detailed analysis – the eight-page GRASSROOTS weekly supplement published by the *Argus* each Monday, and the Community Affairs reporting of the *Echo*. In line with the evidence presented by some of the editors interviewed for this study (see Chapter 6), GRASSROOTS purported to publish '*Your* roundup of local news' (emphasis added; see page 256). It comprised contributions from 'correspondents', and readers were invited to contact them to supply news for items. More than that, the paper undertook on occasion to print what was submitted (19 November, p.6). In most cases, the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the individual correspondents were published alongside their photographs at the head of their entries. Each issue contained about 100 items. These ranged over a wide variety of events and activities, announcements and achievements involving numerous community groups, and sometimes nothing more than notes and jottings. The entry from Gaer for 10 December was typical of the latter type: it began

> FORT WALK: Anyone walking over the Fort during this last week could not have failed to be delighted with the wealth of autumn colour on display. The number of new trees that have sprung up over the last few years have grown enough to have an abundance of leaves ...

and concluded –

> On the subject of green areas my sources have informed me that there are to be temporary dwellings erected on the grassland near to the Baptist church. The dwellings are to be mobile and for the use of displaced occupants of prefabs that are due for demolition. I do so hope and trust that the mobile homes will remain mobile and not become permanent.

On 3 December, the correspondent from Duffryn listed events from October, with the apology, 'Sorry I am late with the news ...'. The correspondent from Pontypool was not always sure of his facts: 'Recently, Woolworths and Kwik Save (or is it Somerfield) ...' (3 December, p.2). The space was used to air grouses – the state of the Croesyceiliog estate in Cwmbran (10 December, p.2); the shape of the road bumps in Chepstow (19 November, p4), or to rail against 'sick' society (26 November, p.2). Some entries were

more akin to advertising, promoting local pubs and clubs. Correspondents' misuse of English sometimes went uncorrected: the correspondent from Malpas wrote: 'Resident [...] argued that he has rang the police on numerous occasions ...'. Others related at length the contents of talks (3 December, p.7). And, of course, there was the reporting of simply no news: the correspondent from Abergavenny duly passed on the information that when a local vicar asked for comments about the parish magazine, no-one responded (19 November, p.4). At the same time, it was also a space where local authorities, including town councils, could address citizens – the Mayor of Torfaen contributed a diary (3 December, p.2) – and where issues could be raised about policing, flooding, vandalism, parking, street lighting, traffic management, crime prevention and civic developments.

The net result of the journalists at the *Argus* handing over control to Soroptimists; the Royal British Legion; theatre groups; Scouts; sports clubs; community centres; historical societies; churches; eisteddfodau; charities; support groups; schools; the Inner Wheel; residents' groups; choirs; brass bands and many more to set their own news agendas was the publicizing of a myriad of everyday activities – awards, collections, sales, performances; receipts of grants; fund-raisers; school reunions; socials; parties; weddings; fetes; services; reunions; birthdays; art shows; funerals; reminiscences; dedications, and so on. This was not 'news', as defined by journalism. The tension between professionalized news production and community communication was resolved in favour of the latter.

The *Echo* had no such supplement. Voices other than those of its own journalists rarely appeared in its pages. Similar information was published, though, most commonly scattered in the IN BRIEF columns. In addition, the paper had a Community Affairs 'beat', and some content corresponding to that in GRASSROOTS was also published in YOUR CELEBRATIONS, a weekly page, and in a column labelled COMING UP. SOAPBOX on the op ed page was open to readers to contribute opinion pieces. All such contributions appeared to be brokered by the *Echo*'s editorial staff, though. The IN BRIEF columns occasionally suggested that readers with items should contact the paper's 'patch'

reporters, assigned to different Cardiff suburbs. Potential contributors to SOAPBOX were advised to go through the paper's news desk. This ensured that the majority of contributions addressed the news agenda already set by the paper.

The Community Affairs 'beat' coincided with a number of *Echo* initiatives – a shop assistant of the year competition (19 November, p.12); the Ty Hafan appeal concert (21 November, p.9); the light-up-a-life appeal (21 November, p.10) and a children's Christmas party (22 November, p.3). Sometimes reporting on these was paired with community announcements to allow publication of a complete page with such material (26 November, p.10; 5 December, p.29 & 8 December, p.19). The paper's Community Affairs editor also reported more news-like events, such as the refurbishment of a village hall (29 November, p.29); the introduction of a training course for young people (30 November, p.13), and the completion of a charity bicycle ride (30 November, p.34). The story of the last-minute cancellation of a charity tribute lunch for the former Welsh rugby union player Neil Jenkins seemed to have only the most tenuous connections to community affairs (6 December, p.16 & 7 December, p.14). The same journalist's reporting of two competitions, run by the paper, with prizes including free trips to London, were devoid of any community dimension, and were no more than promotional material for the paper (1 December, p.7 & 7 December, p.9).

While it was clear that the *Echo* had opened its columns to items which might not have been traditionally considered 'news', nevertheless it had not abrogated editorial control over that content. It was willing to allow people other than its journalists to scope what was of relevance, but only in the margins (sometimes, literally) of the paper. While it appeared prepared to acknowledge a different kind of news agenda with the establishment of a Community Affairs 'beat', it sought to validate this through the assertion of its own priorities of putting itself at the centre of a limited range of community affairs. Moreover, the *Echo*'s journalists, it seemed, were never far away from re-engaging with their 'nose for news'. What appeared in the paper were community announcements and celebrations, but not community voices. The *Argus*'s

solution was to quarantine such voices away from the main, 'professionally' produced paper.

