

Newspaper Campaigns, Publics and Politics

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For my parents, Gill and Alan Birks

Abstract

This thesis examines the practice of campaigning journalism, where a newspaper seeks political influence and claims to do so on behalf of its readers or a wider public. It is a production and content study of campaign journalism in the Scottish press, examining the journalists' orientation to their readers, both in terms of social responsibility toward them in facilitating their citizenship, and in terms of accountability or answerability to them as their quasi-representatives. The study also analyses the newspapers' representation of the substance and legitimacy of public opinion to politicians at the Scottish Parliament, in particular the governing Scottish Executive (now Scottish Government), and the framing of politicians' obligation to respond to public demands as formulated by the newspapers. In short, it seeks to investigate newspapers' democratic claims to be the voice of 'the public'.

Existing literature indicates that a key legitimization of campaigning journalism is that the newspaper is acting on behalf of a public or publics. However, it is not clear how these claims are substantiated. Existing mechanisms of accountability and normative conventions of responsibility are based on the liberal model of democracy, whereby the press are responsible for informing voters. In campaigning, the press instead adopt the language of representing group interests or protest politics that would fit with a corporatist or participatory model of democracy. These alternative models presuppose active or at least attentive publics, and newspapers' interaction with and representation of them in this sense. This would fit with popular notions of Scottish political history as characterised by activism, and the aspirations of the Scottish Parliament.

However, the campaigns instead addressed an imagined public that were conceived of as a market, and represented 'the public' as a passive and powerless aggregate of interests. Despite campaigning being taken up on behalf of disadvantaged groups, those affected were only given a voice to express their feelings as victims, and political advocacy was largely reserved to the newspaper rather than extended to associations and organisations in civic society. The neo-liberal assumption of private (not political) self-determination and freedom as the defence of property and other personal interests meant that affected individuals were portrayed as passive and vulnerable 'victims' whose freedom and agency were oppressed by criminal perpetrators. Where social welfare was addressed it was dissociated from taxation, and portrayed in terms of consumer preferences. Publics were otherwise addressed and portrayed as an aggregate mass of instrumental interests and fearful, defensive feelings, not as associative or discursive.

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own independent work, except where referenced to others. It was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Glasgow.

I further declare that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted for any other degree.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines the practice of campaigning journalism, where a newspaper seeks political influence and claims to do so on behalf of its readers or a wider public. It is a production and content study of campaign journalism in the Scottish press, examining the journalists' orientation to their readers, both in terms of social responsibility toward them in facilitating their citizenship, and in terms of accountability or answerability to them as their quasi-representatives. The study also analyses the newspapers' representation of the substance and legitimacy of public opinion to politicians at the Scottish Parliament, in particular the governing Scottish Executive (now Scottish Government), and the framing of politicians' obligation to respond to public demands as formulated by the newspapers. In short, it seeks to investigate newspapers' democratic claims to be the voice of 'the public'.

British newspapers tend to be partisan than in other liberal democracies (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), and within their industry Code of Practice (Press Complaints Commission, 2007a) reserve the right to be biased in party political and ideological terms. However, newspaper owners and editors argue that a newspaper's bias serves not to influence its readers but to reflect their existing opinions. Newspapers often make unsubstantiated reference to 'what people think' or 'are saying' (Lewis et al., 2005), whether as a general, undifferentiated mass of 'ordinary people', as 'voters', or as 'decent', 'law-abiding' or 'hard-working' people. In the national press, the Daily Mail in particular argues that it is the authentic voice of 'Middle England', recently rebranded 'MidBritain' after a market research exercise (Gibson, 2008), highlighting the commercial basis of such conceptions or imaginings of the audience. The political ambitions of the Mail included campaigns for a referendum on the EU constitution, for lower fuel duty, and against changes to gambling laws. The apparent influence of the tabloid and mid-market press on the New Labour government has been noted, most frequently by journalists (e.g. Jones, 1999: 154-6), although this has also been interpreted as more of an impact on presentation rather than policy (Fairclough, 2000). Furthermore, the government in London have themselves been focused on commercial measurements of public approval via focus groups rather than through democratic engagement (Fairclough, 2000).

The architects of the Scottish Parliament disagreed with this liberal, or even neo-liberal, approach to governance, where 'the public' is conceptualised as an aggregate of individuals, and their freedom of expression is exercised through market mechanisms as individual choice. Instead, aspiring to a more Scandinavian corporatist model (Arter, 2004), they conceived of Scottish society as a network of overlapping publics, engaged in civic society; indeed the influential Scottish Constitution Convention were themselves constituted of civic bodies such as trade unions and churches (Lynch, 2001). The Scottish media, meanwhile, benefited from a more visible, proximate level of governance, with whom they had more of a voice, but did not

necessarily share the aspirations of the Parliament for the new post-devolution Scotland. Journalists were consulted on the arrangements at the Scottish Parliament, but newspaper journalists in particular used that influence to resist transparency initiatives such as the presumption of on-the-record briefings, and informally replicated other Westminster practices such as lobby journalism (Schlesinger et al., 2001). Whilst the Parliament aspired to be more transparent and accessible to Scottish publics, the press seemed to jealously guard their own behind-the-scenes influence.

It could be argued that devolution of power to regional governance makes politics more accountable to those it directly affects, with the benefits of a scale on which direct participation is more practical, and individuals' voices have more weight. However, the local scale can also mean that politics is personalised, that clientalism and nepotism are more likely, and that change is more easily resisted (Schudson, 1998; Fishkin 1991 cited in Held, 2006). The personal interconnectedness of politicians, journalists and lobbyists in post-devolution Scotland was illustrated diagrammatically in the Sunday Herald newspaper (reproduced in Schlesinger et al., 2001: 20), and is referred to satirically as the 'Scotia Nostra' (see Chapter 10), likening the power and access behind closed doors to Mafioso connections. Yet there is also a popular notion of Scotland as a less individualistic and more collective society, in part due to the feeling of difference from the more English powerful neighbour (see Chapter 8), and in particular the popular understanding of a distinct Scottish history, from the 18th century Radical movement, through Red Clydeside, to Tommy Sheridan's Scottish Socialist Party. In this context newspaper campaigning could have a very different function.

This thesis will therefore aim to analyse campaign practice in the Scottish press, as normatively constructed by journalists, as expressed in campaign texts, and as interpreted by the political classes at whom it is aimed; and to locate it theoretically in terms of these political and democratic models and the social power of public and press. It will not seek to make a measurement or assessment of 'public opinion' on the issues, or of readers' reception of the campaigns, but will instead focus on the journalists' engagement with representation of such publics, and on politicians as a specific audience for those representations. In as far as this research includes a reception element then, it is in asking politicians about their perception of the campaign pressures on them and their beliefs about Scottish publics, from the press and from alternative sources of information.

The first objective was to explore the democratic legitimacy of newspaper advocacy within different models of the press, publics and politics. To this end the study aimed to query journalists' perception of the audience for whom they are writing; what readers need to know, what they want to read, what they will understand, and the relative importance of these considerations; and to interrogate journalists' claims to represent their readers or a wider public, especially when addressing politicians on their behalf. The second objective was to

explore the intended political impact of the campaigning activity, and the implications of the conceptualisation and representation of publics for Scottish democracy.

These themes are introduced in Chapter 2 with an examination of how the democratic role of the press has been theorised – both in terms of informing the electorate (liberal democracy) and representing particular publics, causes or interests (corporatism) – as well as prior research in the area on which this study will build. After outlining the methodological approach and execution of the study (Chapter 3), and introducing the case studies (Chapter 4), the following four chapters address the first objective in terms of journalists' accounts of their production of campaign journalism (Chapters 5 and 6) and the evidence of this practice in the campaign content (Chapters 7 and 8). Chapter 5 will explore how journalists understand or imagine their audience, in particular the extent to which they believe the newspaper can and should firstly inform and engage and secondly represent and mobilise readers on the campaign issues. Chapter 6 goes on to further interrogate the basis of this imagined public in the minds of journalists, and their claims of accountability to the publics whom they are responsible for informing or claim to represent. Chapter 7 picks up on the issues explored in the first half of Chapter 5, and analyses the ways in which journalists' conception of both their social responsibility to *inform* the audience and the commercial constraints on that role are evident in the framing of the campaign issues, including the accommodation of advocacy within that liberal approach. Chapter 8 relates to the second half of Chapter 5, and analyses the *representation* of publics in the campaigns in terms of the attribution of political opinions, agency and influence to various publics, and therefore evidence of a corporatist approach.

Chapters 9 and 10 address the second objective, and therefore turn to the ways in which the campaigns address and are responded to by politicians. Chapter 9 explores the ways in which the campaign articles put pressure on politicians to act, whether in line with or against the dominant press representation of 'public opinion'. Chapter 10 investigates both journalists' and politicians' accounts of the political impact of the campaigns, with particular focus on the responses of the three Scottish cabinet ministers who were addressed by the campaigns, their negotiation of media pressure and other representations of (and contact with) various publics. Chapter 11 then draws together these findings and locates them in the theoretical context of media and democracy.

This research will be of interest to an academic audience as a contribution to the debate outlined above and in the next chapter, but also to the editors, journalists and politicians who are the subjects of study to relate their professional practice to the wider context. Finally, it will be of interest to citizens who are interested in politics and the media and their role in civil society and the democratic process.

Chapter 2: The Dimensions of Campaign Journalism: Academic Literature on Journalism, Democracy, and Public Opinion

This chapter will review the existing literature on media theory and research relevant to the study of campaign journalism. The first section looks at existing writing on newspaper campaigns, to establish the context of the research and how this study will add to current understanding of the area. The second section explores various democratic models, and the ways in which news media can play a democratic role within each, starting with liberal democracy and the liberal model of the press, and then looking at more participative and deliberative versions. The third section goes on to develop notions of ‘the public’ or ‘publics’ and ‘public opinion’, how they are defined, and what discursive capacity has been attributed to them, including in the media. Finally, this chapter will focus on the democratic and media systems of Scotland, and indicate the research direction suggested by the literature.

2.1. Campaign journalism

In the study of media, campaign journalism as a *genre* of news has been neglected. Most detailed studies of the media have instead addressed particular *topics* of news, such as industrial relations, race and immigration, international conflict, and so on. There have been some studies of the ways in which existing protest movements have gained publicity and the media representation of particular social movements – such as the 1960s student ‘new left’ movement in the USA (Gitlin, 1980). Similarly, Eric Neveu (2002) examined the representation of farmers’ protests in France. Two articles have more specifically addressed campaigns initiated and run *by* newspapers, specifically the local press. Meryl Aldridge (2003) reviewed a range of local press campaigns identifying norms and discourses in the trade magazine the *Press Gazette*, and Cross and Lockyer (2006) made a case study of a specific anti-paedophile campaign that ran in the Nottingham Evening Post. A report by the Labour-affiliated think tank Demos will also be considered in this section, although its focus was on the national press.

Much of the existing literature on campaign journalism does not address the accountability of the press to the public for whom they claim to speak; although such claims are recounted they are either accepted at face value (Neveu, 2002) or noted as unsubstantiated, “a real and/or imagined notion” of public opinion (Cross and Lockyer, 2006: 288), without being the focus of the study. There is also more written on the access of independent ‘grassroots’ protest groups to (favourable) coverage in the media (Gitlin, 1980; Neveu, 2002), than on campaigns *initiated* and led by a newspaper.

Where access to publicity has been addressed, it is framed as a case of structural bias in relation to favoured sources rather than advocacy as such – where Gitlin (1980) argued that the media was hostile to social movements, Neveu (2002) counters that *local* journalism could be quite supportive of protests in the community and less sympathetic toward remote leaders. He argues that this is due to the geographical closeness of local journalists to their sources and therefore necessarily to “local’ public opinion”, conflating accounts from sources with the views of the wider community. Indeed other studies of the local press suggest that it is no more accessible to ‘ordinary people’ than the national press (Ross, 2006). Rather this suggests a dependence on a different set of officials, criticism of whom is stifled, as Murphy (1976) found in his study of English local newspapers. This does not indicate a more responsive press, but conversely a ‘heteronomy’ (Bourdieu, 2005) or co-dependence that could be employed to advantage. For instance, Cross and Lockyer (2006) found this to be central to the national government strategy, de-fusing local press opposition to plans for re-housing released paedophiles simply by employing a local media officer. This suggests that the editorial line is defined by journalist-source relations rather than journalist-audience responsibilities, despite the claims to the contrary.

Geographical proximity is assumed to confer a local identity on local papers, but in fact, the ‘localness’ of an audience can be problematic, as a geography-based readership is more diverse than one based on shared social background, interests or values. Aldridge (2003) argued that this presents a commercial (rather than ideological) problem for local newspapers, and that populist discourses, especially personalisation of blame and the construction of ‘outsiders’, were used to universalise campaign issues, to create an “imagined community” (2003: 492) as a market for the local newspaper.

The mission is convincingly to imagine the community by appealing to as many inhabitants with a stake in local issues as possible. At the logical extreme there need be no shared sentiments at all. (Aldridge, 2003:497)

Indeed, Aldridge backed up her own claim that local press are an important topic of study with a commercial market research study (2003: 497); the Future Foundation’s finding that “life is local” defined people’s lived experience almost exclusively in terms of commercial activity, specifically shopping and leisure activities related to local advertising categories (Future Foundation, 2003). This research – commissioned by the Newspaper Society (which promotes the local press to advertisers) – provided no evidence for the independent existence of a political or value-based community that is *not* constructed. Conversely, however, a study by Demos found little support for a commercial imperative for campaigning, as popular campaigns did not increase the sales of the newspaper (Milne, 2005: 41). Furthermore, there is some evidence for a substantively-based or cultural national identity in Scotland that *could* constitute an “imagined community” in Anderson’s (1991) original terms.

The commercially-motivated populism identified by Aldridge can be associated with aggressively adversarial or cynical media (Blumer and Gurevitch, 1995; Lloyd, 2004), which

could disenfranchise the public by discouraging electoral engagement in favour of single-issue protest. In a report entitled “Manufacturing Dissent” – a play on the title of Herman and Chomsky’s famous text (1988) – Demos conversely suggested that the media were biased in *opposition* to the governing classes (Milne, 2005). Kirsty Milne, the author of the report, argued that a hostile press was instrumental in whipping up public protests rather than simply reporting them. The implication is that the contemporary constructed consensus is one against the common enemy of the *government*, replacing the criminal or othered outsiders previously constructed as the scapegoats for society (Cohen, 1973; Hall et al., 1978; Cohen and Young, 1981; Ericson et al., 1987; van Dijk, 2000). However, these findings could equally be interpreted as evidence not only of the political influence of newspaper campaigns, but also potentially a democratic role in mobilising political participation, even if it is limited to single issue politics and disconnected from representative politics.

Where journalists have access to proximate leaders, then, their dependency on elite individuals as sources may undermine oppositional stances, but where the relevant leaders are remote and inaccessible journalists may be oppositional and even hostile to the point of undermining faith in representative politics. However, it is equally possible that adversarial campaigns merely reflect (and reinforce) voters’ rational disillusionment in an occasional process in which only marginal constituencies are addressed and meaningfully influential. Even assuming that this is the case, though, newspapers then presume to redress citizens’ disenfranchisement in a liberal democracy by speaking up for them or organising and framing their mobilisation. The literature on campaigning and advocacy therefore leaves unanswered questions about the imagined publics addressed by the press and the legitimacy of their representations of ‘public opinion’. These questions are related to the democratic role of the press, which depends on the dominant or preferred model of democracy.

2.2. Media and democracy

This section will first address the dominant concept of ‘liberal democracy’, its theoretical basis, and how it is connected to the libertarian and social responsibility models of the press. Other theoretical and ‘realist’ models and media and democracy will then be discussed. Finally, the role of pressure groups in democracy versus other forms of political participation will be more closely examined, leading on to the discussion of publics in the following section.

2.2.1. The liberal model

The central tenets of liberal democracy are an elected, representative government, the sovereignty of the people in holding that government to account, the separation of powers, and the constitutional defence of civil liberties (Held, 2006: 56-95), and more specifically with ‘majoritarian’ systems whereby parties compete for “the right to represent the nation as a

whole” rather than sectional interests (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 51-2). As a form of governance, liberalism emerged as a challenge to the ‘divine right’ of the monarch and other hereditary and religious power, and was therefore radical in many ways, yet it emerged with the rising influence of a merchant middle class and was concerned with the centrality of the competitive market and the defence of private property. However, different variants of liberalism have developed over time and between various countries. In his taxonomy of democratic models, David Held (2006) distinguishes between ‘protective’ and ‘developmental’ models of liberalism, the first being more concerned with citizens’ right to prevent those with power from exercising it in their own interests, and the second focused on citizens’ obligation to ensure the pursuit of the public good.

The ‘protective’ variant of liberal democracy takes a pessimistic view of individuals as intrinsically self-serving and willing to oppress others in pursuit of their own goals, but also regards the public good as the achievement of as many of those self-interested goals as possible – the greatest utility for the greatest number (Bentham, [1776] 1988). For this reason, its proponents argued, people need a form of authority to protect their private property and interests from violence or interference, and scrutiny of that authority to protect the people from their own (equally self-interested) leaders. This is a conception of liberty in terms of ‘negative freedom’ – the absence of constraint rather than positive enabling. In more recent years this has crystallised into a ‘New Right’ or ‘neo-liberal’ notion that Held terms (after Hayek) a ‘legal democracy’ (Held, 2006: 201-8), advocating a ‘laissez-faire’ market and minimal welfare state but strong law and order. Indeed the welfare state is thought to interfere with individual rights by according citizens responsibilities to others in society, and to be misguided because there is no common aspiration or universal ‘utopia’. Only the market – conceived of as a neutral mechanism disassociated from wealth and power – can distribute goods fairly according to desert and effort. The greatest consensus that can be expected or pursued in society, then, is the common acceptance of the rule of law, to which people must be persuaded, but which should not extend to that which the people cannot accept (Held, 2006: 204).

This can be connected with a libertarian model of the press (Siebert et al., 1984), whereby the news media facilitate the ‘free marketplace of ideas’ (associated with John Stuart Mill, [1859] 1991) though he recognised the limitations of the market in other areas, see below). This can mean a partisan press without guarantee of access to all substantive views, but furthermore does not require information to be accurate, assuming that through competitive expression the ‘truth will out’, whilst individuals’ reputations can be protected by libel laws. In this model, misleading statements about public affairs are left to be exposed in the expressive ‘free’ competition – in practice dominated by those with more financial, social and cultural resources – whilst misleading statements about individuals are legally prohibited. Individual interests are defended, but common interests are neglected and assumed to be the aggregate of those individual interests.

Another derivative of protective liberal democracy was Schumpeter's 'leadership democracy' or 'competitive elitism', which held that the modern bureaucratic state was too complex and remote from the people for citizens to competently participate, other than to choose the most skilled political elites to run the country on their behalf. The associated model of the press would be a strong focus on revealing corruption or incompetence among those elected leaders – the watchdog role of the press. A defence of this model was notably made by Walter Lippmann, himself a political journalist, commentator and political advisor. In Lippmann's opinion, the public should not 'meddle', but trust in politicians as professionals, other than when a rule was 'defective' (that is, excessively restrictive), when the public may express dissent through protest and civil disobedience ([1927] 1993: 55), but not to demand improvements in their condition. His argument is further discussed toward the end of this section.

Held associates the 'developmental' variant of liberal democracy with the work of John Stuart Mill. This model focuses on the intrinsic benefits of political participation as the basis of human dignity, which would itself produce an engaged and informed citizenry capable of making decisions in for the common good (though Mill self-contradictorily argued that decisions should be weighted toward the more 'educated and cultivated'). This represents a more optimistic view of civilised society and a positive definition of liberty as facilitating citizens' equal capacity for self-government. In this aspect Mill's model accords with republican and other participatory and direct models of democracy, however, Mill thought direct democracy impractical in complex, large-scale modern societies. His form of liberal democracy places more emphasis on democratic equality than the protective model, and saw a limited place for the state provision of public goods such as education. Some of Mill's principles could therefore be interpreted as supportive of a social democratic form of government (Held, 2006: 93), and Held also sees patterns of influence on the 'New Left' notions of participatory democracy discussed below.

This more social democratic tradition can be related to the "social responsibility theory of the press" (Siebert et al., 1984), also termed a "trustee" model of journalism (Schudson, 1998), or "journalistic professionalization" (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). This is characterised by the adoption of 'professional' norms designed to facilitate the informed democratic engagement of citizens; in publishing only what is objective, accurate, impartial, balanced and fair journalists allow their readers to vote in accordance with their views, values and interests. This journalism is not, however, necessarily analytic or discursive in nature. This is the model of the press usually associated with Britain and the US, though there are significant differences both between those countries, and within them between different sections of the media market (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). The critique of this model is related more to its application than the theoretical premise, and in particular the inadequacy of good intentions in the face of structural inequalities and commercial pressures.

The analogy of socially responsible journalism with traditional professions such as medicine suggests that journalists are disinterested but expert public servants governed by their own altruistic and benign professional ideology (Gallagher, 1982: 162), serving the lay person who is not cognisant of the relevant background knowledge, or skilled in analysis.

[J]ournalists imagine a public that is often too preoccupied and too distracted to be active citizens. Therefore citizens entrust a measure of their sovereignty to journalists just as people entrust a measure of control over their bodies to doctors. The journalists are professionals who hold citizenship in trust for us, and we rely on their expertise or political analysis when we want information about the state of the country. (Schudson, 1998: 136)

Hallin and Mancini dispute the suggestion that journalists have esoteric knowledge comparable to that of doctors and lawyers, arguing that they instead “have a strategic position in the flow of information” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 35). They also assert that adherence to professional norms is not well correlated with training, but more so with levels of autonomy and a public service orientation. The autonomy of journalists from political interference does not mean that they will *necessarily* be oriented to the public interest, but it is an important condition under which journalists are free to adhere to professional norms.

Professional norms are related to the rational-legal authority of bureaucratic rules and procedures, such as recruitment on the basis of merit rather than through patronage and the exchange of favours – ‘clientalism’ (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 58-9). Correspondingly, journalists are expected to represent events, issues and proposals objectively and impartially rather than selectively in loyalty to preferred groups or in exchange for political or economic advantage. Luhmann (1995; 2000) gives an account of the news media as highly differentiated from other institutions in society that serve different functions. However, critics such as Bourdieu (2005) have argued that, whilst the western media has become disassociated from political parties, it is nevertheless predominantly characterised not by autonomy but ‘heteronomy’, especially in relation to the economic field. In other words, journalism is subject to the rationale, interests and influence of commerce.

In most liberal theory the market is not considered as a form of interference in journalists’ autonomy, but as a neutral way of protecting them from political patronage or control. However, critical theorists have noted how commercial and associated social organisational factors can impinge on journalists’ democratic duty (Curran and Seaton, 2003). Newspaper owners are often argued to enjoy considerable political influence as the owners of the means of publicity, and national newspapers have long been run at a loss for the political prestige and impact. Rupert Murdoch is the most commonly cited contemporary example for his alleged sway over the Blair government (Chippendale and Horrie, 1998; Jones, 1999), even though voting studies have tended to find little direct influence over the electorate (Berelson et al., 1954; Lazarsfeld et al., 1965; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1966). Political Economy theorists such as Herman and Chomsky (1988) suggested that media owners had direct and unambiguous

control over journalists and their output via mechanisms of reward and sanction and career progression, but Sigelman (1973) identified more subtle mechanisms of influence in his empirical study of two newsrooms. He found that journalists self-selected into jobs at newspapers with whose editorial line they already sympathised, that they internalised the editorial policy and anticipated preferred angles or even factual distortions from previous editorial revisions, and learnt by example from more senior colleagues. Journalists were conscious, however, of the tension between the pragmatics of the job and the “institutional myth” (1973: 149) of democratic legitimacy. It is also argued, however, that journalists also internalise some hegemonically-inflected newsroom assumptions to the point where they become invisible, and which can privilege certain social groups, such as the preference of elite sources as the credible “primary definers” (Hall et al., 1978).

Schudson (2005a) questioned whether unrestricted freedom of the press is something that should necessarily be championed if that includes not only freedom from state and commercial influence but also freedom from accountability to the public. Habermas (1996: 343) argued that complete autonomy is problematic, since institutions become so inward-looking that they are unable to communicate with other institutions in society on common terms. This might lead us to conclude that an entirely free and autonomous professional journalism would be so self-referential that it could not respond to criticism in any way than to refer back to its own norms and traditions and would therefore not be meaningfully accountable to citizens and certainly not representative of them. There is support for this in Gaye Tuchman’s (1972) finding that the professional norm of ‘objectivity’ was used as an end in itself, as a “strategic ritual” to defend against criticism, without any real consideration for how well informed readers would be by the resulting copy. This highlights how bureaucracy can be unaccountable – a criticism often made by journalists in relation to other institutions. However, if officials can only be prevented from using their autonomy to pursue their own political or economic interests by public scrutiny, then that must also be true of journalists. What distinguishes journalistic autonomy in the social responsibility model from a libertarian model is not only the existence of the professional norms but their formalisation in regulatory systems.

Newspaper journalists are supposed to be held to their professional principles through codes of practice such as that of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ, 1998a) and the industry self-regulatory body the Press Complaints Commission (PCC, 2007). However, unlike the medical and legal professions, there is no force of *accountability* to the NUJ code since journalists are not formally accredited by the union and therefore cannot be struck off for misconduct (Harris, 1992). Similarly, the PCC can only *request* printed apologies¹, unlike state regulator Ofcom for the broadcast media, which has legal force – a paternalistic (as

¹ Nonetheless, the PCC claims that newspapers have always complied with the rulings on the understanding that if the industry does not effectively regulate itself, the government *will* impose public regulation (Harris, 1989: 6).

opposed to authoritarian) state intervention that would be nonetheless interpreted in the US as a violation of the First Amendment (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 50).

For individual journalists, unions and associations like the NUJ can be effective in defending their autonomy from the commercial pressures summarised above, particularly where their objections are in consideration of specific regulations. For instance the NUJ offers legal representation to members who have been sacked or demoted for refusing to break the code of conduct (NUJ, 1998b). Where journalists are determined to act professionally, therefore, they can rely on the legal and financial support of their organisation, though this is more common in autocratic countries where there is more limited freedom of the press (Schudson, 2005b). This demonstrates how, as McQuail (2003:19) argues, accountability of the press is consistent with its freedom, in terms of a positive (enabling) definition of freedom. But, like the PCC, this is an internal industry form of accountability, whereby journalists regulate one another nominally in the public interest, but without recourse to public engagement on the issue. Whilst the PCC does respond to external complaints, only individuals who have been sources for stories or otherwise represented within the pages of the newspaper are considered valid complainants, whilst the general public is not able to complain about being misinformed or misled, so it is questionable to what extent the PCC code really defends the democratic public interest (Harris, 1992).

McQuail claims that public responsibility is ensured through public debate, but his account is essentially limited to peer-review through press councils and specialist media journalism, and through measures of 'public opinion' in which he includes market research and reader feedback as non-market measures of audience approval (McQuail, 2003: 271-272). Market research has traditionally been regarded as an insignificant force in journalism (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1980; Schlesinger, 1987; Tunstall, 1996), though the newsroom has changed since these studies were conducted. Production studies such as these found that journalists were dismissive and suspicious of audience research, and even of the audience itself and its lack of capabilities to decide what it wants or should be given (Schlesinger, 1987: 106-134; Allan, 1999: 109). American researchers (Underwood, 1993, 1998) have been questioning this assumption, along with some tentative comment in the UK (Barnett, 1998). Again, however, market research mechanisms also represent a negative measure of accountability that focuses on public response (not initiative) and again assumes a passive audience.

This suggests that citizens do, as Schudson described it above, "entrust a measure of their sovereignty to journalists", or at least newspapers claim that sovereignty on their behalf. This increasingly extends beyond dispassionately judging performance of citizens' elected representatives; there is typically an emphasis on expressing outrage at wrongdoing, mistakes and indiscretions (Strömbäck, 2005: 334-5), and demanding resignations. This 'watchdog' role can lead to a generally adversarial relationship between media and state (McNair, 2000;

Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 233; Lloyd, 2004), which can ultimately go as far as to cast the 'fourth estate' in the role of "surrogate opposition" (Blumer and Gurevitch, 1995: 214).

However, Splichal (2002) argued that Rousseau had defined the fourth power as *public opinion* and the press as merely an 'organ' of it, and that the press has usurped this borrowed power. According to Splichal too much emphasis is placed on the freedom of the press as a surrogate for true publicity, which he defines as the right of the people themselves to give public expression to their reasoned views. He argued that when the media act as a fourth power it is as a commercial power, and that the nominal moral (not legal) obligation of social responsibility is inadequate to the task of constraining commercial interests.

The Fourth Estate/Power model 'emancipates' power of the media from responsibility and reduces audiences to passive consumers. The press not only becomes an independent participant in the political process; it is also given more freedom and less responsibility than individual citizens. In contrast to the public's right to know, 'the right of the press' to have access to information – which is supposedly justified by the people's right to know [...] – has no counterpart in legal obligations; the press is only morally obligated to be responsible to the public, and therefore it is privileged. (Splichal, 2002: 11)

Indeed, he argues, the media are the only power *without* meaningful, enforceable accountability to the public, and therefore "it is clear that no special power should belong to the press in the name of public opinion or citizens" (2002: 14). By making political judgement the press is attempting to arrogate the public's legitimacy and right to publicity, and illegitimately standing in for the public. This critique of the liberal model of the press comes from a 'republican' or 'participatory' perspective, which argues that in the liberal system voters are 'enslaved' between elections, and will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

A more moderately participatory model within the developmental tradition of liberal democracy was advanced by pluralist theorists, who argued that between elections the people may advance their interests via pressure groups, as the pragmatic equivalent of free association in a complex and fragmented society (Held, 2006: 159). 'Classic pluralists' understood group politics as operating competitively, similarly to individuals in a market, whilst preventing a tyrannous majority by further factionalising people's interests. Whilst this can be justified as concern for minority rights, it is also motivated by fear of power in the hands of 'the masses' (2006: 163). However, a "transcendent" value consensus among citizens is assumed, within the narrow limits of which disagreement is negotiated (2006: 164-5). However, as later 'neo-pluralist' scholars acknowledged, consensus is by no means universal, due to structural inequalities in resources and influence. In media theory liberal pluralists assume that consumers enjoy a choice of newspapers with different views (external pluralism – as opposed to internal pluralism, that is, balance *within* each newspaper) and that consumer sovereignty is ensured by the competitive market, an assumption that has been challenged by critical theorists (Curran, 1991: 28-9; Murdock and Golding, 2005: 62).

Criticisms of liberal democracy have also been made by deliberative theorists, who assert that the market mechanism is inappropriate to the exercise of citizenship. The marketing and selection of political leaders “more or less the way we choose detergents” (Fishkin 1991 cited in Held, 2006: 234) leads to arbitrary or self-interested choices, which is unjust when those choices affect, not only that individual consumer, but everyone in society. Drysek connects this with an excess of instrumental rationality in both private and public life (Held, 2006: 235). Habermas (1996) gives an account of this as the colonisation of the private ‘lifeworld’ by the economic as well as political system, so that publics have been recast as employees and consumers, welfare recipients and taxpayers, and the marketisation of public services has recast citizens’ role in the interactions with the state as that of consumers (Prior et al., 1995) – like the media, individuals are increasingly subject to the logic of markets.

It is difficult to square the liberal model of self-managed responsibility and very limited accountability or public involvement, with claims made by campaigning newspapers to know the minds of ‘the public’ and speak for them in campaigning for particular policy decisions and that such ‘public opinion’ carries legitimacy. It seems likely that any theory that can account for campaign journalism as a legitimate practice must be found *outside* of the liberal model and assumptions.

2.2.2. Alternative models: corporatist, participatory, deliberative

Although the Anglo-American liberal model is frequently assumed to be universally dominant in both media and politics, or at least the ideal-type generally aspired to² (Blumer and Gurevitch, 1995), critical theory has proposed alternative models (Habermas, 1994; Strömbäck, 2005), and comparative analysis has identified distinctly separate systems operating in different countries. Comparative research started with Siebert et al’s *Four Theories of the Press* (1984), which was based only on the legitimising ideologies of media systems, and therefore homogenised the practices of western media in contrast with the communist east. Hallin and Mancini (2004) instead made a systematic study of the subtle variations in western democracy and media. One of their resulting ideal-types was a north/central European ‘democratic corporatism’ model, which is of particular interest since they noted some corporatist characteristics in the British media. Other models are theoretical rather than empirical; participatory models were developed in the 1970s and ‘80s as a normative ideal by the ‘New Left’, and the deliberative model was proposed, among others, by Jurgen Habermas (1994; 1996). Participatory models have attempted to tackle the inherent problems of unequal participation and influence by considering ways of broadening association at the local level to develop consensus or the general will. Finally, the deliberative model asserts that meaningful consensus on the common interest can only be reached through communicative participation on a disinterested basis. The corporatist, participatory,

² Whilst Hallin and Mancini did identify a trend of homogenisation toward the liberal model, this by no means proves a developmental or modernising effect supporting the ideal-type assumption.

and deliberative models of democracy will be discussed in turn, alongside the corresponding media systems (though without assuming a causal relationship between the two).

Corporatism: Corporatism refers primarily to the form of organisation of interests that prioritises tripartite negotiation between capital, labour and the state, via interest groups such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC). The advantage is that the political influence of these groups is formalised, potentially giving a greater voice to organised labour. Hallin and Mancini (2004: 53) make the distinction between the competitive, uncoordinated individual pluralism associated with liberal democracy, and corporatism's consensus-oriented, cooperatively organised pluralism where groups are formally integrated into the system. However, the down-side of being 'insider groups' is that can mean individuals can seek representation only through those insider organisations, who also undertake to keep their own members in line (Grant, 2000). Democratically, the direct negotiation with the state can also undermine the representative force of the parliament and be corrosive to transparency. Corporatism is also criticised for only addressing economic issues, and from a very managerial perspective, excluding interests and social concerns such as redistributive, environmental and minority rights organisations, associations and movements (Held, 2006: 179-83). Some interpretations of corporatism do conceive of interests in just such a broad manner. The contemporary form and function of pressure groups will be considered at the end of this section.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) associated 'democratic corporatism' with a media system characterised by a strong tradition of party-affiliated press, which has carried over into parallelism between the range of political parties – as represented not only by political parties but also other political associations – and the range of newspapers supporting them, with partisan advocacy rather than balance. They also noted a significant role for the state in funding and regulating the media. In many of these countries a range of accessed voices was ensured in public service broadcasting by distributing control among political parties and other social and political groups, a mechanism remarked on approvingly by Curran (1991). Nonetheless, alongside state regulation Hallin and Mancini found significant freedom and autonomy of the press, and alongside the political parallelism they found a mass newspaper market and a developed and formalised system of journalistic professionalism, combining aspects of the liberal model with a more broadly ideologically pluralistic model (labelled the 'polarised pluralism' model). Professionalism in this context is distinct from the liberal definition to the degree that it can simultaneously defend objectivity in its factual observations yet allow for interpretive and ideological political partisanship, standing in stark contrast to Siebert et al's (1984) view of propagandistic partisanship.

In relation to campaigning, it is the political advocacy role of journalism in this system that is of particular interest. Survey data has demonstrated a persistent "missionary" orientation in many European countries; agreement with the assertion that "championing particular values

and ideas” was an important part of their job ranged from 74% in polarised pluralist Italy, through 71% and 36% respectively in democratic corporatist Germany and Sweden, to just 21% in the liberal US (though supposedly liberal Britain fell in the middle with 45%) (Donsback 1995 cited in Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 180). This accords with Weber’s notion of the journalist as a “type of professional politician” (Weber 1946 cited in Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 155). At the same time, however, German journalists have reported being under far less editorial and managerial pressure than Italy (7% to 35% respectively), less subediting, and enjoy greater autonomy in a less hierarchical newsroom (Donsback 1995 cited in Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 174), suggesting that this advocacy was not connected with instrumentalism of the press by political or business elites. However, this “expressive” orientation among journalists in Germany – seeking to pass on their opinion – was also found to be on the decline, in favour of a more typically liberal commercial “service orientation” – to “offer something to the audience” that they wanted, meaning essentially to entertain and to “mirror what the public thinks” rather than to “stir it up, train it or educate it” (Schoenbach et al 1998 cited in Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 180).

Hallin and Mancini draw comparisons between aspects of this model and James Curran’s proposed model of ‘radical democratic’ media (2004: 189), “associated with partisan or investigative styles of journalism” (Curran, 1991: 32). The radical democratic model is designed to develop the public sphere by taking account of the way in which interests have become organised and facilitating a real adversarial contest between them (that is to say, *more* than the impartiality and balance of what Tuchman (1972) called “competing truth claims”). However, whilst Curran advocates the ideal that such a media “represents all significant interests in society”, he also argues that a biased correction to an existing imbalance against weaker groups in society is valid as a radical re-imagining of the media role.

[T]he media should seek to redress the imbalance of power in society. Crucially, this means broadening access to the public domain in societies where elites have privileged access to it. It also means compensating for the inferior resources and skills of subordinate groups in advocating and rationalizing their interests by comparison with dominant groups (Curran, 1991: 30)

Similarly, McQuail (1998: 19) has suggested that aspects of partisanship could be acceptable as part of a mixed system that would also include objective reporting, and suggests (like Curran elsewhere, with Jean Seaton 2003) that the disappearance of the partisan press was due to commercial and industrial changes rather than changes in publics or politics. Curran’s concern with inclusiveness could also be connected with aspects of participatory democratic principles.

Participatory democracy: Contemporary models of participatory democracy are descended from republican models of the renaissance and Rousseau’s writing in the 18th century ([1762] 1997). Rousseau argued that citizens should be expected to be engaged in their community,

including political organisations and interest groups, and to pursue collective goals, having a strong notion of the 'common good'. He termed this development of common goals the 'general will' as distinguished from the aggregated 'will of all', though he recognised that consensus could only be reached on a local scale. The form of participatory democracy advocated by the 'New Left' in the 1970s and '80s recognised this limitation, as well as the arguments of Weber and Schumpeter that people were unlikely to be as interested in or knowledgeable of national politics as local decisions that directly affected them (Held, 2006: 213). Therefore whilst theorists such as Carole Pateman and C. B. MacPherson (Held, 2006: 209-16) accepted the necessity of representative politics at the national level, though proposing that institutions should be more transparent and accessible, they argued that political participation at the local level of community or workplace would reinforce existing interest and increase the understanding of politics more generally.

Crucially, the New Left also recognised that the formal right to participate – the negative freedom of the absence of hindrance – would not in itself facilitate equal participation. They noted that there were structural inequalities of power and resources, including social and cultural resources, that restricted participation in politics, and therefore redistributive policies were needed to realise the liberal goal of equal political liberty. However, the pragmatic details of the model remain unclear, and it is by no means clear whether people could or should be compelled to be politically engaged, or how inequalities in the power and resources of associations representing different interests could be resolved.

The corresponding model of the press would be to give expression to and amplify the social power of peripheral political organisations and pressure groups (Eriksen and Weigård, 2003: 118-9; Strömbäck, 2005: 336). The media should therefore provide information to encourage, facilitate and enable participation in the political process.

News should frame politics in a way that mobilizes people's interest and participation in politics – that is one of its most important responsibilities. As a consequence, news should not only dwell on societal problems but also show when problems are solved. The news should not frame ordinary citizens as passive victims of forces they cannot change, but as active subjects with possibilities as well as responsibilities to change what needs to be changed. Media and journalism should also strive to connect the lives of ordinary people with the words and actions of political parties and other political actors, to show how these domains of actions relate to each other. (Strömbäck, 2005: 340)

In addition, having interested and engaged people, Strömbäck argued that the news media should also respond to the public agenda and allow them to set the terms of discussion rather than acting as agenda-setters themselves.

There are clear parallels with the tenets of 'public journalism', sometimes referred to as 'civic journalism', which seeks to encourage civic engagement and participation. Its proponents have not explicitly argued for a different understanding of the democratic role of the media, and instead argued that public journalism merely seeks to better achieve the goals of the

social responsibility model. Like Tuchman (1972) above, they argue that those goals have been corrupted through reference to the means of professional responsibility as ends in themselves, rather than means to the end of informing and engaging citizens (Rosen, 1996:26-31; Merritt, 1999: 371-3). Academics such as Jay Rosen (1996) and practitioners such as editor Davis Merritt (1999) argue that 'objectivity' norms are used to justify detachment from notions of the public good and the needs of civil society, failing to show the connections between public affairs and their private lives. In addition, the norm of 'balance' can merely mean portraying issues in terms of intractable conflict. This, they argue, excludes publics from the debate because they perceive the situation to be inevitable and hopeless or else feel excluded by the absence of their opinion in the public representations. Similarly, public journalism advocates the attribution of agency to citizens, though more commonly in charitable voluntary work rather than political association, consistent with the liberal notion of being civically self-sufficient.

Deliberative democracy: The preceding discussion concerns the balance between paternalistic or authoritarian rule on the one hand and the unchecked rule of an ignorant and selfish mass on the other, and the appropriate level of participation to prevent either one dominating. Deliberative democracy theorists neither accept that democracy should be protected from the popular will by delimiting participation, nor that participation in itself educates citizens into reasonable or civic-minded behaviour, especially at the local level, which has "a tendency to conformity, intolerance and the personalisation of politics" (Fishkin 1991 cited in Held, 2006: 236). Instead, the deliberative model seeks to improve citizens' understanding of issues, reveal the interests behind particular proposals, and expose instances where consent is based on resignation to a situation that seems inevitable ('accommodation preferences').

In this model legitimate political judgement is reached through deliberation, contributions to which should be open-minded and reasoned, supporting assertions with arguments and evidence and without being dogmatically attached to prior opinions. This should produce judgements that are "fact-regarding" rather than uninformed; "future-regarding" rather than short-sighted; and "other-regarding" rather than self-interested (Offe and Preuss 1991 cited in Held, 2006: 232). In Eriksen and Weigård's interpretation, "the public testing of views contributes to eliminating bad and selfish arguments so that only the generally acceptable ones are left" (2003: 187), but there is some disagreement about whether impartial judgement of the arguments is sufficient to make such a distinction, and some irreconcilable views might be equally valid or reasonable given our imperfect knowledge of the real world or our underlying values.

In Habermas' (1996) theoretical ideal type model of deliberative democracy, developed from his earlier idealised historical account of the bourgeois public sphere of the 18th century ([1962] 1989), retains the mechanism of representative democracy through party competition and the reservation of decision-making to parliamentary representatives and administrative officials,

but instead of conceptualising institutions as autonomous and differentiated, he sees them as integrated by communicative action. Specifically, the judgements reached by the deliberative public sphere in the political periphery (located between the public and the private) are communicated to the core political sphere who take the decisions. However, the public are still designated roles as affected individuals, in particular as public service users, which reflects a private interest at the level of perception of problems, and then a role of 'deciding' based on the deliberation of experts as 'monitors' of the deliberative action (Habermas, 1996: 351-75), which represents a relatively passive, reactive role in opinion-formation. Additionally, the distinction between public and private has been criticised as delimiting the political (e.g. Mouffe, 1993: 71-2); the designation of the family as private and therefore not political (not 'public' in the sense of 'public affairs'), has kept the position of women off the agenda, as the arena of their subjugation, the home, was not open to public scrutiny (not 'public' in the sense of 'publicness').

The role of the media in this system would be as a resource to facilitate a deeper understanding of the issues, extending to appreciation of the likely consequences of proposed policies (Habermas, 1994; Strömbäck, 2005: 337), and to assume and encourage the capability of the public to form a rational opinion oriented to the common good.

The mass media ought to understand themselves as the mandatory of an enlightened public whose willingness to learn and capacity for criticism they at once presuppose, demand and reinforce; like the judiciary, they ought to preserve their independence from political and social pressure; they ought to be receptive to the public's concerns and proposals, take up these issues and contributions impartially, augment criticisms, and confront the political process with articulate demands for legitimation. (Habermas, 1996: 378)

The implications for the media are similar to those for democratic corporatism and participatory democracy in terms of accessibility and engagement, but also require them to be impartial and rational and, importantly, to focus on the substance of issues rather than seeking to be critical of actors' performance in the political process, in particular checking the (liberal) tendency of the press to "focus on gaffes and creating feeding frenzies" (Strömbäck, 2005: 341). Instead leaders should be allowed or even encouraged to change their minds in the light of new information or if persuaded by an alternative argument, an emphasis on dialectical reasoning. Similarly, Rosen argues that public journalism should aim to facilitate deliberation as a "convener of public dialogue" (1996: 62) and stimulate civic participation

But how do these 'decisions' at the weak periphery of the public sphere reach the political core where decisions are enacted? Habermas (1996) is dismissive of the role of interest group organisations, who merely use the public sphere to further their pre-established goals, but is more supportive of the less formal (or powerful) associations, more akin to social movements, who emerge from the public and are involved in reproducing the public sphere by establishing their aims through the deliberative process. The former can gain influence through integration into the political core (as in corporatism), whilst the latter rely on protest and sustained

campaigning in order to gain a place on the media, public and political agenda. The next section will consider in more detail the role of pressure groups in democracy versus other forms of political participation.

2.2.3. The role of pressure groups

The role of pressure groups has changed over the years, especially with an expansion in numbers (Grant, 2000) and in professionalisation (McNair, 2000) and is often now described in terms of policy communities and networks, the former being a narrow and bounded group of interests with stable relations on the relevant issues characterised by bargaining, and the latter being a looser set of groups with diverse interests in overlapping areas with informal interaction characterised by consultation (Grant, 2000: 48-51). Consultation tends to be a more open and transparent process than bargaining, and can contribute to parliamentary scrutiny. Other parliamentary avenues open to pressure groups include private members' bills or private bills, although these have had little influence in recent decades (Grant, 2000: 151-62).

Pressure group advocacy does not only come from the perspective of instrumental interests, but also ideas, beliefs and values. Whilst some pluralists saw instrumental interests as balanced with the stability of *shared* values and conflict theorists saw those values as the propagandistic imposition of *elite* values, writers such as Sabatier (cited in Grant, 2000: 40-1) theorised a more complex set of relations between belief systems and political organisation as 'advocacy coalitions' on particular issues. This may be undermined in British politics by the strong, disciplined party system, which discourages disunity and cross-party coalitions. However, the rise in pressure groups and in single-issue politics in general, has been connected with the decline in party membership (Grant, 2000: 214-6). Grant remarks on the comparative interest and perceived effectiveness (or at least expressiveness) of participating in a treetop occupation protest against a new bypass, versus formal mechanisms of party meetings and resolutions (2000: 215). This relates to Milne's (2005) remarks in her report for Demos about a culture of dissent undermining representative democracy, as well as other (neo-)liberal criticisms of pressure groups as a threat to economic growth and stability (Grant, 2000: 58).

Despite the increase in the number of pressure groups, however, there has been a decrease in informal civic association in the general population of many western countries, especially Britain and the US. Putnam (2000) argues that society is becoming more fragmented and individualistic. Opinion is divided over whether this is an inevitable situation that justifies the delimitation of public participation, or a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby the disenfranchisement of citizens has led to disengagement in politics. This debate was most notably articulated in the 1920s between Walter Lippmann and John Dewey.

Lippmann ([1922] 1954; [1927] 1993), a journalist and a widely syndicated US political columnist, argued that it is impossible for the public to have adequate knowledge on all affairs of state to be able to meaningfully influence policy decisions, and therefore participation should be restricted to the selection of competent and civic-minded leaders. The first problem with such 'competitive elitism' is the inconsistent view of public competence: "if the electorate is regarded as unable to form reasonable judgements about pressing political questions, why should it be regarded as capable of discriminating between alternative sets of leaders?" (Held, 2006: 154). Indeed, Lippmann does not seem to regard voters' choice of leader highly either.

We must assume that a public is inexpert in its curiosity, intermittent, that it discerns only gross distinctions, is slow to be aroused and quickly diverted; that, since it acts by aligning itself, it personalises whatever it considers, and is interested only when events have been melodramatised as a conflict. (Lippmann, [1927] 1993: 55)

These assumptions about the subjectivity, short-sightedness and inattentiveness of the public may reflect Lippmann's position as a journalist, especially in terms of the focus on personalisation and conflict. However, here the role *designated* to the public by the form of democracy is expressed as the *cause* of the dominance these particular criteria ("since it [a public] acts by aligning itself [to a representative – voting]..."). Nonetheless, he sees this type of public attention as fixed, not as a rational response to the limited recourse allowed to them; "[a] theory that justifies the passive citizen is likely to produce the passive citizen" (Prior et al., 1995: 79).

John Dewey (1927), an academic with an interest in philosophy, psychology, education and democracy as well as journalism, argued that a public can be characterised by knowledgeability and inclusiveness if facilitated by state education, the regulation of powerful political and commercial groups, and co-operative principles of expertise and argument rather than competition between powers (Splichal, 2002). Similarly, Lewis (2001) argues that a poorly informed and apathetic public is the product of a lack of information in the media rather than an intrinsic incompetence, and work by the Glasgow University Media Group (Philo, 1990; Philo and Berry, 2004) has indicated that people are more interested in social issues and exercise their reason more when provided the contextual information often missing in media accounts. Furthermore, non-participation can be seen as conscious resistance to a system that doesn't appear to offer people a meaningful choice (Sparks, 1992; McNair, 1999a: 24; Miller, 2003).

Campaigning journalism can perform a theoretically legitimate role within a political system and media model characterised by democratic corporatism, but only where the interests represented are made explicit and accountability occurs through organisations representing those interests. This could also be consistent with Curran's conception of radical democratic media if the organisations and associations of civic society included community groups that represented the interests of the most disadvantaged in society. Participatory democracy could

be served by a form of campaigning that embraced grassroots civic activism. Finally, aspects of deliberative democracy could also be facilitated if evidence and reasoned argument were accommodated, in an open-minded forum of debate. Newspapers' approach to facilitating political participation is dependent on the understanding of 'the public' or 'publics'.

2.3. 'The public', 'public opinion' and participation

This section will examine the ways in which 'publics' have been theorised, and the implications for political participation in the democratic models discussed. In particular it will first examine various definitions of 'the public' and 'publics' and their capacity for rational, deliberative and un-self-interested participation, and will then address the representation of publics in the media and journalists' rationalisation of these representations.

2.3.1. Theorising 'the public', and 'public opinion'

Implicit in the types of accessibility, decision-making and accountability in models of democracy are definitions of 'the public'. The positions of the public are, variously, as those affected by political decision-making (government *for* the people), as voters consenting to be governed (government *of* the people) or as sovereign citizens being represented (government *by* the people)³. Citizenship is thus variously conceived as a status – those eligible for rights and benefits (protections) – and as a practice – the obligations owed by the public to the government in terms of meaningful participation (Prior et al., 1995: 5-6). Some theorists have argued that citizenship rights should be contingent on the exercise of responsibilities (Etzioni, 1998), and others that such rights can only be decided by discursive publics (Habermas, 1996; Baynes, 2002).

Whilst in common usage most reference is made to a 'public' in the singular, or rather, 'the public' in the definitive, most political models are built on the assumption of heterogeneous publics with opposing interests. The differences lie in the ways in which the models assume that these differences can be resolved – whether by consent through competition (majority vote) or compromise (bargaining) or by consensus through deliberation. The nature of consensus in society is also contested, liberal theorists assuming an overarching value consensus underpinning the organisation of society with dispute only over specific management decisions, conflict theorists asserting that apparent dominant values are imposed by powerful elites to serve their own interests, and deliberative theorists arguing that disinterested discussion can reveal the objectively best and most just decisions. Multiple publics are then sometimes conceived of as 'counterpublics' (Warner, 2002), although this term seems to privilege a single dominant public to which the others are counter.

³ Coined by Burke, and famously used by Abraham Lincoln

This indicates the different ways in which 'the public' or 'publics' and 'public opinion' are defined in these models, whether in terms of an aggregate of individuals (liberal democracy) or as a collective, rationally discursive group. Splichal (1999) argues that there is a dissonance between the terms 'public' and 'opinion'; because if one assumes multiple 'publics' then this is incompatible with the typically singular expression of 'public opinion', whilst if one assumes a singular 'public' signifying the "universal, objective and rational" it is incompatible with 'opinion' which is intrinsically "individual, subjective, unstable" (Splichal, 1999: 7). "Adjective theories" concentrate on the opinion part of the term, relegating 'public' to a description, and can therefore define the aggregate of opinions held privately by individual members of the public as 'public opinion'; alternatively, this measurement could be termed mere 'mass opinion'. The reverse privileges publicity – for Habermas (1994) an opinion could only be *public* opinion if it had been formed in the public sphere, as opposed to formed privately and presented persuasively in public. Publicness of expression is nevertheless significant, as opinion can be contingent on the social situation of expression, and the knowledge that such utterances will be open to scrutiny (Herbst, 1998).

Publics are also defined by the method of observation, consultation or measurement. Opinion polls measure an aggregated mass opinion, and by this measure some theorists have argued that "public opinion does not exist" (Bourdieu, 1979; Splichal, 1999; Meyer, 2002), since what is measured includes instinctive, uninformed reactions that cannot be distinguished from the considered, rational responses. Efforts have been made to adapt the method to such concerns, such as deliberative polls (Held, 2006), weighting responses by reported salience or participation (Price, 1992: 35). Vincent Price pulls apart this notion of 'the general public', and distinguishes various specific publics: 'the voting public', 'the attentive public', 'the active public' and various 'issue publics' (1992: 36-43). The voting public (estimated at 70% participating at least occasionally) are sufficiently active to participate electorally, but are not necessarily more informed than non-voters; the attentive public are the actual audience for political communication (whether or not they are the imagined audience being addressed) and tend to be more knowledgeable on public affairs generally (estimated at about a third of the population), whilst only a fraction (15%) are thought to be a truly 'active public', including 'interest elites'. All of the above categories of attention and activity can be thought of as fluid across different issues, and may be constituted differently as distinct 'issue publics', potentially in line with specific interests or as those directly affected by an issue.

Active issue publics can be conceived of (though not exclusively) as those addressed as part of policy networks via consultation mechanisms, and the attentive issue publics as those addressed by campaigning activity to recruit their support.

A campaign may conceive of its target audience as the generally attentive public (as perhaps most campaigns do) or attempt a more issue-specific approach by appealing to those people who are particularly attentive to a given problem. (Price, 1992: 43)

The attentive public are invited to respond by “thinking about what they read and see as well as in forming and expressing (sometimes) opinions on the question”, but those opinions may still be only limited to approval or disapproval of the proposals developed by active publics, or even solely by political leaders. Such approval is valuable political capital to politicians, and is actively sought, rhetorically claimed, flattered and placated, as well as purposefully “shaped and directed”. Anticipated electoral behaviour can be even more significant than actual votes: “the political power of an attentive public lies, then, ‘not so much in what it does, but in political actors’ perceptions of what it *might* do” (Price, 1992: 80). The press has a significant role as the “principal mechanism” of communication between and among elites and publics, and in particular serves a ‘correlation’ function among publics and a ‘surveillance’ function for politicians (Price, 1992: 80). Indeed, US research by Susan Herbst found that legislative staffers (civil servants and policy advisors) “believe that media and public opinion are synonymous” (Herbst, 1998: 187).

2.3.2. Public opinion in the media

The main way in which publics are addressed and represented is in the mass media. The most comprehensive study of the representation of publics in the media is Lewis, Inthorn and Wahl-Jorgensen’s (2005) analysis of all references to publics on broadcast news and coverage of opinion polls in the press in the UK and US over a set time period. They found that references to publics on UK TV news were very common (around a third of news items), and that just 3% of these were substantiated by opinion polls or demonstrations; a further 39% were in the form of ‘vox pops’, but the remainder were unsubstantiated inferences, 83% of which were made by the news reporter or ‘anchor’ (presenter / newsreader). This demonstrates, as Lewis et al put it, “that journalists feel an obligation – and an ability – to either speak for or about the public” (2005: 27). This is of particular concern if journalists make such claims from a position of ignorance, as was suggested earlier in relation to journalists’ democratic accountability to their readers.

Publics were portrayed as “passive observers”, and discursively excluded from political participation.

While they are seen to have fears, impressions and desires, they don’t, apparently, have much to say about what should be done about healthcare, education, the environment, crime, terrorism, economic policy, taxes and public spending, war, peace, or any other subject in the public sphere. (Lewis et al., 2005: 48-9)

Similarly, ‘vox pops’ expressed reactive approval or disapproval, and whilst opinion polls in newspapers made more reference to policy, this was eclipsed by reference to politicians (the personalisation of politics), and the emphasis was on problem-identification – issues on which ‘something should be done’ but without specifying *what* should be done (2005: 67-9). The authors suggest that this could be because the political news is “usually about what politicians do, and not necessarily what people want them to do” (2005: 50), in which case campaigns –

which are specifically about what people want politicians to do – should portray publics in more active terms.

Research conducted by one of the authors of the study, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2001; 2002a; 2002b) shed further light on editors' notions of publics and their political participation when selecting letters to the editor for publication. This work focused on the US press, which though different from the UK press in some significant ways, as detailed earlier, is broadly normatively and organisationally consistent. Wahl-Jorgensen found that letter pages offered a genuine forum for debate, but that editors' selection processes favoured particular forms of expression. In particular, editors "privilege individual expression over the expression of activist groups" and also "prefer the emotionally-charged stories of individuals". In contrast, the overtly political views of activist groups were regarded as "political rhetoric", lacking "sincerity, authenticity and truth" (2001: 313), and a "manipulative discourse" (2001: 311) that advocates an argument that can be contradicted rather than a feeling that cannot. However, like sociology of emotion scholars (e.g. Berezin, 2002), Wahl-Jorgensen also made a persuasive account of the ways in which emotional narrative can allow readers to understand an event meaningfully and in relation to the common good by eliciting sympathy, but alone does not allow a discursive understanding of the issue (2001: 318).

The emphasis on experience suggests, though, that the letters page would be accessible to a broader range of publics than those knowledgeable in areas of policy. However, Wahl-Jorgensen elsewhere (2002b) found that editors' rules of selection required contributions from letter-writers to be in an authoritative voice, which was defined in terms of conventional grammar and eloquence, and therefore related to cultural capital. At the same time, editors were not consciously elitist (as they had been in the past), and preferred challenges to formal authority from an "informed outsider" rather than a person of prominence. As a result the typical letter-writer was an "elderly, well-educated white male" (2002b: 311), and yet was regarded as an average reader. In addition, many regular letter-writers were dismissed as deranged (2002a). Whilst Wahl-Jorgensen is sympathetic to the editors' dismissal of "insane" letters on the basis that their fixed opinions and "formulaic" (pro-gun, anti-abortion and creationist) arguments cannot deliberately engage with the issue, the editors' manner of rejection appeared similarly closed-minded. She acknowledges that it led to a conservative response to readers and a cynical view of their democratic capabilities (2002a: 200). Wahl-Jorgensen points out, however, that the focus on the American Constitution and its basis in 'rights' rather than civic responsibilities contributes to this form of debate (2002a: 198), though Richardson and Franklin (2004) suggest that UK letters pages in the local press are no more deliberative. Of course the press are only one site for public deliberation, and claims are increasingly made a virtual public sphere on the internet, though studies have highlighted limitations (Schultz, 2000; Allan, 2006).

Studies on the representation of publics in the press have suggested that journalists are cynical about the political knowledge and democratic capabilities of the audience, regard appropriate contributions from the public to be limited to personal experience and emotional responses, and dismiss political contributions from the audience as manipulative rhetoric or as insane. However, these studies primarily give an account of broadcast news (Lewis et al., 2005) or the US press (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2001; 2002b; 2002a), rather than the openly partisan (corporatist-inflected) UK press. In addition, the context of campaigning is one where political advocacy is the main mode of address and therefore might be expected to demonstrate a more inclusive view of activism and other political participation. The Scottish political context may also facilitate more corporatist behaviour, and potentially more deliberation.

2.4. Post-devolution Scotland: media, democracy and publics

The field for this study is the press and politics of Scotland post-devolution. This section will first discuss the democratic mechanisms of the Scottish Parliament, including the role of publics, and will then briefly discuss the history and character of the Scottish press.

Prior to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament (by the Scotland Act 1998, following a referendum the previous year) Scotland had been in some respects a “stateless nation” since the union of Scotland and England in 1707, retaining its distinct legal system and education system, and a strong national media (although the press owes its survival more to the physical distance from London, Hutchison, 2008). With devolution, the governing body – initially known as the Scottish Executive, but now renamed the Scottish Government by the ruling SNP (Scottish National Party⁴) – has legislative competence over all matters not reserved to Westminster. Reserved areas include defence, immigration and media regulation.

The devolved parliament in Scotland was explicitly intended to be ‘not Westminster’ (Lynch, 2001: 1), and its design was to a great degree based on the work of the Scottish Constitutional Convention between 1989 and 1995, a civic organisation made up of the STUC (Scottish Trades Union Congress), local authorities and churches (Lynch, 2001: 11-12). Specifically it aimed to have a more consensus-based parliamentary system, as symbolised by the circular chamber at Holyrood, in contrast with the adversarial opposing benches of Westminster, and greater scrutiny of the Executive in contrast with the centralised cabinet (or Downing Street ‘sofa’) style of government in London. To this end the design included an element of proportional representation to produce a more diffuse power, and formal access for interest and pressure groups to encourage more civic participation in government (Lynch, 2001: 1-2), fulfilling the two principal political characteristics of democratic corporatism.

⁴ The SNP are a pro-independence party, but stand for an inclusive not a chauvinistic nationalism.

The Scottish electoral system is a mixed member proportional representation system. The Additional Member System (AMS) means that in addition to the customary vote for a constituency representative decided by majority (producing 73 Members of the Scottish Parliament – MSPs), Scots have a second vote counted toward the election of seven regional MSPs by proportional representation (producing 56 MSPs across eight regions). Through constituency representation alone, the Scottish Labour Party would have had a majority in the first two terms of the parliament (Lynch, 2001), however, with the addition of AMS there was no overall majority, necessitating a coalition (with the Scottish Liberal Democrats) to rule by majority. The sample period of this study falls within this period of government⁵. More significantly, however, a number of smaller parties have gained parliamentary representation, including socialist, environmental, religious and single-issue (hospitals, the elderly) representatives. Committees also have a particularly strong role, allowing greater legislative scrutiny by opposition and backbench MSPs and at an earlier stage in the legislative process than is the case in Westminster, allowing them real influence in the development of proposals (Lynch, 2000). The intention of these mechanisms is a deliberative consensus-oriented debating chamber, rather than one characterised by combative argumentation and political point-scoring.

Groups in civic society are also guaranteed pre-legislative consultation and are invited to join the Scottish Civic Forum to facilitate the process (Lynch, 2001: 90-91). However, the members are overwhelmingly well-resourced groups and organisations, and are therefore factional and potentially unrepresentative of public opinion (Lynch, 2001: 127), and some parliamentary committees have been accused of having a relationship with the main pressure groups working on their issue area verging on clientalism (Lynch, 2000). Furthermore, sectional interests are also pursued via the less transparent form of PR and professional lobbyists (Schlesinger et al., 2001). Meanwhile many pressure groups find it difficult to gain media coverage of their participatory activities, as “civic bodies continue to find it difficult to voice opinion on policy unless it can be interpreted as an attack on an individual politician or party” (McTernan, 2000: 143). This reflects the way in which the Scottish media do not function in a corporatist manner that would be consistent with the ambitions of the parliament.

Consultation can be undermined if it is regarded as a cosmetic exercise for a pre-determined policy that politicians expect to be rubber-stamped but want to give an impression of transparency and public accountability. In this case politicians would be simply using the public sphere to *persuade* the public that the policy proposal is right and appropriate, whilst the policy was developed outside the public sphere. The Scottish Executive define consultation in more open-ended terms.

⁵ The result of the 2007 election placed the Scottish National Party (SNP) as the single largest party in the parliament, but the lack of a willing coalition party necessitated the formation of a minority government, who need to persuade opposition parties, or individual MSPs, on an issue by issue basis to support any bill they wish to pass.

Consultation is a time-limited exercise when we provide specific opportunities for all those who wish to express their opinions on a proposed area of our work (such as identifying issues, developing or changing policies, testing proposals or evaluating provision) to do so in ways which will inform and enhance that work (Scottish Executive, 2004: 3)

This gives an account of the benefits of being insider groups, having a direct influence on the development of policy solutions rather than protesting on the political periphery. However, members of the Civic Forum have complained that consultation deadlines are often too short and inadequate resources are devoted to the publication of adequate publicity and information dissemination (Schlesinger et al., 2001: 254). In terms of representativeness, consultation guidance demands considerations on widening accessibility, with particular attention to potentially excluded groups (Scottish Executive, 2004: 7), and *efforts* to be “inclusive and ensure that outsider groups have more equal access to consultation exercises” (Lynch, 2001: 112) have been recognised whilst reserving judgement on the success of such measures.

The other form of public access is the Petitions Committee, which considers evidence submitted by citizens, and if the issue is found to warrant further attention passes it on to the relevant subject committee, who are obliged to respond to it in some manner (even if only discussing it and explaining why they will take no action). The process requires that petitioners have first approached their constituency MSP or one of their regional MSPs, and exhausted the avenues suggested or facilitated by them. The petitioner is invited to address the committee, and the full transcript of the meeting is then published on parliament website. Whilst more formal and more bureaucratic than the UK government equivalent (recently put online in a collation between the Prime Minister’s Office and voluntary organisation MySociety), the Petitions Committee is more likely to give a discursive response.

There has been a record of successfully holding other public bodies (or quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations – quangos) to account, but the committee has been less successful in terms of scrutinising the Scottish Executive.

Quangos such as the health boards were no longer able to shelter behind Westminster’s remoteness from their decision-making, but had to contend with the locality and activism of the Scottish Parliament and new routes for public action. (Lynch, 2001: 85)

The Petitions Committee is a parliamentary body rather than part of the Executive, and is therefore more integrated with the wider body of MSPs; the committee members, like those of other committees of the parliament, are drawn proportionately from all of the major parties. These mechanisms were intended to create a more democratic corporatist parliament. However, it has been noted that the ruling Scottish Executive inherited much of their structure and procedures from the Scottish Office within the Westminster government, and are therefore less inclined toward genuine discussion and consultation than the Scottish Parliament (Lynch, 2001: 11-12) (Lynch, 2001: 184).

The media, like the Scottish Office, enjoyed a certain amount of independence throughout the period of union (Lynch, 2001: 184), and have to some degree continued as before. However, in their early assessment of devolution, Schlesinger et al (2001) concluded that the broadcast media, in particular the BBC as a public service broadcaster, have been unable to fully rise to this challenge on account of being denied the 'Scottish Six' – a separate national evening news bulletin – and "[a]s a result, it [the BBC] is very much prone to the unchecked influence of the press, especially at the tabloid end of the market" (2001: 261). In addition, they argue that Scottish journalists rely too much on past experience and example of Westminster and Whitehall as a model of conduct and political relationships (2001: 262), though equally there was found to be little reform of the traditionally secretive civil service, especially as regards public communication (2001: 264). The Scottish press have not given the Scottish Parliament an easy time, and have developed a reputation as the 'awkward squad', perceived to be producing "knocking copy" (Lynch, 2001: 180-202), though others have placed equal blame with the inexperienced, incompetent or corrupt behaviour of MSPs (McNair, 2006). However, as noted above it is not only the relationship with political institutions that drives the press, but also market forces.

