

**CRIME, LOCALITY AND MORALITY:  
MEMBERSHIP CATEGORISATION AND  
“NEWSWORTHINESS” IN LOCAL NEWSPAPERS**

PhD Thesis

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how the social interaction of reading local newspapers is accomplished in terms of “newsworthiness”. This ethnomethodological study draws upon Harvey Sacks’ work of membership categorisation analysis in order to demonstrate the work that members of society undertake whilst interpreting newspaper headlines. The analysis identifies members’ use of devices and rules to understand that a crime has taken place, and that the crime has relevance to the local area, and could therefore be understood to be locally newsworthy.

The study analyses newspaper headlines from two geographical locations; the South-East of London and the North of Ireland. A comparative analysis of the headlines shows that the reader is able to interpret categories in terms of breaches of morality through the selection of juxtaposition categories, and to differentiate between location and locality through the utilisation of local common-sense knowledge. Co-presence operates *specifically*, invoking the utilisation of common-sense geographies, local and regional common-sense knowledge(s), and contextual resources associated with reading a newspaper.

The study focuses particularly upon the various detailed ways that locality and morality construct and configure the representation of crime. Furthermore, the analysis puts forward an empirically based methodology for analysing the utilisation of local common-sense within text, and therefore contributes to our understanding of how inference-rich locational categories (can) invoke interpretations which represent segregation or specificity within a locality.

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## Chapter 1

### **1. Foundations of the research: an introduction**

This chapter will serve as an introduction to the analysis that follows. It consists of four sections. In the first section there is an introduction to some of the theoretical considerations that frame this piece of research and give it a distinct ethnomethodological stance. The issues raised here provide a background to how the research was conducted and offer an explanation for the direction and focus of the study.

The second section has several parts, which together provide an overview of the natural history of the research, the research method and process of data collection. It starts by documenting how I became interested in this subject and then moves on to how the data was identified, collected and utilised within the research. The last part of this section is concerned with the reliability and validity of the data and the impact of focusing on local newspaper headlines.

In the third section I outline the aims and objectives of the study to enable the reader to follow my thoughts, arguments and analytical directions.

The last section provides an overview of how the thesis is organised and summarises the content of the seven chapters that follow.



## 1.1. Theoretical considerations

“Many words in this sense then don’t have strict meaning. But this is not a defect. To think it is would be like saying that the light of my reading lamp is not real light at all because it has no sharp boundary. Philosophers very often talk about investigating, analysing, the meaning of words. But let’s not forget that a word hasn’t got a meaning given to it, as it were, by a power independent of us, so that there could be a kind of scientific investigation into what the word *really* means. A word has the meaning someone has given it” (Wittgenstein, 1958:27-28).

Social theorists and philosophers alike are concerned with meaning and language, and their efforts often centre on specifying the meaning of words with precision and accuracy. The impossibility of this task rests upon the indexicality of expressions; where any conversation or description has an infinite number of possible meanings. Yet, for members of society the problem of indexicality does not arise in the same way. On the odd occasions when members find ambiguities in conversations or descriptions, they readily disentangle them. This is because members are able to interpret meaning instantly (Sacks, 1992a) using the resources available to them to get the job done (Hester and Eglin, 1997).

From an ethnomethodological point of view, indexical expressions in (natural) language become the point of inquiry to reveal the orderly properties of language through a concern about the contextually embedded sense of a phrase, word or expression.

Ethnomethodologists echo Wittgenstein’s commitment to understanding meaning contextually, and therefore transform the problem of indexicality from an analyst’s nightmare into a concern about members’ resources. In this way, ethnomethodologists acknowledge that members of society are “practical analysts

of, and inquirers into, the world”, (Hester and Eglin, 1997:1) and utilise this practice to conduct sociological inquiry about how the social world operates.

Lynch and Peyrot further reiterated the importance of recognising the locally occasioned accomplishment of meaning:

“Ethnomethodologists reject the idea that persons make sufficient sense of each others' actions by attaching culturally encoded meanings to particular words or gestures. Instead, ethnomethodologists treat meaning contextually, which means that they endeavour analytically to unpack relational configurations that enable sense to be made and understood *in situ*” (1992:114).

Lynch and Peyrot referred to the analytical “unpacking” of interaction and social phenomena, highlighting four important analytical points within this chapter.

First, words, phrases and descriptions do not have transcendental relevance.

Meaning is not fixed or pre-determined and cannot provide social scientists with a shorthand method of understanding culture. Here, the notion of “unpacking” indicates that analysis is conducted (slowly and systematically) to reveal the relevance of (category) selection in this particular situation, and on this particular occasion.

This thesis provides a detailed picture of “culture in action” (Hester and Eglin, 1997:20) (as opposed to culture in a generalised way), through demonstrating how it is possible to read the selected headlines in terms of criminal activity as part of everyday mundane activity. Reading crime is not pre-programmed through the selection of particular descriptors, categories or devices but is achieved through skilful interpretation of the selected categories to bring about readings understood in terms of crime.



The second analytical point for consideration is linked to the first, and relates to the need to investigate real phenomena rather than the analyst's construction of social phenomena (Garfinkel, 1967). Undertaking analysis from this viewpoint demonstrates how interpretative work is achieved by members of society while they go about their mundane everyday lives. The analysis is not mechanistic or driven by (researchers') presumptions, but through careful attention to the "here-and-now circumstances" in which the interaction arose (Hester and Eglin, 1997:2). Such concerns enable the preservation of phenomena by reconstituting the relationship between theorising and investigation and therefore prevent the research being driven by the practical organisational management of research methods, where requirements such as objective data, measurement systems, or reliability are the focus<sup>1</sup>.

The embedded and occasioned features of the headlines are major components of this research, where the concern is to maintain and safeguard the phenomenon of reading "newsworthiness" in newspapers. It is acknowledged that for some researchers the activity of reading a newspaper is typically viewed as mundane and not extraordinary or a researchable area. Sociologists interested in society at a structural level may dismiss this line of enquiry, as it does not add to debates on power or social structure in a typical manner. However, it is useful to remember Garfinkel's determination to reframe the dichotomy between the individual and society and to focus upon making social structures visible within ordinary life (Sharrock and Anderson, 1986).

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to dismiss the importance of matters such as reliability which will be further discussed in section 2.

Preserving the phenomenon of “newsworthiness” provides a means to gain (real) information about social structures in society.

The third analytical point to note is that this investigation has been undertaken with a view to seeing what arises within the data, rather than from a standpoint of (pre-) selecting a problem or data that will neatly fit into a specific theoretical framework. In this sense, the analysis provided in this thesis is data driven and shows how the orderliness of social action is constituted in its use.

The significant issue here is that society members’ resources<sup>2</sup> are utilised to demonstrate how understanding comes about in *this* instance through category selection. The notion of using members’ resources as a research tool is crucial and enables the research to avoid the pitfalls of a determinist model where the researcher is assumed to have privileged knowledge about the social world<sup>3</sup>.

Hester and Eglin noted the inter-dependency of culture, category selection and the local accomplishment of interaction and stated that,

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<sup>2</sup> Sacks used the imagery of the “machine” (1992a:484) to explain the orderly structure and production of rules and devices, which are used by members to make language intelligible. The researcher merely utilises these everyday, publicly used and publicly available resources in order to show how understanding is achieved. The machine imagery also enabled Sacks to clearly differentiate between the researcher imposing a pre-existing sense of meaning to categories and the devices used by society members to recognise and interpret specific pieces of interaction.

<sup>3</sup> Hester and Eglin referred to this position as a “decontextualised model of membership categorisation” (1997:12), commonly found in cognitive anthropology and Chomsky’s generative grammar. They used ethnographic semantics as an example of a decontextual, determinist model, where “cultural knowledge is said to be embedded in semantic structure of the language, which is in turn said to be stored in a set of cognitive categories in persons’ minds” (1997:12).

It is acknowledged that the semantic structure does operate under the local rules of application and the circumstances of the conversation, but that the semantic structure **pre-exists** the rules and occasion, and sets the parameters of their use. The danger here is that these categories, phrases or expressions become dissociated from their use and therefore offer a decontextualised sense as the presumed meanings divert attention away from the local character of the interactions.



“...it is *in* the use of categories that culture is constituted *this time through*. It is in their use that the *collect-able* character of membership categories is constituted and membership categorisation devices *assembled in situ*: membership categorisation devices are *assembled objects*” (1997:20).

Consideration of members’ machinery – in this case how the practical action of reading crime in newspaper headlines is achieved – reveals the orderliness of social action and therefore provides insight into culture.

The final analytical issue which is linked to the previous point draws upon an observation made by Jalbert (1989) during his concluding comments on the reporting of Haitian and Cuban refugees. He stated that:

“It can be argued that part of the practical methodological problem in explicating news accounts is that the analysts never cease to be members of the culture they/we are attempting to study” (1989:246).

These thoughts mirror Schegloff’s (Sacks, 1992a) criticisms of membership categorisation analysis (MCA), the indiscriminate and casual use of members’ knowledge by sociologists, and the difficulty of differentiating between a member’s knowledge and that of sociologists. These concerns can be addressed by reviewing Alfred Schutz’s (1962) notion of the social world and his adherence to the importance of highlighting members’ competencies and skills in dealing with social situations and activities.

Schutz (1962) argued that there are different levels of analysis in operation. The first level, or order, is undertaken by society members through their everyday lives. The second order is undertaken by sociologists where questions are asked that are uninteresting to society members and/or where members have no interest in gaining the answer. Schutz (1962) noted that it is only possible to undertake second order analysis if first order analysis has already taken place.

In this way, it is possible for a sociologist both to use members' knowledge and differentiate between this knowledge and what is known as a member of society. Members' knowledge is not viewed as null and void or invisible but provides a platform to acknowledge members' skilful management of everyday situations. Thus, undertaking research within this framework does not result in common-sense knowledge being undervalued, dismissed or even misrepresented as sociology. In this sense using Sacks' approach clarifies the position of members' knowledge rather than glossing over it.

Sacks' (1992a, b) approach therefore offers a non-ironic alternative by formally explicating the phenomena under investigation. This notion of formal, non-ironic explanations is central to Sacks' work and highlights the need for rigour whilst undertaking research and the need for ensuring that the analytical framework is explicit rather than implicit. Sociologists need to remain open-minded and must not be drawn into polar oppositions or be drawn into researching phenomena in such a way that they merely escape during investigation.

## **1.2. Overview of research methods**

### **1.2.1. Natural history**

The research was influenced initially by a previous dissertation that used membership categorisation to analyse a news story about the murder of James Bulger in a range of national newspapers. This study had two main analytical concerns; showing how the reader understood the events depicted in the news story and the apparatus that the media used to provide accounts of events such as child-perpetrated murder.

In the initial study, national newspapers were shown to use different mechanisms, such as the selection of oppositional categories in relation to the victim and the perpetrators, the immoral nature of the crime and an inferential framework drawing upon the legal system. The research project also highlighted the usefulness of membership categorisation and raised theoretical and methodological issues. For instance, I became interested in how the reader recognised the relevance of the news story and the possible mechanisms that newsmakers used to gain the attention of the reader and perhaps even particular audiences.

This observation initiated the inclusion of a wider range of newspaper formats to investigate whether there was a relationship between types of newspapers and the mechanisms used to gain the interest of the reader. In this sense, the analytical and methodological frameworks of the study were established, where a focus upon how meaning is constituted would provide information about the production of “newsworthiness”.

This marked a turning point in the research, and led to the investigation of how crime was reported in local newspapers rather than national newspapers. Local newspapers were selected on the basis of ease of access, and included “The Catford and Hither Green Newsreel” and “The Derry Journal”.

One initial observation was that headlines appeared to create a puzzle for the reader. The occurrence of puzzles raised the question of whether this was a



mechanism for capturing the interest of the reader so that they would read the article or whether other interactional work was being undertaken.

Furthermore, the analysis of a headline from the “Derry Journal” revealed that categories were being used in such a way as to draw upon historical and political common-sense knowledge. It appeared that common-sense was being used to accomplish interaction in a specific way for a specific community.

Moreover, the reader was able to understand the relevance of the news story in terms of its significance to the locality. This in turn led to the main area of this inquiry, which centres upon questions such as, how do members of society recognise and use “local” and “general” common-sense? Does the use of local common-sense knowledge link directly with the relevance of the locality? What is the relationship between different types of common-sense understandings? How do they interact? And more generally, what does local “newsworthiness” consist of?

These questions have been addressed through gaining an understanding of how headlines can be interpreted by members through publicly available mechanisms and devices, or in other words through demonstrating how the reader makes the headline intelligible and attending to how the reader finds sense in a local newspaper headline.

### 1.2.2. Data collection and research process

The data selected for analysis in the thesis was obtained from local newspapers drawn initially from Derry in Northern Ireland and Catford in Southeast London. These newspapers were selected so that local newspapers were compared from different geographical areas, and thereby different interactional sites.

Additional data reviewing the coverage of a specific incident was drawn from local newspapers from Derry and from regional newspapers from the North of Ireland<sup>4</sup>. This sample was selected in order to undertake a comparative analysis of the use of mechanisms in both regional and local newspapers<sup>5</sup>. The aim was therefore to analyse the production and uses of identified mechanisms in different contexts and thereby attempt to increase the validity of the findings<sup>6</sup>.

For the purpose of this research, headlines were understood to have the following features:

- Text is large, underlined or in bold print.
- There is additional text to the headline, in the form of sub headlines.
- Sub headlines are noticeably larger than the accompanying article.
- Advertisements, classifieds, letters or replies to letters, title pages, notice boards, business sections and sports sections are not included.

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<sup>4</sup> Appendix 1 provides a complete list of the newspapers and headlines selected from these geographical areas.

<sup>5</sup> Details of the numbers of headlines in the initial sample of local newspapers are provided in appendix 2, table 1. Similarly, details of the numbers of headlines found in the regional and local newspapers are shown in table 2 in appendix 2.

<sup>6</sup> The issue of reliability and validity will be discussed in detail at the end of this section.

The total data set comprised of seven newspaper headlines<sup>7</sup>; five from local papers and two from regional papers. The sampling strategy adopted a “specimen perspective” (Alasuutari, 1995:63) which has been defined as:

“Unlike data seen from the factist perspective, a specimen as a form of research material is not treated as either a *statement about* or a *reflection of* reality; instead, a specimen is seen as *part of* the reality being studied” (Alasuutari, 1995:63).

From this perspective, the reality to be studied is directly observable in the specimens to hand, which was the case with the data set of this study.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the data set was not selected with care or that only extraordinary crimes were selected.

This approach underlines the fundamental presumption of the research, namely, that social interaction is orderly and that the orderly nature of phenomena can be found everywhere – this is what Sacks called “order at all points”(1992a:484)<sup>8</sup>. In this way, the main concern in sampling the data was “to deal with a single event” (Sacks, 1992a:486); that is, the recognition and interpretation of local “newsworthiness”.

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<sup>7</sup> The seven headlines are shown in detail in Appendix 4.

<sup>8</sup> Sacks’ lecture on sampling and subjectivity discussed the issue of the ‘problematic’; conventionally, social scientists tend to look for sites of orderly phenomena in society.

“There is, then a big concern for finding ‘good problems’, that is, to find that data which is generated which is orderly, and then attempt to construct the machinery necessary to give you those results...But if you figure, or guess, or decide that whatever the human does, it’s just another animal after all, maybe more complicated than others but perhaps not noticeably so, then whatever humans do can be examined to discover some way they do it, and that way would be describable” (1992a:483-484).

Sacks also pointed out that sampling issues do not need to be tied to searches for specific sites as the important issue is undertaking careful analysis.

“Now if one figures that that’s the way things are to some extent, then it really wouldn’t matter very much what it is you look at – if you look at it carefully enough” (1992a:485).



The other central issue of concern in the sampling strategy was the need for “direct comparison” (Have, 1999:51) and therefore several opportunities were provided for comparison. These included the availability of the newspapers (e.g. weekly, monthly, bi-weekly), comparison of the coverage of specific incidents (as in the case of headlines 3 & 4, and headlines 5, 6 and 7) and comparison across geographical sites. In addition, the findings from the analysis of the headlines (such as the use of ambiguity and location categories) were comparatively analysed in order to deepen the analytical rigour of the findings<sup>9</sup>.

The initial inspection of the newspapers from Derry and Catford revealed that headlines had several notable features. First, the headlines were often understandable in terms of the reporting of criminal activity<sup>10</sup>. This issue became a central area of interest within the research as many of the headlines (and thereby articles) related to crime<sup>11</sup>. On comparing readings associated with crime it became apparent that different membership categories and devices were being utilised. Reporting and reading crime are not pre-determined or pre-programmed through the inclusion of specific (crime-related) categories, but are a matter for investigation.

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<sup>9</sup> The issue of distributional validity is addressed in the data at the end of the section.

<sup>10</sup> Refer to table 3 in appendix 2 for details of the subject matter covered in the local newspapers from Derry and Catford.

<sup>11</sup> The analysis in chapter 3 demonstrates how crime is understood within 4 different newspaper headlines. Chapter 4 shows how reading crime is linked to reading the local significance of the news items. I do acknowledge the artificiality of presenting the data in this way and stress that this does not reflect a mechanistic approach to the analysis, but separates these readings to provide greater clarity to the issues raised in the chapters presented. Furthermore, the aim is to re-focus attention onto the method employed and away from the content (or so-called real meaning) of the headlines.

The headlines also had a tendency to create puzzles for the reader. The significance of this interaction is that the headlines encouraged the reader to read the accompanying articles to resolve the puzzles. For example, the Catford and Hither Green Newsreel (March 1995) included headlines such as “Driver and his £100,000 load vanish” (p1), “Curry, chips and condoms” (p2) and “Riddle of accident man solved” (p4). The Derry Journal (10<sup>th</sup> February 1995) included the headlines “Pregnant mum stabbed and sister threatened DRUGS PUSHERS IN CROSS-BORDER TERROR” (p1), “Teenager accused of buggery” (p3) and “Stole children’s clothing” (p9).

The third point about the headlines is that they tended to have a particular “slant” or “angle”, as noted by Lee (1984:69). A typical example of the local slant is read in the headline printed in Belfast Telegraph (1st November 1995); “Catholics ‘may not’ be reporting rape”.

The subsequent article reported that many women were not reporting incidents of rape as a result of a lack of trust in the RUC and not due to religious beliefs as might be the initial interpretation. Another example includes a headline from the Londonderry Sentinel (9th July 1997); “Local man made callous comment on murdered police officer”. This headline was reporting on a Catholic man’s comments at the trial of a murdered RUC officer.

Furthermore, category selection was not arbitrary, but had the effect of bringing about a particular social interaction. For instance, headlines often enabled the reader to draw inferences about the motive (and morality) of the actions or activity

being described, as in the case of this headline in the Derry Journal; “‘Thugs’ condemned: Attack on young girl” (10<sup>th</sup> Feb 1995, p2).

Lastly, the headlines could be understood without any reference to the newspaper in which they appear. For instance, the reader does not have to draw upon the context of the newspaper title to understand the headline.

The last part of this section aims to provide an overview of the research process and thereby address Sacks' concern for “accounting for the researcher’s method at arriving at the findings” (Lepper, 2000:174). In this way, documenting the research process aims to make the findings both reliable and distributionally valid.

The diagrammatic plan of the research process, shown in Figure 1 below, can be used to identify issues relating to the distributional validity of the research.

Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 used a constant comparative method (Glasner and Strauss, 1967) to build up a picture of the mechanisms, categories, inferential frameworks and predicates found within the headlines. This process provided evidence of same-site and across-site analysis, thereby enabling the identification of deviant cases in terms of category selection, mechanisms used to invoke particular readings and inferential frameworks. These issues then informed the next stage of the research process.

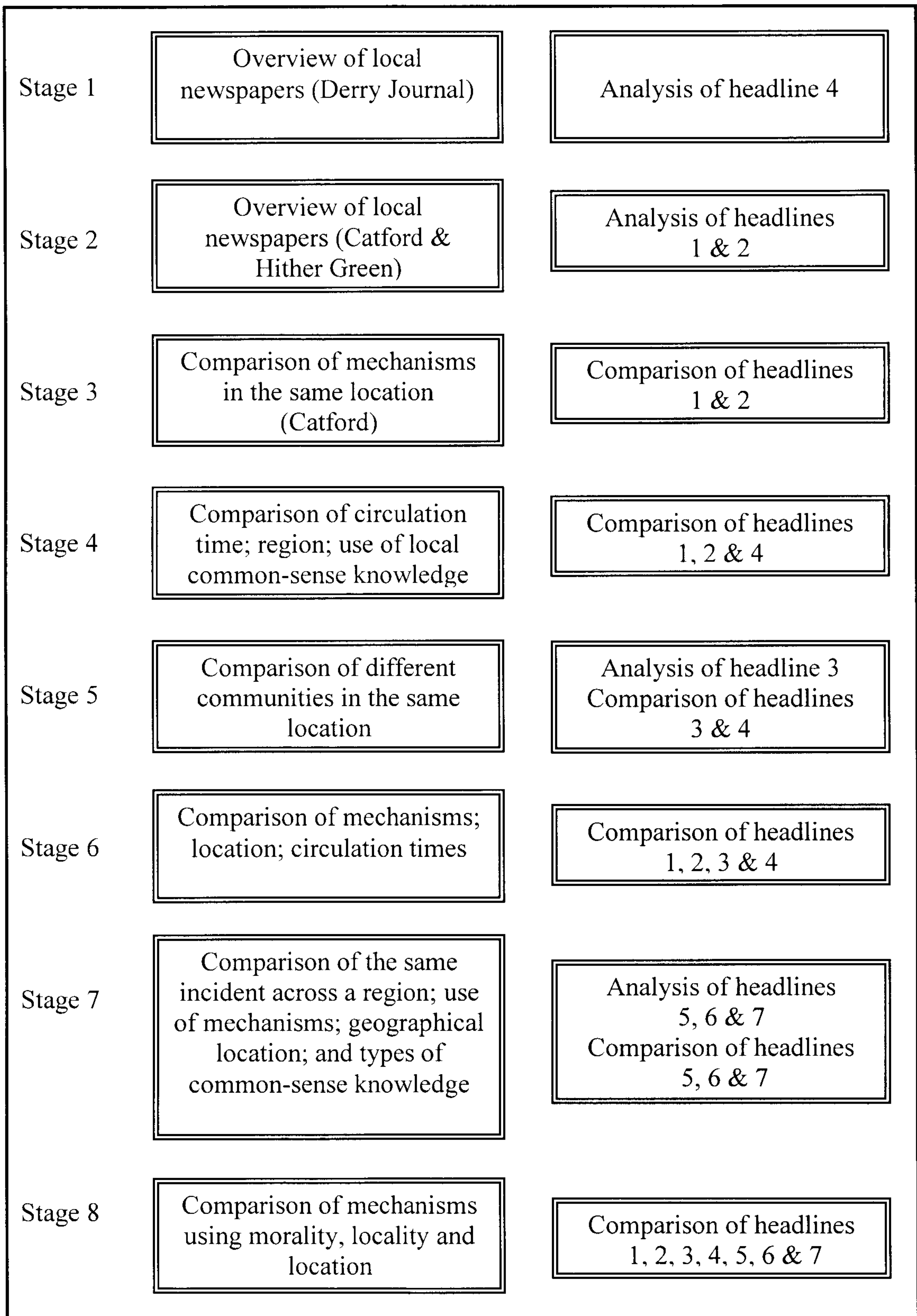
Stage 5 used the comparative analysis of a single incident within the same geographical location drawn from different newspapers as a means to investigate the significance of geographical location, use of common-sense knowledge,



different audiences and different time frames (as the newspapers covered the news item several days apart).

Stage 7 used a comparative analysis of a single incident across a wider geographical area in order to investigate the use of types of common-sense knowledge, the mechanisms operating in the headline and the relevance of geographical location. In this way, the comparative analysis provided an opportunity to study the “distribution of categories” (Lepper, 2000:177) across geographical sites to add further analytical depth to how “newsworthiness” operates.

In the final stage, a further constant comparative analysis was undertaken in relation to how the headlines invited readings associated with crime, morality and locality. Again, any deviant cases were identified and analysed in order to reassess how headlines are read in terms of local “newsworthiness”.



**Figure 1: Outline of the comparison and analysis stages**

### **1.3. Aim and objectives of the study**

Within the context described above, the aim of this research is to explore the production and recognition of “newsworthiness” in local newspapers reporting crime. The objectives are as follows:

- To show how the reader is able to understand local newspaper headlines in terms of criminal activity through their analysis of the relevance of the categories selected and associated inferences through common-sense understandings.
- To show how reading morality is accomplished in the practical activity of interpreting crime in local newspapers, thereby making news stories relevant to the reader.
- To show how the reader recognises and utilises mechanisms that invoke the relevance of locality and thereby interprets the headlines as consequential to the locality.
- To undertake a comparative analysis of the mechanisms identified in terms of types of newspapers, coverage of news items and different geographical locations in order to identify different types of common-sense knowledge and local common-sense knowledge, explore their relationship and show how this impacts on reading local “newsworthiness”.
- To show how the mechanisms in local newspaper headlines provide a means for the reader to make the newspaper headlines intelligible and enable newsmakers to target audiences.



#### **1.4. Organisation of the thesis**

Chapter 2 provides a documentation of my thoughts on relevant literature in relation to the data. Some of the themes include; the rationale for using this methodology; its advances over other possible methods such as discourse analysis and semiotic approaches to media studies; and the consideration of the notion of “newsworthiness”. Other key areas include Jayyusi’s (1984) work on morality and description, and discussions about locational formulations and their provision of contextual resources.