Enabling journalism

Community announcements, of course, were themselves a form of enabling journalism, providing readers with information on a range of activities, events and issues. These were supplemented in both papers with WHAT'S ON pages. Both papers also carried lists of formal bodies and contact details – in GRASSROOTS in the *Argus*, and more comprehensively in what it termed an INFO CENTRE in the *Echo*. As expected, the *Argus* published far less of this kind of material. It ran a regular ROADWATCH column, listing scheduled works, and details of upcoming events in the weekly Business supplement, where there was also advice on buying and selling shares. There was entertainment information in the supplement MONO, and a HOLIDAY & TRAVEL page. The *Echo* was far more active in this regard, not only in themed pages and supplements (for example, WEEKENDER carried items on food, fashion, the home, gardening and health and beauty), but also in general features. It published advice on safe internet shopping (3 December, p.15); on 'how to be a better neighbour' to the elderly (7 December, p.23), and on how to access personal data held by public bodies and private concerns (19 November, pp.10-11).

The bulk of the enabling journalism appearing in the *Echo* was situated at the lower end of the spectrum of categorization used by the paper (see Table 7.2):

- STUDENT FOCUS included STUDENT SAVERS (offers and coupons) and A BLUFFER'S GUIDE to movies, gigs, books, etc.. A CAMPUS COLUMN was written by the equal opportunities and welfare officer of Cardiff University (20 November, p.23);
- The business pages published advice on personal finance (20 November, p.25 & 27 November, p.25) and on running small businesses (22 November, p.39 & 29 November, p.35);

- The crime page incorporated items on crime-stoppers, the location of mobile speed cameras, and contact numbers. The South Wales Police crime prevention officer contributed a column (23 November, p.7);
- In the information and communication technologies page, the main contributor offered advice on a range of topics (bobdotcom – see 24 November, p.22). The column on 1 December (p.17) was headed 'problem solved'. There was more advice in the BYTES & MACS column.

It was apparent that the *Echo* – perhaps assisted by its additional daily pagination – went further than the *Argus* in scoping the range of useful information which might apply to its readership. It could also be argued that the *Echo* consciously addressed a more diverse audience but still within a narrow scope of themes, focused on consumption – from students looking to save money to consumers looking for guidance on how to spend it. If news more often than not concerned the extraordinary, then much of this useful information was clearly about the routine everyday.

Affiliated journalism

In addition to the two campaigns already mentioned (above), these papers exhibited characteristics identified by Aldridge (2003) and Temple (2004) and which have already been outlined (see pages 228-9). During the sampling period, the *Argus* pursued three campaigns – what it called its MINERS CAMPAIGN (for the payout of compensation to former coal workers); BACKING OUR STEEL WORKERS, which also appeared as BACKING LLANWERN WORKERS, and PROTECT HOSPITAL STAFF. In this case, the *Echo* was less active: it pursued its interest in monitoring public spending (see pages 223-5). In addition to the examples already given in Chapter 5, the *Echo*, having reported on spending on official trips by NAfW cabinet members (28 November, p.3), and having given the First Minister a right of reply (29 November, p.7), then intervened, when it was made clear that no requirement would be placed on AMs to publish details of their official allowances, to demand SHOW US THE MONEY (30 November, p.2). A few days later an announcement regarding the cost of providing compensation for AMs who

lost their seats reignited the paper's IT'S YOUR MONEY campaign (4 December, p.1). The paper also published a front page story on the NAfW spending £279,000 on a generator (8 December, pp.1-2).

Both papers also ran a variety of promotions (chiefly, competitions which offered readers prizes). These were not analyzed, as they were deemed to be marketing, rather than editorial, initiatives. However, the papers sought to broker market advantage through a range of community actions. The *Argus* had two such sponsorships of charitable causes – a WARM HEARTS WEEK (intended to assist the elderly during winter) and the self-explanatory CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR SPECIAL CHILDREN – while the *Echo* ran no fewer than five – a POCKETFUL OF PRESENTS (for needy children); the TY HAFAN CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE; a LIGHT UP A LIFE APPEAL; CHRISTMAS CRACKERS (a party for children), and 100 YEARS OF CARDIFF BUSES. Apart from this final example, all were seasonal, and in some ways traditional. This was a space in the newspapers where community involvement and self-interest overlapped. The *Echo* appeared to be significantly more involved in this kind of activity, and it may have substituted for more campaigning-style editorial intervention in the news agenda.