Scotland boasts a uniquely lively and competitive regional press (Tunstall, 1996). There are as many as ten national Scottish morning newspapers including four Sunday titles, five city evenings, 76 paid for weekly papers and 28 freesheets (The Newspaper Society, 2006). The main nationally-circulating Scottish newspapers straddle regional and (quasi-)national identity; unlike England, the nationally circulating titles are not concentrated in the capital, but based in the main cities, and circulation is concentrated in the region of publication. This means that even the audience for the nationally circulating press are more geographically stratified than by class, interests or values as is the case with the national British press. The need to maximise circulation within a limited geographical area, then, exerts a pressure like that observed in the US by Hallin and Mancini (2004: 206) to be politically neutral or uncontroversial so as not to alienate any section of the readership⁶.

The national UK press has a lower than average 'reach' (readership as a percentage of population) in Scotland, with the exception of the 'editionised' titles (of which there are at least nine) that have a dedicated editorial team who supplement selected national content with tailored content specific to Scotland. Scottishness is seen as a key element in branding the press (MacDonald, 1978; Lynch, 2001: 187), but the Scottish Sun only briefly outsold Scottish tabloid the Daily Record (Preston, 2006), and only by aggressive discounting. Nonetheless, this kind of competition from the London press has contributed to a threat to the Scottish press' long term viability.

⁶ The principal exception, despite being the most mass-market, is the Daily Record, which is Labour-supporting

Compounding this, the Scottish press has also suffered due to persistent and aggressive cost-cutting, from the large commercial businesses that now own them. Whilst there has been significant concern about the ownership of newspapers by 'press barons' and 'media moguls' (Tunstall and Palmer, 1991) for the prestige and influence that it commands, the recent experience of the local and regional press shows the impact of newspapers being owned in the same way as any other business. The top four newspaper companies own 63% of all local papers in the UK, including The Herald, Sunday Herald and Glasgow Evening Times (Newsquest), The Scotsman, Scotland on Sunday and Edinburgh Evening News (Johnston Press), and The Daily Record and Sunday Mail (Trinity Mirror). The Herald in particular had already suffered the loss of a third of its staff through successive rounds of redundancies when as part of a restructuring the entire staff were made redundant in December 2008 and invited to reapply for the smaller number of jobs in the new structure (Anon, 2008).

This has hampered the extent to which national and international news can be covered beyond a dependence on wire copy coming from the press agencies. It may also reduced the status of the Scottish press to a secondary purchase to supplement a main national UK newspaper, or even be replaced by the editionised nationals, with potential consequences for Scottish democracy and public participation. An ex-editor of The Herald argued that the Scottish editions have "conned" their readers because they have no loyalty to Scotland or commitment to discussing Scottish politics and making it interesting – giving them what they want but not what they need (Mark Douglas Home, quoted in Reid, 2006).

In some Scandinavian countries there are systems of regulation and press subsidies that defend diversity and minority interests in the market (Curran, 1991) – but in Scotland media regulation remains a reserved matter, and rests in the hands of Westminster. This serves to limit the extent to which the Scottish Executive (or Scottish Government as it is now known) could extend principles of Scandinavian-style democratic corporatism to media systems. Nonetheless, Scotland does share the democratic corporatist characteristic of high newspaper readership, and even political coverage is claimed to attract a significant audience in the local press (Lynch, 2001: 191). There is also a widespread belief that Scottish citizens are on average more in favour of corporatist-style state intervention, and have less faith in market forces than in England (or perhaps than southern England, or London).

In summary then, the democratic context for media and politics in Scotland is complex. Scotland's political institutions have some characteristics of democratic corporatism – an active civic society with formal connections to parliamentary institutions, consensus-oriented parliamentary decision-making mechanisms, and a broadly pluralistic membership. However, the governing body and the media are both steeped in a liberal democratic tradition that is

politically more centralised in its decision-making and focused on electoral accountability, facilitated by a media operating as a watchdog.

2.5. Conclusion

Existing literature indicates that a key legitimisation of campaigning journalism is that the newspaper is acting on behalf of a public or publics. However, it is not clear how these claims are substantiated. Existing mechanisms of accountability and normative conventions of responsibility are based on the liberal model of democracy, whereby the press are responsible for informing voters. In campaigning, the press instead adopt the language of representing group interests or protest politics that would fit with a corporatist or participatory model of democracy. These alternative models presuppose active or at least attentive publics, and newspapers' interaction with and representation of them in this sense. This would fit with popular notions of Scottish political history as characterised by activism, and the aspirations of the Scottish Parliament. In contrast, as suggested by Aldridge (2003) and Lewis et al (2005), the audience may be addressed and characterised in terms of a market.

The literature indicates several areas of analytic interest in relation to the representation of issues and publics. For instance, how do journalists characterise their audience, and understand their own influence on readers' opinions and feelings? Previous production studies have noted that journalists claimed to write for their wife or their editor (Gans, 1980; Schlesinger, 1987), but a study of journalists' conception of their audience has not been made. This study will specifically interrogate the ways in which journalists perceive, respond to and recruit the support of their audience.

Do journalists regard the appropriate role of political journalism as informing voters on the performance and proposals of elite political representatives (liberal social responsibility), as representing the views and/or interests of particular parties and other civic groups, including via parliamentary mechanisms (corporatism), or as encouraging citizens to participate politically, by protesting or otherwise expressing their views locally (participatory democracy)? How do journalists characterise their readers, 'publics' and 'public opinion', and how do they anticipate readers to respond to political journalism? What is the basis for these characterisations?

Are individual and group interests framed as competitive or seeking consensus? Is 'public opinion' represented as singular or multiple? If a public consensus is suggested, is it constructed by uniting readers against deviant individuals (that is, in a moral panic), or is it discursively reached through the open exploration of all possible arguments? Are citizens addressed and represented as potentially affected individuals in terms of their interaction with the state, as recipients of welfare, public service users, and taxpayers (liberal democracy, as

criticised by Habermas) or as active participants and discussants (participatory and deliberative democracy)? The next chapter explains the ways in which this study has endeavoured to answer these questions in the specific context of the Scottish press and democracy.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will outline the theoretical and methodological approach of the research, starting with an overview of traditions within the discipline and how the study is oriented in relation to them. Secondly, it will state the field of the specific research context. Thirdly, the specific data collection methods used will be discussed, including sampling, document search and retrieval, and interview practice. An account of the data analysis methods will then be given, discussing thematic analysis and discourse analysis, and the use of computer aided analysis software to facilitate these methods. This chapter will conclude by summarising the approach of the research and explaining how the various aspects of the research are synthesised.

3.1. Approaches to the study of media

The history of the field of the sociology of media, and related disciplines such as media and cultural studies in the humanities, is broad in philosophical and theoretical orientations, subject focus and methodological approach. In philosophical and theoretical terms the dualism, as in many areas of sociology, is dominated by that of structure versus agency both in terms of production and reception of news media, though a third concept of medium or content can also be considered. This will be addressed first, before going on to discuss the specific methodologies typically employed in the study of media.

3.1.1. Philosophical orientation

There are two philosophical assumptions inherent in the research. Firstly it is assumed that there is a concrete external reality which is to some extent observable and understandable (ontological realism), and both that news can aspire to be consistent with this reality and that social science research can aspire to a greater understanding of it, though only through flawed subjective inference (epistemological relativism). To this extent the philosophy of the research is “critical realist” (Bhaskar quoted in Jensen, 2002a: 268-9). The study of journalism can therefore help to indicate how news might be improved in relation to specified normative ideals.

Secondly, it is assumed that social phenomena are to some extent constrained by social and institutional structures, but that they are also affected (perpetuated or changed) by the meaningful actions of individual agents. Social structures are developed and sustained through action, yet they also constrain the range of potential action that can be undertaken (Layder, 2006). The structural elements of the press are economical, political, and legal, and also the organisational structure of the newspaper companies and broader industry or media system themselves. The social agents acting within these conditions are editors and

journalists as producers, and politicians as sources, subjects and audiences (as well as the wider audience and other actors such as advertisers, though this falls outside the scope of this study).

Approaches to the study of the media have separately approached the subject from systems and action theoretical standpoints; the former is exemplified by 'political economy' approaches to production and media effects, and the latter by interpretive analysis of agency and meaning negotiation in the practice and consumption of media. The political economy approach is criticised for economic determinism and under-theorising agency of the journalists, whilst the interpretive tradition has been criticised for over-estimating individuals' agency and autonomy (Schudson, 2005a). Various approaches have attempted to adopt the advantages of both, such as 'critical political economy' (Murdock and Golding, 2005), and empirical interpretive studies that recognised forms of ownership and regulation as significant, but asked how and why this was the case in terms of meaningful social action and shared cultural assumptions within organisations (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1980; Schlesinger, 1987).

Such studies address media production in terms of the subjective experience and perspectives of the journalists themselves, but recognise this social organisation as a structure of sorts, that is learned and has effects on journalistic practice, yet is socially constructed and reconstructed by the actions of the journalists themselves. Hall et al (1978) referred to this as 'deep structure'. In humanist strands of Marxism (such as Althusarian cultural Marxism) the individual is dialectically related to social order through work (Layder, 2006: 53-4), a view reflected in Habermas' interchange relations between the system and the lifeworld (Eriksen and Weigård, 2003: 99) in the exchange of labour power for monetary income (alongside other private sphere relations through consumerism and public sphere relations through tax and benefit, vote and rule). These studies indicate how media research can recognise both structure and agency. This research will therefore take a similar approach by using a qualitative methodology that will allow agents' meaning to be taken into account, but will also query how they feel constrained by economic, institutional and normative structures and procedures.

3.1.2. Research traditions

In this section the three stages of the media process will be introduced and briefly discussed in methodological terms in relation to quantitative and qualitative traditions. These methodologies will be examined briefly, in explanation of the choices made in the research design.

Media communication is not an event but a process, from the production of journalism, through the textual product itself, to its consumption, and all of these stages are important to a full understanding of the field. Whilst many researchers have maintained that work on the three areas does not have to be integrated (Fairclough, 1995), others argue that ideally all of

these aspects should be addressed holistically (Philo, 2007). There are few examples of fully integrated studies however (Schrøder, 2002), on account of the size and complexity of such an under-taking; therefore this study focuses primarily on production and content with only indicative reception interviews in relation to one section of the audience (politicians).

The use of textual artefacts as evidence is an external, or “etic” approach, which can offer the advantage of being less subjective in the stage of data collection, as they are already extant evidence of a moment in the process, as opposed to being produced by the researcher (for example, through the process of interviewing). However, to study texts in isolation presents a problem at the stage of data analysis, as it risks making theoretical assumptions about producers’ motivations. This aspect is specifically addressed by the internal, or “emic” approach based on observations and/or interviews, on the production process. Text-based approaches are widely used in the humanities, particularly in traditions of hermeneutics and semiotics, focusing on interpretation and meaning (and latterly tied in with identity), and typically applied to creative and artistic disciplines such as literary criticism and film studies, although more recently also with cross-over disciplines such as cultural studies that share some characteristics with the social sciences (Hartley, 1982; Fowler, 1991; Fairclough, 1995).

Media research within the social sciences has spanned both quantitative and qualitative traditions. The quantitative methods most commonly used are audience survey research (e.g. Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1966; Page and Shapiro, 1992; McCombs, 2004), and content analysis of media texts (e.g. McCombs, 2004), analysed using statistical methods. Qualitative research addresses media through interviews with journalists (e.g. Schlesinger, 1987; Tunstall, 1996) or with audiences, typically in group interviews, or ‘focus groups’ (Philo, 1990; Morley, 1992; Philo and Berry, 2004), or ethnographic observations of them in their work environment (e.g. Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1980; Bivens, 2008) and through the qualitative thematic or discourse analysis of media texts and other documentary artefacts (van Dijk, 1988; Philo, 1990; Fairclough, 1995, 2001).

Analysis of newspaper texts generally takes the form either of quantitative content analysis or qualitative discourse analysis of one sort or another, although some forms of content analysis introduce qualitative elements to the process (Philo, 2007). Content analysis counts the incidence of certain words, frames, sources, or coverage of broad topics. Purely quantitative counts are useful only as an answer to specific research questions – comparisons revealing representation that is disproportionate or omitted (Bryman, 2001; Schrøder, 2002). For this reason it is often used in ‘agenda-setting’ research (Schrøder, 2002; McCombs, 2004), popular in the US, which aims to measure the public salience of various issues or topics compared to the amount of news coverage to test the hypothesis that the media tell the public what to think *about* rather than *what* to think. This form of research ignores the discursive, qualitative elements of the text because they are regarded as irrelevant, and there are assumptions implicit in associating coverage with importance (Philo, 2007), since the

substance of such coverage may dispute the significance of the issue or suggest an improvement in a problem (pushing it *down* the agenda).

Nonetheless, the systematic procedures of content analysis mean it avoids undue focus on interesting but unrepresentative frames (Bryman, 2001) and can therefore be useful in conjunction with qualitative analysis. There are two main approaches to combining the methods: one is to qualitatively define the categories to be coded, and to identify the particular keywords or search terms (e.g. Lewis et al., 2005); the other is to use qualitative categorisations to manage data and provide top level descriptive information, as an indicative element leading on to qualitative analysis of the themes and images that make up the discourse (Murdock, 2002:49). This is sometimes termed 'qualitative content analysis' or 'thematic analysis' (Philo, 2007). The main challenge posed by these methodologies is the consistent coding of data (Lewis et al., 2005: 14). Even with a sole researcher, coding must be carefully reviewed.

Discourse analysis adds yet more depth to accounts of textual data. Discourse analysis is a multi-disciplinary method, and has therefore been developed in various ways. Teun van Dijk (1988) has used it in psychological and sociological ('sociocognitive') applications, whilst cultural studies academics (Hartley, 1982) have applied a more semiotics- or semiology-inflected version including visual modes of presentation. Other theorists have taken the tools of linguists or socio-linguists and used them to examine the ideological, social and cultural result of linguistic choices and their link to power relations, methods known as Critical Linguistics (Fowler, 1991) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999), wherein not only lexical (word choice) but also syntactical (sentence construction) choices are analysed.

Critical Discourse Analysis aims to examine how change and instability in society and culture is reflected in media discourse practices, which in principle include production and reception. The method identifies discourses as a choice of socially available models, and a network of intertextual orders of discourse (a social context of a discourse type, for example, academic or advertising). Discourse is regarded as a socio-cultural practice capable of precipitating social change through shifts in language use and discursive practices, and is therefore a transformative as well as reproductive concept (taking a dialectical approach). Some aspects of discourse are more clear in their intentions than others, and there is some doubt over the role of nominalisation (presenting an action as a noun e.g. a protest, rather than people protesting), either as a simple space-saving tactic (van Dijk, 1988: 8), stylistic choice, or concealing agency (Fairclough, 2001).

This suggests one of the disadvantages to this approach. Texts are interpreted without reference to the audience, and the work is only really interpersonal in so far as it addresses representations but not interpretation of them. There is also a danger of missing the broader

significance by focussing on detail of grammar (Philo, 2007). Critical discourse analysis as established by Fairclough (Fairclough, 1995; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2001) explicitly relates discourse to practices. Fairclough argues that linguistic analysis of texts should be related to studies in production and reception practices, but he does not believe that all three aspects need take place in the same study, or be related to the same specific texts, and limits himself to addressing the texts in relation only to other texts or discourses (e.g. conversationalization and marketization, see Fairclough, 1995: 9-10). Furthermore, discourse analysis is described by Bryman (2001) as anti-realist and constructionist, as it assumes that “Discourse is not a neutral device for imparting meaning” but always strategic and ideological (Bryman, 2001: 360) – in Foucault’s terms of discourse as power – and should therefore not be taken at face value. For this reason, discourse analysis can reveal more about the interview data than simply thematising statements, though it is also worth recognising that communication is not always strategic but can also be affectual or oriented to reaching an understanding, as in Habermas’ communicative action (Eriksen and Weigård, 2003).

The methodological approach that this study will take is qualitative, in order to understand the complex subjective, interpersonal, social and cultural dimensions of the processes of production and reception. A quantitative methodology would try to establish a statistical relationship between the volume of media advocacy and corresponding policy-making decisions, and interpret those statistical correlations within a framework that seeks to establish causal relationship. This would fail to make an account of why the campaigning press is as it is within the political context, such as its normative and relational codes, and how politicians negotiate the representations of expert and public opinion in relation to their own role. However, in order to avoid selective analysis of framing and discourse that fits the researcher’s expectations, the incidence of these words, syntactical use and so on will be indicated, without claiming quantitative significance for their relative use.

3.2. Field of study

This research takes as its field of study newspaper campaigns in the post-devolution Scottish press that make claims about public opinion, are directed at politicians, and have a political aim or specific policy objective. The substance of this field is the textual content of the campaigns, the processes of production of those texts, and their reception by the intended political audience. The appropriate samples were therefore newspaper texts (already in existence) and the attitudes, contexts and processes of production and reception (produced through interview research). Additional contextual data included transcripts of parliamentary sessions and committee meetings, and the agendas, minutes and papers from meetings of other decision-making bodies (e.g. non-governmental organisations - NGOs). Other information was also gathered on procedures and guidelines in politics and the media.

3.3. Data collection methods

Newspaper texts are easily and unobtrusively gathered (Jensen, 2002c) and potentially offer a high volume of data, allowing a quantitatively representative sample (although units of measurement are interpretively defined), but also allow for in-depth analysis. The sampling must be a representative portion of all of the available data, or else a thorough and complete sample consistent in criteria, i.e. case studies. The latter option was chosen on account of the narrative and intertextual nature of campaigns.

Single interviews with journalists were chosen rather than focus groups because each individual would have a personal interpretation of the social organisational and professional norms that are formed through interactions with their colleagues that are better addressed individually, and largely the occupation is structurally differentiated, individually (or serially) executed and competitive, factors that do not lend themselves to group discussion. The three politicians were addressed by different campaigns, necessitating different questions. Finally the status of journalists and politicians means that they would likely be reluctant to participate in group-interviews.

The other alternative, which has been widely used in production studies, is ethnomethodological observation (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1980). This method was piloted at the beginning of the research, particularly by attending editorial conferences at two newspaper titles. Whilst they afforded some valuable insights, this is impractical for the study of campaigns, as they emerge only periodically, unpredictably, and overlap between different newspapers. The method was ultimately discarded for practical as well as methodological considerations, however, as the researcher was at that time employed full-time and studying part-time, which did not allow the necessary amount of time to be spent in the newsroom. At the same time, the researcher was, at this time, employed by a news organisation (Newsquest, owner of The Herald, Sunday Herald and Evening Times), not as a journalist, but in market research. Whilst this period of work did not really represent true, rigorous participant observation with thick description recorded, it did allow an insight into the workings of a newspaper business in a wide range of aspects, notes of which were made contemporaneously and used as contextual information where relevant.

3.3.1. Sampling

The sample frame was influenced by the initial exploratory interviews, and selected through purposive criteria of (i) a spread of different types of newspaper, and (ii) roles within the newspapers. The criteria as regards type of paper considered their market in terms of the geography (Scottish national / city), segment (quality / popular), and publication time (morning / evening), but within just one publication interval (daily not weekly) since a very different operation was recognised in Sunday newspapers from initial observations of editorial conferences. The most actively campaigning newspapers were suggested from these

interviews, and the titles selected were therefore 'quality' Scottish national *The Herald*, 'popular' Scottish national the *Daily Record*, and the city evening title the *Glasgow Evening Times*. It was also initially intended that a mid-market Scottish editionised national newspaper (the *Scottish Daily Mail*) would also be included, but this was excluded due to limitations of the scale of the project and the absence of campaigns in the sample period, though some interviews were conducted with journalists and editors there and at the *Scottish Sun* to provide some comparative context.

The different roles within the newspaper organisation were also established from observation, but also prompted by interviewees. This included their position in the hierarchy (editors / correspondents / reporters) and area of content (news / political / home affairs or other specialisms). Theoretical sampling (Bryman, 2001; Jensen, 2002b; Ritchie et al., 2003) was employed in the selection of interview cases in an iterative process between interview and analysis. Campaigns initially emerged as a key aspect from first broad interviews with editorial staff about public opinion in the press, and then began to be collected and specifically asked about in subsequent interviews. Later interviews were selected to illuminate the production of specific campaign texts, and those politicians targeted by them. Multi-step sampling is quite common, and has led to unanticipated results (Jensen, 2002c: 238), and has the advantage of helping to retain the environmental context in the research process / findings.

Campaigns were established as the 'context' of the research (Jensen, 2002c: 238), and the study took the form of a multiple case study. As a very specific and comparatively narrow type of coverage, it was possible to cover *all* campaign articles within dates and criteria of content and objective. Contextually it would have been advantageous to cover the period since devolution, or compare pre- and post-devolution samples, but for practicalities of scale, reliability of interviewees' memory, and the availability of archive newspaper texts, dates were restricted to 2000-2005. Delimitation by date ensures that the sample is fully representative of that period, though not that is historically representative. Other criteria were a threshold of scale (at least a week long), and the nature of the objectives. Only campaigns that had a clear political or legislative objective aimed at politicians were considered, excluding fundraising, consumer and public education campaigns. A broader sample would have given a more contextual account of the representation of publics and public opinion, and in particular shown the extent to which they are framed passively as consumers, but for an in-depth study it was more useful to focus on politically and democratically pertinent case studies.

As well as searches of the online archive Newsbank, cases were highlighted by interviewees (both positive and negative, both in their own and other newspapers to minimise risk of participants' agendas skewing the sample). The nomination of such critical cases by interviewees could be seen as a form of 'intensity sampling' (Jensen, 2002c: 239), and indeed campaigns themselves a strong example of representation of public opinion and of influence. This avoids needing to know what a 'typical' case is, but can still ensure a good spread across

criteria for comparison between cases, particularly across market-types. To ensure that the research project remained a manageable size, given the multiple methods and holistic approach to production, content and (politicians') reception, the number of campaigns was limited to six.

Journalist interviewees were suggested by their position and role within the media organisation in relation to employees with strategic positions such as editorial staff, and from bylines of articles in relation to reporters who worked on the specific campaigns. The distribution of roles within each newspaper was dependent on the structure within each, for instance, the amount of resources dedicated to political content. Politicians were selected who were directly targeted in the campaign coverage, who were all Labour ministers in the governing Scottish Executive. Sampling was complete when no new campaigns were mentioned in interviews and no new aspects of production and reception were forthcoming from interviews (as suggested by Glaser and Strauss, 1968).

3.3.2. Sample matrix

As a multiple case study project, the first unit of analysis is the campaigns within the specified range of newspapers, which then dictates the campaigns from which specific texts, and interviewees are drawn. However, the sampling was monitored to ensure as full a spread as possible within these constraints.

Campaigns

Newspaper	Campaign title	Objective	Date from	Date to	No.
Daily Record	Shop a dealer	Against drugs and seeking tougher sentencing	17/01/2000	04/05/2001	121
	Loan Sharks	Seeking tighter regulation of loan sharks	10/01/2002	18/10/2002	29
	Ned Culture	In support of Anti-social behaviour legislation	02/09/2003	11/09/2003	14
	Airguns	Seeking ban on airguns	03/03/2005	30/06/2005	57
The Herald	Ay Family / Dungavel	Against holding children in asylum detention centres / Ay family to stay in the UK	09/01/2003	03/11/2003	58
Evening Times	Hands off Yorkhill	Against closure of Queen Mother's maternity hospital	09/10/2003	01/10/2004	222

Editors & Journalists

Type of interviewee					Total
	<i>Herald</i>	<i>D. Record</i>	<i>Eve. Times</i>	<i>Other</i>	
Editors (incl Deputy / Executive)	3	1	1	2	7
News / Political / Letters Editors	2	1	0	1	4
Political / Home Affairs etc correspondents / reporters	1	1	1	1	4
Reporters	1	2	1	0	4
<i>Total</i>	7	5	3	4	19

Politicians

Campaign title	Minister targeted	Ministerial post
Shop a dealer	Margaret Curran	Deputy Social Justice Minister
War on Loan Sharks	Margaret Curran	Social Justice Minister
Ned Culture	Margaret Curran (also Cathy Jamieson)	Communities Minister (Justice Minister)
Airguns	Cathy Jamieson	Justice Minister
Ay Family / Dungavel	All Executive	All
Hands off Yorkhill	Malcolm Chisholm	Health Minister

Gaining access was relatively straightforward as the textual source material and the relevant information about potential interviewees were in the public domain, and it was possible to contact both journalists and MSPs directly at their place of work. Newspaper articles were occasionally collected in hard copy, but although this would have allowed reference to location on page, editorial environment and illustrative pictures and diagrams, it would have been onerous in terms of time and restricted the number of campaigns that could be researched. The electronic copies of all newspaper texts over the period available in Newsbank were more convenient, readily available and searchable, as well as including articles from all editions of each issue. Articles from The Herald and the Evening Times were downloaded from the internal intranet system (with permission), which offered the advantage of more detail about each article, including more consistent recording of by-lines, explicit categorisation (news, feature, leader etc) and photograph captions. Other newspaper texts were downloaded from Newsbank. The campaigns fairly consistently labelled all associated articles as part of the campaign (indeed some journalists defined such labelling as key to the definition of a campaign), but as well as the search term “campaign” itself, the keywords of the topics (e.g. “drugs”, “Dungavel”) were a reliable way of ensuring that all articles had been located. Due to the intertextual nature of campaigns, articles frequently referred back to interviews, quotes, and exposés from previous articles, further testing the reliability of the data-gathering.

Interviewees were accommodating and generous with their time. Early attempts to contact journalists by letter or email, and to recruit and select first interviewees through a questionnaire were unsuccessful due to journalists’ busy schedule and heavy email traffic. However, phone calls proved high effective, and resulted in an exceptionally high participation rate of 97%. Strategies employed included speaking to senior staff first (preferably an editor) who would suggest potential interviewees and agree to their approval and (where relevant) recommendation for participation to be mentioned to those staff. Personal contacts were also useful early on, particularly current and previous staff at The Herald and Evening Times. Politicians were more difficult to get in touch with, on account of the various gatekeepers such as constituency secretaries and private secretaries, each of whom responded to different modes of approach and had different requirements before the request would be passed on.

There were limited ethical considerations for this research as journalists and politicians are not vulnerable individuals, and indeed have more power and influence than the researcher. However, measures were taken to ensure that informed consent was given, data was stored securely, and that anonymity was honoured when requested. Journalists were provided with information detailing the scope and objectives of the research, further explanations were given over the phone and in person where requested, and the agreement was briefly restated on the interview recording. Interviews took place ‘on the record’, but there were requests for particular comments to be un-attributable, and in these cases neither the individual nor their job title or place of work were specified. One interviewee requested that the material be on the record, but that he not be quoted *directly*; this request has been honoured. Verbal consent

is customary between journalists and politicians, so both parties were comfortable with this arrangement. Data was kept on one university PC with a back-up copy on a home computer, but both machines were password protected. An ethics form was passed by the Social Science Faculty Ethics Committee of the University of Glasgow

3.3.3. Interviews

Interviews were undertaken to examine journalists' rationalisation of choices and decisions rather than them assume from the text. However, it was acknowledged that journalists have well-rehearsed justifications, so their responses were analysed as expressions of their professional ideology and were not assumed to be their true underlying motivations. It was also important to challenge contradictions (for instance, that they have to be in touch with their publics, but have to make a principled stand irrespective of what those publics think) and to attempt to extract implicit meaning. It was particularly important to be aware of this on account of my status as an employee at Newsquest (publisher of The Herald and Evening Times) at the beginning of the interview period. This meant that I had to be reflexive about my own assumptions regarding the organisation, and about how interviewees' responses might be affected by my occupational identity. However, the work of a Research Executive is distinct from that of a journalist and professional contact tended to be limited to editors, and there did not appear to be any significant difference between the frankness of Herald and Evening Times journalists and those at the Daily Record, for whom my identity was only that of an academic researcher.

These responses were drawn out in qualitative, in-depth interviews, which were semi-structured, so as to address all relevant areas but not to limit the data to aspects anticipated by the researcher. This approach invites tangential discussion and is therefore more flexible (Bryman, 2001), but an interview schedule was used to ensure certain key areas covered. The questioning strategy was not unduly concerned with avoiding interference in interviewees' narratives as it aimed to test and challenge interviewees' normalised professional ideology, and therefore hypothetical questions were used, but were left to the end of the interview. This has been described as using a 'traveller metaphor' where the interviewer leads the interviewee "to new insights" by encouraging them to consider things from a new angle, as opposed to the 'miner metaphor' of excavating existing knowledge. Such an approach is especially recommended for multiple case study research (Bryman, 2001).

Rapport was established fairly easily as interviewees were professionals in relatively powerful (as opposed to vulnerable) positions, who were able to talk at length without difficulty. As an interviewer, background knowledge, such as familiarity with industry terminology and processes and with the interviewee's work, was helpful to establish credibility. However, it was occasionally important to reassure interviewees that there were no right or wrong answers and that their knowledge was not being tested, particularly where interviewer expertise was assumed (whether as an academic researcher or a market researcher).

Contextual questions were asked at the beginning, to inform further questioning. These were related to the professional background of the individual, such as training and previous experience in different roles and at different newspapers. Since the relevant information was not of a personal and intrusive nature, they functioned as good ice-breaking questions that were factual and easily answered. Additional comments were invited whilst recording equipment was still switched on, as once it was switched off it signalled an end to the interview and the return to work, especially where carried out in the interviewee's place of business, as was typically the case. Few comments were offered after recording had ended.

Interviews were recorded electronically on an MP3 player (iPod) so that multiple copies and back-ups were easily produced, and all interviews could be stored, retrieved and played back at ease for transcribing purposes. An additional advantage was that the microphone used (Griffin iTalk) was very discreet, and therefore the equipment was unobtrusive. Interviews were fully transcribed with the exception of introductory explanations about the research and interruptions (phonecalls, passers by and so on) as it was not immediately obvious what would become significant in analysis (Bartlett and Payne, 1997).

Questions were piloted and refined through an iterative process of interview and analysis. Early questions focused on opinion polls, but interviewees led the discussion in a broader direction, and brought up the issue of campaigns as examples. Journalists and editors were asked about the identity and views of their readers, how they differ from the readership of other newspapers, or from the population as a whole, and the origins of those impressions of the various publics. Their professional judgement on the implications of that judgement of reader opinion on their practice was also explored, including the obligation to inform, challenge or reflect dominant views. They were also asked specifically about the role of the letters page, opinion polls and 'vox pops' (or 'man-on-the-street' interviews). In relation to campaigning specifically, journalists and editors were asked about why campaigns were run, what the job of a campaign was, its impact on the newspaper and its readers, as well as the nature of the relationship with politics and politicians. Journalists who had worked on specific campaigns were asked about the origins of the campaign, why certain decisions had been taken (for instance, why did the drugs campaign shift from drug-using parents to drug-using children; from general drugs to heroin; from name-and-shame to protest march?), and how they felt the campaign had made a difference.

Politicians were asked about the character of the Scottish political environment, how Holyrood differed from Westminster, how the Scottish Executive differed from Whitehall, about the strength of Scottish civic society, and about the nature and purpose of consultation. They were also asked about their opinions of the Scottish media environment and political reporting, and of general reporting on their areas. In relation to campaigning specifically, the MSPs were asked whether campaigning and advocacy was a valid role for the press, whether they thought

that the campaigns were representative of public opinion and/or the public interest, about their contact with journalists on those issues, and about their response to the campaigns.

3.4. Data analysis methods

This section will detail the methods used to analyse the interview and content data. The operationalisation of methods of thematic and discourse analysis will be discussed, with reference to examples for illustrative purposes, but first a brief explanation will be given of the use of computer-assisted qualitative software program NVivo to facilitate data management and analysis.

3.4.1. Use of NVivo

The use of computer-assisted qualitative software programs (CAQDAS) as a data management tool to facilitate (but not perform) analysis is time-saving, transparent and allows checks and balances, especially regarding consistency (Bringer et al., 2006). 'Code and retrieve' functions allow data to be categorised (as hyperlinked 'nodes') and for the categories to be worked into a framework as suggested by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1968; Bryman, 2001) but whilst retaining a direct and accessible link with the original text and the extract in context, avoiding one of the key drawbacks associated with grounded theory methodology (Bryman, 2001). Coding can be both be used as "representation", to identify categories for quantitative measurement, and as "resource", to facilitate indexing and retrieval for qualitative analysis of meaning through structures, qualities or context (Jensen, 2002c), both of which were used within this project, as discussed in detail below. Viewing the nodes with the 'coding stripes' (lines at the side of the text labelled with the node name) made connections easier to identify (Bringer et al., 2006), suggesting intersections or union between nodes. The ease of connection from coded text back to the original data, allowing the categorised data to be viewed in context, was essential for a discourse analytical approach.

3.4.2. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse both interview and content data. Thematic analysis was chosen over grounded theory because although the latter has formalised intuitive elements of qualitative analysis that were already widely used, as Jensen says, "It remains unclear what distinguishes grounded theory beyond a rather commonsensical notion of sampling, comparing, and reflecting in a reiterated sequence" (Jensen, 2002c: 248). It was also preferred over analytic induction, a method of hypothesis generation and testing, which is onerous in its requirements of proof and proves only the minimum conditions under which something might occur, as, where strictly applied, one negative case can disprove the whole theory (Bryman (2001). Content, production and reception were analysed separately but consistently, and then connections made to form a theoretical explanations.

The interview research was carried out iteratively, with analysis begun at early stage, and ended with theoretical saturation, when no further findings were forthcoming. The benefit of early analysis was that it allowed a flexibility and responsiveness of the research scope, which began with an assumption that opinion polls would be the most dominant aspect of representation of public opinion to politicians, but this changed to campaigns in response to findings from the exploratory early interview texts. Analytical themes were organised at the first level as related to professional ideology, social organisation, ownership and commerce, sources, audience, publics, democracy, and campaigning – topics that were initial concerns at the interviewing stage. Sub-categories at the second or third level emerged out of the data, for example, beneath ‘audience’, ‘child nodes’ included reader relationship (loyalty, trust, etc), anticipated reception (interest, relevance, comprehension), and reader feedback. None of the categories were mutually exclusive, and indeed frequently overlapped (dynamic coding of data was another advantage of the NVivo software).

Decision-making was recorded to ensure rigour in the analytic process. Each category was given a full description including how it had emerged (whether from the literature or ‘in vivo’ from interview data), which were amended as the concepts developed. A record of these changes and those of connections between them was kept in Excel spreadsheets, hard copies of which were reviewed and changes annotated, creating a transparent audit trail in digital and hard copy form. Top level categories were then analysed for frames and discourses within the intersections with other categories available in the form of ‘coding stripes’. The use of categories assisted the consistent analysis of discourse.

Content data was managed slightly differently, due to the sheer quantity of data, and also because the incidence of particular terms and frames can be significant in extant (‘etic’) media content in a way that is not true of interview transcripts (where the conversation is directed to some extent by the interviewer). Specifically, the search function in NVivo was employed to create nodes of references to specific terms (e.g. ‘public opinion’; ‘risk’; ‘junkies’) in order to identify common frames within the campaign articles. Koenig (2004) recommends NVivo for frame analysis, albeit with the caveat of limits to the number of documents that can be efficiently searched, due to the demands made on computer processing power; despite some problems with the computer hanging and crashing, the use of software remained far faster than manual methods. Search nodes functioned at two levels in the process, firstly to collate sections of the texts that were of interest for further analysis (as a resource, as noted above), and later to check the comparative predominance of frames and discourses identified in that in-depth analysis (as a reference).

The first stage was an initial preliminary read-through of all of the articles in each campaign in order. This serves to clarify the narrative background of events, indicate relevant background reference material (such as parliamentary debates, motions or questions; press releases etc), and to highlight key themes and lexical terms. Rather than inconsistently free-coding framing

at this stage, interesting or frequently used words were noted down in a list of search terms, grouped by theme. Searches were often made on the lexical root of words, in order to return all conjugations of a verb for instance, and where relevant a thesaurus was used to suggest synonyms for words associated with a particular frame. Finally, the articles were reviewed with the coding stripes visible to identify any gaps in the coding. At this stage text that appeared in quotation marks or otherwise attributed to a source was also hand-coded in categories (such as politician, professional or expert source, campaign group and so on), broken down into specific subcategories (Executive minister, MSP, MP and so on), and often overlapping (for instance, MSP and campaigner).

The searches were returned as nodes consisting of each instance of the term in their enclosing paragraphs. It was then possible to work through the node, un-coding irrelevant instances or adjusting the search terms to separate out distinct uses of a word, for instance making a search on 'mother' case sensitive to exclude instances of 'Queen Mother's Hospital', or removing references to 'the public consultation' from a search on 'the public'. It was then possible to 'code on' from the refined node to examine whether each incidence of the term represented a consistent category, or to subcategorise them, for instance as an unproblematised use of a term such as 'junkie', versus an explicit challenge to the term, or to distinguish the different uses of a concept such as 'human rights' (legal, moral, job descriptor etc). Further breakdowns were made according to type of article (news article, feature, opinion column, leader column or letters page – coded as 'attributes' of the article file), and by attribution to sources. These refined nodes could then be seen as 'qualitative content analysis'.

To be logical and reliable, this organisational stage of analysis needed to follow categorisation decisions that were explicit, justified, remembered and checked for consistency (Schrøder, 2002). However, the method was not appropriate to more conceptual or theoretical 'meta-narratives' (Koenig, 2004) or macrosemantics (van Dijk, 1988) that are structural rather than vocabulary-based. For this it is necessary to undertake discourse analysis.

3.4.3. Discourse analysis

This research will draw on analytical methods that originate in critical linguistics and are also associated with Critical Discourse Analysis, which explore the ideational elements of texts (the way of representing the world), and the interpersonal roles (how social relations are enacted). This includes how associations are made and perpetuated, for instance Fowler (1991: 94-5) argues that women are referred to in roles as wives, mothers, sexual objects, more than as voters, workers and so on, and similarly in his study I argue that in the campaigns publics are referred to in roles of crime victims, service users, and otherwise affected individuals, rather than active or discursive agents (see Chapter 8). The method also focuses on how grammatical constructions shift, conceal, or deflect blame or responsibility, for instance by representing an event as a state rather than a process ('is dead', not 'was killed'), a passive

rather than active process ('was killed by them', rather than 'they killed him'), and intransitive rather than transitive ('he was killed', not 'the police killed him'). This research will use these analytic concepts to indicate how social problems are personalised in the culpability of deviant individuals and the passive vulnerability of affected individuals (see Chapter 7).

As well as syntactic (grammatical) concepts, other discourse concepts that were particularly useful in this research were semantic (vocabulary), and aspects of style. Semantic analysis included lexical choices, such as whether increased public spending is described as 'rising costs' or 'increased investment', as well as euphemism (for example, 'lost their son to drugs' rather than 'their son died of a drug overdose') or metaphor (such as loan sharks as 'parasites', or the meta-metaphor of a bridge standing in for a model of healthcare). Stylistic comparisons include the advertising order of discourses that is recognisable in some of the recruitment of support for the campaign. Again this includes aspects of grammar, including the use of the imperative where the newspaper instructs readers, and other 'pragmatics', or speech acts (utterances are actions in themselves), where the newspaper promises, asks, or invites readers. In combination with the production research it was possible to examine the conditions under which this is seen as acceptable or consistent with the journalistic professional ideology or rationalisation of the role of journalists. Discourse analysis was used to a lesser extent in the analysis of interview data, but was useful on occasion when interviewees appeared to correct themselves to express something in a different modality, for instance from "rendered themselves incapable" to "have been rendered incapable" (see Chapter 7).

3.5. Conclusion

The methodology adopted in this research follows an interpretive tradition and employs qualitative methods to facilitate the exploration of the meanings and justifications of journalists in the practice of campaign journalism, and to some extent of the response of politicians to the campaigns. It also examines the newspaper articles that made up the content of the campaigns to examine how the product matches up with journalists' account of their practice.

The production, content and reception aspects of this study have to some extent been treated as analytically distinct, as different moments in the news process, however, they are drawn together when the process is viewed as a whole. In the next chapter the narrative of the six campaigns is outlined, chiefly from the articles themselves, but also from background materials such as parliamentary documentation, and from the responses of journalists to questions about the motivations and strategy of the specific campaigns.

Chapter 4: The Campaigns: Background and Key Events

This chapter will introduce the newspaper titles and specific campaign case studies that will form the basis of both the production and content aspects of this study. The three newspapers will be described in relation to their recent history and position in the market, and the narrative of each campaign, its origin, objectives, methods and objectives will be briefly outlined.

4.1. Daily Record

The *Daily Record* is a national (Scottish) popular tabloid title, owned by Trinity Mirror. It is traditionally Labour-supporting, with a history of campaigning; it was where investigative and campaigning journalist Paul Foot trained in the sixties and discovered socialism. In more recent years it flirted with a more right-wing agenda under Martin Clarke (March 1998 – September 2000). According to Political Editor, Paul Sinclair, Clarke wanted to “take the *Record* out of the housing estates” and pursue more middle class readers, to encroach on the mid-market (C1C2⁷) ground of the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*. To this end, according to Sinclair, the *Record* campaigned against the repeal of Section 28/2A – which outlawed the ‘promotion of homosexuality in schools’ (Lynch, 2001: 110) – although such a *socially* conservative stance would not necessarily alienate their existing left-leaning working class readers. This repositioning was not commercially successful, however, and was reversed with the appointment of Peter Cox (September 2000 – March 2003). The paper again became centre-left leaning and Labour supporting, an orientation that continued with the appointment of current editor Bruce Waddell.

Nonetheless, the Section 28 campaign was a significant, even formative, event in the first term of the Scottish Parliament, and had a lasting impact on post-devolution politics (Hassan and Warhurst, 2000; Lynch, 2001; McCrone, 2002). It was referred to by some interviewees who were peripherally involved (often employed at other newspapers). However, even if it were possible to interview those closely involved, their memories of the events would likely to be patchy and unreliable, and access to campaign texts was limited⁸. Therefore this campaign is not included in the sample, but it remains a crucial historical reference point in the relationship

7 According to the socio-economic categories used by the publishing industry, C1 are lower middle class, working in junior managerial, administrative or professional, supervisory or clerical positions, and C2 are skilled manual workers.

8 This period falls between the digitised records of Newsbank and previous methods of archiving on microfiche, and hard copy archives at Scottish reference libraries such as the Mitchell Library in Glasgow are incomplete.

between politicians and the press in post-devolution Scotland and will therefore be referred to in a comparative and contextual manner.

The Section 28 campaign was masterminded and financed by local businessman Brian Souter and supported by other newspapers (Lynch, 2001: 203; Milne, 2005: 35-42). The campaigners were able to make significant claims of public support for their campaign via opinion polls and an unofficial 'referendum', and frame their stance as defending the interests of 'ordinary families' against those of LGBT pressure groups, framed as 'vested interests'. The opposition seemed to take MSPs by surprise, but the campaign was unsuccessful, largely because there was significant cross-party support for repeal (with the exception of the Conservatives – a marginal force in Scottish politics). However, some have argued that MSPs became more cautious and defensive as a result of the "kicking" they got (Paul Sinclair; also Milne, 2005: 42).

In the sample period four relevant campaigns were published; for action against drug dealers, 'loan sharks', anti-social behaviour, and airguns, all problems experienced in everyday life. In contrast to the Section 28 campaign, these campaigns were not critical of the Scottish Executive, but implored them to adopt measures to solve the social ills described. The first two, under the tenure of Peter Cox, were fairly non-specific in their preferred solution, though they were generally pre-disposed to tougher law enforcement. The last two, during Bruce Waddell's editorship, pursued specific legislative responses, one of which was Executive policy and the other an area of legislation reserved to Westminster. Reader involvement included providing tip-offs to the paper (naming drug dealers and loan sharks), writing letters to the paper for submission to a government consultation exercise (on anti-social behaviour) and joining a protest march (drugs again). The four campaigns will be briefly summarised in turn.

4.1.1. The politics of drug use: 'shop-a-dealer' and the march against drugs

The *Daily Record* campaign against drugs and drug dealers (principally focusing on heroin) was by far the most long-running campaign by the newspaper, comprising 121 articles over six months from November 2000 to May 2001. It had two distinct phases, starting as a 'name and shame' campaign (a common tabloid approach), then moving into a protest march phase. The march and rally took the campaign into the territory of 'outsider' pressure groups (Grant, 2004) or social movements, but failed to adopt political objectives beyond agenda-setting and, having over-claimed on anticipated effects of eradicating the problem simply through a show of anti-drug feeling, the campaign petered out.

The newspaper's account of the origin of the campaign was that it was initiated by the editor's concerns about the effects of drug use on heroin addicts' children; "He said [at the rally] that the campaign began after a chance remark from a social worker [...] He didn't believe it but was forced to when chief reporter Anna Smith investigated and confirmed the grim news" (DR

02/04/01). However, politicians reported instigating the campaign as a public information initiative.

And that led to things, to the shop-a-dealer, it was dubbed, campaign, where we literally did posters and all the media adverts and all the rest of it, you know, to get people to phone Crimestoppers, and I think that was very popular. And, again, the papers, the media were very much behind us on that. (Cathie Jamieson, MSP)

The Daily Record followed the political agenda, but put its own spin on the drive to encourage people to report drug-dealers to the police, and invited them instead to call the newspaper.

By the end of the campaign the editor claimed to have named and shamed more than 200 dealers within the pages of the newspaper (DR 02/04/01). The first named dealer operating in the community was Mags Haney, the head of a large and allegedly notorious family, following an undercover investigation involving reporters speaking to drug-users leaving and posing as drug-users and buying heroin from Haney at her home.

Mags Haney... some guy I spoke to knew them, I went in with him, and the guys bought drugs from her, and I just described what happened. But I was actually in the house with her and all of these other people saying 'who are you?' asking me questions, and they shut the door behind me, and asked me some very uncomfortable questions, and I didn't particularly like it, the door being shut behind me, and I had to get my way out of there. (Mark McGivern, Reporter, Daily Record)

Others followed throughout the campaign, 'naming and shaming' those whose activities were corroborated by journalists' undercover operations. Names were also passed on to the police and the paper made various claims to have influenced or impacted on police activity. Sometimes they implied success by associating the reported arrest, prosecution or sentencing with the campaign, at other times police sources acknowledged the newspaper's contribution of useful information, though the police were also keen to gain recognition for actions and initiatives taken independently of, and prior to, the campaign (DR 06/12/00). Similarly, funding allocation announcements were framed as a victory (DR 19/01/01) even though the money was not new (see Chapter 10).

The protest march was first hinted at on 11th January, and finally announced on 20th February. It was launched with a list of political objectives which were restated on the eve of the march, headlined "The people's charter" (DR 31/03/01), but no other mention was made of them. They were largely related to enforcement and punishment of dealers, such as asset seizure, prevention of money laundering, eviction and sentencing, with only one relating to treatment of addicts, but again, none of the proposals were new or controversial, and some were already being considered (UK Anti-drugs Coordination Unit, 2001). Indeed, when interviewed, journalists could not call to mind a single demand. The turnout on the day was reported at 20,000 (DR 02/04/01), and speeches were given at the rally by senior politicians, celebrities, a campaigner and *Record* editor, Peter Cox. The following day the paper pledged to "keep the fight up until they are driven off our streets" (DR 03/04/01) and reopened the shop-a-dealer

hotline, but the campaign disappeared. The campaign claimed a political impact, but not so much in terms of influencing political decisions as taking action themselves directly.

4.1.2. The politics of credit: loan sharks

The Daily Record again took a 'name and shame' approach including investigative activity, and demanded action from politicians. The campaign ran from May to July 2002, running just 29 articles – relatively few for a resource-heavy investigation – but it attracted significant political praise.

Journalists again claimed that the campaign originated with a tip-off by a member of the public, this time a reader who had borrowed money from a loan shark in Dundee. This would appear to be an example of a *Daily Record* reader going to the paper for help rather than the police or other agencies; a traditional source of stories.

I'll tell you the loan shark one, this is a better example [than the drugs campaign] because that one didn't come about because they [editorial] wanted a campaign, that came about because we wrote one story and then another story and then another story about loan sharks, and then it became a campaign, and then the third story we got we thought, let's make that a campaign, because we got a lot of feedback from the first couple. (Mark McGivern, Reporter, Daily Record)

Again, politicians regarded the campaign as a response to their own agenda – Margaret Curran remarked that “they were very cooperative with us, again, on that” – the initiative being promoted was extra money for credit unions and a 'national debt helpline' to allow the public to contact the authorities for help. This policy was given coverage by the Daily Record but presented as a *response* to the campaign; that leaders “vowed to shake up public advice centres and boost credit unions” (DR 05/06/02). However, also like the drugs campaign, the Record put their own spin on the issue – whilst politicians defined it as 'financial exclusion', The Record framed it as a criminal enforcement issue, with a greater focus those who 'preyed on' the excluded. However, in this case, to some extent it could be argued that the enforcement angle had been politically neglected, as the relevant authority was Trading Standards rather than the police, and detection was therefore dependent on civil action rather than criminal detection.

Journalists again investigated tip-offs to establish their veracity.

I had to go out and watch people doing stuff. It's more difficult [than drugs], I couldn't buy, it's very difficult to borrow money from people, because the people they tended to sell to were people they knew, or people they knew through someone else. You couldn't go up and out-and-out get involved in that. So I had to get people on side who would do it, and watch their progress, and see how it went. (Mark McGivern, Reporter, Daily Record)

The Record claimed a success of sorts, reporting that one of the 'named and shamed' loan sharks was indeed shamed, and “reduced to a laughing stock” in the pub where he operated. Another was reported to have left town and a third to have sold his debts on to another loan shark (DR 06/07/02).

In addition to the 'name-and-shame' strategy, the campaign announced two further objectives, related to political influence, calling for action on both enforcement and prevention.

We will give victims of loan sharks the chance to shop their tormentors.

We will demand tougher laws to stamp out illegal money-lending.

And we will fight to give the most vulnerable in society easy access to credit they can afford (DR 31/05/02)

By the third day backbench MPs and MSPs had taken up the case and announced that they would pursue action in Westminster and Holyrood. MP George Foulkes (Labour) announced his intention to raise a Private Member's Bill to legislate against very high interest rates⁹, and in the Scottish Parliament Trish Godman (also Labour) lodged a motion urging action in partnership with other agencies (Scottish Parliament, 2002).

In terms of political impact, the Record reported that Social Justice Minister Margaret Curran was planning to adopt an asset-seizing plan proposed by Fergus Ewing (SNP), but did not focus on it strongly or frame it as a victory of the campaign (DR 06/07/02). There was a similarly muted representation of pledges by the Assistant Chief Constable in charge of implementing asset-seizing measures, to work with the local authority trading standards department to tackle unlicensed money-lending (DR 15/07/02). However, reporter Mark McGivern reported the first arrest made by the Scottish Illegal Money Lending Unit that was set up two years later (DR 22/12/04), and when interviewed described a close working relationship with the unit and made a cautious claim to have been influential in its establishment (also DR 15/09/04).

4.1.3. The politics of deviancy: 'Ned Culture' and anti-social behaviour

The Daily Record's campaign against anti-social behaviour essentially promoted the Scottish Executive's legislative proposals, but focused on just one aspect – measures to tackle youth disorder. Although journalists acknowledged it as a "political tie-in" (Magnus Gardham), in the articles it was framed as the Executive asking the newspaper to help them to access the views of those affected as part of their public consultation. The campaign contrasted the support of 'ordinary people' with the largely critical responses from civic society organisations and associations, suggesting that the Executive had learned from the experience of Section 28, where civic society groups (such as LGBT pressure groups) were framed as unrepresentative of the wider 'public'. The campaign ran for just nine days in September 2003, over 14 articles.

In line with national UK Labour Party policy, and following the introduction of the equivalent *Anti-social Behaviour Bill* in Westminster in June 2003, the Scottish Executive introduced the *Anti-social Behaviour Etc (Scotland) Bill* on 29th October 2003. Anti-social Behaviour Orders

⁹ The Consumer Credit Bill was passed in May 2005, though it is unclear whether this is related to Foulkes' efforts; indeed the initial review of the original 1974 act was announced back in July 2001.

(ASBOs) had already been established in the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* (which covered the whole of the UK, having preceded devolution), but concern had been expressed that these new powers were not being used by local authorities and the new bill was intended to “tackle antisocial behaviour more effectively” (Scottish Parliament, 2003a: 1). Prior to the introduction of the new bill, the Scottish Executive published a consultation document on the proposals (Scottish Executive, 2003), which was distributed to civic organisations, including pressure groups for both young and older people (Scottish Parliament, 2003a: 2). In addition, ministers made visits to constituencies at the request of local MSPs, and attended meetings with ‘stakeholders’ such as children’s charities, police and church organisations, and housing associations and other neighbourhood organisations.

The *Daily Record* campaign was launched on 1st September, just 10 days before the deadline for submissions to the consultation (which had been launched on 26th June). It was explicitly initiated by the Scottish Executive, yet was still billed as a campaign, inviting views to be sent to “Neds¹⁰ Campaign”, and setting out “How you can nail the neds” (DR 01/09/03). The letters and emails were handed to the Communities Minister, Margaret Curran, on the 10th September, the closing date for submissions).

Curran was quoted as congratulating the *Record* for providing this “compelling [...and] invaluable evidence” (DR 11/09/03). However, when the report on the consultation, written by John Flint and colleagues at the Urban Studies department of the University of Glasgow, was published, it was less convinced of the usefulness of the exercise; “It should be noted that the context and language for these campaigns were determined by the two newspapers¹¹ and the responses they received reflect this.” (Flint et al., 2003:17). Therefore, though apparently invited by minister, these submissions had less formal influence than if readers had responded independently to the consultation or attended one of the constituency meetings, though the meetings appeared to have raised similar points. The Bill was passed on 17th June 2004, and received royal assent on 26th July.

4.1.4. The politics of gun control: airgun ban

The campaign for an airgun ban was the only *Daily Record* campaign to have no discernable link with the Scottish Executive’s agenda, and to be solely a response to the news value of the story. The fact that firearms legislation is reserved to Westminster, yet the *Daily Record* continued to address the Scottish Executive, meant that this was the most oppositional of the four *Daily Record* campaigns. However, it was also the least emphatically defined as a

10 Scottish slang for working class youth of a particular subculture, akin to ‘chav’ or ‘scally’ in England, and often associated with drunken disorder and gang violence: “A stupid or worthless person; a good-for-nothing; spec. a hooligan, thug, yob, or petty criminal. Also used as a general term of disapprobation” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2003).

11 The other newspaper was the *Greenock Telegraph*

campaign, made little reference to public opinion and made no direct appeal to readers. It ran between March and June 2005 and included 57 articles.

On 2nd March 2005, a two year-old boy called Andrew Morton was shot in the head with an airgun by a 27 year-old man, Mark Bonnini, and died in hospital two days later. Bonnini had been shooting at a fire crew attending an incident nearby in Easterhouse, a deprived and run-down area on the outskirts of Glasgow. The gun used was a legally-owned air rifle that required no license. The *Record* gave extensive coverage of Morton's death and called in the leader column for airguns to be banned (DR 05/03/05).

Firearms legislation was the remit of the Home Office, whose attention had been focused on *illegal* gun use rather than airguns, as it was the former that was perceived to be a problem in various cities in England (Home Office, 2004), though comparatively rare in Scotland. Both the First Minister and Prime Minister were quoted stating that the Scottish Executive and Home Office were working together on the issue, and warning against knee-jerk reactions, though McConnell was consistently more enthusiastic about legislation (DR 07/03/05; Hansard, 2005b; Scottish Parliament, 2005a). In the meantime, McConnell announced in First Minister's Questions that a public campaign would be launched to encourage airgun owners to hand them in to the police (Scottish Parliament, 2005a), and the initiative was confirmed on 23rd March. The newspaper mentioned that a parliamentary debate on a motion called by Kenny MacAskill of the SNP was due to take place on 24th March, but did not cover the lengthy debate. However, when Michael Howard, then Conservative leader, expressed reservations about the need for legislation in an interview with local radio station Radio Clyde during the party's Scottish conference, the *Record* published criticism from Andrew Morton's mother¹², anti-gun campaigners, and in a leader column (DR 19/03/05).

After a further (but not fatal) airgun incident, and three days before the 2005 general election, Charles Clarke, then Home Secretary, announced that he would present proposals by the end of July to legislate to restrict airgun use, reported by the *Record* the following day as a "proposed ban", to "take airguns off our streets", dubbed "Andrew's Law" (DR 03/05/05), though Clarke's reported comments on the BBC indicated that restrictions on use were more likely than an outright ban. This interpretation was confirmed by the Home Office response to a pro-ban Early Day Motion (PIMS, 2005), which highlighted the raft of existing legislation and the difficulties both of a full ban and licensing, including unenforceability (especially in consideration of the black market) and compensation costs for the full ban option, and increased administrative burden on police in the case of licensing (Hansard, 2005a). The following day Home Office Minister Hazel Blears announced measures to increase age

12 Morton's parents were treated very sympathetically throughout the campaign, and it was not reported until the following year that they had, quite recently at the time of the campaign, been arrested for dealing cannabis.

restrictions and forbid people from firing airguns beyond the boundaries of premises, as part of the *Violent Crime Reduction Bill* (2005).

The announcement was welcomed by Justice Minister, Cathy Jamieson, but the media response was hostile, expressing a feeling that stronger action had been promised by the government prior to the general election, and reneged upon (Executive News Online, 2005 and DR 09/06/05). The Record reported conflict between Jamieson and the Home Office, and suggested that the Executive were considering independent measures within devolved powers (DR 09/06/05), which seemed to be confirmed by McConnell at First Ministers Questions the following day (Scottish Parliament, 2005b), but this rebellion was reportedly slapped down by Clarke (Scotland on Sunday 12/06/05). Amendments to the *Violent Crime Reduction Bill* were announced on 13th October 2005, including registration of airgun sales as proposed by ACPOS. Both announcements were reported in the *Daily Record*, with SNP-attributed criticisms that they had not gone far enough, but still claiming it as 'Andrews Law' and without pushing for further action. However, airgun crime has continued to be a political issue, and the call for a ban was renewed in early 2007 (Question S2F-2752) by Tommy Sheridan (then leader of the SSP).

4.2. The Herald

The Herald is a 'quality' broadsheet morning national Scottish newspaper based in Glasgow, in competition with the Edinburgh-based Scotsman. At the beginning of the analysis period it was owned by Scottish Media Group (SMG), but was bought over by Newsquest, the third largest UK local and regional press owner (The Newspaper Society, 2008) in 2003. It has a circulation of over 73,000, with readership surveys indicating a total of 281,000 predominantly middle class readers (Newsquest, 2006b), including more MSPs than any other newspaper (MORI, 2004).

As a 'quality' broadsheet newspaper, The Herald has less of a campaigning tradition than the Daily Record, but has a record of giving a platform to dissenting voices, including critical coverage of asylum detention, particularly of treatment of children and dawn raids to remove families to detention, which continued under the subsequent editor (Charles McGhee). However, the issue's elevation to a campaign may have been partly motivated by the fact that parliament was in summer recess from 27th June, marking the start of 'silly season' where a shortage of political news means the media are more reliant on press releases, including those from pressure groups and campaign groups.

4.2.1. The politics of immigration: the Ay family and 'Dungavel: Scotland's Shame'

The Herald's Dungavel campaign had two distinct phases. It began with opposition to the deportation of a family of Turkish Kurds – Yurdugal Ay and her four children aged between

eight and 14 – who had been held in Dungavel Detention Centre¹³ for a year whilst appealing against the rejection of their asylum claim. When this attempt failed, and the family were deported, the campaign then developed into more general opposition to the detention of the children of asylum-seekers, labelled, “Dungavel: Scotland’s Shame”. Its writers, contributors and sources variously advocated the closure of the centre or of its family unit; abolition of, or limit on the length of, detention of children; and/or education of detained children in local schools. The newspaper did not orchestrate a show of public support, and made contradictory assessments of public opinion, but did attract debate in the letters to the editor page. The campaign ran from July to December 2003, and comprised 131 articles. As with the Daily Record airguns campaign, the newspaper’s demands were directed toward the Scottish Executive. The reasons for this were largely pragmatic, since Home Secretary David Blunkett and Beverly Hughes, the Immigration Minister ignored the campaign and refused to be interviewed by the paper (HD 12/07/03).

Yurdugal Ay and her husband Salih were Kurdish refugees from Turkey, where they said they were persecuted by the army and military police for their Kurdish ethnicity. However, the basis of their claim was not heard in the UK because they were considered ‘third country applicants’ and rejected on that basis. The couple had first sought and been repeatedly refused refuge in Germany in 1988, where two of their four children were born (the younger two in Greece, though no mention is made of the family living there) before fleeing deportation by moving to Gravesend in Kent, where they lived for three years. Mr Ay was deported to Germany in May 2002 and subsequently sent back to Turkey, and had reportedly not been heard from since (he later turned up alive and well), but Mrs Ay absconded with the children to avoid deportation. Although she later turned herself in, the family were detained in Dungavel in July 2002, and remained there during the appeal process in prison-like conditions with rudimentary education provision. The campaign began as the family lost their appeal and were attempting to make a final appeal to the House of Lords.

The origins of the newspaper campaign lay in the campaign groups that had formed in civic society on behalf of the family. A group of religious and trades union leaders wrote a letter, published in The Herald’s letters page but trailed and summarised as a news article, appealing to Blunkett to grant residency as “reparation” for the length of their detention and the effect on the children, rather than due to the merits of their case (HD 04/07/03). The following day the term “campaign” was used as the support grew and the call “gained momentum”; quotes were published from Amnesty International, a Scottish teaching union, and sympathetic MSPs. On the same day the leader column, for the first time, directly advocated one of the campaign objectives: the right to mainstream education for the detained children, “It is our duty to care

13 The ‘Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre’ is one of eight secure facilities around the UK, the only in Scotland, designed to house asylum-seekers who are to be forcibly removed from the country, or who were judged to be at risk of absconding during their appeal process. It is located near Strathaven in a former prison, and opened in September 2001.

for all children living in Scotland. [...] That is what The Herald believes” (HD 09/07/03). However, the campaign did not set out how this could be achieved, leaving room for critics, such as Beverly Hughes (HD 20/12/03¹⁴), Scottish Secretary Helen Liddell (HD 11/09/03), and two letter-writers (HD 08/09/03, 12/09/03), to suggest that the campaigners advocated separating children from their incarcerated or deported parents; and an MP to suggest that they implied support for “open-door immigration policy” (George Foulkes MP, letter to the editor HD 15/09/03).

On 24th July it was reported that legal aid had been denied to the Ay family and preparations begun to deport the family, a decision that *The Herald* criticised in the leader column. The lawyers decided to pursue the case without aid, but the Lords refused to hear the case (HD 01/08/03). A new application was lodged in the names of the children, but the Home Office refused to defer their deportation (HD 02/08/03) and responded with a letter expressing their “gravest” view of the attempt (HD 04/08/03). The family threatened to refuse to board the plane (HD 04/08/03), but, despite a last minute press conference in their lawyers office by speakerphone (HD 05/08/03) they were deported on 5th August 2003. However, the family were eventually granted leave to remain in Germany on the basis (ironically) of having been traumatised by Dungavel.

The following day The Herald individually asked every Minister in the Scottish cabinet whether they thought that the Ay family should have been detained for a year, and whether it was right or wrong to deport them. No individual comments were made but a collective statement for the Executive was issued re-stating that immigration decisions are reserved to Westminster, that it would therefore be inappropriate for ministers to comment (HD 06/08/03). The front page featured pictures of all those questioned with the headline “Wall of Silence”, and Malcolm Chisholm, then Health Minister, was criticised for refusing to respond to questions about the Ay family on BBC Radio Scotland. The leader column asked, “Has devolution lost its voice?”.

This marked the shift in the campaign from lobbying on behalf of the Ay family, to a more overtly political campaign against the detention of children more generally. Pressure on Scottish ministers to intervene increased when the paper reported that the Scottish Liberal Democrat leader and Deputy First Minister, Jim Wallace, had intervened in another case 18 months previously by writing to the Home Secretary (HD 08/08/03). However, Wallace argued that he had written in his party political role rather than as an Executive minister, but spoke out against the detention of children in a similarly qualified way (HD 09/08/03). Having secured one expression of opinion the paper then pushed for ministers to publicly press the Home

14 Though this article appeared at the end of the campaign, the quote had been from an earlier interview: “In an interview on September 24, she told me [Lorna Martin]: “I believe profoundly that the best place for the children is with their parents and to separate them would be unconscionable. I couldn't actually do that.”” (HD 20/12/03), though this particular quote did not appear in the original article published 27th September.

Office, but only backbench Labour and opposition MSPs did so vocally. Two inspectorate reports on Dungavel (HM Inspector of Prisons, 2003; HM Inspectorate of Education, 2003) gave *The Herald* further ammunition to argue that it was inappropriate accommodation for children beyond the very short term (HD 15/08/03). The regime at Dungavel was subject to further criticisms when it was reported that a detainee had been punished for feeding her children cereal in her room (HD 03/08/03).

Rosie Kane of the SSP and Robina Qureshi, director of advocacy charity Positive Action in Housing, took what *The Herald* described as “direct action” to free families from Dungavel by allowing them to stay in their homes as part of the bail conditions, and also contributed to the bail payment (HD 05/09/03; HD 12/09/03). Positive Action in Housing also organised a public meeting, which *The Herald* covered briefly (HD 06/09/03), and the following day a protest organised by the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) was held outside Dungavel, and addressed by SNP leader John Swinney, whose speech was summarised and briefly quoted (HD 08/09/03). Swinney went on to negotiate privately with MSPs from other parties, including Labour, to construct a motion for debate in the Scottish Parliament that could attract cross-party support (HD 09/09/03). However, the motion was only passed with a Liberal Democrat amendment that entirely reworded it from calling for an end to detention of children at Dungavel to expressing concern and calling for the inspectorate recommendations to be implemented (Scottish Parliament, 2003b: col 1595), which a *Herald* leader column described as “a vote to do nothing but be mildly unhappy” (HD 12/09/03). However, the Executive did announce some negotiations with the Home Office (HD 12/09/03).

The *Herald*’s arguments increasingly adopted the SNP’s constitutional angle, particularly when “legal experts” identified a section of the *Scotland Act 1998* (which enacted devolution) that allowed for the transfer of limited powers to the Scottish Parliament, and could be used to transfer power over the welfare and education of those detained at Dungavel though not over asylum and detention per se (HD 10/09/03). Simultaneously, there was a flurry of minor activity at Westminster, as Early Day Motions were posted on three consecutive days from 8th September (PIMS, 2003a; 2003b; 2003c), though they did not attract a great deal of coverage, to the frustration of at least one MP (George Foulkes MP, letter to the editor HD 15/09/03).

Finally, after the campaign had begun to slow, Immigration Minister, Beverly Hughes agreed to an interview in order to announce measures intended to ensure that asylum-seekers with children were dealt with more quickly and therefore avoid lengthy detention of children, without compromising on the policy of detaining children or putting a time limit on the length of detention, and making no mention of education (HD 27/09/07). On 4th November, a proposal to house asylum-seekers in hostels in the community whilst on bail was put forward by “a group of churches and charities [the Refuge Scotland Project] led by a Scottish MP [Michael Connarty (Lab)]”, but politicians were quoted reiterating the need for secure accommodation to prevent absconding (HD 03/11/07). Similarly, an STUC petition was referred to the Home

Secretary and no further action taken (Scottish Parliament, 2005c). Further punitive measures were introduced in the *Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc) Bill* (House of Commons, 2003), although the intention to introduce electronic monitoring ('tagging') to replace detention could be interpreted as an improvement. Hughes did, however, make a concession on the detention of children by implementing a 28 day time limit, unless sanctioned by Hughes herself, and also promised to improve education at Dungavel specifically (HD 16/12/07). Though the measures were criticised as insufficient by opposition MSPs, *The Herald* claimed it as a victory in the leader column, in particular as tantamount to an "admission of wrongdoing" (HD 16/12/07).