Chapter 3 is the first of the data chapters. All of the data chapters include a comparative analysis section for the purpose of increasing the validity of the findings and providing direction for further investigation. Chapter 3 provides an analysis of 4 local headlines drawn from Derry and Catford. The main analytical focus of the chapter is to demonstrate how the reader is able to understand the headlines in terms of criminal activity. I suggest that this is largely achieved through readable oppositional pairs, category-bound-activities (CBAs) associated with criminality, and the transformation of category selection, such as “cross-border terror” being interpreted as “terrorism”.

Chapter 4 contains a discussion about morality and its linkage to reading criminal activity. I suggest that reading morality is important as it invites the reader to anticipate that the news story is written from the ‘victim’s’ perspective. The analysis shows that reading morality is accomplished by several different mechanisms, such as morally contrastive category selection, inferential

characterisation of categories, disjunctive categories and categories associated with locality.

Chapter 5 extends the analysis of locality and shows that reading locality is important in the practical activity of reading crime in local newspapers, thereby making the news story relevant to the reader. The analysis shows that reading locality is achieved through location categories, ambiguity and inferential frameworks that invite the reader to draw upon local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practices and beliefs. The recognition and use of these mechanisms are discussed as a means for the reader to understand the topic of the description and make the news story recipient-designed.

This theme is further examined in chapter 6, where I show how the reader is able to differentiate between locality and location, and the impact that this has on reading “newsworthiness”. In addition, this chapter explores the impact of selecting geographical location categories and demonstrates how the inclusion of this type of category invokes the reader to undertake combinations of location, membership, and topic analyses to make sense of the news story.

The final data chapter, chapter 7, draws upon headlines selected from local and regional newspapers from the North of Ireland which reported the same incident. This comparative analysis demonstrates how local and regional common-sense knowledge(s), contextual resources, puzzles and co-presence are utilised to make sense of the headlines. The observations from the comparative analyses are

discussed in relation to the configuration of local “newsworthiness”, particularly in terms of the reciprocity of news production and recognition.

The discussion in chapter 8 develops the notion of “newsworthiness” and addresses Schegloff’s criticisms of MCD from the research findings. Finally, I outline the implications of the notion of local “newsworthiness” for various audiences including researchers of media products, those interested in MCA, and researchers interested in locality, crime, or morality.



## Chapter 2

### **2. A review of the literature**

The discussion that follows is a reflection upon relevant literature in relation to key turning points in this research. Five main issues are discussed:

- A critical review of more traditional ways of doing media research, such as using reception analysis<sup>12</sup> on news reports, and of the relative merits of an ethnomethodological approach.
- These issues are taken up in relation to “newsworthiness”, highlighting the benefits of focusing on the local production of meaning.
- The analytical significance of mundane textual phenomena is reviewed in relation to Schegloff’s work on locational formulations. Here, the impetus of text and its relationship to the activity of reading for location is considered.
- I discuss crime, deviancy and morality as interactional accomplishments that are respecified as members’ phenomena.
- Alternative approaches to my own (in particular, semiology and discourse analysis) are reviewed in terms of their applicability to this study.

#### **2.1. Text, meaning and audiences in media studies: an alternative approach**

The conceptualisation of the media as all powerful has given way to notions of audiences being active and intelligent consumers of the media (Fiske, 1987;

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<sup>12</sup> Fiske (1987:1991) suggested that audiences are active producers of meaning as they decode media text by interpreting the text in relation to their own cultural, social and individual circumstances. In this way, readers do not consume media meaning but create their own meaning.

1991)<sup>13</sup>. Earlier ‘effects’ research was based on the assumption that audiences responded in the same way and certain groups, particularly children, were vulnerable to psychological damage from media outputs<sup>14</sup>.

Reception analysis is concerned with the way that the audiences read media texts. Hall (1980)<sup>15</sup>, and later Morley (1992)<sup>16</sup>, suggested that texts have different kinds of decoding or readings. Morley identified three different types of reading; preferred readings where the reader accepts what is being presented without questions; negotiated readings where the reader accepts only some of the meanings presented; and alternative or oppositional readings where the reader is in opposition to the preferred reading.

He suggested that different groups have “differential access” to the use of the codes and this is the basis of their readings. For example, the depiction of scantily dressed women in an advertisement will produce different readings. A middle-class woman may accept the preferred reading in relation to other women but not in personal terms due to her independence, whereas a feminist may produce an

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<sup>13</sup> This is not to imply that there are differing opinions in relation to the notion of the active audience, but that this approach reflects a current fashion in media theory. For instance, Kitzinger reviewed the findings of the Glasgow media group and suggested that “concepts of such as ‘polsysemy’, ‘resistance’ and ‘active audience’ are often used to by-pass or even negate enquiry into the effects of cinema, press or television presentations” (1999:4).

<sup>14</sup> For example, it was documented in a West Australian newspaper that children were becoming seriously ill after exposure to cartoons (O’Shaughnessy, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Hall’s seminal paper provided a means of theorising the communication process between media and media consumer. He suggested that media messages are encoded by the media through processes such as “technical infrastructure”, “relations of production”, “frameworks of knowledge” and “meaning structures” (1980:130). Messages were decoded by the same processes but operated in the reverse order.

<sup>16</sup> Morley’s (1992) *Nationwide* project was a UK review of television programmes shown in the 1970s with the aim of applying Hall’s notion of encoding and decoding in different social classes.

oppositional reading as the advert is deemed as insulting and demeaning to women (O'Shaughnessy, 1999).

Morley's (1992) work used an ethnographic approach to audience studies to consider how meanings are constructed at the point of encounter between the texts and the reader. This has become the focus of new audience research. The advantage of this approach is that it avoids the assumption of (some) semiotic research where meanings are inherent within the text and avoids the trap of equating media ownership to ideological power<sup>17</sup>.

This is not to suggest that reception analysis has escaped criticism. As Kellner (1995) pointed out, the recent focus on audiences' construction of meaning has resulted in the indiscriminate use of the notion of resistance, and in some research studies, provided banal conclusions such as 'we all see things differently'.

Morley (1992) also raised concerns about the imbalance between micro and macro structures, where there has been a concentration on the micro processes of reception to the detriment of any engagement with the macro structures of the media and society.

From an ethnomethodological point of view, the concerns about textual analysis undertaken by media sociologists are rather different.

Fundamentally, media sociologists' interest in the orderliness of social phenomena focuses on what they see as the relationship between "social

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<sup>17</sup> The limitations of semiology will be discussed in relation to this research study in section 2.5.



structure” and the “social actor”. These social science constructs mean that analysis is based on analytical abstractions. In this way, the practical issues associated with everyday life are (for want of a better phrase) ‘bracketed out’ or separated from theoretic social structures. Whilst the aim of theorising social structure is to provide explanations of substantive issues – that is, the types of issues raised by society members – the desire to provide such explanations means that sociology typically conflates theory and substantive issue.

Theoretical explanations based on abstractions about social structure include substantive explanations. Sharrock and Coleman provided a useful example of how this operates in relation to the notion of “the social actors”:

“The category social actor ... amounts to formalisation and abstraction, a theoretical reconstruction, of the category “person”. As such, it is made to exhibit many (if not all) of the qualities properly attributed to persons; in particular, that of possessing intentions and motives, and being able to formulate goals. Yet by transforming “persons” into “social actors” by theoretical reduction, these selfsame qualities and attributes become problematic insofar as they too must be theorised” (1999:3).

The process of ‘bracketing off’ motive, intention and purpose of the “social actor”, in order to provide a theoretical abstraction of the person, results in an uncertain ontological status. As Sharrock and Coleman pointed out in relation to the sociologists’ task,

“Either they must be granted an effectivity to those intentions independent of social structure (in which case the sociological account will be seen as deficient and inadequately theorised), or they must be recuperated to social structure, in which case the notion of the social actor is rendered empty of all content, becoming seeable only as that which is determined by always-already-in-place social structure” (1999:9).

In relation to text and meaning, the problem then becomes, ‘do texts have meanings that can be discovered or does the reader bring these meanings to the text?’ This question is relevant to the problem found throughout sociology; that

of the relationship between structure and agency<sup>18</sup>. For instance, should media inquiries construct an ideal reader, or in Fiske's language an "inscribed reader" (1987:62), or should such studies aim to provide an array of different readings of one text as a way of ensuring that the reader maintains active status. Each position acts as a means to resolve the "problem of meaning" in text. Yet neither solution is entirely satisfactory nor adequately deals with the issue of relationship between structure and agency.

A further problem also comes to light; in order to make claims of being a theoretician and therefore being able to distinguish between meaningful and non-meaningful things, the sociologist needs to suspend his or her membership. However, in doing so, the sociologist conceals how he or she draws upon members' knowledge that some things are meaningful.

A common complaint made by ethnomethodologists is, therefore, that the sociologist is a member and this needs to be acknowledged, or else the outcome is the conflation of formal and substantive matters.

The formal construction of social structures within ethnomethodology is focused on the internal logics of social structure. Thus, both the problem and the explanation are internal to the inquiry and avoid the problem of drawing upon substantive issues. In other words, ethnomethodologists make common-sense knowledge the topic within the inquiries rather than using common-sense

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<sup>18</sup> As Sharrock and Coleman pointed out:

"The tension between the desire to celebrate the autonomy of the social actor and the demands posed by high theory is to be seen throughout media sociology" (1999:14).

knowledge as an unacknowledged resource. Conversely, media sociologists often undertake studies that are concerned with the ideology of social structures, and yet utilise common-sense knowledge to theorise about such matters.

Morley's (1992) work exemplified this point in that he assumed that people are responsive to his version of social structure when they interpret media texts.

However, as Sharrock and Coleman pointed out:

“Morley, as we say, finds class society in media output...But what we suppose he cannot admit is that he might find class society there because he puts it there in the first place” (1999:21),

and

“...what Morley ... construes as uniquely sociological knowledge – viz., knowledge of “social structures” – is in fact knowledge which is commonplace, routine and shared” (1999:17).

The claim to sociological knowledge is made on the basis of high theory where the sociologist has privileged knowledge that can inform members of society about the ‘real’ meaning of text, consequently dubbing members as naïve or “cultural dopes” (Garfinkel, 1967). In turn, the theorised text bears little resemblance to the context of text in everyday life.

In this way, by attending to the ‘problem of meaning’ rather than everyday practices, the media sociologist not only disregards the skilful practices of members but misrepresents common-sense knowledge to instruct the reader how to interpret the text.



In short, ethnomethodology can offer media sociologists interested in textual analysis an approach that avoids the conflation of theory and substantive matters through focusing on the internal logic of social structures.

This analytical stance makes it possible to attend to the everyday practices of members through using common-sense knowledge as a topic, and thereby acknowledges the skilful work that readers undertake, and consequently avoids taking a privileged theorist's position. In this way, the 'problem of meaning' is replaced with concerns about describing social structures to capture the essence of social life.

The next section follows up these issues in relation to "newsworthiness"; more specifically, it discusses the need to consider the "whatness" (Garfinkel and Wieder, 1992) (or haecceity) of "newsworthiness" and how such social interaction is accomplished.

## **2.2. "Newsworthiness" as a social interaction: exchanging 'purpose' questions for 'task' questions**

Moerman's study (1974) of a South East Asian tribe, the Lue, provided some direction to this research. His analytical shift from 'who' questions to 'why' and 'when' questions provided a distinct approach to the notion of "newsworthiness".

Typical media studies research in this area focuses upon issues such as production of bias in news reports, the reproduction of stereotypes, the impact of monopolies, audience responses and audience effects of media products to mention a few<sup>19</sup>.

Interesting as these approaches may have been, there seems to be a vital missing component – or at least the approaches do not seem to clarify the conceptualisation of “newsworthiness” as social interaction – that is, the phenomenon of “newsworthiness”.

As Garfinkel and Wieder commented, those engaged in the formal study of interaction need to attend to the “missing whatness” of the “actions-in-their-setting” (1992:181). My analytical focus therefore shifted from *purpose* directed questions about hidden agendas, bias or the reproduction of representations, to *task* based questions<sup>20</sup> about how the social interaction of “newsworthiness” is produced and recognised as a news story. As Sacks noted:

“Look to see how it is that persons go about producing what they produce” (1992a:11).

In this way, orientating to the task makes it possible to demonstrate how headlines are made intelligible and thereby provides information about how members understand description.

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<sup>19</sup> Galtung and Ruge (1973) produced a list of criteria for ‘news values’ which reflected newsmakers’ decision-making processes about the “newsworthiness” of a story. This work is considered a classic by media analysts and is used as a resource for current research. Although there is not sufficient space here to discuss their use, the identified values include the following points: frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite persons, personalisation and negativity.

<sup>20</sup> This echoes Wittgenstein’s (1968) thoughts about language and activity, where words are seen to have contexts in relation to the activity they are doing, and a separation of these issues leads to a relativist position.

“Social order is an accomplishment of members’ practical action and practical reasoning. This means that whatever it is that members are doing is a practical accomplishment” (Hester and Housley, 2002:8).

The shift in focus raised, therefore, many different sorts of questions such as how, for instance, do members of society differentiate between a story, gossip and a news item? What interactional work is being undertaken? How is this interaction achieved?

Drew’s (1978) work on the occasioned use of society members’ religious common-sense knowledge, McHoul and Watson’s (1984) study of the use of common-sense and formal geographical knowledge in a classroom setting, and Lee’s (1984) analysis of a newspaper headline, clarified that the construction of description is not merely an appendage of some specific event – rather, it is a means to accomplish specific interactional tasks. Watson (1996), and Anderson and Sharrock (1979) pointed out that “newsworthiness” is not static, but varies from news item to news item and for that matter from newspaper to newspaper. News stories can be shocking, extraordinary, comical, disturbing, blaming and so on, where the reader responds to both the story and to the particular newspaper they are reading (Anderson & Sharrock, 1979). Hester and Eglin (1992; 1997) used MCA in several of their studies which highlighted the analytical significance of orientating to the task of reading a newspaper.

Garfinkel noted the constancy of social interaction and the need to attend to the practical achievement of locally produced meaning:



“For ethnomethodology the objective reality of social facts, in that, and just how, it is every society’s locally, endogenously produced, naturally organised, reflexively accountable, ongoing, practical achievement, being everywhere, always, only, exactly and entirely, members’ work, with no time out, and with no possibility of evasion, hiding out, passing, postponement, or buy-outs, is thereby sociology’s fundamental phenomena” (1991:11).

These writers provided methodological direction to the study and served as a means to address questions such as how to attend to “newsworthiness” as a social interaction and how MCA can be applied to news reports. Issues that remained included how to investigate “newsworthiness” in terms of reading a local newspaper and the relationship between representation of crime in headlines and morality. These are the subjects of the sections that follow.

### **2.3. Locational formulations and texts as active social phenomena**

Texts are pervasive in all aspects of everyday life. Surprisingly, this has not led to the proliferation of textually mediated studies. Either they remain marginalised due to their (so-called) mundane nature or text is conceptualised as an unproblematic entity that provides a conduit to some social phenomena (Watson, 1996). Thus, texts are infrequently viewed as a source of rich, readily available data with which to investigate the social world.

Watson (1996) noted that texts are active social phenomena, where the text and the reader are active participants in the sense-making process, rather than passive recipients of information-giving or receiving. A number of studies (Smith, 1978; Lee, 1984; Schenkein, 1979; and Psathas, 1991) which undertook investigations from this perspective, either used data drawn from newspaper headlines and/or used MCA, which once again highlighted the value of this methodology with this

type of data. These studies underlined the need to investigate texts and the reader as an integrated and co-operative enterprise and provided a means to consider the production and recognition of news stories.

Schegloff's seminal paper entitled "*Notes on conversational practice: Formulating place*", shed some light onto "the problem of locational formulations" (1972:76) in relation to the investigation of local newspaper headlines. His work emphasised the need to make the everyday strange in order to understand how such mundane activities are undertaken in daily life.

Schegloff (1972) identified the importance of sensitivity to the locations of the parties; to the activity being done at that time; to the membership of the interaction; and to the shared common-sense knowledge of the members<sup>21</sup>. He noted that in all of these cases the problem remains the same; that of conversational context, which may change over the course of the social interaction.

In his discussion of location analysis, one rule that is suggested is that the selection of a location formulation seems to require an assessment of the speaker's location and the location of other parties in the conversation to establish if the parties are co-present or not. If the parties are found to be co-present then the selection of a location category may be not required, but in certain situations may be selected, as in the example of a reunion of old friends.

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<sup>21</sup> Lepper (2000) provided a clear guide to Schegloff's work as well as her own in her book *Categories text and talk: a practical introduction to categorisation analysis*. For a broader discussion on location see Silverman (1998).

These observations rely upon the notion that interactants share a “common-sense geography” (1972:85) of different geographical areas, where it is utilised to make sense of the interaction or the task at hand. The idea of common-sense geographical knowledge does raise a problem though, as Schegloff noted:

“What such a common-sense geography is and how it is organised...and whether there is a single layman’s geography or alternative geographies from which a selection is made on particular occasion of use – these are empirical questions, and not ones to be settled by consulting geography books. Such geographies are a cultural fact to be discovered and perhaps subjected to a sort of ‘component analysis’ of place terms” (1972:85).

The issues raised by both Watson and Schegloff helped to frame the investigation about how the crime was represented in local newspapers. More importantly, they served to direct the research to the question of *how* the reader was able to establish that the headline was a not just “newsworthy”, but was significant to the locality and therefore was understood to be locally “newsworthy”. In this way, the challenge seemed to be to integrate empirical questions about the use of common-sense geographies within a framework that conceptualised texts as active social phenomena and took account of the news reports being about crime.

#### **2.4. Crime, morality and deviance: functions and purposes**

Traditionally, crime theorised from a Durkheimian perspective distinguishes between the normal and the pathological behaviour and thereby maintains the moral boundaries of right and wrong. The central component of the functionalist’s argument lies in the response to crime, where the criminalisation of acts is a public affair. In this way, the role of the media is to communicate the procedures associated with the criminalisation of acts through the legal system.



Later work reviewed the media more critically as a site for construction of “social problems”, particularly the portrayal of violent crime; whereas interactionist studies attended the features of deviance attribution and social control agents. These perspectives of crime and deviance seem to be a far cry from the social interaction of reading “newsworthiness” in relation to the representation of crime, which is echoed in Eglin and Hester,

“...in relation to the functions of deviance, the media are cast into a role in a sociological drama rather than being approached as a site of locally ordered social action in their own right” (1999:197).

An alternative direction was provided initially by Pollner’s (1974) and McHugh’s (1970) treatments of deviance as moral matter that is assessed through common-sense understandings. The implication is that acts are no longer conceptualised as inherently deviant but describe the practices through which members of society orientate to the issue of what is deviant. Thus, deviance becomes a member’s phenomenon and again engenders an ethnomethodological approach to this research.

The influence of Jayyusi’s (1984; 1991) work on this research has been fundamental and provided guidance on issues related to morality, deviance, and MCA through the use of detailed analysis of members’ practical reasoning and practical action to make description intelligible . As she commented, an ethnomethodological approach,

“Rather than giving accounts and explanations of members’ conduct, values, beliefs and judgements, it analytically examines the ways that conduct, belief and judgement are organised, produced and made intelligible in members’ own accounts and descriptions, and how these are embedded in various other practices. The accounts are treated as features of those practices, the descriptions as constituents of conduct” (1991:234).

Jayyusi's work provided an empirical method to analyse the sense making procedures used by members, and has allowed me to track how crimes are made observable and reportable in local newspapers. Jayussi's extension of Sacks' work shows how moral reasoning is practically organised and practical reasoning is morally organised.

Finally, this section would be incomplete without recognising the influence of Watson's research (1978; 1983) which provided insight into how to conduct studies of moral work using MCA. His research exemplified the depth of work required through interesting and, most importantly, relevant data.

All that remains of this chapter is to provide a short rationale for not using semiology or discourse analysis to conduct this investigation.

## **2.5. A brief review of semiology and discourse analysis: the problem of language and culture**

The relationship between language and culture has been a central concern for both linguistics and sociology alike. It has generally been conceived in an abstract way, either through various linguistic theories, which attempt to accommodate 'the social', or through the problematic notion of 'the social' (due to the lack of consensus) utilising aspects of linguistic resources. In both of these instances, the relationship between language and culture is unclear due to the unknown nature of the terms – that is, linguistic theory and 'the social' – and the lack of clarity about how they connect:

"However, the fact that such equations cannot really be resolved without a great deal of specification does nothing to discourage attempts to generate statements about language and culture" (Lee, 1991:197).

These criticisms have had a profound influence on decisions made about the methodology of this study. For instance, semiology and discourse analysis as research methods, in their...

"...treatment of language as phenomena out-of-context" (Lee, 1991:199), result in representations derived from abstractions rather than the details of the practical accomplishment of interaction.

Saussure, the founder of semiology, distinguished between "langue", the universal structure and rules of language (that which can be uttered), and "parole" which refers to 'performance' of the activity of talk in different cultures (that which is uttered) (Saussure, 1966 [1916]:38). Consequently, language functions as a system of signs, where meaning is acquired from a combination of signifier and signified, that is, word and object. The connection between language to object is arbitrary and therefore does not reflect reality but becomes a signifying system that 'sets' reality, or mediates reality, and as such has an ideological function (Coupland, Sarangi and Candlin, 2001).

Lee (1991) suggested that Saussure's approach is problematic on two counts.

First, the goal of providing the general systematic organisation of language forms means that the task is to purify individual differences or irregularities. In this way, the social phenomenon being described is a generalisation, as the details have been abstracted away. In terms of text, this means that the details of how texts are understood are lost through the research process.



Second, reference to the ideological function of language brings a cognitive emphasis, which tends to undermine 'the social' dimension of the activity. Once again, this negates the possibility of approaching language in terms of practical accomplishment. In this sense, utilising semiology in relation to local newspapers would have addressed quite different research questions and brought the study no closer to answering how "newsworthiness" is accomplished as a social interaction.

Discourse analysis, the aim of which is to systematically integrate language and 'the social', has attempted to incorporate some of Sacks' findings into its analytical framework and is considered below in relation to the aims of this study.

As Lee noted,

"...the objective of discourse analysis is to find out how utterances containing what is described as 'moves' (actions) fit together to produce discourse. To facilitate this it is argued that a higher level of analytical classification than grammar is required. This is because ...grammatical units are determined by situationally organised rules or maxims, so that performatory function must take account of a higher level of situational relevancies" (1991:218).

As both Lee (1991) and Schegloff (1997) outlined through the use of various data, in discourse analysis the rules and maxims<sup>22</sup> are not generated through detailed observations of how participants orientate to the context of the interaction, but are derived from "the context or the organisational features of the situation" (Lee, 1991:219).

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<sup>22</sup> Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) noted that it is perfectly possible that there may be exceptions to the rules or maxims. However, this would seem to be an imperfect solution as it raises further problems about the number of exceptions – when and how they operate and the like – and whether such exceptions undermine the notion of rules and maxims identified in the first place.

In terms of discourse analysis then, a command is a command due to the classroom environment and an asymmetrical conversation reflects power and status differentials based on gender<sup>23</sup>.

"Such analyses insist instead on characterisations of the parties, the relevancies, and the context, to which the *analyst* is orientated" (Schegloff, 1997:174).

The problem for ethnomethodologists with this approach is that it is not empirically grounded, and once again provides an abstraction of activity through presumption about context, rather than analysing the participants' orientation to *their* context. Considering this criticism in terms of this research, where the goal is to investigate the contextual relevance of "newsworthiness" for the readers of local newspapers, discourse analysis that operates in this way would not provide a means with which to address this inquiry.

Schegloff (1982) also criticised discourse analysis which has its foundations in psychology. In practical terms, the method does not always provide full explanations of all aspects of talk and may not attend to the turn-by-turn organisation of the talk.

More recently, however, Potter and Edwards have provided (some) evidence of attending to how activities get done by the participants and the value of detailed analysis of interaction:

"Thus we *are* committed to the implications of intentionality that follow from the identification of activities in discourse. Yet we are *not* committed to a cognitive account of intentions, an account that treats them as mental events preceding talk and action" (2001:95).

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<sup>23</sup> Schegloff (1997) showed the value of analysing talk-in-action, where the parties orientated to incomplete turns, up-grading emotional responses and other interactional work.

As Silverman (1998) concluded, whether we call work discourse analysis or conversation analysis, it is really a matter of whether researchers view themselves as belonging to the disciplines of psychology or sociology.

As shown in the discussion above, semiology and discourse analysis were not utilised in this particular research study for reasons that relate to the methodological fit between research questions (or orientation) and research tools. If either of these methods had been used, the study itself would have taken a different analytical direction.

The chapter that follows is the first of several data chapters and relates to how the reader is able to understand the local headlines as reports about crime. The focus therefore shows the contextual relevance of crime for the reader and does not presume a prior contextual framework.



## Chapter 3

### **3. The practical activity of reading crime in local newspapers**

The aims of this chapter are:

- To introduce the data selected for analysis.
- To demonstrate how the practical activity of reading crime in local newspapers is accomplished in the selected headlines.
- To compare how crime is constituted within the given headlines, with reference to the relevance of the rules and devices employed to make the headline intelligible.

#### **3.1. The data**

The data analysed in this chapter was obtained from local newspapers drawn from Catford in South East London and Derry in Northern Ireland. As noted earlier in chapter 1, the data comes from a collection of approximately 800 newspaper headlines<sup>24</sup>. From this data collection, four headlines were selected which appeared within a similar time frame; that is, mid-February 1995 to March 1995.

These headlines were selected because they were analytically interesting and readily demonstrated the theoretical considerations outlined in chapter 1.

The section that follows provides an analysis of the four headlines to show how reading crime is accomplished as a practical action. The analysed headlines will be discussed in turn to highlight relevant analytical points.

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<sup>24</sup> These are detailed in Appendix 1.