An example of the latter was the attention paid by the *Argus* to the issue of police mobile speed traps operated on a two-mile stretch of road in Newport where, the paper reported in a two-page news feature, more than 1,500 motorists had been issued with fines (21 November, pp.8-9). The topic had been raised by the paper three months previously, after 'a number of phone calls from angry motorists' (15 December, p.1 & 4-5). Now it invited readers to write in again. This was followed by a news story headed 'Mail pours in: You're revved up!' (23 November, p.13). Three days later, the paper's front page informed readers of 'letters of fury' (26 November), and in a 'Letters special' correspondence was published over two pages (pp.12-13). The paper also editorialized that, without clear speed limit signs on the road, motorists were effectively entrapped.by police who set up speed traps at random, and argued that this constituted not a road safety measure but 'a cash cow for the fine collectors' (p.12). Just over two weeks later, the *Argus* announced 'VICTORY FOR YOU: *Argus* readers to get details of speed

traps'. It reported that Gwent police were to publicize (in the paper) the locations of mobile speed traps (15 December, pp.1 & 4-5). The paper, it seemed, had intervened to resolve the issue.

The local weekly press

The fourteen local weekly newspapers identified in Table 2.2 (page 74) were subjected to the same thematic textual analysis. A number more closely ressembled orthodox newspapers – *The Post*, *Rhymney Valley Express*, *Penarth Times*, *Abergavenny Chronicle*, *Barry & District News*, *Glamorgan Gazette* and *Hereford Times* – than others, which were closer to 'advertising sheets'. The amounts of editorial and advertising content in each were identified in Table 5.1 (page 186). Advertising and advertorials, and supplements and special sections (such as those focused on property or motoring) were not analyzed. This included sports pages. While the number of titles was greater than those of any other groups of papers analyzed, the gross amount of material available was noticeably less. Many of the contents of these papers were similar to those found in the evening press. Community announcements were ubiquitous, and were published both as general news items and in columns, such as NEWSLINE in the *Rhymney Valley Express* and *Glamorgan Gazette*; NEWS IN BRIEF in the *Llantwit Major Gem* and the *Hereford Times*, and IN BRIEF (*Barry & District News*). Some of the themes were the same, too; for example, that of community regeneration (*Rhymney Valley Express* – 30 November, p.1; *Caerphilly Campaign* – 22 November, p.5; *Glamorgan Gazette* – 6 December, p.30). The editorial content was drawn overwhelmingly from the immediate territorial locale: only one news item was found that was not, relating to a petition organized across the UK, the spokesperson for which was somewhat vaguely identified as 'a small business owner based near Cardiff' (*The Post* – 29 November, p.21). Nevertheless, there was Welsh dimension to much of the news – whether it was in the form of the Welsh Rugby Union (*Glamorgan Gazette* – 6 December, p.1 & 13 December, p.3); the NAfW (*Rhymney Valley Express* – 7 December, p.3; *The Post* – 22 November, p.22); compensation for former miners (*Caerphilly Campaign* – 13 December, p.8); BBC Wales (*Bridgend Post* – 13 December, p.7); the Welsh

Development Agency (*Llantwit Major Gem* – 22 November, p.1), or the Rail Passengers' Committee for Wales (*Abergavenny Chronicle* – 29 November, p.1). As has already been noted, a number of AMs contributed columns to the local press (pages 134 & 226); for example, Carwyn Jones in the *Bridgend & Valleys Recorder.*

A number of titles published material contributed by other than their own editorial staff (see below). 'We aim to use all local news items submitted', the editor, Don John, announced in the *Bridgend & Valleys Recorder.* 'Write in! WE WELCOME your news, views and sports items', the paper advised, and it published contributions by nine-year-olds on a school project (4 December, p.10). Schools, play groups and youth groups were encouraged to send in details of their Christmas events to the *Rhymney Valley Express* so they could be reported and even photographed (30 November, p.12). Photographers from the *Glamorgan Gazette* planned to visit infant and junior schools to record their seasonal activities (6 December, p.3). In contrast to these invitations to the general public to get involved in news-making, the *Bridgend & Valleys Recorder* stressed the 'professional' qualifications of its advertising staff (4 December, pp.2 & 3).

Banal journalism

There were several ways in which the local press established and mobilized a rhetoric of localness. One was through allusion to allusions to place, people, etc. through the use of familiar identifiers, particularly in headlines: for example,

- 'DARA St Athan' (the Defence Aviation Repair Agency at the former RAF base) (*Llantwit Major Gem & Cowbrige Gem* – 13 December, p.1)
- 'Bryntirion' (comprehensive school) (*Bridgend & Valleys Recorder* – 11 December, p.1)
- 'KHS' (King Henry VIII School) (*Abergavenny Chronicle* – on several occasions)
- 'Mair Lougher' (crime victim) (*Barry & District News* – 22 November, p.1)
- 'our Arnold' (award-winning community volunteer) (*Bridgend Post* – 6 December, p.15)

- 'WRU' (Welsh Rugby Union) (*Glamorgan Gazette* – 6 December, p.1)