4.3. The Evening Times

The *Evening Times* is a local evening newspaper for the Glasgow area, from the same stable as *The Herald*. It has a small but concentrated circulation of around 90,000, around a third of which are from subscriptions, indicating a regular readership (Newsquest, 2006a). The newspaper's readership is representative of the highly diverse city, particularly under previous editor, Charles McGhee (1999 – 2006, followed by two years editing *The Herald*), who had aspirations to take the title upmarket and make it more 'credible', including a more 'responsible' brand of journalism. Campaigns in the first session of the Scottish Parliament included calling for legislation to regulate landlords of multiple occupancy properties following the deaths of two students in a fire, and for a children's commissioner in the Scottish Executive cabinet to represent children's interests.

During the analysis period the newspaper's efforts were dominated by a single lengthy and substantial campaign against the closure of a maternity hospital in Glasgow. Readers were invited to sign a petition, speak out at public meetings, and tell their stories of personal experience of the hospitals to the paper. The two main journalists (John McCann and David Leask) received an award for the campaign (Press Gazette, 2005).

4.3.1. The politics of public service provision: Queen Mum's / 'Hands Off Yorkhill'

On 7th October 2003, the Greater Glasgow NHS Board (henceforth the Health Board) proposed closing the Queen Mother's maternity Hospital (Queen Mum's) in order to centralise maternity services at the Southern General and the new Princess Royal, which were better equipped to treat women suffering complications. The *Evening Times* opposed the closure, initially interpreting it as an intention to close the Royal Hospital for Sick Children ('Sick Kids' or 'Yorkhill') on the same site, but later focusing on the benefits of co-location of maternity and neo-natal services. The Health Board ran a consultation on the issue before making its formal recommendation to the Health Minister, Malcolm Chisholm, who had the power to approve the plan or ask the Health Board to develop a different solution. The newspaper therefore primarily targeted its campaign at Chisholm, though it also made representation to the

parliamentary Petitions Committee. Over a whole year from October 2003 to September 2004, the Evening Times published 225 articles on the issue. The bulk of the articles (201) were published in the first seven months, with just 16 articles over the period between May (after the Health Board vote in late April) and the Health Minister's announcement in September, with the final 18 articles declaring victory over the two days following the announcement. The paper claimed a victory when Chisholm announced that the Sick Kids' would be relocated to retain the link with maternity services on another site, even though just such a relocation was initially opposed by the newspaper.

The closure of one of the city's three maternity units formed part of a wider policy of centralisation aimed at increasing breadth of specialisation at well-equipped and well-staffed central hospitals, but was also a response to specific local problems of staff shortage and a falling birth-rate (Greater Glasgow NHS Board, 2003a). Since one of the maternity units was new, the decision was between closing the Queen Mum's or services at the Southern General Hospital. The Health Board appointed a Modernising Maternity Services Working Group whose pre-consultation research exercise concluded that the Queen Mum's should be closed on account of the lack of on-site acute facilities for women who experienced complications during birth (Greater Glasgow NHS Board, 2003b). The public consultation sought reasons why, if respondents objected to the closure of the Queen Mum's, they thought the closure of the Southern General preferable (Greater Glasgow NHS Board, 2004).

The campaign initially framed the proposed closure as profiteering by the Health Board, and suggested that Sick Kids' was under threat on account of the value of the land to developers. The newspaper capitalised on widespread affection for the hospitals (especially Sick Kids') with testimonials from parents of children treated there. However, the Health Reporter, John McCann recognised that the Health Minister would ultimately need to be swayed by clinical argument, and the campaign soon shifted to focus on the clinical benefits of the link between the maternity and children's services, and how both could suffer if they were separated, including predicting increased risk to ill new-born babies and the eventual demise or relocation of Sick Kids'.

Editor Charles McGhee characterised previous Health Board consultations as "a pretence" of listening to public opinion, and argued that the board should respond to the strength of public feeling. Therefore a petition was launched on the second day of the campaign (ET 10/10/03). In the same article, the first story of personal experience at the hospitals appeared; a further 28 articles profiled 33 families with experience of the hospitals. The paper also published the contact details of Health Board members (ET 14/10/03), the Health Minister and Deputy Health Minister, local MSPs (Kelvin constituency and Glasgow list) and the local councillor (ET 17/10/03), and urged readers to get in touch with them to express their opposition to the closure. Views were solicited from all 17 MSPs for Glasgow and five others from nearby areas, and supportive statements (to varying degrees) printed from each, with the exception of

ministers (ET 19/02/04). The constituency MSP, Pauline McNeill (Labour), Glasgow list MSP Sandra White (SNP), and SSP spokeswoman on health and former midwife Carolyn Leckie supported the Evening Times' efforts and continued to campaign independently, including tabling parliamentary questions and motions, and securing parliamentary debates.

The campaign also won support from health professionals at the Queen Mum's and Sick Kids', though they preferred to speak to the (more upmarket) Herald, and few experts advocated the retention of all three maternity units (though Leckie argued against centralisation and claimed there was a beds shortage, ET 20/10/03; 03/12/03) but journalists were reluctant to alienate sources at the Southern General by calling for the closure of their maternity unit. However, professional and academic sources were won over by the newspaper's persistence, and contributed carefully evidenced arguments about the potential risks associated with the closure of the hospital.

However, a letter was published from a health professional at another Glasgow hospital that proposed triple co-location of adult, maternity and paediatric services (ET 05/11/03). Despite publishing several such clinical endorsements, the first consideration of the proposal by the Health Board was reported as "New fears for Yorkhill" (ET 07/04/04). The newspaper interpreted the move as support for their argument that the board had always intended to close both hospitals, and local MSP Pauline McNeill expressed concern that a delay between the closure of the Queen Mum's and the relocation of Sick Kids' would still cause damage to service provision (ET 07/04/04).

The public consultation was launched on 13th November, but the newspaper criticised it in emotive terms for asking respondents to "explain why the Southern General's maternity services should be sacrificed rather than why the Queen Mum's should be saved" (leader column, ET 13/11/03), and for not including the status quo as an option. The newspaper also identified a series of errors in the Health Board's public communication. Instead, the campaign encouraged attendance at Health Board meetings (ET 17/10/03), and gave publicity to a public meeting organised by campaign group Save Our Hospitals and attended by the Health Board. The board refused, however, to attend the later public meeting backed by the Evening Times and organised by children's advocacy charity Action for Sick Children (ET 16/01/04), and refused to include the transcript as a consultation submission (ET 21/04/04). The board were also reported to be dismissive of the petition, drawing criticism from the newspaper and local MSPs who supported the campaign. Charles McGhee and Dorothy-Grace Elder presented the petition to the Petitions Committee (Scottish Parliament, 2004; ET 04/02/04). Six Yorkhill doctors also petitioned the Scottish Parliament about the Health Board's consultation (ET 05/02/04), and both petitions were passed on to the Health Committee (ET 01/04/04). The committee heard both cases on 27th April, and concluded that the Health Minister would be called to appear before the committee at the next meeting to answer questions (ET 28/04/04).

As expected, the Health Board voted (by majority) for closure of the Queen Mum's (ET 20/04/04), and the final decision was passed to the Health Minister. Malcolm Chisholm had intervened early in the campaign to assure the Evening Times that he would not simply rubber-stamp the proposals without considering the arguments (ET 30/10/03), and he later visited the hospitals to hear evidence first hand from health professionals and administrators (ET 03/02/04). Pauline McNeill (ET 27/08/04) and the Health Committee (ET 10/09/04) objected that the decision on the Queen Mum's was to be made before the Scottish Executive's National Services Division reviewed children's services, and called for a moratorium on closures during this process. However, Chisholm announced his decision on 30th September, along with £100million extra funding to finance the new hospital with triple co-location of services. The Evening Times reported this as having always been their proposal, and portrayed the Health Board as having opposed it, despite earlier articles suggesting the reverse.

This newspaper had campaigned for the two hospitals to stay together or move together – even when city NHS chiefs were telling us there was no chance of that happening. [...] Sir John said that the Sick Kids' would have to stay at Yorkhill for 15 years. (ET 30/09/04)

Although a new clinical advisory group was given a broader remit of considerations for the location of the new facility, on 27th June 2006 it was decided to locate the facility at the Southern General (Greater Glasgow NHS Board, 2006).

4.4. Conclusion

All of the Daily Record campaigns focused on crime and disorder issues, expressing disapproval of outsiders in society, whilst the Herald and Evening Times campaigns were related to public service provision (education and welfare of asylum-seekers; health service), and were critical of decisions by politicians. All six called for action from politicians. The Herald and Evening Times called for the criticised decisions to be reversed, though they were vague on what should be done instead. Likewise the Daily Record did not consistently argue for specific policies to tackle drug-dealing and illegal money-lending, though the coverage implied support for enforcement solutions; but the newspaper did advocate specific legislative responses to anti-social behaviour and airgun-related deaths, again with a focus on law-enforcement. Even where the Daily Record adopted the Scottish Executive's agenda, most obviously in the case of anti-social behaviour but to some extent in the other campaigns, it put its own angle on the issues to play down the welfare angles.

Two of the campaigns (drugs and loan sharks) were investigative, operating as a watchdog, albeit on criminal rather than political activity, but highlighting information about the experience of certain problems to both citizens politicians. This could be broadly interpreted as a liberal

social responsibility role, although this depends on the accuracy and impartiality of the representation of the issues. Two of the campaigns (drugs and Queen Mum's) involved protest activism, in the form of a march and a petition respectively, which could be understood more in terms of a form of participatory democracy. Two of the campaigns (anti-social behaviour and Queen Mum's) used democratic access mechanisms of the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Executive to attempt to influence policy development, via a consultation and the petitions committee respectively. This could be understood in terms of corporatism if we understand the newspaper to act as a pressure group, and if the newspaper is able to meaningfully represent its readers. Journalists' understanding of their democratic legitimacy in relation to these activities will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Professional Journalism: Social Responsibility and the Market; Partisan Representation and Participation

This chapter examines journalists' understanding, negotiation and justification of the practice of campaign journalism, especially as regards their characterisation of the audience for whom they are writing. In particular, it interrogates the ways in which journalists expect their readers to respond to news stories and campaign issues, and how this relates to their presentation of the issues in ways that are intended to inform the audience as citizens and voters, engage their interest, and represent their views and interests.

The social responsibility model of the press outlined in Chapter 2 is dependent on journalists' attachment to their professional norms and principles, since newspapers are only held accountable to sources and not to the citizens whom they are supposed to serve (Harris, 1992; Pimlott, 2003). However, it has also been noted that whilst the legitimacy of liberal democracy is dependent on the electoral participation of citizens, it also awards them the liberty of not participating, and correspondingly, whilst the news media are expected to fulfil their social democratic obligation to inform voters on matters of public and social significance, voters are not expected or obliged to pay attention to that information, or engage with these issues (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995: 98). For this reason, journalistic practices in a liberal democracy are at least equally focused on the criteria of 'news values' (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001), which (subconsciously) shape the selection and framing of news stories to attract the interest of readers, and often conflict with the principles intended to inform readers. This perceived clash between what voters *should* know and what newspaper readers *want* to know – between the desires of the audience-as-market over the needs of the audience-as-public – is based on a particular idea of the audience that is culturally constructed though specifically related to the culture of commerce. The relationship of journalists to the imagined public whom they are addressing is particularly pertinent to campaign journalism, and if dominated by market relationship would suggest an unconstrained libertarian model associated with protective liberal democracy.

However, it was also noted in Chapter 2 that the British press and Scottish democracy have some characteristics of democratic corporatism, primarily political partisanship in the press and the incorporation of civic society pressure groups into parliamentary decision-making. However, the British press does not necessarily represent those groups in civic society, or even necessarily political parties – indeed, given their otherwise liberal tradition they may well instead represent powerful business interests. Finally, since campaigning journalism is a specific form of partisan journalism that not only represents particular groups or interests, but also proposes action and encourages readers to express their approval or support for that

action, it could suggest a more participatory or even deliberative model of democracy, depending on the manner of public involvement in activist activity or policy advocacy.

This chapter will first examine journalists' understanding of their democratic role as informing voters and citizens, associated with the developmental liberal model of democracy and the social responsibility model of the press. Secondly, the market pressures on journalistic practice will be addressed, where a fragmented audience of customers is addressed, associated theoretically with the freedom and choice of liberal pluralism and the libertarian model of the press but also with tabloidisation and infotainment. Thirdly, it will address the partisanship and advocacy of certain interests and beliefs, as associated theoretically with democratic corporatism, and whether this is correspondingly understood as representing groups in civic society. Finally, this chapter will turn to the role of mobilising support for the campaigns, and whether this could be understood in terms of participatory democracy.

5.1. Social responsibility: informing and challenging readers

This section will interrogate the ways in which journalists understand their democratic role and the dominant norms of journalistic practice, and the extent to which they are able to pursue these norms autonomously, free of pressure from editors and owners. Newspaper journalists' operational understanding of their social responsibilities is expressed in professional norms as formalised in the codes of practice of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the industry self-regulation body the Press Complaints Commission (PCC). The NUJ specifies that information should be "honestly conveyed, accurate and fair" (National Union of Journalists, 1998). However, whilst the NUJ also refers to the specific objective of the "right of the public to be informed", these guidelines are otherwise simply procedural, and therefore reducible to attribution to sources – "They enable a newsman to say, pointing to his evidence, "I am objective because I have used quotation marks"" (Tuchman, 1972: 677).

5.1.1. Objectivity and balance

Editors and journalists at both The Herald and Evening Times identified strongly with the principles of objectivity and accuracy, whilst those at the Daily Record were less concerned with defending their journalism in these terms. Herald journalists also identified with the norm of balance, and explicitly aligned the paper with the more archetypal North American model rather than the more corporatist-inflected British model (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Deputy Editor Joan McAlpine commented:

We have quite an American view of newspapers, in terms of American broadsheet newspapers, that we have an obligation to the truth. So it's very important that Herald stories are balanced, and the tradition of The Herald being a paper of record where you can rely on the information that's within the paper, is very important and its factual accuracy's very important. And that's very important in the stories that we run in the news pages and they would be quite different from what we would run in the editorial section, in the leader section of the paper. (Joan McAlpine, Deputy Editor, The Herald)

The Editor, Mark Douglas Home, invoked the same principles though in less concrete terms – as an aspiration they would “hope” to achieve, and which they would “seldom” transgress. He expressed an aim of providing information “which we hope allow readers to make up their minds, and which inform the political process too if you like”, although this suggests that informing readers and having a political input are *separate* aspects of news address and not linked through the democratic process. Nevertheless he assumes that the newspaper addresses readers who are able to “make up their own minds” on the basis of the facts and “agree or disagree” with comment and opinion.

Both the Editor and Deputy Editor understood the principles and identity of The Herald in contrast to their characterisation of tabloid or “agenda” journalism, “which means that the prominence of a story is dictated by their own belief system, and their outrage around the story will depend on what they think about it” (Mark Douglas Home, Editor, The Herald), criticising the agenda-setting priorities and the subjectively emotional tone (of “outrage”). Joan McAlpine further criticised the Daily Mail in particular for being “aimed at both reflecting and influencing public opinion”, for imposing (or attempting to impose) its beliefs on its readers, and distanced The Herald from the notion of “reflecting” ‘public opinion’, or indeed being driven by any opinion stance.

Similarly, Evening Times Editor Charles McGhee characterised the newspaper’s practice in terms of objectivity and balance, and defined his approach in contradistinction to both the norms and practices of the tabloid press and the Evening Times’ previous imitation of them. McGhee argued that he had “introduced a more responsible brand of journalism” than had previously characterised the paper.

We now have a philosophy that says simply tell it as it is, and try and make it as balanced as possible, and that’s fundamentally what drives the style of the newsdesk in terms of writing and presenting material. (Charles McGhee, Editor, Evening Times)

This was intended “to move it away from the other red-tops as they’re known”, distinguishing the newspaper’s professional ideology from that of the *Daily Record* and the *Scottish Sun*.

Indeed, the journalists at the Record made far fewer claims to adhere to such norms. Political Reporter Dave King referred to balance as a particular mode of reporting, rather than an overarching guiding principle, but once again interpreted the principle of objectivity – giving “the facts” – as the balancing of contradictory assertions.

Quite often you’ll use experts, you know, if there’s a major issue and you’ve got one expert who’s for something and one expert... you’ll put the two of them side by side on a page, the for and against, and let the readers make their own minds up. [...] It’s very good if you’re using it in that context, of just saying to the readers, ‘here’s the facts’.
(Dave King, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

However, whilst in part motivated by a desire for accuracy, King also admits that it is simply “easier”, “because the reporter isn’t an expert in the field and they have to get everything explained to them”, so journalists will defer to ‘expert’ sources on issues they do not fully

understand, distance themselves from the claims and pass responsibility for any evaluative judgement on to the audience, even though readers, crucially, are not able to interrogate the source.

These quotes indicated that a common operationalisation of objectivity is that various 'truth claims' are offered and readers are invited to make their own minds up. This can be interpreted philosophically and epistemologically in a number of ways (Benton and Craib, 2001). It may be that journalists lean toward a relativist understanding of 'truth' and 'reality' and leave the audience to interpret events according to their own cultural 'truth' or assumptions, in which case any preference of certain 'facts' as the most robust and valid could be interpreted as cultural imperialism or hegemony. This could be a product of a free market philosophy rather than any post-modern philosophy – that truths are what they are selling and the customer should be allowed to choose among them (though this is not the way in which Mill ([1859] 1991) conceived of the 'free market-place of ideas').

Alternatively, it may be that journalists have a realist understanding of truth and expect readers to make a rational evaluation of the empirical evidence presented. To be meaningful, this would require that supporting (or opposing) evidence is presented for each assertion (Tuchman, 1972), otherwise not only do journalists relinquish responsibility for meaningful explanations, but readers' decisions are arbitrary preferences or based on other intangible criteria of 'trust' or 'likeability' of those making 'truth claims' (Langer, 2007). The absence of supporting evidence may simply be due to lack of resources, forcing journalists to rely on newsgathering shortcuts such as over-reliance on quotation (Bell 1991, cited in Allan, 1999), prefabricated news (Lewis et al., 2008), and analytical shortcuts such as 'common sense' framing and cultural stereotypes (Gitlin, 1980), or journalists may *choose* to frame news in such a way (with a focus on conflict) simply to appeal to their imagined public, and sell more newspapers (Aldridge, 2003).

Finally, journalists may simply inconsistently apply notions of objective truth and balanced representation of values and preferences, or conflate the two (Lewis, 2008), either because the concepts are not clearly defined in their training, or because they do not have time to reflect on which principle applies. Whilst the concepts of objectivity, accuracy, balance and fairness are the constraining vocabulary available to journalists, they use these terms in complex and intertextual ways. At the same time, these principles are sometimes invoked strategically in the service of post-factum rationalisations.

Journalists' accounts of the ways in which they claim to defend their professional principles indicates a realist approach, in that they argued that certain 'truth claims' could not be printed because they were "not true" (Lucy Adams, Damien Henderson, Calum MacDonald at The Herald and John McCann at the Evening Times). However, they also acknowledged analytic

and pragmatic difficulties with the pursuit of 'truth', some of which are simply the limitations of available evidence (suggestive of critical realism), whilst others pointed to social organisational constraints such as newsdesk pressure (see autonomy, below). However, the journalists rarely cited responsibilities to the audience as their motivation to uphold their procedural professional norms.

Journalists at The Herald in particular reflected on the nature of objectivity and reality, especially in relation to attribution to sources. One Herald reporter, who had university training that included critical perspectives on news and journalism, was specifically critical of relativist problematising of objectivity (although he misremembered who had proposed that view¹⁵), arguing that "there's a case to be re-made for the kind of objective values which were kind of really attacked in the 70s and 80s by the left".

I think, I mean that's my kind of agenda if you like, that that kind of left-wing critique of news values has had its day and I think the danger is by banging that drum too much you're stating the bleeding obvious, everyone knows that now, everyone knows there's no such thing as objective truth; the readers know it... But what you do is actually attack something else which is quite important which is the need to assert journalistic standards, which is very difficult especially because it rubs up against the question of resources. And they're the hard arguments to win, not the ideological. (Damien Henderson, Reporter, The Herald)

Henderson suggests that the theoretical questioning of a realist approach to objectivity has undermined it as an aspiration and a guiding norm in the practice of journalism, or at least has strengthened the hand of owners and managers who seek to make cuts, although it's by no means clear that most journalists or managers would be similarly acquainted with these academic perspectives.

Henderson was also, however, conscious that attribution alone – "the judicious use of quotation marks" (Tuchman, 1972) – was a flawed method of seeking truth.

I mean if you present things as objectively reported, so-and-so saying this... and of course you never actually can, but if that's the appearance of what you're doing... and to an extent you can as well. (Damien Henderson, Reporter, The Herald)

To some extent, Henderson acknowledges that "the appearance" of being objective is a key aspect of quotation, supporting Tuchman's (1972) finding that such attribution can be a strategic way of shielding themselves from criticism by distancing themselves from the quoted opinion, but also by portraying the quotation as *in itself* an objective observation of the *event of utterance* by the source. A misleading or untrue assertion may therefore be printed due to the absence of contradictory evidence simply because of shortage of resources that would allow a journalist to spend time researching a story thoroughly (Lewis et al., 2008), but where contradictory evidence has been identified journalists reported being subject to organisational

15 Henderson confuses conflict perspectives, including the Glasgow University Media Group, with the relativism of postmodernist perspectives (of which GUMG have been particularly critical)

pressure to treat the assertion as credible. Such constraints on journalists' autonomy will now be discussed in more detail.

5.1.2. Autonomy

The amount of pressure from the newsdesk varied between the newspapers. Herald journalists reported greater autonomy, though one – Lucy Adams – recounted a different experience at a national broadsheet newspaper where she had previously worked.

One of the reasons I left [that newspaper] was you would even say to the news editor 'this is simply not true, you know, you can't do this' and they would say 'we've got to do this'. And then he wouldn't tell the editor that I'd told him that it wasn't true. And then there'd be a letter the next week and the editor would call you in and go 'what's this then, it's not true?' and you'd go [embarrassed muttering]. But at The Herald, you know, you actually go 'that won't work, it's not true' and they go 'alright then'. (Lucy Adams, Home Affairs Correspondent, The Herald)

Nonetheless, the response of the editor demonstrates that ultimately the organisation was stung by criticisms, and that inaccuracy was a failure of news organisation, processes and pressures rather than a conscious intention to mislead.

Journalists at the Evening Times also argued that culturally normative procedures could also inadvertently undermine objectivity. For instance, Health Reporter John McCann observed that identifying an 'angle' or 'line' early in the development of a story is as much of an established norm as objectivity: "old school is you know what the line is before you leave the office", though he suggests that this traditional approach was no longer universally taken for-granted, demonstrating that cultural explanations for news practice allow for progressive change. Nonetheless, a prior interpretation can be imposed on journalists by news editors concerned with delivering what they promised to the editor at morning conference.

What happens is the reporter tells the desk, the desk goes into conference, tells the editor. And the number of times, at all the papers I've worked at, where they're sort of saying 'well that's no good', you say 'how?'¹⁶, they say 'well that's not the line I gave at conference', and 'well, yeah, but I spoke to some more people and that line's not true any more', 'well that's the line they want', 'it's not fucking true'. And you kinda have to fight quite hard, and it's easier when you're experienced or whatever, than for inexperienced or younger people, 'cause you've got people running round trying desperately to get quotes that they know can't possibly be true, finally finding someone to give an opinion that agrees with what an executive decided it should be about. And you can, let's face it, it's a question of how much effort would you give – you get bored – if you're convinced it's really not true, just not... just misrepresentative. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

This illustrates the way in which the word "opinion" is used *both* to refer to subjective views or preferences that cannot be proved or disproved *and* to beliefs and arguments that make truth claims, hence McCann states that the "opinion" sought is "not true". It may be that McCann is philosophically more realist, whilst the newsdesk staff are more relativist and believe that one

16 In Scots dialect, 'how?' can mean 'why?'.

truth is equivalent with, and can be balanced against, another; or again, simply that news editors are exposed to more pragmatic pressures and constraints.

However, suggestions that journalists are all principled individuals constrained by limitation of resources and the newsdesk's expectations of audience interest and understanding may be unduly optimistic. Despite McCann's claim to resist hierarchical pressure to uphold his professional standards, he later suggests that he is not above selecting sources to reflect his *own view*.

And nobody cares what a journalist says, you're not... you only get your opinion in if you find somebody to agree with you and then it's their opinion, otherwise you're... or you can do it as a first person piece, you know, an issue piece, where it's 'this is what I think', which is fine. But a journalist shouldn't be doing that unless you clearly state that it's an opinion piece, or someone else thinks the same thing (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

This is a very frank admission of attempts to "get your opinion in" whilst technically adhering to the norm of objectivity, where attribution stands in for objectivity, in order to remove responsibility for an opinion from the newspaper. McCann makes no specific 'truth claims' here, so may well be referring to subjective opinion, but in that case balance would be a more appropriate norm to apply.

In summary, journalists understand objectivity in realist terms, not only in terms of accuracy in relation to their observations, but also avoiding publishing assertions that were not supported by a wider range of evidence, even if they could be attributed to a source. Nevertheless, this argument was used inconsistently and perhaps strategically, to resist the angles preferred by the newsdesk, but also to 'get their own opinion in'. However, the responsibility to facilitate audience understanding is reduced to leaving readers to make up their minds – conceived in negative terms as not telling them what to think, but not in positive terms as giving them information and context that would allow them to reach an informed decision. This suggests that the audience are not really present in the rationalisation and operationalisation of principles of social responsibility. The next section addresses the perceptions of audience demands and preferences.

5.2. Market pressures: engaging the attention and interest of readers

Whilst the professional norms associated with social responsibility are formally set out in various codes of practice, 'news instinct' – knowing *what is* news – is more usually attributed to on-the-job training and experience (Sigelman, 1973). The news values identified in content studies such as Galtung and Ruge's (1965) original, and later updates such as Harcup and O'Neill (2001) were largely suggestive of journalists' expectations about the audience. David Manning White's ([1950] 1999) gatekeeper 'Mr Gates' had a narrow range of reasons for

rejecting stories, mostly in the vague terms of being ‘not interesting’ or ‘boring’. Many of the journalists gave similar explanations, but when further interrogated, such descriptions related to specific news values. The particular news values journalists referred to (indirectly) in this study included firstly ‘simplification’ in terms of providing an unambiguous interpretation of events rather than the complex evidence, secondly ‘meaningfulness’ or ‘relevance’ to readers in terms of the direct impact of the issue on their lives, and thirdly ‘consonance’ whereby stories need to fit with the audience’s cultural expectations and stereotypes; the second and third of these were pursued via ‘reference to persons’ or ‘personalisation’ in terms of placing subjects with whom readers could identify and empathise at the centre of the story. This reflects a professional belief in a public who are engaged by immediacy, narrative and certainty rather than abstract concepts and subtle caveats, as well as assumptions about the cultural identity of the audience and how inclusive or exclusive their identity might be.

5.2.1. Interesting news: simplification

Evening Times journalists were careful about the argument that their readers were unintelligent or that they wouldn’t understand sophisticated argument, and instead expressed reservations about the level of readers’ *interest* in factual detail (and consequently the persuasiveness of objective journalism). McCann described the supporting empirical evidence as “really boring to read, you know, to most people”.

I’m saying that generally, the readers would be maybe interested in reading the headline, you know, ‘that’s them at it again’, or ‘that’s him at it again’, but not really understand the technicalities, and not want to, and find it really too dense to wade right through. Not to be dead rude, but some people find it too dense to wade right through, others might find it utterly gripping, you don’t know. But not really be there for the general consumption and not something you would tend to find in a paper like the Evening Times. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

This suggests that McCann expects readers to want the ‘simplified’, ‘unambiguous’ interpretation of the headline, and especially the attribution of blame (especially where it confirms their assumptions – see ‘consonance’, below), but not want the more nuanced supporting evidence.

Chief Reporter, David Leask agreed that readers preferred to trust in the analysis of the newspaper, rather than read the supporting evidence themselves.

I think probably things that a lot of readers like the idea of the paper doing, but they would actually rather not read it. Okay. But they like the idea that the paper was taking things on and going... and dotting all the ‘i’s and crossing all the ‘t’s, but ‘please god, don’t make us read all three pages’. So it was absolutely vital that you had simple metaphors for the campaign. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

Leask consciously framed (or retrospectively interpreted the framing of) the issue symbolically rather than empirically. The editor Charles McGhee similarly argued that it was difficult “tackling complex subject like that which, for a particular audience was... it was a hard buy-in”, and credited McCann and Leask for making the issues accessible. Both McGhee and McCann contextualised these beliefs about the audience in relation to the market of “a

newspaper like the Evening Times”, and related to the social class of “a particular audience”, even though surveys have suggested that different social classes are interested in reading about the same things (Schudson, 2000: 178). This was particularly mentioned by Evening Times journalists because they had ventured out of their comfort zone with the Queen Mum’s campaign, but they were not alone in specifying personalisation of issues as most interesting to readers.

5.2.2. Relevant news: personalisation of victims

McCann argued that personalisation through coverage of affected individuals was the most important news value in relation to engaging the audience’s attention.

I mean example’s everything. I mean we had a thing with a PR firm a couple of weeks ago and they were saying ‘well, how can we sell this story and what would the angles be’ and all the rest and everyone said ‘people’. In my case, *local* people. ‘Cause it’s the one thing everybody cares about, everybody from Ebenezer Scrooge down. Stories are about people, stories affect people, and if you find someone who’s affected then other people can understand how it could affect them, or what it would be like if it affected them, even someone who it never will, you know, it will never affect them. But if someone talks about having a brilliant pregnancy or how terrible it was, or whatever, I can understand their feelings because I can relate to it on that level. So people relate to other people having lives, having experiences, having feelings about things and that makes it important and relevant more than anything else would do. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

Importance and relevance are aspects of *strength* of beliefs or the salience of the issue, rather than the substance of audience opinion, so personalisation is argued to have an agenda-setting objective – to make people understand why the issue matters. The editor similarly argued that the case studies were the best way of “demonstrating to a wider readership the importance of the services at the Yorkhill hospitals” (McGhee). It is interesting that McCann’s anecdote relates to advice given to a PR company, advising them how to sell their clients’ stories to the paper in the terms that the journalists ‘sell’ the stories to their readers. This indicates the fine line between attempting to persuade the readers to take an interest in something, and attempting to persuade or manipulate their opinions about the issue. Of course, it also relates to the shortage of resources that makes journalists dependent on pre-packaged material (Lewis et al., 2008).

Magnus Gardham at the Record agreed that personal experience is more real and meaningful to people than statistics.

In a campaign like that you need to keep the issue in the spotlight and to be honest telling personal stories like that, I think people relate to that much more than they do... I mean I could sort of take myself off and dive into some massive statistical report on the Scottish Executive website and come up with all these facts and figures, but actually it’s much more hard-hitting and it kind of means a lot more to people to read about people’s experiences, you know, what’s going on. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

Whilst the evidence provided from interviews with affected individuals can provide more contextual information, the specific aim, according to Gardham, is to maintain the issue in the

news agenda. As well as maintaining a level of interest, this requires maintaining a stream of stories that are 'new'. However, since interviews are more quickly and cheaply gathered and processed than the supporting evidence Gardham described, again this relates to resources, and possibly also skills, given that most journalists are humanities graduates (Marchetti, 2005; Goldacre, 2008) with limited statistical or social scientific training.

Either way, such personalisation was seen as crucial in terms of political influence, that "if you run a campaign that doesn't have personal stories in it, then you're not gonna win it" (David Leask). The newspaper's political opponents regarded this as manipulative – as McGhee says, "the health board tried to use this against us, in saying that we were playing on people's emotions" – but the journalists framed their influence as stimulating an *existing* feeling in readers. Certainly some journalists at The Herald believed that you could not manufacture a feeling of concern in your readers out of nothing, citing the Dungavel campaign as a specific example.

Personally I wouldn't have started that campaign, 'cause I just think it was wrong in a lot of ways. I knew exactly why he got upset about it, and I still know that, but I'm not sure a vast number of our readers were upset about that. (Calum MacDonald, Deputy News Editor, The Herald)

MacDonald regards the editor's objection to the detention of child asylum-seekers as an emotional, affective action, and therefore something that the readers could not be rationally persuaded toward, but also suggests that the emotional impact of the universal concerns of family and parenthood is rationally limited by instrumental concerns, "because it doesn't touch them personally" (Charles McGhee).

Others thought that whilst human empathy is an important part of understanding a problem, the assumption that the readers *only* engage with issues emotionally is a patronising belief associated with the tabloids, and one that The Herald should rise above.

You need to illustrate the human side to things, and there's a human aspect to every story, you know, and I don't argue that's not an important aspect of it. If you can't show what effect something's having on people's lives, then why are you writing about it, you know. I mean I think to say, things are often presented in the abstract and it's a journalist's job to actually pin that down and say... right what this means is, you know, asylum seekers getting dragged into detention centres at gunpoint, you know, all these kind of run of stories. There's a kind of personal aspect that I think is the right thing to highlight, and there's an inherent danger, I think given the trend of the last few decades, to emphasise the personal at the cost of the political, which is just a case of pushing it too far. I think that's a consequence of tabloidisation of news and I think in a sense we've succumbed to that, not altogether, but there was an aspect of that, in the Dungavel campaign. (Damien Henderson, Reporter, The Herald)

However, the personal is defined in contradistinction to something (statistical evidence, perhaps, or legal argument) designated "the political", though perhaps Henderson simply means that they must address the principle rather than gain an exemption for a particular case. Nonetheless, a principled stand on behalf of the 'cultural other' was not considered particularly interesting journalism, even to the journalists; one journalist complained that the

Dungavel campaign “bored the arse off all of us, but was terribly worthwhile” (Calum MacDonald). Moral framing was more generally reserved for condemning the ‘deviant other’, which was thought to fit in with readers’ view of the world – what Lippmann called “the pictures in our head” ([1922] 1954).

5.2.3. ‘Consonant’ news: personalisation of perpetrators

‘Consonance’ was a particular concern for Daily Record journalists, who were careful to avoid contradicting what they expected to be ‘readers views’.

It’s difficult, because newspapers are there to reflect the readers’ views. It would be quite unusual that you’d be at odds with the readers, if you felt that there was quite a strong consensus. If there was a strong consensus that would generally be good enough. Newspapers are like politics in that respect, politicians are persuaded to do things that their electorate ask them to. So, for that reason, it would be unusual that a paper would take a higher moral stance than what the readers believed. (Mark McGivern, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

So whilst journalists might avoid being sectarian or racist, that will not necessarily mean that they will actively criticise such views, or advocate policies that strive for greater equality or tolerance (see ‘anti-discrimination’, below). Instead, the paper is careful to moralise only against those whom it is easy to construct as outsiders. Framing in terms of consonance with dominant stereotypes can perpetuate misrepresentations and prejudice.

The popular titles, in particular, personalised their campaign issues in relation to blaming individuals for problems.

Campaigns are always good when they’ve got baddies. Baddies are good, in my view. People accuse us of personalising things, but ultimately things happen because people make them happen. You know what I mean. You’ve got a campaign against world poverty, but you would have to say that there are people who are responsible for it, whatever... people can be blamed for people starving, *people* do that. You have to have baddies. People understand baddies, people focus on baddies. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

The example of poverty is interesting since it has been pointed out that the very problem with personalisation is that it conceals structural contributory ‘causes’ *such as* poverty (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Fowler, 1991: 156). Blaming individuals for the existence of poverty throughout the world is absurd, as it ignores the political and economic structures through which wealth is distributed. Of course people can collectively either reproduce or amend those structures, but that’s not the same as trying to point the finger at someone who can be accused of ‘causing’ world poverty.

However, Daily Record journalists were also conscious that readers could identify and resist the ideological message of moral condemnation against such ‘baddies’.

There’s always a danger because papers like to pontificate, they like to write in their editorial stuff that condemns someone, you know, someone might be in your paper they like to... as well as reflecting what readers views are, newspapers like to tell them how they should be thinking. You don’t want to be too patronising with that. But you need to

toe the line. Try to judge it, put your acid test on it, but don't be too patronising to your readers. (Mark McGivern, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

Journalists do attribute some sophistication to the audience and do not see them as entirely 'passive dupes', but then seem to respond only by carefully framing their approach, rather than trusting the readers to engage with a more complex debate.

The assumption journalists make about the audience are reflected in the news values that they apply to the framing of the issue. The audience are assumed to be bored by information that is not expressed unambiguously and in terms of personal narrative and self-interest. Whilst the 'personal' can equally be 'political' and ideological, and emotional responses can provoke a "community of feeling" (Berezin, 2002), in applying news values of consonance and cultural proximity journalists assume that even where stories are personalised readers would not identify with the culturally 'other' and would instead understand issues in terms of competing interests and blame. It is also assumed that it is impossible to persuade the audience to rationally change their minds, only to appeal to and exploit 'natural' instincts and emotions. Journalists' expectations regarding public reception of campaign articles leads to a dismissal of presentation in terms of policy effectiveness and the common good.

5.3. Partisanship and advocacy: representing causes or interests

Unlike the US – often taken as the archetypal liberal model journalism – the UK press retains the right to be partisan. The PCC specifies that bias is allowable in as far as "The Press, whilst free to be partisan, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact" (Press Complaints Commission, 2007a). Furthermore, it specifies an anti-discrimination bias – avoiding "prejudicial or pejorative reference" – as legitimate and even mandatory, with the aim of protecting minority groups from discrimination and promoting equal civil liberties. Hallin and Mancini (2004) argued that in many democratic corporatist countries professional notions of objectivity could co-exist with strong political parallelism, whereby the views and interests of different parties and other civic groups were represented in different newspapers. However, as was suggested above, there is a potential tension between objectivity and advocacy if the empirical and the substantive are not clearly defined, so this will be explored first. This section will then go on to look at journalists' understanding of their newspaper's partisanship in terms of the representation of particular groups in society, before examining the contrary explanation that bias reflects only the editor's personal beliefs. Finally, the anti-discriminatory agenda will be examined, including whether journalists understand it as part of their professional responsibility.

5.3.1. Objectivity and advocacy

The Evening Times Editor, Charles McGhee, defined campaign journalism in terms that suggest a more flexible or relativist notion of objectivity and truth than previously stated.

We *will* be biased on occasion when it comes to campaigns, because when we decide to take up a cause then obviously we'll throw our weight behind that cause, but that's... in terms of what we're doing I believe, and I know the PCC backs me in this, and other newspapers, that you can be partisan provided you separate that from, you know, the sort of factual elements of the story. As long as you aim for balance and fairness and accuracy in your general reporting, if you choose to be partisan in pursuit of a cause, then that is quite acceptable provided you label it as a campaign and that this is what the paper believes as opposed to presenting it as fact when, well it may be or it may not be, depending on your view of it. (Charles McGhee, Editor, Evening Times)

McGhee seems to equivocate in his explanation; at first he attempts to reconcile the campaign bias with standard liberal practice by claiming the separation of news and comment *within* the coverage as a model, separating partisan elements from the “factual elements”, but then amends this to separation of *all* campaign reporting from other “general reporting”, by proscribing “presenting [campaign coverage] as fact”. ‘Truth’ or “fact” is – where convenient – framed as relative, and dependent on “your view” rather than as objective and knowable; the audience is invited (via a consumer discourse of product labelling) to choose to believe it or not (although the campaign rhetoric used strongly directs them to do so, as we will see in Chapter 7).

John McCann acknowledged campaigning as an exception from usual practice with regards to objectivity, contrasting the conditions under which he would refuse to print something “wrong” with the conditions of campaigning whereby the line would be held regardless of contradictory expert opinion.

You have to reassess what you're thinking, if they say ‘you're wrong’, you've gotta to say, “okay I'm wrong”. But it depends, because campaigning is different in many ways, I mean, yes, there are things where you're looking for a certain line and it's a case of finding people to argue it and then finding people that will respond to it. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

Again, balance is strategically used in place of objectivity so that the newspaper is able to present the preferred meaning via a ‘primary definer’ (Hall et al., 1978), but point to a rebuttal or denial as a balancing of truth claims.

At The Herald, where objectivity is particularly highly valued, journalists were not relativist about ‘facts’ and evidence; they also, however, claimed to pursue balanced coverage, so partiality in the editorial line of the Dungavel campaign had to be explained. Editors in particular framed it in terms of investigative journalism – in terms of *revealing* facts (that “would otherwise be covered up”) rather than suppressing them – objective reporting that was *partial* to correct a *wider partiality* or imbalance, as a form of external pluralism.

But you know we felt that [child detention] was wrong and so if a journalist was coming to us with a story about families being locked up for huge amounts of time, or mums who had been disciplined for feeding their children at the wrong time and things like that, you

know, we would display the story in such a way that we felt it was important. So, I think there's a difference between taking a campaign and saying we think this is important, and we're going to give it a prominence in the paper in our news agenda that perhaps other papers aren't doing. But you're not actually, generally speaking, you're sticking to the facts, but you're exposing facts that would otherwise be covered up because people don't care about them. Because they don't think they're important. (Joan McAlpine, Deputy Editor, The Herald)

McAlpine admits to a partiality in relation to the angle of the story, motivated by a value judgement that child detention was “wrong”, but argues that the paper was merely engaging in agenda-setting, and doing so through objective ‘facts’ (but facts that are personal stories, pitched to elicit an emotional response). The agenda-setting objective – whereby the news media influence the prioritisation of issues, what people think *about* rather than what they think – reflects a belief that people would “care” about the issue if the facts surrounding it were made known to them, without admitting to any efforts to influence their judgement of the issue.

Critics of the campaign expressed quite the opposite assessment in letters to the editor, accusing the paper of failing to meet their own criteria of informing their readers, particularly of publishing sources’ assertions “without checking the facts” and choosing to “suppress the other side of the argument” (George Foulkes MP, letter to the editor HD 15/09/03). One Herald journalist, reflecting on the campaign, argued that objective reporting of hard news was missing from the campaign coverage, meaning that there was an over-reliance on quotation and opinion-led pieces.

We weren't breaking many news stories, we broke one or two, but mostly what we did was you know, when so-and-so wrote to the Executive, we took chunks out of the letter and put it on the front page, you know. And they weren't great news stories. So from a pure news agenda, in terms of 'is this new?', 'is this telling people new things?' we weren't doing that. (Damien Henderson, Reporter, The Herald)

This reflects the difficulty with a story that did not reveal a formal wrong-doing but a substantive one (see Chapter 7). ‘Hard’ and ‘timely’ news tends toward the personal misdeeds of politicians or the dramatic, immediate consequences of current policy, rather than long-term impacts or incremental changes (such as the erosion of liberties), and so journalists struggled to locate this principled criticism of policy in the liberal model of managerial scrutiny. The alternative (corporatist) legitimisation, as a representation of the concerns of groups in civic society, was far more rarely made. This is the concern of the next section.

5.3.2. Direct representation of publics

The partisanship associated with democratic corporatism is most obviously identifiable in the party-political allegiance of newspapers. However, the commercialisation of the press has been associated with its de-politicisation, in terms of less propagandistic use of news vehicles by their owners but also a more general political disengagement (Curran and Seaton, 2003). This was reflected in editors’ and journalists’ reluctance to explicitly associate their papers with party politics; the editor of the Evening Times explained that he dropped the newspaper’s

allegiance to the Labour party because he felt “that it was no longer acceptable to preach to readers and tell them how to vote and what to do”.

Whilst the Daily Record remains Labour-supporting, and journalists openly acknowledged that certain stories were biased in a particular direction “because you’ve tied your allegiance to a political mast” (Mark McGivern), the paper’s Political Editor, Paul Sinclair agreed that readers did not want party politics pressed on them, offering evidence in the shape of the failed SNP-supporting weekly newspaper *The Scottish Standard*, which lasted just seven weeks before folding.

“It was just ‘cause it was a silly idea. You know, this [holding up the Daily Record] is a Labour paper, and it’s got on the front page Rene Zellweger, and they don’t understand they can be a nationalist newspaper without having an SNP front page every day. You know what I mean, or every week. [...] Aye, you know, it was just, pay 70 pence to get told to vote for the party you [already] vote for. You know, it just didn’t make sense.” (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

Not only do senior journalists believe that readers no longer hold strong party allegiances, but are cynical toward politics in general; Sinclair reflected, “I think there’s a lesser and lesser taste for propaganda, for just a message, people don’t believe in politicians any more, they believe less and less in the political process” a view echoed by others such as Joan McAlpine of The Herald and Charles McGhee of the Evening Times. Editors and journalists may therefore be reluctant to express allegiance with politicians for fear of readers becoming similarly alienated from the newspaper.

Whether avoiding overt party-political bias for liberal professional or commercial reasons, then, newspapers tend to be more *subtly* partisan, in as far as “there’ll always be political spin; I mean, the Mail will always spin a story differently from the Record”, and that such editorialising gives press reporting “a bit more colour hopefully” (Dave King, Political Reporter, Daily Record), which *is* expected to appeal to the audience. With party membership critically low (Graham, 2006) it could be argued that they no longer offer access and representation for the grassroots, so a single-issue approach might be more appropriate. However, “spin” and “colour” does not recognise the audience as citizens with political allegiances, beliefs or objectives, but seeks to entertain them with personalisation and conflict.

Newspapers furthermore capitalise on (perceived) decreasing trust in elected political representatives to encourage readers to believe that the newspaper is speaking for their interests against an unresponsive political system. Both the anti-social behaviour campaign and the Queen Mum’s campaign utilised parliamentary mechanisms (a public consultation and the petitions committee respectively). Potentially, this positioning as a political actor could be understood in terms of corporatism, though shifting from a supporting role akin to a party-worker to a leading or coordinating role akin to a pressure group. However, a newspaper is not recognisably a pressure group; it does not have a membership specifically committed to a particular cause, but customers who buy it for various reasons (as will be shown in the next

chapter), although some pressure groups so similarly combine issue or interest advocacy benefits with more direct instrumental membership benefits such as discounts (Grant, 2000).

Political Reporter Dave King cited a campaign against the closure of the Ravenscraig steelworks in 1992 as a case of standing up for workers because it was “right” to do so. The Record’s more recent campaigns also focused on problems affecting the working classes, or poor and deprived communities, and have appealed to those communities to support, and therefore legitimise, their demands. However, journalists did not report particular relationships with representative groups such as unions, professional associations or pressure groups, apart from when those groups were willing to offer their support to a campaign initiated and framed by the newspaper. Instead, journalists regarded the political agenda of the newspaper as the legitimate prerogative of the editor (see final section, below).

The Evening Times editor claimed a ‘constituency’ commitment for the newspaper to represent their city and their readers, but understanding them as a single monolithic ‘public’.

[The newspaper being recognised for campaigning] kind of cements its credentials with the community. It says to our readers that we are part of the fabric of the community. [...] we’re committed to Glasgow and the West of Scotland, we’re committed to campaigning for readers, we’re committed to being your voice, and influencing the people in power to bring about change that we believe and that you believe is to the betterment of the community, and you know, we’ve demonstrated that time and time again over the past six years. (Charles McGhee, Editor, Evening Times)

The claim to reflect readers’ views remains unsubstantiated – “being” not ‘listening to’ their voice, reflecting an assumption – like Neveu’s (2002) – that proximity means identification or identity with community. Instead, it is based more on conveying such a reputation to the audience. McGhee begins by rhetorically describing a communication of image, “it says to our readers”, and goes on to shift from talking about the readers in the third person to addressing them in the second person, in a persuasive, marketing mode of discourse, pursuing brand “credentials”. To substantiate this superficial assertion, he goes on to claim to have “demonstrated” this commitment to the community, referring to the *campaigns themselves* as the evidence for their altruism, trustworthiness and thus legitimate bias in an entirely circular argument, rather than offering any real evidence of having listened to readers or involved them in decisions. Indeed, this reification of the public seems contrary to the dismissive view of them expressed elsewhere.

Furthermore, the sources privileged were the usual elite sources of politicians, police and other officials. The Herald’s Damien Henderson was, again, aware of the criticisms of reliance on elite sources, but he was unrepentant because he argued that in this “weighting system”, “influential” people are *intrinsically* and ‘naturally’ more important, and “if you can reverse that kind of natural news order of values [...] it’s a very tricky thing to do”. David Leask of the Evening Times does claim to listen to the views and criticisms, of “local opinion formers” and

“community leaders”, such as members of the community council or housing group, or charity volunteers.

The people I tend to care about is the real community leaders that are in the town. [...] These are the people who are the real generators in the town, who'll keep it going. They can be small businessmen, they can be housing activists, community counsellors, the little people who do so much more than that, because you often find that they're doing lots of different things, [...] you know, she'll be on the local housing group, she'll be on the community council, she's probably involved in a church perhaps, or a woman's group, or she helps out in homeless something, blah blah blah. She's the old lady in her eighties who goes round to the pensioners' lunch club and gives the old people a lunch, some of whom are 20 year younger than her. Now these are opinion formers, and you look at these flats and you know that in each one of these block of flats there's one a woman or a man, usually getting on a bit, who keep the world together, and in so many ways they're the ones that actually form the opinions of the people who are round and about. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

This was a rare recognition of civic association, though Leask did not give any examples of their concrete influence on his journalism or the newspaper's content. The substance of this claim is dependent on the views elicited – whether the political agenda and interests of the community, or simply influential individuals' approval of the newspaper and likely impact on circulation; Leask continues “they're the people you've got to keep on side, even commercially” (Leask), indicative of Aldridge's (2003) community-as-market. Somewhat contradictorily, Leask also later reported ignoring “well-known green-ink brigade people or well known campaigners” as sources because they had “cried wolf” in the past – that is, given a tip-off that didn't lead to a story – prioritising the needs of the newspaper. More typically, the few non-elite sources referred to were not associative in character, but fragmented individuals, whether represented individually in ‘vox pops’ or collectively in opinion polls.

Vox-pops were selectively sourced explicitly in the service of editorial bias, which was such standard practice that it was remarked on quite matter-of-factly at both the Daily Record and Herald.

The odd story you might go out and speak to people just to see what the feel is. But in most cases you would use the vox pops that are in line with the line you're taking on the story. (Dave King, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

The most obvious one would be vox pops, you know, you go into the street and find out what people think, and obviously actually what you do is you get a kind of pre-fab idea of what you want people to say, and you get people who are gonna say it. (Damien Henderson, Reporter, The Herald)

This form of bias does not fall within corporatist partisanship, as it does not represent the considered position of a group in society. It is also a false construction of ‘public opinion’ since these strategically selected individuals are metonymically intended to stand in for wider opinion – that is to say, an individual from a particular community, whether it be mothers, conservative voters or Muslims, is taken to speak for the whole community (perhaps assuming that they have identical *interests*), and a small selection of ‘members of the public’ are taken as a representation of ‘public opinion’ more broadly.

Similarly, opinion polls were also occasionally described as a way of representing ‘public opinion’ on an issue, reflecting a liberal pluralist view of legitimate ‘public opinion’ as the aggregate of fragmented individuals’ instinctive responses. However, the Executive Editor, who managed the polling contract, also argued that a surprising or oppositional ‘public opinion’ could generate a “genuine debate”.

We could sample on the basis of generating our own story on the back of it, so that... I would shy away from the fact that we were manufacturing news, because we weren't manufacturing the story, but we would take a topic that perhaps wasn't, you know had been but wasn't, top of the agenda, you know, designer babies or something like that. You do a poll on the basis of people's attitude to that, and on the basis of the poll you generate your own story. And very often kick-start a debate that isn't actually happening, but because you've decided to do a poll on it, it becomes a genuine debate. And it's not manufactured in the sense that we're making this up and there is no debate, but if you like we are prompting the debate. [...] What we're doing is bringing something to public consciousness that perhaps wasn't at the forefront of people's minds, but if asked about it they do have a strong view on it and it's maybe something that should be informing public policy. (Colin McDiarmid, Executive Editor, The Herald)

McDiarmid regards opinion polls as a useful tool for agenda-setting – he reasonably distinguishes *prompting* a debate from *inventing* it, and certainly if there was no basis for controversy the issue would not be picked up, but opinion polls cannot themselves be regarded as debate. McDiarmid argues that even if an issue isn't “at the forefront of people's minds” and has not been consciously considered, they may still hold “a strong view”, which suggests the application of prior values or an ideological position to the issue rather than a deliberative consideration of the arguments.

The limitations of polling as a form of empirical observation were acknowledged by several Herald journalists (including McDiarmid), especially as revealed by the disparity between horse-race election polls and the electoral result, but also, significantly, where journalists disbelieved the outcome because they disagreed with the opinion expressed. One particular example repeatedly cited was a poll on opinions of the proposed anti-social behaviour legislation (at the time of the Daily Record campaign). The question was worded:

The Scottish Executive is putting particular emphasis on young people in its moves to tackle anti-social behaviour in Scotland. Do you support or oppose the Scottish Executive in focusing on young people and their behaviour in this way? (NFO WorldGroup, 2003)

However, journalists remembered the question as being phrased in such a way that it would almost be absurd to answer in the negative, because “people aren't in favour of anti-social behaviour, I mean who would actually say yes?” (McDiarmid). Similarly, Lucy Adams, who as Home Affairs Correspondent was given the task of reporting the poll results, recalled the question to be focused on people's experience of the problem and argued that “it should've said ‘do you believe the government is going about tackling it in the wrong way?’ or something like that”. In fact, the question did address the policy, but in its “emphasis” rather than its likely impact or efficacy.

Interestingly, Herald journalists were surprised that 90% expressed support for the policy, specifically because it contradicted the angle that The Herald had run on the issue, based on the views of “expert” sources.

But that one threw us because we couldn't believe that there could be such a unanimity on something that so many of us, not necessarily all of *us*, but so many of the people that we talked to and the experts had such deep reservations about the way that the antisocial behaviour orders are gonna work, we found it almost inconceivable you'd have almost 9 out of 10 people disagreed. And that's why on that one we almost hammed up the story and said how remarkable and astonishing, I can't remember the actual word but something like that, because it seemed to me that not to acknowledge that it was a remarkable figure made us look a bit naïve. I think that's probably why in that case we almost deliberately went out of our way to get contra opinion, you know. If it had been the first time it had ever been done you could have been a bit more neutral about it [...but] given that all of that had gone before, we then commissioned our own poll on the subject and discovered that 'oops, if this is right, then there's some explaining to do'. (Calum MacDonald, Deputy News Editor, The Herald)

MacDonald quite consciously distances himself and his colleagues from the angle adopted by The Herald, and attributes it to “expert” sources, though in this case many of the groups expressing reservations were civic society groups such as charities and youth groups. However, the suggestion that the newspaper's line on the issue contradicted ‘public opinion’ troubled MacDonald, and had to be “explained”. This either suggests that editors expected their readers to be persuaded by rational argumentation, and therefore it was “inconceivable”, “remarkable” and “astonishing” that they appeared not to have been; or that they were aiming to reflect a broad consensus of public opinion (rather than the views of particular groups), and were concerned that readers would stop buying the paper if it failed to reflect their views or in this case their expectations about the likely impact on policy. Even where considered argument from civic groups *is* represented, then, there are tensions with liberal notions of aggregate ‘public opinion’ or the market. This will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

None of the newspapers' journalists understood their role as the representation of particular political parties, group interests or causes, and although The Herald in fact made far more reference to such organisations and associations in the content of the campaigns, as we will see in Chapter 7, they referred to them in conventional liberal terms as expert sources. Instead of understanding publics in terms of associative groups, the journalists referred to ‘the public’ and ‘public opinion’ in an aggregative sense. However, the editorial bias of all three papers is chiefly explained, not in terms of partisanship toward certain parties, associations or pressure groups, or even a fragmented ‘public opinion’, but in the personal preference of the editor.

5.3.3. Editorial prerogative

At the tabloid titles, journalists characterised their newspaper as having values that are responsible, which emanate from the editor. Daily Record journalists frequently contrasted Bruce Waddell with previous editors.

We have this ethos, and this paper hasn't always had this ethos, it all depends on the editor, it *all* depends on who edits the paper. I am extraordinarily comfortable with and I *like* this ethos. (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

Similarly, at the Evening Times the Chief Reporter described the editor repeatedly as “moderate”, and “thoughtful”, with “considered views”, and very specifically “not your nasty little tabloid editor”, in relation to his personal opinions (David Leask).

And his personality is obviously all across the paper, it's his paper, he's the boss, okay? We don't vote on things, he decides. And because Charles is a man who is moderate in his views, and does not become shrill and stupid, and actually does think about the views he takes, okay? So sometimes he gets it wrong like everybody, but nine times out of 10 he's the man that's coming out with thoughtful and considered views. And that means, I think, that the newspaper has got more credibility and clout than it used to. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

There is a subtle difference in these statements – Sinclair refers to an “ethos” which suggests a set of moral values, whereas Leask talks about being “thoughtful and considered”, suggesting a rational decision based on the evidence though he also describes the newspaper as having “a moral robustness at its heart”.

In the Evening Times' interpretation, responsible “professionalism” is detached from the original *definition of* objectivity and balance, and used as an independently extant quality, or one connected with the more vague ‘reasonableness’ or “fair-mindedness”¹⁷, that can justify *deviation from* objectivity and balance.

Because he's got all the experience and because he's got that fair-mindedness at the root of his journalism, which is a professional journalism. And that fair-mindedness means that when he's campaigning you have to take it seriously. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

Leask intimates that if a newspaper is credible then it is so regardless of whether or not it adheres to objectivity and balance, and is allowed flexibility around the rules of social responsibility *to* citizens on the basis of being responsible *on behalf of* a disengaged public because it can be trusted to do so without abusing that power.

McGhee suggests that this criterion is the main distinction between legitimate and illegitimate influence over politicians.

Which is a good thing and a bad thing, it means that for... for my paper for example, I know I can, with a well-written leader, targeted at the right person, we can have some kind of effect, and possibly get some action, but however, it also means that a paper like the Record, which as I said has got considerable clout with the government, could abuse that power. (Charles McGhee, Editor, Evening Times)

The editor explicitly argues that influence in the hands of the *Evening Times* is positive (since it is ‘reasonable’), but in the hands of the *Daily Record* it is dangerous. The lack of

17 This is not the same definition as a ‘fair-minded participant’ in public journalism (Rosen, 1996: 67), who neutrally convenes deliberative discussion.

accountability of newspaper editors is framed as a selective problem, one that applies only to the competition and those with whom they disagree.

McGhee suggests that the distinction between the Evening Times and the Daily Record is that the “credibility” of the former is based on its ‘reasonableness’, whilst the Daily Record is politically influential because, as a mass-market newspaper, it is assumed to be influential over voters. Of course journalists at the Record dispute this characterisation of them as unreasonable:

I mean, everybody thinks... people tend to think that tabloid newspapers are completely Neanderthal in their outlook, and the reason a lot of people think that is because they’re told that by broadsheet newspapers. In fact, the truth is very, very different, and [...] I think that tabloid newspapers, not just the *Record*, need to be credited actually with a lot more intelligence than... and, you know, a greater sense of responsibility in the way that they deal with these issues. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

This claim to responsibility hinges specifically on intelligence and sophistication – the ability to come to a reasoned rather than reactionary opinion – and essentially accusing the newspaper’s critics of snobbery for questioning their capacity for reason. Again, such arguments are based on the character and qualities of the newspaper rather than principles to which all of the press should adhere, such as informing citizens or the avoidance of discrimination and prejudice.

However, Sinclair also acknowledges that the Record derives its power from its market and has not always actually been reasonable, but still defends the principle of campaigning within clear criteria that define and ensure responsible advocacy:

I think it is wrong and The Record has in the past under previous editors... we have a lot of power, you know, 500,000 copies, 1.5 million readers, that’s a lot of pressure. If you use that just to crush people for the sake of it out of vanity, you’re a bully and you’re stupid, in my opinion, and the readers aren’t impressed. You just turn your readers off. If it is something that chimes with the readers and you push for victory then yes that’s important. (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

Legitimacy here hinges partly, again, on the *motivation* behind adversarialism – that it is a reasoned argument rather than the exercise of power on the whim of the editor – but the approval of readers is also considered critical to ensure or police reasonableness. The expression, “chimes with the readers”, suggests that the objective of the campaign is either something with which they already agree, or something with which they instinctively sympathise, although Sinclair does not specify how the demands or beliefs of the readers are gleaned. The mechanisms of newspapers’ accountability to their readers will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

McGhee appears to assume that his own opinion is consistent with public opinion. In considering the hypothetical situation that the newspaper’s line did not concur with the opinion of its readers it becomes clear that his personal opinion is at least as important as public approval.

That's a good question [laughs], a very good question. Erm... I'm.... ooh... mostly I would go with our readers' opinion. For the simple reason that if the majority of our readers felt strongly enough to say to us, "we do not think this is right, we would like you to help us change this", then it's maybe likely that our view of the situation would accord with that. Now if it didn't, and I'm trying to think of an example for you where it didn't... and there's not one that comes to mind. If we felt that for whatever reason, you know, that although there was a strong public opinion against something but that our view of the situation was that it was ultimately valid, in five or ten years time this is the better road to go down, we would simply take the view of reflecting readers opinions without getting involved in any sort of campaign as such, but simply record both sides of the argument, and make sure that the readers' voices were heard, but not lend the paper's weight behind it. (Charles McGhee, Editor, Evening Times)

His Chief Reporter, David Leask, agreed that McGhee would not run "a populist campaign that was wrong", and that "he would have to believe in it", suggesting that the editor's personal conviction operates as a veto at least. Equally, however, there is a market veto on editorial conviction: he would not be inclined to pursue a campaign for which he was uncertain about being able to gain support; McGhee describes sister paper *The Herald's* Dungavel campaign as "laudable" but immediately qualifies it with, "did it do them any good in readership terms, I suspect not", implicitly assuming that a failure to accurately anticipate reader opinion would have commercial consequences.

Mark Douglas Home of *The Herald* conversely criticised this idea of responsibility as appealing to readers' *existing* or instinctive beliefs, and defended the editorial prerogative on the basis of an anti-racist or otherwise anti-discrimination bias, which we will explore in the next section. Although Douglas Home framed this bias in terms of neutral professionalism, his journalists clearly recognised his personal convictions; McAlpine argued that the editor believed "that there are certain things that we as a paper have a moral obligation to uphold". Henderson even claimed a more moralistic stance than the popular press; that "people look to The Herald in a way that they especially don't look to the tabloids to present a moral case" (Damien Henderson), by which he seemed to mean a progressive morality of the responsible society, as opposed to the tabloids' conservative morality of blame and censure.

Newspapers' bias cannot be explained in terms of corporatist partisanship, since the views represented are not those of political parties or other forms of political association, but the personal beliefs, values and assumptions of the editor, moderated – if at all – by a notion of 'public opinion' that is connected with the audience as a market, which could be understood as populism (with the notable exception of Douglas Home). Neither is this legitimated by liberal notions of social responsibility, but rather by the personal qualities of the editor as 'reasonable' or 'moral'. The next section will explore the extent to which the substantive bias of editors and the assumed values of the readers are open to challenge by journalists, particularly as regards the kind of prejudicial coverage proscribed in the professional codes of practice.

5.3.4. Anti-discrimination and populist campaigns

Discrimination, and particularly racism and sectarianism, was understood as substantively wrong, but not as unprofessional. Whilst journalists at the Daily Record claimed that the newspaper did not pander to the racist or sectarian prejudices they assumed to be commonly held by readers, neither did they claim to challenge them, although this is true to the letter of the professional guidelines (which are about proscribing bad behaviour rather than encouraging good practice). However, the homophobic nature of the Daily Record's Section 28 campaign suggests that the editor's prerogative (and, perhaps, the editor's assumptions about 'public opinion') takes precedence over personal principle, especially in the case of campaigns.

I don't think the paper was doing anything wrong in that, I mean although I disagreed with the stance that it took and I count myself quite lucky that I actually worked for the Sunday Mail and was able to sort of write stuff which I personally agreed with, you know, I think the Record was doing, you know, a perfectly legitimate... I think it was legitimate journalism. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

Kevin McKenna, Associate Editor at the Scottish Daily Mail, similarly included intolerance of certain groups within the legitimate political partisanship of the press. McKenna also justified the illiberal editorial line of the Daily Mail as both the editor's prerogative and as a reflection or representation of their readers' substantive views and emotional responses, assuming a readership who "will be endlessly suspicious of liberalism and New Labour and political correctness".

However, this was not a universal acquiescence. David Leask of the Evening Times, when in a previous job at the Aberdeen Evening Express, chose to write stories in accordance with his own principles rather than the newspaper's agenda, even though this resulted in his stories being 'spiked', "because, you know, 'we don't cover that kind of thing in the paper'", which he regarded as "disgraceful from a news point of view", giving an oblique justification that suggests manipulation of a natural news order rather than principles encoded by the NUJ and PCC. McCann, however, did define anti-racism as a matter of personal (but not professional) principle. In relation to stories about refugees being assaulted in Sighthill, McCann reflected:

I made a conscious decision to say well he's a refugee not an asylum seeker because a lot of them have been so damaged and yet it's completely valid just to get that point across. And you get, I mean journalists are people as well, and they've got their own politics, on a personal not at a party political level, but obviously there's things that you care about. [...] It's more a case of wanting it and then finding a way that you can argue it or justify it. And it's fair enough that an editor or somebody, I think it's fair enough for the newsdesk who have got that role as well, I suppose, to say 'well why are we saying that? Can we not say...', 'no you can't say that', 'why?', 'it's offensive and it's wrong'. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

McCann here attempts to represent minorities in a socially responsible manner (without causing offence to them or promoting prejudice against them) on account of their vulnerability, but he does not advocate providing direct access for representatives such as refugee pressure groups in a corporatist manner.

Mark Douglas Home, Editor of The Herald, the newspaper most attached to the norm of balanced reporting, gave a justification of anti-discriminatory journalism that shrank from an understanding of prejudice as a substantive view (a preference for people who are culturally similar to those to are different), or an emotional response (fear, suspicion, envy), understanding it rather as a product of misinformation, and the corrective as objective reporting.

I mean there is a truth in that, there are prejudiced people within Britain, and yes, the Daily Mail does confirm their prejudices, but I don't know if he [Editor in Chief, Paul Dacre] is performing a function just by confirming people's prejudices. If people's prejudices are wrong, then the sort of counter-intuitive thing that journalism should do is reveal the facts that are a surprise to people and make them realise, 'mm I was wrong about that', and so the thing about the Daily Mail is that confirming people's prejudices that we're about to be overrun by Latvian immigrant workers, but actually, I mean, one immigrant worker from Latvia has come and that's a plumber and we all want plumbers, then, you know, fuelling that ill-informed prejudice with misinformation is not serving democracy at all. Because democracy is served by accurate information, and I think that's where, that's where they make a mistake, they think that by confirming what people already think they're somehow serving the people, and serving their constituency, whereas their function is actually to find out the truth rather than just to serve their constituency and to confirm its prejudices. (Mark Douglas Home, Editor, The Herald)

This suggests a view of readers and voters as instrumental, concerned with maximising their own interests and rationally pursuing favourable outcomes, which relies on immigration being seen as in the interests of present citizens to justify tolerance, rather than the substantive principle of universal human rights. This also overstates individuals' instrumental rationality, and underestimates the emotional component of trust and risk (Berezin, 2002).