**Headline 1:**

The Catford and Hither Green Newsreel, March 1995, page 1  
"Driver and his £100,000 load vanish"

DECORATING INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR Also small repairs Experienced 30 years Reliable Fair prices Free estimates 0181-851-3498	<b>THE CATFORD &amp; HITHER GREEN NEWSREEL</b>	A RELIABLE PLUMBER All repairs, leaks and installations <i>No call out charge</i> 0689 833439
March, 1995 No. 9.		The newspaper with the LOCAL stories 25p

**Driver and  
his £100,000  
load vanish**

A conman has van-

**Headline 2:**

The Catford and Hither Green Newsreel, March 1995, page 1  
"Clergyman awakes to find man with knife standing over him  
ROBBERY IN A RAILWAY CARRIAGE"

DECORATING INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR Also small repairs Experienced 30 years Reliable Fair prices Free estimates 0181-851-3498	<b>THE CATFORD &amp; HITHER GREEN NEWSREEL</b>	A RELIABLE PLUMBER All repairs, leaks and installations: <i>No call out charge</i> 0689 833439
March, 1995 No. 9.		The newspaper with the LOCAL stories 25p

**Clergyman awakes to find man  
with knife standing over him  
ROBBERY IN A RAILWAY CARRIAGE**

A 55-years-old curate was shaken awake on a train at Catford, threatened with a knife and robbed.

It happened after 9pm as Father Arthur Golightly was returning from Chatham. He had

**Headline 3:**

The Londonderry Sentinel, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1995, page 9  
"Drug pusher threatens mother with knife"

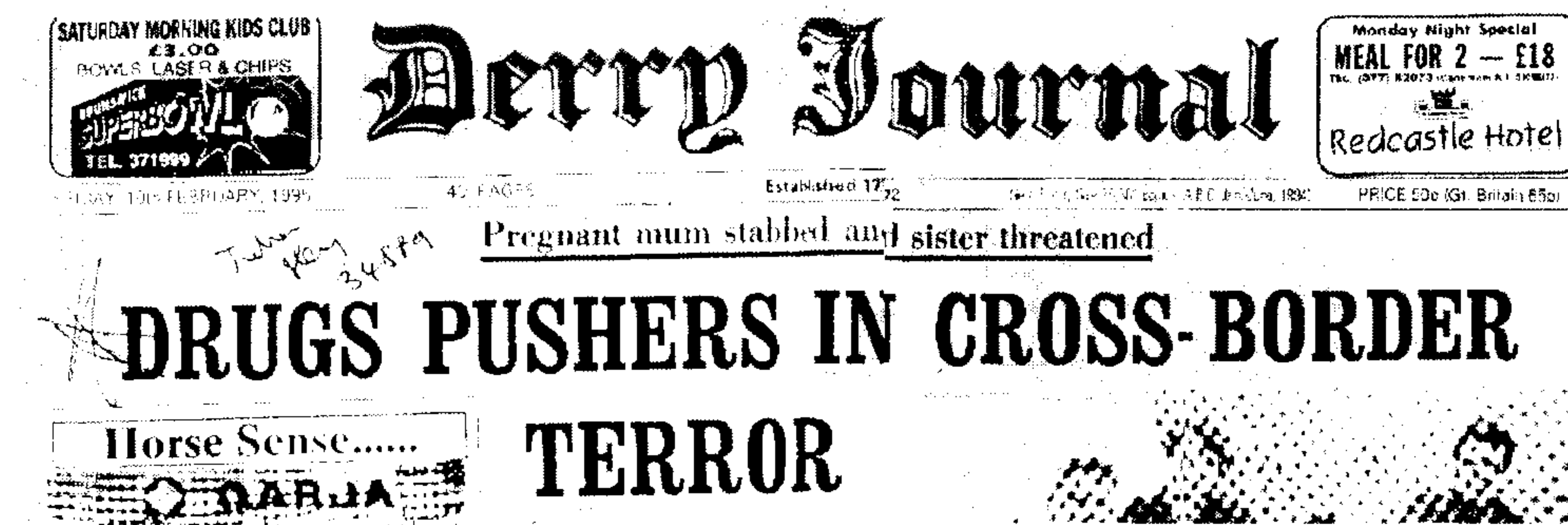
**SENTINEL**

Suite 3, Spencer House, Waterside,  
Londonderry  
Tel: 01504 48889 Fax: 01504 41175 **ABC**  
Established 1829  
55p  
(55p Eire)

**DRUG PUSHER THREATENS  
MOTHER WITH KNIFE**

#### Headline 4:

The Derry Journal Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> February 1995, page 1  
"Pregnant mum stabbed and sister threatened"  
**DRUGS PUSHERS IN CROSS-BORDER TERROR**"



#### 3.2. The practical action of reading crime

The analysis that follows demonstrates how it is possible to read these headlines in terms of criminal activity. It is important to note that I am not suggesting that the headlines can only be read in this way – as all description will have several possible readings – but that reading crime is powerfully encouraged by these headlines.

The analysis of headline 1 shows that reading that a crime has taken place is accomplished through understanding the conventional associations between the categories “driver”, “£100,000 load” and “vanish”. These conventions invoke notions of paid employment and typical category bound activities which construct possible motives for moving the “load”. Drawing upon inferences associated with the category “vanish” therefore invites the reader to understand the description in terms of it being stolen rather than borrowed or delivered.

Reading criminal activity in headline 2 is shown to be accomplished through a combination of the format of the headline and category selection, where the reader



is able to understand the sequential order of events and that the categories “man with knife” and “robbery” are drawn from the MCD “criminal activity” through the application of the consistency rule. The selection of the category “clergyman” invokes notions of duties and responsibilities and implies that this is a highly moral category, unlikely to undertake illegal activities. The reader is therefore able to understand that the “clergyman” represents the “victim of the crime” which invokes the oppositional standard relational pair (SRP) “victim of crime/perpetrator of crime”.

Similarly, the analysis of headline 3 demonstrates that the description in the news report is understood in terms of criminal activity through reading the standard relational pair (SRP) “victim of a crime/perpetrator of a crime”. This reading is brought about through the selection of the category “drug pusher” which can be understood to be drawn from the collection “criminal activity”. Drawing upon inferences associated with drug related crime informs the reader of a possible motive for the activity of “threatens with knife”, and provides the reader with an explanation of why these conventionally incongruent categories are linked together.

The analysis of headline 4 shows that reading criminal activity relies largely on the selection of the categories “cross-border terror”, where these categories are mapped onto each other to invite readings associated with “terrorism”. Other category selections such as “drugs pushers” and “stabbed” invoke the MCD “criminal activity” which makes it possible for the reader to understand that the “drugs pushers” represent the perpetrators of the crime. The category “drugs

pushers” is upgraded through the application of the consistency rule to “drug pushing terrorists”. This is important as it makes it possible for the reader to understand that a possible motive for the crime was terrorist activity and that this is not merely a report about a drug related crime.

### **3.3. Analysis of Headline 1: “Driver and his £100,000 load vanish”**

#### **3.3.1. Reading that the “load” was stolen**

The focus of this analysis is to demonstrate how the meaning-options of this account are brought about to enable the reader to understand the headline as a report about a criminal activity.

There are two issues here. Firstly, it is important to recognise that text is active and headlines have impetus as they provide the reader with instruction about how they read the news story (Sacks, 1992b; Watson, 1996). Secondly, the reader is also active and not merely a passive recipient of information. Readers utilise their common-sense understandings of the conventions associated with (different kinds of) text, together with knowledge of the social world to make sense of and understand text within a given instance. Jalbert referred to this process as the mediated nature of news reports in his analysis of Haitian and Cuban refugees:

“We can speak of news accounts as being *mediated* by those who construct them and by those who ‘consume’ them” (1989:235).

In the case of headline 1 the conventions associated with the text instruct the reader to find the news story. The reader uses common-sense knowledge to interpret the relevance of the categories selected, which enables the reader to understand a possible motive for the actions described in the news report.



As noted above, reading that a crime has taken place is achieved through the selection of the category “vanish”. In this instance, “vanish” is understood as an expression of the motive for removing the “£100,000 load”, and provides a good example of how indexicality can be remedied in order to provide a specific reading; namely that a crime has taken place<sup>25</sup>.

So, how is this reading achieved? Why is the category “vanish” interpreted in this way rather than in terms of a ‘grand conjuring trick’ or other extraordinary event? I suggest that “vanish” is not understood in this way because of an important issue which Sacks talked about in his first lecture in the Spring of 1970, where he discussed the notion of “doing being ordinary” (1992b:215). He noted that people tend to constitute themselves as merely doing ordinary usual things even when they may be understood to be quite extraordinary in nature:

“And it’s really remarkable to see peoples’ efforts to achieve the ‘nothing happened’ sense of really catastrophic events. I’ve been collecting fragments out of newspapers, about hijackings and what the airplane passengers think when a hijacking takes place. The latest one I happened to find goes something like this: “I was walking up towards the front of the airplane and by the cabin I saw the stewardess standing, facing the cabin, and a fellow standing with a gun in her back. And my first thought was he’s showing her the gun, and then I realised that couldn’t be, and then it turned out that he was hijacking the plane” (1992b:220).

Sacks suggested that doing “being ordinary” enables people to know that certain things are going to happen in a certain way. For example, drivers will ordinarily give right of way to a pedestrian on a crossing as this is interpreted as a usual

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<sup>25</sup> The strength of the inferences associated with “vanish” can be observed through selecting an alternative category such as “missing” and may be understood to be associated with something that is lost. “Vanish” on the other hand implies that the action was associated with bizarre and *intentional* actions which invoke inferences about the possible motives of the category involved with making the “load” “vanish”. Selecting “missing” however tends to weaken readings associated with criminal activity.



scene of someone crossing the road. This enables both the driver and the pedestrian not to have to make “each-and every-time decisions” (1992b:221). It is assumed then, that an action or activity is mundane or ordinary. Only if this interpretation is discounted are events understood to be extraordinary. I suggest that this is the case in headline 1, where “vanish” is read as a crime and not as a bizarre incident. So the news report is constituted in an ordinary, mundane, usual manner and is understood as such unless there is reason to discount this initial interpretation.

Reading the category “vanish” in terms of criminal activity is accomplished through understanding that the categories “driver”, “£100,000 load” and “vanish” are drawn from the MCD “transporting goods”. Sacks used membership categorisation devices (MCDs) to mean:

“...any collection of membership categories, containing at least a category, so as to provide, by the use of some rules of application, for the pairing of at least a population member and the categorisation device member. A device is then a collection plus rules of application” (1974:332).

These categories seem to go together through the application of the ‘consistency rule corollary’. Sacks presented several rules of application; the consistency rule states that,

“If some population of persons is being categorised, and if a category from some device’s collection has been used to categorise the first member of the population, then that category of other categories of the same collection *may* be used to categorise further members of the population” (1974:333).

The consistency rule corollary demonstrates the strength of this association between categories as it is a hearer’s maxim:

“It holds: If two or more categories are used to categorise two or more members of some population, and those categories can be heard as categories from the same collection, then: Hear them that way” (1974:333).

The device and rule invite readings that these categories are drawn from the collection “transporting goods”, and in turn enable the reader to gain further information about the “vanishing load”. For instance, commonsensically, we know that objects such as “£100,000 loads” do not move on their own, as “loads” are (valuable)<sup>26</sup> inanimate objects<sup>27</sup>.

Reading the headline in this way implies that someone is responsible for making the “load” “vanish” and encourages the reader to search for possible motives for moving the “load”. Sacks suggested that readers are able to predict such actions through the notion of category-bound-activities (CBAs):

“... I intend to notice that many activities are taken by members to be done by some particular or several particular categories of members where the categories are categories from the membership categorisation device” (1974:335).

Category-bound-activities invoke readings that predict action and, through their associations, suggest potential motives for moving the “load” such as “being employed as a delivery person”, “getting lost”, “borrowing the goods”, or “stealing the goods”.

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<sup>26</sup> The headline tells us that the “load” is valuable, as it is worth “£100,000”. Commonsensically, if the “load” is valuable in terms of its monetary value, this implies that it is desirable. This reading draws upon common-sense knowledge of a capitalist economic system, where typical CBAs include “ownership of valuable objects”, “valuing individual wealth”, and “buying and selling to create profit”. This common-sense knowledge supports readings that a crime has been committed.

<sup>27</sup> The category “vanish” is not read as being drawn from the MCD “magic”. This is important as it alerts the reader to consider the inferences invited from the other categories selected. I suggest in chapter 5 that these inferences, alongside the category “vanish”, are highly significant to reading this event in terms of reading local criminal activity.



Although all of these readings are possible, I suggest that “delivering”, “losing” or “borrowing” the “load” are weaker readings. There are three reasons for this.

First, commonsensically if the “load” had been “delivered” then its whereabouts would be known. Second, if the “load” and “driver” were lost, commonsensically it would still be possible for the “driver” to make contact with the owner of the goods<sup>28</sup>. Third, drawing upon common-sense knowledge of “borrowing” valuable objects, typically the permission of the owner would be sought<sup>29</sup>.

Moreover, drawing upon common-sense knowledge of not gaining permission to move the “load” invites notions of legal and illegal activities. Hence, the activity of moving the “load” without the owner’s permission is read as an illegal activity; it is therefore interpreted as likely to be theft, particularly as the “load” was worth “£100,000”. This tends to downgrade readings that the “load” was delivered, lost or borrowed, and tends to upgrade readings that the “load” was (potentially) stolen<sup>30</sup>.

It can be seen that adopting an analytical stance which attends to the relevance of category selection, rather than a “decontextualised model of categorisation analysis” (Eglin and Hester, 1997:12)<sup>31</sup>, provides a means to understand how the

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<sup>28</sup> The duties associated with a “driver” employed to deliver goods (through associated CBAs) are understood to include the reporting of accidents, damage to goods or reporting untoward circumstances. Again, the usefulness of CBAs to the analysis can be observed and serve to explain how the reader is able to predict the occurrence of particular activities and read motive and inference.

<sup>29</sup> This is a weak reading as commonsensically people typically ask permission to borrow objects, particularly if they are extremely valuable.

<sup>30</sup> Jayyusi (1984) noted the need to focus upon the relevance of categories selected and their associated inferences, where categories are embedded and occasioned.

<sup>31</sup> Refer to chapter 1 section 1.1 for details.



interaction was achieved as a practical action. In this instance, the analysis shows how the category “vanish” predisposes the reader to interpret the headline as a report about a crime. This approach avoids presumption about the pre-determined nature of newspaper headlines or interpretation of descriptors, and demonstrates how categories operate together.

Reading crime does not rely upon the selection of a single category, collection or rule, as this would deny the work undertaken by the reader who adheres to the task or to the relevance of the categories selected. Deflecting away from the reader’s interactional work would merely offer the analyst a gloss and not provide the detailed workings of culture in society. As Sacks suggested, undertaking laborious observations gives,

“...some sense, right off, of the fine power of a culture. It does not, so to speak, merely fill brains in roughly the same way, it fills them so that they are alike in fine detail” (1974:332).

### **3.4. Analysis of Headline 2 “Clergyman awakes to find man with knife standing over him ROBBERY IN A RAILWAY CARRIAGE”**

#### **3.4.1. Reading that the “clergyman” was robbed by the “man with knife”**

The analysis that follows considers two different aspects of headline 2. Firstly, it can be observed that two different formats are present within the headline. The first part of the sentence is written in lower case and the latter part in capitals. The significance of using different formats will be discussed in reference to the instruction that this provides for the reader of the text, namely to read that these events are sequential. Secondly, and related to the use of two different formats, the reader is able to interpret the headline as a news story depicting a “clergyman” as the victim of “robbery”.

Three main issues arise in relation to the format of the text. Firstly, it can be observed that the headline is read as a whole rather than as two separate elements; where the components are read as linked together and represents a sequence of events. This was noted by Sacks in his famous analysis of a child's story, "The baby cried. The mommy picked it up".

"I take it we hear two sentences. Call the first  $S_1$  and the second  $S_2$ ; the first reports an occurrence  $O_1$  and the second reports an occurrence  $O_2$ . Now, I take it we hear that as  $S_2$  follows  $S_1$ , so  $O_2$  follows  $O_1$ .... We hear that  $O_2$  occurs because of  $O_1$ : i.e., the explanation for  $O_2$  occurring is that  $O_1$  did" (1974: 330).

The format therefore instructs the reader to recognise the linkage between the categories selected, where the "standing over with a knife" happened first and then consequently a "robbery" was undertaken. In this way, the second part of the sentence explains the first.

The second observation is that the capitalised part of the sentence selects a category, which can be read as being drawn from the MCD "criminal activity"<sup>32</sup>. Focusing on the interface between the reader and the text raises the question about how the reader interprets this instruction. I suggest that the reader understands the description as a story rather than an advertisement, serial or letter (Anderson and Sharrock, 1979), and moreover that it should be read as a *news story*.

Lastly, and this is linked to the former point, the use of capitals operates to arouse reader's' curiosities and encourages them to read the accompanying article. Lee noted that headlines often provide the reader with the "angle" of the story.

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<sup>32</sup> Category selection must be considered in relation to its relevance to other categories. For instance, the phrase daylight robbery is commonsensically not referring to literal robbery but displays disapproval about the price of a particular consumer good.



"From the heading I was able to anticipate that the story was probably a rape story. But more than that: I was able to anticipate that it was not *just* a rape story but a story that had a certain 'angle' or 'slant' and that this 'angle' or 'slant' was related to its tellability as a story" (1984:69).

In the case of headline 2, the reader is able to recognise the “angle” of the article accompanying the headline. In this way, using capitals gains the readers’ attention and alerts them that this news story is about crime.

Reading that this is a report about crime is also tied to category selection<sup>33</sup>. It is possible to recognise that this is a report about events where a “man robbed” a “clergyman” with a “knife” and that this is a serious crime. This reading is achieved through the selection of the categories “clergyman”, “man with knife”, “robbery”, “standing over”, “him”, and “railway carriage”. The category “robbery” can be read to be an illegal activity, drawing from what we commonsensically know about legal and illegal activities through our everyday mundane experiences. “Robbery” is understood as being a CBA of the MCD “criminal activity”,<sup>34</sup>.

Furthermore, the category “robbery” invites the reader to search for a possible category that may have undertaken this activity. In this way, the MCD “criminal activity” provides the reader with much information about probable categories that may be read as the “robber” – such as “man with knife” – through the application of the consistency rule.

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<sup>33</sup> These two mechanisms (format and category selection) operate together to strengthen reading of criminal activity.

<sup>34</sup> Sacks (1992a:250) noted that CBAs could inform the reader of the possible MCD associated with this category. The data that Sacks drew upon is a discussion about homosexuality and relationship problems. These issues are introduced through the selection of the category “hairstylist”, where “hairstylist” is read as a CBA of the MCD “homosexual”.



It is important to note that this is not a definitive association as other readings are always possible. For instance, the “man with knife” in a “railway carriage” may be undertaking mundane CBAs such as “peeling an apple” or “sharpening a pencil”. These types of activities are commonsensically associated with legitimate and mundane ways of using a “knife” on a train.

However, reading the headline in this way is weaker due to the selection of “standing over” and “him” in association with the “man with knife” and the sequential nature of the events that occurred. Through the application of the consistency rule, the “man with knife” is read as not undertaking mundane activities, but as using the “knife” as a weapon to aid a “robbery”. The headline tells us that it is the “man with knife” doing the “standing over” and not the “clergyman” or some other, as yet, unknown category on several counts. Firstly, using the pronoun “him” informs the reader to understand the category “him” as the “clergyman”<sup>35</sup>. Secondly, these categories are linked through their proximity<sup>36</sup>. Thirdly, “standing over” someone with a “knife” is read as a CBA of the category “robber”. Drawing upon common-sense notions of activities associated with a “man with knife standing over” someone, CBAs may include

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<sup>35</sup> Sacks noted that pronouns are often used to indicate that you are referring to the person mentioned earlier:

“Nouns referring to the same person are not simply repeated directly; they are replaced with pronouns... If you want to indicate that what you are referring to is that identification of the person that you’ve just used, ‘you’ or ‘I’ probably will not work. But, ‘he’ may well specifically do the job of linking the pronoun and a noun without causing any trouble...” (1992a:712).

<sup>36</sup> Note the impact on the reading if “standing over” is relocated in the revised headline, **“Clergyman awakes standing over man with knife. Robbery in a railway carriage”**. Now, it is possible to read that the “clergyman” as opposed to the “man” is undertaking the activity of “standing over” with knife.

“threatening violence”, “aggressive behaviour”, “potentially undertaking crime”, “unpredictable behaviour”, and “guarding or protecting someone”. In this case, the notion of guarding is less probable as a result of the powerful association between “robbery” and “man with knife”. Also, drawing upon common-sense knowledge about the manner in which personal protection is undertaken in this country and the type of person requiring this service, “standing over” as a protective activity is a weaker reading. In the case of headline 2, the reader is able to understand that the category “person with knife standing over” is associated with the MCD “potential perpetrator of crime”<sup>37</sup>.

The category “railway carriage” also supports this reading as it draws upon common-sense knowledge about the kinds of activities undertaken in this situation, such as “travelling from place to place”, “being a passenger”, “sleeping”, “eating a snack”, or “reading”. In this sense, both the “clergyman” and the “man with knife” are drawn from the MCD “passenger”. However, the headline tells us that the “man” is “standing over” the “clergyman” with a “knife” and this is incongruent with everyday notions of being a passenger on a train<sup>38 39</sup>.

The category “passenger” is downgraded, therefore, in the case of the “man with knife”. Reading headline 2 in this way implies that the “man with knife” had other reasons for undertaking a journey, such as that he may have undertaken a

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<sup>37</sup> To upgrade the notion of the category “man with knife standing over” being associated with protection, other categories would need to be selected. For example, the hypothetical newspaper headline “**Man with knife standing over Prince**” may be read as aligned to a protective activity.

<sup>38</sup> I am not suggesting that “robberies” do not take place whilst travelling on a train; we are all too familiar with the reporting of this type of crime. My point is that the activity of “standing over” someone “with a knife” is not typically associated with the category “passenger”.

<sup>39</sup> Commonsensically, “standing over” someone in rush hour would be read as mundane activity. The issue here is that the reader is able to understand that the “man” is “standing over” with a “knife”, which downgrades readings associated with passengers travelling in the rush hour.



“robbery” and this downgrades his status as a “passenger”. The categories “man with knife” and “standing over him” are drawn from the same MCD “potential perpetrator of a crime” through the application of the consistency rule and associated CBAs such as “acting suspiciously”, “watching other passengers”, and “moving around the carriage”.

Nevertheless, this explanation does not adequately demonstrate how “threatening” is interpreted as a “robbery”. The consistency rule, together with the format of the headline, upgrades the MCD “potential perpetrator of a crime” to a reading where “man with knife” is also drawn from the MCD “criminal activity”, which links the categories “man with knife” and “robbery” together.

Furthermore, the “clergyman” is read as having been less likely to have undertaken the “robbery” through drawing upon common-sense understandings of a clergyman’s duties, responsibilities and obligations, and therefore is drawn from the MCD “religious leader” or the MCD “Christian”. The “clergyman” is understood to undertake duties concerned with his parishioners and implies that the “clergyman” is a (more than normally) moral person who undertakes activities for the good of others. Commonsensically, these types of duties and responsibilities would not normally be associated with a person who would undertake a “robbery”<sup>40</sup> and therefore the “clergyman” represents the “victim of a crime”, rather than the “perpetrator of a crime”.

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<sup>40</sup> Note, that I am not suggesting that “robberies” can not be undertaken by “clergymen”; merely that if this were the case, then a “category modifier” (Sacks 1992a:44) such as “crooked clergyman” would be selected, and it would be read to be a notable event. In this headline, however, a “category modifier” has not been selected and therefore the reader understands that some other category has undertaken the “robbery”.



The category “victim of a robbery” is read as inextricably linked to the category “perpetrator of a robbery”. Sacks referred to such groupings as standard relational pairs (SRPs) which are drawn from the “collection R” which is described as a collection of paired relational categories,

“that constitute a locus for a set of rights and obligations concerning the activity of giving help” (1972:37).

In this way, the reader is able to understand that the “victim” and the “perpetrator” of the crime are associated through the SRP “victim of a crime/perpetrator of a crime” and are linked together in a standardised routine way. The routine nature of this association occurs not through a team-like quality, but through its linkage with the crime. Consequently, the oppositional pair “clergyman” and “robber” are interpreted as complementary, as both are bound by the activity, rather than by an allegiance to giving support or help. Watson similarly noted the use of oppositionally related pairs in his analysis of police interrogation interviews, where categories were “conjoined by the deed described as murder” (1983:35).

So, commonsensically, where there is a “victim of a robbery”, there is also a “perpetrator of a robbery”. Drawing upon CBAs typically associated with the category “robber” – that may include “stealing”, “possible violence”, and “threatening behaviour” – invites readings that the “man with knife” was doing the stealing. Hence, the consistency rule, together with the SRP, makes it possible to understand that “clergyman” and “man with knife” belong to the same MCD “parties to a robbery”.

The SRP “perpetrator of a crime/victim of a crime” is highly significant to reading crime, and provides the reader with the “slant” of the headline. In this sense, the

SRP is a strong device, which does much work to make the headline into a story about crime. Furthermore, it explains how the “clergyman” is viewed as an innocent “victim of a crime” who is going about his daily business when he is robbed at knifepoint.

The practical production of intelligibility by society members, which focuses on how the production of sense operates, orientates the analysis towards members’ resources to undertake practical action within everyday life. The consequence of this approach is the avoidance of invalid and unreliable findings<sup>41</sup>. It has been shown that merely focusing on a category readily interpreted as drawn from criminal activity offers an incomplete interpretation of how the reader understands the text to be a news story about criminal activity. Members’ resources provide both the tools and solutions to many of the analyst’s problems, such as the maintenance and preservation of (real) phenomena and the macro/micro divide.