This sense of knowingness was bolstered by regular references to supposedly shared histories. A number reflected the industrial and labour movement past of south-east Wales, particularly in the *Rhymney Valley Express* (23 November, p.4; 30 November, pp.6 & 7 & 36-7; 7 December, pp.8 & 36-7; 14 December, pp.4 & 7 & 36-7), but also in the *Abergavenny Chronicle* (6 December, p.4). This embraced some of the cultural heritage of that history; for example, recognition of the centenary of Cwmbach Male Choir (*Rhymney Valley Express* – 14 December, p.8). For the most part, though, this past was viewed through a prism of nostalgia. Publishing an extract from an autobiography of growing up in Maesteg, the *Bridgend & Valleys Recorder* headed the item, 'HARD TIMES IN OLD MAESTEG'. The text, however, was wistful: 'I remember no serious crime or vandalism, rapes or murders. Old people were never mugged and doors were never locked by day or night. Children played in the streets with no fear of being molested or assaulted', it began (20 November, p.10). The series MY CARDIFF in *The Post* adopted a similar view of the past (22 November, p. 24; 29 November, p.24; 6 December, p. 22 & 13 December, p.22). Even in the *Rhymney Valley Express*, the feature I REMEMBER THAT ... was more focused on the 1960s and even the 1990s than the industrial past (30 November, p.19). Many of the recollections published by the papers proffered a neutralized past – one in which the taken-for-grantedness of the central activity presumed a shared acceptance that such things 'just happened' and presented a case for some dimension of local association. The topics included Llandow airfield, which was the site of the worst air crash in aviation history to that date in 1950 (*Llantwit Major Gem & Barry Gem* – 6 December, p.6); Barry Dock lifeboat (*Barry Gem* – 22 November, p.30; 13 December, p.22); schools and churches (*Barry Gem* – 13 December, pp.20 & 21), and the military (*Hereford Times* – 22 November, p.15).

All the newspapers busied themselves with reporting news from the territorial locale, and most did not have the space for expansive feature articles on historical topics. The extents of the papers for news and features, including letters to the editor, editorials and so on, were as little as eight pages (*Caerphilly Campaign*); nearly 40 pages (*Rhymney*

Valley Express and *Glamorgan Gazette*), and about 100 pages (*Hereford Times*). Nevertheless, when the news was framed historically, it was not necessarily by the divisiveness of the lived experiences of the industrial past, but rather by exceptional historical examples which tended to elicit responses leading to a unitary sense of the past.

Precise journalism

A considerable amount of the scoping of the news arose from the involvement of community correspondents in making that news. Several papers published such content, including *The Post* (VALE VILLAGES – 29 November, p.30 & 6 December, p.16, which also appeared in the *Barry Post* – 22 November, p.4 & 6 December, p.4); the *Bridgend & Valleys Recorder* which regularly published community correspondence; the *Rhymney Valley Express* and *Glamorgan Gazette* which featured IN TOUCH, amounting to up to four pages each week; the *Penarth Times* and *Barry & District News* (COMMUNITY NEWS), which again was up to four pages; the *Gem* series (also COMMUNITY NEWS), and the *Hereford Times* (TOWN AND COUNTRY). Groups and organizations were also given a voice: school news appeared in the *Bridgend & Valleys Recorder* (27 November, p.5 & 11 December, p.10); the *Penarth Times* (22 November, p.22); the *Gem* series, and the *Barry & District News* (22 November, p.10) The *Bridgend & Valleys Recorder* reproduced content from the *Bryntirion Bulletin*, a school newsletter (4 December, p.5; 11 December, p.10). The *Gem* series ran AROUND AND ABOUT THE LOCAL WIS and the *Abergavenny Chronicle*, WI NEWS. A pensioners' association was given space in the *Bridgend & Valleys Recorder* (20 November, p.4), and the *Cowbridge Gem* printed BRIDGE CLUB NEWS AT COWBRIDGE (13 December, p.3). The Rhymney Valley Partnership Board was given a column by *Rhymney Valley Express*, and the principal projects officer for Monmouth county council enjoyed a weekly space to discuss planning and development in the *Abergavenny Chronicle*.

News, then, was not just defined 'professionally', but embraced versions of both community communication and the brokering of flows of information from official

bodies to readers. The multi-layered nature of government in Wales – Westminster, the NAfW, large unitary local authorities, and many small to medium-sized towns (see pages 68-9) – may have rendered such communication more necessary. As Kirkpatrick (2000, 34-5) has pointed out, in relation to the local press in Australia, networks of correspondents extended newspapers' capacity to scope their territories, while their capacity to scrutinize government declined (Bromley 2005a). One example of the way in which the everyday working of the systems world at the level of lived experience was engaged by newspapers was the reporting of ordinary magistrates' court hearings. By the 1990s increases in the numbers of cases heard and declines in the numbers of journalists employed coincided to significantly reduce the number of reports from the courts appearing in the local press (Clother 1994, 232). In 2001, the *Rhymney Valley Express* and *Glamorgan Gazette* ran columns of brief notices from local courts, headed JUST LOOK WHO'S BEEN IN COURT. These could equally be regarded as concomitant to the focus on crime evident in features such as VALE CRIME ROUND-UP (*Gem* series) and CRIME FILE (*Barry & District News & Penarth Times*).