Alternatively, having defined The Herald in contrast to agenda-led tabloids, Mark Douglas Home strategically re-defines socially liberal values or the principle of anti-discrimination as something that can be uncontroversially stated as factually right, rather than values that he normatively locates in the 'sphere of consensus' (Hallin, 1986), though other journalists admired that it was "done on principle" (Gardham). Nonetheless, Douglas Home was unusual in thinking that newspapers could and *should* challenge readers' views, rather than reflect their expectations and assumptions back to them. However, this view was not shared by his journalists, or even his news editors – Calum MacDonald argued that "sometimes it can be very posturing and very kind of pose-y and 'aren't we smart'", suggesting that readers would feel that they were being lectured.

Journalists explained the avoidance of a substantively principled approach as an expectation that the audience would resent being moralised to, and expected readers to resist the explicit imposition of values, if those values were not those that the readers already shared.

It's more difficult, you have to present a convincing argument. It would be more in an educating way rather than in a nagging kind of a way I think. You'd present a case, even though it might be unpopular, if you thought you could get support for it, but it's easier if you're already sort of on side with them. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

McCann argues that “educating” or “convincing” the readers with facts is more acceptable to them than challenging their values, even though elsewhere he describes the audience as resistant to being educated or exercising critical judgement. Only the Daily Record’s Political Editor, Paul Sinclair argued that people have positive values that newspapers can appeal to whilst remaining popular, specifying those informed by personal relationships in the private sphere, such as the instinct to “pull around the [victims’] family”. Although again this relates to the news value of personalisation, Sinclair suggests that empathy could prompt community feeling rather than fear – that it can produce an ‘us’ without recourse to a ‘them’. The journalists’ assessment of pressure from the audience as critics or a market will be explored in the next chapter.

Herald and Evening Times journalists defended partisanship within the norms of British newspaper journalism, but always framed it as a greater emphasis on particular facts rather than the exclusion of others or as the promotion of an ideological agenda. In contrast, journalists at the Daily Record were comfortable with their Labour Party allegiance, and in that were more overtly or conventionally corporatist. Similarly, journalists claim to pursue an anti-racist agenda, but they don’t locate this within their professional ideology, advocate representation of minority groups via civic association, or believe they can actively challenge prejudiced views. Where challenges were made to readers’ views it was legitimised through reference to objective arguments and evidence, playing down the more substantive elements of the argument, largely with the objective of making the advocacy acceptable rather than accepted. Advocacy is defended as legitimate but expected public resistance means that it is not overt, and not transparently representative. Instead it is understood to be the prerogative of the editor.

5.4. Campaign activism: participation and support

Four of the six campaigns invited and appealed to readers to participate. Two of the Daily Record campaigns (drugs and loan sharks) asked readers simply to report criminal activity, which can be regarded as civic-minded behaviour, but is not political as such. However, the drugs campaign also encouraged readers to attend a protest march and the Evening Times’ Queen Mum’s campaign encouraged readers to attend public meetings, sign a petition, and express their opposition to their MSPs and to the Health Board directly. The Daily Record’s anti-social behaviour campaign included a letter-writing campaign, although in that case the letters were directed to the newspaper, who passed them on to the Communities Minister (Margaret Curran).

The recruitment of readers’ support was explained by John McCann as facilitating latent beliefs or desires.

But you have to give them something to care about, and something to do about caring, in this case the petition and all that. So get them... let them realise they want to help, and then give them a way to help. And off they go. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

McCann seems to quite consciously frame the petition in these terms, correcting himself from “get them [to help?]” to “let them realise they want to help”. Furthermore, McGivern admitted that readers did not always necessarily hold the prior beliefs represented in the articles: “sometimes you’ll put things on your readers though, which is a bit disingenuous, that are politically driven”.

The Daily Record journalists reported receiving criticisms accusing the paper of exploiting the victims of drug abuse, though they were not published in the paper.

A lot of people said we were cynical about it, said ‘well there you go, marching out these bloody families’, a lot of people feel that they were exploited as well ‘to make your campaign look good you’ve huckled them out onto the street and they’re doing your bidding’, [...] there were scores of people with banners with their dead son or their dead brother on it, I mean it was a bit eerie, but it was full of punch, you know it was very poignant, I thought it made for a very powerful display. (Mark McGivern, Reporter, Daily Record)

McGivern doesn’t quite contradict the criticism, since his justification seems to be precisely that the display of support made the campaign look good. It is certainly not clear who was the beneficiary of that ‘power’, other than the newspaper, though McGivern did argue for the (temporary) effects of social censure, that dealers were genuinely affected by disapproval of neighbours – “they became pariahs, they felt the stare of their neighbours on them, they felt public opinion was against them”. However, if anything, the march seemed to aim to persuade ‘the public’ to identify with these affected individuals and families, to see themselves as potentially affected (as detailed above), and consequently to report dealers to the police, rather than to facilitate the expression of a political opinion, such as persuade politicians to change the circumstances that contribute to the appeal of drug use.

Readers’ participation in the petition and protest march was not understood in the terms of participatory democracy, but as support for the newspaper’s action on their behalf as quasi-political representatives.

5.5. Conclusion

Journalists at The Herald and Evening Times expressed identification with the professional norms of the social responsibility model of the press. However, although they are supposed to oblige journalists to consider the audience as citizens who need to be impartially informed, this responsibility is defined in professional norms and guidelines that are procedural and seen as an end in themselves, rather than as means to a democratic end, and are therefore applied

strategically and without reference to citizens. Indeed, readers are imagined to be uninterested in a truly socially responsible journalism that provides supporting evidence to enable them to rationally distinguish between 'competing truth claims'. Therefore journalists' social responsibility is undermined by the commercial news values, employed to appeal to the audience as market for whose attention journalists are competing. The resulting focus on personalised, instrumentally relevant, and culturally consonant framing could lead to a bias toward explanations of social issues in terms of individual behaviour rather than structural pressures and constraints, and in terms of the competing interests of 'us and them' rather than common goals and consensus. This will be explored in Chapter 7.

The British press code of practice emphasises objectivity and accuracy, but does not require impartiality in the presentation of facts or evidence or balance in the presentation of substantive views, which Hallin and Mancini (2004) interpret as evidence of corporatism. The Herald explained their bias as a selection of facts that had been previously excluded and therefore *corrected* a partial representation of the facts, whilst tabloid journalists' reference to 'balance' was principally to justify the publication of assertions that were not objectively supported by evidence. Editorial bias was therefore typically understood as the prerogative of the editor as benign dictator, permitted by the PCC, whose code of practice was interpreted as provision of an exemption for the press rather than outlining principles of partisan representation. Whilst Hallin and Mancini saw the biased nature of the British press as evidence of corporatist tendencies, then, journalists saw it as an additional element of freedom from regulation.

Until fairly recently, the editorial prerogative was characterised by partisanship in the form of party-political support, which was a matter of concern for those who assumed that newspapers would influence readers' vote, but which did connect the advocacy of the newspaper with a form of grassroots political association. However, the increasing commercialisation of the press in response to the contracting market for newspapers (and high newspaper readership is a characteristic of democratic corporatism in Hallin and Mancini's categorisation), as well as the perception of society as increasingly fragmented, instrumental, and disillusioned with party politics, has led to a form of bias that is in part more autonomous and in part more subject to the market. The greater autonomy is not, however, a professional autonomy governed by responsibility to citizens, but the relatively unconstrained opinions, beliefs and assumptions of the editor as a benign dictator, characterised as 'reasonable' (but without any mechanism other than the market to constrain 'unreasonable' editors). This is consistent with neither the social responsibility nor democratic corporatist models of the press, but the libertarian model, which assumes that the free market neutrally ensures representation of all views and interests. Accordingly, this editorial prerogative is constrained only by a liberal, commercial notion of the readers as a market.

Both in terms of the social responsibility and democratic corporatist rationalisations of the British press, then, these newspapers made reference to their formal democratic legitimacy, but in practice tended more toward the libertarian, market-driven press, especially in their construction of 'the public'. Similarly, the participatory elements of the campaigns were designed to strengthen the hand of the newspaper, rather than facilitate citizens' political self-determination. The next chapter will examine in more detail newspapers' evidence for this claimed democratic legitimacy, analysing claims of accountability to readers, through industry regulation and reward (social responsibility), interaction with readers as critics and contributors (corporatism), responding to them as a market (libertarian) and through their support for activist advocacy (participatory democracy). The next chapter explores the evidence presented by journalists to support their assertions about readers and other publics.

Chapter 6: Accountability: the Audience, the Public, and the Market

This chapter will examine the extent to which journalists' responsibility to and representation of the audience or particular publics is enforced through mechanisms of accountability. Industry self-regulation through the PCC holds journalists accountable only to sources and subjects of stories: "The PCC does not generally accept complaints from third parties about cases involving named individuals without the signed authorisation of the person concerned" (Press Complaints Commission, 2007b). Harris (1992) observes that these individuals are most likely to be official sources and people in public life often with power and/or influence – rather than citizens who feel they have been misled or otherwise poorly served by news content. Indeed, the PCC describe themselves as a free and quick alternative to suing for libel (open to complaint not criticism). This relates to the form of protective liberal democracy that Held terms 'legal democracy', which defends people from being misrepresented but not misinformed (see Chapter 2). Accountability to sources and subjects is ostensibly aimed at ensuring that accurate information is published, which is in the public interest (in terms of social responsibility, as detailed in the previous chapter) but whilst sources may be best-placed to assess the accuracy of such representation, they are often also pursuing their own interests and agenda in seeking publicity so cannot be relied upon to uphold the public interest, only to challenge other sources in as far as their interests are competing.

Direct accountability to readers is instead available through informal feedback and criticism to journalists or to the newsdesk, but there is no formal obligation for journalists to respond. Journalists also interact with readers as contributors via letters to the editor and as sources or case studies for stories. These contributions are selected by journalistic gatekeepers, but equally the newspapers rely on readers continuing to volunteer their opinions or experiences. Finally, readers may otherwise express their disapproval by choosing not to purchase the paper, and McQuail (2003), among others, makes a claim for accountability of the press through the market.

The formal mechanisms will be addressed first, then readers as critics and contributors via letter to the editor, and finally as customers. Formal accountability through industry regulation will first be addressed briefly, before the chapter turns to the mechanisms through which journalists claim to be accountable to the audience: reader feedback, public contributions as letter writers and as a market. Finally, this chapter will address the ways in which journalists claimed that specific campaigns demonstrated this accountability.

6.1. Industry self-regulation and legal constraints

Editors and journalists did make some reference to industry regulation and libel law.

Because one of the things we found, certainly I spent the first six months or so of my editorship sorting out all of the problems that had built up in the previous five or six years, I couldn't believe, you know, how many lawyers letters, PCC complaints, you know, general complaints I had and it was simply because the paper had been pursuing a typically tabloid agenda, which was 'let's get the story and then we'll, you know, pay scant attention to the facts, really'. (Charles McGhee, Editor, Evening Times)

Here McGhee acknowledges that the Evening Times had been guilty of not letting the facts get in the way of a good story, but argued that this was damaging to its reputation. However, he also suggests that it is possible for newspapers to continue in this fashion, and indeed that the more "typical tabloid[s]" do, and regard such complaints as a hazard of the job, or even proof that they were doing a good job of finding out what politicians (as well as celebrities and so on) didn't want to be known.

Where there is editorial concern about complaints however, it does appear to strengthen the hand of individual journalists. McCann refers to the PCC as a key piece of arsenal when defending professional standards of accuracy and objectivity in the face of pressure from a news editor to print regardless.

And you've also got the argument, 'well yeah we could do but, but they could go to the PCC and they'd be right and we'd lose, or they could sue and we'd lose, and these are not good actions to have'. 'Cause otherwise they'll insist, 'I don't care'. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

At the same time, in reference to a concrete example when a complaint was made about his reporting on the Queen Mum's hospital campaign, McCann's response was more defensive – "what we wrote was right and true and fair, she refused to respond at the time when we asked her, and now she wants to write a page of nonsense; no we're not gonna give that to her".

Newspapers certainly do not hold themselves to the same standards of accountability as they expect of public figures. Leask said of a piece he wrote about Catriona Renfrew of the Health Board (published on the day of the interview) "That's thrown in there for a good reason and the reason is that she will shortly be a member of the board who will be in charge of monitoring herself". However, Charles McGhee was appointed to the board of the PCC in December 2003 (Anon, 2003), towards the beginning of the Queen Mum's campaign. Whilst there is nothing unusual about that given the nature of the PCC, it does suggest double standards within the industry in terms of accountability.

Journalists at The Herald tended to refer to their own internal standards without reference to industry or legal accountability, which perhaps indicates a more positive notion of good practice rather than simply avoiding censure and exploiting loopholes. However, Lucy Adams recalled being asked by a previous editor at another (broadsheet) newspaper to follow up a story tip-off the editor had been given by a taxi-driver, despite her reservations that

investigating the claim involved "asking the question on no valuable premise whatsoever" and that "as a paper we could have got done for slander because we had to phone up a lot of people who knew him, or used to know him".

At the Daily Record there was some concern about legal accountability to subjects of stories, since 'name and shame' campaigns centre on making accusations of criminal behaviour.

So I had to get people on side who would do it, and watch their progress, and see how it went, and feel confident that I wasn't gonna get sued, 'cause you're always worried about getting sued by these people, even if they're guilty. (Mark McGivern, Reporter, Daily Record)

However, the main source of accountability mentioned at the Record was the informal but public criticism in other newspapers.

The people who do read it [the leader column] tend to be politicians and other newspapers, who are always sort of looking at each other, you know, for gaps and things like that. You know, it's that sort of self-policing idea that papers have to be responsible, and this is where it kicks in. Because there's absolutely no doubt that papers like the Herald would dearly love to pick up on moments of Daily Record stupidity, and point out, from their sort of lofty, erudite world view, how silly we are, you know, and some columnists who – I think it's a dreadful thing actually because we are all in the same profession, we are all writing for different markets – but still some columnists cannot resist deriding other newspapers. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

This kind of analysis of media content within newspapers is increasingly common with the popularity of media supplements or coverage within business pages, though in Scotland these tend to be limited to the weekend papers. Interestingly, even though Gardham acknowledges that such "self-policing" is intended to ensure "responsibility" he still seems to resent it and consider such criticism from peers as uncollegiate or unnecessarily competitive.

Association within the industry is not only about regulation, however, it also provides a form of recognition of good practice. Charles McGhee referred to peer-praise in that his aspirations in transforming the Evening Times were to be an "award-winning" newspaper, but this was the only positive reference to awards as a motivation. Indeed, industry recognition is not necessarily seen as valid. John McCann dismissively recalled that the Record "actually got an award" for the drugs campaign, suggesting that it was undeserved. Furthermore, whilst awards may motivate journalists, they are not necessarily seen to motivate *responsible* behaviour. Lucy Adams of The Herald described the agenda of an editor she worked for previously at a (broadsheet) title as to "bring down the First Minister":

Predominantly because he thought that it would do his career a lot of good to be seen to be bringing down ministers. And I suppose typically over the last few years, people who've won journalism awards have won awards because the minister they've written about has been forced to resign. (Lucy Adams, Home Affairs Correspondent, The Herald)

David Leask at the Evening Times also associated awards, such as the story about expense claim irregularities that forced the resignation of First Minister Henry McLeish that earned the

Journalist of the Year award. A more constructive form of praise may in fact come from *outside* the industry, from pressure groups and charitable organisations, such as the award given to Damien Henderson by the Refugee Week Scottish Media Awards to reward journalism that challenges assumptions and prejudices about asylum and asylum-seekers (BBC News, 2006).

PCC complaints are only a deterrent to irresponsible journalism if the editor regards apologies as damaging. Whilst industry self-regulation for the most part facilitates accountability only to sources and subjects of stories, industry recognition through awards is presented as confirmation that the newspaper is doing the important democratic work of holding elite sources and subjects to account. However, this can lead to a hyper-adversarialism (McNair, 2000) that serves the interests of journalists (career advancement) and media organisations (newspaper sales; political influence and prestige) more than the interests of citizens. The next section will address forms of accountability that journalists claim facilitate accountability to readers more directly.

6.2. Readers as critics

If readers feel that the public interest has not been served or a particular interest not represented by the newspaper, they cannot take their complaint to the PCC, but they may take it directly to the newspaper, and increasingly to the individual journalist.

Editor Charles McGhee claimed that the readers were the *main* authority in holding the Evening Times accountable.

And a paper like this which is rooted in the community and has got to face up to its readers daily, and is not as remote as what papers like the Record or other national newspapers can be from its readers. We're not remote from our readers, we're... you know, we have face-to-face contact with them if you like and we can't betray that kind of loyalty and trust that the paper previously had in the way that it did in that five or six year period, and there were a lot of bridges to be built and a lot of fixing to be done, and we changed not just the style and the look of the paper but the actual content. (Charles McGhee, Editor, Evening Times)

This is suggestive of the notion of a public journalism that is engaged with rather than detached from the local community (Merritt, 1999). The ways in which, as *local* journalists, they are close to sources has been explored by Murphy (1976) and Neveu (2002). However, it's unclear by what mechanism or in what context they are 'face to face' with the readers. At all three newspapers, direct contact tends to be in the form of informal feedback via email and telephone to the individual journalist or newsdesk, and letters to the editor designed for publication in the newspaper. The latter also functions as a contribution to debate on the issues as well as criticisms of their coverage, but this will be tackled separately in the next section.

The main direct contact individual journalists have with their readers is via feedback, now generally received by email, which tends to be more critical than approving. It is usually dismissed as unrepresentative and even “unhinged”, as found in studies of more formal feedback through letters to the editor (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002a; Raeymaeckers, 2005). Journalists reluctantly concede the validity of complaints of inaccuracy but dismiss accusations of imbalance or the omission of a particular point of view or interpretation, not because they reserve the right to be biased, or to partially or disproportionately represent certain groups or interests, but because the complainants’ views are invalid.

Yes, but these are weird people. Okay. So what I’m saying to you is that if you were to play attention to all the weird people who wrote you... [...] Now you take the weirdos who sit round on their computers at night when they should be watching TV or going down the pub, if you take them seriously then that’s a bit of a worry. I don’t really value the opinions of people that email, that’s a terrible admission but I don’t. I don’t take it seriously. Sometimes someone will make a good point, sometimes you’ll have got something wrong, perhaps a detail, something, whatever. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

Leask gave the specific example of sectarianism, that “if you write about either Rangers or Celtic you’ll get dogs’ abuse”, and therefore since, like the Record, the Evening Times gets complaints from both Protestants and Catholics, such people are objecting to the inclusion of views with which they disagree, rather than the biased exclusion of their own views. This is indicative of the way that the market drives news toward blandness, through avoidance of challenging readers’ views. However, for all substantive complaints to be rejected means that the newspaper’s agenda may become dogmatic and unrepresentative to reasoned disagreement.

At The Herald, informal feedback was similarly dismissed because it came from a substantive or emotional (“impassioned”) standpoint.

You get a degree of feedback from your readership. You know, again the ones that come on to you tend to be the ones who have more of a point to make. So if you publish a cartoon that’s controversial for reasons that I won’t bore you with the news desk suddenly becomes responsible for that but we’re not at all, so we get the really kind of front line of the nutters or those with a very impassioned point of view. (Calum MacDonald, Deputy News Editor, The Herald)

To some extent, both MacDonald and Leask appear to be critical of those who are engaged by issues, those who have “a point to make”, rather than being more ‘normally’ passive and disinterested (limiting their activities to drinking and “watching TV”). MacDonald infers that strong views are equivalent to intransigence, which would not be appropriate to Habermas’ deliberative public sphere, where participants are supposed to be open to persuasion or being disproved, or even to corporatist negotiation, but again, the newspaper’s position when campaigning is similarly fixed and not open to challenge.

Journalists’ resistance to reader feedback may be related to the form of *expression* of the criticism, or simply the lack of corresponding praise. Mark McGivern of the Daily Record noted

that feedback was “mostly [...] mistakes you’ve made in the paper”. His colleague Paul Sinclair agreed that emails tended to be skewed to criticism.

It’s very difficult because the emails you tend to get people don’t tend to write to say you’re spot on. I wrote one column, I had my house broken into, and I wrote a column about it and I got this very long email from a fella, and the first four paragraphs said ‘I liked your column, spot on, it happened to me, that’s exactly how I feel, I think you’ve really chimed with so many readers blah blah’, and the next eight paragraphs started with ‘and it’s so much better than the shite you usually write’. (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

This suggests that people like to see themselves and their experience reflected in the paper and that they judge the content of the paper – in relation to their personal lives.

A less frequently cited basis on which readers respond is collective identity, particularly tied in with notions of ‘Scottishness’.

Oh you get a reaction, there was one famous front page that erm, I’m trying to think when it was now... When the English football fans rioted in, was it Barcelona or something, and we had a relatively inexperienced editor at that time, Terry Quinn, who put on the front page, ‘*our* shame’, now that caused massive reactions, ‘cause it wasn’t our shame it was England’s, you know. So if you get it wrong, they’re not short of letting you know. (Dave King, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

This illustrates the danger of using the public voice, the inclusive ‘we’, and the propensity of readers to resist such characterisations. This is especially pertinent when, as in this example, there is an element of blame. There are clear comparisons to be made with the Hillsborough disaster¹⁸, the Sun’s coverage of which proved fatal for its circulation in Liverpool for years, although that case also contained factual inaccuracies and outright invention.

Feedback through the letters page is generally seen as more valid: “I’m much more interested in reading the formal letters to the editor, than... even the ones that aren’t published, than the slightly mad people who have email on computers” (David Leask). This possibly reflects a tangible difference in the content and expression of the letters, firstly on account of the standards demanded by the paper of correspondents if they want to be published, and secondly because of a certain amount of accountability in as far as Herald letter-writers have to supply their names and addresses, even if they choose not to have them printed. In contrast, emailed criticisms, like comments online, will often be anonymous and therefore more frequently insulting or aggressive (Allan, 2006). Equally, however, the journalists’ response may have less to do with the inherent qualities of the criticism than the public nature of its expression; it is less easy to dismiss a criticism if its validity is open to evaluation by others.

18 The Hillsborough disaster was an incident at a football match in 1989 where 96 Liverpool fans were crushed to death. The Sun claimed that Liverpool fans pickpocketed victims and assaulted police officers who went to their aid, see Chippendale and Horrie (1998).

The Herald, unlike the Daily Record and Evening Times, publishes letter-writers' criticisms of its content and journalists – Lucy Adams said that “The Herald seems to have more letters in about stories that you write than any paper that I’ve written for” – though that’s not to say that the paper necessarily responds to them, yet the journalists clearly fear public exposure by readers. Accusations of inaccuracy are taken seriously, even if the mistaken belief is widespread. Calum MacDonald gave the example of the MMR vaccine to illustrate the way in which he believes that, though the paper should reflect the readers’ values and opinions, The Herald would look foolish if it reflected the majority’s misunderstanding of scientific evidence. MacDonald argued that such a stance “would be a gross dereliction of duty and it would be silly, and we’d be getting letters, I mean you couldn’t do that”, making reference to journalists’ social responsibility, but also aware that knowledgeable readers would expose the paper and that such accusations would be damaging to the newspaper’s reputation (again in a way that they may not be to a tabloid paper).

Henderson, meanwhile, was less certain that the paper should respond to or reflect readers’ *opinions* but would still pay attention when the criticisms are framed in terms of objectivity, even if subjectively motivated.

So what you’ll see in the letters pages, for instance, is people attacking a piece which obviously they disagree with ideologically, but they’ll attack it on the grounds that, ‘well, you’ve accepted a piece of spin’, or, you know, ‘the journalism has not been done to a standard’, and ‘you presented ideological views as objective fact’. And I think that argument cuts both ways, I think that’s the criticism that readers use against the paper I think is a standard they expect of it. (Damien Henderson, Reporter, The Herald)

Letter-writers are therefore taken seriously because they use the same tactics as journalists – instead of making the case for a particular value, they argue that the interpretation of opponents is not ‘true’. Complaints of imbalance and the omission of certain opinions would be equally valid in principle (in accordance with the editors’ account of the newspaper’s policy), but seem to concern journalists less.

This concern for standards of objectivity can mean that the letters page is useful as a form of right to reply for sources and subjects of reporting.

And quite often if somebody has got a complaint against an article that has been written that they feel hasn’t represented their views properly or was incorrect, they might often run it as a letter in the letters page in the first instance, rather than the corrections, as it offers them the opportunity to get their views across in a very well-read forum. (Joan McApline, Deputy Editor, The Herald)

This suggests an admirable standard of transparency, though perhaps also a confidence that the paper would not be damaged by being criticised by elite sources such as politicians.

Indeed, readers will not necessarily accept the source’s account above that of the journalist, and such criticisms by politicians can provoke readers to defend the original story.

I love the letters page sometimes though, because you can write a really controversial story and get a really nasty letter back from a minister or somebody and you feel a bit

upset, and then you get about 10 letters on the next page defending what you wrote. (Lucy Adams, Home Affairs Correspondent, The Herald)

The presence of praise as well as criticism also distinguishes the feedback via letters to the editor from informal feedback to individual journalists. This openness to criticism is of course particular to the broadsheet or quality press where the tabloids print “more a comment from the reader rather than... debating” (Dave King) – mostly support or praise, less frequently disagreement – but not criticism or argument.

Whilst editors like to claim that they answer first and foremost to their readers, journalists are highly dismissive of most feedback and criticism they receive. Critics’ opinions are characterised as invalid on account of being strongly-held and therefore irrationally emotional or based on fixed values, and critics themselves are considered ‘weird’ for diverging from the passive, disengaged behaviour that is perceived to be the norm. However, journalists’ defensive response to criticism is also an understandable frustration with intolerant individuals resistant to being exposed to views with which they disagree. That is not to say, however, that such views are representative of the newspapers’ readers or that closed-mindedness is inevitable. In part such contributions are a product of the forum of expression (Herbst, 1993) and public, attributable, and therefore reasoned criticism in the letters page is taken far more seriously. King also highlights the second distinctive function or role of the letters page in the quality press – that of a forum for debate that “fleshes out an argument” and allows people to give their reasons (Colin McDiarmid); something closer to the ideal type of the public sphere.

6.3. Readers as contributors or publics

The views of individual readers and members of the public were present in the campaigns in the letters pages (principally in The Herald) and as interviewees, often in the form of case studies of affected individuals (in all three newspapers but especially the tabloids). The letters page tends to be more abstract and discursive whilst the case studies are more often experience-based and descriptive. Whilst not necessarily representations of ‘public opinion’ more broadly (which will be dealt with in Chapter 8) these contributions can theoretically ensure that the newspaper carries a more ‘balanced’ or broad range of views. As sources, readers are due the same accountability as ‘expert’ or elite sources if they feel that they have been misrepresented; as letter-writers, they are able to express themselves directly in their own words, though they are also open to challenge from other letter-writers.

Discussion and deliberation is evident where writers reference and respond to specific points raised in previous letters. Many Herald journalists expressed pride in the reputation and standing of the newspaper’s letters page in this respect, that “the letters page is acknowledged in public life in Scotland if you like, to be a genuine forum for a fairly frank exchange of views”

(Colin McDiarmid). The expression of opinion is therefore welcomed by journalists when the readers' disagreement is directed at other readers; their contribution or role is then more similar to that of 'expert' sources presenting conflicting views.

The Herald's Letters Editor, Andrew Hood, does express a concern for balancing opinion, and in particular the difficulty of achieving this because strong opinions about the government are generally critical in nature.

It's really very difficult if you've only got room for three or four letters on something like the Iraq war, and you've got three or four very eloquent letter writers protesting about it. And you've maybe got one or at most two boring letters from these party apparatchiks saying how wonderful Blair is, and once upon a time you had room to put in the party apparatchik and balance it, but nowadays as I say two or three elegant letters, the boring one tends to be discarded. (Andrew Hood, Letters Editor, The Herald)

This seems to suggest that the real reason for imbalance of opinion in the letters page is that support for incumbent politicians is regarded as less interesting or newsworthy than criticism. Hood later confirms this interpretation with reference to letters received praising the standards of care in local hospitals, discarded because "letters from happy people are not... very satisfying". The characterisation of party-supporters as "apparatchiks" accords with Richardson and Franklin's (2004) analysis of parties 'colonising' local newspapers' letters pages during the UK 2001 general election, but demonstrates a belief that party politics is not an appropriate form of political engagement for the individual.

Letter-writers were not, in any case, believed to reflect or represent 'public opinion'.

The letters page would suggest that readers of The Herald are all members of the Scottish Socialist Party, and we're all, you know, fervently republican, and fervently anti-war and campaigning radical socialists. But I think that is more of a reflection of the letters page than it is of the general readership of the paper. I think it's because of the role The Herald plays, I mean it has a very key role in sort of Scottish public life, and... politicians or people who are politically active would use the letters page to conduct debates. And since Scottish politics tends to be left of centre, it tends to be the kind of soft left versus the hard left, with a bit of nationalism thrown in as well. And that's going to be reflected in the letters page. (Joan McAlpine, Deputy Editor, The Herald)

This supports the argument that politicians use newspapers to communicate with one another as much as with voters (Price, 1992: 81). However, McAlpine seems to suggest that Scottish politics is not representative of Scottish public opinion, despite the electoral mandate and even despite a more representative system in Scotland incorporating an element of proportional representation.

Letters editor Andrew Hood argued that despite the intentions of previous editors, the letters page "could never be" a page "for ordinary people", and that even the non-official contributors would be (or have been) active in public or community life.

No, I don't think [they are representative] because I think there's an awful lot of apathetic people who buy the paper. And they maybe didn't lead very interesting private lives that served their community, they have hobbies but they're not really in the business of writing letters to newspapers about politics. (Andrew Hood, Letters Editor, The Herald)

Letter-writers, then, are characterised as not only the attentive public but the active public although in fact Hood's definition of serving the community may simply mean prominent or influential in their careers. Hood is, for example, able to report the background of a number of regular correspondents, who are largely retired professional or military men. Whilst Wahl-Jorgensen (2002a) finds this elderly male demographic correlated with conservative views, however, the Herald letters page is characterised as being more left-wing than the general readership and the population.

One member of the newsdesk staff describes letter-writers as both journalists and sources; "they're all very elegant and eloquent writers, but they almost become a mainstay in a way that your own staff are writing stories", and they are an "easy source of news" (Calum MacDonald). One politician, himself in a piece of published correspondence, criticised the newspaper for publishing support for its Dungavel campaign from the group of tame readers that form the "small coterie of correspondents" (George Foulkes MP, letter to the editor, HD 15/09/03).

The letters editor certainly sees them as journalistic contributors rather than an open forum.

You see what I don't think Mark [Douglas Home] quite understands is there's this hard core of I don't know quite how many, it's somewhere probably between 30 and 50 of very trusted correspondents who do... they're topical, they do know how to write, I think they are very good for the paper, but they do cause irritation to Mark and to a lot of people outside, and I persist in using them but, you know, I have to sort of dodge and weave a bit. (Andrew Hood, Letters Editor, The Herald)

Hood's job is largely as a gatekeeper, but he also protects those correspondents that he favours. When they fall out of favour with the editor he contacts them personally to encourage them to write less frequently, concerned that if a number of their letters are rejected they will stop writing altogether. The relationship is perhaps similar to a journalist and their sources, in that the letter-writers are cultivated and relied upon, except that contributions are offered to Hood rather than solicited by him. This suggests that the contributors are not really a public at all, then, but a form of unpaid and unsolicited journalism or elective elite sources. However, they *are* prepared to criticise the newspaper and individual journalists, which would be more difficult for the letter-writers if they were true insiders.

The letters editor is to some extent dismissive of the 'ordinary' reader, who cannot express themselves as eloquently as those repeatedly favoured. The gatekeeper status of the letters editor maintains standards but leads to exclusivity.

You don't get the impression from them [regular contributors] that their motivation is just to see their name in print, and I do detect an awful lot of people who that *is* what they want, and they're just not very good at it, and therefore unashamedly I am an elitist. And of course that doesn't go down well with certain quarters of our supposedly non-elitist society. (Andrew Hood, Letters Editor, The Herald)

This accords with Wahl-Jorgensen's findings that selection for "brevity and authority" drive a tendency toward elitism and closes down the range of voices (2002b), although in this case

more consciously. However, in stark contrast to Wahl-Jorgensen's findings elsewhere (2002a), regular writers were treated as valued correspondents rather than as deranged.

However, at the Evening Times the 'idiom of insanity' (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002a) was employed to discredit contributors with whom they disagreed.

I mean in the old days we used to call them the green ink brigade. And at least you could tell they were mad 'cause they use green pens, now with email you can't tell they're mad. But there are people who are obsessive letter writers, obsessive emailers, obsessive phone-ins to radio programmes and you can't imagine for a minute that they are in any way representative in my view. [...] Because there are a lot of nutters and they're attracted to the media like, you know, flies to... (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

This is markedly similar to the remarks Wahl-Jorgensen reported at The Bay Herald, where "the secret to knowing if someone's crazy is that they type it all in caps and then underline and highlight things" (2002a: 190-1), which was used to legitimise a conservative cynicism about democratic engagement with readers (2002a: 200).

The final form of direct public contribution is as sources for stories – This is more typical of tabloid papers, especially where initiated by the member of the public.

Phone-ins are an important way of getting stories. And, you know, some newspapers in particular do very, very well out of this, I mean the Sun and the Record, famously, do very well out of it when one of the main ways of generators of copy is punters phoning up the reporters line or the hotline in the paper. I don't think we do very well out of that in the Evening Times. Perhaps because people have an inkling that maybe they can get some money out of the Sun or the Record. Perhaps because it's part of the culture to phone the Record, and a lot of the phone-ins we get are frankly a waste of everyone's time. And we have a very efficient newsdesk secretary who fields those calls. And she'll often say, well I think you should phone the Record, or phone the Sunday Mail Judge. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

Whilst the Health Reporter takes satisfaction in being able to "help" readers who phone in with stories, such as "people who wait months, or years, for operations, who get them a couple of weeks after they've been in the paper", Leask's comment suggests that this help is only forthcoming if the paper gets a good story in return.

The Daily Record may in part do well from readers because it holds its readers in a higher regard, and sees the relationship as a two-way process. The Record journalists cultivate the loyalty of readers as sources by helping them, even when there is nothing in it directly for the newspaper in terms of a story.

And there's a long tradition at the paper... where people would phone us, we were their court of last resort, you know, when the police couldnae help, or lawyers couldnae help, the last resort, phone the Record, you know. And a lot of times you made the calls for them, you know and you'd phone housing departments and say 'look can you do something?' You wouldn't write a story but you'd intervene and say 'can something be done?' and that sort of thing. And that buys tremendous loyalty. (Dave King, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

Though there is no story as a result of the intervention on these readers' behalf, there is a commercial benefit in such "loyalty". As Paul Sinclair points out, when he helps a reader "she loves it, she'll be a Daily Record reader for life", and when that reader tells her friends, "then people will have a genuine feeling of 'The Record's not a bad thing, it's a good thing'", so the paper achieves a PR goal. The combined result of this is that there is a "culture", as Leask observes, of phoning the Record, so the paper is likely to be rewarded with tip-offs that do become stories.

On other occasions affected individuals' cases are presented by their political representatives, professionals with responsibilities for them, or via pressure groups who have increasingly professionalised operations, presenting individual cases as part of a PR package to win coverage for their cause.

I mean for those kind of people who want something done, pretty often it'll be the press officers that'll tell you about them. Sometimes a doctor will say to them, you know, doctors who read the paper and see the kind of stories will actually twig it might be worth calling the papers. MPs, MSPs and that kind of thing. If you see an MSP quoted there's a 50:50 chance that they put the person on to us in the first place. Not in every case by any means, but quite often, they'll have said, go to the papers to that particular person. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

The presence of 'ordinary people' in newspaper stories is therefore often initiated by elite sources, presumably in support of their own objectives, or by journalists looking for case study examples to illustrate their chosen angle. In the case of campaigns, case studies may be solicited in the pages of the newspaper or simply attracted by the coverage of similar stories, again depending on journalists' initiative.

However, journalists use a discourse of professionalism to claim superior judgement of the news over the lay person as contributor or source; a notion of the journalist as a trained, skilled and experienced professional in the traditional sense (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003). It is argued that the necessary journalistic skills are not available to the wider public; therefore they are unable to judge what it is that they want and/or need until it is given to them.

I mean, most people are... have got very boring things to say, the problem with that is that if you, there was an old philosophy that you should knock on every door in your town and behind that door there will be a story. And I still believe in that, I think that everyone who phones us up probably has a story if you can pitch it right or if you... it might not be the one that they're phoning you up with, they might not know what the story is because they're not reporters, they're not journalists, so they don't know what makes good copy in the paper. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

Such a view of the capabilities of public opinion is by no means new, and is comparable with liberal arguments about the limitations of the public in political matters (Lippmann, [1922] 1954), although those elitist arguments are being challenged by 'new media' and 'citizen journalism' (Allan, 2006).

The selection of contributions of letter-writers accorded in many ways with those identified in the US press by Wahl-Jorgensen, in that there was a concern with balancing opinion, but primarily with publishing authoritative, punchy and well-written letters, which were typically written by elderly men who had been in senior positions in society before retirement. However, Hood demonstrated a more conscious elitism, and a preference for critical opinion rather than agreement, approval or positive experiences – the bias toward ‘bad news’ observed by Galtung and Ruge (1965). Interestingly it is this reason that Hood gives for discarding contributions from political party members (or ‘apparatchiks’) whose support for their party is “boring” – although Hood portrays their views as approval for individual politicians rather than policies. Nonetheless, Hood does not expect readers’ contributions to be based solely on experience or feeling. The form of contribution associated more with the tabloids, however, is very much focused on people as individuals affected by social problems or policies rather than citizens as such. In this case the contact is initiated by the journalist or by a professional on the individual’s behalf, and can be dependent on the newspaper’s agenda, yet can result in genuine assistance. As with letters to the editor (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2001; Raeymaeckers, 2005) this action on behalf of an individual can be understood as a PR goal, but also demonstrates civic responsibility. This suggests that an understanding of the audience as a market could operate as a positive pressure, although this form of representation cannot be understood as facilitating political participation.

6.4. Readers as a commercial market

Most of the journalists interviewed claimed some kind of accountability to readers via the market, because they argued that readers would stop buying the paper if it published views with which they disagreed.

I mean papers’ success or failure rests on how, on a day in day out, how it chimes with the views of the people that are buying the paper. [... That matters] fundamentally, because people stop buying the paper. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

This suggests that market forces of supply and demand will ensure that the spread of newspapers in a society reflects the spread of political views, since that is how the papers would meet market demand. Clearly this has not historically been the case, not least during Conservative rule in the 1980s when only two newspapers were sympathetic to the Labour party (McNair, 1999b).

Similar claims of accountability through the market were made with specific reference to campaigns, but journalists particularly emphasised claims to represent the audience politically, with the implication that the market relationship afforded them some form of political accountability. For instance, Dave King of the Daily Record said that “it makes a big difference when you say you can speak on behalf of five-hundred, six-hundred thousand

readers”, assuming that purchase of the newspaper is evidence of agreement with its politics, effectively a vote for the newspaper’s view.

Nonetheless, the belief was backed up with two cautionary tales of reader disapproval. The most infamous case was of course *The Sun*’s coverage of Hillsborough, which was referred to by Calum MacDonald and David Leask, as well as being acknowledged by the editor of the Scottish Sun as “perhaps the obvious and the most painful example of when readers let us know” (Rob Dalton). However, this type of accountability relates to accuracy and representation of a large group of readers, rather than any claims to reflect readers’ political and ideological beliefs.

Another common example was more pertinent – that of The Scotsman’s editorial policy of right-wing unionism under the stewardship of Andrew Neil.

The Scotsman being more right-wing than they [the readers] were, under Neil and not... and it’s costing them readers by the bucket. [...] We couldn’t really afford, and newspapers shouldn’t be able to afford to get out of touch with the readers, The Scotsman being the perfect example of that. You know presumably whatever they might think should be the Scottish education system, just saying it doesn’t make it happen. In fact it pisses off a core part of your readership, which doesn’t seem to be very clever because you haven’t achieved anything and you’ve shot yourself in the foot commercially. (Calum MacDonald, Deputy News Editor, The Herald)

MacDonald describes this mechanism, not just as real, but also as appropriate, accepting market forces as an appropriate pressure on journalists. This contradicts Schudson’s (1998) assertion that journalists do not consider the market an appropriate source of constraint.

Several journalists reported being mindful of accurately assessing the opinion of readers to prevent circulation from dropping.

The paper’s got to be in touch with its readers, you know. And the art of the newspaper and the difficulty is to make sure that you are in touch with your readers. (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

The expression ‘in touch’ is the reverse of one that newspapers usually use in reference to politicians, who are referred to as being “out of touch”. Joan McAlpine of The Herald gave the example of First Minister Jack McConnell deciding not to go to the D-day celebrations in 2004, and Andrew Nicoll of the Scottish Sun referred to Tony Blair learning from a woman in a TV discussion show audience that GP surgeries would only making appointments for the following 48 hours – “the point of the story is that he didn’t know, the point of the story is that he’s out of touch, and the point is that every place these people go smells of new paint”. In return, according to Lucy Adams, politicians would use the same terms to defend populist policies such as anti-social behaviour legislation, arguing, “well, if you criticise this you’re out of touch”. The expression “out of touch” is used to suggest leaders’ remoteness of experience from that of ‘ordinary’ people. However, being conscious of ‘ordinary’ people’s experience is not the same as taking the decisions that they prefer, which could equally be dismissed as populism (which will be discussed in Chapter 10).

Most journalists claim to know precisely what will appeal to readers, on account of their professional judgment and news values. Several journalists, all from the tabloid papers, referred to “instinct” and “intuition”.

Very little that has come from that we should take a line because the readers are demanding it. It's normally, if you're good at what you do, you take that line, that will be in tune with your readers anyway. (Dave King, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

Perhaps there is a tendency, then, toward instinctive responses that are probably not the most reasoned but are the easiest to provoke, and/or an ability to sell the line to the readers rather than intuit their existing opinion (as noted in relation to news values in the previous chapter).

In contrast, Douglas Home, the Herald editor, argues that “you have no idea what the wider public will think [...so you're] working in the dark, but I think that's probably the way it should be”. In contrast to the popular papers, he regards ignorance of the public-as-market as a virtue, even though as editor he is held responsible for circulation. However, given those responsibilities and the need to answer to commercial management, Douglas Home also made an argument that *The Herald's* market is associated with high standards, and that purchase reflects approval of, and is contingent on, the continuation of those standards.

In the end what we trade on is reliability and believability and trust and people need to believe that what we're writing is correct rather than detect us skewing things around to protect our ideology or beliefs. (Mark Douglas Home, Editor, The Herald)

Douglas Home frames this form of journalism as a responsible public service, but also one demanded by the readers. This view is also reported by newsdesk reporter, Damien Henderson that “I think what people look for in the news pages is a kind of standard of proof, and what they would think of as being objective”.

Henderson also argued that people buy the paper for the standard of debate, including in the letters page, which he believed attracts a wider audience than its contributors.

I think that there's, I mean even for the people who don't write in, I think there's an identification with that level of debate. So it's not a straightforward reflection, but I think it's an aspirational thing, that people read The Herald, in a sense, to get a kind of... the paper of record. And a paper in which intelligent people articulate views. (Damien Henderson, Reporter, The Herald)

This belief was supported by several journalists who remarked upon the proportion of readers who claimed (in the regular reader surveys) to read the letters page. Whilst fewer than half of the sampled readers reported reading the letters, this was higher than many imagined.

Furthermore, Douglas Home purposefully sought market research support for his commercial judgement that “people want to be challenged by newspapers” (as discussed in the previous chapter), by requesting that a question be added to a 2003 reader survey¹⁹ - in response to

¹⁹ The author's observation whilst employed as Research Executive at The Herald stable of newspapers.

the statement “I expect my newspaper to challenge my viewpoint”, 56% of readers agreed, against just 21% who disagreed (although more – 34% – were prepared to agree that “I choose my paper to reflect my opinions”). However, though the Deputy Editor acknowledged that the Editor regarded Herald readers as a niche market of “key decision makers [...who] hold different opinions”, she also argued that there is a need to address a wider market in order to halt decline; “also broadsheets are trying to reach out to beyond just a tiny elite, they’re trying to reach out to the general public who are less interested in politics” (Joan McAlpine). The need to commercially “reach out” is well documented in discussions of tabloidisation in terms of the diversion of resources from ‘hard news’ such as politics, social affairs and investigative journalism, to ‘lifestyle’, consumerism and entertainment and increasingly to free giveaways such as DVDs (Sparks, 1992; Franklin, 1997). This reflects editors’ experience of the immediate fluctuations of the daily sales figures supplied by the circulation department, rather than the more subtle, long-term responses to quality.

The professional inclination to challenge the readers was not unique to Douglas Home, but journalists at the popular titles made a different assessment of reader reception and its market implications.

The most frustrating thing about working for a paper like ours, or many other papers, is that you sometimes don’t surprise your readers enough. Okay? You sometimes share their views all the time that you’re reinforcing their assumptions rather than challenging them. Okay? Now, as a journalist the thing that give me most pleasure is surprising people, okay, challenging their assumptions, not reinforcing them. As a local newspaper journalist, if you do that too much, you alienate readers and they don’t buy your paper. [...] You have to... take people along with you. You can’t completely challenge their world views all the time. You don’t always want to make them uncomfortable when they’re at home having their tea, reading the Evening Times, you know, don’t make them uncomfortable before they get to the sudoku, you want them to be happy, more or less, with what’s going on here. People want to be surprised, shocked and happy sometimes but mostly they just want to know that the world’s okay, and everything that they thought it was, that they were right. Occasionally they like to have a wee jab, a wee jolt, but no more than that. I mean me, I’d like them to open up a paper and cough up their lunch. And swear loudly. You know what I’m saying? Hopefully in agreement, perhaps in disagreement, I don’t care, you want them to react, but sometimes you’ve got to bear in mind that overall the paper can’t do that, in my view, they won’t read it, in my view. If they want to be surprised and amazed every week they would buy a different newspaper. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

Leask is conscious of the diverse market served by a local newspaper and the range of views that must be accommodated. However, this is not thought to be achieved by voicing all of these views – broadening the sphere of legitimate controversy – but by avoiding controversy and retreating to the sphere of consensus. Journalists claim to know both that readers want their views confirmed and what those commonly-held views are. Despite their dismissive view of readers as vocal critics, journalists appear to accept the validity of readers’ displeasure when expressed silently via the market mechanism, even though it is then difficult to glean what element displeased them and for what reason. And yet, in many ways, journalists’ judgement of readers as a market is similar to their characterisation of “weird” critics – that they object to reading views with which they disagree, rather than demand representation.

The more impersonal format of feedback may make the message more palatable to the journalists, and yet the formal commercial measurements, such as market research, were still not widely acknowledged as a source. In several cases, though, self-reported journalistic instincts were often found to be strikingly similar to market research findings reported to the editor. For instance, Leask stated that “ultimately, if you were to take a slice of Glasgow and go through it, I would like to think, it probably isn’t the case, I’d like to think that our coverage was representing that slice of people”, in precisely the same terms as a ‘factsheet’ of audience statistics circulated by the editor (see appendix II), and quoting the audience statistic that the editor particularly asked to have included. The factsheet was designed to formalise the editorial communication on the direction of the paper, but interestingly, Leask didn’t even attribute that reader profile to his editor, let alone to the market research.

Editor Charles McGhee defined the audience in commercial terms when discussing the development of his policies for the paper, and referred to readers in marketing categories in terms of their product use (“regular”, “occasional” and “lapsed” readers) and value to advertisers (“socio-economic groups”, rather than ‘social class’, and lifestyle “interests” connected to advertising categories, specifically “employment or entertainment or shopping”, rather than values and opinions). Similarly, at The Herald what MacDonald calls intuition is really extrapolation based on market research and electoral data.

Again it’s very kind of intuitive, rather than being very informed. You just look at how people vote, I suppose is the main source of that... The products they buy, the things that work in terms of you know shopping and retail trends, that kind of thing. (Calum MacDonald, Deputy News Editor, The Herald)

Surprisingly often, editorial staff defined their readers’ identities in relation to consumption – a definition encouraged by the terms of market research data. Lucy Adams, however, openly acknowledged that her knowledge of market research came from “briefings from the editor”. However, the formal communication within the organisation is augmented with informal contact with readers. This is principally their own peers, though Lucy Adams reports that some taxi drivers “get really offended because the assumption is that they don’t read The Herald, and a lot of them do”.

Overall, the editorial staff were more willing than reporters to admit a familiarity with market research, although it is possible that this is connected with the interviewer’s role as a Research Executive at two of the newspapers. The Herald’s editorial staff were most conscious of the demographic data, but also made more analytic interpretations of the figures.

I suppose they are atypical of the population in that they are predominantly ABC1s, and so that does... in that sense they’re the elite demographic, and they probably have different views as a consequence of that, because they by definition are more comfortable, they’re more middle class, they live in different areas and so on, so their view of Scotland may be different from someone who lives, you know, in a sink estate and there’s crime all around them and the local school is rotten. (Mark Douglas Home, Editor, The Herald)

The Editor sees people's opinions as a product of their day-to-day experience, and that experience as structurally determined.

The Deputy Editor was more specific in her extrapolations of ideological orientation from demographic data.

However, I know that Herald readers are also older, that they're more middle class, so I have to balance the fact that they are better educated with the fact that they're... and that will make them more liberal with the fact that they are older and more middle class might make them quite conservative. (Joan McApline, The Herald)

This is not entirely objective or based on evidence, but rather reflects an *assumption* that university education is linked with more progressive or left-wing beliefs, and that people get more conservative or right-wing as they get older. Nonetheless, it is a more sophisticated interpretation than a purely consumption-based definition.

Daily Record journalists referred to market research findings or jargon less frequently, and when asked about it associated it only with advertising sales²⁰, but they also acknowledged the increasing use of such commercial profiles by journalists and editors.

I mean, to be honest, these are not, these aren't typically kind of waved in front of journalists, but I think they do... sort of help inform journalistic decision-making, that's the way to put it. It's happening more and more actually. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

Gardham also linked this with reader statistics from the online versions of newspapers, although the Scottish papers have not made as great an investment in their web presence as the UK nationals, this suggests that the influence of market measurements of the audience will continue to grow with the likely convergence of print and online news formats.

Despite its ubiquity, however, market research is not an especially useful tool in gleaning the political or substantive views of readers. The market research defined audience is likely to be characterised, not by its political opinions or concerns, or by its voting sympathies, but by its consumption patterns. As with aggregate measures of public opinion, the danger lies in assuming that the responses elicited are fully representative of the concerns and motivations of readers, rather than being a product of the market-related role that they are designated by the commercial form of consultation. Market research addresses them as consumers, not as citizens, and therefore their responses reflect this.

Indeed, in-house market research for product development²¹ has also produced responses that contradict newspapers' claims to be held accountable for their political coverage through the market. Much of the information gleaned through newspapers' own internal market

²⁰ However, no direct access to the Daily Record's market research communications was available, so it is more difficult to evaluate these claims.

²¹ For example for the launch of new supplements.

research (which is carried out for editorial departments, as opposed to the large bought-in datasets that are used to sell advertising space) suggests that people frequently buy the newspapers for content other than political or social issues, or indeed any kind of news.

I think if we weren't politically in chime, although you could argue that, let's be fair, people buy the Daily Record for sport, and they buy it for features and they buy it for news, but not necessarily political news. (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

In fact, as Colin McDiarmid of The Herald observed, even the advertising content can be more of a draw for a local paper than the news content; "a significant amount of people buy The Herald to look at the jobs and to look at the house ads, and I think if you start with the notion that every single reader you've got is reading news then you've made a mistake". Similarly, McGhee of the Evening Times complained that despite his best efforts, "actually all people are interested in is the where the newspaper crossword is or whether we have the Gol²² cartoon or not".

Journalists increasingly recognise that not every copy of the newspaper is actually read cover to cover. Focus group research conducted by The Herald in 2005²³ suggested that 'occasional' or 'lapsed' Herald readers preferred the 'compact' or tabloid size of The Scotsman or Daily Mail for the very reason that it allowed them to more easily flick through the pages quickly, only stopping at the articles that particularly interested them. This suggests that even 'serious' newspapers are facilitating a more casual engagement with their content in order to broaden their market beyond the socially and politically-engaged niche, as Joan McAlpine suggested above. Nonetheless, Mark Douglas Home resisted managers' desire to change The Herald to a compact format, though the deterioration of his relationship with management almost certainly contributed to his sudden dismissal a few months later.

This notion of selective consumption (suggestive of a liberal pluralist or uses and gratifications interpretation of audience reception) is something that journalists use to explain the popularity of newspapers which espouse views which they don't like to believe are common in Scotland; as Sinclair says, "I speak to people who are not aware that the Daily Mail is a Tory paper because they skip by it; they're not interested."

Papers like the Daily Mail, a lot of people buy them because they're... I mean I regard their formula as, the first nine pages will tell you how we're all going to hell in a hand cart, and then in the middle of the paper it'll tell you how to combat cellulite and lose those extra difficult pounds, and people love that and actually I read that too! But where they skew it is there's a pretty strong – and in many ways it's a nauseating thing about Scotland, it can be nauseating – there's a kind of social democratic consensus, but now we have the Daily Mail, passionately anti-devolution, but it's happened. (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

²² A popular cartoonist who retired, drawing complaints from readers who thought they paper had decided to stop commissioning the strip.

²³ Co-ordinated by the author whilst employed at the company.

Sinclair argues that the Daily Mail does not reflect the views of its readers, but does not suffer commercially because the readers ignore the political content. Interestingly, the Scottish Daily Mail was the only paper whose editorial staff claimed to do “not a hell of a lot” of market research, and referred mostly to “instinct”, and the editorial prerogative²⁴ “because the Labour government are in, and they [senior editorial] hate Tony Blair” (Kevin McKenna), suggesting that the editorial line is decided almost independently of reader opinion, as long as circulation remains healthy. However, more recently the Guardian reported that the Mail had commissioned research to update the ‘Middle England’ market profile using quantitative, qualitative and ethnographic studies, and recruiting a “5,000-strong polling panel” for future consultation (Gibson, 2008).

The editor of the Scottish Sun was more prepared to acknowledge that the paper does do a lot of market research, which is centrally organised, but includes the Scottish office. The results similarly suggested that the paper can consciously get away with not reflecting the opinions of its readers.

One of the questions that was put to the younger male occasional readers was ‘what do you think of our politics coverage, what do you think of page 2?’ [...]. And this young chap said, ‘I didn’t realise you had a page 2!’ For a very obvious reason, he was always looking at page 3, and then went straight into the paper, and he was being more than semi-serious. What he was saying in his own way was that, ‘I’ve never looked at it’, or ‘I’ve looked at it once and I’ve decided that that’s not for me’. (Rob Dalton, Editor, Scottish Sun)

Dalton was unconcerned that the political coverage did not appeal to sections of its readership, perhaps because he believed that they would take an interest as they got older, but more likely because the political coverage is aimed more at influencing politicians than its readers and therefore they are happy to continue to bury it opposite photos of topless women.

Market research evidence from the Daily Record also seems to support that view. Sinclair refers to findings to support his feeling that the Section 28 campaign’s “1980s right wing agenda of ‘save our kids from being taught how to be gay’” was largely ignored by readers, and therefore didn’t reflect their views.

And we did some market research and asked people ‘what do you like about the Record?’ and one of the things they said was the campaigning, and we said ‘well which campaigns did you like?’ They said children’s hospice and this and that, you know the fundraising stuff, and they were asked about clause 28 and something like, anecdotally, 92% of those said ‘what was that campaign?’ And it would appear that what had happened was that the Record readers had just gone ‘ach’, and turned the page, and it just, actually, [whilst with] the radio studios and TV studios of Queen Margaret Drive we were having a huge impact and discussion about where this took Scotland and all the rest of it, 1.5 million readers or 500,000 people who buy the paper, they didn’t care. Or very few of them cared. And I think that’s very interesting. (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

²⁴ Although as Sigelman (1973) noted, journalists tend to work for newspapers with whose editorial line they agree, and likely more so for editorial positions, and those who don’t, such as McKenna, largely adhere to the established position.

Sinclair describes the campaign having a significant political impact despite (in his assessment) being unrepresentative of the readers or of public opinion, and having no effect on that opinion, but equally, that disjoint having no effect on the paper commercially.

A journalist at another newspaper disagreed, however, and believed that there probably was a commercial consequence of this misrepresentation of their readers' opinions (if such it was).

However, if you were to launch some vitriolic campaign, and are proven to be wrong then that can backfire big time. Personally, for example, I think that the newspapers that backed the Clause 28 campaign made a serious error of judgement. Why? Yeah, many of the readers were probably homophobic, but guess what, some of them were probably homosexuals. So, you know what I'm saying there, if you were to, even if you were to launch a campaign that was only seen to hurt a minority of the readers, you're not gonna get them back. Now, I don't know whether [there are many people went to other newspapers?] because they slagged off gays essentially and were unpleasant about them, I'm guessing there are. You only need to see how upsetting a minority of views, commercially, the best example is in Liverpool. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

Indeed, circulation did suffer, dropping almost 10% over the course of Martin Clarke's period as Editor (between April 1998 and August 2000) and as a result he left (Murray-Watson, 2000) and was replaced by Peter Cox, who repositioned the paper back toward the left. As one Herald reporter argued "that's why they had a change of editor, they tried to go against the Executive, against the Labour party, people stopped buying the paper". (Damien Henderson). Nonetheless, as noted earlier that campaign had more far-reaching consequences on the political landscape in Scotland.

A majority view or popular sentiment is therefore considered inadequate as a basis for a campaign if there are likely to be strong beliefs or feelings to the contrary.

What the Daily Record would do, would be to say something's happening here, and we want to reflect it. That's the... that's the altruistic view of it of course. But possibly even more fundamental is that editors... I'm not talking about this one or even the one before, I mean in general, they want to sell newspapers. So, quite often they'll, they try to drive opinion in a way, but driving opinion and reflecting opinion. And in between, appealing to your readership, as a paper that they want to buy. So it's a juggling act, you know. A newspaper will always like to look as though it's reflecting great concerns, but it's probably not gonnae reflect that great concern if it loses readers from it. (Mark McGivern, Reporter, Daily Record)

McGivern refers to the Mirror's opposition to the Iraq invasion, an event that provoked widespread protest, yet the Mirror's reflection of those views was blamed for a fall in circulation. Paul Sinclair agreed that "it cost him [Piers Morgan], commercially, it cost him hugely". The Record's avoidance of that stance McGivern attributes to the "soldiering tradition" in Scotland, but cannot account for the English reaction. Essentially, however, this suggests that the campaigning agenda is driven by the avoidance of disagreement rather than the reflection of readers' opinions.

In contrast, Sinclair argues that the Daily Mail's anti-asylum coverage is "playing to a very narrow band of people" and disregarded by others. This might seem to contradict the

assessment of the cases of Section 28 and the Iraq war, however it can be entirely consistent, but reflect a belief that those who are not hostile to asylum are indifferent to it, rather than holding a strong opinion in favour. Again, it is not the number of people who agree, but the number who strongly disagree that is the significant judgement.

Instead of choosing issues and arguments that reflect readers' views then, the newspapers more commonly select issues that won't be instinctively resisted. McGhee's claim to *represent* his readers politically (in the previous chapter) is itself intended to *appeal to* the audience, selling the newspaper's actions as a powerful and influential political actor. The paper measures success only on the extent to which they are trusted by readers to act 'responsibly' *on their behalf* via market research measures of brand identity, as agreement with word associations chosen by the editor such as "campaigning" (66 per cent), "trustworthy" (67 per cent), and "cares about Glasgow" (83 per cent). What McGhee is claiming is not a community constituency who the newspaper politically represents, but a market whose brand associations with the newspaper is interpreted as a surrender of their citizenship to the newspaper to hold in trust for them, as suggested by Schudson (2005a) in Chapter 2. This reflects a neo-liberal application of market logic to politics and state services.

Daily Record journalists reported similar attitudes to campaigning as "a good way of connecting with readers" (Magnus Gardham), and like McGhee's brand "credentials", "you get great credit from your readers for it, you get credibility" (Mark McGivern). So the Record journalists also regard campaigning as something that appeals to the audience, however, it is not necessarily seen as something that can cause a direct circulation lift – McGivern remarked of the drugs campaign, "It would be good to see, I don't know how many extra papers you would've sold, maybe not many, but it certainly got a great reader response", and indeed the Daily Record editor Bruce Waddell regarded campaigns as a threat to daily circulation as they require that dry political stories need to lead the agenda and be put on the front page day after day and since front page stories that are regarded as a key sales tool, he has run fewer in more recent years because of the fierce circulation battle with the Scottish Sun. In this context, Douglas Home's insistence that Herald readers want to be challenged, and read views with which they disagree, seems radical.

The dominance of the market conception of the audience leads to a more bland form of news reporting that avoids areas of controversy, but also a more unambiguous and self-legitimised claim to speak for readers on subjects of apparent consensus on basis of that purchase. Nevertheless, newspapers' own research indicates that newspaper purchase cannot be interpreted as approval (or even consumption) of the whole product. Herald journalists were more likely to regard their readers as expecting a range of sophisticated arguments, even if not as open-minded as such. However, with the exception of Mark Douglas Home, journalists

do believe that readers of their own newspaper would be repelled by content with which they strongly disagreed, whilst explaining competitors' success as due to readers ignoring the controversial ideological standpoints. It is entirely possible that journalists only recognise the ideological nature of views with which they personally disagree, or expect that response from their readers.

6.5. Conclusion

Journalists referred to their audience both as the ultimate authority over their representation of political issues and campaign advocacy, and as unqualified to judge on account of being "weird" or "mad" for having strong political views, or simply not having news instinct. Individually, as critics, readers' views as dismissed as undemocratic or illiberal (though sometimes as rude or aggressive) and especially for objecting to the inclusion of views with which they disagree, but collectively, as an anonymous market expressed in circulation or market research figures, those views were regarded as more acceptable.

Whilst it could be argued that such market pressures mean that minorities, like the LGBT community, are less likely to be misrepresented and vilified, it also reflects a market-driven self-censorship. The avoidance of views with which readers may disagree can produce a very bland forum of debate, equally avoiding the promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding as much as prejudice and prior assumptions. This is in fact illiberal in Mill's ([1859] 1991) terms, as he warned against orthodox views remaining unchallenged, since a minority view can be proven right, and even if it is not, the dominant view then becomes common-sensical and believed in itself, whilst the original reasoning is forgotten because it is untested.

In any case, some journalists are also conscious that there is little evidence that readers express disapproval of the newspapers' political views through the market, but rather that people buy newspapers for various different reasons and consume them selectively. That is not to accept a purely 'uses and gratifications' approach to audience reception and conclude that the advocacy of newspapers has little effect on its audience, or only the effects that they have chosen, but merely that purchase of the newspaper is not the equivalent of a vote in favour of their political advocacy. Indeed, journalists understand their impact on readers to be to sell their political activities in such a way that readers admire, even if they don't read. In some instances it may well be in newspapers' interests for readers to take little interest in the issue further than believing that the newspaper has their best interests at heart and trusting them to campaign on their behalf. If any effect, then, this form of marketing campaigning activity to readers may encourage political passivity – to entrust their citizenship in the hands of the newspaper.

The next chapter will examine how the assumptions about the audience and 'the public' are reflected in the content of campaign articles in the ways in which the issues are represented to best appeal to readers and recruit their support (and avoid their opposition).

Chapter 7: Addressing Readers: Engaging, Informing and Recruiting

This is the first of three chapters analysing the content of the campaign articles. The last two chapters analysed how journalists understood their democratic role in terms of the liberal social responsibility to inform and the corporatist responsibility to represent readers as a community. It was demonstrated that this was constrained by journalists' market-inflected expectations about readers' reception, in particular, journalists' belief that their readers were instrumental and competitive, rather than discursively capable and consensus-oriented, and not principled or altruistic. This chapter will focus on the journalists' intentions to *inform and engage* readers, to examine how journalists' expectations about the audience colour the ways in which they communicate the campaign issues in the newspaper. In particular, it will explore how liberal professional norms and news values translate into journalistic practice (but not to extrapolate from the content to the audience's beliefs, through a crude media effects model). Journalists also indicated that they believed that the audience were resistant to overt political partisanship, and that they therefore promoted the campaigns' political actions as a public service to readers to achieve a PR goal and also to recruit their support. Chapters 8 and 9 will go on to analyse the *representation* of 'the public' or 'publics', and the framing of politicians' obligation to respond to the campaigns on the basis of those publics.

This chapter will first address the dominant mode of framing, whereby the campaigns aimed to engage readers and to capture their attention and interest in the issues by discursively personalising them, casting individuals in the roles of 'victims' and perpetrators ('baddies', as Leask called them). Secondly, it will analyse the ways in which readers were informed on the issues or had their (assumed) views challenged, which The Herald editor had justified in terms of the news value of 'unexpectedness' and surprise, but is more often conceived of as a normative principle that conflicts with news instincts in terms of engaging the reader (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995: 98). Finally, the chapter will then go on to analyse the ways in which readers were recruited to support the campaign through promotional discourses.

7.1. Engaging readers: personalisation

As we saw in Chapter 5, journalists argued that the personal angle made issues accessible and interesting to readers, and suggested it played an agenda-setting role since individuals' stories could communicate why the issue matters, to make it "relevant and important" (McCann), whilst caveats were advanced by others who suggested that excessive personalisation could undermine the political argument (Henderson). All of the campaigns in the sample used personalisation to communicate relevance and cultural proximity in terms of

affected individuals or ‘victims’, whilst only the Daily Record focused on making issues consonant with dominant values through ‘othering’ the perpetrators or ‘baddies’.

7.1.1. Personalisation of problems: the experience and threat of victimisation

All of the campaigns expressed the dimensions and importance of the issues through depictions of the impact on ‘victims’ and their families, particularly in terms of “misery”, “fear”, “tragedy”, and “despair”. “Misery” occurred in the drugs campaign 34 times (23 of which were unattributed); in the loan sharks campaign 17 times (nine in quotes from politicians and the police); and in the anti-social behaviour campaign 12 times (from politicians and letter-writers). “Fear”²⁵ occurred in relation to anti-social behaviour 19 times (13 unattributed); to loans sharks 11 times (8 unattributed); to Dungavel 14 times (10 in quotes from child asylum-seekers). Events were framed as “tragic” or a “tragedy” in the drugs campaign 29 times (19 unattributed); and the airguns campaign 33 times (28 in quotes, a third from politicians). The drugs campaign also described the effects of drug use as “devastating” (or other conjugations, 24 times, 14 in quotes, half from the affected public), the loan sharks campaign referred to “despair” (three times, one from a politician), and the Dungavel campaign to the tearfulness²⁶ of the children (18 times, 14 unattributed). In the anti-social behaviour campaign, the letters expressed frustration and anger above all. The Queen Mum’s campaign did not have any ‘victims’ as such, since the policy had yet to be implemented, but patients of the hospital and their families speculated that they *would* feel “upset” (ET 13/10/03), “devastated” (four times) “heartbroken” (three times) if the hospital(s) closed, and “terrified and hysterical” (parent quoted in ET 26/01/04), and “would not have coped” (parent quoted in ET 18/10/03) without the services there.