### **3.5. Analysis of Headline 3 “Drug pusher threatens mother with knife”**

#### **3.5.1. Reading that the “mother” is the victim of a drug related crime**

For this headline, there are two aspects that need to be considered; the formatting issue of where the headline appears in the newspaper; and the relevance of category selection in relation to construction of a possible motive for the crime.

There is a noticeable similarity between headlines 2 and 3. For example, both headlines select the category “with knife” which can be read as linked with the

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<sup>41</sup> Refer to chapter 1 section 1.2.2 for a full discussion of reliability and validity in relation to this data.

reported crime. This observation is of interest as the newspapers are markedly different in terms of readership and circulation<sup>42</sup>.

Headline 3 differs from headlines 1 and 2, as it does not appear on page 1 of the newspaper. I suggest that appearing on page 9 of the newspaper may indicate to the reader that this news story is either of less importance than stories presented earlier in the newspaper<sup>43</sup>, or that this may be an additional item about a story covered previously. The placement of the headline is significant and works together with category selection to encourage readings that interpret the headline as another story about drug-related crime, indicating the proliferation of these sorts of incidents.

The major analytic interest in headline 3 is how the categories selected display the motive of the criminal activity undertaken, and how this relates to reading a newspaper headline. I suggest that identifying a (probable) motive presents readers with the “slant” (Lee, 1984:69) of the story and thereby enables them to make sense of the description as a report about crime:

“... not all deeds ‘require’ the specific provision of motive; typically, only those deeds which appear to members to be untoward, puzzling, deviant, bizarre or to comprise some kind of breach seem to be treated as “specially accountable” in this way” (Watson, 1983:32).

The categories selected in headline 3 tell the reader that a “mother”<sup>44</sup> is

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<sup>42</sup> I will consider the significance of this issue further in the next section of this chapter.

<sup>43</sup> Drawing upon common-sense knowledge of producing and editing newspaper items, the reader can understand that priority is given to items that are viewed as particularly significant in order to encourage the reader of the headline to purchase the newspaper.

<sup>44</sup> In the next chapter I consider how the selection of “mother” supports inferences that the activities undertaken are associated with a breach in morality. This is not to suggest that the work that “mother” does here is not important, but serves as an attempt to further develop the analysis later in the thesis and present arguments as clearly as possible for the reader.



“threatened with” a “knife”. This can be understood as representing a serious crime, where a person is having her life threatened by a “drug pusher”, thus ascribing this situation as dangerous and frightening.

One of the main procedures used to imply motive is the selection of the category “drug pusher”. As a starting point, it can be observed that the headline does not identify the “victim” or the “offender” of the crime per se. Instead, this is gained inferentially through the selection of the central categories “drug pusher” and “mother”. As in the previous headline, the victim and the perpetrator of the crime are described through the selection of a single category, where this is sufficient for the purpose of this interaction. Sacks called this the economy rule:

“It holds: A single category from any membership categorisation device can be referentially adequate” (1992a: 46).

Furthermore, Watson in his analysis of police interrogations noted that the,

“...explicit introduction of a single membership category is adequate to provide a motive for a given deed” (1983:33).

Together these categories are therefore inferentially rich, and imply a motive for the criminal activity and a means for identifying the “victim” and “perpetrator”.

The categorisation “drug pusher” is understood as conventionally tied to a number of typical activities such as “buying and selling drugs for profit”, “having a drug network”, “possibly being involved in other criminal activities”, “corruption of others”, and “a dishonest lifestyle”<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, these CBAs invoke readings that “drug pusher” is drawn from the MCD “criminal activity”, in turn invoking

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<sup>45</sup> I am not suggesting that there is a definitive interpretation of the category “drug pusher”; merely that in this instance this is the most likely reading. For instance, a medical doctor could be referred to as a “drug pusher” or for that matter a coffee bar owner. In this case, however there are few inferences to suggest that this category should be read in either of these ways.

notions of illegal activity. The headline tells the reader that the “drug pusher” undertook the “threatening with knife”, which through the application of the consistency rule is also understood in terms of criminal activity.

However, these devices and rules do not explicate the link between the categories “mother” and “drug pusher”, where both are somehow involved in the events that took place. As with headline 2, common-sense understandings of SRPs within “criminal activities” invoke readings that there is a “perpetrator of a crime” and a “victim of a crime”. In this case, the “mother” represents the “victim” while the “drug pusher” represents the “perpetrator” and both are drawn from the MCD “parties to a crime”. The oppositional categories form a SRP, through their association with the deed, and are drawn from the same MCD “parties to a crime”. The SRP device is therefore important to the overall reading of the headline as it provides a motive for these otherwise incongruent categories to be read as being linked together.

The oppositional category “victim of a crime/perpetrator of a crime” operates in a similar manner to headline 2. The reader is instructed to read that the two parties are co-joined by the criminal activity, which in this case is understood as a drug-related crime.

At first hand, headline 3 may have appeared to be obvious, providing limited potential for interesting findings. As noted earlier, it is not possible to decide these matters in a presumptive manner, as it is in the fine grains that organisation of interaction takes place. The analysis of headline 3 raises an important

analytical point; the consideration of the relevance and orientation of category selection avoids a mechanistic interpretation of MCA and highlights that again the analytic purpose rests on explication of society members' orderly sense-making abilities and resources.

### **3.6. Analysis of Headline 4: "Pregnant mum stabbed and sister threatened DRUGS PUSHERS IN CROSS-BORDER TERROR"**

#### **3.6.1. How the drug related crime is constituted as "cross-border" terrorism**

One of the first things to notice about headline 4 is that it reported the same story as headline 3. There are several notable features that differ in the reporting of this story. First, headline 4 occurs in a different newspaper. Second, it appears on page 1 of the newspaper. Third, it appears six days earlier than headline 3.

Fourth, the format used is the same as headline 2, where the initial parts of the description are presented in lower case and the latter part uses capitals. Fifth, the headline has a highly complex nature and includes the selection of many different categories. Lastly, the reader is able to understand the news story as a report of criminal activity motivated by terrorism, which is achieved through category selection and the presentation of the headline.

Let us first consider the significance of how the headline has been presented and then return to the impact of category selection.

The reporting of this news item in two different local newspapers has several consequences. For instance, it can be assumed that the reported incident is highly



relevant to the local community and that the readers of each newspaper are provided with different versions of the incident<sup>46</sup>.

This observation reiterates an important analytical point within this analysis; whether the news stories are accurate presentations of the reported incident, and/or whether the headlines are accurate presentations of the news stories are not of any consequence.

The focus is upon making visible the orderly features of categorisation and the accomplishment of (a particular form of) social interaction. In this way, the analysis neatly side-steps concerns with accuracy and truthfulness in favour of displaying local understanding of description-in-use. As Moerman put it:

“...the ‘truth’ or ‘objective correctness’ of an identification is never sufficient to explain its use” (1974:61).

Where the story appears in the newspaper is likely to be linked to the length of time since the event occurred and provides the reader with information about the tellability of the story.

Sacks noted that there is a relationship between the tellability<sup>47</sup> of the story and the time frame of the event being described. In his data, the fact that the car crash occurred yesterday is highly relevant:

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<sup>46</sup> This draws upon common-sense knowledge of the consumption of newspapers, whereby society members tend to purchase the same newspaper and rarely consult alternative sources of information to corroborate the truthfulness of the report.

<sup>47</sup> The notion of tellability is useful and may provide a possible reason for why the same news item appeared on different pages in the newspapers. This will be pursued further in chapter 4.

“The constraints on mentioning something can be rather severe, such that in talking of it today, it’s only that it happened yesterday, or the day before yesterday, or some day formulatable by reference to today – and within very narrow limits – that it is mentioned at all” (1992b:15).

The use of capitals in the latter part of the headline also serves as a means to gain the interest of the reader and therefore implies that this is a particularly important news item.

It can be observed that headline 4 is a good example of a complex combinational use of membership categories, where the selection of category “cross-border terror” is used to convey the transformation of the category to “terrorist”, thus invoking the disjunctive pair “freedom fighter/terrorist”. Let us unpack these two issues here before proceeding with the analysis.

This headline is constructed atypically as it does not comply with the economy rule. In this instance a single category is not referentially adequate and requires the selection of further categories which are mapped onto each other or transformed into alternative identifications.

Watson (1983) documented this transformation process in his paper focusing on the presentation of victims and offenders within police interrogations, where mapping categories served to provide motive(s) (such as racial hatred) for the offences. It can be observed that a similar mechanism was utilised in the complex construction of headline 4<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> In Jayyusi’s (1984) book *Categorisation and the moral order* there is reference to the transformation of categories, where possible inferences may be deleted, transferred or altered from one category to another, through a process of reformulation of category relevance.

The other issue relates to the term ‘disjunctive pairs’. This term is used to indicate that the categories, activities or events selected about a person are asymmetrical and conflicting (Coulter, 1979; Jayyusi, 1984; Jalbert, 1989; Lepper, 2000). Disjunctive categories represent a means of providing different and often opposing characterisations about the same person. Coulter suggested that disjunctive pairs operate:

“...at the level of the social organisation of their use. We can speak of the categories “belief” and “knowledge” as forming a *disjunctive category-pair*... Where one part of these pairs is invoked to characterise some phenomena seriously, *the speaker’s belief-commitment may be inferred, and the structure of subsequent discourse may be managed in terms provided for by the programmatic relevance of the disjunctive category-pair relationship*” (1979:181).

I suggest that the category “cross-border terror” is central to the headline and invokes readings associated with the disjunctive pair “freedom fighter/terrorist”. Thus, the “perpetrators of the crime” can be read to be extremely dangerous “drugs-pushing terrorists” that “stab” and “threaten” women with families, who are going about their routine everyday lives. The selection of the category "cross-border terror" is significant as it enables the reader to infer co-joined motives which are linked to inferences about “terrorist” activity.

This enables the reader to understand the significance of the crime being drug-related and the reason for “cross-border” movement. "Cross-border terror" is therefore pivotal within this headline and enables the reader to understand the headline as a news story. The analysis that follows will consider how the reader is able to make the headline intelligible and will draw upon the analysis from headline 3<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> Here, I am not suggesting an abandonment of orientating to the indexical occasioned relevance of category selection; I merely wish to avoid repetition for the reader of the thesis.



As a starting point, let us take a step back and consider how the reader is able to understand that the "drugs pushers" were responsible for "stabbing" the "pregnant mum" and "threatening" her "sister".

The selection of the CBAs "stabbed" and "threatened" guide the reader to search for potential categories that may undertake these types of activities. In this way, CBAs can inform the reader of the possible MCD of the category associated with these activities.

Sacks stated that this was possible through a hearer's maxim associated with CBAs:

"If a category-bound activity is asserted to have been done by a member of some category where, if that category is ambiguous (i.e., is a member of at least two different devices) but where, at least for one of those devices, the asserted activity is category bound to the given category, then hear that *at least* the category from the device to which it is bound is being asserted to hold" (1974:337).

The selection of the categories "stabbed" and "threatened" invokes the MCD "criminal activity". The categorisation "drugs pushers" is also interpreted as a collection from the MCD "criminal activity" through the application of the consistency rule. Drawing upon common-sense knowledge about legal and illegal activities, where "stabbing" can be understood as "an act of violence", "an act of self defence" or "an intention to kill" and could potentially incur legal intervention, the reader is left in little doubt that the "drugs pushers" undertook the "stabbing" and "threatening".

As a result, the "drugs pushers" are understood to be the "perpetrators of the crime" and this implies a possible motive for the stabbing; that is, this is a drug-

related crime rather than an unprovoked attack. Moreover, this category invites the reader to invoke the oppositional pair “victims/perpetrators” forming the SRP “victims of crime/perpetrators of crime”, which operates in a similar way to headlines 2 and 3.

A point of analytical interest is that the oppositional pairs are interpreted as containing two members (or more<sup>50</sup>). This reading is achieved through the selection of a plural associated with the “drugs pushers”, and through reading that both the “pregnant mum” and the “sister” were “victims of the crime”. The duplicative organisation of the category “drugs pushers” enables the reader to understand that they “work together” as a team-like unit<sup>51</sup> or in other words there is a form of interdependence that co-exists between category members. In this way, it is possible to “predict” actions (Drew), where the “threat” is read in terms of a “victim” either being “stabbed” or subjected to some other violent activities.

“Notice that the attribution of activities in this way can work not only as *prescriptions* (to contrast what some group is observed to be doing with what it *should* be doing, for instance when imputing disloyalty), but also *prediction*: the independence of categories in a unit may be invoked to predict that an action which is asserted to be done by incumbents of one or some categories defining a unit (or device) will also be, or have been, done by persons identified in other categories from that same unit” (Drew, 1978:15).

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<sup>50</sup> In the case of the “victims of the crime”, it is possible to read that this includes the “sister” and the “pregnant mum”. However, with the “drugs pushers” the exact number is less clear, as they form a general category. I suggest that reading that there are two is more probable, as otherwise an additional category may have been selected to instruct the reader of the imbalance of the situation. Again, this draws upon common-sense knowledge of constructing a news item where a disproportionate number of victims to offenders would be an important issue.

<sup>51</sup> Sacks suggested that categories can be read to go together, or are duplicatively organised:

“When a device is used on a population, what is done is to take its categories, treat the set of categories as defining a unit, and place members of the population into cases of unit. If a population is so treated and is then counted, one counts not numbers of daddies, numbers of mommies, and numbers of babies but numbers of families – numbers of ‘whole families,’ numbers of ‘families without fathers’” (1972:334).



The notion of being able to make "predictions" about the actions of a category, in conjunction with the consistency rule, is extremely useful and provides a convincing explanation<sup>52</sup> of the "threat" being issued by the (same) "drugs pushers" and that the "threat" was violent and possibly could involve being "stabbed". Nevertheless, reading the actions merely in terms of this being a drug-related crime does not account for the inference that this was an extreme incident. If this headline was only describing a drug-related crime, this could have been achieved through the application of the economy rule. For instance, the headline **"Pregnant mum stabbed and sister threatened by drug pushers"** brings about this reading. These categories operate both together and separately to construct a motive for the "cross-border" movement and enable the reader to assume that this is a report about terrorist activity<sup>53</sup>.

Let us turn to how the categories "terror" and "cross-border" become transformed into "cross-border terror". On inspection, it can be observed that "terror" is situated next to the category "cross-border" and closer to the category "drugs pushers" than to either the "pregnant mum" or the "sister". The proximity of the categories links "terror" to the categories "drugs pushers" and to the category "cross-border"<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> The consistency rule is also a possible explanation, but as noted earlier this is a weak device on its own and in this case "prediction", together with duplicative organisation, provides a more robust account of this reading.

<sup>53</sup> The category "terror" also enables the reader to understand that this is an extremely horrific crime. This issue is discussed in chapter 4 where the crime is considered in terms of a breach of morality.

<sup>54</sup> For instance, let us note the outcome of relocating "terror" whereby the headline would read **"Terror of pregnant mum stabbed and sister threatened Drugs pushers in cross-border incident"**. In this headline, "terror" is commonsensically read as a CBA of being a "victim of crime".



This association transforms these categories into “cross-border terror”. The inferences associated with the “drugs pushers” and “cross–border” are downgraded and this in turn upgrades the attributes associated with the “cross-border terror” of the incident, thus implying that there is an association with terrorist activity.

Mazeland, Huisman and Schasfoort noted the use of category transition as an “up-scaling operation” (1995:279) whilst studying the negotiation of categories during travel agent telephone calls. The transformation is crucial to the overall reading of headline 4, and provides an explanation as to why the “drugs pushers” acted in such an extreme manner and how the “drugs pushers” are understood to be terrorists.

“Cross-border terror” is understood as being associated with illegal activity through the application of the consistency rule, where “drug pushing”, “stabbing” and “threatening” are all associated with illegal activity. “Cross-border terror” invokes a notion of terrorist activity by drawing from common-sense notions of the type of activities associated with “cross-border”, “illegal” and “terrifying” actions. Typical CBAs may include activities such as “drug trafficking”, “harming innocent people”, “carrying out crime across the border”, and “undertaking extreme actions”. The reader is able to understand that the “perpetrators of the crime” are “drugs pushers” through understanding the possible motive, and to see that the crime was (part of) terrorist activity.

As noted earlier, this news item was reported in another newspaper, six days later, on a different page and selecting alternative categories. The differences in coverage and the emphasis on “terrorist activity” in headline 4, indicate that the categories selected “presuppose certain disjunctive belief-commitments” (Jalbert 1989:240). This obviously has a bearing upon the interpretation of the headline by the reader. Reading activities associated with the disjunctive pair “freedom fighter/ terrorist” provides the reader with further instructions about how to read this headline as terrorism. Jalbert used this analytical tool to identify the uncritical ascription of categories by news reporters to the “ideological enterprise” (1989:245). However, this approach tends to undermine the ethnomethodological stance of the research<sup>55</sup>, and therefore I use this tool to unveil the intelligibility of the selection of disjunctive pairs for the reader<sup>56</sup>.

The motive for “crossing the border” is also linked to “terrorism”, and strengthens readings associated with the transformation of “cross-border” to “cross-border terror”. For instance, “cross-border” enables the reader to draw upon common-sense notions of the types of situations where people may cross a border. These could include examples such as "travelling", "being on holiday", "living close to

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<sup>55</sup> There are occasions when Jalbert’s discussions seem overly concerned with ideology at the expense of more central ethnomethodological concerns. For example, in his discussion about how the reader understands the impact of the news report:

“What such reasoning procedures can yield for the uninformed reader/listener/viewer is a tendency to accept *face value* what is being presented and a predisposition to adopt the “presented facts” as “the facts” (1989:243).

I suggest that this leans towards an assumption that the reader/society members are “cultural dopes” (Garfinkel, 1967:191) rather than skilful interpreters of the orderly properties of social interaction.

<sup>56</sup> This issue will be a central concern in chapter 5, where a discussion about locality develops, raising the analytic concern about use of local common-sense knowledge and how it is utilised to make sense of these newspaper headlines.

the border of two countries", "visiting someone", "being at war", or "being an asylum seeker". Drawing upon these common-sense notions can inform the reader of the possible MCD of the category associated with these activities such as the collection "people that travel across a border".

This MCD is associated with movement between different countries.

Furthermore, "crossing the border" is read as being associated with either mundane legal activities (e.g. going on holiday) or illegal activities such as travelling without official papers or smuggling goods. The activity of "crossing a border" is associated with "dealing with officials", whereby the official could be involved in activities such as "checking passports", "asking the purpose of the journey", "searching people or property", "identifying legal and illegal activity" and "arresting people".

There is some ambiguity about whether it was the "victims" or the "perpetrators of crime" that undertook the "crossing the border". Note that the ambiguity itself is not the important issue; what is relevant is the assessment of the legitimacy of the journey.

I suggest that reading the motive for the movement is extremely relevant to the reader, where it is less likely to be undertaken by the "victims" than the "perpetrators of the crime".

Drawing upon common-sense notions of CBAs associated with the category "terrorist" these would include actions such as "arms deals", "punishment



beatings”, “violence”, “criminal activities”, “setting bombs”, “drug trafficking”, and “anti social behaviour”<sup>57</sup>. Many of these activities invoke a notion of movement from one area to another. Despite the ambiguity about the direction of the movement, it is more likely to be the “terrorists” who are “crossing the border” as the activities that they are associated with commonsensically demand a greater degree of movement.

All that remains of this chapter is to present a brief comparative analysis of the devices and rules which make the headlines intelligible as stories about crime. The section that follows therefore acts as a summary, and provides analytical direction for the next chapter.

### **3.7. A comparative analysis**

Throughout the analysis of the headlines it has become apparent that there are some common features associated with the practical action of reading criminal activity. I use the term common features in a general way to indicate similarity rather than a fixed prearranged use of devices and rules. In this spirit it can be noted that some devices and rules are used regularly within headlines. For example, all of the headlines provide the reader with motives for the activities being reported and use MCDs, CBAs and the consistency rule.

Most of the headlines use oppositional pairs, the SRP “victim/perpetrator”, the economy rule, and most appear on page 1 of the newspapers. Less frequent

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<sup>57</sup> An interesting point to note is that if the category selection had been “cross-border” this activity may have been interpreted as part of everyday life, where everyday activities such as “cross-border shopping” and “cross-border football matches” take place.

features include the use of capitals, and coverage in two different newspapers. The consistency rule corollary, category transformation, and disjunctive pairs occur in only one of the headlines. Similarly, only one of the headlines appears on page 9, rather than on the front of the newspaper.

Headline 1 had quite a different structure from the other three. A possible reason for this is because the story was about property and not a victim of a crime. The news story was heavily dependent upon the selection of the category “vanish”. In this way, “vanish” provided the reader with inferences about criminal activity, and implied that this was not a severe crime.

Headlines 2, 3 and 4 invoked oppositional pairs and the SRP “victim/perpetrator”. The headlines provided the reader with CBAs linked to illegal/criminal activities through the explicit or implicit selection of the category “knife”. This is analytically interesting as the papers have different styles, distributions, circulation times and a dissimilar readership. This line of enquiry will be pursued in later chapters when looking at other local newspaper headlines.

On reading headlines 2, 3 and 4, the reader is able to understand that some victims are interpreted as more innocent, or more unfortunate, than the others. For instance, headline 4 presents a story where the victim’s whole family is being attacked, including her unborn child. The notion of a hierarchy of victims draws upon our common-sense knowledge of the severity of crimes, where some crimes are viewed as more contemptible than others. Again, this line of inquiry will be pursued in the analysis that follows.

The last observation is in relation to headline 3; category selection was minimal and yet still enabled the reader to invoke the SRP “victim/perpetrator”. Headline 3 did not present the reader with a puzzle or select categories that were ambiguous. Why? What is being achieved within this social interaction by not creating ambiguity? How does this impact on the meaning-options for the reader? Again, these lines of inquiry will be pursued in chapters that follow. The next chapter contains a discussion about morality and its linkage to reading criminal activity.



## Chapter 4

### **4. Reading crime and morality**

In the previous chapter I showed how headlines 3 and 4 were understood to relate to a drug-related crime and terrorist activity respectively. These headlines reported the same incident and therefore they present an interesting case for further analysis.

In this chapter I suggest that the reader pays close attention to moral implications associated with the categories selected in the newspaper headlines. Reading morality enables the reader to characterise the categories selected and implies typical actions that may be undertaken. Focusing on the practical action of reading morality clarifies how the reader is able to understand the relevance of category selection. In this way, it is possible to demonstrate how activities, actions and categories are made intelligible through practical reasoning; where inferential work may happen to bring about readings that characterise a category as deviant<sup>58</sup>. As Pollner noted,

“... common-sense is an integral part of the deviant-making enterprise”  
(1974, 27),

where the deviant character of an act is not intrinsic to the act but is constituted by the response to the activity.

McHugh (1970) has described the mechanism of Pollner's "deviant-making enterprise". McHugh treats deviance in terms of the relationship between

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<sup>58</sup> Chapter 2 discusses these issues in greater depth. See section 2.4 for details.

conventionality<sup>59</sup> and theoreticity<sup>60</sup> of acts, where deviance is not identified in its effect but through the assessment of the act using common-sense rules:

“Deviance is thus the expression of a process in which behaviour is assessed as conventional (or not) and then theoretic (or not). With regard to conventionality, to be deviant the behaviour requires that it be deemed unnecessary - not accidental, coerced, or miraculous. When the conventionality contingency is realised, the equivalent of a charge has been made. The charge then sticks or not depending on whether the actor is treated as a theoretic or practical actor” (1970:170).

The analysis that follows is in keeping with these notions and is therefore concerned with demonstrating how members of society come to understand categories selected as deviant and/or immoral.

The first analytical aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how morality operates *in situ*, revealing the interactional logic of moral ascription within these headlines. In this way, I show that the moral features of description are publicly available, visibly displayed, members’ resources, which enable judgement, evaluation and inferences to be produced and understood.

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<sup>59</sup> McHugh's use of the term conventionality refers to not just the rule, but whether the rule can be followed and followed in this given situation; in McHugh's words the responsibility criteria of “it might have been otherwise” (1970:152). Conventionality also implies that a charge of deviance is made, which can either be refuted or accepted on the grounds of (interpretative) common-sense rules.

“A deviant act is a conventional act, whence it is deemed that the conditions of failure are not present, and thus that the act under question was not inevitable” (1970:163).

<sup>60</sup> The second criterion of responsibility for deviance is that of theoreticity which distinguishes between theoretic action and practical action. The former is where actors know what they are doing in terms of some rule or criterion but in the case of practical action the actors do not know what they are doing for some reason or other:

“To be a theoretic actor, thus is ‘not merely to satisfy criteria, but to apply them’” (1970:168).

In this way, intent is vital to the charge of deviance.

The second aim is to provide a comparative analysis to identify if morality operates in the same way or differently within these headlines, and to consider the analytical consequences of these findings.

#### **4.1. The interactional logic of moral ascription and description: reading morality in headlines 3 and 4**

As outlined in chapter 2, the notion of morality is not viewed as a social fact, typical of Durkheim's methodological approach to sociological study. Moral concepts are constituted in and through their use whilst members of society conduct their everyday lives. The characterisation of a category as deviant is the result of practical reasoning and practical action, rather than because an activity is pre-determined to be deviant. Acts are therefore not intrinsically deviant, but are constituted as such, as Pollner noted,

“...deviance is the gloss for its own accomplishment” (1974:35).

Deviance is typically a moral matter, open to assessment through the utilisation of common-sense reasoning. However, it is important to note that purportedly immoral acts may not be deemed as deviant. For instance, if actors are not deemed responsible for their actions due to their mental health or age or if there is some circumstance where the rule could not be followed (McHugh, 1970).