Enabling journalism

Information about crime (if not court cases) could be classed as 'useful': certainly, advice on crime prevention (*Cowbridge Gem* – 6 December, p.11) seemed to be in that category. A majority of the local papers published basic information intended to be primarily of use to readers: WHAT'S ON AND WHERE? (*Bridgend & Valleys Recorder*; *Gem* series; *Caerphilly Campaign*); a WHAT'S ON column (*The Post*); WHAT'S *ON*... (*Penarth Times* and *Barry & District News*; *Hereford Times*); CLAIM YOUR DATE (*Abergavenny Chronicle*), and WHAT'S ON (*Glamorgan Gazette*). These were self-explanatory, as were USEFUL VALE INFORMATION (*Gem* series) and VALE COUNCIL ROADWORKS REPORT (*Llantwit Major Gem*). THE V FILES contained news from voluntary groups (*Rhymney Valley Express*), as did HEREFORDSHIRE VOLUNTEERS (*Hereford Times*). Occasionally, specialist columns appeared giving advice and guidance: the Chief Medical Officer for Wales provided health counselling (*Rhymney Valley Express* – 30 November, p.27; 7 December, p.26 & 14 December, p.17;

Abergavenny Chronicle – 22 November, p.4), and GAVO Caerphilly Volunteers Bureau contributed a column on Altzheimer's Disease (*Rhymney Valley Express* – 7 December, p.6).

Enabling journalism was far less in evidence. Only one possible example was found: two feature articles on the National Pub Watch initiative, supported by Gwent Police and, therefore, more akin to an advertorial (*Caerphilly Campaign* – 6 December, p.10 & 13 December, p.10). Otherwise, useful information was located in themed pages, sections and supplements: FAMILY LIFE, HEALTH & FITNESS and LEISURE & HOBBIES (*Penarth Times* – 29 November, p.14, 6 December, p.14 & 13 December, p.13 & *Barry & District News* – 29 November, p.17; 6 December, p.18 & 13 December, p.14); a gardening column (*Abergavenny Chronicle* – 13 December, p.4), and LEISURE TIMES (*Hereford Times*).

The idea of 'useful information' appeared to extend in some papers beyond supplying basic data about public services and civic activities to boosting local businesses (*The Post* – 22 November, p.15; 6 December, pp10 & 16; *Barry & District News* – 6 December, p.22; *Bridgend Post* – 6 December, p.7; *Hereford Times* – 22 November, p.21). It was possible that the local press dealt routinely with matters which were so close to its readers – and called them 'news' – that the role of 'a guide to life and consumption' was rendered redundant. Furthermore, it was equally likely that local newspapers lacked the editorial resources to buy in, or alternatively to research and publish, such material. Of the fourteen titles, only five carried separate supplements, the majority of which were no more than advertising vehicles – *Rhymney Valley Express* and *Glamorgan Gazette* (TV EXTRA); *The Post* (MOTORING); *Caerphilly Campaign* (WHEELS) and *Hereford Times* (MOTORING TIMES).

Affiliated journalism

Notwithstanding the 'campaigning culture' among the local press identified in Chapter 5, there was little evidence of affiliated journalism in the sample. The *Post* newspapers

took up an NAfW initiative on recycling, publishing a front-page article written by Sue Essex, the minister for the environment (*The Post* – 6 December, pp.1 & 6 & 13 December, pp.1 & 16-17; also *Barry Post* 6 December, pp.1 & 3 & 13 December, pp.1 & 6-7, & *Bridgend Post* – 6 December, pp.1 & 5 & 13 December, pp.1 & 9). The *Gem* newspapers raised £2,000 for a man with an inoperable brain tumour (*Cowbridge Gem* – 6 December, p.1). The *Glamorgan Gazette* Appeal was designed to raise funds for a scanner for the Princess of Wales hospital (6 December, p.18), and the *Rhymney Valley Express* co-sponsored a SANTA APPEAL (30 November, p.2).

The question raised was why was the local press so weakly involved in enabling and affiliated journalism?

Conclusion

It was evident that banal, precise, enabling and affiliated journalism could be found in all newspapers in the sample. However, they were configured differently. Were patterns discernible in these configurations? Banal journalism drew on, and established, discourses of UK-, British-, English-, Welsh-, (Gwent) regional-, (Cardiff) metropolitan- and local- nesses which traced, to some extent, the formal layering of the press. (UK) national newspapers reflected a Britishness, which tended to privilege Englishness. Where elements of that press reoriented themselves, they could inflect Britishness with a degree of Welshness. For their part, the national papers of Wales resorted to a greater stereotyping of Welshness, based on cultural interpretations of knowingness and mateyness. The evening press located Welshness as a context for regional and metropolitan identities, and local newspapers drew on the same Welshness as a setting for localness. Moreover, while the (UK) national press contained elements of enabling and affiliated journalism, these were significantly weaker in the Welsh national press and the evening press, and almost non-existent in local newspapers. However, this was not a simple pattern. There were differences between newspapers ostensibly in the same layers – between the Wales edition of the *News of the World* and the *Welsh Mirror*; between *Wales on Sunday* and the *Western Mail*, and between the *Echo* and the *Argus*. It

was also apparent that banal, precise, enabling and affiliated journalisms were interlocked, and that they overlapped. The ways in which identity was represented suggested the scoping of the news, which largely determined – and was determined by – its usefulness, and offered opportunities for newspapers to interpose themselves in the news agenda. These relationships seemed to mesh with some dimensions of Lasswell's (1960) functionalist analysis (see page 79). Thus, it was the connections and coincidences – the ways in which these journalisms were configured – which had most importance, reflecting the interpretation and representation of the cognitively (culturally) constructed 'environment' (Lasswell 1960, 130).