In many instances the intention of arousing “communities of feeling” and associated “bonds of solidarity” (Berezin, 2002: 41) was explicit. The drugs campaign explicitly stated the personalised angle: “the human face of the devastation caused by the evil of drugs [...] they had shattered an entire family” (DR 02/03/01), and the reaction was expected to be one of sympathy. A story about a woman whose son died after taking methadone began, “WARNING If you have tears ... prepare to shed them” (DR 23/02/01), explicitly stating the expected emotional response of readers, and implying that to have no tears was to be cold-hearted. In Weber’s terms, such ‘affective’ emotional actions are non-rational or borderline rational but not irrational (Giddens, 1971). In some cases the emotional framing was indeed effective in communicating a political point. In the Dungavel campaign it highlighted the punitive treatment of children – Beriwan described how she and her siblings were “nervous and scared” of the guards and were separated from one another as they were deported (HD 08/08/03), and 10 year-old Kostya Loban recounted the frightening ‘dawn raid’ by a uniformed arrest team to take the family to Dungavel: “I was scared [...] They wouldn’t let me take

²⁵ Including “afraid”, “scared”, “frightened”, and “terrified”.

²⁶ Including “tears”, “tearful”, “crying” or “cried, and “sob”.

pictures, my toys or my pencils” (HD 17/10/03). In other cases the emotional framing was more sensationalist and sentimental (what Franklin refers to as 'Newszak': 1997: 1). Much was made of the age of the victim, referred to as “two-year-old Andrew” (23 times) and “little Andrew” or “wee Andrew” (nine times, twice adopted by letter-writers), “because... the death of a child, it’s [clenches fist against chest, indicating heart-wrenching feeling] you know? It gets you” (Mark McGivern, Reporter, Daily Record).

However, this sympathy and fellow feeling was expected to be aroused only where readers could empathise with victims to the extent that they could imagine themselves in the same situation. In the drugs campaign, profiles of parents affected by their children’s drug-taking emphasised the previous good character of the drug-users and respectability of the families (“My husband Drew and I had always worked, we took [the children] on foreign holidays” – DR 23/02/01), framing drug users as civilised members of mainstream society who have been de-civilised by drugs, so that imagined readers could identify with them and imagine themselves as potential victims, through fears for their children. The *Record* also consistently throughout the anti-social behaviour campaign defined the areas affected as *respectable* communities (even if deprived), and therefore not divergent from the readers conception of themselves, but also portraying the working class as mostly the ‘deserving poor’ by distinguishing them from the ‘undeserving’ element; constructing a cohesive ‘us’ only by contrast with an other ‘them’ (Sonwalkar, 2005).

Further, the campaigns suggested that readers might be indirectly affected, even if they and their family did not take drugs or borrow from loan sharks or be otherwise considered complicit in their victimisation (blamelessness is further discussed later in this section), by framing the wider communities more generally as victims. Communities were described as “blighted” (drugs 16 times, 14 unattributed; loan sharks three times; anti-social behaviour seven times), and to a lesser extent “ravaged” and “plagued”. Politicians used a similar discourse in parliament, for instance, describing the plight of “honest, decent people from certain areas” (Colin Campbell (SNP) in Scottish Parliament, 2001: col 820), suggesting an impact on those ‘innocent’ of drug use. The *Record* also extended the sense of threat beyond deprived areas; “the evil of drugs is no respecter of boundaries [...] The truth is that drugs can get into every community, into every home” (leader, DR 11/12/00), to establish that readers could find themselves the victims of drugs through no fault of their own, even if they did hold drug-users responsible for their victimisation. Likewise in the anti-social behaviour campaign, the *Record* argued that “Rural communities across Scotland are buckling under the ever-growing menace of youth crime – once a problem confined mainly to cities” (DR 01/09/03), but in this case (and also with the loan sharks campaign) the newspaper could not deny that the issue was mostly a problem on “rundown housing estates” (DR 01/09/03) rather than middle class areas.

The Queen Mum's campaign also emphasised the breadth of potentially affected publics: "They point out that there are families out there who don't know that they are going to need this service" (attributed to parents, ET 13/02/04), impressing upon readers that they could be personally affected, in order to encourage them to support the campaign in their own interests. Though the campaign didn't labour this point, the journalists reported that it was a key factor in the selection of the issue as a campaign, although this could be post-factum rationalising of the decision.

Again, there are very few people in this town who wouldn't have known somebody who was born in the Queen Mother's, there is nobody in this town who doesn't know anybody who's been treated at Yorkhill, in one way or another, that doesn't happen. So that is what we're talking about at the very outset of our conversation, something that, what combines all your readers, well there's something that does. If you are born and brought up in Glasgow there's a damn good chance you were born in Yorkhill, there's an even better chance that you bumped your heid²⁷ on a Saturday afternoon and you went down there to get it fixed. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

Leask sees this not only as uniting people through their experience, and therefore attention and understanding, but also as appealing to people's instrumental interests because "if you're just fighting for some people then it's never going to have that mass appeal". This suggests that Leask addresses an imagined public that would not protest on behalf of another affected public if they themselves were unaffected, and that people's instinct is not to get involved, so that the campaign must be framed "so you can't say that's not to do with me".

For similar reasons, The Herald struggled to portray asylum-seekers as constitutive of the community. There was a similar assumption among *Herald* journalists as at the *Daily Record*, that the newspaper's public were only concerned about problems that affected, or could potentially affect, them personally.

Perhaps if that had been, perhaps, I dunno let's say for example instead of locking up asylum-seekers' kids they'd been locking up every second child of every Scottish family, and we pointed it out to them [the Scottish Executive] and they had some sort of arcane way of getting out of it on a technicality, then I think it would have been different. (Calum MacDonald, Deputy News Editor, The Herald)

The paper therefore resorted to hypothetical, 'put yourself in their shoes' arguments – "Imagine, if you will, every Scot who emigrated being subjected to special tests..." (opinion column, HD 07/08/03), as did letter-writers – "how would you like a child of yours to be subjected to this treatment? And do you imagine that children locked up in Dungavel are less worthy of love or less infinitely precious than your own?" (letter to the editor, HD 09/09/03), attempting to appeal to the universality of the experience of parenthood. A focus on children was common to most of the campaigns, in part for this perceived universality, but also to establish the innocence of the 'victims'.

²⁷ Scots dialect for 'head' – used purposefully here, speaking in a stronger accent than his own, perhaps to emphasise the local unpretentiousness of the connection.

This is the final criterion for sympathetic ‘victims’: that readers would not think they had brought it on themselves, but regard them as blameless and defenceless. This was particularly pertinent to the Daily Record’s drugs and loan sharks campaigns and The Herald’s Dungavel campaign, where ‘victims’ chose to take drugs, borrow from loan sharks and enter the country ‘illegally’ or abscond to avoid deportation. This aspect will be discussed in more detail, with reference to each case in turn.

The Daily Record’s drugs campaign was interesting in the way in which the personalisation of the issue led to drug-users being portrayed sympathetically in a relatively progressive manner in tabloid terms, and journalists may have expected this to challenge the views of many readers, although the interviewees skirted around this suggestion. Nonetheless, the pejorative term, “junkie” was used 30 times in the campaign, only six of which were challenging the use of the term (all but one from local people and those personally affected by drug use), and the remaining unproblematised uses were overwhelmingly unattributed (21 of 24 times). However, the use of the term was also concentrated in the early the ‘name and shame’ phase of the campaign, before the focus switched to the protest march and personal stories were more frequently elicited.

From an early stage, however, journalists were conscious of not alienating the families of drug-users, on whom they were dependent as sources (of tip-offs as well as personal stories) by portraying them unsympathetically. For this reason the focus of the campaign very quickly shifted from the impact on drug users’ dependent children to their grieving parents.

We covered that; we didn’t keep harping on it. [...] It was really just sort of a sense of shock at the extent to which in some places grandparents are bringing up grandchildren because there’s a generation of parents who have rendered themselves incapable of parenting, or have been rendered incapable of parenting, because of drug problems. I think we covered that aspect of it, but once you’ve said that, you can’t say that every day, but no I don’t think we sort of abandoned that as an important problem. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

Gardham here modulates his language between attributing agency to drug-using parents and describing the situation as a state in which they have found themselves, correcting himself from a transitive to an intransitive syntax to remove blame from the parents. His first judgement was that the drug-taking parents had been themselves responsible for their situation, both subject and object of the sentence through use of a reflexive verb (“rendered themselves incapable”), but catching himself, amends this to erase the subject so that the parents remained the object of an action, but the acting subject is indeterminate (“have been rendered incapable”), and though a cause is added at the end of the sentence it is formed as a noun (“drug problems”) rather than action (‘taking drugs’).

Passive syntax and lack of semantic agency was also common in the campaign articles; in particular there were 24 instances of the construction “[victim] [verb in past tense] by drugs”, including having been “blighted” (three times), “ravaged” (twice), and “killed” (twice) by drugs,

with 'drugs' as the subject in the sentence – the agent – and users as affected participants. It was largely the journalists, but also politicians, celebrities and officials (nine in all), who used this sentence construction to place blame on drugs rather than drug users. In comparison, there were 11 instances of active syntax with the drug users as the subjects ("take(s) drugs" or "use(s) drugs" or other tenses), eight of which were quotes from affected individuals, and five of them were either negative (denials) or in the conditional tense. The drug-users themselves remained silent in the campaign, with the exception of one "professional" woman who was a fairly functional heroin user (DR 31/03/01), and a few ex-users who were quoted emphasising their rejection of drugs, that they were "determined never to touch drugs again" (DR 02/12/00). Politicians' discourses on the issue were largely similar, with one exception; a Conservative MSP emphasised that "every individual is responsible for their own actions. Everyone, regardless of their circumstances, has a choice" (Scottish Parliament, 2001: col 830-1), suggesting less sympathy and/or a more limited social responsibility for the victims, but unusually attributing some agency to drug-users. However, no-one acknowledged, as McNaughton (2008) has argued, that drug-users may have *reasons* to take that choice, as an almost rational response to their circumstances.

One way of minimising the blame on drug-users for their decision to take drugs, was to concentrate on children and young people as intrinsically vulnerable and not responsible for their actions: "kids this young, who quickly fall down the slippery slope into drug addiction, are easy prey" (DR 05/12/00), "teenagers in their community fall under Munro's evil spell" (DR 05/12/00). Even the Conservative MSP conceded that children were particularly "easy prey" (Scottish Parliament, 2001: col 830-1). In an interview, a teacher argued for the personalisation of (child) victims as a way of humanising them.

And when people see these addicts in the street what do they think – scumbag, lowlife?
I don't – I still see a human being because I think until the day they are buried these are still our children and they are not yet lost to us. (DR 27/02/01)

This is precisely the opposite of the dehumanising personalisation of the dealers (which will be addressed in the next section).

Interestingly, the reasons given for loan shark debtors' vulnerability was 'addiction', though this time to alcohol, making sympathetic reference to "alcoholics" or "alkies" (six times, the latter in quotes) and "drinkers" (twice). They were described as defenceless against the offers of the lenders – explicitly "vulnerable" (15 times, eight by politicians and 2 by the police), and "at risk" (three times), again as "easy prey" (three times), who were specifically "targeted" (four times, one quoting an MP), and as having had "no choice" (twice) but to turn to the loan sharks. Once in debt they were "trapped" (nine times, one by an Executive minister) and "enslaved" (four times) with "no way of escaping" (DR 31/05/02), or "no chance of escape" (DR 08/06/02). In contrast, one politician argued that schools were failing to teach "budgeting", and so failed to prevent people from making irresponsible decisions "for many, young people, mismanagement of their money, rather than insufficient money, causes trouble" (Donald

Gorrie (LD) in Scottish Parliament, 2002: col 13111), suggesting that they did have a choice but weren't educated enough to know what it was.

Like the Daily Record's drugs campaign, in The Herald's Dungavel campaign avoided the derogatory characterisations of asylum-seekers without directly challenging them focusing on the children. Fifteen references were made to "failed asylum-seekers", and two uses of the term "bogus" to describe asylum seekers, but only four challenged the government's use of the terms to describe those still in the appeals process (all from pressure group representatives). None criticised the terms as stigmatising asylum seekers generally and framing them as deceitful (Bailey and Harindranath, 2005). Of the 11 references to "illegal" immigration, six were explicitly critical of unlawful entry (four from letter-writers); however, whilst the other five accepted it as a legal or political definition, they did not accept it as a moral definition (only one letter-writer).

Neither did The Herald challenge the Home Office's characterisation of the Ay family, as culpable of "immigration sins" (quoted five times) including their legal appeal. The paper instead distanced the children from the "sins of the parents" (leader, HD 05/07/03) and "sins of adults" (leader, HD 12/07/03), and was criticised by a letter-writer for accepting the "government's language traps" (letter to the editor, HD 15/07/03). However, other letter-writers echoed the separation of innocent children from culpable adults – "it was the treatment of the Ay children that was in absolute terms unacceptable" (letter to the editor, HD 11/08/07), and specified that this was not contingent on the virtue of the parents (letter to the editor, HD 07/07/03). Another, however, argued that the whole family were suffering from a "self-inflicted plight" (letter to the editor, HD 08/08/07), supporting the government's 'victim precipitation' interpretation – that they brought it on themselves – usually associated with crime issues (Elias, 1986), and another letter-writer went as far as to suggest that they were knowingly playing the system – "It seems to me that this family are very streetwise" (letter to the editor, HD 09/08/07).

Of 25 uses of the adjective "innocent", 21 specified children, (letter-writers eight times, leader column writers six times, and politicians five times) whilst only two referred specifically to asylum-seeking parents (in an opinion column and a letter to the editor). Children were also described as having "done nothing wrong" three times (in a leader column and quotes from a lawyer and church leader). Like drug-users, ('illegal') immigrant children were distinguished from those who were intrinsically bad, or bad by their own choice, and yet there was no equivalent to the *Daily Record's* discourse of having had "no choice", and again, relatively little detail on the *reasons* why adult asylum-seekers' made claims for refuge. Though the issue was personalised through the Ay family's case, the details of their (and other Kurds') experience in Turkey was given little attention (referred to once – HD 12/07/03), and only the children were deemed "vulnerable" (three times).

However, in contrast to the Daily Record's portrayal of 'victims', the Ay children were not portrayed as entirely lacking in agency. In particular, 14 year-old Beriwan was directly quoted 26 times in 10 articles and statements were attributed to her in three further articles (the rest of the children were quoted four times and Mrs Ay was never directly quoted). Beriwan was described as "mature [...] Polite, intelligent and articulate, she has become the family's spokeswoman", but there were reminders that she was still only a child "clinging to her mother" (HD 12/07/03). However, the children could be safely attributed agency in their protest without compromising sympathy, because they were *not* attributed agency in the specific decision to enter the UK or to abscond to avoid deportation, and could therefore be considered "innocent".

The framing of the campaign issues in terms of personalisation of affected individuals was expected to engage the interest of the readers, but only where those 'victims' were culturally identical with the readers in some way, where readers could themselves fear being affected by the problem, and where 'victims' were not attributed any agency that might lead them to be blamed for their victimisation. In framing the campaign issues in this way, the newspapers were expecting a largely emotional (affective) response that is borderline rational. The intention to elicit sympathy for marginalised individuals struggling with the consequences of drug-use, loan shark debt, or persecution abroad reflects an expectation of altruistic instincts from readers on 'victims' behalf, whilst inflating fears of victimisation reflects journalists' expectations of a more instrumental or defensive instinct in their readers. The latter was often combined with the personalisation of that threat in terms of criminal perpetrators.

7.1.2. Personalisation of crime and disorder: blaming the 'baddies'

The Daily Record used a moralistic discourse to define drug dealers, loan sharks and anti-social youths as outside or beneath mainstream society – "scum" or "scumbag" (drugs campaign 11 times, two from members of the public; loan sharks five times, one in correspondence; anti-social behaviour once in a letter to the editor – DR 06/09/03), "lowlifes" (drugs campaign, twice, one by an MSP). Anti-social children in particular were framed as having rejected social constraint on their behaviour – as "lawless" (twice) and "out of control" (three times, twice in correspondence), as having "no respect" (three times, all letters), "laughing" at authority (letter to the editor, DR 04/09/03), and "think they rule" (letter to the editor, DR 06/09/03); a discourse central to the Executive's "respect agenda" (Scottish Executive, 2003: vi-vii) but present largely from the contribution of letters, emails and texts from affected individuals. Readers also disproportionately participated in labelling young people as "ned(s)" (80 times in just 11 articles, 44 of which were over just two letters pages, and a further 11 attributed to politicians), "yobs" (three times, two of which came from letter-writers), and a "menace" (six times, two in letters to the editor), hanging around not in groups but in "gangs" (13 times, 11 in letters to the editor, two attributed to affected publics).

The Record applied adjectives to drug-dealers that described dealers as lacking in human empathy; “vile” (three times), “sickening” (twice), “sadistic” (DR 11/01/01), as did sources such as an MP who had lost his son to heroin who described them as “ruthless, vicious, soulless” (Ian McCartney, quoted in DR 19/03/01), and another affected individual explicitly referred to dealers as “not human” (quoted in DR 02/03/01). Similarly, loan sharks were othered by accusing them of “cruelty and callous contempt” for their fellow humans (DR 11/06/02), and describing them as “tormentors” (twice), and anti-social youths were described as “vile” (DR 01/09/03) and “vicious” (twice, one in correspondence). Again, letter-writers led the othering discourses in the anti-social behaviour campaign, describing youths as inhuman and unsocialised – “how long before we’re rid of these animals”; “it’s time for this scum to toe the line”; “[they] make me sick to my stomach” (letters to the editor, DR 06/09/06).

The culpability of ‘baddies’ was often set against the blamelessness of victims, in relation to whom dealers and loan sharks were metaphorically described as predators – “preying” on victims (drugs seven times, loan sharks 14 times) and looking for “easy prey” (drugs once; loan sharks 10 times, three from politicians). The term ‘loan sharks’ in itself is an animal metaphor suggesting predatory behaviour, and others invoked were those who live off their hosts – “parasites” (11 times, just under half in quotes, two from letter-writers, two from MPs), “bloodsuckers” (five times, one from a ‘victim’), and “leeches” (three times), and there was also one disease metaphor – “a cancer within our communities” (senior policeman quoted in DR 15/07/02). ‘Baddies’ were also described as occult figures – drug dealers were casting an “evil spell” (DR 05/12/00), and 79 other references were made to “evil” in the drugs campaign, 44 of which were specifically directed at dealers – the others more vaguely referring to drugs or “this evil”; loan sharks were also described as “evil” (11 times, twice by politicians), and “wicked” (DR 04/06/02).

Respondents to the Scottish Executive’s anti-social behaviour consultation were critical of the way in which young people were stigmatised by the proposals and the ‘tone’ of their representation (Flint et al., 2003). This criticism was acknowledged by journalists, but dismissed on account of imagined dominant values and beliefs.

We were criticised and the politicians were criticised for using the word ‘ned’, thereby demonising people. I think to be honest it was... it is entirely justified for a newspaper to use the language which its readers use, you know, provided that... you know, you are putting it in context and treating the story responsibly, which I think we did. [...] I mean I understand why language is important, but in this instance I think it was... I think we were talking in a perfectly normal language for people. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

This is a clear example of journalists claiming to take their lead from their imagined public, and speak in what they judge to be readers’ own language, what Hall et al (1978: 61) called the “public idiom”, however, Hall et al argued that such language was a way of naturalising the views of elite sources. Interestingly, the largely working class readership were not expected to feel targeted by the insult (in the way that a minority ethnic readership certainly would of a

racial slur). Conversely, aspirant working classes may choose to adopt such terms to distance and distinguish themselves from other sections of the community. Though it is a prejudicial generalisation, it is a cultural one that individuals can reject in terms of their own identity (even if ascribed the label by others). Certainly it was the letter writers who most frequently framed the young people in such terms, but it is impossible to know where this discourse originated: with the politicians, the newspaper or affected publics.

Set against the other Daily Record campaigns, the airguns campaign stands out for not vilifying the man who shot Andrew Morton to the same extent as the other “baddies”, perhaps because it was not a campaign aimed at rousing public opinion, possibly even assuming their horror at the crime and therefore their support for the campaign as a given. The words prevalent in the other campaigns, such as “evil”, did not appear once, and only the sentencing judge was quoted describing the act as “wicked” and “depraved” (DR 31/08/05), and the boy’s mother called him a “monster” (three times) and a “menace” (DR 10/08/05). Largely, however, the focus was on the guns themselves, described as “lethal” (12 times) and “deadly” (seven times). This relates to the policy outcome sought – a gun ban rather than tougher sentences, and perhaps also because, as was pointed out (by both a gun shop owner and anti-gun campaigner), the perpetrators were also frequently children “fooling around” with the guns (DR 05/03/05), and therefore accidental rather than intentional.

The initial ‘name and shame’ angle of the drugs and loan sharks campaigns was intended to encourage members of ‘the public’ to report drug dealers, and this discursive ‘othering’ reflects an assumption that people would not be moved to action unless they felt personally threatened by the dealers or loan sharks in their neighbourhood; that they would otherwise believe that it was nothing to do with them. The anti-social behaviour campaign could have had a similar impetus, since there was also a call to action aimed at readers, however in this case and with the airguns campaign there was not thought to be any reticence on the part of the readers, and it was assumed that readers would trust in and cooperate with political and official agencies to solve the problem.

The personalisation of social problems functions to obscure the structural explanations of deviance (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Fowler, 1991), and to explain it as caused by intrinsically ‘bad’ people, or inadequately socialised people, who don’t share dominant, ‘decent’ values and moral and therefore need to be forced to comply. In criminology this is described as an ‘offender precipitation’ model of crime (Elias, 1986). Such a polarized construction of ‘us’ and ‘them’ is a common observation in media scholarship; whether theorised as a form of nation-building (Sonwalkar, 2005), market construction (Aldridge, 2003), or hegemonic defence of the status quo (Cohen, 1973; Hall et al., 1978), the discursive (and consequently, perhaps, social) exclusion of the ‘other’ is thought to consolidate a feeling of solidarity or social compliance among the majority. The obvious theoretical framing in media scholarship is that of “moral

panics”, given the stereotypical depiction of the problems, the labelling of “folk devils”, symbolic framing as a threat to social order, and the calls for tougher social control. However, our concern here is not especially the social impact, but the suggested origin in the (assumed or reported) fears and prejudices of mainstream society. Ericson et al suggest that the “emotive aspects of modern political discourse [...] tell a lot about the character of the people who consume them”, that they apparently search for their own values and reassurances through dramatic representations of deviance, control and moral order (1987: 361-2), but the content of news tells us far more about journalists’ imagining of the audience than it does about the audience itself.

All six campaigns framed social issues in ways anticipated to be meaningful and accessible to the audience through personalisation and simplification. This resulted in a representation of society in terms of competing personal interests, and social justice in terms of social control. It also overstated individual personal self-determination of those blamed, whilst playing down the agency of those framed as victims. Angles that could contextualise the issues in more informative ways, and ways that journalists expect to challenge audience’s ‘common sense’ assumptions, will be addressed next.

7.2. Informing readers: evidence and context

Chapter 5 indicated that journalists often assumed that readers were uninterested in complex abstract arguments or detailed evidence. However, at the same time, most also thought that readers found it more acceptable to be persuaded through objective ‘truth’ and evidential ‘facts’ rather than challenges to their values and assumptions. Editorial staff at The Herald, in particular, explained bias – especially in favour of arguments that were assumed to be unpopular – in terms of correcting an imbalance in available information. This assumes an open-minded audience of ‘public sphere’ participants who process new information rationally, whilst the tabloids (and even some Herald journalists) assume an audience that interprets or responds to new information in relation to prior values and beliefs. The ways in which evidence and argument was actually communicated will be explored in relation to four areas of contextual information and countervailing arguments: structural factors of poverty and deprivation (in the Daily Record); the pragmatics of policy in terms of balancing service provision with funding through taxation (Evening Times and The Herald); the rights and responsibilities of citizens (Daily Record and The Herald); and representations of risk (Evening Times).

7.2.1. Structural factors in crime and deviance: poverty and deprivation

As noted above, the Daily Record neglected conditions associated with criminal behaviour in favour of an offender precipitation understanding of crime and deviance – that offenders are intrinsically ‘bad’. This was most explicit in the anti-social behaviour campaign, where poverty was explicitly rejected as a factor. Whilst the Executive’s consultation document recognised the role of factors associated with social deprivation (specifying family, school, employment and drug-related problems), the First Minister, Jack McConnell explicitly denied any such link.

He said deprivation always played a part in crime figures. But he added: “Poverty and deprivation are not an excuse for taking the church railings off the wall and hitting an old lady over the head with them. Poverty and deprivation are not an excuse for having sex in someone’s garden if you are 14. Poverty and deprivation are not an excuse for eight-year-olds sticking fireworks through the letterboxes of old age pensioners. That’s a complete and total lack of respect for other people and property. And that’s what I think we need to have.” (DR 05/09/03)

The Executive’s ‘respect agenda’ therefore focused on explaining anti-social behaviour policy as instilling dominant social norms. McConnell’s dismissal of structural factors in relation to offending behaviour is suggestive of an assessment or expectation of people’s views that may be shared with the Daily Record. It anticipates a ‘folk’ understanding of deviance as an intrinsic impulse only controlled by the threat of social censure and punishment, of that any attribution of motivation to, or recognition of constraint on, perpetrators as excusing the behaviour and therefore removing that moral censure crucial to social control. This was also expressed in letters to the editor who argued that that the law protected offenders and not victims, that the police’s hands were tied by “politically correct nonsense” (letter to the editor, DR 06/09/03), that Hearing Panels were too lenient, and that victims were given no support from the housing association. Parents were also blamed for the failure to enforce rules and punish transgressions, letting their children stay out whilst ignorant of what they are doing.

More surprisingly, conditions associated with victimisation – that people are more likely to fall victim to drug dealers and loan sharks if they are poor and deprived – whilst not rejected, were rarely explicitly discussed. There were just six references to poverty and deprivation in the drugs campaign, of which two argued that it was *not only* the poor who suffered from drug misuse, and one argued that drug use *caused* poverty, whilst just two referred to poverty as a circumstance that could motivate drug use (one in a quote from Gordon Brown). The only significant attention to structural factors was in relation to the Scottish Parliament’s committee report, which the paper interpreted as criticising the Executive for failing to tackle poverty (DR 08/12/00), although the report specified more complex associated factors such as parental problems or educational difficulties (Scottish Parliament, 2001: col 793), which avoided both simplistic determinism and simplistic self-determination.

The loan sharks campaign was connected with poverty in as far as the borrowers were “weak and underprivileged” (DR 04/06/02). It was perhaps easier for the Record to make a connection with structural conditions in this case than in the drugs campaign because

borrowers' actions were aimed at solving (in the immediate term) a shortage of money, rather than at escaping the conditions of multiple deprivation, and it is more obvious how individuals' actions are constrained by the options available to them ('financial exclusion' in political terms).

The Daily Record's marginalisation of structural factors in relation to victimisation was perhaps in part intended to avoid narrowing the proportion of potentially affected, and therefore concerned, readers to those in deprived areas, and also because it is seen as an intractable problem whose solutions are not obvious, with too little potential for short-term recognisable change – something that the paper could claim as a victory. However, as with deviance, it was also possibly because the journalists recognised, and expected their readers to recognise, that the relationship between poverty and drug use was not one of direct cause and effect because it is clear that not everyone in those circumstances or areas takes drugs, borrows from loan sharks or behaves in an anti-social way. Therefore, rather than try to understand and explain complex and abstract relationships between structure and agency, the newspaper dismissed the former in favour of the latter with the benefits of unambiguity, relevance and consonance. However, the effect was to portray the issues as competing values – the dominant values being threatened by 'deviant' values – rather than recognising the distinct interests of disadvantaged communities which may conflict with the interests of other groups. This constructs an impression of a 'transcendent' consensus, as needed to unite plural interests in the competitive liberal model, ignoring the structural disparities in resources and democratic influence that mean that consensus in society is not universal. The relevant structural issues neglected by the Evening Times and even by the broadsheet Herald were related rather to political and bureaucratic power and administration.

7.2.2. Policy administration: welfare provision, priorities and taxation

The Evening Times' Queen Mum's campaign was focused on public service provision, and so was centrally supportive of the government's responsibility for the welfare of patients. The closure of the maternity hospital was interpreted as a cut in provision rather than a centralisation of provision, and therefore as 'cost-cutting' whereby the Health Board's money was framed as its own rather than public money. One letter-writer argued that "when it comes to money-making and profits, people have no conscience", and that the Health Board should realise that "money isn't everything" (ET 21/10/03). This argument suggested that the Health Board were cold and distant and therefore prioritised efficient spending over lives and service provision, but did not acknowledge that the board's funds were limited and funded by taxpayers, and therefore that efficiency could result in improved service provision. The campaign made a rhetorical distinction between "cost" and "investment", where the preferred option of keeping the hospital open was described as an "investment" (six times), as was the final triple co-location solution (twice), and the problems suffered at the Queen Mother's blamed on "lack of investment" (ET 20/10/03) or "underinvestment" (parent quoted in ET

01/10/04), whilst developments that were being criticised were only twice described as “investment”, and far more frequently referred to as “costs” (18 times) or “wastefulness” (three times).

McCann reflected on readers’ anticipated orientation toward public spending:

JMcC: And I just generally see dead people as being a bad thing, and that’s why it matters. We want these workers to help them, we don’t care how expensive it is, necessarily. They [the Health Board] do, and they will balance deaths against cash. Normal people in their normal lives don’t – they care about pain and death and they don’t particularly care about the health board budget.

JB: Even though it’s out of their taxes?

JMcC: Yeah... that *is* a thing, that at *one* level they would do, you know, you want a policeman on every corner that’s fine, but if it puts a penny on their council tax that’s... And that’s... well the money for Yorkhill came from their taxes. But people have different priorities and Catriona’s [Health Board Planning Director, Catriona Renfrew] were not perceived to be the same as most people’s would be.

Readers are assumed to prefer services over money, unless they are conscious of it being their own money from taxation, then their priority choice shifts to maternity and child services over other (unspecified) services. The paper did not encourage debate over what *should* be cut, or whether people would be prepared to pay higher taxes for improved services, or indeed how the shortage of obstetricians would be solved. The newspaper resisted the alternative option offered by the Health Board – the closure of another of the city’s maternity hospitals.

Leask dismissed the conflict of interests between expectant parents closest to Yorkhill and those closest to the Southern General as “artificial”, constructed by Health Board efforts “to divide and conquer, to pit one part of the town against another” (David Leask). This, Leask argues, was ultimately “overcome” by the newspaper’s rejection of the Health Board’s position that one maternity hospital must close, changing the terms of the debate from the official discourse of a “tough choice” (Greater Glasgow NHS Board, 2003b). Largely this resulted from the complaints of bias from sources from the Southern General Hospital, and reflected the professional discomfort of journalists at justifying bias as well as pragmatic reluctance to alienate important sources on which they depend, who “were people we needed to keep on side in the simple day to day business” (Leask).

A welfare angle was also used strategically in the Dungavel campaign, but predominantly in terms of formal (legal and bureaucratic) rationality, to suggest that responsibility for the children of asylum-seekers fell within the Scottish Parliament and Executive’s remit, since education and welfare were devolved responsibilities (whilst asylum and immigration was reserved). However, the paper did not otherwise focus heavily on welfare services, perhaps because it was expected to emphasise the potential costs associated in some people’s minds with immigration. Some letter-writers did deny the nation’s social responsibility on the basis of domestic economic interests: an MP (George Foulkes) argued that immigration caused

“enormous pressure on our infrastructure” (letter to the editor, HD 15/09/03) such as public services and housing, and another letter-writer even sought to blame asylum-seekers for their own repression; “If many Third Worlders are unable arrange decent and humane government for their countries, it is simply not the responsibility of the UK to bear the brunt of this failure” (HD 08/08/07). There was only one real challenge to arguments of costs of immigration, and that again came in a letter to the editor that argued that the government were using immigrants as a scapegoat for their own failings, to “divert attention from the real reasons why “our” infrastructure is under pressure: years of underfunding and underinvestment” (letter to the editor, HD 16/09/03), framing it in terms of overall ‘investment’ rather than competition for resources, and highlighting and rejecting the ‘us-and-them’ discourse.

A more common framing (again in the letters page, but also opinion and editorial column) was rather the “moral responsibility” (letter to the editor, HD 07/08/03), or “moral and legal responsibility / obligation” (three times) of a “civilised” society or “civilisation” (eight times) toward *all* individuals, including asylum-seekers. One leader column argued that, “If the measure of a civilised country is how it treats children and those in need, Jack McConnell’s Scotland has been found badly wanting” (HD 05/08/03), another that decent, universal education is the “badge of a civilised, liberal society” (HD 09/07/03) making an argument for common principles overriding individual interest. Letter-writers and opposition MSPs similarly argued that the Dungavel policy was incompatible with people’s beliefs about themselves as a society. Oddly then, the news pages focused on the legal technicalities of the government’s obligations, and especially on the constitutional jurisdiction of the Scottish Executive rather than the substance of *what* it was Scottish ministers were expected to do differently from the Home Office.

The Record focused less on welfare issues than the other newspapers. Arguments in favour of drug treatment services and credit unions were not *opposed* in the drugs and loan sharks campaigns, but marginalised. Whilst there were 20 mentions of drugs rehabilitation, 11 of which stated that it should be provided, there was no discussion of the shortage of current provision, and little discussion of the relative virtues of long-term management of addiction through methadone programmes versus recovery from addiction through drug rehabilitation programmes. Interestingly, this was also the aspect that was personalised least, with only two references in personal stories, both relating to the failure of their treatment, and only glancing mentions of two rehabilitation schemes or organisations. Even in the references that were explicitly supportive of rehabilitation, the newspaper felt that it had to mention enforcement: “Rehabilitation was just one aspect of the crime plan, which also emphasised tougher sentencing for persistent criminals” (DR 27/02/01). Further, the Scottish Executive made claims of welfare objectives for anti-social behaviour measures such as parenting orders, whilst the Record presented them as purely punitive and a deterrent through fear of punishment.

Whilst welfare and public services are broadly framed as a commonly-agreed ‘good thing’, the connection with ‘costs’ and taxation problematises the issue, particularly in relation to competition for resources and notions of fairness. Welfare therefore appears to have been avoided as an issue where readers may perceive the interests and use of resources of the intended recipients (such as asylum seekers, drug-users) as competing with their own, and only pursued in relation to a universal service such as health and maternity. Therefore expectations of a self-interested audience are evident in the campaign framing. ‘Government investment’ then occurs where the majority of readers are thought to benefit, and ‘costs to the taxpayer’ occur when resources are thought to be diverted to minority groups. This is linked with a discourse of rights and responsibilities.

7.2.3. Rights and responsibilities: competing interests

As well as the discourse of deservedness of help in the personalised news frames, there was a discourse of more formal and abstract “rights”, and government “responsibilities”. However, some saw “rights” as not universal, but competing and dependent on citizen (or prospective citizen) “responsibilities” to others whose interests may conflict. This was mostly present in The Herald’s Dungavel campaign, but was also present in the framing of the Daily Record’s anti-social behaviour campaign.

In the anti-social behaviour campaign letter-writers portrayed themselves as those deserving of rights, and the defence of those rights, on account of their compliance with dominant social norms, describing themselves and others in their neighbourhoods as “decent people” (seven times in letters, 11 in all including three from politicians), “hard-working” people (six times, split between letter-writers and politicians), and “law-abiding” people, citizens or taxpayers (four times, all letter-writers)²⁸. In contrast, rights were not accorded to those who transgressed these rules: “who cares about human rights? Neds have none” (letter to the editor, DR 09/06/09). Some writers, such as the popular philosopher Julian Baggini (2008) have connected such views with communitarianism, whereby certain rights of the citizen are contingent on fulfilling certain responsibilities such as adhering to the laws; however, this quote appears to apply this contingency to basic human rights – a common framing in tabloid newspapers such as the Daily Mail and The Sun who oppose human rights law.

In contrast, The Herald made a significant amount of reference to “human rights”, although of 75 references, only 21 were to human rights as a principle; 13 were in reference to the legal process of asylum application and appeal and four to specific legislation (plus 23 referring to lawyers etc); and a further 13 referred to human rights abuses or violations (nine in the country of origin and four in this country). The references to human rights as a universal principle

28 There were also 10 references to “ordinary” people, but this was only used by politicians (four times) and journalists (six times).

were most frequently made by campaigners (six, including two from campaigning MSPs), correspondents (six), and leader columns (five). The European Convention on Human Rights was mentioned four times (twice in leaders columns and twice by campaigning politicians), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 12 times (five times by campaigning politicians, three times by pressure group organisations, twice by lawyers), suggesting a recognition that children should be allowed some control over what happens to them. Largely, these references were made in passing, but the leader column references made up a more forceful argument in relation to post-9/11 governance:

When commentators said that the world would never be the same they were, of course, stating the obvious. What was less obvious was that we would try to protect our own freedoms by being so cavalier with the basic human rights of others. The British government should be communicating its outrage about Guantanamo Bay, not just about the British prisoners there. And the Ay children should be allowed to go to school. (Leader column, HD 12/07/03)

This is an abstract and intellectual argument requiring theoretical rationality, and assumes a more discursively capable public than much of the campaign coverage.

Equally, the campaign focused on society's responsibilities to asylum-seekers (or at least their children). The reference to "duty" (18 times) was also suggestive of moral imperative; it was mostly attributed to the government (10 times), such as the Scottish Executive's duty to speak up for and (again vaguely) "help" the Ay family and other detained children (leader columns and campaigning politicians), but the remaining eight instances applied to the people of the country, as a societal or civic duty both to care for and educate the detained children and to welcome asylum-seekers, such as the civic duty of Scotland towards the "community's children" (education professional organisation in HD 09/07/03). However, the Home Office claimed a conflicting duty to "maintain immigration control" on behalf of existing citizens (Home Office spokeswoman, quoted in HD 05/08/03). In this case, it was the government that attempted to frame the issue in terms of competing interests rather than universal rights. Asylum-seekers' technical transgressions (having entered "illegally" and being "third country applicants") were especially deemed to have invalidated their claim to rights, in favour of the rights of current citizens to protect their borders.

Whilst The Herald made firm statements in favour of taking responsibility for child asylum-seekers, it consistently failed to engage with the arguments of its opponents. The Herald did not compare the outcomes of different policy approaches, or even clearly back a specific alternative to detention, perhaps feeling constrained by the objectivity norm and therefore remaining detached (as criticised by proponents of public journalism (Merritt, 1999)). Neither, however, did the Home Office encourage a discursive response – perhaps because they too judged that people were instinctively or instrumentally in favour of 'tough' immigration control and not open to persuasion. This allowed one correspondent to complain, "the Establishment's attitude to discussion on matters of race and immigration bears an unpleasantly strong resemblance to its Victorian counterpart's attitude to the mention of sex"

(letter to the editor, HD 20/08/03), and suggest that liberal views on the issue were naive and pragmatically un-workable. Whilst there was no mention of political correctness, there is a clear connection to this discourse that connects anti-discrimination with censorship (Fairclough, 2003).

The fear of portraying asylum seekers' interests as competing with those of other citizens meant that The Herald were unable to make a case for altruism, for recognising someone else's need as greater. This may not be unconnected with the campaign's failure to create a "community of feeling". However, whilst personalisation of an issue in terms of the impact on affected individuals may help to explain it to readers in terms of common rights and social responsibilities, it does not necessarily lead to that framing – for instance the anti-social behaviour was framed instead in terms of selective rights and social control of 'the other'. The related construction of the threat of victimisation has an impact on the explanation of risk.

7.2.4. Prediction and risk

It might be expected that all of the campaigns that advocated specific policies would argue the merit of their preferred policy in relation to the likely outcome as compared with other policy options. However, the airguns campaign ignored the Home Office's concerns about the resources required to ban something already in wide circulation and the likely unintended consequences (such as black market trade), or the effect on minority leisure pursuits. The anti-social behaviour campaign did not question the practical implications of the policy – such as the conflation of "minor misdemeanours with serious criminal activities" (Flint et al., 2003: 26) in the definition of anti-social behaviour – much less its likely effectiveness. Finally, The Herald was vague about what should happen to asylum-seeking families with a record of absconding, and the consequences of not detaining them. Whilst SNP leader John Swinney argued (in the parliamentary debate on his motion) that detention was a disproportionate response to the acknowledged risk of asylum-seeking families absconding, making a rational value judgement on the relative acceptability of risks (as observed by Priest, 2005), that "the risk of harm to innocent children from being locked up behind bars outweighs the risk of the family absconding" (Scottish Parliament, 2005a: col 1548), The Herald did not report this argument, preferring to ignore such risks to the enforcement of immigration policy.

In contrast, this was an area of comparative strength for the Evening Times' Queen Mum's campaign. This is because they were opposing a *proposed* policy, on the basis of the *likely* problems that could occur as a consequence. Not only is this unusual in presenting the consequences in the predictive conditional, but also in making causal connections. Although a positivist attribution of cause and effect can be over-simplistic, the focus on *institutional* actors and policy decisions avoids oversimplifying the problem to one of individual agency driven by intrinsic and unmotivated evil (as in the Daily Record campaigns).

Whilst the campaign described the policy as an active “threat” to the hospitals (56 times), the “risk” to patients was suggestive of likely but unintended problematic consequences. The concrete outcomes included the potential deaths of children, three times predicted to be a *direct* effect of the proposed closure (“would die because / if”, twice attributed to health professionals and once in a quote from a parent). However, this was not very prominent in the coverage. Instead, a more nuanced and less sensationalist interpretation was more common, adopting clinicians’ discourse of ‘risk’ (although health professionals were only directly quoted seven times). The word “risk” appeared 84 times, 20 times specifically referring to risk to life, otherwise more generally to patients being “at risk”; 47 identified the victims as babies or children, whilst just 17 described the risk to mothers’ lives. The increased risk to babies was overtly stated as a likely direct consequence of the proposed closure 30 times (of the 47). Despite the less definitive attribution of cause and effect, there was no contextualisation of risk as a balance of probabilities, nor the impossibility of a nil-risk for seriously ill babies. There was also a preference for the stronger modals of prediction – “will” (14 times) or “would” (13 times) – rather than the less certain “could” (three times) and only one instance of “might” in relation to the risk to mothers, avoiding equivocation or caveats (related to the news value of unambiguity described above).

Of the 17 mentions of risks to mothers in labour, only two acknowledged the Health Board’s argument that they were at risk at the Queen Mum’s, two denied that risk, and five stated that increased risk to mothers was instead associated with the proposed closure. The relative risks to mothers and babies were substantiated in terms of respective numbers needing treatment, but babies were also instinctively seen as more vulnerable than adult mothers, and their deaths as more tragic.

So two years down the line, when the hospital’s shut, right, and I’ll be blunt and vulgar and tabloid here, and there are protesters after the first baby has just died in the ambulance in the Clyde Tunnel, carrying vulgar little coffins, going ‘rest in peace, baby Bobby or Betty, killed by Malcolm Chisholm’, he knows somebody’s going to go back and say, he was told two years ago that would lead to deaths. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

Leask acknowledges that this approach is sensationalist and unpalatably “vulgar”, but not that it is misleading, or reflects a simplistic understanding of causal explanations and binary understanding of risk (risk / no risk), either on the part of the journalists or anticipated on the part of the reader. However, scholars have suggested that value judgements are important to the pragmatic assessment of risk and acceptable risk-taking (Priest, 2005) and are not necessarily irrational; a risk to babies may be reasonably judged less acceptable than risk to adults.

Journalists described their efforts to make some of the key arguments accessible to readers. The “link” between the maternity and children’s hospitals was referred to 147 times in 90 articles, across news articles, features, and leaders columns. Stories focused on both health

professionals' arguments and parents' experience of the "bridge" (31 times) or "corridor" (16 times).

So it was absolutely vital that you had simple metaphors for the campaign, and that way we hit upon the very simple metaphor of the bridge that linked the two hospitals. [...] And anyone who saw them bringing children across that little bridge, explain what happened, they get the message. Essentially it's a very simple one – don't break up this service. And when you had a physical thing, a bridge, and then the wonderful human stories of the children that had gone across that bridge, and the mothers that had gone across that bridge, and that brought a very simple message home to people. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

However, despite the case against the closure of the Queen Mum's being based on the preservation of the link between the maternity and children's hospitals, just under half (16 of 33) of case study stories were instances where a baby was born at the Queen Mums and transferred to Sick Kids'. Almost a third (10) were testimonials for Sick Kids' alone, where children were born elsewhere, or fell ill or were injured later in childhood, who would have been unaffected by the closure of the Queen Mum's.

Especially in early articles, parents' concerns were related to uncertainty and misunderstandings perpetuated by the Evening Times, such as the closure of the Sick Kids' hospital or the withdrawal of paediatric services: "I'm really worried that if Leona is transferred to the Southern, she will be treated as an adult patient" (parent quoted in ET 28/10/03). Other concerns were better informed, particularly where parents related their experience to the predicted effects on service delivery – chiefly the distance between post-natal mothers (at the Southern General) and sick new-born babies (at Yorkhill), e.g. "I don't know how I would have coped if the twins had been split up [between separate maternity and children's hospitals]" (parent quoted in ET 15/12/03).

The framing of the campaign issues avoided challenging readers' assumed preconceptions, even where this would have supported the objectives of the campaigns. Structural factors were not explicitly acknowledged as constraint on people's behaviour (though victims' personal 'vulnerability implied such constraint), nor as motivation for 'deviant' behaviour. Welfare policies were only balanced against taxation where there was deemed to be competition for resources between different interests. The Herald did make significant reference to universal human rights, but focused on the formal rationality of legal obligation more than the substantive desirability of such as principle or how it should be implemented. Where potential policy outcomes were discussed, risk was simplified rather than expressed as a balance of probabilities, and although the Evening Times did not sensationalise the risk, there was a threat of 'vulgar' accusations of blame if the Health Minister didn't cooperate with the campaign demands. The campaigns did not for the most part attempt to persuade people to change their minds on the basis on new information or arguments. Instead the newspapers'

efforts at persuading or putting pressure on politicians were sold to the readers as noble actions on their behalf.

7.3. Recruiting readers: selling the campaigns

Many of the campaigns were promoted to readers with commercial sales techniques. Fairclough (2001: 168-174) identified common features of advertising as an order of discourse, including “synthetic personalisation of audience members” through the direct form of address in the second person, including in the imperative (‘have a break, have a kitkat’), and implicitly including the reader in a statement made by the newspaper by use of the first person plural as an inclusive ‘we’ (see also Fowler, 1991: 49-50). Much of the “ideological work” of advertising discourses, according to Fairclough, is through the construction of the consumer. This is most simply achieved through the celebrity endorsement, where the celebrity stands both for the traits and characteristics to which the consumer aspires, and for the trust transferred to the product. This section will address celebrity endorsement first, followed by addressing the reader in the second person and the imperative, and finally use of the inclusive ‘we’.

7.3.1. Celebrity support

Both the Daily Record and Evening Times actively recruited support for their campaigns from famous Scots, often television or sports personalities or pop stars. These statements of support functioned as publicity and persuasion. The Evening Times acknowledged the publicity function, boasting, “Our campaign received another high-profile boost” (ET 03/12/03). A journalist at the Daily Record described the attention-grabbing purpose.

What they do is they’re used as figureheads, but they don’t need to do too much, but if you get just a minute on the phone with them, or maybe just an email that someone makes up for them and sends, runs it past them and sends it over, it means that you can then use a photograph of them, like Rod Stewart, ‘last night Rod Stewart backed our campaign, he said “drugs are crap”, you know, but you’ve got a picture of Rod Stewart: ‘drugs are crap’. It means that you’ve got... showbiz runs newspapers these days and it means that you’ve got something that lights up the page a little bit. (Mark McGivern, Reporter, Daily Record)

This suggests that McGivern regards the campaigns as potentially boring to readers without the angle lent to them by such personalities.

Celebrities are also thought to play a persuasive role where expressions of public support are sought. The Evening Times editor saw this effect as simple imitation – “if they like the personality they must think, ‘well, if Carol Smilie’s supporting it, it must be a good cause, I like Carol Smilie so I’ll support it” (Charles McGhee).

People like that are role models, so they’re useful in a campaign like that, the very fact that they’re considered to be a role model, they’ll be more inclined to think like them

rather than take it from the Daily Record, so we rely quite heavily on them. (Mark McGivern, Reporter, Daily Record)

This is not dissimilar from the newspaper's own claims to be trustworthy representatives who can decide on behalf of the readers, and equivalent to the logic of celebrity product endorsement in advertising.

McCann acknowledged that such responses are irrational, but defended the Evening Times' approach on the basis that their celebrities had relevant personal experience, although of the 20 celebrities named as supporters, only three spoke of their personal experience.

[Celebrities were] really important, because... people like to read about celebrities, they're a good thing to have in the paper, they're high profile thing and people will listen. You know, people will listen to celebrities when they shouldn't possibly, you know, 'I think that what's happening down in Rwanda's terrible', aye right, how much do you actually know about it? But, the good thing is they were celebrity *parents*, and they had a direct... you know. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

Celebrities' personal experience of their children's birth at the Queen Mum's, or in two instances of suffering complications there, is presented as 'knowing something about it', but that knowledge does not necessarily represent any greater insight than McCann's example of sympathy for suffering in Rwanda, and certainly no more than the non-famous parents featured. To some extent the campaign aimed to show the stars identifying with 'ordinary people': that actor Robert Carlyle's experience of the hospital with his wife was "just like thousands of Glaswegians before him who have been touched by the axe-threatened hospital" (ET 12/01/04).

The Daily Record's drugs campaign went one step further than the others by offering the added incentive of the possibility of meeting their heroes on the march – "The leaders of Scotland's main political parties, showbiz stars and sports heroes will walk shoulder to shoulder with ordinary people" (DR 23/03/01, plus nine other mentions of "shoulder to shoulder"). Entertainments were also advertised such as a bouncy castle and Radio Clyde Roadshow: "There has never been a better reason than Sunday's march for Scots to get out and enjoy themselves" (DR 31/03/01) – the march was marketed as a family event as much as a protest.

7.3.2. Addressing the reader

It is rare for newspapers to use the imperative, since readers are perceived to be resistant to being told directly what to think. Even in the campaigns it was usually reserved for the early stages, and was often replaced by reports of the level of support so far. It was also limited to the Daily Record and Evening Times. In relation to invitations to "shop a dealer" and "shop a shark", the Daily Record used the imperative to tell readers to "phone us" (eight times), "call us" (twice), and "tell us" (twice). However, in relation to the anti-drugs march, of 62 uses of "join" in that context, only one was truly imperative "Join the fight" (leader column, DR 20/02/01), though other uses that addressed the reader (also in the leader column) included

“we want every community in Scotland to rise up and join us in the fight” (DR 16/02/01), “We need you to join us” (DR 20/02/01) and “We ask again that you, our readers, join us” (DR 27/02/01), and (in a news article) “We hope you'll join us” (DR 27/03/01). The Evening Times told readers to “save these hospitals” (ET 10/10/03) though it used “save” as imperative just three times, early on, followed by two uses of the infinitive “to save”. Of seven uses of “add your name” in relation to the petition, three were in the straight imperative, whilst the other four were conditional, such as “You can still add your name” (ET 16/02/04).

Both newspapers modulated some uses of the imperative with a conditional clause, such as “if you know a pusher, phone us” (DR 24/02/01), and “If you want to save these hospitals” (ET 10/10/03). In the latter case, the only other option is not to want to save it, suggesting negligence rather than a preference for the Southern General, or support for the case for centralisation²⁹. Similarly, “show how much you care” (ET 10/10/03), addressed the readers as people who (it is assumed) do ‘care’, and presenting the only logical alternative as being ‘uncaring’ rather than disagreeing. The Evening Times also instructed readers to “tell them what you think” (six times), “tell us what you think” (four times), as well as “tell us about your experiences” (ET 17/10/03). However, the newspaper was careful not to tell the readers *what to think*, but to tell them to *report what they (already) think* to the paper or to political leaders. In practice the newspaper was only looking for a particular type of response, one of support, but framed that opinion as a foregone conclusion - “telling them *why* you think...” (ET 09/10/03 [my emphasis]), which appears to invite reasoned argument, but is a modulated form of the alternative “tell them *that* you think...”

The Evening Times further introduced a discourse of enabling the expression of this assumed opinion, with 15 uses of “you can”, in relation to signing the petition (nine times), including ways of making it easier, such as signing online on the newspaper’s website (five times) and at selected supermarkets (twice), and in relation to contacting the Health Board (five times, one of which in quotes from a health professional). One headline said simply, “You can save the Queen Mum’s” (ET 22/10/03), making a direct claim for the effectiveness of such protest. The petition, in particular, was framed as providing an opportunity for a concerned public, “TODAY we launch a petition to give people who care about The Queen Mother’s maternity and Yorkhill Sick Children’s hospitals a chance to join the fight to save them” (ET 10/10/03).

Both newspapers made frequent use of the word “urge” to recruit support. The Daily Record used it 15 times in relation to recruiting readers to attend the anti-drugs march, of which only three addressed readers directly in the second person (two of which were in quotes from celebrities), though the others referred to “people” (twice), “everyone” (twice), “readers” (DR

29 The Health Board were criticised for similarly closing down the available options in the phrasing of the consultation question; “The question was phrased in an unanswerable way: “If you want to keep the Queen Mum’s open, then why do you want to shut the Southern General’s maternity?”” (ET 21/04/04).

10/03/01), “Scotland” (DR 31/03/01) and so on. The Evening Times urged readers 23 times to support the campaign, largely either by signing the petition (13 times, quoting health professionals four times, a politician once and parent once) or attending the public meeting (seven times, three health professionals and one politician), and the constituency MSP also urged people to respond to the consultation (ET 22/10/03). The Daily Record also, to some extent framed protest action as something readers would support but had to be motivated to act (see the next chapter for a discussion of the assumed apathy of publics). The newspaper only used “you can” three times, and all three were arguing for the effectiveness of action, such as “you can help us get the dealers off the streets”, and were similarly enabling only through assisting the newspaper’s actions on their behalf.

One way of including the reader in the newspaper’s advocacy was to frame their expression of support as a responsibility, since their support was “vital” (Evening Times, seven times), and since the paper was acting on their behalf – “your fight too” (DR 11/01/01). The more subtle way is to semantically include the audience in the collective interests, shared values and national identity.

7.3.3. Inclusive discourse

An inclusive discourse was most commonly used in the Daily Record’s drugs campaign, in particular on the run up to the anti-drugs march. The march was framed as “the day when we, as a nation, would stand up as one and tell the low-life drug dealers: “Your time is up”” (DR 31/03/01), and local MP and bereaved parent Ian McCartney connected the ‘war on drugs’ metaphor to a wartime spirit of co-operation or common interest: “In wartime the community is supposed to come together” (DR 19/03/01). The imagined community of the Scottish (quasi-)nation was further emphasised by 15 references to “Scots” (see the next chapter for further discussion of the representation of national identity in relation to ‘the public’ and ‘public opinion’).

The Daily Record used the inclusive ‘we’ 83 times in 45 articles in the drugs campaign, but 51 of those were in quotes, and most that were not in quotes were in leader columns. Political sources were the most frequent users of this particular form of rhetoric, using it 24 times (14 times from members of the UK government, seven times from Executive ministers, and three from other MPs or MSPs), followed by affected individuals (11 times) and celebrities (10 times). In particular, the campaign repeatedly declared “we can”³⁰ (29 times, eight from politicians, three from affected individuals) and “we need to” (three times, two in quotes from politicians, one celebrity), specifically, “we can win” (eight times, two in quotes from politicians); “together / united we’ll beat...” (five times), again making (inflated) claims for the effectiveness of protest action to deter drug-dealing.

30 A vague but optimistic phrasing now associated with the political rhetoric of Barak Obama and his campaign-trail catchphrase “yes we can”.

There was also extensive use of this rhetorical tool in the anti-social behaviour campaign, 34 times in just 14 articles, and even more driven by sources than the drugs campaign, as all but three were in quotes or letters. Politicians and councillors used 'we' in an inclusive sense 16 times, and letter-writers 14 times, 11 of which were "we need...". Conversely, of the 21 uses of the inclusive 'we' in the airguns campaign, only eight were in quotes (four from politicians, three in correspondence and one campaigner), reflecting the fact that that campaign made less effort to recruit public support, but stated that "we need" an airguns ban in 'the public interest'. The loan sharks campaign, however, only used the inclusive 'we' five times, three of which were in letters to the editor agreeing that "we" as a public should report loan sharks to the police, since there was a more limited call to action than the drugs campaign.

More surprisingly, the Queen Mum's campaign used the inclusive 'we' only eight times (two in quotes from health professionals, one from a politician), despite the heavy emphasis on recruiting support. Instead the Evening Times used 'we' more frequently to refer to the newspaper itself, and its activity on readers' behalf, such as "we revealed" (three times) and "we still need more support" (three times); the campaign representation of the newspapers as political actors will be discussed in the next chapter. *The Herald*, similarly, only used the inclusive 'we' once, and in an unusual way, to include readers collectively in blame or moral responsibility for the actions of their government, when an opinion writer argued that society should take responsibility for the family that "we have helped traumatise" (opinion column, HD 07/08/03), specifying society as the culpable agent.

Overall, the Daily Record campaigns were sold with more rousing, inclusive rhetorical flourishes, in part by making claims for the effectiveness of public support that conflated aims and effects ("we need to drive out..."), whilst the Evening Times was more likely to address the reader in the second person to tell them how they could help, and reserve 'we' for describing the newspaper's actions on their behalf. The broadsheet Herald, meanwhile, talked about society and nation in more abstract terms and refrained from promotional discourses.

7.4. Conclusion

The newspapers' responsibility to inform their readers was often, but to varying degrees, subordinated to their need to appeal to readers' assumptions and interests and recruit their support. This was especially true where an active or vocal contribution was required, and, particularly in the tabloid cases, where disagreement, uncertainty or complexity was seen as damaging to the objectives of the campaign.

Fowler (1991: 16) suggested that, whilst the personalisation of blame was problematic, the personalisation of the experience of social ills was (or would be, since he argued this was lacking) a positive corrective to the dominant official perspective – a view echoed by some of the journalists in Chapter 5. The personal impact on affected individuals was given prominence in all six campaigns, and to some extent did aim to create an altruistic “community of feeling” (Berezin, 2002) that was expected to garner the sympathy of readers and their support for objectives designed to help ‘victims’. However, this did not necessarily translate into a principled substantive rationality. Both the Daily Record and Herald assumed that the feeling of sympathy would not override the instrumental resistance to resources being diverted less ‘responsible’ or ‘deserving’ members of the community – an understanding of society as competing private interests dominated over any notion of common interests. The Herald therefore retreated to bureaucratic formal rationality of legal and constitutional infringements rather than challenging the immigration system, and the Daily Record emphasised the threat of victimisation to all readers, depending on fear responses that can be irrational or disproportionate.

In addition, the focus on individuals rather than social structures, coupled with assumptions about what readers would consider sympathetic and deserving, meant that the newspapers were careful to delineate blame in such a way that avoids assumptions of ‘victim precipitation’ (Elias, 1986), and therefore removed all agency from those affected. This results in an infantilisation of affected individuals, and a preference for ‘victims’ who are actually children (in four of the six campaigns), assuming that their vulnerability and passivity is accepted to be inherent, and to take advantage of feelings of protectiveness toward children. However, they were not focused on children’s *rights* (though mentioned in the Dungavel campaign in terms of legal obligation), but instead focused on need for *protection* on the basis of assumed vulnerability, though some of these vulnerabilities are socially constructed (Mayall, 1994).

The perpetrators in criminal and deviant behaviour in the Daily Record campaigns, in contrast, were described as the authors of their own destiny and therefore personally responsible for the social ills. The Record’s representation and understanding of crime issues was therefore limited to an “offender precipitation” model, whereby crime is caused by intrinsically degenerate criminals, whose behaviour is inevitable, assuming that if those particular individuals were removed then the problems would cease to exist (Elias, 1986), and neglects any understanding of the contribution of structural conditions.

The personalisation of blame also meant that the campaigns that advocated particular policies presented the proposals as a panacea, simply because they represented action ‘against’ the perpetrators. The Daily Record campaigns conflated public opposition to crime with support for particular solutions, particularly the anti-social behaviour legislation and airguns ban, but also to some degree ‘tougher’ enforcement of drug-dealing and illegal money-lending. The

campaigns that conversely opposed policy proposals (the hospital closure and detention of children) presented the rejection of the policy as sufficient to defend the interests of those affected, although columnists and correspondents in *The Herald* discussed the social and altruistic aims of society. In the *Daily Record*, “civilised” and “decent” behaviour was equated more with being “law-abiding” (the defence of private property and person) than any principled concern for fellow human beings (social welfare).

Instead, many of the campaigns *sold* their objectives to the readers. The tabloid newspapers, in particular, aimed to influence readers to *support* the campaign, whilst semantically distinguishing this from trying to influence them to *agree* with it. There is a conflict between the desire to drum up support for a campaign since the representation of consensus is important, and reluctance to appear to be didactic toward readers because of the perceived resistance of readers to being told what to think. The case for support was therefore persuasively presented, but framed in the discourse of consensus and unity, which implied that readers were already in agreement in order to hide their hand, and using many of the rhetorical devices of advertising.

This chapter has discussed the ways in which ‘public(s)’ were addressed in the campaigns; the next chapter will go on to examine how public(s) are characterised, represented and attributed agency in the articles.

Chapter 8: Representation of Publics: Social Attitudes, Agency and Participation

The previous chapter examined how journalists' intentions to engage, inform and recruit readers were evident in the campaign texts; this chapter goes on to examine their claims to reflect and represent their readers and other notional 'publics'. Specifically, it will analyse the social, ideological and political attitudes attributed to the various 'publics', the representation of them as active agents or as passively affected individuals, and the representation of publics' access to politics and the possibilities for participation. Chapter 5 indicated that the publics that journalists imagine they are addressing as readers are self-interested and instrumental, however, this seems to clash with the popular perception of Scottish public opinion as more left-wing than the UK average and certainly than the popular notion of 'Middle England' (Lewis et al., 2005), and to some extent as more politically active.

Firstly, this chapter will analyse the social attitudes that the journalists attributed to the Scottish population and the specific readership of the newspapers, and the expected reader response to the campaigns. Secondly, it will analyse the actual representation of reader attitudes and support for the campaigns within the newspapers. Thirdly, the chapter will address the agency attributed to 'publics' as actors in accounts of their own experiences and as agents in the public sphere. Finally, the newspapers' representation of various publics' political engagement through civic society will be addressed, as well as the political mechanisms that are designed to allow such 'publics' to access and influence the political process, leading into the next chapter, which will address the framing of politicians' obligation to act in accordance with these representations of 'public opinion'.

8.1. Journalists' characterisations of publics in Scotland

This section will examine journalists' characterisations of Scottish 'public opinion' in terms of its political and ideological orientation (as opposed to its response to and demands of the newspaper as such, which were discussed in Chapters 5 and 6), and then specifically on the campaign issues. The kinds of publics referred to include an aggregate mass public, the population of Scotland as a nation, specific communities, attentive publics, active publics (in terms of civic society organisations) and issue publics (such as pressure groups).

8.1.1. Political 'public opinion' and participation

According to the Scottish and British Social Attitudes Surveys the centre-ground of Scottish public opinion is to the 'left' of that in England (Paterson, 2002), although this general rule conceals a more complex set of opinions. In relation to Scottish Executive policy, there was evidence that the apparently left-wing policy of abolishing higher education tuition fees was

actually more popular amongst the right, that the anti-homophobic abolition of Section 28 chimed less with the Scottish public than with that in England, but that Scots were more favourable towards taxation and public spending than their counterparts south of the border (though taxation is reserved to Westminster). Whilst there are problems with measuring 'public opinion' via polling, this analysis does present and problematise the popular characterisation of left-wing, social democratic, even socialist Scottish attitudes.

Journalists at all three newspapers perceived Scottish 'public opinion' to favour the social provision of public goods and services by the state more than (southern) English people. Paul Sinclair of the Daily Record regarded this as a philosophical, normative position that was almost universal – what he called a “social democratic consensus”, with reference to corporatism.

There is a different Scottish perspective, but I think it's one that's familiar in pockets in England, and we're very much more, we're a corporate state, we believe in collectivism, I mean even the strand of conservatism that there is in Scotland believes much more in the state than in England. I think that one of the things the Tories have been so bad at, I think there are a lot of Tories up here that don't vote Tory, and I think that's because they found the kind of Thatcher Toryism offensive, because the Scottish Toryism is 'you work hard, you're not ostentatious, you make money, you know and that's fine', but it was easy money and it went against the grain. I think, yes there are specific Scottish issues, yes we vary, we incline to a certain belief, I think of a quality of solidarity and that sort of thing. (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

This view was echoed remarkably closely by journalists at the other newspapers, such as Herald Executive Editor, Colin MacDiarmid's view that “we are more interventionist by nature, I think even the Conservatives in Scotland believe that there is a greater role for selective government involvement, than the belief that the private sector has the answer to everything”.

Even those who disagreed with the 'social democratic consensus' did not argue that it didn't exist.

There's nobody who's actually saying, we should start again, we should do this, we should do that, they're all... oh there's something rotten going on in the state of Scotland, liberal consensus and it's just porridge. (Andrew Nicoll, Scottish Political Correspondent, Scottish Sun)

Nicoll instead suggests that the consensus is politically constructed and suffers from a lack of dissent from the right – the reverse of the situation identified by political economy and cultural Marxist scholars in the seventies and eighties (Hall et al., 1978; Herman and Chomsky, 1988).

However, others, such as Joan McAlpine, had a more pragmatic explanation for this redistributive economic view.

But traditionally people in Scotland have been more open to high taxes, I suppose because there's... possibly there's less high earners here... so they're less likely to pay personally through their pocket. But generally speaking they value the public sector and public services more highly, than in other parts of the UK. A larger proportion of Scots

work in the public sector, the public sector is proportionately bigger here³¹. So not only are they likely to enjoy the services of the public sector, but they're quite often reliant on the public sector for their own wage. (Joan McAlpine, Deputy Editor, The Herald)

McAlpine argues that Scots' apparent belief in state provision is self-interested and individualistic, rather than altruistic and collective, on the basis of an assumed net Scottish gain from the UK tax system. This echoes some of the English media's complaints about the devolution settlement and the Barnett formula that allocates a certain amount of the UK national purse to Scotland, and is alleged to fund more profligate Scottish spending (such as provision of free care for the elderly) from London tax receipts – a view that the newspaper more recently attempted to debunk (Leask, 2007).

Furthermore, McAlpine was aware of the distinction between left-wing viewpoints on economic and social issues, and the complexities of Scottish attitudes on each.

Well it depends, it depends on what you mean by liberal, and I think we're more left of centre, particularly on economic issues, but on sort of issues of personal behaviour we might not be as liberal, you know, I don't think there's anything to suggest that Scots are more open to gay marriage, for example, than in England, you know, if anything they might be slightly nervous of it. (Joan McAlpine, Deputy Editor, The Herald)

The example of gay marriage to illustrate the social conservatism of the public is probably not accidental, but relates to the Section 28 incident, when many people's assumptions about the progressiveness of Scottish 'public opinion' were challenged (Arshad, 2000).