Equally, it can not be assumed that all news stories about crime will be read in terms of breaches of morality. Commonsensically, the reporting of crime is often not linked to such breaches, and crimes are not always understood as immoral acts. For example, non-payment of council tax or non-payments of parking fines are understood to be illegal activities. However, they may not be interpreted as



immoral since they are concerned with financial matters rather than harming individuals or property. So, some crimes may be understood as illegal, but not necessarily immoral, while others may be understood as highly immoral crimes, where physical or mental harm may have been inflicted on a person<sup>61</sup>.

This raises an important analytical issue – what interactional work is accomplished through reading the headline in terms of moral and immoral activities. I suggest that reading breaches of morality (and in this instance deviance) is a central component of understanding the newspaper headlines<sup>62</sup>. In the analysis that follows, both headlines enable the reader to understand that this is a story told from the reality as experienced by the “mother, mum and sister”. This comes about through interpreting the moral significance of the description in headlines 3 and 4, through the selection of the “morally contrastive categories” (Lee, 1984:70), and by drawing upon the conventional implications and inferential consequences of a particular category selection.

Let us turn to the analysis. Headline 3 has been divided into three sections which together work to enable the reader to interpret the “drug pusher” as an “evil-doer” and the “mother” as a “totally innocent victim”. The reader is able to draw these

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<sup>61</sup> Criminal activities may be read as “positioned categories” (Sacks, 1992a:585) in terms of a hierarchy ranging from immoral and illegal to activities that are merely illegal. Sacks’ discussion about “positioned categories” is in relation to age, where babies can be understood to be lower than adolescents, which in turn are lower than adults. The important issue is that categories are progressive and therefore babies commonsensically become adolescents and finally adults. Obviously, in the case of criminal activity, progression is not automatic, but it remains possible to read that this type of progression may occur. The reader’s ability to understand the hierarchical nature of “criminal activity” is not limited by the absence of automatic progression. Reading the hierarchical nature of criminal activity is also linked to understanding the relationship between the degree of immorality and the crime.

<sup>62</sup> In the final chapter I suggest that reading morality represents, in part, the “newsworthiness” of these headlines.

conclusions through the use of morally contrastive categories which invite the reader to evaluate the moral characterisations of the “mother” and “drug pusher”. The moral assessment of the “mother” as an innocent party tends to strengthen readings that characterise the “drug pusher” as undertaking immoral evil acts and thereby transforms this category into an “evil-doer”.

Headline 4 contains 3 sections which co-jointly encourage the reader to understand that the “mum” and “sister” are innocent victims of terrorist activity who have been exposed to terrifying atrocities. Readings associated with the immorality of the crime are accomplished in two ways. First, the readable severity of the crime implies that the women are “innocent victims”. Second, the readable severity of the breach of morality leaves the reader in little doubt that the “terrorists” are thoroughly wicked “evil-doers”. The mechanisms that enable the headline to be understood in this way include morally contrastive categories, disjunctive pairs and the selection of categories understood in terms of locality and morality.

The morally contrastive categories operate in a similar manner to headline 3 where the characterisation of one part of the oppositional pair provides the reader with an inferential framework for the other part of the pair. The extent of the terrorists’ immorality can be understood through considering the typical CBAs associated with disjunctive pair “freedom fighter/terrorist”, where acts of “terrorism” may be associated with legitimate targets to overthrow an oppressive political regime. Thus, the reader is able to understand the depth of the depravity of the “terrorists” as their actions do not conform to the notion of legitimate



targets and can be understood to breach their own moral codes of practice.

Further moral judgements about the crime and motives of the terrorists' actions are provided through the selection of the location category "cross-border" which invites the reader to draw upon local common-sense knowledge of the political climate and the religious divisions that occur in this area. The reader is therefore able to identify possible political groups that may have undertaken this type of activity and make judgements about the morality of this political group in relation to the "victims of the crime".

#### **4.2. Analysis of Headline 3: "Drug pusher threatens mother with knife"**

##### **4.2.1. The "drug pusher" is an "evil-doer" who undertook an immoral act**

Turning to headline 3, I will look at how the practical production of sense-making is accomplished through the reader understanding the relevance, outcomes, inferences and characterisations associated with the categories selected. This again shows that reading text is an active process rather than a passive one.

The selection of the category "drug pusher" in the headline draws upon the MCD "criminal type", where pushing drugs is read as an illegal *and* immoral activity. Reading immorality is accomplished through the selection of morally contrastive categories, where the "victim" is not merely a victim, but is interpreted as an "innocent victim" and the "drug pusher" is understood to be an "evil-doer". Lee noted that this was the case in his analysis of a headline about a rape of a young Girl Guide at a Hell's Angel's convention:

"Conventionally members of our society would appear to regard rape as involving contact between 'innocent victims' and 'evil-doers'" (1984:70).



Similarly, the categories selected in the headline make it possible for the reader to establish that the crime is typical of the immoral acts that drug pushers undertake. For instance, the category “threatening with knife” is read as an immoral act, as commonsensically “threatening with knife” is intended to cause potential harm and injury to another person; in this case, the “mother”.

The possible motive for the drug pushers’ actions is interpreted as immoral because the activity of drug pushing is understood to be immoral. In this way the reader is able to understand this is a news story and to anticipate that the story is written from the perspective of the victims of an immoral act.

So how is it possible to read the category “drug pusher” in this way? This reading is achieved in a number of ways. First, the CBAs tied to the category “drug pusher” and the associated inferences are all understood in terms of immorality. Second, the category “drug pusher” limits the possibility of the reader being able to interpret these actions as happening merely as a result of drug use, and therefore implies a sense of control and intent in relation to the criminal activity. Third, the activities that are undertaken are understood as “evil” acts. Finally, these evil acts are bound to the “drug pusher”, transforming “drug pusher” “doing evil acts” into an “evil-doer”.

Before we consider the CBAs that may be tied to the category “drug pusher”, let us consider the CBAs that imply morality as opposed to immorality. These may include “being polite, kind and thoughtful”, “putting others’ needs above your own”, “being a good example” and “avoidance of aggressive or violent

behaviour”. Typical CBAs associated with the activities of a “drug pusher” include “buying and selling drugs for profit”, “preying on vulnerable people”, “being involved in other criminal activities”, “corruption of others”, and “dishonest life-style”.

Commonsensically these CBAs associated with the “drug pusher” are read in terms of immorality and encourage the reader to understand that the corruption of others and criminal activities are undertaken in the pursuit of making money.

Drawing upon common-sense knowledge of earning a living through drug pushing, these activities would need to be undertaken on a frequent basis to secure a regular income. The reader is also able to understand that these actions are part of the everyday life of drug pushers, and are therefore typical of the sorts of activities that drug pushers undertake.

In fact, if a “drug pusher” does not corrupt others or engage in criminal activity then the likelihood of maintaining a living is limited. Again, this reading is made possible through drawing upon CBAs of the activity of pushing drugs such as, “encouraging people to use drugs”, “giving no information on the dangers”, “targeting young people” and “pushing harder and harder drugs”.

The reader is encouraged to invoke inferences associated with immoral actions through associated CBAs, transforming criminal activities into *immoral* criminal activities and upgrading the MCD “criminal type” to “immoral criminal type”.

Related to this reading is the significance of selecting “drug pusher” (as opposed to possible alternative categories, such as “drug baron” or “drug addict”<sup>63</sup>). I suggest that this is another important analytical point, as selecting “drug pusher” is highly relevant to reading the immorality of the criminal actions. Furthermore, it provides inferences that the criminal activity is undertaken with intent, rather than undertaking crime as a result of having been taken over by the effects and need for drugs<sup>64</sup>.

In order to explain how this reading comes about, it is useful to consider the CBAs related to the category “drug addict”. These may include “being addicted”, “not being in control”, “escaping reality”, “acting unpredictably”, “being desperate for a fix” and “having an alternative lifestyle”. These CBAs are understood in terms of the activities directed towards an individual drug addict, and imply that the drug addict is out of control. Alternatively, the CBAs associated with “drug pusher” imply that activities are undertaken to corrupt others rather than oneself.

Commonsensibly, the corruption of others is understood as an intentional and controlled action and CBAs may include “persuading people”, “leading people

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<sup>63</sup> It should be noted that these categories can be ordered, that is, read as “positioned categories”, where “drug baron” is read as the highest order and “drug addict” as the lowest. Consider the selection of the alternative category “drug baron”. Commonsensibly, this category could be understood in terms of seniority, controlling territory, and potentially directing the actions of drug pushers and criminal activity in their area. This enables the reader to understand that a higher degree of immorality can be associated with “drug barons”, but may involve less direct contact with “victims of crime”.

<sup>64</sup> I am not suggesting that “drug pushers” are not likely to use or be addicted to drugs or have some involvement in organised crime; merely that the category selected in this headline diminishes these readings, and upgrades CBAs such as “buying and selling drugs for profit” or “involvement in small scale criminal activity”.



astray”, “dishonesty”, “deceitfulness” and “cheating”. Consequently, the primary concern of drug pushers can be understood in terms of the corruption of others rather than it just being something that happened as a consequence of drug use. This, again, demonstrates that category selection is not an arbitrary process, but enables the reader to understand the categories selected in the headline in a particular way. The work that the selected category (“drug pusher”) does is to encourage readings which invite inferences associated with deviance<sup>65</sup>.

As noted earlier, deviance is constituted through practical reasoning and practical action. The notion of deviance is therefore not static or fixed. An act will be responded to in an occasioned and local manner as discussed by Becker and Pollner respectively:

“In short, whether a given act is deviant or not depends in part on the nature of the act (that is, whether or not it violates some rule) and in part on what other people do about it” (Becker, 1963:14).

“A person believed to have committed a given ‘deviant’ act may at one time be responded to much more leniently than he would be at some other time. The occurrence of ‘drives’ against various kinds of deviance illustrates this clearly. At various times, enforcement officials may decide to make an all-out attack on some particular kind of deviance, such as gambling, drug addiction, ...” (Pollner, 1974:31).

Selecting “drug pusher” enables the reader to draw upon an inferential framework of deviance, which provides further information about the characterisation, type of activities and intentions of the “drug pusher”.

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<sup>65</sup> In this instance it is possible to understand that the category “drug pusher” is both immoral and deviant as “drug pushing” is understood to be illegal and therefore punishable. The ascription of “pushing” also ascribes theoreticity to the actor and a choice available in the situation (i.e. conventionality). As McHugh pointed out,

“deviant acts are not identified through their effects, as doing so results in the “sacrifice” of the sociological import of punishment, which is associated with a set of self-identifying acts that are items in the *production* rather than effects of deviance” (1970:153).

Consequently, the reader is able to understand that the activities undertaken by the “drug pusher” may be considered to be evil. Again, I suggest that this reading is analytically significant and provides a rich inferential framework for the reader to draw upon.

Most notably, the types of activities associated with the category “drug pusher” may be understood to be depraved, malicious and a means to make money. The category “drug pusher” is therefore readable as not only actively and intentionally seeking out new clientele, but implies involvement in activities that are corrupt, destructive, violent and immoral. This provides the reader with a possible motive about why the “drug pusher” undertook the actions of “threatening with knife”.

As Watson noted,

“...typical *motives*, too may be treated as category-bound. (Indeed, a single categorisation may in *principle* provide for a range of “tied” motives)” (1983:41).

Typical category-bound motives associated with “drug pushers” are commonsensically understood as immoral<sup>66</sup>, which enables the reader to make judgements about the drug-pusher’s actions, intentions and characteristics.

Furthermore, “drug-pusher” is drawn from the MCD “immoral criminal type”,

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<sup>66</sup> To clarify my position here, I am not suggesting that morality is fixed or pre-determined by rules and regulations, or that acts are (or should) be responded to in a particular way. In short, I am suggesting that the reader is able to draw upon certain conventions associated with morality and that there is a place for moral agreement to occur. Agreed conventions depend on the circumstances in which they happen. Jayyusi noted two relevant issues here:

“We find ourselves in a position between two basic and omnirelevant premises: that there are certain deeply conventional forms and spaces of moral agreement; and that there is also a genuine and significant range of moral diversity” (1984:11-12), and

“Moral diversity and difference are given in the logic of conventionality – the conventions which underpin our practices, and ground our communicative activity ... do not rigidly designate what it is we can do, or how it is we can talk about some action, experience or event. Our concepts, as Wittgenstein has shown, have a multiplicity of criteria for their use and application...” (1991:244).



and therefore is not only associated with other drug pushers, but also with other immoral criminal types. The consequences of the inferential associations between the “drug pusher” and “immoral criminal types” are that these categories undertake evil acts, as the actions are associated with a high level of immorality<sup>67</sup>.

These readings enable the reader to make further interpretations about the character of the “drug pusher” and understand this category as an “evil-doer”. Accordingly, the “drug pusher” doing evil acts becomes transformed into the category “evil-doer”. In this way, the “drug pusher” is understood as being characterised as a particular *type*. Lee noted evil acts done by evil-doers are understood as typical acts that evil-doers do:

“Thus members are able to arrange their knowledge of the world in such a way as to bind the moral category ‘evil-doer’ to the category Hell’s Angel.” (1984:71).

The activities that the “drug pusher” undertakes are understood as typical of that type. Jayyusi stated that knowledge of a “type of person” (1984:24) in relation to the characterisation of Hell’s Angels enabled a police officer to make projections about possible activities that may be undertaken by this category in the future:

“The projected action is therefore provided for by the guarded prediction of a *consequence* – this projection is then tied to, and provided for, as having been generated by a knowledge of, and familiarity with, a ‘type’ of person. It is not knowledge of *specific* persons that generates this projection, but knowledge of and dealings with these ‘types’, albeit that this ‘type’ categorisation may be generated in the first place on the basis of particular persons’ behaviour. It is not, however, what is specific to each but what is perceivably common to all that is the focus of such projections, typifications and inferences” (1984:24).

The significance of this reading is that it enables the reader to upgrade the MCD “immoral criminal type” to the MCD “evil-doer” which provides further

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<sup>67</sup> This issue is discussed later in relation to the “mother” being understood to be an “innocent victim” of an evil act. See section 4.2.3.



inferences about the category's characteristics and possible actions that may be undertaken.

#### **4.2.2. The “mother” is the “archetype of goodness”**

Reading that the “mother” is an innocent victim of an evil act further strengthens readings that the “drug pusher” is an “evil-doer”.

In this way, the selection of the category “mother” does much work to enable the reader to understand that she is steeped in duty and responsibility and undertakes selfless acts. The actions of the “drug pusher” are understood as immoral, deviant and unjust, characterising drug pushers as typical “evil-doers” who bring malice and terror into the everyday lives of mothers<sup>68</sup>.

Let us consider the category “mother” to demonstrate how it is possible to understand the headline in this way. “Mother” is drawn from the MCD “family” and typical CBAs are those associated with actions such as “looking after children”, “domestic duties”, “provision of care and support to family members” and “having responsibility for the household”. The category “mother” can be read as being drawn from the MCD “motherhood”, where typical CBAs include actions such as “giving birth”, “producing new life” and “producing milk to feed the baby”. Sacks noted that categories frequently belong to several different MCDs:

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<sup>68</sup> Again, it can be noted that the “drug pusher” was both immoral and deviant, but in other descriptions this need not be the case. These are empirical questions that require investigation and can not be deemed to be necessarily connected.

“That is, the same categorial word is a term occurring in several distinct devices, and can in each have quite a different reference; they may or may not be combinably usable in regard to a single person” (1972:333).

“Mother” is understood to be combining both of the MCDs “family” and “motherhood”.

Jayyusi (1984), Watson (1983) and others further extended Sacks’ notion of CBAs and referred to “predicates”, where CBAs are viewed as just one class of predicates. Other predicates may include rights, knowledge, attributes, obligations and competencies. Eglin and Hester noted that society members draw upon,

“... conventional knowledge of the relationship between categories and category-relevant features...”

to understand,

“...predicates such as actions, motives, reasons, beliefs” (1992:244).

This notion is useful as it enables the reader to understand the responsibilities and obligations associated with “mother” and makes it possible to understand that children are a central (but not the only) component of her obligations. The formality of the category “mother” implies that the “mother” has a (wide) range of dependants. Typical obligations may include “taking children to school”, “cooking meals”, “giving love and affection”, “teaching about right and wrong” and “providing safety from danger or dangerous situations”.

In fact, it is possible that the category “mother” may undertake activities that warn her children about the dangers of taking drugs, where she could be held accountable for not undertaking such preventative measures. Wider family

connections are also implied and make it possible to read that she may undertake similar actions with members of her wider family too<sup>69</sup>.

Turning to the reading “creation of new life”, “motherhood” is significant as commonsensically it is a process that everyone relies upon for their own existence and a process that sustains the human world. The CBAs and predicates associated with the MCD “motherhood” are understood to have global rather than personal significance.

The consequence of selecting the category “mother” is to invite the reader to understand that the “mother” undertakes duties and responsibilities and is a giver of life. This can be seen to operate more clearly by considering the alternative category “mum”. The category “mum” commonsensically can be drawn from the MCDs “family” and “parenthood”. Typical CBAs and predicates associated with “parenthood” may include activities such as “creating offspring”, “caring for daughters and sons”, “providing food and shelter for sons and daughters”, “offering support and guidance to sons and daughters” and “having moral and legal responsibility for one’s own children”. The CBAs and predicates associated with “parenthood” are read in terms of the parent’s obligations to, and responsibilities for, their own sons or daughters.

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<sup>69</sup> If we replace the category “mother” with “woman” the importance of selecting “mother” is shown even more starkly. The headline may still be read in terms of a “woman” being a victim of a crime through drawing upon CBAs associated with this category such as “potentially being a girlfriend”, “potentially being a mother” and “having (some) feminine qualities”. The selection of “woman” is therefore less shocking than the selection of “mother” (or for that matter “mum”) as the reader cannot establish with any certainty that she has dependants or is involved in a relationship. Again, the selection of categories is not a random process the categories are actively selected to invite the reader to draw inferences about the events that are being described - in this case family commitments and the creation of life.



In this way, using “mum” invites the reader to downgrade the significance of the creation of new life and view it as a personal rather than a global event. Her activities and responsibilities are understood as tied specifically to the “mum’s” children, where she is undertaking childcare and household tasks for her own children rather than in general. This specificity tends to offer a weaker reading of wider family connections. The category “mum” is used by children and not other family members which again upgrades the importance of responsibilities and duties towards her own children rather than other family members.

Reading that a “mother” (rather than a “mum”) has been “threatened with knife”, may be shocking in three ways. First, because a person who has given life is having her life threatened. Second, the threat not only has an impact on a “mother”, but also “threatens” the very stability of her immediate family, as well as potentially having an impact on wider family members. Third, “mother” has typical CBAs associated with producing and sustaining new life, where these activities have global relevance as well as being personally significant. The category “mother” can therefore be interpreted in terms of “decency” and “virtuousness” which invites characterisations of the archetype of “goodness” and “honesty”. In contrast the “drug pusher” is understood as the archetype of “evil”, where no one is safe from potentially immoral crimes.

I suggest that reading “innocent victim” in opposition to “evil-doer” is pivotal to understanding that the headline is written from the mother’s perspective.

Furthermore, the inferential characterisation of the “mother” strengthens the reading of the malevolence of the crime, where an “evil-doer” attacks someone

who is constituted in terms of goodness, decency and, most importantly, innocence. The reader, therefore, is able to draw inferences about the selection of these incongruent categories and understand that an evil “drug pusher” is running amok, “threatening” the life of a good, decent “mother” while she goes about her daily business.

The analysis has shown that the selection of categories is not a random process and that reading inferences is not achieved through the selection of a single category, but comes about through the co-dependency of the categories selected. Consideration of membership categories has raised an interesting analytical feature of morally contrastive categories; that is, categories are understood to operate in the same manner as a SRP through their association with the MCD “parties to a crime”. The morally contrastive categories are tied to CBAs associated with the MCD “parties to a crime” and provide an inferential framework for the reader to draw upon to gain an understanding of the relevance of category selection. The analysis has demonstrated that the intelligibility of the headline is reflexively constituted by categories, inferences, characterisations, and motives associated with category selection.

The section that follows shows that reading these categories in this way is further strengthened by understanding that this is a severe crime which had psychological effects on the “mother”. I suggest understanding the headline in this way provides the reader with information about the innocence of the “mother”.

#### 4.2.3. The characterisation of the “mother” as an “absolutely innocent victim”: examining the severity of the crime.

By considering the events described in the headline, commonsensically it is possible to understand that this is a severe crime and that it had a psychological effect on the “mother”. The description also implies that the crime could potentially occur again. The intelligibility of the headline is accomplished through the selection of opposing categories which are understood as “good” versus “evil” or potentially even “absolute good” versus “absolute evil”.

Reading the headline in this way enables the “mother” to be characterised as absolutely innocent and therefore emphasises the nightmare quality of the victim’s experience. So, how is the reader able to understand that the “mother” is in no way complicit in the act and is truly an innocent victim of an “evil-doer”?

Reviewing the typical CBAs associated with the activity of threatening someone with a “knife” may include “acting aggressively”, “putting someone in imminent danger”, “frightening someone”, “intimidation”, “threatening to physically harm someone”, and “being powerful”. It can be observed that these actions invoke a sense of danger and enable the reader to interpret that the “mother” was in imminent danger of potential harm.

To show how this work is achieved, consider the alternative headline “**Drug pusher threatens mother**”. This hypothetical headline makes it possible to read that the “mother” is intimidated in some way through either verbal or physical abuse. The selection of the category “with knife” upgrades the imminent physical danger as it draws upon common-sense knowledge of the dangers associated with weapons such as “knives”.



The significant issue here is the severity of the potential danger, where fear, anxiety and anticipated harm are implied rather than actual bodily harm. Reading that the “victim of the crime may be in imminent danger” enables the reader to understand that the “victim” is frightened and powerless. Commonsensically this is a psychological response to a crime, where being frightened is understood to be a predicate of the category “innocent victim”.

The inferential consequence of categories associated with the “drug pusher” is that the reader is provided with characterisations about the “mother”, where her innocence is bound to her response to the crime. For instance, typical CBAs associated with the psychological effect of being “threatened with a knife” include “being frightened”, “being scared”, and “being powerless”. These CBAs are useful tools for the analyst, because they demonstrate how the reader is able to understand that the headline has been written from the mother’s perspective, and imply her innocence<sup>70</sup>.

Lee (1984), in his analysis of the rape of a Girl Guide, noted that age was bound to innocence and naivety:

“Such descriptions might be seen therefore as providing a more adequate candidate for the category, innocent victim, particularly when seen in contrast to the Hell’s Angel” (1984:72).

The inferences associated with the psychological aspect of the reported crime are significant, as commonsensically our fears are often more frightening than reality,

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<sup>70</sup> I am not suggesting that victims of crimes do not challenge criminal activity. There are many reported incidences where bank robbers have been challenged in this way. However, this headline does not suggest that the “victim of a crime” undertook such actions and therefore the “victim” can be understood to be “frightened”, “powerless”, “passive” and “attempting to run away”.

where such fears can result in high levels of anxiety and even physical responses to stress.

Smith documented how behaviour described, as “mentally ill” type behaviour is constituted in the account offered in an interview. She noted that the interviewee tended to draw upon,

“...the term ‘mental illness’... (which) provides a set of criteria and rules for ordering events against which the ordering of events in the account may be matched, or tested” (1978:26-27).

The reader of headline 3 is therefore encouraged to draw upon the common-sense knowledge of the criteria and rules associated mental health which imply that the “victim of the crime” must have been under considerable mental strain. The crime is understood as a severe crime because it plays on the mind of the “victim”, where it is possible for the victim to imagine that limitless atrocities may occur.

Moreover, the reader is able to understand that the “threat” may potentially continue or that this is an incomplete action<sup>71</sup>. This is achieved through the selection of “threatens” which is in the present tense, and invites the reader to read that there is an increased possibility that this incident will occur again.

Commonsensibly, interpreting that the crime is incomplete strengthens the psychological aspect, and enhances the reading that this is a severe crime.

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<sup>71</sup> Consider the alternative headline “**Drug pusher threatened mother with knife**”; by constructing the headline in this way it would be possible to read that this incident took place in the past as the verb is in the past tense. The selection of “threatens” does additional work and is potentially readable as an incomplete action that has both happened and may happen again.

Through this analysis it has been demonstrated how it is possible to read this news story from a victim's perspective and this leaves the reader in little doubt that the "mother" is absolutely innocent. Inferences are drawn from the selection of morally contrastive categories that highlight their conflicting and opposing natures. These categories co-jointly result in a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted, rich description, which enhance readings that the "drug pusher" is "evil", and in turn infer that the "mother" is entirely innocent.

This analysis has shown that reading the description as a breach of morality enables the reader to understand the description is a news story about criminal activity. Explicating how the reader utilises notions of morality and immorality through their practical reasoning and practical action therefore reveals the orderliness of social interaction.

The upcoming sections demonstrate how morally contrastive categories operate in headline 4. The additional mechanisms of disjunctive pairs and categories read in terms of locality are also employed. Assessing the morality of the activities in the news report results in category transformation. This is accomplished by drawing upon an inferentially moral framework which characterises the "pregnant mum" and "sister" as "good" and "drug pushers" as "evil".

I acknowledge that similarities exist between the mechanisms used in headlines 3 and 4. However, these will be discussed in the final section which is in the form of a comparative analysis to highlight pertinent points and raise analytical direction for future chapters.



### **4.3. Analysis of Headline 4: “Pregnant mum stabbed and sister threatened DRUGS PUSHERS IN CROSS-BORDER TERROR”**

#### **4.3.1. The “pregnant mum” and “sister” are “innocent victims” of the crime**

In the previous chapter I demonstrated how it is possible to read this headline as a report about crime. Furthermore, it was established that the “drugs pushers” “stabbed” and “threatened” both the “pregnant mum” and the “sister”, and these actions are understood as “terrorism”.