It was tempting to conclude that Sparks' (2000, 15-16) '"continuum" model', in which all newspapers contained '"bundles" of different kinds of content' (see page 191), applied. Yet that would suggest that the news was primarily scaled in a hierarchical way – from the national to the local – rather than scoped. Rather, Lasswell's noted formula could be adapted and an answer sought to each of the following questions:

Who
Surveyed What
In Which Cultural Context
To Correlate Whom
For What Effect?

These 'questions' correspond broadly to precise, banal, enabling and affiliated journalisms (from Lasswell 1960, 117-8). The connection was made clearer by taking account of Lamsam's (1997) sub-categories to Lasswell's original functions, which divided surveillance into (a) warning – news of danger or threat, (b) instrumental – news essential to society, and (c) exposure – non-essential information; and which divided correlation into the more self-explanatory (a) booster and (b) exposer.

These – and not national/local distinctions about news – were at work in the representations of Welshness (the differences between the *Welsh Mirror*, *Wales on*

Sunday and *Western Mail*); in the representations of urbanity (the *Echo* and *Argus*), and in the representations of localness (the *Argus* and the weeklies). One clear determinant of such distinctions appeared to be the range of the professional journalism domain, and the capacity and willingness of journalists to share the communicative act with those outside journalism. Lamsam (1997) found that an emphasis on surveillance-warning and surveillance-instrumental was associated with a focus on political news, news about government and news agendas largely set by administrative functions. There was a correlation with the use of transmission to curtail cultural expression (commonly, to reminiscence and nostalgia – 'recalling the old days'). Finally, correlation appeared most often in its booster form. Lamsam made the point that, given her sample newspapers were considered to be propagandist and subject to overt censorship, 'professional' journalism would configure editorial content differently. As we have seen (page 115), it has long been a criticism of local journalism that it, too, followed the 'unprofessional' model, and that opening up editorial space to non-professional contributors would only further cultivate this approach. A reading of the thematic textual analysis conducted here indicated, however, that loosening the journalists' grip on news resulted in a re-orientation of the topics (rather than the functionality) of surveillance, correlation and transmission – deciding what demanded, or was worthy of, attention.

8
Conclusion

Conjecturing why younger Americans were no longer interested in the news, and especially local news, Mindich (2005, 122-125) contended that journalism needed to be more accessible, to display 'humanness', humour, empathy and passion, and be engaging, in order to promote 'greater news involvement'. By the late 1990s it had become received wisdom in the UK, too, that 'the press's biggest enemy is ... youth' (Christmas 1997b). An analysis of overall news use during the US presidential election in 2004 concluded, 'young people ... are abandoning mainstream sources' in favour of the internet and comedy TV, such as the 'phoney news' of *The Daily Show* (Pew Research Center 2005). Pessimists believed that no response from within journalism would alter the situation: 'The important things that affect readership are happening before the customers are old enough to turn up in the reader surveys' (Meyer 2004, 18). Yet there was evidence that young people (up to two-thirds of 15-24 year olds in the UK) still read newspapers (Christmas 1997b; Hujanen n.d.). Nevertheless, and notwithstanding a broad satisfaction with local newspapers, they could still feel that the news they read 'lack[ed] a connection with their everyday life.' While nearly eight out of ten young people surveyed in Finland reported that the news provided them with important information, fewer than 25% regarded local news as personally interesting, and only 8% felt it addressed issues of relevance to their everyday lives. It was argued that this militated against greater engagement and potential participation. Young Finns viewed journalism as static 'packages of facts' (Hujanen n.d.). The problem, Christmas (1997b) asserted, arose not because young people were tuning out, but because newspapers 'believed[d] their own prejudices'.

Even young journalists were irked by the way the news was told. Invited to contribute to imagining the newspaper of the future, American journalists aged 30 and under came up with a list of challenges to 'the traditions of conventional ... local journalism' (Brown 2005, 3):

- adopt the tabloid format
- abandon the inverted pyramid
- use less wire copy
- be more questioning of authority
- embrace more diversity
- publish more international coverage
- publish stories about people, people, people
- objectivity should be optional
- adopt magazine-style narratives
- adopt a conversational tone
- have bite
- be visual
- be entertainment-heavy
- be enabling
- employ and publicize more people like us (Cox 2003).

The former founding editor in chief of MSNBC calculated that journalism needed to be interactive, immediate, personality-driven, participatory, inclusive, carefully paced and packaged, and graphic – elements once considered distracting embellishments – as well as, opinionated, transparent and more open to reader participation – more akin to nineteenth century viewspapers – bringing

the public – including their local community – into their news gathering and news delivery planning processes in ways that were probably unimaginable just a few years ago. ... news executives need to think about their products as participatory community institutions, not merely as distributors of their own creative output, and open themselves to input, feedback, ideas and journalism from outside their own organizations. (Brown 2005, 7-9 & 11)

This was hardly innovative thinking. More than a decade previously, the *UK Press Gazette* (1993) noted the calls for 'a complete reversal of the norms which too many of us have taken for granted' to stimulate local newspaper reading. It involved

> bringing the readers into the newspaper at every opportunity, giving them ownership and a real sense of involvement. That way, journalists focus on what readers want to be told rather than on what journalists want to tell them

Such ideas were mooted even earlier – in the 1970s. All the same, journalists in the US, questioned for the decennial survey conducted by the Indiana University School of Journalism, showed no effects of this: their basic understanding of what constituted 'news' was determined, first and foremost, by their training, their supervisors, their news sources and their peers in the newsroom (Poynteronline 2003). There was no evidence to suggest that this approach did not apply elsewhere: contemporary journalism manuals published internationally for English-speaking readers continued to cling to 'professional' ideas of newsworthiness and the inverted pyramid writing style (Burns 2002, 77 & 113). Specifically, in the UK journalism embarked on a period of professionalization (through the institution of university courses and programmes) precisely as the orthodoxy was being challenged.