The characterisation of Glasgow as a city was similarly contested; Evening Times editor Charles McGhee reported the dominant assumption that "Glasgow you would've said historically was even more left of centre, almost getting on for in the old days a communist feel", with reference to the radical 'Red Clydeside' era in the early 20th century. However, McGhee's Chief Reporter pointed to a more complex past.

A lot of people talk about Glasgow as being this kind of big left-wing place with working class heroes, like [socialist politician John] McLean or like Tommy Sheridan, but ultimately it's also the place of [tea company founder] Thomas Lipton. So, you know, it's got a huge history of free enterprise, free trade, a huge middle class that are very rich, wealthy, successful middle class, [...] So it's very difficult to say, are readers politically more left wing? Well yes, you look at the city council and see that there aren't very many Tories, but equally there's a wealthy class in Glasgow and they're not all social workers, despite what you might think, [...] because let's face it the town in the fifties was a Tory town, and those are the same kind of people who now vote for Tommy Sheridan sometimes. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

Leask suggests that the voting record of the population (frequently cited as evidence of left-wing views) is not necessarily indicative of the interests and opinions of the city's inhabitants. Like McAlpine, he links opinions to self-interest (as represented by wealth) more than principle.

31 This information was supplied by the Research Department as part of product development research for the launch of a new supplement, Society, aimed at public sector workers, and designed to attract and retain public sector recruitment advertising.

Correspondingly, Charles McGhee argued that the voting record of particular constituencies is reflective of the perceived failure of the politics that was supposed to address their interests.

Glasgow has some of the poorest constituencies not just in the UK but in the whole of western Europe and you get the sort of election turnouts in Shettleston, which is one of our worst areas, of under 40%, which says to me that these people actually, although some of them still vote Labour, they effectively feel disenfranchised, because life hasn't changed for them. They have been born and brought up in an area of multiple deprivation and nobody's been able to make that any different, so they just don't bother voting any more. (Charles McGhee, Editor, Evening Times)

There was therefore a mixture of characterisations of 'the public' in Scotland and Glasgow, from an abstract notion of a socially principled nation/city with a historical tradition of political activism, to a more specific view of voters and readers as a collection of interests and demands, with little faith in the transformative power of political engagement.

Nonetheless, there was still a perception of an active, engaged and oppositional civic society in Scotland. John McCann of the Evening Times argued that "activism and a shared sense of responsibility, people looking out for each other and opposing authority when it doesn't look out for them" was particularly strong in Glasgow. Notions of activism and collectivism seem to refer to a participatory form of democracy often associated with the left, however, the combination of "responsibility" and expecting to be 'looked out for' (positive rights) suggests a centrist communitarian approach to civic society, in the mid-late 1990s associated with New Labour and the Third Way (Giddens, 1998), and which sees the voluntary sector as having a quasi-governmental role in service delivery rather than as representative of interests.

In contrast, Paul Sinclair of the Record remarked on the weakness of broader forms of civic association, relating Robert Putnam's argument in *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000)³² to impressions of Scottish (working class) life:

And it talks about how in America in the 1950s your dad of three would go out on a Thursday evening with his mates and they'd all go bowling, and now actually you go and bowl on your own. You know, a number of people do, and there's not the sense of community and doing things together. And one of the politicians I speak to argues that he grew up in a housing estate much like mine, where dads came home, were home by five, had their tea, went out and took the BB [Boys Brigade] or coached football or did something. He says now the same housing estate dads get home at half seven, they're knackered, they don't even want to talk to their kids, and there's no point in doing anything else and there's all these problems and then we get fragmentation. So ideology, I think we have values, but no I do think we're becoming much more individualistic. (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

Sinclair sees a more individualist and instrumental attitude as a historical development, but as opposed to Paterson et al's (2004:154-5) argument that it is a product of a more educated and

³² This was the only instance of an academic perspective informing a journalist's perception of publics and their political participation.

affluent population, he sees it (or his politician source does) as a product of late modernity's demands on the workforce.

Others referred explicitly to more formal organised interests such as trade unions, although this was not a prominent characterisation of publics, more common among older journalists: Dave King had been working at the Daily Record for 27 years, and had been a journalist for 42 years.

Scotland has always been left-of-centre, the political atmosphere has always been to the left, you know, sometimes a long way left. England is quite different. There are pockets of very strong working class activism, but it's *right*-wing. London dockers were the classics, the dockers are a strange breed in London, who could be very left wing and very protectionist in some ways, but they're also, they could be bloody Alf Garnets in others. I mean there is a strange mix in the actives.... The campaigning of the working class of Scotland has been different, 'cause it does always tend to be on the one side, whereas there are pockets, but especially in the London area, where unionism was *way* to the right of what you thought possible for a union. (Dave King, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

This, again, reflects the distinction between economic beliefs associated with personal interest and social attitudes, although King still sees a left-wing economic activism as more naturally aligned with liberal or progressive social views.

Joan McAlpine regarded formal, organised civic society in Scotland as fairly influential.

For example in London Tony Blair is going down the road of Foundation Hospitals, and we're not, and I imagine that that was to do with the health unions and the influence they have on Scottish Labour, and the influence of doctors in Scottish society, and a number of things to do with certain interests in Scotland, that if they did that it would cause so much disruption that it wouldn't be worth it. (Joan McAlpine, Deputy Editor, The Herald)

However McAlpine's suggestion that they represented "certain interests", implies that health professionals opposed the policy on their own behalf as workers rather than because of strong beliefs on the best or fairest way to provide public health services.

In terms of the readership of the particular newspapers, journalists at the Daily Record and Evening Times tended to see their readership as broadly reflective of the wider population in their circulation areas, whilst those at The Herald regarded their market as more distinct and determined as much by social class as geography. Herald readers were broadly characterised as "better educated" (Joan McAlpine) and "more thoughtful" (Calum MacDonald), but were also seen as diverse in their area of employment and therefore in political philosophy.

You'll have, you know, this sort of educated academic working at Glasgow University, living in the West End who will probably have very liberal, very left wing opinions, say, but on the other hand you might have the businessman living out in a Stirlingshire village or in Bearsden who might [also] be reading The Herald. (Joan McAlpine, Deputy Editor, The Herald)

In particular, the readers who tend to write letters to the editor were seen as more left-wing than the general readership – "the people who make the most noise, who write the most

letters, will tend to be probably the most left of centre, but I suspect that our readership is quite conservative underneath it all” (Calum MacDonald). The suburban “Glasgow businessman, conservative, Bearsden reader” (Damien Henderson) who is resistant to change, especially social and cultural change, was a characterisation mentioned by several Herald journalists, and was referred to as the “traditional” reader, related to the history of the newspaper as Conservative-supporting until the 1980s (Reid, 2006).

The characterisation of the Scottish public as having social democratic economic principles was certainly not explicitly present in the campaigns, and the instrumental interpretation was much more in evidence. As we saw in the last chapter, the Evening Times did press for quality public health provision, but assumed that public demand for such provision would not extend to support for higher taxes to pay for it, and indeed assumed that support was based on perceived personal benefit from use of the hospital, rather than any social democratic principle. The Herald argued that society should take responsibility for the welfare of asylum-seeking families, but stopped short of making reference to the economic implications of that responsibility, leaving the way open for anti-immigration critics (largely in letters to the editor) to portray asylum-seekers as a potentially crippling financial burden. The Daily Record did not call for greater redistribution to help those suffering from problems related to poverty and deprivation, and instead focused on angles that reflected a belief in the social conservatism of Scots, such as the law and order agenda.

8.1.2. Expectations of public opinion on campaign issues

In terms of beliefs and opinions on specific issues, publics were imagined more pragmatically as people with experiences and interests. Therefore it was the focus on crime enforcement that Daily Record journalists considered the basis of specific consensus on issues – “It’s the kind of thing that everybody... nobody’s got a good word for a heroin dealer” (Mark McGivern), perhaps based on an assumption that people want change they can see with their own eyes and that the perpetrators are the most visible aspect of the problem.

And I think there was huge anger at what was happening and anger that people seemed to be getting away with it. It’s a bit like drug-dealing isn’t it? Everybody knows who these people are who are, you know, the money-lenders and, again, there was this great frustration that nothing seems to get done. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record).

The attributed emotion of anger and frustration suggests a focus on fairness; that people want to ensure that everyone is abiding by the rules governing behaviour in society, and not ‘getting away with’ unfair advantage. This implies an understanding of cooperation in society akin to game theory, where willingness to behave socially or altruistically is predicated on strategic exchange and contingent on others behaving similarly, rather than on an a-priori principle. Such goal-oriented rationalism is also consistent with a utilitarian approach.

Daily Record journalists explicitly stated that they did not expect their readers to hold socially liberal views on specific issues, and argued that any such angles originated with the Labour party, rather than the newspaper or their expectations about their readers.

I think there are occasions when the Record is ahead of public opinion on certain issues. Now, what tends to happen then is you just kind of, you know, you say what you have to say and you... you don't make... you don't sort of shout about it, things like that. I mean I think this happens to the Record, which as you know is a Labour-supporting newspaper and often there will be... there will be socially liberal issues, you know, which we are in agreement with but which you kind of suspect a lot of our readers would not be, would be more resistant to. Having said that, I mean the previous Labour administration was very sort of... was quite socially tough on issues like crime, I mean it was ASBOs and Parenting Orders and all things like that which I think probably was in tune with a lot of their core voters and our readers. But I think that there were occasions when they weren't. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

Even though the journalists at the Record assumed that the majority of their readers voted Labour, they still believed that those readers were more inclined toward 'tough' policies on crime enforcement than welfare and social justice. This is evident in the way in which the Scottish Executive's welfare aims in policies such as Parenting Orders were not covered in the Daily Record's otherwise supportive campaign, as we saw in the previous chapter.

Even the majority of journalists at The Herald considered 'the Scottish public' to be socially conservative. Readers were commonly assumed to be hostile to immigration and asylum, and even though Herald campaign articles suggested that the tabloids were misrepresenting or producing such views, journalists privately accepted the popular press' version of 'public opinion'.

I think there is a view that that kind of stance on immigration isn't supported by the public, and I think, I think it's an issue that the public's very divided on, which is quite a brave thing, to campaign in the way that we did on Dungavel, because it was taking a stance. (Damien Henderson, Reporter, The Herald)

Henderson regarded the campaign as a matter of principle, leading rather than following 'public opinion' (although he also argued that "Scotland's a less racist place" than elsewhere in the UK). Such opinion-leading behaviour was described by Editor Mark Douglas Home as "surprising" readers with new information (see Chapter 5), however, as we saw in the last chapter, there was little evidence of the campaign articles challenging the assumptions attributed to readers about the impact of immigration or the motives of asylum-seekers.

Again, the socially liberal angle of the Dungavel campaign was argued to have originated more with public figures than as a reflection of the imagined public, and again with reference to the "different political consensus" in the Labour-led Executive in contrast with Westminster politics, in that there was perceived to be "more support for immigration politically" (Damien Henderson, Reporter, The Herald). Again, however, McAlpine judged the contributions of groups in civic society to be contrary to the views of "the general public".

And despite the fact that perhaps a lot of the readers might not have felt so sympathetic towards failed asylum seekers. Although a lot of the great and the good of Scotland, the

churches, the trade unions, and the social work chiefs and the teaching unions were all very much against the locking up of children in Dungavel. The general public's view... well other polls in other papers showed that they weren't that bothered about families being there. (Joan McAlpine, Deputy Editor, The Herald)

Civic society organisations were therefore not seen as representative of their membership, or wider publics, but rather as what tabloid or right-wing newspapers tend to refer to as the 'liberal elite'; this is further explored below.

Given that most journalists agreed that Scots had a greater belief in universal state provision of public goods, rather than faith in the market and choice, journalists might have anticipated a supportive opinion in terms of welfare spending. However, the editor of the Evening Times assumed that readers and the wider 'public' had little faith in the bureaucratic public sector to be responsive to the public, that "there was probably an expectation out there that big public institutions like that tend to ride roughshod over public opinion and do what they want anyway" (Charles McGhee). This objection to public institutions assumes a self-interest in doing "what they want", as opposed to 'what they believe is best', and perhaps assumes that the market is more responsive to what 'the public' (characterised as fragmented, self-interested voters) "want". Preference is framed as more valid than argument. McCann acknowledged that 'public' hostility to the closure was imagined to be an instinctive response, but also that their own, journalistic response was similarly instinctive.

And I think in the early days the feeling was 'this is a bad thing', and that the public see it as a bad thing, and we tend to agree with them on that. Without being entirely sure.... It's a bad thing, it just is, it'll be unpopular, it's just... doesn't seem right. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

A hospital closure is essentially seen as an intrinsically "bad thing" in itself, almost regardless of the arguments about health outcomes.

Leask also related hostility to the closure to civic pride and the defence of a valued institution, though in this case referring to the unthreatened Royal Hospital for Sick Children.

The money that was raised by the public subscription for the hospital, it was paid for, effectively, not by the NHS and the taxpayer, but by ordinary people who put their hands in their pocket. [...] And I think that that's something that everyone in Glasgow can feel proud about. [...] It's a big icon, it's about Glasgow, and not *bad* Glasgow, not knife Glasgow, not sectarian Glasgow, not slum Glasgow, it's about 'Glasgow: not bad eh?' (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

The hospital was therefore thought to have a symbolic role in the city's understanding of itself, but one of the things that it stood for was the civic-minded generosity of "ordinary people", giving them more moral ownership than payment through taxation.

Journalists recognise popular characterisations of Scottish publics as more left wing and supportive of social democracy and the welfare state (although they also challenge conceptions of Scots as more socially and culturally tolerant), and in this abstract sense tend

to conceive of publics in terms of associative and collective behaviour, rather than as a mass of fragmented, self-interested individuals. However, Joan McAlpine argued that support of the welfare state was instrumentally-motivated due to Scots disproportionately benefiting, and David Leask suggested that there is also a significant wealthy population with an interest in *less* redistributive politics. Whilst only The Herald journalists were conscious that their readership was not representative of Scottish society as a whole, all three papers assumed an audience who were more liberal and less corporatist, more self-interested and less collectivist. They expected 'the public' to be angry at criminals "getting away with" crime, frustrated at perceived system failures in enforcement (including immigration control), sceptical of public service bureaucracies, and instinctively against hospital closures. Although Daily Record journalists expected most of their readers to be Labour voters, they did not expect them to be supportive of all of the party's policies, and although Herald journalists regarded their readers as the educated elite, they did not expect them to agree with "the great and the good" in civic society. The next section examines the representation of "the public", "public opinion", and "readers" in the campaign texts, as well representations of national identity and notions of "community", in terms of the substance of beliefs, attitudes and opinion ascribed to these 'publics'.

8.2. Representation of publics: issue publics, 'public opinion' and campaign support

This section will give an account of the beliefs, attitudes and opinions attributed to various publics in the campaigns. The Evening Times referred most frequently to "the public" (82 times, in 25% of articles), partly because it was used by their political and official (clinical) sources (25 and 14 times respectively, of a total 49 quotes) and disproportionately to "public opinion" (20 times) in comparison with the other campaigns. The Daily Record instead favoured "readers" (46 times, in 16% of articles) and "communities" (207 times, in 43% of articles), largely in relation to soliciting tip-offs for the 'name and shame' aspect, whilst use of "the public" tended to be in the context of "members of the public", again, reflecting their police sources (14 of 20 quotes in the drugs campaign and three of four quotes in the airguns campaign). The Herald, meanwhile, made most reference to "Scots" (20 times, led by letter-writers), and "communities" (46 times, seven by campaigners, seven by politicians and four times by letter-writers), whilst the four references to "readers" were all made in correspondence.

The notions of "readers" and "the public" were represented in distinct ways at both the Daily Record and Evening Times. Support for the campaigns was specifically attributed to "readers" rather than "the public" more generally, and references to "readers" were rarely attributed to sources. The Daily Record's drugs campaign most frequently referred to readers (and addressed them to give them credit for successes and pledge to "keep on fighting" for them), followed by the anti-social behaviour campaign. Both overtly prefaced most references with a

claim to ownership – “our readers” (10 times) or “[Daily] Record readers” (18 times), so the actions of the readers represent a testament to the influence of the paper. The Evening Times also referred to their readers in such a way, but only 11 times in twice as many articles. The Herald rarely mentioned either “the public” or “readers”, and those few references were more syntactically and modally complex than in the Daily Record or Evening Times.

The Daily Record represented ‘the public’ as highly critical of failures of enforcement, particularly in relation to drug dealing and anti-social behaviour, and to some extent loan sharks, among those who lived in areas where there was a high incidence of offending. The anti-social behaviour campaign largely substantiated this characterisation with reference to letters to the editor which (as we saw in Chapter 7) indicated that the main publicly perceived cause of anti-social behaviour was the reluctance or inability of police to arrest the young people involved. The letters page was also referred to as evidence of support for the loan sharks campaign but this time to demonstrate that people did not blame borrowers, since “Only a few [three of the 16 published] believed people should know better than to borrow from them” (DR 01/06/02).

The Record substantiated its claims of support for their drugs campaign with reference to the protest march attendance, which was interpreted as a statement by “the people of Scotland” that “they want the drug dealers out of their communities” (DR 02/05/01). Otherwise, publics’ feelings toward drug dealers were largely attributed by political, official and celebrity source, such as the football manager quoted saying that people in deprived areas of the east end were “fed up with the people who are pushing drugs” (DR 17/03/01).

The assumption that (local, affected) public(s) understood drug use as caused by drug dealers was, again, linked to ‘system failure’ explanations in terms of policing failing to effectively enforce the laws that are supposed to constrain offenders’ behaviour (Elias, 1986). In particular, the newspaper reported local people’s frustration with the police’s difficulties in getting more substantial evidence following drug tip-offs – that operations “came to nothing” (DR 03/02/01), and that dealers were thought to consider themselves “untouchable” (three times). This was further equated with support for more tangible enforcement; that “The public expects to see high-visibility policing” (senior police source, quoted in DR 15/02/01). There was essentially a conflation of continued experience of the problem with support for enforcement-related policy solutions on the basis that people did not approve of or tolerate drug-dealing.

The various publics were also attributed a vague “feeling against drugs” (three times). This was, again, inferred from attendance at the march, but this time by politicians; “The tremendous turn-out proved just how much feeling the people of Scotland have against drugs” (MSP in letter to the editor, DR 11/04/01); “The Daily Record has taken on an important role

which shows the depth of feeling of its readers against drugs” (Scottish Executive minister, quoted in DR 02/03/01). Public opinion was therefore gauged from the response to and support of the newspaper’s rhetoric. However, the shift in the focus of the campaign toward stories focused on heroin was driven by the *readers* in their role as sources; the editor’s intention had been that it would be about “drugs in general, but it turned into a heroin campaign because all the complaints were... we got very few complaints about other drugs” (Mark McGivern). Although the paper continued to regard cannabis as a gateway drug, the general focus of the campaign does suggest that it is difficult for the newspaper to follow a predetermined angle that is at odds with people’s experience if it relies on readers as sources for the bulk of the campaign copy.

Nonetheless, being “against drugs” reflected the framing of competing values discussed in the previous chapter – that the drug dealers had had the upper hand, and by marching the mainstream (imagined) community were re-imposing their dominant values – in a “defiant gesture” (DR 03/03/01), that “will go down in history as the day all Scotland fought back” (DR 02/04/01). The implied effect of that gesture was dramatic – “ordinary people determined to ensure a safer Scotland for future generations” (DR 30/03/01); “The day that 20,000 Scots marched for a new future” (DR 02/04/01), though it was by no means clear what change was anticipated, or how that would happen.

The Herald’s representation of public opinion was rather contradictory; both denouncing hostility to immigration as racism in society, *and* at the same time claiming widespread public support in order to legitimate and lend force to their campaign. The newspaper’s representation of a supportive opinion was rather vaguely expressed as a public “outrage” (11 times, three times in letters to the editor), but interestingly and unusually referred to active publics in the form of the civic society organisations such as trades unions and churches, and issue publics such as refugee pressure groups, that initiated the campaign, rather than a more general ‘public’. Unlike the tabloid papers, The Herald did not claim a central role in the campaign, or present the newspaper as the originator of arguments with which the readers or publics were simply in agreement, but rather as publicising an extant campaign and considered opinion expression of these groups; “The public outcry over the issue has been highlighted in The Herald” (leader column, HD 16/12/03), referring rather to those exercising publicity rather than an aggregated notion of ‘the public’.

More generalised favourable public opinion was largely expressed in terms of Scottish national identity – the paper referred to “Scots” almost twice as often as “the public” or “public opinion” (22 times, 10 times, and twice, respectively). There was a discourse, particularly on the part of letter-writers, of Scottishness as tolerance, inclusiveness and welcoming. One letter-writer presented a rhetorical separation of critics of the campaign from the Scottish public, and allied the former instead with the British government.

THOSE who apparently support the inhumanity of the British government's actions seem deliberately blind to the fact that the main thrust of the Scottish complaint was that, however wrongly the Ay case as a whole was conducted, it was the treatment of the Ay children that was in absolute terms unacceptable to the Scottish people (letter to the editor, HD 11/08/07).

For obvious reasons the Scottish Nationalist Party were particularly keen on this framing – the then leader of the SNP, John Swinney, promised not to allow the Executive “to ignore the mass protests, or ignore the shame felt by the overwhelming majority of Scots” (protest rally speech quoted in HD 08/09/03). A letter to the editor also described the Scottish Executive as being “nae langer Scots” (HD 07/08/03). Whilst this reflects the Scottish identity reported by Henderson above, other letter-writers expressed more doubts in the face of the racist rhetoric of another correspondent who “does nothing to restore my faith that Scots are not the bigoted, ignorant, narrow-minded people I hope we are not” (HD 09/08/07).

The Herald acknowledged that their presentation of supportive public opinion was contrary to the dominant (possibly mistaken) assumptions about public opinion, and therefore that urging politicians to respond to public opinion could lead to populist anti-immigration policies – “there are easy votes in [Conservative] suggestions of special health screening for new immigrants lest they burden our health service” (opinion-writer, HD 07/08/03)³³. This was a popular explanation for (UK) government policy, for instance, one letter-writer suggested that “Government and opposition compete to be the most vicious because they believe this reflects the will of the public” (letter to the editor HD 07/08/03). An opinion writer made the opposite argument, that the racism of ‘society’ (even the middle class portion from which *Herald* readers are largely drawn) is a product of, or made acceptable by, *politicians’* racist discourses, “New Racism, legitimised by New Labour” (opinion column, HD 04/09/03) suggesting that politicians, (like the newspaper) should lead public opinion by example.

George Foulkes, a Labour MP, conversely blamed the campaign *itself* for pushing the issue further than the public might accept, causing a retrenchment of hostile views.

You have missed the point that those from overseas - genuine asylum-seekers and immigrants - as well as Scots of Asian or other ethnic backgrounds are especially worried about the backlash this campaign for these illegal applicants might provoke. You may have pleased the small coterie of correspondents who flood your letters column each week, but I doubt the vast majority of your readers or of the people of Scotland will have been impressed. (George Foulkes, letter to the editor, HD 15/09/03)

This would seem to be indicative of the reluctance of politicians to tackle the issue for fear of inflaming intrinsically resistant public opinion. However, this was challenged by an ‘ordinary’ letter-writer, “Such a backlash is not some sort of natural and unavoidable response that people jump to, but the consequence of an orchestrated racist campaign” (letter to the editor, HD 16/09/03). That orchestration was frequently argued to originate, not with politicians, but with the mass-market and mid-market press that The Herald argued politicians feared.

33 Although perhaps not, given that the Conservative party lost the 2005 election.

The Herald Editor, Mark Douglas Home, considered apparent public opinion on immigration and asylum a construct of the tabloid press.

I'm not sure that the majority are as prejudiced as we like to think. But it's hard to know what the majority think when, you know, when there's no real way of testing what they think. Because the mass circulation papers are all about peddling their own kinds of prejudices, and their justification for this is that this is believed by the common man and, and then it probably does become believed by the common man because they've read it so much that on what basis would they believe something else if they're not hearing anything any different? (Mark Douglas Home, Editor, The Herald)

Journalists often attributed a greater power of influence to other newspaper than they did their own, but Douglas Home does believe it is possible to change people's minds by exposing them to the full range of information and arguments.

Like the Daily Record's anti-social behaviour campaign the Herald made some claim to evidence of supportive 'public opinion' in the letters to the editor page. Seventy letters were published relating to the campaign, of which 56 (80%) were sympathetic to the campaign, and 10 were explicitly critical. This balance of opinion was reported by the paper in its regular Saturday item 'Postbag Poll', indicating 85% and 83% agreement among letter-writers (HD 09/08/03, 13/09/03). In addition, the salience of the Dungavel issue for letter-writers was indicated in the occasional Saturday item 'Hot Topics', which suggested that the campaign topic was the most popular subject of the week for correspondents on two occasions (of the eight published over the duration of the campaign). However, according to the Letters Editor, Andrew Hood, the amount of correspondence on the subject was relatively small, and Editor Mark Douglas Home "kept on asking" if more letters were coming in on the subject. In part, though, Hood put this down to the failure to explicitly solicit letters (whilst in contrast, the other newspapers solicited support by addressing the readers directly).

Some letter-writers expressed criticism of the campaign as "the sensationalist soundbites of the pseudo-left" (HD 06/09/03), "bluster from bleeding-heart liberal clergy, unrepresentative pressure groups, self-appointed social-conscience lawyers (there's a contradiction in terms), tree-dwelling MSPs, and indeed bandwagon-riding journalists" (HD 09/08/03), and "the left-wing pro-illegal immigration agenda" (HD 08/08/03). The latter contributor further anticipated being subjected to "dreaded moral accusations of being [...] a racist" (HS 08/08/03). However, supportive letter-writers took the opposite point of view, criticising the formal and instrumental rationality of the critics and explicitly expressing their moral beliefs. In response to one correspondent's argument that the UK is not socially responsible for foreign nationals (HD 08/08/03), another correspondent argued that he "displays a selfish and arrogant attitude which appears to be endemic within the British population" (HD 09/08/03), criticising him for only considering his own personal interests through instrumental rationality. Another correspondent rejected critics' formal rationality of adherence to existing structural constraints of law – "It is extremely worrying that many of your correspondents are more concerned with

the letter of asylum law, rather than its spirit” (HD 11/08/03). Other supportive letter-writers also lamented the values of the campaign critics, declaring they were “frankly appalled at the attitude of some of your readers”, but regarded them as merely a “mean-minded minority” (HD 09/09/03). Overall, the letters to the editor represented a public forum that could accommodate dissent, allowing for ambiguity and controversy rather than presenting an artificially simplified consensus, though each side merely described the other as the oppressively sanctimonious “bleeding heart” or individualistically selfish “mean-minded” minority, without coming to an accommodation between the two sides.

One Herald article also represented or constructed public opinion via ‘vox pops’ solicited on the streets of Scotstoun, where campaigners proposed siting an asylum hostel to house families who would otherwise be held at Dungavel (HD 03/11/07). Two quotes were published, one in favour of welcoming asylum-seekers on account of the falling Scottish population, another citing the “innocence” of children. The newspaper’s interpretation was that “public opinion yesterday was firmly on the side of the refugee families”. However, the same article featured a contradictory assessment of public opinion from Labour MP Michael Connarty – “It [the hostels proposal] would give the government the ability to say ‘Well, we are tough on fake asylum-seekers and cheating immigrants’ which people want” whilst also being compassionate solution, with no reference to public demand for the latter aspect.

Another measure of the public estimation of the problem was in protests organised by civic associations and pressure groups. The paper reported that the church leader John Mone had gathered 21,000 petition signatures (five times), and that another petition had been submitted to the petitions committee by the STUC (HD 13/11/03) who also organised a “2000-strong rally” (HD 08/09/03), following a “packed” public meeting (HD 06/09/03) organised by Positive Action in Housing. The Herald depicted the anticipated support for the rally as broad in character

Among them will be people from different parts of Scotland and of various backgrounds and faiths. The employed and unemployed will be there, the young and the old, native Scots and those that have made this country home. (leader column, HD 06/09/03)

The article attempted to demonstrate that campaigners were not just the ‘usual suspects’, but a broader principled consensus rather than an interest group, representing supporters as upholding shared values. However, of 16 mentions of support for various campaigners efforts or objectives, only two referred to public support, one of which spoke of the need to solicit it (German pressure group, quoted in HD 06/08/03) and the other argued that “few people would support” the policy of uncontrolled immigration that the correspondent argues is implied by the campaign (letter to the editor, HD 06/08/03). In fact, overall, more (nine) refer to soliciting support or criticise the refusal of politicians to support the campaign, than make claims of public support (seven).

The Evening Times, having a smaller circulation than the Daily Record and a less elite audience than The Herald, relied heavily on public support to give the campaign legitimacy and force. The “petition” was referred to 224 times, only 54 of which were in quotes or attributed to sources (23 to health professionals, 13 to politicians, 18 to others including affected individuals and campaigners). In 23 cases the petition was mentioned in relation to “the public”, nine times in relation to “readers”. The petition was intended “to show how strongly the public supports”, or “the level of public support for” the hospital(s) (five times), and it was interpreted as demonstrating “public opposition” to closure plans twice, and the desire of readers “to save” the hospital(s) four times, conflating admiration for or gratitude to the hospital and its staff with opposition to the centralisation of services. The newspaper reported the running total of signatures on the petition 73 times.

Various public meetings were also referred to (36 times). Initially they referred to the Health Board’s public meetings (six times in all), which are held *in public*, but do not call for public *involvement*. Other, more interactive meetings organised by the Health Board as part of the consultation process were mentioned but not publicised, as was a meeting organised by some of the local MSPs (mentioned after it had occurred – ET 14/11/03). Two meetings organised by pressure groups or ‘charities’ were publicised, one by Save Our Hospitals (publicised in one article and reported in two further articles), but most emphatically the second, organised by Action for Sick Children and officially supported by the Evening Times (16 times – six promoting attendance and 10 quoting statements made). This meeting gave an opportunity for public participation, though the parents quoted had almost all already appeared in the newspaper, and merely reiterated their experiences.

Despite the apparent significance of ‘public opinion’ in the campaign, little of the substance of what people believed or believed in was included in the newspaper’s account. Overwhelmingly ‘the public’s’ attitude was one of “support” or “backing” (in all “support” 178 times, “backing” 46 times, specifically “public” support 25 times, from “readers” seven times, and directly addressing readers four times), although support was more frequently framed as for the hospital than for the newspaper campaign.

In the Daily Record and Evening Times campaigns, ‘the public’ were referred to repeatedly as the basis of the campaigning advocacy, but the concerns attributed to them were emotions or statements of support for the campaign rather than substantive opinions. The newspapers positioned themselves as political advocates and claimed the agreement and support of various ‘publics’ (readers, local communities etc). In contrast The Herald took a less central role, putting civic and interest campaign groups centre-stage, and therefore recognising activism as valid, and in the letters page provided a forum for a more wide-ranging debate *by* as well as *about* publics, facilitating a more complex account of various ‘publics’ with a range

of beliefs and philosophical orientations in relation to rights and responsibilities, formal rules and substantive belief. However, the representation of 'public opinion' in the news pages was more vague and inconsistent, probably because the private assessments of journalists were less optimistic about 'public opinion' than the editorial line. The next section will analyse the extent to which agency was discursively and semantically attributed to such constructed notions of 'the public' or specific (local or national) 'publics' in the campaign representations.

8.3. Representation of public agency

The various references to 'publics' can be characterised, not only in terms of the substance of those characterisations, but also in terms of the linguistic structures. The syntactical position of 'the public' as either subject or object of the sentence can indicate whether they are attributed agency, or are described as affected by the actions of others ('affected participants'). The details of sentence construction will rarely be consciously considered by journalists, beyond general stylistic concerns, but to some extent betray journalists' assumptions about 'the public' or 'publics' – about individuals' ability to have control over their own lives and to affect the world around them, and how they relate to social groups and structures.

This section will analyse in turn the representations of "readers", "the public", "Scots", and "communities", in each case examining the ways in which they are represented as active 'agents', that their actions are nominalised, that they are semantically 'affected participants', or described as being in a particular 'state'. Being 'agents' in the sentence simply refers to being the acting 'subject' associated with the verb, whilst affected participants are conversely the 'object' acted upon. 'Nominalisation' refers to verbs being transformed into nouns, such as "the public view" and "public concerns", and even "public opinion", that conceal the substance of what it is that they think, believe, or are concerned about, and, crucially, the reasons for this. However, verbs are also sometimes nominalised for stylistic purposes, such as to make writing more formal (especially in academic writing).

In the Evening Times "readers" were framed semantically as 'agents' in 10 of 23 references, eight of which were framed in active syntax – four described them as having "signed the petition", but they also "show[ed] their anger" (ET 17/10/03) and "condemn[ed]" the closure (ET 21/10/03), though also as evidenced only by the petition. In the Daily Record's drugs campaign "readers" were agents in more than half (19 of 34) of sentences referring to them, though seven of those were in the passive voice (e.g. "named by Record readers"). These attributions of agency came early in the campaign, during the name-and shame stage, and related to reporting drug dealers to the newspaper – they "shopped", "named", or "identified" dealers six times, and "called", "phoned" or "rang" the newspaper seven times. Later in the

campaign they (actively) “backed” and “joined” the campaign (twice), but were largely semantically affected participants.

On the run up to the protest march Daily Record readers were “asked” or “urged” to join the march (twice), “joined” in marching. The anti-social behaviour campaign also solicited support, but in this case all six references to “readers” framed them as ‘beneficiaries’ in terms of being listened to, such as “asking Record readers for their views” (DR 06/09/03) and “hear the experiences of Record readers” (twice). In the loan sharks campaign, readers were once “giv[en] the chance to shop loan sharks”, but were rarely mentioned in this campaign. “Readers” were less frequently framed as affected participants in the Evening Times (seven of 23 – under a third), twice being “urged to sign” the petition, but also were given an “assurance” and a “chance”, and were “insulted” and “thanked”. Again, this was not used by The Herald to any extent – two of the four references to “readers” framed them as affected, both in letters to the editor – they were “invite[d]” (HD 15/07/03) and described as not “impressed” by the campaign (HD 15/09/03). “Readers” actions were not frequently nominalised in any of the newspapers. The Evening Times referred to readers’ “support” or “view” five times; the Daily Record made reference only once to readers’ “feeling” (in the drugs campaign – DR 02/03/01), and their “response” (loan sharks campaign – DR 01/06/02), and The Herald once to readers’ “attitude” (letter to the editor, 09/08/03).

In contrast to the “readers”, “the public” were less actively portrayed. In The Evening Times, “the public” were semantically framed as agents in fewer than a third of cases (21 of 83 instances), and in just under half of these their action was de-emphasised or denied, three times by being presented in the passive transformation, and in a further seven cases either in the conditional modality (such as ‘can’ or ‘could’) or negative (such as ‘can’t’), leaving just 11 instances where “the public” were clearly presented as active, as “support[ing]”, “put[ting] their view” and so on. Again, in the Daily Record “the public” were less frequently attributed agency than readers (seven times of 29 references), and their actions were often conditional or imperative – “if the public let us know” (police quoted in DR 19/12/00), “the public need to see” (police quoted in DR 20/12/00). “The public” were twice described as having “backed” politicians at the election on account of the promise of an airgun ban, but neither “readers” nor “the public” were frequently attributed agency in the other campaigns.

In the Evening Times, actions attributed to “the public” were nominalised 14 times of the total 83 references, including three times as their “view”, “concern” twice, and “support” once. In addition, what “the public” thought about the issue was described as “public opinion” 20 times, seven of which were in direct quotes (four from politicians, two health professionals and a campaigner) and a further seven attributed to sources (four politicians and three to the health board). “Public opinion” was described as being “ignored” four times (three of which were attributed to politicians) and treated with “contempt” twice (quoting a campaigner and a health

professional), and as not fully “gauge[d]”, consider[ed]” or “take[n] account of”. The Daily Record used fewer nominalisations (in the drugs campaign only – nine of 29 reference to “the public”), specifically “information” (three times), “support” (twice), and “perception” (DR 09/03/01), plus “public opinion” just once (politician quoted in DR 07/12/00). This may be a stylistic choice for the tabloid Daily Record, which uses more direct simple sentences. The Herald also only used five nominalisations – “the public mind” (leader column, HD 09/08/03), “will” (letter to the editor, HD 06/09/03), “outcry” (HD 16/12/03), and “public opinion” twice”, but it made fewer references to “the public” all round.

The most typical representation of “the public” was not as actors at all, but ‘affected participants’, most commonly as ‘patients’ – those affected by the actions of other subjects – or occasionally as ‘beneficiaries’ of them. In the Evening Times this was by far the most common framing of “the public” (46 times – over half of references). They were “offered”, “encouraged”, “dismissed”, “listened to” (or not) twice, and had information (or “misinformation”) “compiled”, “distributed”, “provided” or “made available” to them nine times. Fifteen uses of “the public” directly quoted politicians, who were, if anything, more likely to refer to “the public” as affected participants (nine times, out of 15 quotes from politicians), as were health professionals (eight of 12, though five of these were repetitions of the same quote). The Daily Record positioned “the public” as affected participants eight times in the drugs campaign – they were “asked” to name dealers (DR 02/12/00), “show[n]” that they have a role (campaigner quoted in DR 12/12/00), “warned” to be vigilant (police quoted in DR 23/01/01) and so on.

Publics were also described as not acting or being acted on, but simply being in a certain state; in particular, emotions were attributed to them. In the drugs campaign, Daily Record “readers” were described as “anxious” (DR 01/12/00), “concerned” (DR 20/02/01), and “sickened” (DR 11/01/01), as were “communities” (DR 28/02/01). The Evening Times rather nominalised the dominant emotion from ‘being angry’ to “anger” at the proposals (16 times) – whilst it was attached to “protesters”, “readers”, “public”, “Glaswegians” and others, the subject was omitted in seven cases, such as “there is a real anger” (MSP quoted in ET 20/11/03).

The Herald frequently referred to “Scots” (20 times, seven times in correspondence, four quotes from politicians and four leader or opinion columns), split fairly evenly between being positioned as agents, associated with nominalised action, as affected participants, and in a state of being (what Scots ‘are’ or ‘are not’ like). “Scots” agency was presented in a predictive modality, such as “most Scots will feel only shame” (campaigner in letter to the editor, HD 11/08/03), which expresses less certainty than ‘Scots feel’. Three references were made to “the people of Scotland” (two from a campaigner, one MP and a councillor, three of which were in correspondence), as affected participants who had been “besmirched” by Dungavel

and were “called on” to welcome migrants (Bishop Mone quoted in HD 15/08/03 and in letter to the editor 05/09/03).

Four of the six references to “Scots” in the Evening Times were as affected participants, whose lives were “touched by” the hospitals (twice), and were “ignored” and had things “explained” to them. Since the newspaper was making an argument that the hospitals were used by people from throughout Scotland, not just Glasgow, it is perhaps surprising that this was not used more. The Daily Record’s use of “Scots” (as a collective noun, once use as a Scots dialect form of the adjective “Scottish” was discounted) was less distinctive, and was largely used in the same way as “the public”, as was “the people of Scotland”, except that they were described three times as being “united” as a nation.

All of the campaigns made significant mention of “community”, as might be expected from campaigns that could benefit from emphasising *Gemeinschaft* over *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies, 1955) – a more instinctive defence of common goals, rather than a negotiation of personal interests in the wider organisation of society – for the reason highlighted by Aldridge (2003), constructing consensus in an audience with diverse interests. However, it is unclear the extent to which the “communities” referred to are related to social personal contact or more formal social or civic association, or simply as a place where fragmented individuals have similar instrumental interests but are motivated only by how they might *personally* benefit. In many cases the word could be meant and read in any of these ways, and any systematic analysis on this basis would be highly subjective, so a more impressionistic account is offered here.

Reference to communities in the Daily Record campaigns was common in three of the four campaigns – mentioned 146 times and in 56% of articles in the drugs campaign, 32 times and 56% of articles in the loan sharks campaign, 26 times in 38% of anti-social behaviour campaign articles, but only five times in the airguns campaign, featuring in just 7% of articles. The drugs campaign began with two articles that made a great deal of use of “community” or “communities” (22 times in all). The first (DR 17/11/00) reported an announcement by Gordon Brown (then Chancellor of the Exchequer) of proposals to fund “community partnerships” (three times) to tackle drugs. Communities were largely affected – they were “move[d] into” and “[brought] down” by drugs, and had to be “rebuil[t]” and “[made] strong”, but were also ascribed an active role – to “come together” and “join up”. Brown blamed a lack of formal association and voluntary work for the persistent drug problem – “the strong community organisations we need have weakened over time”, and cited an American model of community organisation and their vocal disapproval of drug dealers as inspiration. The second (DR 18/11/00) profiled an example of such community organisation – Mothers Against Drugs’ march through Cranhill³⁴ following a local church leader’s criticisms of the community’s

34 A deprived area in the east end of Glasgow

“reluctance to get involved”. The organiser specified that the community included those *taking* drugs – “the drug users are our community”, and also made explicit that communities were more than neighbourhoods – “if we don’t fight for the drug users, we won’t have a community at all” – describing the social disintegration caused by drugs, rather than simply the effect on families. However, in the remainder of the articles, less frequent reference was made to communities, and references were less explicitly to associative groups with a common will, but more suggestive of groups of collectively affected people (for example, “drugs cause suffering and grief in communities up and down Scotland” – Executive minister quoted in DR 06/12/00), or as individuals who were failing to act in their own interest, especially through individual acts of cooperation with authorities such as reporting criminals (e.g. “the biggest mistake communities can make is that police know everything” – police source quoted in DR 19/01/01).

Apart from similar references to communities as affected participants (“terrorised”, “blight[ed]” etc), the loan sharks campaign largely mentioned communities as a physical location for credit union services, though credit unions were also framed as “community groups”. The anti-social behaviour campaign similarly referred to the “impacts” on the community of youth disorder, with even more focus on community as place and as local environment – Margaret Curran (then Communities Minister) was quoted defending people’s “right to live in a community that is clean and well looked-after” (DR 04/09/03). Apart from three references to local people being helped to “reclaim” their communities (two quoting the First Minister, Jack McConnell), and one mention of communities being “given more powers” to sanction off-licenses that sell alcohol to children, there was no reflection of the consultation document’s promise to “empower” communities by giving them more say in how anti-social behaviour is dealt with by the authorities (Scottish Executive, 2003), much less how communities could take personal responsibility, as was highlighted in the consultation responses – “encouraging attempts to reduce anti-social behaviour to be seen as a collective responsibility, not just the remit of official agencies” (Flint et al., 2003: 27).

Similarly, in the Evening Times’ Queen Mum’s campaign communities were primarily portrayed as a location for services or an area served. However, there was also one mention of a community group, the Drumchapel³⁵ Community Forum, who were actively portrayed as “speak[ing] out” (ET 06/02/04), though no reference to the community and patient groups that had participated in the pre-consultation process. There were also two references to nominalised community “views” and one to their “opinions”. The comparison of the hospital with a community (three times) was also suggestive of personal contact and instinctive loyalty among its members (*Gemeinschaft*).

The Herald also described the “community” as a location where services should be provided for asylum-seekers – especially education and housing. However, the campaign also made

35 A deprived area in north Glasgow.

specific reference to the interpersonal and social role of education in the community, since it was those aspects that were specifically not available under conditions of detention, “which denied children education and social contact on the local community” (HD 12/09/03). Three mentions were made of asylum-seekers “integrating” into the community, and two of “contributing to” the community, which are also suggestive of a social or civic association, rather than a collection of individuals – though on another occasion, “asylum-seeking families and local communities” suggested that the former were not part of the *Gemeinschaft* of the latter (HD 23/06/03).

However, two letters to the editor made liberal arguments for Scottish society as a whole to be seen as a diverse but inclusive community – the “entire spectrum of the community in Scotland” (letter to the editor, HD 15/07/03), and “Scotland as a community of inclusive national identity” (letter to the editor, HD 09/09/03). The latter writer goes on:

Ultimately, indeed, what binds us in this community-writ-large of Scottish nationhood is our stance toward freedom. A freedom that knows no distinction of race or religion or other cause for domination. A freedom that asks us to stand this ground, with reverence for that among which we tread. A freedom to look our neighbour directly in the eye, and offer back the same such honesty of being (letter to the editor, HD 09/09/03)

This depiction of the Scottish community is evocative of Benedict Anderson’s (1991) notion of the nation as an “imagined community” as a powerful ideal that people will give up their own immediate interests and even their own lives to defend – bringing elements of *Gemeinschaft* into wider, more impersonal society. These letter-writers seem to suggest that people should defend the interests of asylum seekers as a defence of Scottishness.

The Evening Times and the Daily Record portrayed their *readers* as fairly active, but only in response to the action of the newspaper – signing the petition in the case of Evening Times readers, and reporting criminals (especially drug dealers) by Daily Record readers, whilst in The Herald only letter-writers made reference to “readers”. In contrast the few actions attributed to “the public” in the popular papers were often nominalised and largely related to the construction of ‘public opinion’, but “the public” were most frequently constructed as affected by the actions of others. However, in The Herald especially, the construction of particular ‘publics’ of the Scottish nation and local “communities” was more complex, active and relational.

8.4. Representation of political participation

Journalists’ comments in the first section of this chapter suggested that they saw civic association as fairly strong and influential, oppositional, and variously as part of establishment, competitive interests, or part of a counter-public. This section will examine the representation of such association, such as trades unions, professional organisations, religious organisations

and pressure groups, in the campaigns. It will then go on to look at the representation of ‘publics’ ability to directly access the Scottish Parliament. In relation to the campaigns the relevant procedures and agencies intended for the direct contact of citizens with their political leaders are public consultations and the petitions committee.

8.4.1. Representation of civic association

The Daily Record did not give much coverage of civic organisation or association, though they were less critical of pressure groups than the newspaper had been in the past. The Section 28 campaign had dismissed the interest groups consulted as “well-funded gay pressure groups”, employing a left-wing discourse of powerful interest groups as a “corrupted counterfeit” (Glasser, 1999) of associative democracy, in order to justify the funding of another campaign group (the ‘referendum’ funded by businessman Brian Souter) to provide a corrective balance, “evening up the odds” for the wider public, contrasting “noisy” interest groups against “the silent majority” (DR 14/01/00).

The closest parallel in this period of campaigning was the anti-social behaviour campaign, since it was (comparatively mildly) critical of the civic organisations that had already responded to the consultation, or at least of their views.

Ministers automatically get to hear from the usual official organisations, including the police, voluntary bodies and local councils. Make no mistake, their views are important and will make fascinating reading. We know, for instance, that homeless charities oppose Government moves down south to withhold housing benefit from nuisance neighbours. And senior police officers have questioned whether they really need extra powers to disperse gangs of youths. (leader column, DR 01/09/03)

The newspaper stops short of questioning the legitimacy of these organisations, and describes advocacy as coming from benevolent “charities” rather than instrumental ‘interest groups’, though it doesn’t mention youth organisations, who might be thought to represent interests that oppose those of the ‘decent people’ that they claimed to be representing.

The drugs and airguns campaigns made some reference to campaign groups set up by affected individuals – in the former Mothers Against Drugs (MAD), and in the latter the parents of children killed in the school shooting in Dunblane in 1996. These groups were genuinely constitutive of the interests that they represented – “representational” as opposed to “promotional” groups that speak *on behalf of* an issue public, though the latter are typically more professional and effective (Grant, 2000: 197). MAD were most likely favoured because they fitted with the angle of the campaign (they focused on expression of disapproval, and were more concerned with driving out dealers than treating victims) rather than defining it. However, whilst other organisations played a more significant role as “primary definers” (Hall et al., 1978), it is not only the newspaper’s selection of sources that influences the angle, but access to them; one journalist described drugs treatment organisations as “wary” of the *Record*, and more inclined toward the ‘quality’ press, whilst the police are a key source for the Daily Record, and contributed to the newspaper’s focus on enforcement and associated

discourse of a “war on drugs”. Similarly, the police’s use of such a discourse was judged in the evaluation of the Scottish Executive’s ‘Know the Score’ campaign to have “made it difficult for them [treatment and outreach organizations] to sign up to the campaign” (MacLean et al., 2002: 24).

The two campaigns that opposed official policies were more dependent on civic society. The Evening Times campaign began with a contribution from a campaigner, Dorothy-Grace Elder, who was a retired investigative journalist and MSP, but increasingly reported the views of professional health organisations such as the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons and health union Unison. However, no formal groups representing patients were referred to, although several had taken part in the pre-consultation process such as the National Childbirth Trust (West Glasgow Branch), Maryhill Mother’s Group, and Father’s Support Group (Ruchazie), and others involved in the policy network group MatNet (Maternity Services Consultation Network) (Greater Glasgow NHS Board, 2003b: appendix 3).

The Herald gave the most significant account of civic society, and indeed the campaign was initiated by a group that included representatives of trades unions, professional associations, and religious leaders. Their role in the campaign was praised by a letter-writer: “Churches and trade-union groups have courageously filled the gap that our politicians left. They deserve credit” (letter to the editor, HD 04/08/03), suggesting that they were more representative of wider society than the official political representatives. Contributions were later published from human rights organisations such as Amnesty, and refugee pressure groups such as Bail for Immigration Detainees and Positive Action in Housing. These groups were largely ‘promotional’ cause groups with open membership and organised structure, and were described by The Herald as “charities” to emphasise their uncontroversial ‘good works’ for disadvantaged groups rather than political advocacy on their behalf, much less portraying refugees as themselves politically active. The campaign also attracted the support of a cross-party group of opposition politicians from the SNP, SSP, and Green Party, reflecting the diversity representation in the Scottish Parliament at the time. Some letter-writers also appeared to be members of political parties, but did not declare their affiliation. This could be regarded as part of healthy corporatism, but as was clear in Chapter 6, the letters editor clearly regarded it as party-political propaganda, and parties as pursuing their own interests as competitors within the political process rather than being representative of their grassroots members and those who vote for them.

8.4.2. Representation of political accessibility

Two campaigns made reference to public consultations – the Evening Times questioned and undermined the Health Board’s consultation, and the Daily Record intervened in the Scottish Executive’s consultation on anti-social behaviour, at the Executive’s request, inviting submissions to the newspaper rather than to the consultation directly.

Daily Record journalists were supportive of the principle of public consultation, but sceptical about the way in which it was carried out.

I think that consultations are fairly often designed to, you know, come up with the answer that politicians wanted to hear and to justify policy-making. So I think it's healthy to be sceptical of consultations to that extent, however... I think it's difficult to argue against the principle of consulting widely on difficult issues, I think it's important that it happens, it's a good thing that it happens, you know. We might be slightly sceptical about the motives. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

However, Record journalists admitted their motivation to intervene in the antisocial behaviour case was to paper's benefit – "newspapers would much rather speak to them themselves, because it means that they get stories out of it, and stories are the lifeblood of the paper" (McGivern).

The Evening Times accused the Health Board of several failings with regard to the public consultation, allowing them to characterise it as "flawed" and a "sham" (further explored in the next chapter). Specifically, they were accused of manipulating public opinion by trying to "force the public into an adversarial decision" (health professional quoted in ET 13/11/03), or of failing to listen to it. The consultation was "public" in the sense that it was conducted '*in public*', and publicly accessible in that there were no entrance criteria for respondents, however, it was not "public" in the sense of being aimed *at* 'the public'. David Leask demonstrated a critical understanding of this in an early campaign article, describing it as "what is euphemistically called "public" consultation on the closure" (ET 22/10/03). He went on:

But let's be clear what this consultation is. It is not a referendum. The board is not asking the people of Glasgow to decide whether to close Queen Mum's. It is challenging them to come up with new evidence strong enough to sway them from the closure proposal. (ET 22/10/03)

The Health Board's remit of consultation was acknowledged, but not explicitly criticised, and subsequently ignored. The newspaper portrayed the consultation as being intended as a measure of public feeling, and criticised the board for their failure to live up to the newspaper's preferred criteria, the "spirit of consultation" (twice). The campaign did encourage readers to respond to the consultation (though less frequently than it encouraged them to sign the petition), but it expected people to find it "complex and intimidating" and told them "don't be put off" (ET 13/11/03). The public were portrayed not only as excluded through the bureaucratic forms of political access, but also disenfranchised through feelings of "cynicism" (four times) and lack of "trust" (10 times) or "confidence" (six times, but five repetitions of one quote) in the board.

Despite the Evening Times' use of the petitions committee, the Health Reporter didn't have much faith in it, or the other mechanisms of the parliament, and was more focused on the less accessible direct decision-makers in the Executive.

I mean even like the petition for example, Charles wanted to do a big petition for the Parliament, it struck me, don't go to the Petitions Committee³⁶, the Petitions Committee can't actually do anything at the end of the day, there's no point petitioning them, but the point is that they can then, refer it to the Health Committee who can refer it back to the Health Board. And then they can say... whatever. But the most that the Petitions Committee could have done, having gone to the Health Board and so on was come back and said, 'okay, you got that badly wrong'. [...] So we gave the petition to Malcolm, because Malcolm had to decide. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

Nonetheless, the campaign described the committee twice as "influential" (one in a quote from an MSP) to give clout to the criticisms made by its members and chairman. However, the mechanism of the petitions committee was not explained, and it was not presented as a form of open public access to the Parliament. 'The public' were portrayed as dependent on more powerful representatives to speak for them, not in terms of joining civic associations that represent their interests or opinions, but through backing the actions of their newspaper.

8.5. Conclusion

Despite an abstract notion of Scotland as a collectivist, politically active, and relatively tolerant nation, in relation to the specific campaign issues journalists expected their readers to be self-interested, sceptical of public institutions, apathetic, and insular. Neither did they consider political parties or civic society to be representative of the 'general' public, who were characterised rather as an undifferentiated mass who had experiences and instincts but not political opinions. This accorded with the representation of the substance of the attitudes and emotions attributed to publics within the campaigns, though their opinions were inferred only in terms of claimed agreement with the newspaper. The Dungavel, anti-social behaviour and (to some extent) loan sharks campaigns made reference to letters to the editor received by the papers on the issues, even though The Herald journalists did not consider letter-writers representative of the readership of the newspaper (see Chapter 6). The drugs and Queen Mum's campaigns supported their assertions with reference to readers' show of support by participating in the protest march and petition respectively, although the manner of recruitment suggests that the newspapers' advocacy was marketed to readers rather than rationally persuading people to the campaign's point of view (see Chapter 7).

Indeed general publics were largely represented as passive, sceptical, even cynical, which was blamed on the lack of accountability of public institutions, including the formal routes of political access such as consultation. In contrast, readers were portrayed more actively, but only in relation to the newspaper – as supporting the campaign and helping by supplying information. However, The Herald featured more complex accounts of publicity and community – interestingly these came disproportionately from letter-writers.

³⁶ It is likely that the editor's interest in the petitions committee was influenced by the early involvement of Dorothy-Grace Elder, an ex-MSP and former member of the committee

The tabloids represented publics in relation to the newspaper as a political actor on their behalf, and perpetuated perceptions of inaccessibility and unaccountability of political actors in order to preserve their position of political influence nominally on behalf of a singular “public”, and to continue to promote this as a public service to “readers” from whose interaction they can generate stories. The Herald was more uncomfortable with its advocacy for both professional and market-related reasons, but facilitated a substantive debate on the values of Scottish society, however, this was arguably limited as it failed to inform that debate with a full range of arguments in the news pages.

Chapter 9: Addressing Politicians: Obligation to ‘Public Opinion’, the ‘Public Interest’ and Moral Principle

The point of campaigning journalism is ostensibly to have a positive effect on the problem identified, and to this end all of the campaigns addressed politicians in some way. The previous chapters have demonstrated how the campaign issues were represented to readers in a way that largely failed to inform them on the wider context and arguments relevant to effective policy preferences, but instead aimed to appeal to instincts, sympathy, fear and self-interest, through personalised representations of the problems, and recruit their support through marketing discourses, defining both ‘deserving’ affected publics and general legitimate publics as politically passive and trusting in the newspaper to act on their behalf. In this chapter attention turns to how politicians were put under pressure to act in response to these representations, leading on to Chapter 10, where the politicians’ responses are addressed.

The first section of this chapter addresses the ways in which politicians were framed as obliged to respond to various dimensions of the represented publics: a generalised ‘public opinion’ or ‘public feeling’, voter demand in terms of electoral mandate or threat of electoral punishment, and affected individuals as those to whom politicians have a responsibility of care. The second section examines the representation of politicians’ obligations to respond to criticisms that claim to reveal wrongdoing in relation to the current or proposed policy. Finally, the last section analyses the less common representation of politicians’ obligation to take a principled lead rather than follow populist demands.

9.1. Framing of politicians’ obligation to respond to publics

All of the campaigns framed politicians as legally or morally obliged to respond to (the newspaper’s representations of) various publics. This section will first examine how the campaigns framed politicians’ obligations to ‘the public’ or ‘public opinion’ with reference to the Daily Record drugs and Evening Times campaigns that orchestrated a show of support through forms of protest. It will then address how those obligations were framed in relation to electoral accountability largely by The Herald and Evening Times, before turning to the presentation of obligation to specific groups of affected individuals (‘victims’), which was a significant aspect of all six campaigns.

9.1.1. Politicians’ obligation to ‘the (general) public’

Most of the campaigns made some reference to public support to place pressure on politicians, but it was the campaigns that had staged protests that particularly represented these shows of ‘public opinion’ as obliging politicians to respond. This framing frequently

served to close down debate by representing those who disagreed with the campaign demands as being 'out of touch' or arrogant.

The Daily Record equated its own enforcement-focused view on drugs with that of "the people", so that criticism of the campaign was an insult, not (only) to the newspaper, but to the public (DR 03/03/01). The only critical viewpoint published in the newspaper came from then SSP leader Tommy Sheridan, who argued that cannabis should be legalised so that cannabis users do not come in to contact with dealers (and therefore with harder drugs) and heroin prescribed to put dealers out of business; he also attempted to organise a counter-march on the same day as the Record's. In an editorial the *Record* stated their view on drugs as "common sense" – that is, believed by everyone without conscious reasons – that "[t]he case for the campaign against hard drugs is irrefutable. It is so obvious it does not even have to be stated" (leader column, DR 03/03/01). Sheridan was therefore judged to be "out of touch" since "The whole of Scotland has thrown its weight behind our campaign" (DR 03/03/01). The newspaper's framing of its own position accords with Hallin's (1986) notion of the sphere of consensus, in claiming its values and opinions as those that everyone holds and that require no balanced presentation of views against. Sheridan's views were conversely located within the sphere of deviance, therefore outside the sphere of legitimate controversy where he would need to be afforded a balanced platform, even though he was an elected representative with greater claim to a public mandate than the newspaper.

The Record was explicitly personal in its criticisms, not only of Sheridan's actions but his personality ("heartless and egoistic", "disrespectful, mean-spirited, self-serving and arrogant"), suggesting that he had no sympathy for drug users or their families (see below) and calling into question his motives ("trying to gain publicity for himself"). He was also described as a "lawbreaker" (for his arrest at an anti-nuclear weapon protest) and a "poll tax jailbird" (DR 03/03/01) and therefore as himself an outsider, who does not cooperate with the dominant values of society as expressed in the laws. This is illustrative of the personal attacks on reputation that may motivate politicians to cooperate. However, other politicians also adopted similar discourses against Sheridan: "I have to tell Mr Sheridan that he is not listening to the ordinary people of Glasgow" and later "the ordinary working-class people of Glasgow" (Margaret Curran (Lab) in Scottish Parliament, 2001: col 847-8) – a particularly pointed accusation since Sheridan portrayed himself as a populist politician and man of the people (a reputation the Daily Record also argued that he had "forfeited" – DR 03/03/01).

Opposition to campaigns that claimed to speak for 'the public' was also interpreted as "arrogant" and "insulting". This was particularly the case in relation to the Evening Times' Queen Mum's campaign since the Health Board had explicitly prioritised clinical arguments over public feeling: "From the very outset, the board stressed its consultation was not a referendum. It would be swayed by clinical facts, not public opinion" (ET 20/02/04). The

newspaper stressed that the Health Board had an obligation to listen, that consultation required that “we need to know people are going to be listened to” (ET 31/10/03); however, listening was defined as acting on public preference, that the Health Board, by not changing its mind previously had proven that “It has not listened and it is not going to listen to what people want this time.” (health professional quoted in ET 24/10/03).

The Evening Times regarded the Health Board’s previous refusal to change their minds as evidence of an intransigent disregard of public opinion.

It was a Health Board that, in our dealings with them on other issues, that we were convinced were not prepared to listen to readers. They made, as far as we were concerned, they made a pretence of carrying out public consultations on various issues, but our experience had been that they weren’t really listening. [...] And so we’d already been through that experience with them, so when they came out with the proposals for the Queen Mum’s hospital and the children’s hospital at Yorkhill we took one look at it and we said ‘they have no intention, given their past record, of listening to public opinion on this’. (Charles McGhee, Editor, Evening Times)

Though the newspaper acknowledged the Health Board’s account of the consultation mechanism as an invitation to put forward counter-arguments and “not a referendum” on public sentiment (three times), journalists presented this as evidence of the board’s unaccountability rather than the limitations of the process. Both the pre-consultation with expert groups and the full public consultation were described as a “sham” 10 times, (attributed to politicians four times, health professionals three times, and one campaigner) and as “flawed” 17 times (politicians nine times, health professionals three times), and the result was twice judged “engineered” by the board. The board’s counter-claim that it was “robust” was cited four times.

The Health Board were portrayed as actively dismissive of public opinion (as represented by the newspaper’s petition); Planning Director Catriona Renfrew was quoted as saying:

It's not a matter of how many million signatures you get. If people look at the material and say 'There's something you've missed,' then it will be considered. We want people to consider the issues with us and respond on that basis. (ET 27/10/03)

Though this merely restated the board’s position on consultation, this statement was described as an “astonishing outburst”, and the article was headlined “Health board boss slammed for insult to readers who sign petition to save the Queen Mum’s”. The board’s refusal to attend the public meeting that was supported by the Evening Times was also interpreted as “an insult to the people of Glasgow” (parent quoted in ET 20/01/04) and a “slap in the face not just for the public but for the professionals” (MSP quoted in ET 16/01/04). Overall the Health Board was argued to have “shown outrageous contempt for public opinion” (ET 17/02/04), and “poured scorn on the outcry” (ET 20/02/04).

The explanation presented for the board’s position on public opinion was that they were remote and “high-handed” (Sandra White (SNP) quoted in ET 20/11/03) and believed themselves to know better, rather than as having clinical reasons. The Health Board were

accused of “arrogance” 13 times and “arrogant” *action* a further two times, but characterised as *being* “arrogant”, just twice, and as being “smug” once (ET 13/11/03). These more personal, though still collective, insults were most frequently related to the consultation or public opinion (eight times including ‘smug’), but also twice in response to the board’s refusal to answer 16 written questions posed by the Evening Times.

And with astonishing arrogance, the board suggested it wouldn't answer the questions because The Evening Times didn't understand the issues surrounding the Queen Mum's. (ET 07/11/03)

The Health Board’s reaction to the campaign was not successful in PR terms; in refusing to make sympathetic noises they failed to demonstrate that that they understood people’s fears and priorities. In contrast, Malcolm Chisholm was praised for acknowledging (however neutrally) the expressions of concern, “Mr Chisholm said he was conscious of the strong feelings on the subject” (ET 31/10/03), and their attachment to the hospitals, having “already made it clear he understands the value of the service better than the many health board officials who admit they don't” (ET 01/10/04). This illustrates the consequences for officials and politicians of not seriously considering people’s emotional responses, even if they form an irrational basis for policy-making.

MSPs learnt this lesson early in their first term during the Section 28 campaign. The Daily Record rejected the Executive’s claim that the consultation offered parents an opportunity to express a view, because First Minister Donald Dewar “refuses to be bound by the results – overwhelmingly against scrapping 28... so what was the point of the “consultation process”?” (opinion column DR 17/01/00), without making it clear that this referred only to the views of the *parents* who responded, whilst the overall result was 70% in favour. However, the response was characterised as “Dewar comes under fire for refusing to guarantee he will accept public opinion on the issue”. The paper warned against being so “dismissive”, because “To say he recognises the concern of parents, but does not believe it to be justified, is dangerous talk” (DR 17/01/00), a theme that was developed by telling readers that ministers “think they know better than you do” (DR 19/01/00). Later this was repeatedly described as “arrogant” (DR 08/02/00), “patronising” (DR 08/02/00) and “an insult” (DR 31/05/00). The Executive’s dismissal of the quasi-referendum result was reported as “Wendy [Alexander]’s two fingers to the lot of you” and a “snub to 1million Scots” (DR 31/05/00).

The anti-intellectual nature of this populism is clear in Souter’s statement that “We do not want guidelines from a group of middle-class intellectuals who thought up these ideas in a trendy wine bar” (DR 25/01/00). The paper found it difficult to characterise politicians’ support of repeal as self-interest, but was unwilling to recognise it as moral courage and leadership (or to support the Conservatives), and therefore explained it as a sop to the “chattering classes”, or the “politically correct classes” (DR 19/01/00), who were themselves depicted as a threat, that parents want children to be “protected from exposure to liberal views on homosexuality that may go much further than their own” (DR 21/01/00). This suggests that exposure to different

opinions is a kind of violation of privacy that requires protection in the form of censorship – that people have the right not to be moralised to or be challenged in their beliefs in any way (however mistaken). It also suggests that people believe that socialisation must only reproduce the dominant norms of society, regardless of the freedom and rights of minority (in this case LGBT) groups. To some extent then, the tabloid press still plays the same role as Cohen (1973) and Hall et al (1978) identified in the 60s and 70s of reproducing the social and cultural status quo but then it was associated with reproducing the power of elites, whereas now government and other powerful and influential groups are characterised by newspapers not as a conservative elite but a ‘liberal elite’ to whose paternalism the press can be fiercely resistant (although the Daily Record has since been fairly compliant with the Executive, and the Executive have equally avoided displeasing the Record).

This populism was resisted by The Herald, who attempted to make a case for public sympathy for the children of asylum-seekers that was morally principled, but in that case the ministers’ refusal to acknowledge public feeling on the issue was not a PR disaster as it had been in the Section 28 and Queen Mum’s campaigns.

If The Herald is pushing a story that the Executive think reflects public opinion and could start to damage them politically then they would probably do something about it. [...] But with the Ay family they probably made a calculation that it would probably all blow over and the public would be okay about it. (Joan McApline, Deputy Editor, The Herald)

The failure to persuade politicians of the strength of public opinion against detention of children was partly a product of the newspaper’s own lack of conviction on that characterisation, but also a political judgement that incurring such outrage would not translate into action, that is, would not damage their election chances, whereas responding positively to the campaign might (explored further in the next chapter), though in fact they did lose the election to the more pro-asylum SNP.

The construction of the particular ‘public opinion’ represented by the Daily Record and Evening Times as being beyond challenge by politicians was achieved in these three campaigns by framing critics as representative of illegitimate publics, either because they were deviants who were morally *beneath* mainstream society (“lawbreaker” Sheridan in the drugs campaign), or because they presumptuously positioned themselves as *superior* to mainstream society, either morally (MSPs in the Section 28 campaign) or intellectually (the Health Board in the Queen Mum’s campaign). The campaigns valorised instinctive, emotional responses, which they framed as in touch with ‘the public’, and the drugs campaign explicitly essentialised such feelings as intrinsic common sense. The notion of ‘the public’ that politicians were pressured to respond to is expressly not discursive, is insulted and patronised by disagreement, and intransigent in its beliefs. However, when readers criticised the *newspaper* or *journalists*, the emotional or intransigent nature of their views was deemed to have *invalidated* that criticism (Chapter 6), so tabloid journalists expected politicians to bow to form of public opinion of which they are themselves dismissive. Nonetheless, even where The

Herald tried to call on politicians to respond to liberal moral principles attributed to the Scottish public, politicians dismissed it in favour of the more pessimistic assessment. The next section addresses the representation of the electoral motivation for politicians to respond to campaign pressure.