So, let us turn to how it is possible to interpret the women as innocent victims of terrorist crime. The selection of the category "pregnant mum" provides the reader with much information about this category; namely that the woman was pregnant and that she is a mother. Drawing on commonsense knowledge of the category "mum" it is possible to read that the woman already had a child or children; if this was not the case other categories may have been selected, such as "pregnant woman", "pregnant sister" or "pregnant mum to be"<sup>72</sup>.

The relevance of this category selection is that it enables the reader to understand that not only is the woman pregnant but that she already has family responsibilities and obligations. She may undertake CBAs and associated predicates such as "caring for her family", "possible household responsibilities", and "being held responsible for the child/children".

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<sup>72</sup> As discussed in the previous section “mum” is drawn from the MCD “parenthood” and “family”. See section 4.2.2. for details about typically associated CBAs of these devices.

Clearly, from this selection "pregnant mum" is understood to be drawn from the MCD "family" and "parenthood". The inferences associated with this characterisation of the "pregnant mum" operate in a similar way to headline 3 and enable the reader to understand that she is steeped in duties, responsibilities and obligations related to her family commitments. These predicates enable the reader to understand that she is innocent and that she has no responsibility for the actions undertaken.

Furthermore, the categories "sister" and "pregnant mum" are duplicatively organised where the category "pregnant mum" and the category "sister" can be read as part of a team and therefore will respond to each other as team members who belong to a larger unit. The "sister" can be read as not anyone's "sister" but the "sister" of the "pregnant mum". Therefore the category "sister" is also drawn from the MCD "family" where "family" represents not any family but *their* family. The selection of the MCD "family" serves as a powerful tool as it invokes a notion of these women being immersed in family life where mundane everyday activities may take place. Using common-sense notions of family life, the headline can be read as shocking, as there is an incongruity between common-sense notions of the kinds of activities associated with family life and those that took place. Reading that they were exposed to criminal activities, these women are understood to be involved in a situation that is extremely violent and potentially life threatening. This enables the reader to draw inferences about the "drugs pushers" and evaluate the morality of the activities that they undertook.

I am not suggesting that stabbings do not occur within family situations - there are countless examples that could be cited – for example, the incident of Marvin Gaye being stabbed by his father – but that the incidence of a stabbing in a family situation would need to be accounted for in some way. Ordinarily the reader will select the most mundane reading until that reading is no longer viable and then other readings will be considered<sup>73</sup>.

The reader is encouraged to consider the moral character of the categories associated with the activities of “stabbing” and threatening innocent women. The readable acts of aggression and violence leave the reader in little doubt that the “terrorists” are malicious and immoral. Moreover, in this headline, the violence not only endangered the "pregnant mum" and potentially the “sister”, but also may have been inflicted on an unborn child.

Clearly, this level of violence (particularly to the unborn child where notions of innocence and vulnerability are invoked) would typically characterise the “terrorists” as capable of depraved, immoral and vicious acts.

As noted in the analysis of headline 3, the characterisation of one part of the oppositional pair “victim of crime/perpetrator of crime” provides the reader with an inferential framework for the other part of the pair. Consequently, the “victims” are interpreted as innocent, highly moral and worthy of redemption.

This reading encourages the reader to understand that the “terrorists” are immoral “evil-doers” who undertake immoral and depraved acts.

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<sup>73</sup> Sacks’ (1992b) work on being ordinary has been developed by Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) in their analysis of resisting category ascription and subculture membership.



#### **4.3.2. The crime was a severe breach of morality: the “terrorists” are “evil-doers” who are completely immoral**

I suggest that the interpretation that the “terrorists” can be understood as immoral “evil-doers” rests upon reading that:

- the “victims” were terrified by the actions of the “perpetrators”;
- the “terrorists” undertook evil acts, which are understandable as immoral, depraved and cruel and are therefore, typified as “evil-doers”; and
- the “terrorists” are understood to have gone beyond the bounds of their own frame of reference, as the crime was not a attack on a military base or political target, but two ordinary women immersed in the everyday duties of caring for their family.

Let us turn now to how the “victims” are understood as being terrified. The inferential consequences of reading that the “drugs pushers”, and “pregnant mum” and “sister” are drawn from the MCD “parties to a crime” is significant as it invokes typical CBAs associated with victims. These may include activities such as “being scared”, “being powerless”, “being abused either mentally or physically” and “being terrified”.

Furthermore, the intensity of this “terror” is strengthened as the women are understood to be “terrified” not only for themselves but also for their sister and unborn child. So the reader understands that this must have been a harrowing, horrific experience.

It can be observed that there is a readable link between the category “terror” and the “perpetrators of the crime”. The category “terror” operates to, first, heighten

the reading that the crime is particularly depraved, and second, to enable the reader to (further) characterise the actions associated with the “perpetrators of the crime”.

The application of Sacks’ second viewer’s maxim provides an explanation for this reading. Sacks defined the maxim as follows:

“If one sees a pair of actions which can be related via the operation of a norm that provides for the second given the first, where the doers can be seen as members of the categories the norm provides as proper for that pair of actions, then (a) see that the doers are such Members, and (b) see the second as done in conformity with the norm” (1992a:260).

This demonstrates the duality of selecting the category “terror”, where the reader is able to interpret the order of events, namely that the “perpetrators” were terrifying and the “pregnant mum” and “sister” were terrified. There are two important aspects to the application of this rule; first, it is possible to read that one of the activities occurred given the occurrence of the other; and second, it enables the reader to understand the sequence of the occurrence of these events.

The interpretation of these categories in this way tends to characterise the “victims” as merely reacting to the circumstances in which they found themselves, where they may have (even) been calm and controlled if the “perpetrators” had not petrified them. More importantly it highlights that the “victims” were at the hands of merciless, immoral, criminals who wielded their power to scare, frighten and terrify.

Through CBAs tied to the category “terrorists” the reader is able to interpret the severity of the breach of morality associated with the crime. The “terror” faced by

the “pregnant mum” and “sister” is upgraded by reading that the “perpetrators” were “terrorists”. Typical CBAs associated may include activities such as “drug trafficking”, “harming innocent people”, “carrying out crime across the border”, and “undertaking extreme actions”. These acts are commonsensically read as extreme, violent, terrifying and typical of the acts undertaken by “terrorists”.

As stated earlier, Watson (1983) noted that motives are also category-bound. In this way, it is possible to understand that the readable motive for the crime was associated with drug pushing and “terrorism”. The category “drugs pushers” is understood in terms of an action and not a membership categorisation, and thereby “terrorists” becomes transformed into “drug trafficking terrorists”. The involvement with “drug trafficking” is highly relevant as the reader is able to understand that a possible category-tied motive for the crime may have been “drug trafficking terrorism”.

Drawing on common-sense knowledge of these types of activities, the reader is able to make moral judgements about the severity of the acts, the intentions and motives, and the characteristics of the “drug trafficking terrorists”<sup>74</sup>. The crime is therefore read as a combination of evil acts, typical of the types of activities undertaken by “terrorists” who are commonsensically known to stop at nothing.

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<sup>74</sup> The issue of moral judgement has been the subject of debate throughout the development of philosophical and sociological thought. Jayyusi provided a useful discussion about the key issues in her chapter “*Values and moral judgement: communicative praxis as a moral order*”. She pointed out that:

“Moral concepts and beliefs turn out not to inhabit a high ground that overlooks the terrain of action, or ‘fact’ – rather they are *constituents* of these, and practical reasoning turns out to be morally organised” (1991:235).



On reading that these actions are evil, the reader understands that the “terrorist” is a typical “evil-doer”. This reading can be further supported if the consequences and impact of the crime are considered. For instance, the “stabbing” of the “pregnant mum” not only has severe consequences for the “victims of the crime”, but also for the whole family. Common-sense knowledge of the MCD “family” invokes the predicates centred on giving love, care and affection to family members, which would be particularly marked in a circumstance where injury and pain has been sustained by the family member. Through these predicates the reader is able to consider the impact of the injuries on the wider family members, such as creating concern, anxiety and worry for the family and pragmatic difficulties associated with the care of children or household tasks.

The selection of the category “pregnant” is particularly significant to reading the consequences of the crime, and can be read to invoke worry and concern about the unborn child and alerts the reader to the morally contrastive nature of the categories selected. This is accomplished by the “unborn child” being understood as totally innocent and in need of protection from the outside world, and the “evil-doer” being read as destructive, evil and totally immoral.

I suggest that reading these morally contrastive categories is crucial to the intelligibility of the headline, where reading innocence, vulnerability and powerlessness provides the reader with an understanding of the severity of the breach of morality, and thereby further characterises the “perpetrators of the crime”.

The final issue in this section draws upon the analysis undertaken in chapter 3 relating to the disjunctive pair “freedom fighter/terrorist”. Here again I suggest that reading this disjunctive pair invokes inferences about the severity of the crime and highlights that the “terrorists” are completely immoral.

Let us take a step backwards to further consider the use and interactional consequences of selecting a disjunctive pair, or as Jayyusi called them, “disjunctive category sets” (1984:123). Jayyusi noted that there are two different types of disjunctive category sets, Types I and II<sup>75</sup>. The disjunctive pair “freedom fighter/terrorist” is typical of Type I, where such categorisations represent alternative categorisations in relation to a specific practice or action. As Jayyusi stated,

“In both Type I and Type II category disjunctive operations, a second and/or alternative categorisation to a first (implicit or explicit) is produced as a result of a locally contrastive assessment of a member’s practices, actions and beliefs” (1984:123).

In her discussion about data drawn from the Scarman Tribunal (extract D), Jayyusi noted that understanding the characterisation of the asymmetrical oppositional pair “police/people of the Bogside”,

“...depends on neither logical nor only conventional grounds, but on local knowledge, belief and practices” (1984:124).

This is significant to the analysis of headline 4, as reading that this is a report about “terrorist” activity invites the reader to draw upon not only common-sense knowledge but *local* common-sense knowledge.

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<sup>75</sup> Later in the chapter she made a further distinction and includes Type III.



I suggest that the intelligibility of the headline depends upon the reader having an understanding of the context of the categories selected. In this way it is possible to demonstrate the significance of category selection and show the inferential consequences of reading “terrorism”. Drawing upon local common-sense knowledge, the headline can be understood in terms of the political context<sup>76</sup> of reading “terrorist” activity and encourages readings that understand “terrorist” as part of the asymmetrical oppositional pair “freedom fighter/terrorist”.

Commonsensically, “freedom fighters” are associated with typical CBAs such as “political activism”, “bombing political targets”, “fighting an oppressive regime”, “violent activities” and “having strong political views”. This provides the reader with further information about the types of activities undertaken and the potential targets of these types of activities.

This raises an interesting point; despite the category “freedom fighter” being associated with violent and extreme actions, the category is understood to operate within a (specific) moral framework, where “terrorist” activities are understood to be aimed at the “oppressors” who therefore represent legitimate political targets for overthrowing the dominant political ethos. The inferential consequences of this reading highlight the depth of depravity associated with the crime as,

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<sup>76</sup> In Schegloff’s paper “*Whose text? Whose context?*” he made the point that clarifies the position that is being taken in this analysis. Here the political context of “terrorism” is the political context of “terrorism” for the reader, and not a presupposition of the analysis or a socio-political context of macro-structures of society. The latter approach is used by researchers using critical discourse analysis (CDA). Schegloff is critical of CDA because the relevance of the events for the participants is glossed over and replaced by the researcher’s notion of context. As Schegloff stated,

“... before undertaking to relate cultural artefacts to their so-called social, economic and political contexts, one might well undertake to grasp their constitution as objects in their own right. ... we have to establish, and re-establish for each inquiry, what constitutes the *relevant* social context” (1997:170).

Reading the political context is considered further in the last section of this chapter which discusses the inferential relevance of selecting location categories.



commonsensically, a pregnant woman, her sister and an unborn child are not read as (legitimate) political targets, but as completely innocent victims of a brutal and senseless crime. From this reading the category “freedom fighters” can be understood to be so depraved that they do not even act within the confines of their own political and moral framework and are therefore characterised as completely immoral, violent, despicable, contemptible, “evil-doers”.

This analysis is noteworthy for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the complexities of inferential work. Second, it shows that understanding this newspaper headline depends upon not just common-sense knowledge but local common-sense knowledge and in turn invites the reader to read the headline as a report about a local incident. It is relevant here to note that this interaction is accomplished through the reader making a judgement about the moral framework of the criminals and evaluating their adherence to these principles from the perspective of the “victims of the crime”.

The analysis has shown that reading the ‘localness’<sup>77</sup> of the report does not solely rest upon the selection of location categories, but operates in a complex, intricate manner through the inter-weaving of the reader’s assessment of the morality of the actions, the utilisation of local common-sense knowledge, and through reading the significance of location. This is the focus of the next section.

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<sup>77</sup> The ‘localness’ of the report is used here to indicate that the reader can understand that the incident happened in the local area. In chapter 6, I show how locality can be understood as in the local area and location as a specific place either in the locality or outside it.

### **4.3.3. Reading location categories in terms of breaches of morality**

The selection of location categories is fundamental to understanding headline 4 and enables the reader to make further judgements and evaluations about the breach of morality associated with the crime. Local common-sense knowledge enables the reader to read the political (and thereby the religious) context of the headline through drawing upon notions of a divided Ireland. Local common-sense enables the identification of potential political groups or organisations that may have undertaken the crime. The reader is able to interpret that this organisation is likely to be immoral and that this moral framework is different to that of the “pregnant mum” and “sister”. I suggest that these readings work together and enable the reader to make moral judgements about the activities associated with the crime, moral character of the “perpetrators” and the possible motive for the actions undertaken.

Let us start with how it is possible to read the political, and thereby religious, context of the headline. Reading the headline in this way comes about by understanding the relevance of location through the selection of the category “cross-border”. Reading “cross-border” as a location category encourages the reader to consider the relevance of their location. Schegloff’s work on locations is useful here, where he noted that there are certain rules associated with locations.

He stated that,

“... the selection of a location formulation requires of a speaker (and will exhibit for a hearer) an analysis of his own location and the location of his co-conversationist(s), and of the objects whose location is being formulated (if that object is not one of the co-conversationists). One important dimension of such an analysis is whether, for some formulation, the objects of the analysis are co-present or not. For many conversational activities or topics, a formulation under which the co-conversationists are co-present are rejected” (1972:83).



Headline 4 does not include the location category “Ireland”. Nor does it include the category “Northern Ireland”. As argued by Schegloff (1972), these categories are not selected because the reader is understood to be co-present in Northern Ireland (despite the fact that they may not literally be living in Northern Ireland – they may be merely drawing upon common-sense knowledge about this area).

This invokes the duplicative organisation of the pair of categories “Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland” which are understood to be drawn from the MCD “divided Ireland”. Drawing upon local common-sense knowledge the MCD “divided Ireland” invokes associated CBAs such as “civil unrest”, “political activism”, “conflict between Catholic and Protestant communities”, “sectarianism” and “terrorism”. The political and religious context of the headline is made intelligible through understanding the relevance of selecting a category associated with location.

This is similar to Drew’s discussion about members’ knowledge of religious geography and accusations. He points out that,

“...much of the talk... involves the interactants producing descriptions of *locations*, and particularly named locations - where these can be attributed to some known identity in the normally organised religious geography of Belfast” (1978:4),

and

“The warrant for this mapping procedure lies in interactants’ knowledge about the ‘religious identity’ of certain streets, areas, ends of streets, etc., in the city, knowledge which they may invoke in order to identify persons as members of that religious group to which the street, etc., belongs’..” (1978:9).

These readings make it possible to understand that this crime was undertaken by (members of) a sectarian organisation and that these actions could potentially be a



part of a “terrorist” campaign. Drawing upon common-sense knowledge of “terrorism” in Northern Ireland the reader is able to understand that the headline represents a story about the “troubles in Northern Ireland”. Typical CBAs associated with “terrorism” in Northern Ireland may include “organised sectarianism”, “tit-for-tat tactics”, “politically motivated action”, “extremism” and “bigotry based on religious beliefs”. I suggest that these activities are read as motivated by political views fuelled by an intolerance of certain sections of the community due to their political and religious beliefs and this invokes notions of (secular) organised “terrorism”<sup>78</sup>. Commonsensically, organised “terrorism” implies that the actions have been planned and therefore are understood as a campaign rather than a single isolated incident.

Let us turn to the final issue of how the reader is able to understand that the terrorist organisation is immoral and that the “pregnant mum” and “sister” operate within a different moral framework. It has already been demonstrated that the “terrorists” that undertook the crime are implicitly understood as immoral “evil-doers”. This reading provides the reader with inferences about the moral character of other members of the political organisation, where commonsensically membership invokes notions of working for a common purpose and holding similar points of view. It should be noted that there is some ambiguity about the organisation that may have undertaken this crime.

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<sup>78</sup> In this instance political views and religious beliefs are aligned together, where Catholic is linked to Republican and Protestant is linked to Unionist. An important point here is that these terms are not always understood in this way, but that this meaning is achieved through the selection of location categories which invites the reader to associate these categories with the “troubles in Northern Ireland”.

Commonsensibly the crime could have been the result of either Republican or Loyalist “terrorist” activity. Furthermore, the reader is able to understand that the “victims” are also likely to be either Catholics or Protestants drawing upon local common-sense knowledge of religious and political alliances in Northern Ireland. As a consequence it is possible that the “victims of the crime” may hold similar political and religious beliefs to the “terrorists” that undertook the crime.

This analysis highlights a potential problem for the writer of the newspaper headline; the reader may also hold Republican or Loyalist views and therefore the headline could be perceived as an attack on these views and lay the reader open to some level of accountability for the actions described.

I suggest that this problem is avoided as the reader is encouraged to consider the relevance of the “victims” (and possibly their own) morality. This is achieved through drawing upon common-sense knowledge of the impact of beliefs and opinions on people’s lives and where terrorism is associated with CBAs linked to extremism. In contrast, drawing upon common-sense knowledge of everyday life in Northern Ireland and typical CBAs associated with being “victims of a crime”, the reader is left in little doubt that the “victims” moral framework is based upon “goodness” and not on immoral evil-doing. This reading enables the “victims” (and the reader) to be distanced from the actions and the immoral inferences associated with the “terrorists” actions.



This differentiation brings about characterisations of “being ordinary” (Sacks 1992b:216)<sup>79</sup> despite the possibility that their (that is, the “victims” and/or the reader’s) religious beliefs and political alliances may be understood as either Catholic/Republican or Protestant/Loyalist. Consequently, this reading further reinforces inferences that the actions that the “terrorists” undertook were beyond justification and were beyond the bounds of reasonable conduct.

Through this analysis, I have shown how it is possible for the reader to make judgements and evaluations about the morality of the acts associated with the crime through publicly available, publicly used resources. The mechanisms that operate in this headline include the selection of categories understood to be morally contractive; disjunctive pairs which invoked inferences about the “terrorists” moral codes of practice and locational categories. This enables the reader to understand that the “terrorists” and the “victims of the crime” operated within different moral frameworks. This analysis shows the skilful work that society members do in their daily lives and how careful attention to practical reasoning and practical action makes it possible for the analyst to show how sense and intelligibility are brought about. As Jayyusi reminded us whilst considering language,

“The analogy one thinks of here is that of the interwoven patterns of an oriental rug: one might follow the different strands through many alternative paths, locating patterns which cancel, complement or criss-cross each other, but which are formed from the same strands and elements and constitute a gestalt whole” (1984:19).

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<sup>79</sup> McKinlay and Dunnett (1998) in their work on self and identity undertook an analysis of interviews with members of an American gun club. They noted that the gun club members provided descriptions of gun owners as ordinary people through contrasting club members with criminals and vigilantes where the actions of these categories could be “understood to be unacceptable” (1998:40). It would appear that a similar mechanism is operating here in headline 4 through the selection of categories which morally contrast the “terrorists” with the reader, thereby alleviating the reader from any responsibility for the inferences associated with the actions described in the crime.



The remainder of this chapter concentrates on a comparative analysis of the mechanisms used to read the morality of the newspaper headlines.

#### **4.4. A comparative analysis**

This comparative analysis does not consider whether headlines 3 or 4 included or omitted particular devices and rules<sup>80</sup> in a generalised or mechanistic manner, but focuses upon how the reader uses devices and rules for the practical purpose of understanding the news story.

This comparison endeavours, therefore, to identify how the reader makes judgements about the morality of the actions described in the headlines to reveal if these mechanisms operate in a similar or different manner, and considers the analytical consequences of these findings.

The relevance of conducting the comparative analysis in this manner is that it enables the researcher to maintain a focus on *how* questions and refrain from asking *why* questions prematurely (Silverman, 1998). The key areas for discussion will include a comparison of how the morally contrastive categories operate; the readable severity of the breach of morality; and the inclusion of location categories.

This analysis acknowledges that both headlines are understood in terms of morality through reading the significance of morally contrastive categories. In headline 3 it can be noted that it contains few categories about either the “victim”

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<sup>80</sup> Although in Appendix 2 I do include table 2 which provides a summary of the devices and rules used in headlines 3 and 4.

or the “perpetrator”. In contrast, headline 4 provides the reader with an array of categories and inferential frameworks forming a complex combinational use of membership categories. The important issue is how does this mechanism operate in each headline? Understanding headline 3 relies upon the work that the category “mother” accomplishes. For instance, this single category forms the basis of a powerful inferential framework that enables the reader to understand this category as moral, innocent, a “victim”, a “victim” of a severe crime and that this act was unjust. Reading that the “drug pusher” was an “evil doer” is therefore not only achieved through reading inferences associated with drug pushers, but is the result of reading that the categories “mother” and “drug pusher” morally conflict. The characterisation of the “mother” therefore provides immoral characterisations about the “drug pusher”, which in turn reinforces readings that she is truly an “innocent victim”. This encourages the reader to understand that the story is being described from the victim’s perspective through drawing upon the interactional logic of moral ascription, namely reading the morality of the “mother” in relation to the “drug pusher”.

In headline 4 the presence of morally contrastive categories hinges upon the “drugs pushers” being understood as “terrorists” which provides the reader with inferential parameters that characterise the “drugs pushers” as “immoral evil-doers”. This enables the reader to interpret the “victims of the crime” in terms of “innocence” and “goodness”. These readings in juxtaposition to the immoral character of the “drugs pushers” invite further characterisations about the “victims” such as “honesty”, “decency”, “duty” and “virtue”.

The asymmetrical morality of the categories selected in both headlines does much work to enable the reader to understand the news story. There is a similar mechanism that operates in both headlines. However, I suggest that complex combinations of categories in headline 4 enable the reader to draw further moral distinctions between the “victims” and the “perpetrator” through understanding the severity of the breach of morality.

The severity of the breach of morality is interpreted in several ways. First, the reader is able to understand that the injuries to the “victims” were serious and that the “terrorists” acted in an extreme manner. Second, the “terrorists” were operating within different moral parameters to the “victims”. Third, the crime was unjust as the “terrorists” did not even operate within their own moral framework.

Furthermore, the severity of the crime may also be interpreted through the selection of location categories, where these categories are understood in terms of locality and breaches of morality. These include the relevance of the reader’s location bringing about understandings associated with a “divided Ireland”, “religious conflict” and “secular organised terrorism”. In this way, headline 4 uses additional mechanisms to emphasise the importance of the morally contrastive categories.

This raises an important analytical point. If reading morally contrastive categories can be achieved in a simple or complex construction, how does this impact on the reader making sense of the headline? I suggest that this may be related to the



work that the headline may be undertaking, and raises the possibility that “newsworthiness” is constructed for different purposes. For instance, it may be related to the purpose of the news story. As noted in chapter 3, although these headlines represent the same story, they were not reported on the same day. This might account for the different use of morally contrastive categories.

Alternatively, the different construction may be a response to targeting different audiences or providing news in a politically and religiously divided geographical area. In this way, reading locality and breaches of morality may be a mechanism for doing this interactional work.

Despite being able to identify that there may be different purposes of the news story, it still remains important to establish how this is being accomplished.

These analytical points serve to give a direction to the following data chapters, where the impact of the reading of the severity of the crime in other headlines will be analysed to identify whether this mechanism operates in a similar manner.

Other examples of location categories will be analysed to establish how they operate in other headlines. In addition, the consequences of selecting location categories, where categories which may be understood in ways other than through an association with morality (such as locality), will be considered.

## Chapter 5

### **5. Reading crime and locality**

In the previous chapter the analysis of headlines 3 and 4 demonstrated how the reader was encouraged to make moral judgements about the activities described which made it possible to draw upon inferences about the moral character of categories selected and read that the typical actions associated with crime were associated with a breach in morality.

Two main points arose from this analysis; the consequences of reading the severity of the crime and the readable function of location categories. The latter will be examined further in this chapter by analysing how location categories operate in headline 2 and by undertaking further investigation of the work that location categories do in headline 4. In this way, it will be demonstrated that the severity of the crime is intrinsically linked to reading that the crime has an impact on the locality and thereby has consequences for people living in the locality.

Headline 2 has been selected for analysis due to the readable severity of the crime and because it includes categories understood to be locational formulations. In addition, analysing this headline will provide an opportunity to compare headlines drawn from distinct geographical locations.

This chapter demonstrates that the intelligibility of the news stories relies upon the selection of location categories. I suggest that locational formulations provide the reader with a rich inferential framework, which enables the reader to;

- characterise categories selected;
- assess the morality of the actions undertaken; and
- understand the political and local implications for people connected to the locality.

The significant issue here is that location categories are embedded in the occasioned features of the headlines, where members undertake considerable interpretative work to understand the relevance of location categories. For example, in chapter 4 it has been seen that the political implications of location categories are not culturally determined readings, but are actively constructed through category selection, associated CBAs and other inferential predicates. As we are reminded by Garfinkel,

“The phenomenon consists, too, of the analysability of actions-in-context given that not only does no concept of context-in-general exist, but every use of “context” without exception is itself essentially indexical” (1967:10).