Although the NCTJ was instrumental in this development and the promotion of the 'one journalism model', it was soon progressively marginalized as other branches of the media and, eventually, universities laid claims to shaping journalism education and training. This meant that journalism as a single occupation scaled from the most local (smallest) to the regional/provincial, the national and even international (largest) became less tenable. Nevertheless, the idea that local journalism was the poor relation of national journalism did not disappear. Local newspapers were either training-grounds for transient young journalists, or dead-ends for those who had failed to make it to Fleet Street. The pervasive effect of the 'one journalism' model encouraged homogeneity in news values and news writing, many local newspapers simply aping the national press. While the NCTJ promoted a version of local journalism (based on Oxdown), many university programmes idealized the journalism of the regional evening press – and some students aimed at national newspapers. Ironically, adherence to 'one journalism' models also contributed to

their fragmentation, as ideas of what constituted even basic journalism multiplied across radio, television, magazines and the internet; tabloid and broadsheet styles. This resulted in a division between what were considered to be 'professional' models and those determined by other factors, notably 'the market'.

Largely absent from these debates were the people for whom journalism was intended: journalists defended their obligation to address what was *in* the public interest, while others stressed what the public could be interested *in*. The former constituted its audiences as citizens; the latter saw them as consumers. 'Professional' journalism was supposed to warn of dangers and threats and provide its audiences with essential information; to expose malfunction and malfeasance, and to expose the conflicts which underlay community cohesion (albeit for their ultimate reconciliation). 'Market-driven' journalism was viewed as providing non-essential information, acting as a booster and transmitting unchallenging consensual values. However, 'propaganda' models combined the warning and instrumental functions with boosterism and the transmission of non-conflictual culture. 'Alternative' journalism often linked non-essential information with exposure and conflict. While 'professional' journalists denigrated such approaches, they laid bare the possibility of configuring elements of journalism in ways which went beyond this restrictive range of models. Negotiating these possibilities became journalism's main challenge:

> It is, then, also journalists' task and in their interests to look for new ways to enrich local journalism – to reach issues and perspectives that are interesting and relevant to the readers' everyday lives, to create public participation, and to enhance dialogue. (Hujanen n.d.)

As constructs of local journalism were tied closely to ideas of proximity, what constituted 'locale' was crucial to such considerations. Traditionally, 'local' was construed territorially: local journalism in particular was defined by its geographical locatedness; but the 'here' of a location also had a 'there' of situatedness. A scaled fixity of place was accompanied by a scoped concept of 'us'. A scaling of news which drew on correlations of size (small towns had small newspapers and give rise to small stories) resulted in particular distortions (small stories in small towns were big news in small newspapers). On the other hand, a scoping of news relied on other signifiers of 'us' which indicated proximity through shared identities. Such

journalism was 'precise'. It built on understandings of 'us' which reflected and created images of self-identity, transmitting a sense of shared culture. This journalism was 'banal'. Appeals at the level of cognition were leveraged into concrete contingent relevance – providing information on which readers could act. This journalism was 'enabling'. Finally, as the local press mapped out contingent and cognitive locales, it also sought to position itself as points on those maps, interposing itself in the news it reported. Information was used to pinpoint issues and campaigns. This was 'affiliated' journalism. Local news was made, then, less by scaled reference to 'professional' norms, exemplified by national standards and practices, but more through scoping identities which were not necessarily coincidental to territory.

Precise, banal, enabling and affiliated journalism was found in all the UK press. However, they were not configured identically. The local press invested more in precise and banal journalism than it did in enabling and affiliated journalism. Moreover, differences existed with this regard among the local press. That was perhaps not unexpected. Hybrid forms of journalism, which melded 'professional', 'propaganda' and 'alternative', as well as other models – newszak, McJournalism, communi-commercial journalism – were identified. Newspapers used banal, precise, enabling and affiliated journalism distinctively to establish relationships with their imagined communities. Precise journalism surveyed the environment by scoping it; banal journalism transmitted values; enabling and affiliated journalism correlated news with its audiences. This occurred within contexts which were largely outside the control of journalism – in media contexts which were determined by tendencies to oligopolization and concentration of ownership and control, and in broader contexts of social, cultural, political and economic change. These contexts were also inter-related, impacting on (re)definitions of 'the local'. This was particularly acute in south-east Wales where industrial decline, urban regeneration, demographic shifts, linguistic and cultural associations, different histories, and politics were refracted through the prism of devolution and the establishment of the NAfW, while the local press was controlled by oligopolies based outside Wales.