9.1.2. Politicians' obligation to voters

Closely related to politicians' obligation to 'the public' is their obligation to voters – that elected representatives had to respond to voters' demands as represented by the campaign because the democratic mechanism obliges politicians to do the public bidding. However, whereas the previous section discussed the framing of politicians' obligation to citizens by facilitating public influence between elections (corporatist or participatory democracy), this section addresses the obligation to respond to voters on the basis of promises made at the last election or under threat of losing the next election (representative democracy). The campaigns could equally function as a tacit threat to influence readers to vote against them. To some extent public protests such as the Daily Record's march and the Evening Times' petition are a form of electoral pressure by indicating support numerically and suggesting the majority will, although disagreement on a single issue will not necessarily translate into votes against the politician or party (Della Porta and Diani, 1998), but this electoral implication was not frequently made.

The Queen Mum's and airguns campaigns made most explicit reference to electoral accountability because they most closely preceded or coincided with an election (the 2005 UK general election) and called for specific policy decisions. In the airguns campaign, the Record complained that prior to the election ministers at both parliaments had hinted that a ban would be introduced, and that they had subsequently gone back on an election promise.

Just before the General Election, they [Labour politicians] dropped the broadest hints there would be a ban if they were re-elected. The public backed them and they won handsomely. Now at the start of their third term they have announced new proposals on airguns but they seem to have dropped the idea of a ban. What do they expect the public to do now they have ignored our wishes? This is precisely the kind of double dealing which turns voters off politicians. (leader column, DR 09/06/05)

The Record claimed that a ban was part of (or even central to) the Labour party's mandate for (UK) government. Although the newspaper (like many of its readers) would not have backed another party over the issue, and so *before* the election only achieved a vague assurance that the issue would be addressed, they were able to use Labour's re-election to construct the refusal to ban airguns as wrongdoing, with a focus on voter cynicism.

Evening Times readers were reminded of their democratic *entitlement*, that "MSPs represent you", invoking a discourse of rights, and more ambiguously, "the board's duty is to you", which could equally refer to responsibility to act in citizens' best interests. Just one article referred to the *electoral* role of the public in relation to the anticipated general election, headlined "Fears at ballot box backlash over NHS closures turns up pressure on health minister" (ET 10/09/04). However, unlike firearms legislation, health is not reserved to Westminster, so MPs would in

that case have borne the brunt of the electoral punishment for the actions of Holyrood ministers. In contrast, *constituency* representation at the Scottish Parliament was effective in this case, as the local MSP, Pauline McNeill (Lab) was one of the most active campaigners on the issue, and was credited with putting “pressure” on the Health Minister (ET 07/05/04) as was SNP Glasgow list MSP Sandra White (ET 27/04/04).

The campaign emphasised that the Health Board were not directly accountable to the electorate; it was described as a “quango” (six times: three times by politicians, once by a campaigner), “unelected” (12 times: two politicians, a campaigner and a health professional), and “unaccountable” (four times: twice by politicians). The newspaper described two board reports as “secret”, and the board as having “nodded through” the consultation and closure recommendation without a vote (six times), and as having “rubber-stamped” their own proposals (six times). The paper also cited Health Minister Malcolm Chisholm’s assurance that he would *not* “rubber-stamp” the board’s recommendation (10 times), with the implicit suggestion that any approval of the decision would be interpreted in that way. The board were blamed for public cynicism toward politics, losing the trust of the public and some politicians to act on behalf of the public interest (13 times), and four references to such cynicism being caused by the board’s approach to consultation (for example, “The public has lost trust in these processes and become very cynical” (MSP quoted in 17/01/04).

Accountability was also an issue in The Herald’s Dungavel campaign, which similarly placed pressure on Executive ministers to intervene, but in this case the UK government were the decision-making body (as asylum and immigration is reserved) and were framed as unaccountable to Scottish voters. The Executive were portrayed as being complicit with the Home Office and failing to represent more tolerant Scottish views. The Herald’s strategy was to not to target the Home Office, but to oblige the Scottish Executive to express an opinion of disapproval, and then to place pressure on them to lobby the Home Office. The Daily Record had taken the same approach on airguns – another reserved issue – but in contrast to that case, ministers refused to comment. The newspaper looked for inconsistency in ministers’ positions, which was interpreted as “breach[ing] the line” that the Executive held (leader column, HD 09/08/07). Yet this would be pointless, if, as John Swinney (SNP leader) argued, “Scottish ministers are incapable of convincing their London counterparts” (quoted in HD 08/09/03), suggesting that quiet diplomacy was going on behind the scenes, but had not been successful.

The Scottish Parliament and its ruling Scottish Executive were regarded by many letter-writers as the main institution for Scottish voters’ political representation: “What Scots hoped was that their votes [for devolution] would bring them a new parliamentary set-up in which their official spokespeople, the executive, would truly represent and reflect their views” (letter to the editor, HD 11/08/03). Some supporters even suggested that there was no alternative to lobbying the

Scottish Executive and to question the appropriateness of that lobbying was to silence them: “My understanding of devolution does not include the Scottish people and their media agreeing to stay silent about issues in Scotland that are administered by Westminster” (letter to the editor, HD 08/08/07) without acknowledging representation via local constituency MPs. Even a Labour MP argued that the Scottish faction of his party were playing into hands of SNP by not responding, allowing Dungavel to be seen “to be an English-run establishment inside Scotland, not answerable to Scots law” (Michael Connarty (Lab), quoted in HD 15/08/03), rather than accountable to Scottish voters through their MPs.

The Herald’s approach was rather to argue that responsibility for welfare and education of detainees should be devolved to Holyrood, so that control would be in the hands of those that the newspaper and other campaigners saw as under more obligation to Scottish voters.

That’s not to say that policy coming from New Labour and the LibDems at Holyrood would be any less racist than that coming from New Labour at Westminster – but at least people in Scotland would be able to influence policy more directly (editor of a Scottish legal journal, letter to the editor, HD 07/08/03).

The UK government were portrayed as less accountable because of an assumption that representation of individual voters through constituency MPs is ineffective, not so much in comparison with constituency MSPs, but in comparison with pressure *directly on ministers*.

Whilst Labour MPs are disproportionately Scottish, so have a significant presence in the governing party and in cabinet, they serve the country as a whole, and Scottish voters make up only 9% of the population, so the press (like pressure groups) have greater influence on the Executive through proximity, scale and accessibility.

I think it’s probably easier now to run campaigns because we have a tier of politicians with a lot of power over bread and butter issues, you know, health, transport... issues which you might find yourself campaigning on. And we’re much closer to them. And I think there’s probably greater chance to influence politicians if that’s what you’re, the kind of end result of the campaign, if you’re looking for a policy change on something. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

MSP Cathy Jamieson made an almost identical point, that they were “immediately more accessible”, but in reference to the proximity to *constituents* because they are not in London.

Campaigns in the Scottish press therefore reach all of the electorate who have put the governing Scottish Executive in power, and can claim to represent or influence enough voters to theoretically affect the next election, although significantly, no Scottish newspaper supported the SNP when they won in 2007. Indeed, since the Scottish newspapers are fairly fixed on their party allegiances (in comparison to The Sun, for example) none of the campaigns encouraged their readers to vote against the incumbent parties, and the more common approach was to interpret politicians’ unresponsiveness to the representation of voter demands in terms of generating cynicism and distrust of politicians.

Again, a comparison with Section 28 is interesting, since despite the proximity and accessibility of the newly devolved parliament, MSPs in that case did appear to have misjudged the opinions of a significant number of Scots (as imperfectly expressed via opinion polls). A Demos report attributed the elevated controversy in comparison with England and Wales in part to overconfidence in the enlightened opinions of the Scottish people on the part of the MSPs (Milne, 2005: 41). However, Scots could not express their disapproval electorally because there was near universal cross-party consensus on the issue. This would suggest that the Daily Record functioned appropriately as their readers' 'voice' against an unaccountable political class – as one MSP, Malcolm Chisholm conceded, “the public don't like that, all the politicians ganging together against the public opinion” – but he also argued that sometimes it is important to take a principled stand, which will be addressed in the final section of this chapter. In addition, of course, the Daily Record intended 'public' dissent to be inflamed by the sensationalist representation of the repeal, not as a largely symbolic act representing an abstract principle of tolerance but as a radical change in the way that their children would be educated, which framed parents as potentially affected individuals (and therefore as a specific 'issue public'). This particularly powerful framing will be addressed next.

9.1.3. Politicians' obligation to affected individuals

All of the campaigns to some extent argued that politicians had an obligation to respond to the newspapers' demands on account of the extent or impact of affected individuals' experience of the problem, since they were all focused to some degree on the experience of 'victims'. Politicians were therefore obliged to recognise the problem and promise to act to alleviate its impacts, and any failure to do so was interpreted as evidence of those politicians' lack of sympathy with those affected. Largely, then the focus on affected individuals performed an agenda-setting purpose – by provoking an emotional response in their readers the newspapers make a case for the salience of the issue and strength of demand for (non-specific) action – but frequently support for action to be taken in the interests of 'victims' was conflated with support for specific policies.

The Daily Record interpreted the response to the loan sharks campaign as a measure of the extent and impact of people's experience of illegal money-lending: “The staggering number of calls made by desperate people, many at the end of their tether, has underlined the huge scale of the problem” (DR 05/06/02). This interpretation was supported by politicians in the parliamentary debate – “The Daily Record campaign has exposed how widespread loan-sharking is” (Kenny Gibson (SNP) in Scottish Parliament, 2002: col 13107). The widespread praise for the campaign (further detailed in the next chapter) meant that the campaign did not feel the need to press the argument for politicians' obligation to respond, even though the response was largely expressive and made no new proposals to tackle the problem, so the campaign set the agenda discursively and may have had a long-term impact on efforts to tackle loan sharks.

The anti-social behaviour campaign also focused on ‘victims’ experience of the problem, this time led by politicians’ invitation to contribute on this basis: “The Executive have asked for the Daily Record’s help in uncovering the true extent of Scotland’s ned culture” (DR 01/09/03), yet the Daily Record tended to frame the scale and intensity of affected individuals’ demands in terms of politicians’ own independent measures, such as direct correspondence: “the biggest single topic that fills the post bags of MSPs” (DR 01/09/03). Indeed, politicians had invited the newspaper to campaign on the issue in order to make the case for *their own* obligation to respond to ‘victims’ demands for action, directed at their critics who had dominated coverage of the issue in the quality press (though the critics were portrayed as ignorant of the extent of the problem rather than unsympathetic).

Moreover, the view attributed to, and voiced by, affected individuals that ‘something must be done’ was conflated with support for the legislative proposals put forward by the Executive.

‘Cause it was at a time when the anti-social behaviour stuff wasn’t that popular, and there was an argument that, folk said ‘well it’s not really necessary, blah blah blah blah’. [...] But if you were living in communities where these kids were hanging about outside your door every night of the week, they were saying, ‘we want it’, and Labour were saying that there was grounds for it because people in the community want it. And I think the reaction we got from our campaign showed that it was in certain areas, and it was there that it was the most effective, that there was a need for something to stop it. (Dave King, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

King refers interchangeably to people’s experience of the problem, desire for the problem to be ‘stopped’ and ‘wanting’ the legislation. Again, this was not unique to the newspaper, and was equally used by politicians, as one Herald journalist observed, “I mean Margaret Curran’s defence of the entire bill is that this is a problem and it affects people” (Lucy Adams). Ministers’ (including Margaret Curran’s) view of the campaign coverage will be explored in the next chapter.

In contrast, the airguns campaign called for a specific policy response that was not already being considered. However, again, public support for the policy was assumed on the basis of public sympathy with the victim’s family. The result of this conflation was that opposition to the ban proposal was interpreted as *lack* of sympathy for Andrew Morton’s parents. When Michael Howard, then Conservative leader, questioned the efficacy of a ban in a radio interview, it was framed as having “sparked fury” and “caused further distress” to the “grieving” mother, who “accused Howard of laughing at her” (DR 19/03/05). An anti-gun campaigner also described Howard as “a cold man who did not seem to care what the people of the country wanted” in relation to the Dunblane incident, and his airgun ban opposition “offensive” (DR 19/03/05). Again, politicians also adopted the same tone – Leader of the Commons Peter Hain was quoted remarking that, “Mr Howard’s attack on the handgun ban is an insult to the victims of handgun crime”.

One Daily Record journalist attributed the near-success of this campaign to the strength of sympathy for the parents who lost their young child (as detailed in Chapter 7). He was also aware, however, how disproportionate a response can be triggered by such an emotional approach.

I mean look at Madeleine McCann³⁷ just now, the News of the World have started a new campaign, even though there's only two children that were ever known of that were abducted on holiday – two kids compared to the many million who go on holiday and they started a campaign. They've got a charter, they want all these things in place, and they've already got people saying, 'yeah, we'll do it', right? So they've actually got a winning campaign already, they've got the campaign won before they got it even launched, and that was all in response to, essentially, one little girl going missing. (Mark McGivern, Reporter, Daily Record).

McGivern suggests that policy responses can therefore be skewed out of all proportion to the scale of the problem if the intensity of sympathy for victims or fear of becoming a victim is strong enough, although it is unlikely that that was the case in the McCann instance³⁸. Conversely, however, if the affected individuals have been neglected, then the agenda-setting role can be entirely proportionate, and indeed correct a lack of concern for some disadvantaged groups through a 'community of feeling'.

Dave King argued that the main achievement of the drugs campaign had been, "getting people angry, 'cause MSPs were getting hit with all sorts of mailbags and general awareness that something had to be done", and as therefore challenging a political fatalism, that the drug problem was beginning to be seen as inevitable or intractable. However, again, support for tackling the problem was conflated with support for certain solutions. The Daily Record identified itself so much with the 'victims' of drugs that to disagree with the campaign's emphasis on law enforcement was framed, not as proposing ineffective policies, but as being unsympathetic to the 'victims'. Again, Tommy Sheridan bore the brunt of this. In response to his intention to stage a march in favour of legalising cannabis, a leader column described him as "insensitive", "uncaring", and giving "a two-fingered insult to the victims of drugs and their families", and Gaille McCann of Mothers Against Drugs was quoted demanding "will he not acknowledge that this is an opportunity for parents to grieve together?" (DR 03/03/01). Similarly, Sheridan's later proposal for free prescription heroin (to put illegal dealers out of business) was reported to have been "roundly condemned", and "attacked" by "families of dead addicts" (DR 10/03/01). These criticisms suggest that the political objectives (largely tougher enforcement) could not be challenged because they could not be separated from the

³⁷ Madeleine McCann was apparently abducted from the villa in which her family was holidaying in Portugal, precipitating an international missing child appeal, initiated by her parents and fuelled by media interest.

³⁸ The campaign was launched on 5th August 2007, and labelled "Code Madeleine", based on a similar procedure in place in public spaces in the USA for systematising the immediate search effort. Whilst the newspaper tried to take credit for the initiative, the travel industry organisations (Federation of Tour Operators and Association of British Travel Agents) said that they were "pleased to have helped develop Code Madeleine" (NOW 05/08/07) rather than simply responding to the newspaper's suggestion. Indeed, it is likely that the newspaper was brought on board to publicise the measures to potential customers to ensure they were not put off travelling with children.

personal feelings experienced by bereaved participants, so to criticise one was to criticise both.

The conflation of victims' interests and feelings with support for enforcement solutions is related to the framing of issues in terms of competing interests and the personalisation of blame on individuals who were unfairly benefiting by not playing by the rules. Therefore politicians were separated into those who were on the side of the victims and those who were on the side of the drug dealers. A Record article about an MP who blocked a Private Member's Bill (that proposed to confiscate drug dealers' assets) by "talking out" was headlined "Tory protects drug dealers" (DR 24/03/01), and another article posed the question about Sheridan "whose side is he on?" (DR 03/03/01).

These adversarial tactics, portraying politicians as actively 'against' the interests of those affected, were rare in the campaigns in this sample, but were a major feature of the Section 28 campaign. Then First Minister, Donald Dewar's criticisms of the campaign were characterised as "Dewar: this pro-family propaganda isn't fair" (presenting a caricature of his position as a direct quote), inferring both that he was 'against' the family, and that his criticism of the campaign was nonsense since pro-family opinions represented an existing consensus and therefore could not be propaganda. Brian Souter was further quoted threatening "that he will fund a "prolonged guerrilla war" which will brand both [Labour and Liberal Democrats] as the parties that "hate marriage"" (DR 31/05/00). Current Editor Bruce Waddell argued that he consciously moved the paper away from a 'nasty' paper, and argued that it had made enemies under previous editors.

In contrast, The Herald attempted to avoid framing asylum in terms of competing interests, since it was exactly that framing that tended to dominate the hostile tabloid coverage of immigration issues, but the campaign did demand that Executive ministers express sympathy for the 'victims' of child detention, and were criticised for failing to do so. Ministers were described as "silent" or maintaining "silence" 54 times, of which 24 were attributed to sources, including 15 in correspondence, the remainder being unattributed descriptions by the newspaper journalists, although 11 were in leader columns. One explanation for politicians' silence was that they were emotionally distant and overly focused on bureaucratic nicety. One academic (in education, specialising in equality) bemoaned the "callousness of uncaring officialdom" (letter to the editor, HD 07/08/03), echoed, on the same day, in an opinion columnist's criticisms of "officialdom washing its collective hands" of the problem and called criticisms of the campaign "technical" (opinion column, HD 07/08/03). More commonly, however, the silence was framed as morally wrong, described as "shameful" (three times – by a leader writer, an MSP and a campaigner), "baffling and wrong" (leader, HD 15/08/03), "wrong-headed" (leader, HD 10/09/03), "unpardonable" (leader, HD 08/08/03), and "unforgivable" (letter to the editor, HD 06/09/03).

In contrast to the Daily Record's representation of its opponents, The Herald refrained from personalising their moral criticisms of the Home Office, and focused on the policy *decision* rather than individual politicians. Of six uses of "barbaric" or "barbarity", only one directly accused the government, specifically of "descending into barbarity" – and this was in a letter to the editor (HD 08/08/03), two described the policy, and a lawyer twice used a passive and intransitive syntax to say only that the Ay children had "been treated" barbarically. Similarly, "policy", "legislation" and "laws" were described as "draconian" (one from a pressure group, one in an opinion column and one unattributed). Whilst a leader column (HD 05/08/03) paraphrased Rosie Kane as having "accused the government of traumatising children" in a direct, transitive sentence, the full quote reveals that she had simply described the children as "traumatised" (quoted in HD 06/08/03), and other references are made to the nominalised "trauma" (three times).

Interestingly, it was letter writers whose criticisms were most like the Daily Record's othering blame discourse, criticising politicians personally (though largely collectively) and characterising them as lacking in human empathy and separate from mainstream society. Letters from Christian readers in particular took this approach³⁹ – one questioned the Christianity of Blair and Blunkett, who had "said goodbye to compassion" (letter to the editor 06/08/03), and the following day a church leader used an unfavourable animal simile – "Like snakes, they shed the skin of compassion, they slough off thoughtful emotion" – and argued that they ceased to be "decent and humane", and "cast away basic drives of care and kindness" (letter to the editor, HD 07/08/03). More generally, of the 32 references to "humanity" (including "humane", "inhumane" and "inhuman"), 20 referred to policy and were attributed to campaigners or in leader columns, whilst the five accusing politicians (three of the UK government, two of the Scottish Executive) of inhumanity were all in correspondence.

Unusually, the use of emotive personalisation, especially of the children, to exert political pressure was criticised by some readers in the pages of the newspaper. One protested that "I feel we have been subjected to a great deal of emotional blackmail here", based on the photogenic quality of the Ay children; another criticised the family's final press conference as "a shameless pulling of every emotional stop", and viewed this sort of rhetoric as unhelpful in making rational decisions – "an example of hard cases making bad law" (letter to the editor, HD 06/08/03). The Conservatives later picked up on the criticism, though also conscious to sound sympathetic: "There has been far too much heat and emotion brought into what is certainly an emotive matter" (Bill Aitken MSP quoted in HD 09/09/03). This suggests that The Herald's use of emotional discourses may have been less successful than the Record's in constructing public support.

³⁹ It could be that a particular church was involved in the Ays' campaign and the letter-writing was part of their activities, or simply that religious people are particularly inclined toward moral reasoning.

One Herald journalist attributed this failure, not to resistance to the personalisation of the issue per se, but the perception of the family as guilty of breaking immigration rules and therefore as undeserving.

Our mistake was that we banged the drum for this one family, without... I don't think their case was strong enough to do what we wanted them to do. We were using them for political ends, and there's always an aspect of that, let's not be naive about that, but their case was not strong enough to do what The Herald wanted to do with them. And that was just, it's never perfect, but that was a problem. And our asylum reporting became about the Ay family, and I think readers felt patronised by that. (Damien Henderson, Reporter, The Herald)

Henderson is explicit about the political purpose of stimulating sympathy, but regards it as dependent on having an impact on readers, which was judged to have been unsuccessful due to a stronger impulse of self-interested opposition to illegal immigration, therefore allowing politicians to be unsympathetic without fear of public censure. Politicians' moral obligation to take a principled lead is discussed below.

Like The Herald, the Evening Times avoided framing the Queen Mum's campaign in terms of competing interests, since the potential conflicts of interest were between residents of the West End and South Side of the city (in terms of proximity to maternity services); between mothers and babies (in terms of proximity to acute care); and between patients of maternity services and patients of other health services (in terms of funding allocation). However, the paper framed the proposed closure as against the interests of all Scots and the Health Board's support of closure as therefore a result of them not caring about patients (rather than trying to improve the standard of care – see section 9.3. below).

Like The Herald's depiction of politicians, The Evening Times portrayed the Health Board as unfeeling, but not entirely inhuman. The newspaper described the board as "bureaucrats" seven times. Bureaucracy was equated with an unhealthy obsession with money – "bureaucrats and bean counters" (ET 09/10/03), and with unaccountability – "faceless bureaucrats" (ET 30/09/04). However, the latter does also seem suggestive of automatons blindly following rules, and as such mildly dehumanising – that the board are not actively bad, but empty of emotion and compassion. Still, the newspaper's conviction (especially later on the campaign) that the board had already decided the fate of the hospital, and would not be diverted or dissuaded, was reflected in representations of more active determination – that they were "hell-bent" on that course of action (twice), on a "mission" (ET 24/02/04) and "plotting" (ET 30/09/04), which suggests more malevolent intent.

The Board was called "shameful" and "shamed" (four times, twice by politicians), suggesting a moral tone of censure. Politicians were also the most likely to describe the board and its actions as a "disgrace" and "disgraceful" (six times of a total nine; parents twice), and three parents described themselves as "disgusted" at the plans. However, there were very few

personal criticisms of the individual members of the Health Board or Working Group, though Margaret Reid took exception at being dismissively described as a “sociologist” (11 times) as opposed to a public health specialist.

Therefore, again, the newspaper aimed to influence the decision by “getting the officials in a position where they care about, or they’re advised to care about doing something about it” (John McCann), aiming to make an emotional impact on politicians, or at least obliging them to appear to care.

I mean I know that it’s a very famous anecdote that Malcolm Chisholm had visited the Queen Mum’s across that bridge and met a mum from America, who’d come from America to have her child there, who was seriously ill. And he saw the child, the child recovered. This story wasn’t told in the paper actually because the parents were rather shy. But he saw that, the baby and he went ‘oh right’, so even for him a very clever man who was quite capable of understanding all the clinical arguments, even for him the simple human story told it better. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

However, whilst the Daily Record and The Herald largely required only *expressions* of sympathy and support, in this case only a reversal of the closure decision would be interpreted as ‘caring’, again conflating sympathy for ‘victims’ with a particular policy without proving it would improve their situation.

In summary, pressure exerted on politicians in the campaigns was based on their obligation to respond to various publics, on account of the strength of the assumed feelings of the aggregated mass public and the deservedness of affected individuals. Firstly the campaigns represented politicians’ obligation to the instinctive emotional beliefs of ‘the public’ (that homosexuality, drugs and hospital closures are bad things), which were presented as beyond challenge, even when those feelings were conflated with political opinions and policy preferences. Opposition to the campaigns was therefore framed as deviant, supercilious or patronising. Conversely, The Herald struggled to represent a compassionate public feeling (that imprisoning children is a bad thing) due to the dominant assumption of self-interested ‘public opinion’ (that immigration is more of a bad thing). Secondly, and connectedly, the demands of voters were presented as a technical basis for politicians’ obligation to respond to the campaign, on the basis of a claimed mandate (for an airgun ban) or to rectify the unaccountability of decisions being opposed (by the Health Board and the Home Office). Opposition to the campaigns was therefore framed as producing cynicism in the electorate. Thirdly, politicians were pressured to respond to the needs of affected individuals, often simply by expressing sympathy and appreciation of their situation and assuring ‘victims’ that their problem was on the public agenda. Again, all but the loan sharks and Dungavel campaigns conflated concern for the plight of those ‘victims’ with support for specific policy proposals; opposition to the enforcement emphasis of the campaigns on drugs and airguns was interpreted as a lack of sympathy for the ‘victims’, and the Evening Times similarly warned that if the Health Minister failed to reverse the closure decision it would be interpreted as not caring

about newborn babies. Nonetheless, some arguments and evidence were presented to politicians in the Dungavel and Queen Mum's campaigns.

9.2. Framing of politicians' obligation to respond to criticisms

Exposing the poor outcome of policy decisions, and especially the failings of the politicians responsible, is the traditional 'watchdog' model of the press, and a tradition of 'muckraking' or investigative journalism (Ettema and Glasser, 1998; Graber, 2002; Bromley, 2005). This approach focuses on placing pressure on politicians by identifying wrongdoing, whether through incompetence or mendacity.

Formal criticisms of asylum detention policy in the in the Dungavel campaign focused firstly on the contravention of human rights agreements, though the campaign did not detail the principles outlined in international law. Secondly, the Home Office was accused of failing to uphold standards of welfare and education set by their own inspectorates. The report was quoted or referred to 17 times in 13 articles, though it was only released half way through the campaign. The key elements that were repeatedly quoted were that detention of children should only occur in "exceptional circumstances" / as an "exceptional measure" (10 times), and for no more than a "few days" / a "matter of days" (15 times) – clear criteria against which the paper could objectively criticise the government's performance.

Campaigners accused the Home Office of expediency: that "The government should not ignore human rights when they become politically inconvenient" (letter from Amnesty International official, HD 19/07/03), and accused them of deporting the Ay family hurriedly to close down the issue before the inspection reports were published (Rosie Kane (SSP) in HD 15/08/03). The implication is that decisions were being made for the benefit of politicians themselves, not the people for whom they are responsible or on behalf of those they represent.

Similarly, the Evening Times sought evidence of wrongdoing on the part of the Health Board. The depiction of the board as motivated by money was a particularly dominant source of criticism, and one most resented by board members since it was framed in a discourse of corruption. Of 32 mentions of "money" or "cash" in relation to Health Board spending, 13 accused the board of cost-cutting, and six of those seemed to insinuate that they had benefited personally, rather than the public purse or other health services. This began with campaigner and ex-MSP Dorothy-Grace Elder calling the closure a "scam" (writing in ET 09/10/03), and in the leader column on the same day, accusing the board of being seduced by "the intoxicating smell of cash" (ET 09/10/03) on account of the alleged value of the west-end site. This accusation attracted a vigorous rebuttal from the Health Board which described the allegations as "utterly absurd" (Greater Glasgow NHS Board, 2003c) and "an outrageous slur

which has no basis in common sense let alone reality” (Greater Glasgow NHS Board, 2003d). Margaret Reid, the Chair of the Maternity Working Group, also had a letter published in the Evening Times, denying the allegations (ET 21/10/03), but three of 15 supportive letters from readers and Yorkhill staff on the same day accused her and the board of seeking “profit”.

Other accusations related to incompetence and manipulation. The Health Board and the Working Group were accused nine times of making “selective” use of evidence (from the Expert Group on Acute Maternity Services – EGAMS) to support their preferred option of closing the Queen Mum’s (seven times quoting or attributed to the West Dumbartonshire Council consultation submission, and twice to health professionals at Yorkhill), an accusation that could equally be levelled at the newspaper. The board was also accused of publishing “inaccurate” information or “inaccuracies” 13 times (seven of which were attributed to or quoted health professionals and two quoted an MSP), and three times of “incorrect” statements, conclusions, and attributions (all attributed to health professionals). Doctors, midwives and an MSP further accused the Health Board of “misleading” statements in leaflets and the consultation brochure five times, but only once of purposefully lying: “The board has already been found wanting in this farce of a consultation. Now it has been found lying” (Sandra White MSP, quoted in ET 09/12/03) for failing to correct “false” information in a leaflet when made aware of the error.

This detailed evidence was deemed crucial to making a watchdog argument that obliged the minister to respond, even though it was not expected to interest readers

But it [“boring” detail on EGAMS guidelines] had to be in there so they were almost, if you like, committing an offence, and it was on record that they were doing something they had no right to do, that was clinically wrong. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

The Evening Times felt that it was unlikely to whip up outrage at the board’s mistakes in numerical evidence and referencing of sources, so the obligation of the board or the minister to respond was not contingent on readers’ comprehension of the substance of the criticisms. Although the overall impression of the reputation of those involved *is* thought to be a powerful influence (as will be apparent in the next chapter), and readers are assumed to accept the judgement of the newspaper on the nature of the offence.

Instead, the notion of the public record was used to impress upon the minister that the outcome of his decision would be scrutinised against their predictions (albeit with a simplistic understanding of cause and effect), and that he would be held to public account in the future for the outcome of this decision. Specifically, the journalists emphasised that the personal impact *would* be understood by readers, and *would* affect his reputation.

And this is a case when newspapers are for ever, because the cuts [cuttings] are there for ever, right. And he knows that. The arguments that are stated in the paper are there, which may only be read by a fraction of our readership on the day, but they’re in the cuts. So two years down the line, when [children have died en route to Yorkhill] he

knows someone's going to go back and say, he was told two years ago that would lead to deaths. That's why it counts, because it's there in black and white and it's not going to go away. (David Leask, Chief Reporter, Evening Times)

Promising to judge the minister on the outcomes of his policy decisions is entirely consistent with liberal, representative democracy, but this suggests that Chisholm will be judged disproportionately on certain outcomes – that is, he may be judged more harshly for one baby dying (apparently) as a result of the closure of the Queen Mum's than several women dying in childbirth as a result of keeping it open.

Journalists assumed that the Health Minister would be motivated more by the pressure of 'public opinion' than objective argument, even if he did not want to appear to be doing it for the votes.

The way I was looking at it in terms of my copy, my line on the campaign, if you like, where the emotive, if you like, and the things that you can understand, are the issues they're the issues, if you like, that get people involved. That then puts pressure on the politicians to do something, to want to do something, if you like. The clinical arguments, the technical arguments, give them an excuse to do something. So it's the two things, the people make them want to, and then the clinical side of it gives them an excuse to do it, or the will to do it, whether politically or personally. (John McCann, Health Reporter, Evening Times)

McCann reports that the emotional, personalised framing (Chapter 7) was aimed at the general readers in order to be able to represent their support for the campaign objectives (Chapter 8) in order to place pressure on the Health Minister, whilst the clinical evidence was aimed *only* at the minister. As Leask said "there were stories in our paper, particularly editorials, which were aimed specifically at Malcolm Chisholm and [other] politicians, which were forensic in their detail, and which most of our readers wouldn't have been interested in".

The editor also argued that this was the case, but also suggested an additional media agenda-setting role.

And whilst the story about the EGAMS⁴⁰ debate wouldn't get a double page spread it *was* given coverage in the paper so that we *could* bring it to the attention of the Health Minister and others who *were* concerned, and it was picked up by the broadsheets as well, who had, you know, a greater interest in the more complex side of the argument. (Charles McGhee, Editor, Evening Times)

Again, however, MSPs were known to read The Herald (MORI, 2004), so this 'pick-up' of the story could be equally designed to address the minister and his colleagues, rather than the readership as a whole, even though the broadsheet readership may be considered more interested in the "complex side of the argument".

⁴⁰ It was argued that the Health Board had selectively quoted from government guidelines (the Expert Group on Acute Maternity Services – EGAMS) to support their claim that maternity hospitals should have adult intensive care on-site rather than nearby (ET 14/01/04)

The campaigns obliged politicians to act in response to accusations of wrongdoing and predictions of undesirable predicted outcomes, for which they would be blamed if they did not respond in the preferred way. However, unlike the emotional framing of the issues the evidence of wrong-doing was not expected to influence politicians through the expression of, or influence on, 'public opinion', or by informing electoral behaviour. Political pressure on the basis of the newspapers' objective criticism was seen as intrinsically democratically legitimate. Though there was a threat that some outcomes could be made into an election issue (agenda-setting), it was more likely to lead to calls for the resignation of the individual politician. However, such accusations can become more of a self-serving witch-hunt, whereby insinuations are made rather than rigorously-evidenced accusations, both to achieve the political goals of the newspaper and to sell newspapers with scandal.

9.3. Framing of politicians' obligation to lead rather than follow

The Herald's Dungavel campaign was the only one to make the argument for principled leadership, standing up to mistaken or unacceptable views, and even for influencing voters to accept more progressive or altruistic policies.

A letter-writer argued that "it is necessary for someone to lead instead of following" (letter to the editor HD 07/08/03), suggesting not that politicians are mistaken about the "will of the public" but that policy should be directed to a moral end and politicians' good example would, perhaps, make hostile views less acceptable or persuasive. An opinion columnist similarly suggested that the government should "lead the country to compassionate solutions", rather than "echo the demands of the right-wing press" (opinion column, HD 07/08/03), though clearly this in itself could obviously be read as a demand, simply from a more left-wing press.

Although editor Mark Douglas Home had argued in favour of challenging misinformed readers with new information (see Chapter 5), in *print* the justification for going against perceived dominant 'public opinion' was that the people who held anti-immigration views were *tabloid* readers who had been influenced by those papers (though this was also an argument made by Douglas Home). The Herald and its contributors often implicated the tabloid and mid-market press as the ultimate cause behind politicians' actions. Letter-writers in particular believed that the Executive were "feart⁴¹ of right-wing media campaigns" (letter to the editor, HD 07/08/03), and that parties in Westminster were "vying with one another to pander to fear and bigotry to get the Murdoch press on their side" (letter to the editor, HD 16/09/03). The Herald's characterisation of opposition to the campaign as craven populism is the direct opposite of the tabloid papers' characterisation of opposition as arrogant paternalism.

⁴¹ Scots dialect for 'afraid'. Scots is frequently used by letter-writers to The Herald.

The Herald's campaign could be read as an argument for politicians to listen to *their* readers (who have been informed) rather than tabloid readers (who have been influenced), although there was still limited evidence for deliberative publicity. Tabloids often complain that a minority 'liberal elite', as potentially represented by the 'quality' press and their readers, has disproportionate influence, though such a characterisation in this case would be somewhat undermined by the campaign's lack of success. However, the newspaper framed the campaign objectives as consistent with politicians' *own* private opinions, and instead of calling for ministers to cede to The Herald's demands, called for them to have the courage of their own convictions, though this was not apparent in politicians' comments (see next chapter).

And although they were able to hide behind the devolution settlement, I mean personally they were rattled because they knew that we were right. And they knew that they, they personally believed in it as well, a lot of them. But they cared more about their political careers than, than to put their head above the parapet and say 'yeah, The Herald's right'. (Kevin McKenna, Executive Editor, Scottish Daily Mail, previously of The Herald).

Ministers' motivation to maintain their silence was therefore assumed to be cowardice and ambition, though the same could be said of politicians conversely leaping on the bandwagon of Daily Record campaigns for fear of being vilified by the paper.

The ministers' persistent refusal to respond to pressure from the Dungavel campaign was critically portrayed as being "grimly silent" (letter to the editor, HD 08/09/03), and "obstinate" (HD 16/12/03). This was interpreted, not as strength in the face of media pressure, but as weakness in relation to the UK government – that they were "craven" (letter to the editor, HD 07/08/03) and "silently complicit" in the Home Office's policy because they had not challenged it (letter to the editor, HD 08/09/03).

Surely devolution is a sufficiently mature concept by now for Scottish ministers to have dared to speak their minds when an injustice was being perpetrated on their own doorstep. Political protocol is well and good, but the reluctance of ministers to step over this particular boundary has devalued them in the public mind. A principled stand would have won them many friends. (Leader column, HD 09/08/07)

The refusal to speak out was further deemed to damage their reputation – that the silence was a "stain on each of them" (letter to the editor, HD 07/08/03), and the First Minister was "demeaning his office" (attributed to John Swinney (SNP), HD 12/09/03); the paper argued that the people of Scotland were being "insulted by silence" (leader, HD 06/08/03) and that 'the public' admired strong leadership.

Ministers were accused of "cowardice" (including "cowardly" behaviour and being "cowards") 13 times, and specifically "moral cowardice" seven times. The first such accusation was levelled by a correspondent as "cowardice and cynicism" (letter to the editor, HD 04/08/03) and correspondents continued to refer to it most frequently (as well as to their "fear" of "challenging" (HD 07/08/03) or "offending" (HD 13/09/03) London), but the following day it had been picked up by the leader writers who coined the phrase "moral cowardice" (leader, HD 05/08/03), which was then taken up by MPs Michael Connarty (Lab) (HD 08/08/03) and Alex

Salmond (SNP) (HD 21/08/03). Other opposition politicians made similar accusations – at the public meeting, Rosie Kane (SSP) described ministers as “lacking both spine and guts”, and Sandra White (SNP) told the Executive: “get off your knees” (HD 06/09/03). SNP party leader, John Swinney, however, was conversely accused of “moral posturing” (HD 15/09/03) by a member of his own party (though one vying for the leadership).

A Daily Record journalist (who went on to work as an advisor to Gordon Brown briefly in late 2008) blamed politicians for not having the confidence to make the arguments in favour of unpopular policies, giving the example of hospital centralisation.

But, the then deputy health secretary put it to me that there are five hospitals in Glasgow, if you're taken in an accident or you're suddenly taken ill, you've got a one in three chance that when you go to that hospital you're going to have a consultant that going to be able to deal with your condition. He said we're only going to make it two hospitals, but if you go there, there will always be a consultant there that can deal with your condition. That is good news. Have you heard that? Have you heard them arguing that case? The politicians, and it's not just the fear of the press, it's a lack of bottle on the part of politicians, a lack of leadership by the politicians, that has made newspaper campaigning on small issues like that so much easier, because they lack the bottle to actually go out and fight their corner. (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

But at the same time as a journalist Sinclair shares the blame for not discussing such arguments (especially since he is aware of them), yet he seems to see it in adversarial terms – that it is the politicians' job to fight *against* the press representations of the issues, rather than being able to expect a full, accurate and fair portrayal of the issues. Politicians' assessment of the coverage of campaign issues will be addressed in the next chapter.

9.4. Conclusion

The Daily Record and Evening Times campaigns legitimised their pressure on politicians with reference to their representation of publics. As established in Chapter 8 'legitimate' and 'deserving' publics were represented as being in emotional states and as affected by others, as politically passive but supportive of the campaigns. The obligation of politicians to respond to the campaign demands was therefore framed as respecting these publics' feelings and as sympathising with and caring about the affected individuals, and disagreement as offending those feelings and being 'heartless' in the face of victims' suffering. Whilst the identification of problems and highlighting their extent and salience among publics could be simply agenda-setting (though as was clear in Chapter 6 and 8 there is little basis for claims that this represents readers' or even an aggregate mass public), in the Daily Record and Evening Times campaigns, politicians were placed under pressure to respond to populist impulses.

The Daily Record's framing of politicians' obligation to respond to the experience of those suffering from problems associated with drug-use, borrowing from illegal moneylenders, anti-social behaviour and airgun crime, and to respond to sympathetic or fearful 'public opinion',

was a rational basis for agenda-setting – telling the politicians what issues to focus on, not what to do about them. However, The Herald’s failure to frame asylum-seekers, even when children, as people to whom politicians had obligations, suggested that it was the public opinion aspect that was the most significant in the minds of politicians, and moreover a public fearful of falling victim to the problem more than a public outraged on behalf of others. So the campaigns only appeared to have an agenda-setting role when making their readers fearful of being affected by the problem, rather than in accordance with a social democratic principle of positively enabling all groups in society.

Furthermore, the Daily Record campaigns did not stop at agenda-setting, but conflated the emotional responses of the various publics with certain assumed policy preferences. The framing of the campaigns in terms of competing interests between ‘victims’ and offenders, meant that politicians were called upon to express their sympathy by taking the side of the ‘victims’, and therefore punishing the offenders. This served to suggest that sympathy for those suffering those problems was synonymous with calling for an enforcement response. Similarly, sympathy for patients’ fears about the planned closure of the Queen Mum’s hospital was conflated with opposition to the closure, even though those fears may be unfounded (as many were, as shown in Chapter 7). Debate on effective policy choices was closed down by presenting challenges to instinctive ‘public opinion’ as arrogant and patronising, and as producing cynicism in the electorate. Only The Herald argued that politicians should resist populist instincts, but even then the newspaper shied away from a full debate on the issues surrounding immigration and asylum, the implications of current legislation and what changes to that would mean for Scotland and the UK.

The electoral mechanism that is central to political accountability in a liberal democracy was given little attention, except where it was assumed that the fragility of politicians’ positions of power meant that they would be more vulnerable to the newspapers’ criticisms and demands than institutions less directly accountable to Scottish people, including the UK government. In addition, there was also evidence of a judgement that people are only motivated to *act* on beliefs that they feel strongly in an emotional (again mostly fearful) sense, including voting against a party on the basis of a single issue. Again, both journalists and politicians assumed an electorate composed of competing interests, and therefore that people would vote in accordance with an instinctive understanding of their own interests, not their altruistic moral beliefs, or even rational arguments about the likely effectiveness of policy. Although the experience of opposition to the Iraq war may have shaken that assumption to some extent, in the end Blair and his party were still re-elected. In Scotland the rhetoric of the parliament was to be more diverse in voters’ choices, and more transparent about decision-making to empower publics to participate directly. The pressures exerted on the Scottish Executive by the press are contradictory to those aspirations; politicians’ responses to them will now be examined.

Chapter 10: Political Influence of Campaigns

This chapter addresses both the newspapers' and politicians' accounts of the political influence of the campaigns. It does not seek to make a definitive judgement on the extent of newspapers' influence, but investigate politicians' relationship with the press through their published responses, references to the newspapers in parliament, and discussion in interviews. The three ministers interviewed were those who were targeted by the campaigns. Margaret Curran was the Communities Minister at the time of the anti-social behaviour campaign and Social Justice Minister during the loan sharks campaigns, and the Deputy Social Justice Minister during the drugs campaign. Cathy Jamieson was the Justice Minister at the time of the airguns campaign, and was also there during the anti-social behaviour campaign, though the lead department was Communities. Finally, Malcolm Chisholm was the Health Minister during the Evening Times' Queen Mum's campaign. All three were ministers during The Herald's Dungavel campaign, though no one single minister or department was targeted by that campaign.

The first section evaluates the newspapers' specific claims of influence in terms of politicians' praise and support for the campaigns, policy decisions, or debate. The second section examines the politicians' understanding of newspapers' influence over the audience, legitimacy on behalf of 'the public', and effectiveness of various forms of pressure, corresponding with the analysis of these aspects in the three content chapters (7, 8 and 9).

10.1. Newspapers' political support and claims of influence

None of the campaigns achieved a political response that could be unambiguously interpreted as evidence of influence over politicians and political decision-making, but most made some claims of influence, even if only of attracting the attention of politicians. This section will first examine the statements of support and praise secured by the newspapers, with a focus on the Daily Record campaigns on drugs and loan sharks that had largely cultural or symbolic aims. The coverage of actions taken by politicians on the campaign issues will then be addressed, starting with claims of credit for policy decisions, then the deliberative contributions of politicians in parliamentary questions, motions and debates.

10.1.1. Politicians' support: praise for the campaigns

The Herald sought expressions of support from politicians, specifically ministers, but this was connected to a political purpose in terms of asking them to lobby the Home Office. The Evening Times attracted the support of the constituency MSP and some regional list MSPs, but again specifically to put formal pressure on the Health Minister. Therefore, the Herald and

Evening Times' support will be dealt with in the next section as political action, and this section focuses on the Daily Record, whose political support was more symbolic. In its drugs and loan sharks campaigns the Daily Record asked politicians for expressions of symbolic support rather than pressuring them in an adversarial manner. The other two Daily Record campaigns did not attract such declarative support, since they called instead for specific policy responses, one of which, however, (anti-social behaviour) was initiated by the Executive.

Politicians praised the protest march phase of the Record's drugs campaign in particular as *representing* public opinion. However, Deputy Justice Minister Iain Gray was typically vague in stating that, "The Daily Record has taken on an important role which shows the depth of feeling of its readers against drugs" (DR 02/03/01); he did not specify what the purpose of the newspaper's role was, nor to whom public feeling was being shown. Certainly no politician expressed surprise at public opposition to drugs, or credited the newspaper with telling them anything they did not already know, so such expressions of support were purely symbolic.

The earlier 'name and shame' phase was instead praised for *influencing* the newspaper's readers, although politicians were more cautious about legitimising the direct intervention of the newspaper in crime detection. Iain Gray was quoted praising the campaign in that it "has a very powerful message that we can do something to change things – and that is very positive" (quoted in DR 02/12/00), but he refused to condone naming and shaming, rather encouraging people to report drug offences to the police. Similarly, the Scottish Drug Enforcement Agency (SDEA) director, Jim Orr (DR 02/12/00), Mothers Against Drugs founder Gaille McCann (DR 12/12/00), and Stirling MP Anne McGuire (DR 28/03/01) praised the campaign for making informing on neighbours socially acceptable and giving people confidence to do so to the police in future. The Record described the police as "confident that the tide is turning in the war against drugs, and that more and more people are on their side" (DR 06/12/00). In particular, then, politicians praised the Daily Record for the public information aspects of the campaign; for encouraging people to do their civic duty, which was interpreted as cooperating with official agencies. Politicians' praise seemed to be contingent on the targets of the campaigns being readers or 'baddies', but not MSPs themselves.

Similarly, in relation to the loan sharks campaign, whilst politicians credited it as investigative and as revealing the extent of the problem (in less cautious terms than in relation to the drugs campaign), they emphasised that the campaign was directed against the criminals not at politicians.

I am appalled at the extent of evidence that loan sharks are preying on cash-strapped people, charging exorbitant interest rates and harassing borrowers. That is why my colleague Margaret Curran and I are happy to back the Daily Record's excellent campaign to expose these crooks. (Hugh Henry MSP (Lab), Deputy Social Justice Minister, quoted in DR 20/06/02)

Politicians also praised the Record's campaign in parliament; indeed eight of the ten speakers in the parliamentary debate congratulated the paper. Again support was simply declarative, expressing sympathy and reassuring readers that the Executive were on their 'side', but without proposing a political response. Such support and praise from MSPs ran through the course of the campaign, and was ubiquitous in the parliamentary debate on the motion. Even opposition parties (who typically resent the party political support of the Record for Labour) complimented the campaign, as Conservative Phil Gaillie said "if it is unusual for an SNP man to praise the Daily Record, it is even more unusual for a Tory to do so" (Scottish Parliament, 2002: col 13109). The support of the politicians could reflect genuine admiration for the investigative work on a worthy issue, but equally for the Executive it could be seen as a way of getting praise in the newspaper for existing policy in exchange for crediting the Daily Record for bringing the issue to public attention, suggesting that the campaign was aimed at educating the public not to borrow from the lenders rather than demanding political action.

In summary, the Daily Record actively solicited praise and recruited support from Executive ministers and other politicians. Politicians praised the campaign both for giving a message to 'the public' and as a representation of 'the public', but not for advocacy of policy; for aims that were cultural (changing public attitudes) or symbolic (public expression of dominant values) more than practical. The administrative and legislative responses to the campaigns will be considered next.

10.1.2. Political action: policy change, motions and bills

Four of the six campaigns had clear political objectives: the Evening Times called for the Health Board's hospital closure plan to be rejected, and The Herald opposed the Home Office's policy of detaining asylum-seeking children, though neither advocated a clear alternative solution to the overstretch on obstetricians or sanctions to enforce immigration restriction. The newspapers' claims of success in relation to these objectives will be addressed first. Secondly, despite being primarily symbolic and not particularly pursuing specific policy goals, the Daily Record's drugs and loan sharks campaigns did claim to have "inspired" political action on the issues. Finally, some more deliberative parliamentary responses will be briefly summarised.

The Evening Times made the most emphatic claim of political influence. Though the outcome was not one that the newspaper had championed, and had even opposed when suggested by the Health Board, they framed it as evidence that the Health Minister had "listened" to the newspaper, and that the Health Board had not. Of 27 references to "listening" in relation to the Health Board, 17 argued that they *were not* listening or *had not* listened (13 in quotes from politicians and health professionals), five argued that they *should* listen (all quotes from politicians), and five reported the board's claims and assurances that they *were* listening or *had* listened. In contrast, of the 23 references to Malcolm Chisholm "listening", 14 credited

him as listening or having listened (three in quotes from health professionals, two from politicians), five related to his promise that he *would* listen, and four argued that he *should* listen (two from parents who attended the public meeting). Chisholm was described as the “listening minister”, and his (temporary) reprieve for the Queen Mum’s as having “showed he really cared” (headline ET 01/10/04), and that “he was repaying the trust that had led many in Glasgow to call him “the minister who listens””. Although the detail of some of the articles in the special supplement published to celebrate the ‘success’ of the campaign explained that the relocation of maternity services to an adult hospital was only being delayed whilst the simultaneous relocation of the Sick Kids’ hospital was being considered, the headline claimed “Queen Mum’s Saved” (ET 01/10/04).

The two campaigns that demanded specific responses on devolved issues (asylum and airguns) were only able to claim even more limited victories. The Herald’s Dungavel campaign failed to end the detention of children, and only achieved a promise from the Home Office to process and deport families more quickly to avoid lengthy detention, but this was claimed as a moral victory as tantamount to an “admission of wrongdoing” (HD 16/12/07). The Record’s airguns campaign failed to achieve a ban but the Scottish Executive set up a scheme to encourage people to hand airguns into the police, and the Home Office put some further restrictions in place, which were dubbed ‘Andrew’s Law’ despite being considered an inadequate response (DR 03/05/05). The anti-social behaviour campaign, meanwhile, claimed that Social Justice Minister Margaret Curran had promised the Daily Record and its readers influence over the Scottish Executive at the outset (DR 01/09/03), however, in reality the policy was already fully developed and there was little scope for influence.

Although the Record was not strongly committed to pursuing policy objectives for the drugs and loan sharks campaigns, and more focused on their own activity gathering information for the police and gaining symbolic praise from politicians, the newspaper was prepared to give favourable publicity to, and take credit for, policies that were already in place. The Record reported that politicians intended to support credit unions as the most effective tool against loan sharks, but did not make clear that this was already an established policy (DR 05/06/02). The following day the Record reported the “announcement” that Scotland’s credit unions had recently received £4,000 each, although there was no corresponding press release, and the money had been announced as long ago as the previous August, as part of the ‘financial inclusion’ strategy (Executive News Online, 2001). Similarly, Glasgow City Council pointed to existing initiatives in development such as a “new strategy for poor communities” – but it was presented by the Daily Record as if a response to the campaign – “vowed to shake up public advice centres and boost credit unions” – implicitly claiming it as a victory (DR 06/06/02). A further announcement by Deputy Social Justice Minister Hugh Henry, of an extra £1million funding over two years for Money Advice Scotland and the Citizens Advice Bureau to improve the availability of financial advice (DR 14/06/02) was actually related to the Debt

Arrangements and Attachments Bill laid before parliament the previous month (The Scottish Parliament Information Centre, 2002).

In relation to the drugs campaign, an announcement by Deputy Justice Minister Iain Gray of new targets for drug users, deaths, needle-sharing and treatment program use (Executive News Online, 2000) was reported in such a way that suggested that it was new funding in response to the campaign, "backed the Record's anti-drugs campaign as he announced a £100million blueprint to cut Scotland's shocking drug death toll" (DR 02/12/00). A further announcement, which specified how additional police funding would be allocated, was reported as new money (DR 19/01/01), although the funding itself had been announced the previous September (SDEA, 2001). In addition, the amount of funds allocated to the police overall was described as being directed toward drugs enforcement.

The drugs campaign did, however, inspire some politicians to offer genuinely new proposals, beyond the existing policy. MP Des Browne announced his intention to produce a Private Members Bill (presented to the Commons on 26th February) to introduce a Drug Trafficking Offenders' Register, to make it more difficult to launder drug money. The Bill was claimed as a "victory in drugs battle" (DR 16/02/01); "Now our pleas are being heard by politicians and turned into law". Although it wasn't a *proposal* that the Record had put forward, Browne credited the paper with having highlighted the *problem* – "The MP cited the Record's high profile campaign as the inspiration for his bill" (DR 20/02/01). Similarly, Blair's new criminal justice plans for England and Wales were described in a headline as "Inspired by Record" (DR 27/02/01) because they included measures to tackle drug-dealing, and again the Prime Minister's focus on drugs in his Scottish Labour Party conference speech was framed as "Blair follows Daily Record lead" (DR 10/03/01). In a leader column the newspaper further claimed "he showed he has taken on board the Record's message that this is a war that must involve all of us" though this message appeared to have originated with Gordon Brown (DR 17/11/00).

In addition to the Scottish Executive's responses, other activity occurred in the parliamentary business. Two motions were tabled on loan sharks, one in each parliament. Trish Godman's motion in the Scottish Parliament was claimed as support for the newspapers' demands.

THE Scottish Parliament is set to get behind the Daily Record's campaign against loan sharks. In a debate next week, Labour MSP Trish Godman will back our drive to name and shame the parasites. More than 30 MSPs of all parties are backing Godman's stand. Godman has tabled a motion calling on the Executive, the UK government, the police and other agencies to work together to "drive these predators out of their sordid business". And the Executive yesterday promised to support the Record campaign. (DR 20/06/02)

In the parliamentary debate on the motion, politicians reported several stories from the Daily Record campaign. The motion functioned as declarative support, like the praise for the campaign detailed in the previous section, but more formally requested an administrative response to the problem, which in the long term may have contributed to the founding of the

illegal money-lending unit. Similarly John Lyons' motion tabled at Westminster was framed as crediting the campaign as having performed an agenda-setting function, "thanking the Record for highlighting the evil caused by loan sharks" and "congratulated the Record on our campaign" (DR 25/07/02). Again, however, the motion praised the campaign for "raising public awareness" (PIMS, 2002), suggesting that the campaign was a public information campaign and not aimed at politicians. There was also a debate on airguns, secured by Kenny McAskill (SNP), whose motion calling for powers over firearms legislation to be devolved to Holyrood was also amended to praise for measures already taken. The Daily Record gave little coverage of the debate, nor did it cover the anti-social behaviour debate when the bill was presented to parliament.

In opposition to the Queen Mum's closure, MSPs Pauline McNeill (Lab), Sandra White (SNP) and Rosie Kane (SSP) lodged eight motions between them, which called for specific decisions to be taken by the Health Board or the Health Minister, including investigations into wrongdoing and a moratorium of closures, half of which were reported in the newspaper. One of these (S2M-00511) was debated in the chamber, however, only Sandra White's speech putting the motion forward was reported in the Evening Times. In addition, Pauline McNeill submitted 43 written questions and two oral questions to the Scottish Executive between June 2003 and May 2004; Malcolm Chisholm's responses to some of them were published in the Evening Times (ET 16/06/04). Her questions to Jack McConnell at First Minister's Questions relating to foetal medicine at the hospitals were also reported (ET 07/05/04). Finally, Bill Butler (Labour) lodged a proposal for a Private Member's Bill to have a proportion of Health Board members elected (ET 30/06/04), which attracted 31 supporters but fell the following November, and again was not covered in the newspaper.

On the Dungavel issue, 30 parliamentary questions were tabled by Pauline McNeill (Lab), Linda Fabiani (SNP), Tommy Sheridan (SSP) and David Gorrie (LD); and seven motions were lodged, including four by Rosie Kane of the SSP, and one by SNP leader John Swinney which attracted enough support to secure a debate. The motion proposed that children no longer be detained in Dungavel, but was effectively defeated by amendment. The debate was covered in the newspaper, but focused on the outcome rather than the substance of the arguments. SNP leader John Swinney was explicit about his party's preferred alternative to detention of families, and accepted that they ran the risk of some families absconding, but argued that this was an acceptable risk, and detention a disproportionate response.

Families could be asked to report daily to a police station or a social work department to account for their movements. To those who might say that there is a risk that such families will not turn up and will abscond, I make two points: first, is it realistic to assume that a mother who speaks little or no English, who has no money and up to four children will go on the run? Who do they think that we are talking about here? [...] My second point is that, for the Scottish National Party, even if there is a risk that a family will go on the run, the interests of the child must come first. For us, the risk of harm to innocent children from being locked up behind bars outweighs the risk of the family absconding.

That is our choice; it is for others to make their choice. (John Swiney in Scottish Parliament, 2003b: col 1584)

The Herald did not address the relative risks or relative harms, and the coverage of parliamentary debate was no more deliberative than that of the Daily Record, focusing on the political game rather than the quality of the arguments. A proposal by a pressure group for hostel accommodation of asylum-seeking families (dismissed by the Home Office for not addressing their security concerns) was given coverage, but its merits were not discussed.

To some extent the Daily Record did also demand or inspire some actual political action (as opposed to expression) as a response to the campaigns, such as motions and private members bills, but largely it was the two more adversarial campaigns that sought political action (or to prevent action). Both The Herald and Evening Times put pressure on the Scottish Executive to respond with a change of policy. There were some backbench and opposition politicians that supported the aims of these campaigns and initiated debate on the issues, but this activity attracted less attention than ministerial policy and coverage of debates focused on speeches that praised the newspapers or were critical of their opponents.

This section demonstrates that all three newspapers were keen to claim some sort of influence, even tangentially (Dungavel and airguns) or downright misleadingly (Queen Mum's). There is little evidence to suggest a direct cause and effect relationship between the campaign demands and the prominence of the issue on the political agenda or policy decisions, especially given the Record's tendency to hijack announcements that form part of a long-term strategy and present them as a victory for the newspaper. Equally, however, politicians were prepared to publicly praise campaigns, but largely only where the objectives were cultural or symbolic, and not aimed at the politicians themselves. What is not apparent from these (mis-)representations of political influence is how politicians understood their relationship with the media, and in particular whether they regard press influence as real and legitimate. In the next section, the reception of the campaigns by the three MSPs who were ministers of the relevant departments at the time will be analysed.

10.2. Politicians' reception of campaigns

This section will examine the reception of the campaigns by the ministers targeted. It will particularly examine their opinions of the newspapers' representation of the issues to readers, representation of public opinion and support, and pressure on the politicians to respond. Firstly it will examine the politicians' opinions on the quality of the newspapers' coverage of the issues, as detailed in Chapter 7, in terms of informing readers. Secondly, analyses at their opinions on the campaigns' representation of publics, as analysed in Chapter 8 in terms of public opinion, support, agency and political engagement and participation, as well as readers'

trust in the newspaper to represent them. In addition it examines the extent to which the politicians thought newspapers influenced their readers. Finally, attention will turn to the ministers' responses to the pressure those newspapers attempted to exert on them through campaigning, as explored in Chapter 9, and particular the obligation claims on behalf of the public, voters and affected publics, and the need to resist such populist pressures.

10.2.1. Politicians' opinions on newspaper coverage of the issues

This section looks at how politicians responded to the campaigns in terms of their opinions on how the newspapers covered the issues when addressing readers. In parallel with the analysis of the coverage in Chapter 7, these observations fall into similar categories: informing readers on the complex arguments and abstract concepts of difficult issues, and the personalisation of issues in terms of victims and perpetrators. Firstly, however, this section will report politicians' more general assessments of political journalism in Scotland, and Holyrood in particular.

Ministers did not in general regard the Scottish press at Holyrood as any more diverse in their angles on political news than the Westminster lobby, despite the attempts in the design of the Scottish Parliament to avoid the worst incestuousness of the 'Westminster village'. Cathy Jamieson argued that between them, "by and large they will come to a conclusion about how a story is running and how it's to run, and that's what happens", and Margaret Curran described the press as operating as a "pack", and that "there's maybe not enough pluralism, I think, in the Scottish press", suggesting that the press are less pluralistic than the Scottish Parliament. In party political terms that tends to benefit her party, but in terms of representation of the specific issues and arguments it suggests a partiality across all of the newspapers that is not balanced out through external pluralism.

This uniformity is acknowledged by Dave King of the Daily Record and explained as a product of the competitiveness of the Scottish market, and particularly of political journalism.

A genuine news reporter, unless you're on a major story, you can do stories nobody else is doing, but here, virtually everything you write, unless you've got an exclusive, everything you do is either covered by PA or covered by your competitors. So it's constantly being... tested, in the sense of, if they've got a line you haven't got, you know, they've developed their story a better way than you have. (Dave King, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

The fear of being too different and therefore exposed to being picked off by an editor demanding to know why the journalist didn't get the story everyone else was running, or didn't call it right, leads to a certain amount of cooperation; though King also adds that "you still shark each other every day if you can", for instance for the exclusive that allows them to lead the angle on the story.

This suggests that the competitiveness in the Scottish press (especially fierce in a declining market) does not have the stimulating effect on quality and innovation that free-market

economists would expect. In large part that is connected with the resource issue that Henderson alluded to in Chapter 5, and the increasing profit margins expected by the new owners of much of the indigenous press. Some of the shortcomings that the politicians identified in respect of how well newspapers inform their readers on the issues may be connected to cost-cutting, as library services to aid journalists' research have been cut at The Herald ('Spike', 2007) and any background research and analysis is time-consuming and therefore costly. The politicians instead, however, attributed it to a contemporary public idiom associated with spin and the internet.

I think that one of frustrating things for politicians is that in the era of the soundbite or the kind of blog-style commentary, it's actually quite hard to get them to step back and do the analysis, and the kind of serious heavy-weight stuff when you actually *do* want to read the for-and-against, or the different views on things. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

Jamieson suggests that such impartial argumentation is not only the type of journalism she would like to see reporting on issues within her political remit, but also that she would like to read to be more broadly informed on (possibly those or) other issues.

Margaret Curran argued that distance from the personal contact with politicians and the everyday workings and intrigues of the parliament was necessary in order to understand and write intelligently on the bigger picture.

I just don't think our commentary is as strong as maybe it is at a UK level. You know, when you get the think-pieces, you get the journalists who are not necessarily engaged in the day-to-day machinations of politics. They're not following people round the corridors, but they understand the issues, and they'll look at government, and they'll look at parliament and they follow the debate and they follow some of the thinking around that. I don't know, I just don't think we get enough of that in Scotland. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

This reflects the problems associated with the personalisation of politics and its representation as a competitive game rather than a consensus-oriented debate.

However, at the same time, Curran accepted that as inevitable, even though that is not in the spirit of the aspirations for the new parliament and its "new politics".

The key to it is to make it controversial, you know, if you make it a fight, people will cover it. And then they'll say you shouldn't fight about it. It's just that built-in contradiction there is. And there's a theatre in it – they are just obsessed with the theatre of politics and that's how you get journalists to write about it. So they'll write forever about First Minister's Questions, and it's the most irrelevant political activity of the week in terms of changing anybody's life. And it's theatre, that's all it is. But people want theatre and they want personality and that's just a given about politics, there's no point in moaning about it. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

Curran accepts this framing of politics as something intrinsic about political journalism itself or about "what people want", as represented by journalists' understanding of what people want. The ways in which politicians understand news values and accept their validity in engaging the imagined public is significant to their own understanding of citizens and voters. This was not a

dominant form of framing in the campaigns (since they *were* aimed at achieving, or at least portraying, consensus on the issues), but does reflect the lack of coverage of parliamentary debate.

Much of the debate that ministers would like to see covered is related to what *should be* done, and is therefore related to predicted outcomes of policy options and proposals; in contrast the news tends to focus on events and effects after the fact.

Again, getting that [the likely consequences of an SNP policy] onto a day-to-day news agenda is not the easiest thing to do, because it demands that you step back a bit and look at trends and look at funding strategies and you say ‘the cost of this will be...’ and you can only really grab people when the cost ‘has been’, or is happening. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

To some extent this can be explained in terms of dominant ‘news values’, or it could be attributed to limits in the skills of journalists, but journalists explained it as due to the limited interest for the audience, their imagined public.

Tabloid journalists in particular were regarded as having a superficial understanding of policy development and strategy, whereby “probably about 80% or 90% of the time it would be the same words that would be written” about crime announcements (Cathy Jamieson). Jamieson attributed this repetition to different reporters writing on the issue and not realising that the policy was not new, but as noted above, there could also be some purposeful re-presentation of a policy as new in order to frame it as a response to their campaign. In contrast, broadsheets that had “specialist journalists” (e.g. health, education, home affairs for justice) were judged to understand “the whole broad sweep” of strategy, but Jamieson regretted that specialist coverage was often put in specialist supplements (to support public sector advertising) and “probably does not get to as wide an audience as it could do”.

It was not only the tabloids, however, whose tendency to personalise issues, and explain them in terms of those affected by them was noted.

The media were always looking for individual stories more than anything else, and talking about the *consequences* sometimes of poverty, rather than maybe trying to have a debate about the *causes* of it and the *solutions* to it and the ways forward to it. That’s understandable, because it’s hard. And that’s true of a lot of people, so it’s not right to say ‘och the media, if only the media were better we’d solve poverty’, because it’s obviously not as easy as that, sadly. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

Curran attributes the lack of coverage of issues such as poverty to their difficult nature, both in terms of understanding the contributions to and consequences of poverty, and in terms of appearing intractable. However, the ministers did generally see the framing of issues in personalised terms as constructive.

Indeed, the parliamentary praise that the Daily Record's campaigns on drugs and loan sharks attracted suggests that politicians regarded such highlighting of problems as the appropriate role of the press.

Often, there are animated discussions in Scotland about the role of journalism and often, we see advocacy journalism of the worst kind, whereby analysis and commentary are moulded and thrown into fact. Journalism is at its best when it takes up issues that affect families, communities and people as they go about their business. Such journalism is to be commended. (Brian Fitzpatrick (Lab) in Scottish Parliament, 2002: col 13116)

The distinction made between valid and invalid topics for campaigning suggests that the MSP believes that journalism's role is to report on people's experience of social problems, to demand that politicians address the problem, but leave the detail of policy responses to politicians. However, the other aspect of the Daily Record's personalisation of crime and disorder issues is the focus on criminal offenders, which leads to an assumption of offender precipitation of the problem, and a conflation of sympathy for the victims with 'tougher' law enforcement and punishment of offenders.

Margaret Curran brought up anti-social behaviour as an example of newspapers' focus on the perpetrators, in reference to the difficulty of getting attention for policy announcements.