Considering how location categories are understood on this occasion addresses Schegloff’s concern<sup>81</sup> about members’ implied use of a “common-sense geography” (1972:85), whilst making sense of the relevance of location categories. Such a concern highlights the need to consider the indexical properties of location categories. As Schegloff stated,

“...on each occasion in conversation on which a formulation of location is used, attention is exhibited to the particulars of the occasion. In selecting a ‘right’ formulation, attention is exhibited to ‘where-we-know-we-are’, to ‘who-we-know-we-are’, to ‘what-we-are-doing-at-this-point-in-the-conversation’” (1972:115).

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<sup>81</sup> Chapter 2 provides an account of Schegloff’s work on locational formulations and includes a discussion about his concerns about the notion of a common-sense geography.



Silverman (1998) pointed out the importance of studying members' methods for remedying the indexicality of location categories. This involves much more than simply stating that such formulations are dependent on social context.

Adopting the latter viewpoint would be merely explaining location categories in terms of context, and this would place the researcher into a position of using common-sense knowledge to formulate analysts' rules. As Schegloff reminded us,

“To say that interaction is context-sensitive is to say that interactants are context-sensitive” (1972:115).

Consonant with earlier chapters, the purpose of analysing this text is not to instruct people as to the “actual meaning” or the meanings that “should be achieved”, but to explicate how understandings can be achieved by society members and to demonstrate the specificity of these understandings<sup>82</sup>.

The first analytical aim of this chapter is to pursue the understanding of location categories in order to explicate further how these categories enable the reader to make sense of the news story. In this way, through attending to the production and construction of location categories in these headlines, the details of how the reader accomplishes readings related to the severity, morality and locality of the crime are demonstrated. A further aim is to undertake a comparative analysis of headlines 2 and 4 to examine how local common-sense knowledge is used in different geographical areas and in different newspapers.

This comparative analysis will enable the researcher to gain an understanding of how different communities within a given area utilise local common-sense

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<sup>82</sup> Jalbert (1999) provided a useful discussion of these issues in chapter 2 of his book “*Media Studies: Ethnomethodological Approaches*”.

knowledge, and thereby provide a different kind of treatment of ‘culture’ than found in constructive sociology.

### **5.1. Locational formulations: reading inference on membership categories and activities in headlines 2 and 4**

As detailed in chapter 2, Schegloff’s work on locational formulations is centred upon the problem of how members on a particular occasion select one set of categories and reject others, as there are likely to be number of place terms that could be used to formulate a geographical location. Moreover, he suggested that location categories may be used to describe objects and activities other than place and can thereby be understood to do additional work. As Schegloff pointed out,

“Where a place term is used to formulate something other than location, the first question may not be how that term was selected out of the set of terms that are correct for that place, but rather how a place term came to be used to do a non-place formulation” (1972:82).

Thus, the inclusion of a location category in a headline will not always be understood as denoting a place or a geographical area. Location categories may be operating as complex combinations of inferences drawn from several different and possibly opposing categories. For instance, Lepper’s data drawn from an inner city Further Education College showed the function of the “duty-rota logbook” (2000:27). In one case, Lepper showed how location categories are a “means of doing discriminations and disavowals” (2000:27). This is accomplished through the combined selection of the descriptions “spends her time in the refectory and not in the library” with “she is rude and aggressive” (2000:78).

This raises an important point in relation to this inquiry; there is a temptation to presume that a news story will be understood as having local relevance if it

contains locational formulations either in the headline or the title of the newspaper. But as we have already observed in headline 3, this is not always the case. The relevance of locality needs to be shown in fine detail through attending to how the reader is able to understand the relevance of this selection within this given situation.

With these issues in mind, let us turn to the analysis of headline 2 which has been divided into four sections. Each section considers the inferential framework that location categories provide for the reader. I suggest that associated inferences include an evaluation of the morality of actions undertaken in light of the clergyman's moral character and his commitment to his parish. Moreover, the reader is able to understand the significance of the incident occurring on a local train. This reading is accomplished through drawing upon common-sense knowledge of the collection "passenger" and through the application of Schegloff's rule on location which encourages the reader to consider their own geographical location and thereby utilise local common-sense knowledge to make sense of the description.

Location categories also invite readings that this is not just a crime but a *local* crime and consequently may have serious implications for people in the locality. The reader is encouraged to consider whether the crime was premeditated or opportunistic and this ambiguity further strengthens the significance of reading locality in the headline. The analysis therefore demonstrates how the news story is understood as a local news story by showing how inference, predicates and ambiguity operate within this headline.



The analysis of headline 4 focuses upon the significance of reading that there is ambiguity about whether the “victims” or the “terrorists” crossed the “border”. Reading that the “victims of the crime” crossed the “border” utilises local common-sense knowledge of crossing the “border” in Derry and implies that this type of crime may take place again and therefore acts as a warning to local Catholics. Alternatively, reading that the “terrorists” crossed the “border” invites the reader to draw upon predicates and CBAs associated with terrorism and invokes interpretation that these activities demand a considerable amount of “cross-border” movement. Furthermore, the reader is encouraged to consider where the incident took place to evaluate the effectiveness of the “cross-border” officials through drawing upon common-sense knowledge(s). The analysis shows that both of these readings invite the reader to utilise local Catholic common-sense knowledge(s) to interpret the relevance of reading locality, thereby upgrading readings associated with the “troubles in Northern Ireland” to “the troubles in the locality”. In this way, the analysis shows the detailed picture of “culture-in-action” (Hester and Eglin, 1997:20) within this newspaper headline.

## **5.2. Analysis of Headline 2: “Clergyman awakes to find man with knife standing over him ROBBERY IN A RAILWAY CARRIAGE”**

### **5.2.1. The “clergyman” has parishioners: reading the significance of locality**

In chapter 3, I demonstrated how it is possible to read headline 2 as a news report about a crime, where this reading is tied to category selection. The headline was understood as a report about events where a “man robbed” a sleeping “clergyman” with a “knife” and that this was a serious crime<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> This chapter will not include an analysis of the breach of morality associated with the crime in a detailed way, but where breaches of morality are implied, these will be discussed in order to reveal how readers make sense of the headline.

The practical production of sense-making is accomplished through the reader understanding the relevance, outcomes, inferences and characterisations associated with the categories selected. By paying attention to the production and construction of location categories, I suggest that the reader is able to understand the severity of the crime by drawing upon inferences associated with locality.

The selection of the category “clergyman” draws upon the MCD “religious leader” and perhaps the MCD “Christian”<sup>84</sup>, and invites the reader to understand that there are tied predicates and inferences to this category. I suggest that these inferences enable the reader to characterise the “clergyman” and the type of duties that he may undertake. Most importantly these characterisations are associated with a local area – namely, a parish – and this enables the reader to understand that this crime may have an impact on the clergyman’s parish and parishioners.

The category “clergyman” can be understood as a generic religious category rather than a description of a specific denomination. Reading this generic religious category tends to downgrade readings related to the “clergyman” undertaking specific religious ceremonies and upgrades the importance of activities associated with supporting local “parishioners”. Consequently, the types of predicates associated with this category include taking (keen) interest in issues that affect local people and the locality and tending the needs of individual parishioners.

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<sup>84</sup> It should be noted that it is possible to read that the religious leader may not be a Christian as commonsensically rabbis and imams are also understood to have flocks.

Furthermore, the “clergyman” can be read as forming part of the SRP “clergyman/parishioner”, where these categories are linked together in a standardised routine manner. Typical CBAs associated with the SRP “clergyman/parishioner” may include activities such as “offering religious ceremonies/attending religious ceremonies”, “offering support in times of crisis/accepting support in times of crisis”, “co-ordinating local fund raising events/helping with local fund raising”, “being a community representative/ being a member of the community” and “ensuring confidentiality/having trust that confidentiality will be maintained”. These CBAs are noteworthy as they enable the reader to imply that the “clergyman” is highly moral, someone who undertakes activities for the good of his parishioners and is likely to be concerned with issues that affect local people in the parish.

Selecting the category “clergyman” is therefore highly relevant to understanding the headline as it enables the reader to interpret and understand the types of activities that the “clergyman” is likely to undertake and where these activities may take place. The (potential) relationship between the “clergyman” and “parishioners” is understood to be based on mutual trust, commitment and a concern for the local parish.

The reading that the “clergyman” was “robbed” at knifepoint invokes interpretations that this is not just a crime against a religious leader, but also a crime against someone who is a vital member of a local community. I suggest that this reading makes it possible to understand this crime is not just an attack on an individual, but an attack on a whole community. Understanding the category



“clergyman’s parish” as a location category therefore provides the reader with further inferences about the immorality of the crime, the severity of the breach of morality, and therefore the severity of the crime to the local community<sup>85</sup>.

As this analysis has demonstrated, reading locational formulations is not dependent upon the selection of place terms or geographical categories. The reader may also draw upon predicates, CBAs and inferences to make sense of the categories selected. McHoul and Watson (1984) examined how common-sense geographical knowledge<sup>86</sup> is interpreted and utilised in a classroom setting and thereby transformed into subject knowledge. In their paper, there is an acknowledgement of the difficulty of applying MCA to non-personalised categories which they propose can be (partially) solved by two analytical axes which are not mutually exclusive but involve some overlap and inter-dependency:

“Our first analytical axis proposes a solution based on the conventional relations between categories, devices and their attributable predicates. The second involves analytic reference to the ways in which a common-sense geography is implicated and articulated in the task of building the developmental model of the port city, to which the lesson is addressed” (1984:283).

This analysis therefore has similarities to McHoul and Watsons’s work, as readers draw upon their geographical common-sense knowledge as a means to understand the relevance of category selection and establish the “subject-predicate ties” (McHoul and Watson, 1984:291) of the “clergyman’s parish”.

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<sup>85</sup> These readings rely upon understanding the central role that the “clergyman” plays in the “parish” as confidant and local representative.

<sup>86</sup> The relationship between common-sense geographical knowledge and Jayyusi’s discussion of “local common-sense knowledge, beliefs and practices” (1984:124) in relation to the characterisation of the asymmetrical oppositional pair “police/people of the Bogside” is unclear, and a matter for further analytic investigation. In this instance the reader tends to draw upon geographical knowledge that is not directly connected to a locality, where the reader does not draw upon local common-sense knowledge of a particular parish, but of how a parish operates in general.

As McHoul and Watson pointed out, there are overlaps between the two analytical axes. This can be readily observed in the case of the “clergyman’s parish” where the predicates associated with the “clergyman’s duties” are “part and parcel of the procedural framework of a common-sense geography” (1984:298). This raises an important analytical point; the analyst needs to work within a conceptual framework that acknowledges the “mutual embeddedness of MCDs and common-sense geographical knowledge” (1984:299) to ensure that the complexity of the social interaction is not glossed over.

### **5.2.2. Reading that the “clergyman” was travelling on a local train: the relevance of the category “railway carriage”**

As demonstrated in chapter 4, both the “man with knife” and the “clergyman” are drawn from the MCD “passenger” through the tied CBAs associated with the category “railway carriage”. This section demonstrates how the selection of “railway carriage” invites readings that this incident occurred on a local train, that is, in the Catford and Hither Green area. Consequently, I suggest that the category “railway carriage” does much work in the description as it is understood by the reader as a location category and serves as a powerful tool for the reader to make sense of the newspaper headline.

“Railway carriage” operates as a location category in two ways. First, it invokes inferences associated with movement from one geographical area to another through ties with the MCDs “passenger” and “public transport”. Drawing on common-sense knowledge of predicates and CBAs associated with these MCDs the reader is able to understand that passengers travel on trains for the purpose of



going from one destination to another. This reading provides the reader with a motive for movement from one geographical area to another so that the “passenger” is undertaking a journey.

Linked to this, “railway carriage” also operates as a location category through the reader being encouraged to consider their geographical location in relation to the route of the train and the journey undertaken by the “clergyman”<sup>87</sup>. This reading is made possible through the application of Schegloff’s rule on locations<sup>88</sup>, where location categories are not selected when the reader is understood to be co-present. In this way, the non-selection of London, Catford or Hither Green infers that the reader is co-present and this invites the reader to understand the significance of their own geographical location whilst reading the headline and thereby draws upon local common-sense geographies<sup>89 90</sup>.

Someone occupying the category “clergyman” can therefore be understood to be travelling in or through the Catford and Hither Green area and transforms the category “passenger” to “passenger travelling on a local train”, thereby upgrading this category. Furthermore, through drawing upon predicates associated with the

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<sup>87</sup> This latter point is significant as it highlights that the “clergyman” is understood as the “victim”; the story is understood to be written from the perspective of the “victim” thus transforming the category “victim” into “innocent victim”. In section 5.2.3 of the analysis I demonstrate that this invites the reader to consider the impact of the crime on their own life.

<sup>88</sup> Schegloff’s location rule is detailed in full in chapter 4.

<sup>89</sup> Here I am suggesting that the reader may consider the geographical location to which they are linked, either in terms of where they live, work or have family connections. I am not suggesting that the reader is concerned about being in the locality when they are reading the headline.

<sup>90</sup> This is an analytical point, as the reader is drawing upon local common-sense geographical knowledge rather than geographical knowledge in general.



knowledge and attributes<sup>91</sup> tied to the category, it can be understood that passengers use their knowledge of the train network to reach their final destination. In this way, the reader is able to establish that the “clergyman” may have some knowledge about the local network and the routes that the trains take<sup>92</sup>.

Common-sense geographies are not simply “propositions about spatial arrangements” (McHoul and Watson, 1984:294) of an area, but are embedded in the interpretative sense-making procedures that the reader undertakes. They suggest that common-sense geographical knowledge has open-texture, is occasioned and has varying practical relevance. McHoul and Watson pointed out that geographical knowledge,

“...does not seem to form a rigid, invariant and strictly bound conceptual grid, but instead is an open-textured domain, open to recombinations and at all points embedded in a generic domain of procedural knowledge which ties slivers of geographical knowledge to the occasions of its relevant use” (1984:297).

Reading that the incident took place whilst travelling on a local train therefore encourages the reader to understand the significance of the locality<sup>93</sup>. I suggest that understanding “railway carriage” as a location category informs the reader about how to interpret the headline and provides the “slant” of the news story.

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<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, drawing on the attributes of “passengers” constructs possible motives for the robber’s actions. “Passengers” can be understood to travel with the express purpose of reaching a specific destination and may be expected not to make contact with other “passengers”, unless they were previous acquaintances. In this headline however, it is possible to read that the knife man’s motives for travelling on the train is with the express intention of worrying and disturbing other people through the act of undertaking a “robbery”. This tends to downgrade readings associated with the “man with knife” being a “passenger” and strengthen his characterisation as a “robber”.

<sup>92</sup> The “clergyman” is interpreted as someone who may be included as in the same “territorially-based membership” (Schegloff, 1972:93) through his common-sense knowledge of the local network. This notion of “territorially-based membership” is discussed further in section 5.2.3.

<sup>93</sup> Local area refers to places that local people visit or travel to on a regular basis, rather than a specific place such as Catford or Hither Green and can be understood to encompass the immediate area used by local people. Later in this analysis I suggest that reading the local area is important as it enables the reader to understand the crime as a local crime.

Consequently, although location categories are not selected in relation to the clergyman's destination, the place where he started his journey or the route of the train, the reader is able to interpret that the crime took place on a local train.

In fact, the reader is not able to specify whether the "clergyman" has reached his destination or is still en route, or how frequently the "clergyman" uses this network or if this was the first occasion that he had travelled on this train.

Despite the lack of specificity about the details of the journey, this does not diminish the relevance of reading that the incident occurred on a local train, and from the analyst's point of view, this serves to highlight the strength of reading co-presence within the locality.

The significant issue is that the reader can interpret the headline despite the lack of detail about the actual destination of the "clergyman". The relevance of selecting "railway carriage" is that the "clergyman" is understood to have been travelling in the locality (and not some other [unknown] destination). The locational formulation "railway carriage" therefore provides the reader with an inferential framework, which highlights the importance of the locality.

The analysis of the category "railway carriage" has demonstrated the skill and complexity of the work that members of society undertake to make the headline intelligible, where in this instance the reader draws upon *local* common-sense geographies as a central component of the sense-making procedures. As Schegloff reminded us in his thoughts about whether there are different forms of common-sense geographies, how these may be organised, and their relevance of use,



“... these are empirical questions, and not ones to be settled by consulting geography books. Such geographies are a cultural fact to be discovered...” (1972:85).

It would seem from this analysis that different forms of common-sense geographies do operate, where the reader is able to draw upon both local and general geographical common-sense knowledge. This raises the question of *how* the reader knows when to draw upon local or general geographical common-sense knowledge. I suggest that this may operate through the reader orientating to the topic through the application of the consistency rule. As McHoul and Watson stated,

“... the consistency rule not only operates at the level of co-selection of the place references but also at the level of (internal) topic organisation. That is, consistency considerations can exhibit sensitivity and alignment to topic, and are also constitutive of topic” (1984:296).

Thus, orientating to the local topic of the description encourages the reader to draw upon local geographies. If this were not the case, (more general) geographical common-sense knowledge would have been utilised.

### **5.2.3 The crime is a local crime: reading the consequences for local people**

This section of the analysis demonstrates how it is possible to understand the inferential consequences of reading that the crime took place on a local train. In essence, I show how the reader is able to understand that this is a local crime and that there may be serious implications for their own safety or the safety of people living and working in the locality. Reading that this crime took place on a local train commonsensically makes it possible to understand that local people are likely to use the train network and therefore may be vulnerable to similar attacks.



This reading encourages the reader to have concerns about the safety of their friends, neighbours and (perhaps) family.

Local geographical common-sense knowledge enables the reader to interpret the location category “railway carriage” as a particular type of train and to understand that the “robbery” may have taken place on a particular train on a specific route. For example, drawing upon local geographical common-sense knowledge about South London enables the reader to understand that the underground network does not operate in this area. “Railway carriage” is therefore understood in terms of over-ground trains rather than an underground train. The reader is also able to draw upon local geographical knowledge about Catford and Hither Green, where both of these areas are served by over-ground trains. This reading is further supported by drawing upon local common-sense practices<sup>94</sup> of being a “passenger” on this network, where trains in this area mainly use modern “carriages” to serve the train network at peak times. Thus, it is possible for the reader to understand that the “robbery” not only took place in the locality, but that this crime may have taken place on a particular route possibly at a specific time of day, in the locality. The reader utilises their local common-sense geographies and practices to understand the relevance of selecting the category “railway carriage”, which in turn highlights the local significance of the headline as commonsensically the reader may use, or have used, this route to travel around the area.

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<sup>94</sup> Jayyusi (1984) highlighted the use of local common-sense knowledge, beliefs and practices in relation to the interpretation of the oppositional pair “police/people from the Bogside” (1984:124).

It is possible to read that local people (including the reader) could potentially be an “innocent victim of a crime” in the future. This is strengthened by reading that the “man with knife” may have deliberately chosen to travel on this route to increase his opportunity to conduct a “robbery”<sup>95</sup>. Understanding “railway carriage” as a location category therefore adds to the reading (derived from the assumption of co-presence) that this is not just a crime, but this is a local crime and that this has implications and consequences for local people. In this way, “railway carriage” is interpreted not merely in terms of a place term, but brings about other interactional work, which is related to reading inferential consequences of the news story.

Schegloff’s discussion about how society members’ recognition of place names in or near the area is organised through “territorially-based memberships” is a useful resource here:

“Their place, and its environment of places, have characteristics, character, a population composition, etc. These categories are filled by persons with their particular situations, their house, *their* street, *their* neighbourhood, *their* part of town, *their* city, *their* state, etc., on which they are knowledgeable and can speak, while others can respond accordingly. The sharing of particulars at one another of these levels is perhaps one sense of membership in a ‘same community’” (1972:93).

There are two significant points to note. First, adopting an analytic focus on how members understand the relevance of category selection provides details about the organisation of “territorially based membership”. In this case, the reader uses both local geographies and local common-sense practices to make sense of the headline. Second, for the reader to make use of local geographical common-sense

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<sup>95</sup> This issue is analysed further in section 5.2.4 in terms of reading whether the crime was opportunistic or pre-meditated.



and practices requires members of society to recognise different types of knowledge and their relevancy<sup>96</sup>.

“That is to say, a describer will choose descriptors that exhibit an orientation to the context. Descriptors in that sense are reflexive features of the objects or setting or persons they describe” (Hester and Housley, 2002:25).

It is possible to show the details of how newsmakers deal with the problem of making something relevant for a particular audience (Hester, 2002).

The use of location categories may be a mechanism by which newspaper headlines are made relevant to particular audiences, while at the same time providing a sense-making procedure. As Sacks proposed,

“A culture is an apparatus for generating *recognisable* actions; if the same procedures are used for generating as for detecting, that is perhaps as simple a solution to the problem of recognisability as is formulatable” (1992a:226).

I suggest that headline 2 is made intelligible in terms of the consequences of the local crime for the locality and personal security and is therefore understood to be highly significant to people living in the locality.

#### **5.2.4 Was the “robbery” premeditated or opportunistic? The consequences of the crime for the locality**

The reader is able to understand that there is some ambiguity about whether the “robbery” was premeditated or was carried out opportunistically. Reading this

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<sup>96</sup> Similarly, Housley and Fitzgerald discussed how MCA can be used to investigate the social organisation, recognition and interactional setting of knowledge. The paper considered the model of membership categorisation analysis and argued that focusing on,

“category work in interaction can provide a means of exploring interaction and discourse beyond the confines of the macro-micro dualism” (2002:60).

They suggested a possible solution to this issue may be found in Sacks’ notion of recognisability as members’ phenomena.



ambiguity<sup>97 98 99</sup> is important as it encourages the reader to understand the severity of the crime through appealing to the consequences of the crime for the locality. The reader is able to interpret that the very fabric of their locality (or community) is under threat by “robbers” and “men with knives” who commit crimes against innocent (local) people going about their daily lives.

I suggest that the ambiguity is achieved through the selection of the location category “railway carriage” in conjunction with the category “man with knife”. In this way, it is possible to understand that there are two potential readings associated with this headline<sup>100</sup>. The implication of reading that the crime may have been premeditated enables the reader to understand that this “robbery” may have been deliberately undertaken in this locality which therefore may be the target of further criminal activity. Commonsensically, it also invites the reader to understand that this local crime has implications for not just local people but also the locality. The inferential consequences of this reading are that local people (including the reader) may not only doubt the safety of travelling on local trains, but may have concerns about the safety of the locality generally.

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<sup>97</sup> It is important to note that ambiguity, where it is understood in relation to interpreting that this or that occurred differs from the notion of creating puzzles (Lee, 1984) and disjuncture between categories and the activity in its application (Cuff et al, 1979).

<sup>98</sup> Sacks (1992a,b) discussed ambiguity at some length in a number of his lectures and offered a number of different ways that ambiguity may occur in conversation or description. Here, I am referring to ambiguity being used “in an either or relationship – either you mean this or you mean that, it’s not clear which,…” (1992a:165).

<sup>99</sup> Later in the analysis I suggest that ambiguity is a mechanism to encourage the reader to complete the accompanying article.

<sup>100</sup> This is not to suggest that there are only two possible ways of reading this headline, as there are always other possible readings associated with description, but merely that reading ambiguity is powerfully encouraged by the reader through the relevance of category selection.

The implication of reading that the crime may have been opportunistic invites the reader to understand that the use of old style trains by the network makes local people vulnerable to attacks from criminals and that this is a safety issue for the local community.

The important issue is that the interactional outcome<sup>101</sup> is the same whether the reader understands “robbery” in terms of it being premeditated or opportunistic, as the headline is interpreted in terms of the implications of the crime for the locality in both instances. The ambiguity may therefore serve as a mechanism to heighten the significance of reading the local consequences of the crime. Reading that this may have been a premeditated “robbery” is achieved through reading that the “robber” was carrying a “knife”, and used the “knife” as a weapon to commit a “robbery”. The reader is able to understand that the motive for the “man with knife” to travel on a train was to conduct a “robbery” (rather than undertake a journey). Drawing upon common-sense notions of preparing to undertake a journey, typical CBAs may include “purchasing reading material”, “getting a drink or snack”, and “referring to a timetable”. The act of carrying a “knife” can be understood to be incongruent with the activity of being a “passenger”<sup>102</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> To reiterate, the focus here is to understand how the interaction comes about and not to rely upon “culture”. As Sacks pointed out in relation to conventional social science,

“Now what I want to do is turn that around; to use what ‘we’ know, what any Member knows, to pose us some problems. What activity is being done, for example. And then see whether we can build an apparatus which will give us those results” (1992a:487).

<sup>102</sup> Obviously, there are situations where people legitimately bring “knives” onto trains, for example, after purchasing kitchen knives, but this activity in itself would be unlikely to be a reportable incident.



Furthermore, drawing upon common-sense knowledge of possible actions undertaken by a person boarding a train with a “knife”, CBAs may include “mugging”, “stealing”, and “violent and threatening behaviour”. These CBAs are associated with potentially causing harm to other people and taking property (including money) that does not belong to them<sup>103</sup>.

This reading is further strengthened through the reader being able to understand that the “robbery” occurred on a particular type of train, and perhaps even at a particular time of day, through drawing upon local common-sense practices of being a “passenger” on this train network. This invokes a notion of the “robbery” taking place in a confined space as “railway carriage” can be understood as an old style of carriage that is designed to have separate compartments (and slam doors), rather than an open plan seating arrangement (which would be more typical of coaches, rather than carriages)<sup>104</sup>. Commonsensically, people not only need a motive to undertake actions; there is also a need for an opportunity to follow through these actions. Reading that the “robbery” took place within a confined space invokes inferences associated with the “robber” having an opportunity to undertake the “robbery”. The location category “railway carriage” draws upon local geographical common-sense knowledge of the train network and local common-sense practices of being a “passenger” on this type of local train. Again, there is ambiguity about whether the “man with knife” deliberately chose to travel

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<sup>103</sup> In the headline the category “robbery” was selected as opposed to “mugging”. This may give an indication of the potentially premeditated nature of the incident, where “mugging” is typically understood to be an opportunistic activity.