The new politico-cultural context was reflected by most of the press in south-east Wales – but by no means the press in Wales as a whole – through providing a setting of Welshness for other constructs of belonging. Except, perhaps, in the case of the

Western Mail, which had established a prior claim to being 'the national newspaper of Wales', Welshness did not supplant other forms of belonging, however. They survived in various forms – the matey-ness of *Wales on Sunday*, the consumerist metropolitan boosterism of the *South Wales Echo*, the traditionalist regionalism of the *South Wales Argus*. Viewed in this way, these papers seemed to break the boundaries of accepted classifications of the local or regional press. Furthermore, an important distinction emerged as to how newspapers constructed these senses of belonging. For a significant number of them – mainly the weekly press, but also the *Argus* – this meant not relying wholly on 'professional' journalism, but encouraging citizen-reporters to contribute to their columns. Participation of this kind was of a different order from the manipulated involvement in competitions, call-ins, votes and events staged by *Wales on Sunday* and the *Echo*. It handed elements of editorial gate-keeping and agenda-setting to ordinary people.

When it came to making local news, the editors of weekly newspapers acknowledged the distinctions to be drawn between 'professional' journalism and 'community' reporting. They accepted overwhelmingly the place of the latter in their papers. Nevertheless, an uneasy accommodation seemed to have been reached with more orthodox 'professional' forms of journalism, and journalism schools, where many young journalists were initially trained, were on the whole more reluctant to abandon traditional approaches to newsmaking, even though a number recognized that this was no longer the journalism practised by much of the local press.

Disaggregating the influences on these developments was difficult. There was some evidence that, ironically, younger university-trained and more female journalists were more amenable to changing local news agendas and gate-keeping practices. Corporate interpretations of 'the market' also seemed inevitably to play a role, particularly in Trinity Mirror owned titles like *Wales on Sunday* and the *Echo*. Although it was not directly tested, an atomized consumerist culture, as represented particularly in the *Echo*, was no doubt a factor. Finally, politics made a contribution through the reinvigoration of the idea of Welshness, and the search for what Williams (1999b) called 'the new Wales'. This effect may have been mitigated by the prior technocratization of much of the local politics, which diminished the direct relationship between local power and the local population. The net result was more

reliably measured qualitatively than quantitatively, however. Although there was no definitive evidence that the local press in south-east Wales published less political information, it seemed that it eschewed the radicalism which had historically characterized those local newspapers. Except for the *Argus* (ironically, widely regarded by the dominant Labour Party in south-east Wales as a Conservative newspaper), the press reproduced a discourse of acquired historical neutrality, eliding the radical past: in the case of the *Western Mail* this extended to a shallow stereotyping of Wales as a land of song and rugby.

Was this tantamount to dumbing-down; the assertion of a restrictive, exclusionary discourse?

While there was some evidence that some newspapers pursued communi-commercialism, and filtered public voices through their own journalism, where public voices were allowed to be heard directly, more traditional forms of community were apparent; an interest and involvement in charities, volunteer groups, cultural activities, and so on – even, on occasion, politics. To be sure, the overall tenor was conservative. To understand this more theoretically, we can turn to the Japanese concept of *dochaku* (literally, 'living on one's own land) which was massaged into *dochakuka* (the origin of the term 'glocal') (Robertson 1995, 28). The contemporary (re)construction of 'local', Robertson contended, was a function of globalization (p.30). That is not to say that experiences of standardization, including the growing globalization of communications, were uniformly universal (p.31). Rather, 'the ideology of home' represented part of the globalized condition of homelessness, and 'home' and 'locale' were not always one and the same (pp.35 & 39). Thus, 'one's land' and living on it may be, separately and/or together, both familiar and alien (p.41) – a space of coal mining, steel making, labour movement politics, auto-didactism, male voice choirs, brass bands, the local paper; and of fast food restaurants, branded goods, imported television programming, pop music, and a corporatized press.

The 'news paradigm' and its diffusion from its roots in Anglo-Saxon journalism, along with the functional differentiation associated with modern societies (Høyer and Pöttker 2005), were integral to this, providing journalism with the apparatus of a

profession (Pöttker 2005, 266-7). The paradigm determined proto-universal norms for journalism, based on the event as reportable, news values frames, interviewing as an information-gathering technique, the inverted pyramid style of writing and the journalistic notion of objectivity (Høyer 2005, 10-14). The universality of the journalism project called into existence the particularities of 'the local', and expressed its hybridization. What if the news paradigm were not a universal mechanism for overcoming the barriers to communication and imagining societies in modern contexts? If instead it worked to exclude key elements from 'societal talk'? If, rather, 'the news paradigm ... appears as a cultural instrument, being used in journalism by the bourgeois elite of democratic societies to defend their privileges' without 'respect for the audience'? Then any dissolution of established forms of 'professional' local journalism, to be more inclusive of hitherto marginalized or silenced voices, represented neither dumbing-down nor democratic deficits, but further democratization (Pöttker 2005, 271-2).

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Note: *Web site addresses (URLs) have been given in short form on the understanding that sites are easily navigated and citations can be simply checked. Where this does not appear to apply, URLs have been listed in full. Some articles were accessed electronically, in which cases the pagination of the original could not be traced. Paper copies of electronically accessed material have been kept by the author. Access dates refer to those printed on these hard copies.*

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