And then you talk about anti-social behaviour, and [clicks fingers] you're on the front page every day. You literally could say one thing about it and you could get on the debate, because somehow it captured people, because it was like a debate about... you know, people could attach to that debate and want to have, you know, very easy sanctions and get very animated about it, in a way that you can't really on the poverty debate. But to me they were the same thing. I thought, it's just how you create solutions. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

A focus on easy solutions against 'baddies' would therefore win the minister more column inches, but a policy that included some sanctions for non-compliance as part of a wider package of measures risked being partially represented. In relation to anti-social behaviour, Curran complained that "the frustration was that people just wanted to talk about the sanction end of the argument, they didn't want to talk about the causes and they didn't want to talk about some of the longer term solutions". However, the soundbite of the "respect agenda" was introduced by *politicians* (especially the Blairite First Minister, Jack McConnell), frequently in ways that 'othered' disruptive young people. Nonetheless, Curran claimed that she also saw young people as affected individuals, as victims who were in need of assistance, that "it was about diversionary activities, [...] where you saw young people heading into trouble and you tried to intervene", an aspiration that was present in the consultation document but which was not reflected in the media coverage.

Similarly, in relation to credit, debt and 'financial exclusion', the Daily Record chose to focus on the criminal activities of loan sharks.

That appeals more [...] but why that appeals... that 'this is a bad person, point the finger at this bad person'... So if you did a press release on a credit union, you'd get a bit like that [indicates an inch between finger and thumb] where you said 'join your credit

union’... but if you do it that way... I’ve never quite worked out what it is grabs public attention. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

Curran accepts journalists’ judgement of what “grabs public attention” (or else conflates the two if she means that she hasn’t worked out what grabs *journalists’* attention), and seems to accept it as a way of engaging people’s interest, yet doesn’t see it as constructive simply to “point the finger”.

Cathy Jamieson expressed more willingness to adapt the representation of policy to the newspaper agenda in return for favourable coverage.

In terms of the kinda tabloid agenda, I always found that to pitch it from the angle of ‘this is *actually* about getting people to pay back something to the local community if you look at it in terms of the value of the work they’ll do. So there was... it was a different story, and one of the things about politicians, that we have to do sometimes, is understand, you know, what is the kind of story line that the newspapers are looking for and how best do we then use that to explain our message. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

This is a fairly self-evident truth of contemporary media management, and is designed by politicians to spin an issue favourably, but it is equally demanded by the press in terms of having the newsworthy angles presented to them, often already written up in press releases (recalling McCann’s advice to the PR company in Chapter 5). However, whilst the substance of the policy may not have changed in the face of an enforcement-focused tabloid press, the message may well be significantly affected by the efforts to gain positive coverage of it, limiting the potential for informed public debate as Sinclair argued in the previous chapter.

Politicians were critical of the standard of comment and analysis in the Scottish press, and the uniformity of angles on political stories, and lamented the personalisation of issues in terms of victims and offenders, though largely resigned to the personalisation of politics in terms of individual politicians and conflicts between them. However, they also accepted the newspaper’ claims to know what engaged the attention of the audience. The next section examines how the politicians judged ‘public opinion’, and how they interpreted campaigns claims to represent ‘the public’.

10.2.2. Politicians’ opinions on representation of public(s)

Where the previous section examined how politicians interpreted the ways in which newspapers informed and engaged readers, as detailed in Chapter 7, this section relates to Chapter 8’s discussion of the representation of ‘the public’ and ‘public opinion’ in the campaigns. It correspondingly addresses the politicians’ assessment of the representativeness of the newspapers’ depictions of public opinion, and their judgement of the agency of ‘the public’, independently and through the newspapers’ actions on their behalf. In addition, the politicians’ reports of their own gauging of ‘public opinion’ independently of newspaper coverage will be covered.

Malcolm Chisholm reflected that newspapers may to some extent have to be representative of their readers' views in response to market pressures, and cited the same example of the Scotsman's circulation decline mentioned by Calum MacDonald of The Herald and others in Chapter 6.

But it's an interesting point because at the end of the day there could be the same issue for a newspaper editor as for politicians; to what extent are you going to follow our lead? And I suppose the fact of the matter is that there isn't any simple answer to that, because I suppose my sense of The Scotsman is that they've lost a lot of readers, particularly in the public sector, but, you know, they're advocating – it's probably changed now and slightly toned down now they've got new owners – but they advocated policies that they believe in, and so the price of that *is* losing some readers. So, in a kind of way, that's quite an interesting analogy, that newspaper editors are not in that different a situation from politicians: to what extent are you going to lead and to what extent are you going to follow? In general terms you wouldn't expect newspapers to get too far away from their readers or they'll start losing them. (Malcolm Chisholm MSP, ex-Minister for Health)

His analogy between the market and the vote does not necessarily suggest Chisholm sees an equivalent accountability, but the minister does seem to regard people's purchase of a newspaper as indicative of broad approval of the editorial line, and in particular interprets changes in circulation as a response to the angle on social and political issues (as opposed to pricing, promotions, marketing and competitor activity, or changes non-news content such as sport or cartoons). Chisholm also makes a broader point about the difficulty of taking a lead by challenging received opinion if that means losing your audience or voters, a consideration that is further discussed in the next section.

In particular, Chisholm thought that the Scottish press might be more representative of the more left-leaning aspects of Scottish public opinion discussed in Chapter 8, though similarly cautious on the extent to which Scots are more socially liberal on issues such as asylum.

But to some extent, it's a bit of a two-way relationship, that the media has to follow its readership as well as the other way around, so if Scottish public opinion – although I'm not sure on asylum seekers it's all that different from English public opinion although I think the recent [Social Attitudes] survey suggests it was slightly better – but I suppose if Scottish public opinion is kind of like slightly to the left of English public opinion on certain issues then that would be reflected in the media to some extent. (Malcolm Chisholm MSP, ex-Minister for Health)

In terms of the Daily Record in particular, he also thought that the paper might be more representative of Labour voters, on account of the Record's own support for the party: "I mean I suppose especially with the *Labour* party the Record's thought to, you know, to reflect the views of a lot of Labour-supporting people". Of course this again assumes that people buy a newspaper to reflect their party-political preferences, which is not necessarily the case (see Chapter 6), but Chisholm does interpret the relationship between newspaper and voting preference as one of readers choosing a newspaper that reflects their views rather than readers of a particular newspaper being influenced to vote in a particular way.

Margaret Curran conversely thought of the Record as influencing people more than representing them, but believed that readers nevertheless do trust the press to represent them.

They reach out and can talk to people in a way we can't get to people like that. And also they have a legitimacy, people tell the Daily Record things that they wouldn't necessarily tell anyone else. And people see 'the press' as a great threat to the system. I don't know how many times I've heard people say, 'well I'm going to the press with this, I'm going to tell the press', and you're like 'carry on!' You think, 'you'll not get listened to', people think that, you know, it's like The Judge in the Sunday Mail is like a knight in a shining armour and they see the press as protecting them. So when the Daily Record's like that it is very very good, and it can help, you know it can collect information and it can shape a debate. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

As discussed in Chapter 6, The Record (and its sister paper, the Sunday Mail) has actively cultivated such a reputation by helping readers behind the scenes even if their problem was not a news story, whilst the Evening Times was more dismissive of phone-ins that simply demonstrated for their journalists that most people had no news instinct for what was interesting about their lives. Curran recognises the role of such trust in attracting personal stories from readers but also in influencing readers to trust in the newspaper's representation of the causes and solutions to the problem, though clearly sees this as more cooperative with "the system" than adversarial and threatening. In particular, she observes that readers' misplaced trust in the Record can be used by politicians to "reach out" and "get to people".

Cathy Jamieson also saw readers' perceived close relationship with the Record as useful in terms of gathering information, arguing that in the name and shame campaigns its trusted position made the newspaper a useful intermediary between individuals and official agencies.

Personally, again I didn't have a particular problem with that because for many people who might be wary of politicians or the police, or repercussions in their own community, actually for some individuals the notion that they would phone the newspaper might've been a safer option for them. So if it works, who was I to criticise it? (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

In the loan sharks and the first phase of the drugs campaign, the Record was, therefore, regarded as influencing readers on politicians' behalf, rather than representing public opinion to politicians, much less influencing politicians on readers' behalf (which will be taken up in the next section).

In other circumstances, however, Jamieson did believe that "it can test public opinion as well, which is another opportunity" once again regarding newspapers as fulfilling a function for politicians by floating ideas as "policy balloons" (Meyer, 2002: 94-6), more than offering an expressive opportunity for readers. The Daily Record journalists agreed with this assessment.

Well, with the anti-social behaviour campaign I think that, you know, I think that was more politically driven than it was reader-driven and I think that the Executive were very much minded to pursue this kind of strong anti-social behaviour agenda. I think there was an extent to which they were sort of putting their toe in the water and wanted to see whether their hunch about, you know, people's perceptions of life in communities where

they lived was correct. So, you know, I think there's an element that we were, you know, part of helping them to gauge public opinion. (Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

Gardham suggests that there was a genuine sense of uncertainty about the extent and intensity of affected communities' concern, distress or anger about anti-social behaviour, and that the Record's campaign had a real impact on the way in which ministers took the policy forward. It seems more likely, however, that politicians anticipated that response from readers and that the campaign was used as a publicity or even propaganda tool to demonstrate to readers that the Executive were in touch with their concerns, or at most to change the minds of their critics in civic society and within their own parties.

Even when using the media to gauge public response, Jamieson did not necessarily see the newspapers' reactions as *representative* of 'public opinion', but instead judged it from the response received in personal contact with voters who had seen the media coverage.

I would know if it was something that mattered to people because if I was in a shop, or, you know, wherever, out in the street, and people said to me, 'I saw what you said in the paper or I heard what you said on television, or that was something interesting', and people often commented on it or talked about it, so it was obviously... it was making a difference to them. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

This suggests that Jamieson does attribute a certain amount of agency directly to individuals, and an engagement with politics that extends to recognising Scottish ministers in the street. However, the basis of their interest she interprets as the policy "matter[ing] to people" and "making a difference to them" in their lives as affected individuals, rather than their responding to the arguments deliberately.

Deliberative consensus in policy-making was sought outside of the core political sphere, but formally through the organisations and agencies of civic society, and in particular the 'issue publics'.

Recently we had a consultation on forced marriage and whether there should be a specific offence in terms of making someone get married against their will, so we were genuinely open-minded and uncertain about what was best on that. So I think looking at the responses, the balance of evidence was against that, and groups that you might have particular respect for on that issue such as ethnic minority women's groups, or women's aid and so on, tended to be against it. So that did have an influence, on me and I think generally. (Malcolm Chisholm MSP, ex-Minister for Health)

That Chisholm specified that they were "genuinely" open-minded in this instance suggests that other proposals consulted on are more pre-determined. However, in some cases at least, pressure or 'stakeholder' groups do have the opportunity to present evidence and arguments, even if the final judgement is perhaps more likely simply to be for or against the proposal rather than to develop alternative policy options.

One instance when civic society organisations had less influence over Executive plans was the anti-social behaviour legislation.

By the point at which I was bringing legislation into the parliament, the arguments, to a large extent, had been had; we had worked with the various sectors, we had tried, I had anyway, we had tried to build a consensus around the issues, so that the legislation for me was the kind of end point. Now that was not always the case, there were some things such as anti-social behaviour legislation was one example where it became a catalyst for change. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

In this case, most of the organisational responses were critical of the legislative proposals developed by the Executive, so efforts were made to extend participation in the consultation to a wider public, and specifically to those living in areas affected by the problem (including through the Daily Record in the last 10 days of the consultation period). All three politicians explained this as reaching out beyond the organisations on the standard lists for consultation, which were described by both Cathy Jamieson and Malcolm Chisholm as the “usual suspects”. This suggests a different approach to consultation that could be interpreted as participatory.

Margaret Curran emphasised the importance to the consultation exercise of the contributions of affected individuals who reported their experience, “the experience of those living in local communities probably counted more than anything else, that’s what we tried to reach out and get, because we felt we hadn’t got it before”. However, the consultation was not intended to seek their views on how appropriate or effective the policy proposals would be.

JB: What did you learn from going into the communities?

MC: Again just the scale, you know, the depth of some of the problems they face.

JB: That’s how they’re affected, were they able to contribute on the other things you were talking about – the solutions?

MC: Yes and no. It was more about, I would say, the experience; by and large it would have been the experience.

Curran gave an account how the Executive learnt about the support needs of disruptive young people, including those “who had been through the system”, in terms of earlier intervention, alcohol use, and parental care issues, but did not expect to receive a more discursive contribution from affected communities.

Jamieson framed the opportunity for those affected to express their experience and frustration as in itself empowering: “it was about empowering people to say enough is enough” – in similar terms to the Daily Record on drugs – but Curran did not think they had achieved *real* empowerment of communities and it remained an aspiration.

We need to have an honest discussion about it, because we’re naive about some of it and we’re patronising about some of it, but you have to be empowering and we hadn’t stretched... we hadn’t stepped into that empowering bit yet. The debate was too unbalanced. So that was the next stage of it. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

Curran was aware of the limitation of public participation through consultation, but she also regarded the predominantly emotional response from those living in affected communities as entirely understandable.

I mean it was people saying no-one's ever listened to use before, no-one's ever said, this can change, and that kind of frustration that people had really began to come out. [...]. And that all just came to public attention and boiled over a bit. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

In part, then, Curran saw the tone of those contributions as a product of the long-term disenfranchisement of the deprived populations.

However, politicians' exposure to people's experience of anti-social behaviour did serve a purpose in terms of setting the agenda. Both Curran and Jamieson expressed shock at the extent of the problems experienced by people in deprived areas – and both stressed that they had backgrounds in community and social work respectively, so were not naïve. They emphasised their own obligation to help those affected, and Curran characterised those critical or sceptical of the effectiveness of the policy as being complacent about and unsympathetic toward deprived communities.

And the biggest shock to me was that everybody just expected people to put up with it. It was decided that that's what happens in the East End of Glasgow; that is how people live. And I just thought, no it's not, it's not how people live, and if it happened in your community you'd be going wild about it. There's a level of breakdown that we just can't accept as a society. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

Jamieson also suggested that liberal critics of the legislative agenda were betraying deprived communities: "I thought, there's absolutely nothing left-wing about communities being destroyed by drug dealers, or by serious crime, or by people who just frankly don't care" (Cathy Jamieson).

In contrast, both MSPs framed the legislation as an expression of sympathy with people's perceptions of the failings of welfare and public services: "people felt they were abandoned, they felt no-one was listening, they felt that the law was not on their side" (Cathy Jamieson). Curran further argued that those perceptions were accurate, that there was a "failure of some public services". Both Curran and Jamieson argued that anti-social behaviour was a real and pressing problem, but they largely – like the newspapers – characterised affected individuals having 'feelings' on the issue and as passive recipients of state intervention, but not as constitutive of a discursive public.

One response to the perceived limits of people's discursive capabilities might be to raise the standard of debate in the public sphere, but both press and politicians thought it more realistic to expect people to contribute in a more declarative or descriptive way, or have their interests represented by others. Despite the reservations expressed above, the intervention of newspapers, particularly the Daily Record, on such issues was seen as more representative of 'the public' than civic society organisations, but equivalent in legitimacy. Even with reference to formal mechanisms for public participation in politics such as the petitions committee, the role of newspapers as political representatives was accepted.

For many members of the public, they wouldn't necessarily themselves feel, despite the fact that it's easy, they wouldn't necessarily feel that they were able to go and do the work on putting the petition in, but they would quite happily support it if the newspaper was doing it. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

Jamieson assumed the agency of 'the public' to be limited by motivation and effort, and therefore saw newspapers' use of the petitions committee as a valid representation of pre-existing 'public opinion', rather than a product of the newspaper's marketing of the campaign.

In summary, the market necessity for newspapers to represent their readers was interpreted by Malcolm Chisholm in terms of readers' resistance to being challenged in their views, and he argued that this was also a concern for politicians. Margaret Curran argued that newspapers (especially the Daily Record) did, however, influence their readers by gaining their trust and appearing to represent their interests by seeming in touch with their concerns. Politicians therefore used the press to communicate their policies in those emotional and instrumental terms, regardless of their misgivings of this framing. They accepted journalists' account of this as interesting to the audience, but not necessarily of the substance of publics' opinions of policy proposals, and often depended on their own measures of 'public opinion'. Whilst civic society organisations played a deliberative role in policy-making, contributing responses to policy proposals (if not usually contributing alternative proposals), they were not regarded as representative of publics in society, and newspapers' actions 'representing' their readers were regarded as legitimate action 'on behalf of' a disengaged and passive public. Interestingly, the politicians did not object to newspapers' (assumed) influence over their readers if it is in the Scottish Executive's interests, whether to "use [it] to explain our message" (Jamieson) or to more broadly "shape a debate" (Curran). The next section analyses how the politicians responded to pressure that was not necessarily so supportive of Executive policy.

10.2.3. Politicians' opinions on pressure from the press

This section addresses how politicians responded to the pressures placed on them by the campaigns, as detailed in the previous chapter. Specifically, it examines the ministers' reactions to the newspapers' representations of their obligations to respond to 'public opinion' and electoral pressure, to criticisms and accusations of wrong-doing, and to take a principled lead in the public interest.

Newspaper pressure on politicians to respond to public opinion was seen as valid to some extent, but views of this kind were always qualified. Malcolm Chisholm admitted that local papers "can be influential via the public who they're speaking for and indeed influencing", but this also expresses scepticism about the validity of newspapers having influence over politicians on account of their power to influence the electorate. He also argued that when taking policy decisions politicians would not, or should not, necessarily accept newspapers' representation of public opinion: "I mean you have to make a judgement, I mean it could be that a newspaper was completely out of step with public opinion", in which case it was not

assumed that the newspaper could influence its readers to change their minds, or that its readers represented a minority view that was not representative of 'public opinion' (a judgement which may have been made of The Herald's Dungavel campaign).

Cathy Jamieson argued that newspapers' representations would be taken into account in a discursive way, in order to hear new arguments rather than simply gauging reactions.

It depends on the issue and it will depend obviously on the individual paper, and, you know, I would never use it as a kind of referendum, but it's... in terms of getting debate and discussion going, and, you know, trying to get views. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

However, none of the politicians could call to mind a particular instance when a newspaper campaign had brought to their attention a new argument. Instead ministers credited the private contributions of particular pressure groups or influential experts.

For instance, in relation to the Queen Mum's campaign, Malcolm Chisholm referred to his direct contact with affected individuals and health professionals, many of whom had also been sources for the newspaper.

I didn't particularly feel that the Evening Times was critical to that [decision], I think for me the critical thing was talking to various people and seeing alternative solutions. Because at the end of the day, you can't just be against something, you've got to have some other alternative way forward, and round that one there was a different scenario emerged through talking to local people, and particularly some of the local clinicians, who had an alternative kind of way forward. (Malcolm Chisholm MSP, ex-Minister for Health)

Chisholm argued that the newspaper's pressure to respond to public opinion was not the critical factor, and that without a workable solution he would have been prepared to "take the hit" of the threatened criticism. In contrast with newspapers, insider pressure groups work to develop new policy proposals and therefore have more influence with politicians, in a corporatist arrangement. It is questionable, of course, whether this would be a proper role for the press.

Nonetheless, Chisholm acknowledged that 'public opinion' was not entirely irrelevant to his considerations.

But at the end of the day, you know, public opinion is always a factor, obviously, it would be bad if it wasn't. But equally, in terms of lots of decisions on health or anything else, planning or whatever, you don't always just calculate what percentage supports policy A and what percentage supports policy B, but I mean obviously it is a factor, of course it is. (Malcolm Chisholm MSP, ex-Minister for Health and Communities)

This suggests that Health Reporter John McCann's assessment of the separate roles of each type of pressure – public opinion and clinical argument – was accurate, except that the Evening Times had focused on evidence of wrong-doing on the part of their opponent, the Health Board, rather than evidence supporting an alternative policy proposal.

This was also the failure of The Herald's Dungavel campaign, which Curran argued was not "as informative as it should've been [and] jumped to a conclusion without really taking people through all of the issues", though she commends the sentiment of wanting to "be good to incoming mothers and children":

I mean that's a good impulse to have, you don't want to discourage that in people, but they just didn't want to think through some of the complications about that to say, well if you didn't have some system of management around that what are the consequences of that. And at its extreme, when people absolutely break the rules, you have to have some sanctions. And we were talking about the sanctions, we were talking about the extremes, people never saw the underlying arguments to do with that. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

Effectively, The Herald's campaign failed to make an argument for an alternative way of managing asylum-seekers who have absconded because it failed to challenge the arguments about immigration enforcement as deterrent.

Jamieson also interpreted the Record's preference for enforcement-related policies as related to their focus on the interests of the 'victims' of the problem, which were assumed to be served by punishing offenders. Asked about the Record's focus on enforcement Jamieson said:

I suppose the diplomatic way to put it would be that they tend to be on the side of the victim, always, and to take the side of the victim and to look for the justice system to be on the side of the ordinary person, rather than self-serving in its own interests. And they like to see policies and an agenda coming forward that demonstrate it. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

She interpreted anti-social behaviour legislation in the same way, as competing interests – those of the affected individuals versus those of the perpetrators, and interpreted the Record's position as again "very much on the side of their readers" (Cathy Jamieson). This contrasts somewhat with Curran's interpretation of the legislation as in the interests of the disruptive or violent young people, as much as those of the community around them, although to some extent this reflects their role at the time as Justice Minister and Social Justice Minister respectively.

In terms of making ultimate policy decisions, however, the politicians tended to emphasise their own formal democratic legitimacy. Margaret Curran referred to her obligation to voters in terms of a mandate for government, where voters have consented to the manifesto presented prior to the election.

But with a parliament, you see, a parliament of elected people, always they will protect that authority that... the mandate they've been... being elected gives you a legitimacy very few people can compete with. No matter how important your experience, no matter how good your point is, if you're a democrat, most are, that's not contested really, it's hard to beat being elected, 'cause you have the ultimate authority and you can ultimately say, 'I've more of a call on this than anybody else, because I've been sent here to do this, you know, people have gone out there and voted for me to do this'. (Margaret Curran MSP, ex-Minister for Communities and Social Justice)

This defends the core element of representative democracy in the Scottish parliamentary system, and is not inconsistent with Habermas' (1996) notion of deliberative democracy,

where the final decision does still rest with the elected representatives, though they are obliged to take into account the arguments presented in public deliberation when making that decision. However, it can simply mean that voters are offered a limited range of choices, and no matter how inadequate the voter considers even the best option, the vote is interpreted as sufficient consent, what Chisholm referred to as a “buy in”. Further, as we have seen, in practice the arguments were not aired in the wider public sphere.

To the other extreme, politicians argued that a purely populist response to the instinctive policy preferences of (an aggregative view of) ‘the public’ would lead to some very illiberal policies, such as the death penalty. Malcolm Chisholm, in particular, was conscious of politicians’ obligation to lead “I suppose people do pay attention to some extent to what the media says, but, you know, politicians have got to lead as well as to follow”. He reflected on the balance to be struck between the two political imperatives:

So... there’s no simple answer to that, you have to do both don’t you? Because you have to be serious about listening to people’s concerns, but at the end of the day you can’t just follow people’s views on every thing, I don’t think you can really, so... But I suppose it would seem more important to take a lead on certain issues where you feel that there are, you know, negative attitudes that you have to challenge. I mean something like the asylum issue is probably the most obvious example of that, so... I suppose we tend to feel that the UK governments’ been a bit... too much following certain sections of the media and public opinion round issues of asylum, whereas we tend to show more leadership, round issues of asylum and race and so on in Scotland. So that’s maybe a good example of where you need to show... some leadership. But yeah, you’re not gonna do that, if you carry that to extremes in other issues like ‘we know what’s best for you’ then that’s not good kind of government either is it? (Malcolm Chisholm MSP, ex-Minister for Health)

Chisholm is conscious of the dangers of appearing arrogant and paternalistic, as demonstrated by the framing used by the Daily Record in the previous chapter, he argues very specifically that it is particularly important to lead and – in the same terms as Mark Douglas Home – “challenge” popular views on matters of moral conscience such as discrimination. Again, however, the “concerns” of affected publics are regarded as valid, but on specific policy directions the choice is understood as between following publics’ “attitudes” and “show[ing] leadership” (i.e. doing “what’s best” regardless of opposition). Neither of these approaches to following or ignoring acknowledge the alternative of advancing the debate discursively, and seem to assume a fixed and intransigent ‘public opinion’.

Although Chisholm gives the example of asylum, in the case studies examined in this study there was little evidence of principled leadership on that issue in relation to The Herald’s Dungavel campaign. It had most obviously occurred in relation to Section 28, when a cross-party consensus made a decision that was apparently unpopular with a significant number of voters.

But the public don’t like that, all the politicians ganging together against the public opinion... they don’t like that, but it does give the politicians some protection I suppose in their collective... But I think that’s probably the issue, around a lot of the equality issues, there has been cross-party consensus around that so people have been quite

bold on equality issues and so on, in some ways. (Malcolm Chisholm MSP, ex-Minister for Health)

Such leadership might be interpreted as undemocratic in terms of voters' personal choices (as emphasised by 'protective' liberal democracy), but it does defend the freedom of all groups in society (consistent with 'developmental' liberal political philosophy). The Daily Record had attempted to represent the Section 28 issue as one of competing interests, suggesting that the interests of the LGBT community were in conflict with the interests of parents, and that defending the freedom of LGBT people would impinge on the freedom of parents to censor what their children are exposed to.

This argument was rejected by Scottish politicians, but the campaign was acknowledged to have had a lasting effect on such boldness.

But obviously in a way it's kind of calmed down a bit, but the big, the big example in the early years of the Parliament was of course Section 28, and the Daily Record's role in that, that was obviously a good example of, well in that sense the press wasn't successful, but it kind of like had quite a profound effect I think on a lot of politicians, in terms of... it probably made doing something, it probably made them think that doing certain things was more difficult than they thought, you know! So I think it's an interesting example of where perhaps the media wasn't influential at the time but perhaps had a longer lasting effect in terms of the general perception of how difficult it could be to do certain things, you know, against the media. (Malcolm Chisholm MSP, ex-Minister for Health)

The relationship between the campaigning press and political governance is therefore a complex one. Paul Sinclair argued that "politicians believe we are more important than we are, and genuinely, they're more frightened of the press than they should be, particularly in Scotland", which he attributed to "the kicking devolution got" during that phase of the Record's history.

Politicians clearly do fear negative coverage in the Daily Record, as Dave King, the paper's Political Reporter, argued, "the last thing a politician wants is to see their name in bad headlines every day for a week". Political Editor Paul Sinclair argued that the newspaper has more influence over politicians' reputation than anything else: "We are very important about getting a message across, I think, over a long period of time, and over getting a politician's reputation for competence or incompetence, that's important", but the construction of reputation is not necessarily on the basis of policy.

But MSPs know that if push came to shove, it's the publicity effect of the Record as well, remember. It's not just the fact that you've got five-hundred thousand people behind you, but if you put it in the Record that Cathie Jamieson's a tosser... then five-hundred thousand people are gonnae read it actually. And politicians don't like reading that every day, with the best will in the world, you know, so the cumulative effect can put pressure on them as well. (Dave King, Political Reporter, Daily Record)

King exaggerates the tone of personal insult, but the intention behind the criticisms the paper can mete out is clear. Sinclair argued that it is the MSPs' fault that this is an effective form of

pressure, on account of “politicians vanity that they have to have everybody on side, so they are quite vulnerable these kind of people”.

Evening Times editor Charles McGhee agreed with this assessment and explained it as a lack of experience in comparison with the UK government, rather than a greater spirit of accessibility and consensus-building.

You know, we still have a fledgling sort of legislature here, and they're very, very susceptible to what the press in particular say about them, and to sways in public opinion, and they want to be presented in the best possible light in the press. [...] Right now I don't think the Scottish government, the Scottish devolved government, have enough strength and belief in itself not to react to criticism from our media titles. (Charles McGhee, Editor, Evening Times)

When this assessment was put to Malcolm Chisholm, however, he suggested that he was unusual in resisting such pressure from the press, “well it may well be that some of my colleagues are like that, I'm not like that, but... it may be that that is the case, I don't know”.

Whilst the press appear to have less influence over policy decisions than they claim on account of their failure to engage with the evidence, they do have the power to demand *expressive* responses from politicians. This suggests that establishing a reputation as caring people is considered more significant than a reputation as competent policy-makers. In relation to the airguns campaign in particular, Jamieson was conscious of the importance of expressing sympathy, and the risk of seeming uncaring when faced with an event that was universally high on the news agenda.

On the day that that happened [Andrew Morton being shot] I remember very well because I was actually at the Scottish Labour Party Conference and there was a whole kind of media scrum of people there at the time and I can remember thinking, you know, this is not an issue that is a devolved matter but nonetheless there is a child who has died in terrible, terrible circumstances, I cannot walk past these journalists and not say anything. You know, and I just took the view that that was the right thing to do. So sometimes it would be a very serious issue where you just have to respond, at a human level if nothing else. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

In contrast to The Herald's Dungavel campaign, which was also a reserved issue, Jamieson did feel that the pressure to comment was appropriate. The imperative to demonstrate that she was emotionally 'in touch' with the imagined public was stronger in this case, where the victim was a Scottish child, than when the victims were asylum seekers, which was perhaps therefore considered less “serious” in terms of perceived demand for an appropriate emotional response.

Similarly, Jamieson admitted to being reluctant to refuse to join the Daily Record's march, knowing that it would appear unsympathetic.

But if you've got a newspaper, like for the Record for example, behind an initiative like that [the protest march], there are very few politicians, frankly, who are going to turn round and say 'I'm not going to support that'. I might as well be honest about it. But if they're on the right side of the argument, you know, people will support it. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

Politicians were willing to cede to newspaper pressure, but only to give a symbolic response to demonstrate that the problem was on the political agenda, and only as long as the newspaper was “on the right side”, by which she meant not actively critical of the Executive’s record on the issue, not blaming them for failing to deal with it.

Asked what she would do if the newspaper were not on the right side, she explained how generally journalists would have negotiated with her prior to running the campaign.

Probably for me personally as a politician I would probably talk to them about it. But if I was in the position of being a minister, I would hope that by the time somebody’s got to the stage of doing a campaign on something that was in my patch I would already be talking to people, and looking to see how we could build some consensus around it. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

The power of newspapers is then actually one of backroom negotiations, where politicians equally have something that they can offer to the journalists. This was acknowledged (anonymously) by one journalist, who described the manoeuvring at Holyrood as that of the “Scotia Nostra”, a common satirical name for the Scottish political elite comparing it to the mafia (also known as Cosa Nostra).

Politicians participate in these negotiations to avoid adversarial coverage of their activity.

Now if I had just sat back or just ignored it, then there could’ve been a whole campaign, the focus of which might’ve been, just been critical, of something that hadn’t been done, rather than saying, well, actually we’ve got an opportunity to take it forward. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

The Evening Times editor argued that Labour politicians “regard the Record’s support, or continuing support as absolutely vital” (Charles McGhee), suggesting that the party, then leading the coalition in power, depended so much on the Record’s support that ministers would be more responsive to the paper. One Daily Record journalist argued rather that the paper had “more influence over the Labour party” simply because it was less critical of the party, whilst “the Tories and the Nats [SNP] are always saying they don’t get a decent deal with us, that we give them stick all the time” (Dave King), suggesting that the positive coverage is rewarded by influence.

Newspapers negotiate because they are themselves concerned about their reputation as being politically influential, and are therefore vulnerable to such negotiations. This is particularly apparent in relation to campaigns, as Calum MacDonald, Deputy News Editor of The Herald said, “The old adage in newspapers that you should never start a campaign until you already know you’ve won”, a received wisdom reported in very similar terms by all of the Daily Record journalists, and several others at The Herald and Evening Times. However, all of these journalists also disagreed with this in principle, though Sinclair thought it realistic due to the “increasingly commercial” nature of news, whilst Gardham thought it too “cynical”, and that “newspapers do and should campaign on issues on a matter of principle where there isn’t

an easy straightforward victory round the corner to crow about on the front page. Most obviously, the Queen Mum's and Dungavel campaigns weren't expected to succeed.

The Evening Times editor didn't think that losing in this instance would've been a problem, because he felt that the paper would have gained "recognition" for "having fought the good fight" against a powerful "bureaucracy". David Leask framed this recognition in more explicit terms of being seen to be on the readers' 'side', "to show that you are for your readers, okay, that you are their champion, their friend, okay? And even if you lose you can prove that". However, this is a retrospective justification, so it is difficult to know whether they had at first thought that they could win, though it may be significant that the Health Reporter, John McCann, who would have been best placed to sound sources out (and indeed who reported being told "Charlie McGhee's wrong and it's a done deal") was on holiday when the campaign was launched.

Paul Sinclair reported the way in which politicians effectively have a veto on campaign ideas, due to the importance to the newspaper of achieving a result.

I stay in contact with politicians of all political parties, though clearly I get a better hearing from the Labour Party politicians. And I can walk in just to hear what things are like. For example at one point a previous editor wanted to go on a campaign to restore the earnings link to pensions, and I had to tell him he wasn't gonna win it. No matter what he did. And even if the readers, the whole readership was entirely behind it, he wasn't gonna win it. There was no way they would've passed that. (Paul Sinclair, Political Editor, Daily Record)

The Daily Record journalists accepted the pragmatics of politics, McGivern reported that "sometimes it's not listened to because it costs money", and gave the NHS as an example where "the government would look at the Daily Record and they just think, 'well we'll just take that on the chin you stupid bastard'". Similarly he mentioned a policy that "we don't do housing stories" because of the scale of complaints about damp etc in social and rented housing "you can't keep writing about it because all it does is encourage other people to write", and because it was considered an intractable problem (or possibly because landlords are more powerful 'baddies' than small-time drug dealers etc).

At the most pragmatic, The Record chooses campaigns that are "a bit of a fait accompli" to the extent that they are not even shaped by private negotiations but an impulse to "jump on this bandwagon because then we can say that we did it!" (Mark McGivern). This was not confined to the Daily Record; the Scottish Political Editor of fellow tabloid the Scottish Sun made a similar point.

No, I think resistance is not futile, but you immediately bring to mind our campaign to have a Saltire flying outside the Scottish Parliament. Which we did vigorously, secure in the knowledge that it was gonna happen anyway. The point is to have a nice open door against which to can thump your little fists. (Andrew Nicoll, Scottish Political Editor, Scottish Sun)

Similarly, in relation to electoral influence, Nicoll was sceptical: “The Sun has this fantastic reputation for being some kind of king-maker; they don’t, they just back the winners”. This interpretation is supported by the Scottish Sun’s short-lived experiment with backing the SNP in Scotland, which had no discernable effect on the election results.

In contrast, the failure of The Herald to negotiate on Dungavel was noted. Jamieson complained that the “phone-round” tactic that the paper used to put pressure on ministers was contrived to be critical.

Because MSPs will always think there’s an angle to it, and if you answer you’re likely to have it used against you, if you don’t answer you’re likely to be exposed as not having answered, and actually if you think the answer’s a bit more complicated than a yes or no answer, there is no opportunity. So it’s the one thing that I think MSPs don’t like. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

This led to an impasse whereby “then it becomes a kind of almost like an endurance test; we keep saying it and they keep saying ‘nothing to do with us’ then they can kind of bore to death” (Calum MacDonald).

Jamieson gave an account of these negotiations as “newspapers” (presumably meaning the Record) being more focused on campaigning for a “positive outcome” rather than adversarially opposing the current approach to the problems identified.

I think the whole way Section 28 went on, I think the whole parliament, Scottish society and everybody has moved on from that time. I think people still feel as strongly as about the issues, but I think if you look at how things have been handled since then I’d say the campaigns that people have picked up have been much more likely to be trying to achieve a positive outcome than campaigning against it. (Cathy Jamieson MSP, ex-Justice Minister)

This could suggest a more consensus-driven relationship with the press that is more consistent with a parliamentary system that aspires to consensus in policy-making. However, the “positive outcome” sought seems to refer to policy response in itself, rather than the likely result of that policy on the incidence or experience of the problem, and indeed many of the policies praised by the Daily Record were already planned or being put into practice, so the outcome was no different than it otherwise would have been. This therefore suggests that the negotiations between politicians and the (tabloid) press are intended to reach a mutually beneficial arrangement whereby the politicians *appear* to be responsive to ‘public opinion’ as represented by the newspaper, whilst the newspaper is able to *appear* influential over politicians and policy-making (again framing their actions as on behalf of ‘the public’), regardless of the efficacy of the policies trumpeted.

Again this is tied up with a conflation of people’s concern about a problem and their support for the policy, and further between the stated intention of a policy and effective outcome. Asked how the press could play a more democratic role, Malcolm Chisholm described how they could be more supportive to Scottish Executive policies, such as the crackdown on knife-carrying. He justified this on account of assumed consensus around the desired *outcome*, and explicitly

excluding discussion on “the details of crime policy”, which might be considered more democratic.

That’s been very much a partnership between the press and politicians and whatever people think about the details of crime policy I suppose most people would say it was a good thing to try and get knives off the street so I suppose round that there’s been quite a positive partnership, and I suppose mainly with the tabloid press and politicians. (Malcolm Chisholm, ex-Minister for Health and Communities)

This was described as support for “good causes”, with the implication that they are morally incontrovertible. Where the intention is cultural – to make knife-carrying unacceptable – this could certainly be the case, as part of a public information campaign. However, where this refers to support for a particular policing strategy or legislative sanction it suggests that neither the press or the politicians are responding to the obligation to develop meaningful, discursive ‘public opinion’, but rather constructing consent to their mutual benefit.

The anti-social behaviour consultation and the associated Daily Record campaign were about gaining consent, rather than negotiating an informed consensus with affected individuals.

Anti-social behaviour was meant to be controversial in some of its content, but again it was widely consulted on within local communities. And many of the demands came from there even if some of the more liberal members decided they didn’t like the conclusion. I don’t think you can actually argue that they were imposed on people without some buy-in to them, if you see what I mean. (Malcolm Chisholm MSP, ex-Minister for Health)

Despite aspirations to more meaningfully involve and empower disadvantaged publics, the role allocated to them by politicians is the same as in the press – as vulnerable victims affected by the actions of others, whose ‘trust’ to fix the problem representatives must win.

Jamieson went further, describing the anti-social behaviour legislation as having a symbolic purpose, of demonstrating to affected individuals that politicians did understand and sympathise with their situation.

People living out in communities wanted something to be done. They wanted people to hear their voice; they wanted to be taken notice of. And there was a lot of argument at the time about did we really need legislation to do that. But we used the legislation, partly about tightening up and giving more powers to local authorities etc etc. but also, frankly, to signal a message to people. (Cathy Jamieson, ex-Justice Minister)

The discourse of ‘listening’ on anti-social behaviour therefore led to an empty gesture politics, whereby politicians and the tabloid press united to make people feel that something was being done, even though the majority of professionals and civic organisations believed that the solution would be ineffective.

10.3. Conclusion

The relations of power between the press and politicians are often, especially in the case of the tabloid press) based on neither cooperation nor conflict, but negotiation, what Lewis et al

(2008) and others have termed a “trading” relationship, in pursuit of their own interests. The exchange is typically argued to be pre-packaged information in return favourable angles, but the evidence from this study suggests that in campaigning the exchange is instead praise and symbolic support for the campaign in return for a favourable reputation as caring and ‘in touch’ with ‘the public’. It is also significant that the campaigns that took a more conflict-based approach were not significantly more successful in achieving their objectives, nor more informative and analytic of policy proposals, decisions and outcomes, even in the ‘quality’ press. Indeed, whether the upper hand was with the press or the politicians, neither served the interests of the people, whether as voters, citizens, or a deliberative public.

Politicians were aware of the market pressure on newspapers to reflect their readers’ opinions, in as far as being a constraining force on advocacy of controversial or challenging views. However, they did not believe that newspapers truly represented ‘public opinion’, simply that they knew how to engage their readers on social and political issues and appeal to their emotional instincts. The press were not thought to be able to challenge readers’ preconceptions or influence them to change their minds, but to be able to capitalise on those instinctive beliefs to recruit their support. This suggests a rather sophisticated understanding of the press – certainly more so than the journalists give politicians credit for. However, this makes politicians pragmatic in their relationship with the press, and communicate symbolically to demonstrate that they understand ‘ordinary’ people’s experience, but not attempt to communicate arguments or evidence that inform policy.

Yet, blaming the press for the shallowness of political communication is somewhat disingenuous, since Chisholm’s analogy between press and politics suggests that politicians understand their relationship with voters in a similar way – as striking a balance between ‘listening’ and ‘leading’. Both respond to affected publics’ feelings and concerns to demonstrate that they are ‘in touch’ and can therefore be trusted to represent them in their best interests without appearing patrician, but without consulting them on policy or involving them in the debate. When making direct contact with affected publics, politicians were no more discursive than the press, and similarly solicited only descriptive accounts of personal experience of victimisation, casting public actors in a passive role. Whilst journalist Paul Sinclair argued that politicians don’t have the confidence to make their argument, ex-minister Margaret Curran suggested that politicians don’t have faith in the press to represent the argument, but neither party had faith in ‘the public’ to be engaged by the argument.

The final chapter discusses the implications of these findings for democracy in Scotland, beyond the straightforward ‘independence’ or ‘influence’ of the press, focusing instead on accountability and the role of ‘the public’.

Chapter 11. The Exercise of Publicity in the Scottish Press: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter will discuss and contextualise the findings from this study. In particular, it will evaluate the democratic legitimacy of the newspapers' claims to represent general or specific publics. It will argue that journalists were *not* able to substantiate these claims, but that a legitimately democratic understanding of the political role of the press *could* be incorporated into the norms of journalism to facilitate the positive aspects of campaign journalism whilst more meaningfully facilitating public participation. The chapter will first draw together the findings from Chapters 5 to 10 into a cohesive summary. Secondly, it will relate these findings to the literature and theoretical models of the press outlined in Chapter 2 and outline the original contribution made by this study. Finally, the chapter will suggest directions for future research.

11.1. Summary

Journalists' understanding of their democratic role centred around liberal democratic notions. Furthermore, they often leaned toward the 'protective' variant, and corresponding libertarian notions of freedom of choice and defence of individual rights, rather than the 'developmental' variant that underpins the social responsibility model of the press. This was in part due to the self-regulatory codes being viewed as a list of restrictions, and even as tools to retrospectively justify their practice, rather than a positive model for good practice. It was also reflective of a more generally neo-liberal view of 'the public' as instrumental individuals whose interests were largely served by minimising interference in their lives. The campaigns therefore focused on politics as a provision for social control through law and order. This allowed journalists to defend their political advocacy as on behalf of affected individuals, as this was regarded as the main basis of their democratic legitimacy.

The journalists at The Herald and Evening Times explained their democratic role primarily in the terms of the social responsibility model of the press – the responsibility to inform citizens via objective and impartial reporting. Accordingly, journalists largely expressed a realist understanding of 'fact' and 'truth'; some at The Herald even explicitly rejected relativist arguments, were aware of academic criticisms of source selection, and stated the need for adequate resources (although none were willing to speak out about cuts). However, journalists justified the publication (and even – in the case of campaigning – foregrounding) of assertions that may not be true by claiming that 'balance' allows readers to make up their own minds between competing truth claims, whilst simultaneously assuming that readers were *uninterested* in the supporting evidence that would make this choice meaningful. Choice is

then based on readers' trust in the person asserting it. The newspaper takes this role in campaigns, as a trusted advocate whose assertions readers could choose to accept or reject. Editors and journalists therefore justify campaign bias via a liberal pluralist argument of freedom of choice in the free marketplace of ideas – closer to the libertarian model than social responsibility.

However, it was also assumed that if readers were bored by the campaign or objected to the inclusion of views with which they disagreed, then they would not just choose to ignore or disbelieve the campaign, but rather choose to stop buying the newspaper (apart from Mark Douglas Home, who – uniquely – believed that Herald readers *wanted* and expected to have their assumptions challenged by the newspaper). Journalists therefore attempted to make the campaigns both interesting and persuasive to readers, not in relation to their needs as citizens, but their desires as a market. This could also be argued to be democratic in populist terms, but (like social responsibility) is operationalised via habitual and institutionally-reproduced shortcuts rather than any meaningful market feedback. Market appeal is sought by reference to an imagined audience who are not thought capable of making up their own minds on the basis of evidence, but assumed to be interested in personal narrative and to share certain values and interests, to which they can appeal through 'news values'. Interestingly, then, unlike investigative journalism (or 'muckraking') in the US tradition (Ettema and Glasser, 1998), the commercial success of the popular Scottish newspapers (probably in common with the UK press) is thought to be found in the expression of values rather than the appearance of objectivity.

It was assumed that readers would not accept challenges to their values and beliefs, and the most fixed values were imagined to be conservative instincts based on fear of the other and defence of security and property, rather than constructive or aspirational principles. Some journalists felt *personally* strongly that prejudiced views should not be reinforced (though none specified anti-discrimination as a professional norm or made reference to NUJ or PCC guidelines), but did not believe that they could challenge them outright in any way that might be construed as criticism. Journalists argued that readers are more open to being informed with 'straight facts' than having their cultural assumptions directly challenged, but the popular titles were reluctant to adopt an educating role, seeing it as condescending. The Herald editor argued that anti-immigration feeling and racism *could* be tackled by disproving factual misconceptions, such as about the true number of immigrants and their contribution to rather than dependency on society. However, such evidence was not presented in the Dungavel campaign, and again, this still seeks to appeal to the instrumental self-interest of the audience. This reflects Douglas Home's discomfort with and reluctance to acknowledge the principled partisanship in favour of societal responsibility and positive freedoms that was the key strength of the campaign in the eye of some of the tabloid journalists.

However, campaigns typically hope not only to engage the attention of readers, but to portray their aims as uncontroversial – as in line with the values and interests of every ‘decent’ individual – and to promote an image of the newspaper as defending those universal values and interests against the deviant other and the distant and unresponsive authorities. This is the ‘transcendent consensus’ that pluralists argue holds society together despite competition and disagreement over the managerial details. It is often associated with moral panics, which operate in the service of the status quo by reinforcing dominant values. However, campaigns make a more *specific* claim to represent readers and particular issue publics who are affected by the problem identified, and claim to challenge the government and powerful interests.

The Daily Record tackled issues that disproportionately affect deprived and disadvantaged groups in society, whose interests tend to be marginalised and who do not have much stake in the status quo. The newspaper gave voice to affected individuals and published accounts of their experiences. These sympathetic narratives were intended to create an altruistic ‘community of feeling’ that would promote support for helping ‘victims’. However, in order to be sympathetic, journalists believed that ‘victims’ had to be considered ‘decent’ and ‘deserving’. ‘Deserving’ victims were particularly portrayed as vulnerable and passive, not as having political views and opinions, and certainly not as trying to advance their own interests, regardless of whether those were individual or group interests. Indeed, instead of representing ‘victims’ as disadvantaged by society’s structural inequalities, the drugs and anti-social behaviour campaigns emphasised the universal threat of victimisation and therefore universal interests, invoking a fear response. Furthermore, the drugs, loan sharks and anti-social behaviour campaigns appealed more to values of moral *censure* than responsibility. This assumes an instrumental public with greater concern for their own interests than the suffering of others, or assumes that fearful anger at perpetrators is more motivational than anger at injustice and systematic failures in markets or state welfare. This more conservative emphasis is significant because, whilst sympathy only suggests an opinion that ‘something must be done’ without discussing the merits of different responses to the problem, anger at perpetrators suggests support for law and order policies, and often outrage at crime was conflated with support for tougher enforcement.

The Herald tried to adopt the tabloid personalisation of affected individuals to create a ‘community of feeling’ in support of asylum seeking families. The newspaper made a tentative claim to the sympathy of Scottish publics, often framed in terms of Scottish national *identity* as tolerant and welcoming. However, the campaign fell between two stools: they struggled to portray the Scottish Executive as out of touch with ‘ordinary’ Scots (partly because the journalists didn’t believe it to be true), but because they avoided acknowledging the risk that rejected asylum-seekers might abscond, the newspaper failed to contextualise this risk against the harm caused by imprisoning children. Neither did the campaign challenge immigration

legislation, or discuss the merits of alternative policies to detention. Effectively The Herald made no more challenges to the system than the Daily Record's campaigns.

The Evening Times also personalised the individuals who they argued would be affected by the hospital closure, through testimonials for the hospital and its staff, and expected this to be the aspect that was of most interest to 'ordinary' readers. Nonetheless, the newspaper did publish relatively sophisticated statistical evidence to support their assertion that the closure would lead to greater risk of death for babies, although none of the journalists expected it to be of interest to the 'general' readership. Evidence was rather aimed directly at the Health Minister, whilst the effect on readers (of headlines particularly) was expected to be in terms of the reputation of the Health Board as cold, bureaucratic and unaccountable. Indeed, readers were not expected to have noticed that the outcome claimed as a victory was criticised when proposed *by* the Health Board. It is perhaps this misrepresentation that Margaret Reid of the Working Group wanted to raise when she complained to the PCC of inaccuracy, but the adjudication found in the newspaper's favour, and denied her a right to reply on the basis of legitimate bias.

Partisanship was therefore not primarily understood as part of a representative democratic role, but as an editorial freedom permitted as an exemption from the regulatory guidelines (and therefore from formal social responsibility on the basis of universal principles). Bias was considered part of the overarching legitimacy of the editorial prerogative, and any claim for democratic responsibility was made on the basis of the personal 'reasonableness' of the editor as a benign dictator. However, the market conception of the audience was a constraint on partisanship as much as on social responsibility. The angle of campaigns must therefore be acceptable to readers to the extent to which they do not put them off – partly by appealing to assumed instincts and partly by marketing the actions of the newspapers to readers as benevolent action on their behalf, which they were then honour-bound to support – to 'do their part'.

The audience was defined, addressed and recruited as a market, as was apparent in the journalists' sources of information about readers. The ultimate form of accountability to readers was argued to be their liberal freedom to choose another newspaper, and so for their displeasure to be expressed through the monthly audited circulation figures or the internal sales figures. However, journalists were also conscious (from promotional sales lifts and market research data) that many readers did not choose their newspaper on the basis of its political leanings, or even read the political news. In this case advocacy according to editorial prerogative would be unconstrained by the audience's views, as long as it is buried on the politics page – indeed this may be why The Sun continues to run its politics coverage opposite page three.

Where readers who responded in emailed feedback were attentive to political bias their ideological commitment was regarded as peculiar, and as evidence of being unrepresentative of 'the public'. Some of these contributions and criticisms were also dismissed on the basis of being unacceptably dogmatic or prejudiced, yet journalists accepted those same views as valid considerations in relation to market pressures and the obligation to be 'in touch' with readers, indicating that they might be seen as representative after all when conceived of in terms of an abstract generalisation. In contrast, Herald readers' contributions in letters to the editor suggested a left wing, redistributive and socially and culturally tolerant readership, but they were *not* considered representative of the newspaper's readers.

Though journalists made frequent reference to market research, the data largely told them only the socio-economic make-up of the audience, their reading patterns and consumption habits. Of course, marketing companies (such as Experian) make up descriptive accounts of typical residents of postcode areas (for example, 'Rupert and Felicity' are typical 'Symbols of Success') from similar data, but for a specifically commercial purpose that presupposes utilitarian individuals seeking happiness and identity expression through consumption. Nonetheless, given that for many it was the only information available, and that the generalisations extrapolated were often relatively analytic, this could certainly be considered an improvement on assuming an audience that is socially and culturally identical to themselves or their immediate family (Gans, 1980; Schlesinger, 1987).

Daily Record journalists possibly have more claim to being 'in touch' with some readers' feelings and experiences on account of contact with disadvantaged individuals as sources – whilst this does not guarantee a reflection of their political views (and indeed even their experiences were framed in terms dictated by news values and expectations of the general audience), this contact may challenge the cultural assumptions of middle class journalists. The Daily Record's dependency on readers as sources may ensure more meaningful accountability than the market, not so much on account of the formal accountability of the PCC, but the informal relationship-building of developing sources (Starkey, 2007). Given that there is not likely to be repeated contact with the same individuals, this trust is built by reputation, and especially by responding to and helping individuals when there was nothing in it for the newspaper (although that reportedly happens less than it used to). Margaret Curran argued that the tabloids do have a reputation as trustworthy, as 'on the side' of their readers, and as influential, but that this was unearned and in fact "they'll not care". Nonetheless, politicians reported using readers' trust in their newspaper, in negotiation with journalists, to get their message across. In return for the reputation politicians' gain from appearing to have responded to 'public feeling', the newspaper appears to be politically influential, and is able to market themselves as a civic-minded campaigning newspaper.

The Evening Times made similar claims to direct contact with the community, but were far less responsive to phone-ins from 'members of the public', and instead expected campaigning to appeal to readers in and of itself as a public service on behalf of the community, akin to fundraising for a local charity. The campaign was described, in a circular argument, as both a reflection of the trust readers placed in the newspaper *and* as proof of that trustworthiness. Readers were told that the campaign was in their interests and on their behalf, but expected to take that on trust on the basis that campaigning itself shows public-spiritedness (rather than sectional partisanship). Whilst the Evening Times also used 'ordinary' affected individuals as sources, they supplied testimonials for the hospital, not experience of problems (since they were *predicted* not current problems), much less knowledge of policy proposals and their implications.

Whilst the representation of publics in terms of being affected by events portrays them as politically passive, two of the campaigns included participatory elements. Both the Daily Record's drugs campaign and the Evening Times' Queen Mum's campaign used the language and gestures of political activism – the former included a protest march and a rally, the latter a petition and public meetings. However, this political participation was oriented entirely via the newspapers and interpreted as an endorsement of the newspapers as political representatives. In addition, readers' support was recruited through a marketing order of discourse, addressing readers in the imperative and using the inclusive 'we', intended to communicate a PR message to brand the newspapers as community champions. Admittedly, this is not necessarily different from how pressure groups and other campaigning organisations work in this increasingly the professionalised NGO sector, though civic society groups are rarely afforded such publicity.

The Daily Record and Evening Times also used the parliamentary mechanisms of access designed for citizens to highlight problems or advocate solutions. The Daily Record intervened (although by invitation by Margaret Curran) in the anti-social behaviour consultation, soliciting letters and emails as a form of consultation response, but without giving the information or asking the specific questions contained in the consultation document. The letters gave an account of readers' experience of anti-social behaviour rather than responses to the proposals, although some did offer their *own* proposals (generally punitive). The Evening Times took its petition to the parliamentary Petitions Committee, most likely on the suggestion of ex-MSP Dorothy-Grace Elder, although the focus shifted to directly addressing the Health Minister on the initiative of the Health Reporter. These interventions position the newspapers as pressure groups negotiating policy in a corporatist sense as insider groups, though the Record was selling the privately negotiated agreement to its 'members', whilst the Evening Times' representations were more critical and public (although the presentation of the final decision – in terms that the newspaper could claim as a victory – was probably privately negotiated).

The Herald was the only newspaper to *represent* pressure groups rather than act as one. However, whilst the campaign represented civic society activity as evidence of ‘public’ outrage, Herald journalists did not consider formal political parties or civic organisations to be representative of their notion of ‘the public’. Even broadsheet journalists did not expect their readers to be members of political parties, and did not see the active public as a significant public to address. However, The Herald did acknowledge opposing arguments and assertion of competing interests in the letters page, where preferred societal values were discussed, although the debate still did not extend to the specifics of policy. Because of this the debate was characterised more by the competitive assertion of values and derogatory characterisation of opponents views, rather than seeking agreement on the likely outcome of policy choices.

The campaigns placed pressure on politicians to respond to the campaigns on account of their obligation to the preferences of ‘the public’ as a singular undifferentiated, aggregated mass, whose ‘feelings’ could not be challenged, and asserted that to do so – even with reasoned argument – was to insult the ‘victims’ or patronise ‘the public’. In contrast, The Herald invited politicians to take a moral lead, rather than follow ‘public opinion’ or the tabloids’ account of it. However, since the campaign flinched from making an overtly persuasive case to citizens, this was suggestive of a paternalistic elitism that assumes an intrinsically self-interested ‘tyrannous majority’.

The Daily Record’s drugs and loan sharks campaigns sought and published praise and symbolic support from politicians – but this seemed to be contingent on ministers in particular being able to frame the campaigns as aimed at (positively) influencing ‘the public’ or else representing their feelings or dominant values, rather than as critical of policy or calling for policy change. However, when backbench or opposition MSPs took up the campaign issues in parliament, this was largely also represented in terms of support for the newspaper’s actions, and not in terms of political action that could have an impact on policy. The *substance* of parliamentary debates was not given coverage and did not add to a deliberative understanding of the issue, even in The Herald. Politicians complained that only the “theatre” of combative and competitive First Minister’s Questions was given any coverage, that the same words from justice policy announcements were published (in the tabloids) every time, and that the issues were simplified excessively by focus on personalised framing of the cause of social problems. However, they also accepted journalists’ judgement that this was what appealed to the audience. They did not, however, believe that any of the newspapers were representative of the substance of ‘public opinion’, but at the same time, like journalists, they were quick to attribute any loss of circulation to a view with which they disagreed or thought unpopular among ‘the public’.

Politicians remarked on how newspapers liked to portray politics in terms of conflict, yet when acting as political actors themselves the Daily Record in particular negotiated with politicians to advance their objectives, whilst The Herald's Dungavel campaign was more adversarial in their pressure on ministers and therefore found themselves at an impasse – an “endurance test” of mutual contradiction that did not move the debate forward. However, in terms of effective public opinion, ministers were more likely to credit active issue publics, such as pressure groups and other civic organisations, who expressed opinions via the corporatist mechanisms of the parliament and government. The main exception to that was the anti-social behaviour campaign, where affected individuals were specifically sought out on account of opposition from relevant professional and pressure groups, who were largely of the opinion that the policy would not be fair or effective. Margaret Curran in particular was concerned that the problem appeared intractable and was therefore neglected, and unusually connected the problem with material poverty rather than the New Labour discourse of a cultural problem associated with a “moral underclass” (Fairclough, 2000). She also recognised that the policy of inclusiveness and accessibility in consultation had not been developed to the point of genuine empowerment of communities.

It is not true to say that campaigns are not in any way representative of publics and the concerns of particular groups, but represent them as passive victims who are angry or fearful, and not as citizens with political views. The democratic implications will now be considered.

11.2. Discussion: the democratic role of campaign journalism

Journalists' only frame of reference for giving an account of their democratic role was in relation to liberal democracy. At The Herald and Evening Times in particular, journalists used the language of the social responsibility model, associated with what Held (2006) calls the 'developmental' variant of liberal theory, whereby citizens are encouraged to be attentive publics and vote rationally. However, there was little focus on electoral representation, and the campaigns did not aim to inform or influence the electorate. There was little effort to make the campaign issues into electoral issues, and none at all outside of the immediate election period in 2005. The popular newspapers did not attempt to inform or enable publics to vote in accordance with their views, but to reinforce their cynicism and impression of politicians and other public officials as remote and unaccountable. This reflects a view of the electorate as “enslaved” between elections (Rousseau, [1762] 1997), associated with participatory democracy, but instead of advocating public participation in politics, the Daily Record in particular intervened on their behalf, thus allowing the newspaper to retain its role as an intermediary between ‘the public’ and politicians.

The Daily Record and Evening Times valorised the legitimacy of ‘the public’, but only so that they could borrow or claim that legitimacy for themselves (Splichal, 2002). Politicians' role

was discussed in terms of direct representation – government *by* the people – arguing that politicians must do the bidding of voters, not legislate in the best interests of citizens and society; however, in a liberal democracy voters are only invited to choose appropriate leaders, not to influence policy decisions. Again, this is more consistent with participative democracy, but without an associative public. Even activist tactics were adopted by the popular papers as a way of simply endorsing the newspaper as a political actor, rather than helping citizens to express their own political voice, although the Evening Times made more effort to involve readers discursively through the use of public meetings as well as the more declarative form of participation through the petition.

The campaigns also presented issues and represented publics in terms of liberal democratic rather than corporatist representation; readers, voters, and a more generalised ‘public’ were addressed and portrayed as an aggregate of fragmented, self-interested individuals. However, in this case the assumption was of a more protective variant, verging on legal democracy in the case of the Daily Record’s focus on law and order, protecting negative liberties (protecting the individual and their property from others), but also their feelings. Although the tabloid press is typically opposed to ‘political correctness’ (PC) – defending their right to offend as freedom of speech (even to make prejudiced generalisations about groups on the basis of characteristics), this obligation to the public uses the same discourse of offence often associated with ‘PC’ – that everyone should be protected from being offended (even in relation to opinions or religious or political beliefs). Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2001) argued that political argument was avoided in preference for emotional expression because the latter could not be contradicted. This study would support that assertion, but more specifically for the reason that commercially journalists prefer to avoid proposing an argument with which people might disagree because it is assumed that they will then cease to buy the newspaper. Furthermore, in contrast with Schudson’s assertion about the US press (1998) journalists regarded market pressures as appropriate and even democratic.

Whilst Hallin and Mancini (2004) interpreted the editorial bias of British newspapers as a characteristic of corporatism, journalists rationalised it in libertarian terms, as freedom of speech in the marketplace of ideas, and specifically as the freedom of the editorial prerogative. Readers were offered a choice of believing the campaign or not; buying the newspaper or not. However, as a commercial organisation (especially given the competitive nature of the declining newspaper market) ‘not’ is a choice editors hope few will make. Journalists struggled to pull apart their notions of reflecting and influencing readers’ views, since both were connected to market mechanisms.

Given that tabloid newspapers usually claim to represent ordinary individuals who are portrayed as powerless, then this could be justified as a re-balancing of the representation of interests in a pluralist system where powerful interests have greater access to and influence

on politicians, as was argued explicitly in the Section 28 campaign (although referring to minority LGBT groups as more powerful than the catholic church or businessmen like campaign financier Souter), but given that the claims to represent the audience are so tenuous, the views represented are primarily those of the editor combined with an *imagined* public who are attributed neo-liberal views.

Journalists resisted public accountability by questioning their critics' legitimacy, and instead tabloid newspapers couched their claims to represent 'the public' in terms of competitive elitism – claiming that readers have chosen to purchase the newspaper because they trust it to advocate knowledgeably on their behalf, to be 'on their side', without having to explain to uninterested or uninformed readers *why* it is in their interests. However, at the same time journalists insist that politicians should respond to the newspapers' representation of 'the public'. Newspapers would not be the first or only (quasi-)pressure group to be unaccountable to its members, but they are the only ones with such a privileged position in terms of publicity, given the lack of coverage generally afforded to civic society.

Campaigns could be construed as (unconventionally) corporatist in terms of their direct negotiation with politicians via the Scottish Parliament (petitions committee) and Scottish Executive (consultation). However, the Daily Record did not engage with the specifics of policy details and proposals, but suggested a vague support for 'tougher' enforcement. To some extent the Evening Times *did* address the specific points raised in the consultation, by challenging evidence in the consultation such as the recorded rates of difficulties experienced by mothers and babies. To some extent the newspaper seemed to represent the views of the health unions and professional associations, though always presented the sources as specific experts (much as The Herald did with anti-social behaviour). The Herald was the only newspaper to give a platform and support specifically to civic associations, though even they described them as 'charities' to deemphasise their political nature, and did not always give serious consideration to the detail of their argument in a deliberative fashion. Consequently, politicians tend to credit (insider) pressure groups and civic society organisations as being more influential on substantive policy decisions, as opposed to the *presentation* of policy.

The newspapers seemed to consider pressure groups to be democratically illegitimate on account of the political nature of their views. The Daily Record and Evening Times attempted (with varying success) to represent their own view as apolitical and uncontroversial; as located in the direct experience of 'decent' individuals and the potential impact on any individual in society. This led to the campaigns taking a neo-liberal stance since defensive interests of property and person are the only ones that benefit everyone who has something to lose. The Herald struggled to present asylum detention in such terms, however, although the journalists still assumed that readers' (perceived) indifference was related to the absence of personal threat to them and theirs, and even Douglas Home hoped to challenge intolerance through

appeal to self-interest. Individualist and protective neo-liberalism was normalised as apolitical, whilst altruism or even respect for the rights of others was regarded as political and controversial.

The Herald's solution was to argue that politicians should 'lead' on the issue, which could be interpreted as persuading people to accept or even support progressive policies through deliberation and argumentation (which need not be self-interested instrumental rationality or conservative reference to the existing system through formal rationality), but seemed instead to mean adopting pro-asylum policies even if the majority of the public opposed them. All the same The Herald was the only newspaper that facilitated some deliberation, including discussion about what values we *want* to share in society.

Each of the newspapers had different democratic strengths in their campaigning activity. The Daily Record took up the problems experienced by poor and deprived minorities, and represented them as sources, but in its avoidance of circulation-damaging controversy infantilised 'victims' and focused on negative freedom. The Evening Times represented the abstract and statistical analyses of risk and, even though it was intended to be addressed over the heads of readers to politicians, engaged with policy pragmatics in an effective (though sometimes inconsistent) way, though interacting little with the audience. The Herald represented the views of civic society and ran a relatively deliberative letters page, including the views of critics who opposed the campaign, though their arguments were not acknowledged in the news pages or opinion columns, but were rather dismissed as racism – as simply offensive to their moral values, without making a case for those values.

There could be a positive democratic role for partisan campaigning, taking a more corporatist approach to emphasise a range of informed viewpoints and publicising the participative opportunities on various issues. In particular, newspapers need to engage with publics in more associative terms, rather than viewing them as a collection of interests and experiences. That includes attributing political opinions to them, even if they might not be universally shared.

11.3. Further research

The journalists and politicians in this study reflected on how Scottish politics and the Scottish press differed from elsewhere in the UK, but most had no frame of reference. A comparative study would lend this context, for instance with of the Welsh and Northern Irish local press, or between the regional and national press. Another fruitful comparison would be between the understanding and representation of publics in Scottish editions in comparison with London editions.

Appendix I: List of interviews

The Herald

Mark Douglas Home, Editor – 16/07/04
Joan McAlpine, Deputy Editor – 28/07/04
Colin McDiarmid, Executive Editor – 10/08/04
Calum MacDonald, Deputy News Editor – 28/08/04
Andrew Hood, Letters Editor – 21/09/04 – 23/08/04
Lucy Adams, Home Affairs Correspondent (now Chief Reporter) – 03/08/04
Damien Henderson, Reporter

Daily Record

Bruce Waddell, Editor (now Editor in Chief for the Daily Record and Sunday Mail) – 10/04/08
Paul Sinclair, Political Editor (since worked as advisor for Gordon Brown) – 11/05/05
Magnus Gardham, Political Reporter (now Political Editor) – 13/08/07
Dave King, Political Reporter (Holyrood) – 09/05/05
Mark McGivern, Political Reporter – 07/08/07

Evening Times

Charles McGhee, Editor (since spent two years as Editor of The Herald) – 18/08/05
David Leask, Chief Reporter – 25/08/05
John McCann, Health Reporter – 23/08/05

Other newspapers

Rob Dalton, Editor, Scottish Sun – 10/05/05
Andrew Nicoll, Political Editor, Scottish Sun – 09/05/05
Kevin McKenna, Executive Editor, Scottish Daily Mail – 24/05/05
Stuart Nicolson, Political Reporter, Scottish Daily Mail – 09/05/05

Politicians

Malcolm Chisholm MSP (Lab), Health Minister (later also Minister for Communities) – 04/07/06
Cathy Jamieson MSP (Lab), Justice Minister (later Deputy Leader and Acting Leader of the Scottish Labour Party) – 31/01/08
Margaret Curran MSP (Labour, Glasgow Ballieston), Deputy Minister for Social Justice; Minister for Social Justice; Minister for Communities – 19/05/08

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