<sup>104</sup> It is important to note that this reading rests mainly on the selection of “railway” which invites notions of British Railways (as opposed to Network Rail) and therefore makes it readable that it is a train from old rolling stock as opposed to newer train carriages.



on this type of train (at this time of day) rather than a modern train, to increase his opportunities to conduct a “robbery”.

The reader is not able to interpret the extent of this possible premeditation. Did he actually plan to undertake a “robbery” (or questionably to rob a “clergyman”, or this “clergyman”, or a “clergyman” in this local area, or even a “clergyman” using this local train)?

Nevertheless, reading that this may have been premeditated invites the reader to assume that this crime may have been a planned activity, where the safety of the locality is under threat from deliberate and targeted criminal activity. Hence, the headline can be understood in terms of the local community being under attack from “men with knives” who travel on trains to “rob” innocent, good, decent, people going about their daily lives.

Alternatively, the reader is also able to understand that the “robbery” may have been undertaken opportunistically and was not the result of planned criminal activity. For instance, was it typical for the “man with knife” to carry a weapon so that he undertook the “robbery” when the opportunity arose?

The tied CBAs associated with the categories “man with knife”, “robbery” and “clergyman” enable the reader to draw inferences about the character and typical activities that the “robber” may undertake. Typical CBAs may include actions such as “watching other passengers”, “looking for a chance to conduct a robbery” and “targeting vulnerable people”. Typical predicates may include using

knowledge of previous robberies to undertake this “robbery”. In this way, the reader is able to understand that the “robbery” may have been undertaken by someone who has prior experience of undertaking robberies, and may take advantage of opportunities to strike again. This is significant as it enables the reader to understand that the “robber” is likely to prey on vulnerable people such as a sleeping “clergyman”. I suggest that the “clergyman” is understood to be vulnerable on three counts; first because he was sleeping and therefore commonsensically may have been dazed as he was awoken. The “clergyman” can be understood to be undertaking the mundane activity of sleeping on a train which enables the reader to assume the “clergyman” was not expecting this event<sup>105</sup>. The reader is able to understand the expected routine nature of the journey, as commonsensically, people aware of danger whilst travelling on a train would be unlikely to fall asleep, and if this were the case they may be held accountable for their actions if they did so<sup>106</sup>.

Second, the “clergyman” is also understood to be vulnerable through inferences associated with the immoral character of the “man with knife”. The degree of immorality can be read first on the grounds of stealing from a “man of God” and second to steal from a “respected” member of a community drawing from

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<sup>105</sup> The selection of the category “to find” invites the reader to read this category in terms of a discovery, which implies that the “robbery” was an unexpected event. Typical CBAs associated with the category “to find” may include actions such as “searching for an item or person”, “gaining an awareness about oneself, or of a situation”, and “attaining clarity in some way”. Each of these CBAs implies notions of discovery and searching. In the headline, however, we are told that the “clergyman” was not in a safe, comfortable and routine environment as he discovered that a “man with knife was standing over him” while he was sleeping.

<sup>106</sup> I am not suggesting that there was not actual danger (in fact from the categories selected a potentially dangerous situation did occur), merely that the category-bound activity “awakes” implies a notion of the routine, secure and familiar, drawing upon typical CBAs associated with the category “sleep”.

associated CBAs and the locational formulation of the unspecified denomination of the “clergyman”.

Finally, I suggest that both of these readings of vulnerability rest upon inferences drawn from the location category “railway carriage”, which is interpreted as a compartmentalised type train with only a few “passengers”, as it is understood to be a non peak time train. The reader is able to understand that this type of “railway carriage” has implications for local “passengers” and therefore the locality. Reading “railway carriage” in this way tends to heighten the clergyman’s vulnerability as compartmentalised trains limit the victim’s opportunity to run away or seek help from a fellow “passenger”. The vulnerability of the “clergyman” may have been reduced if he had not been travelling in this type of train. Therefore, the reader is able to understand that these types of “railway carriages” present a potential threat to the safety of not only the “clergyman” but also for local “passengers” using this network. Reading the category “railway carriage” as a location category is highly relevant to understanding that although the crime may have been opportunistic there may be a potential threat to the safety of people in the locality through the use of compartmentalised trains.

This analysis has shown how the reader makes sense of reading ambiguity about the nature of the crime. I suggest that reading this ambiguity is central to the intelligibility of the newspaper headline as it provides the reader with inferences and associations tied to the relevance of reading locality. To summarise, I have shown that reading ambiguity rests upon the interpretation of “railway carriage” as a locational formulation thereby drawing upon the local geographical common-



sense knowledge and practices of the reader. The category “railway carriage” powerfully encourages the reader to understand the significance of the locality and highlights the (potential) consequences of the crime for this local area whether the crime is understood to be premeditated or opportunistic.

On a final note, it would appear that ambiguity might be a mechanism to attract the attention of the reader; persuade them to complete the accompanying news article; and predispose the reader to reading the article in particular way (Anderson and Sharrock, 1979). Whilst it is fully acknowledged that the following observations represent a single case and that there is a need for further analytical investigation, it does raise a few analytical issues. It highlights that newsmakers utilise mechanisms other than the creation of puzzles to gain the attention of the reader (Lee, 1984). Most importantly it would seem that, ambiguity invokes notions of locality and highlights the inferential consequences of reading locality for the reader. As Hester noted in his study about identity using MCA on news coverage about a steel company (based in Wales) making several thousand steelworkers unemployed,

“The task for the programme maker is to make a programme for an audience. A central consideration in turning something into a ‘something for us’ would seem to be recipient design. In other words, how are stories told in such a way that they are relevant for, and take into account, their recipients, with respect to their design features?” (2002:26).

Ambiguity may be a mechanism to make the news story relevant to the lives and interests of potential readers through invoking notions of locality.

The upcoming sections demonstrate how locational formulations operate in headline 4. I suggest that the reader is encouraged to draw upon local

geographies, local common-sense knowledge, beliefs and practices from the Catholic community through the selection of the location category “cross-border”. The analysis therefore provides further details about how locational formulations do additional work other than locating geographical places.

The central focus of the analysis is concerned with the consequences of reading ambiguity about who crossed the “border”. I suggest that the ambiguity tends to highlight the importance of reading locality and thereby upgrades prior readings associated with “the troubles” in Northern Ireland to “the troubles” for Catholics in the locality. For instance, reading that the “victims” of the crime may have crossed the “border” can be understood as a warning to Catholics living in the locality. Alternatively, reading that this activity may have been undertaken by the “terrorists” enables the reader to question the effectiveness of the armed forces in dealing with terrorism, thereby implying some level of culpability for the crime. Both readings act as a mechanism to highlight the consequences of the incident for Catholics in the locality.

### **5.3. Analysis of Headline 4: “Pregnant mum stabbed and sister threatened DRUGS PUSHERS IN CROSS-BORDER TERROR”**

#### **5.3.1. Reading ambiguity about who crossed the “border”**

In the previous chapter I demonstrated how it is possible to read this headline in terms of the crime being understood as a breach of morality. Furthermore, it was established that assessing the morality of the activities undertaken was reliant upon the inferences associated with the selection of the locational category “cross-border”. It was shown that it is possible to understand the political, religious and

moral context of the description through attending to the relevance of category selection in the newspaper headlines.

The forthcoming analysis demonstrates that reading ambiguity rests upon the reader understanding the category “cross border” as a location category. In both cases the reader is understood to be co-present in Derry, which powerfully encourages the reader to draw upon local common-sense knowledge of being a Catholic, living or working in the locality. Once again, I suggest that this reading is made possible through the application of Schegloff’s rule on locations<sup>107</sup>, where location categories are not selected when the reader is understood to be co-present. The non-selection of the category “Derry” is understood in terms of the reader being co-present in this locality<sup>108</sup>.

Furthermore, the category “Derry” may not be regarded as purely a location category. This category is highly relevant to the context of the description where the selection of “Derry” (in the newspaper’s title) enables the reader to interpret that the newspaper items are directed at a particular section of the city’s community, which is commonsensically understood to be predominantly Nationalists and Catholics<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>107</sup> Schegloff’s location rule is detailed in full in chapter 4.

<sup>108</sup> The selection of this category is highly relevant to the context of the description where the selection “Derry” enables the reader to understand that the newspaper items are directed at a particular section of the city’s community, which is commonsensically read to be predominantly Nationalists/Catholics. The category “Derry” is not only understood as a geographical term but also provides the reader with information about the possible religious and political affiliations of the reader.

<sup>109</sup> This observation shows a striking resemblance to Drew’s (1978) work on accusations and religious geographies and this will be considered further later in the chapter.



The reader therefore is not merely drawing upon local geographies, local practices of crossing a local border, and local beliefs about the location of terrorist activities to understand the ambiguity; but also draws upon common-sense knowledge from a particular section of the community, namely, Catholic communities in the locality.

Reading that the “victims of the crime” may have crossed the “border” is made possible through the reader drawing upon local common-sense knowledge of “crossing the border” in the Derry area. The reader is able to interpret that this mundane activity resulted in the women being “victims” of a vicious terrorist attack. Commonsensically, this invites the reader to understand that this type of incident may occur again, and that the crime has serious consequences for Catholics in the locality going about their everyday lives. The reader is able to interpret the headline as a potential warning to local Catholic people undertaking mundane activities such as crossing the border in the pursuit of work-related or leisure activities.

Alternatively, reading that the “terrorists” undertook the movement from one area to another is made possible through the predicates and CBAs associated with the category “terrorist”, where these activities are understood to involve a considerable amount of movement across the “border”. Again, the reader is encouraged to draw upon local common-sense knowledge about “crossing the border” in this locality. This invites the reader to judge and evaluate the competency of the armed forces and to interpret that in this case they have been

ineffective. Consequently, it is implied that the armed forces may have some degree of responsibility for the crime taking place due to their inefficiency.

So how is it possible to read that the “victims of the crime” crossed the “border”? I suggest that understanding that the reader is co-present in “Derry” implies that the newspaper’s readership may be Catholics who are understood to not acknowledge the legitimate presence of border checkpoints. “Crossing the border” is understood as a mundane everyday occurrence for Catholics and this suggests that the “victims” may have been Catholics. Drawing upon local common-sense practices and beliefs of Catholic and Protestant communities, the former are understood to frequently engage in “cross-border” activities and the latter are not<sup>110 111</sup>. This reading is made possible through the reader understanding that Catholics may interpret the category “cross-border” as an artificial border that has been enforced by British government through inferences associated with the MCD “divided Ireland”.

Catholic communities may therefore be understood to not acknowledge the presence of such “borders” and not let the presence of the armed forces encroach on their freedom of movement. “Cross border” activities can be interpreted as a

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<sup>110</sup> This reading is significant as it demonstrates the complexity of interpreting the category Catholic; where it may be understood as a religion, an alliance with Nationalist views, to reside in a particular part of the locality, a moral framework, a way of managing being ordinary, an insult, an association with paramilitary force, etc. Again, it demonstrates that the indexicality of expression provides the researcher with a powerful tool to show how society members accomplish social action.

<sup>111</sup> It should be noted that “crossing the border” might not be understood to be a mundane everyday occurrence for Protestants as they are likely to acknowledge that Northern and Southern Ireland are different countries due to their political viewpoint. In addition, it is possible to understand that Protestants may have less reason to “cross the border” as there is less likelihood for there to be family, community or other connections.



CBA associated with the category Catholic. In this sense, Catholics and Protestants do not merely engage in different activities but may engage with local common-sense geographies differently too. As McHoul and Watson pointed out,

“Whilst this domain of practical geographical knowledge is common knowledge, it is also the case that members may be differentially ‘located’ within it. In other words, for some given members, some items of that knowledge might be more ‘remote’, less vivid, relatively empty of detail, etc. than others” (1984:297).

This is an important analytical point as it demonstrates the orderly composition of local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practices and beliefs and how society members may utilise such information to orientate to the topic of the description.

Reading that the “victims” may have been Catholics provides the reader with further information about where the incident may have taken place. The location category “cross-border” draws upon the reader’s local geographical common-sense knowledge as to the actual location of potential “border” checkpoints.

Commonsensically, there are many different “border” checkpoints in the locality. The reader therefore draws upon local common-sense practices of most frequently used checkpoints by Catholics.

This reading seems to have some resonance with Schegloff’s notion of “territorially based membership” and highlights not only the importance of membership but also recognition of the locational formulation. As he stated,

“We have already suggested that recognisability of locational formulations is related to membership, and particularly to the locally organised knowledge attributable to territorially based membership classes. Where someone lives can be informative about what they know” (1972:111).



This reading implies that the reader may also be a Catholic in the locality due to the recognition and understanding of the locational formulation “cross-border” as denoting CBAs associated with Catholics. I suggest that this reading is central to the intelligibility of the headline as the reader can be understood to be likely to cross the “border” and commonsensically may be vulnerable to the same kind of attack from terrorist activity. The newspaper headline is thereby upgraded from a report about “the troubles” in Northern Ireland to “the troubles” for Catholics in the locality. For this reason, I suggest that the headline is understood as a warning to Catholics in the locality and highlights the dangers of undertaking everyday mundane activities such as crossing the “border” as the destructive and disruptive forces of terrorism are ever present.

Conversely, reading that the “terrorists” crossed the “border” is made possible through drawing upon predicates and CBAs associated with the category “terrorist” in conjunction with local common-sense knowledge, geographies and practices drawn from Catholic communities. The reader is able to make judgements about where the incident might have taken place, assess the efficiency of the checkpoint officials in specific areas and lay some responsibility for the incident to the ineffectiveness of the armed forces.

The “terrorists” can be understood to be tied to predicates that demand movement. For instance, typical CBAs associated with the category “terrorist” include actions such as “arms deals”, “punishment beatings”, “smuggling goods”, “criminal activities”, “setting bombs”, “drug trafficking”, and “anti social behaviour”. These activities can be understood in terms of smuggling goods or travelling

between Northern Ireland and the South. This invokes notions of crossing a “border” and suggests that the “terrorists” may have taken advantage of two countries bordering onto each other in order to support (and perhaps fund) their terrorist activities.

The reader is encouraged to consider where the incident may have taken place. Furthermore, the reader draws upon local common-sense practices of crossing a “border”, in order to assess the most likely checkpoints that “terrorists” may have targeted<sup>112</sup>. This reading draws upon Catholic common-sense knowledge through tied CBAs linked to crossing the “border”. Catholic local common-sense knowledge of particular checkpoints is likely to be more detailed than those sections of the community that do not undertake “cross-border” journeys on a regular basis. In this way, local common-sense practices are a resource for the reader and enable the reader to link together specific checkpoints and typical CBAs associated with these areas.

The use of local common-sense practices within this headline therefore seems to operate in a similar way to Schegloff’s notion of “course of action places”. He stated that,

“Another sort of formulation might be called “course of action places,” i.e. places that are identifiable places only by virtue of what goes on there and are so formulated” (1972:101).

This raises an interesting point as it demonstrates how – as McHoul and Watson

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<sup>112</sup> This raises an interesting point, as the reader may be understood to discount or include certain checkpoints on the grounds of the reputation of the area surrounding the “border” checkpoint. For instance, drawing on local common-sense knowledge of areas vulnerable to “terrorist” activities in and around “Derry”, the reader is able to interpret that the incident may have happened near areas where terrorist activities have occurred in the past.

(1984) suggested – local common-sense knowledge appears to be differentially located in some members than others. The reader utilises local common-sense practices linked to CBAs associated with Catholic communities to assess where the terrorist attack may have occurred. In addition, the reader draws upon local common-sense knowledge of the types of activities that “officials” would undertake at a “cross-border” checkpoint around “Derry”. Associated CBAs may include “assessing people’s motives for journeys”, “identifying people involved in terrorism”, “searching for goods associated with terrorist activity”, “carrying and potential use of weapons”, “showing a military presence”, and “arresting people suspected of terrorist activities”. The reader is therefore able to understand that the “officials” undertake activities that monitor and assess the legitimacy of journeys and undertake category tied predicates such as actively seeking out potential terrorist activity.

In this instance, however, the journey would seem to have been incorrectly assessed, as “terrorists” attacked innocent women going about their daily business, which invites the reader to interpret that the checkpoint “officials” were inept. This reading invokes the SRP “border officials/potential terrorists” and enables the reader to understand that the “border officials” should have been able to predict the intentions of the “terrorists”. This resembles Drew’s (1978) work about the construction of accusation through religious geographies. He pointed out that the team-like qualities of SRPs not only extend to prescription of activities; it is also predictive of the types of activities that parties should undertake. In this sense, the reader is able to understand that the border officials’ actions were ineffective or, in Drew’s words, defective:



“The availability of that prediction is thus accountable grounds for inferring that the action which the witness ordered the police to take was in some way defective...It is in the sense that the inappropriateness of the action can be taken to have been more than ‘chance’ misreading of the situation, or a mistake ‘anyone might have made’, that I use the word defective” (1978:17).

This is further supported through drawing upon the reader’s local common-sense practices of crossing a “border” where the reader is aware that some checkpoints are more lax than others and therefore may be less effective in preventing this sort of activity. This tends to strengthen inferences that the reader is expected to be Catholic through associated predicates and tied CBAs and again demonstrates the specificity of local common-sense knowledge and how the reader is able to make use of this knowledge to make the headline intelligible.

The significance of reading that the “border officials” were defective is threefold. First, it enables the reader to understand the headline in terms of the armed forces having some culpability for the crime occurring. Second, it highlights how the reader makes the headline intelligible through drawing upon local common-sense knowledge and practices drawn from the Catholic communities. Lastly, it demonstrates the mechanisms that newspaper headlines use to make news stories relevant to audiences.

To summarise, I have suggested that reading the location category “cross-border” is central to the sense-making procedures utilised by the reader, where reading locality highlights the different practices within the community and therefore different (versions) of local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practices and beliefs that exist in the locality. The locational formulation “cross-border” powerfully encourages the reader to recognise the ambiguity about who crossed

the “border” and to understand the importance of the locality. In this way, it would appear that the headline is likely to be targeted at Catholic communities in the locality due to the need to draw upon specific local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practices and beliefs linked to CBAs associated with Catholics.

All that remains of this chapter is a comparative analysis of how locality is understood in headlines 2 and 4 in order to assess how local common-sense knowledge operates in different geographical areas. It is hoped that this discussion will raise analytical direction for future chapters and highlight pertinent points regarding the context of the description.

#### **5.4. A comparative analysis**

In accordance with the overall emphasis of the chapter, the comparative analysis is concerned with demonstrating how the embedded properties of local common-sense knowledge operate in both of the headlines. The key areas of comparison include:

- how categories in the headlines are understood as locational formulations;
- the centrality of reading locality; and
- how local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practices and beliefs operate in newspapers from the geographical areas of Catford and Derry.

Consequently, I hope to shed some light on the apparatus used by newsmakers to make news stories relevant for their audiences and show how society members utilise these resources to make sense of the newspaper headlines.

Let us start with a brief comparison of how the reader was able to understand categories in terms of locational formulations in headlines 2 and 4. Both headlines had one central location category, which invoked many readings associated with the locality. Neither of the headlines included place terms in the categories selected, but these were understood through the reader considering the relevance of their own location through the inferences associated with movement. This made it possible to understand that the reader was co-present in localities through the application of Schegloff's rule on location. I suggest that co-presence is therefore a central component of reading location categories in these headlines and may serve as a mechanism to both constitute the topic and orientate the reader to the significance of reading locality.

A notable difference is that headline 2 included a further location category through reading that the "clergyman" had connections to a "parish". Despite the inclusion of location categories associated with breaches of morality in headline 4 (outlined in chapter 4), I propose that the locational formulations operate differently, as the former invokes inferences associated with the immorality of the crime while the latter is centrally concerned with the importance of locality.

The locational formulation in headline 2 draws upon common-sense geographical knowledge, whereas reading inferences about immorality of the crime in headline 4 encourages the reader to invoke local common-sense knowledge. Again, this demonstrates the analytical benefits of focusing upon how the interaction was accomplished, as it may be tempting to assume that reading locality utilises local common-sense knowledge or local common-sense geographies. Clearly, in this



instance, local common-sense knowledge or local common-sense geographies have not been used and indicates that this may be a useful area to investigate further.

Turning to the centrality of reading locality, I propose that the intelligibility and sense-making procedure utilised by the reader is based on understanding the relevance of the locality in both of the headlines. In other words, the topics of the news stories are constituted through reading locality. Understanding locality in headline 2 is brought about through several readings which operate together to heighten the importance of the locality. Briefly, these include; understanding that the train was a local train; that the crime had consequences for local people; and that either the locality may be the target of criminal activity, or that people in the locality are vulnerable to crime as a result of the type of trains operating in the locality. In this way, reading locality in headline 2 seems to operate in an incremental manner. This mechanism does not deflect the centrality of reading locality, but merely indicates how reading locality is made possible in this instance.

This differs considerably from headline 4, where reading locality was accomplished through the readable ambiguity about who crossed the “border”. Consequently, it would appear that reading locality is not achieved through a single mechanism and that the centrality of locality is not reliant upon the employment of one mechanism as opposed to another. Again, this raises a point for further investigation to establish if these mechanisms are repeated in other

headlines or if different mechanisms operate to highlight the importance of reading locality.

The analysis also demonstrated that the readable ambiguity in the headlines acts as a powerful mechanism to highlight the importance of the locality in the headlines. Observations about how ambiguity operates in both of the headlines include the reader's utilisation of local common-sense knowledge rather than general common-sense knowledge and the tendency for several types of local knowledge to be combined together to bring about readings that are associated with the locality. In this way, ambiguity operates in a highly complex manner.

There are notable differences, however. In headline 2 the reader resolves any ambiguity by drawing upon a combination of local common-sense practices and local common-sense geographies. This is the case whether the headline is interpreted as though the locality is being target for criminal activity or whether the type of train makes people in the locality vulnerable to crime.

In headline 4 reading that the “victims of the crime” crossed the “border” combined local common-sense practices and beliefs to enable the reader to interpret that “Catholic” is tied to CBAs associated with crossing the “border”. In addition, Catholic local geographies and practices are combined to locate where the incident may have taken place and checkpoints frequently used by Catholics. Alternatively, reading that the “terrorists” crossed the “border” combined Catholic local common-sense practices and Catholic local common-sense knowledge to identify the potential location of checkpoints used by “terrorists” and to apportion

some blame to the armed forces for the incident. Headline 4 draws upon different and more specific types of local common-sense knowledge, practices and geographies in each reading. The local common-sense resources that the reader utilises in reading ambiguity, and thereby locality, is therefore another area which requires further investigation in other newspaper headlines.

The final part of this section compares how local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practices and beliefs operate in these two cases. There are several relevant points here. In terms of similarities, both headlines encourage the reader to draw upon local practices and these tend to be combined with local geographies in several readings. This would seem to be a useful observation and tends to indicate that there may be a relationship between what people do and their local common-sense geographies. In other words, local common-sense practices may inform local common-sense geographical knowledge. Consequently, Schegloff's notion of "territorially based membership" may operate not only by reference to where someone lives, but the practices that people undertake or may have undertaken. This would seem to account for the observation that the reader may not be (literally) based in the locality but still is able to make sense of the news stories in the headlines.

A further similarity is that both headlines appear to be associated with the consequences of the crime for the locality, and this encourages the reader to draw upon complex combinations of local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practice or beliefs. It would seem that more specific readings require the reader to draw upon more specific local knowledge. For instance, in headline 2,



understanding that this was a local train draws upon local common-sense geographies, while reading the consequences of the crime draws upon both local geographies and practices. Similarly, in headline 4 understanding the headline in terms of a warning for Catholics draws upon a combination of local geographical common-sense knowledge, practices and beliefs from Catholic communities. I therefore propose that this may be a mechanism to target specific audiences, or in Hester's (2002) words, make the news story designed for the recipient. Again, this would seem to be another area for further investigation in other newspaper headlines.

There are also a number of notable differences in how the headlines highlight the importance of locality. For instance, headline 4 draws upon local common-sense beliefs, which is not the case in headline 2. This may appear to be a straightforward observation. However, I propose that this may possibly be a further adaptation of Schegloff's notion of "territorially based membership". In this sense, there may be a relationship between local common-sense beliefs and the type of local practices members undertake. It may be another example of how newsmakers are able to target specific sections of communities, through drawing upon the reader's ability to recognise the relevance of local common-sense beliefs and thereby local practices. This would be a useful area to pursue in other headlines to establish if the outcome was the same or different from headline 4.

Finally, the analysis has also demonstrated that the ambiguity in headline 4 tended to differentiate between Catholic and Protestant communities within the locality and made it possible to identify the possible audience of the news story. In

headline 2, however, the headline did not differentiate between sections of the community. This would seem to be an important point as it invited inferences to be made about the identity of the reader and possible mechanisms that newsmakers may utilise to reach their audiences and perhaps different sub-sections of communities.

It would appear from this analysis that reading locality is a mechanism to target different audiences, as suggested in chapter 4, as news stories may have different purposes and therefore different readers. I have shown that location categories do not operate in a simplistic or mechanised manner. Location categories are highly complex membership devices, which require the reader to recognise, utilise and differentiate between common-sense knowledge and various types of local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practices and beliefs.

The chapter that follows is concerned with the further exploration of the relationship between location categories, reading locality, and newsmakers targeting different audiences in other newspaper headlines. Special reference will be given to mechanisms such as ambiguity, co-presence in the locality, and the utilisation of (so-called) community-specific local common-sense knowledge. In addition there will be an investigation into how other mechanisms operate, such as place terms, encouraging the reader to interpret the importance of locality in the newspaper headline.

## Chapter 6

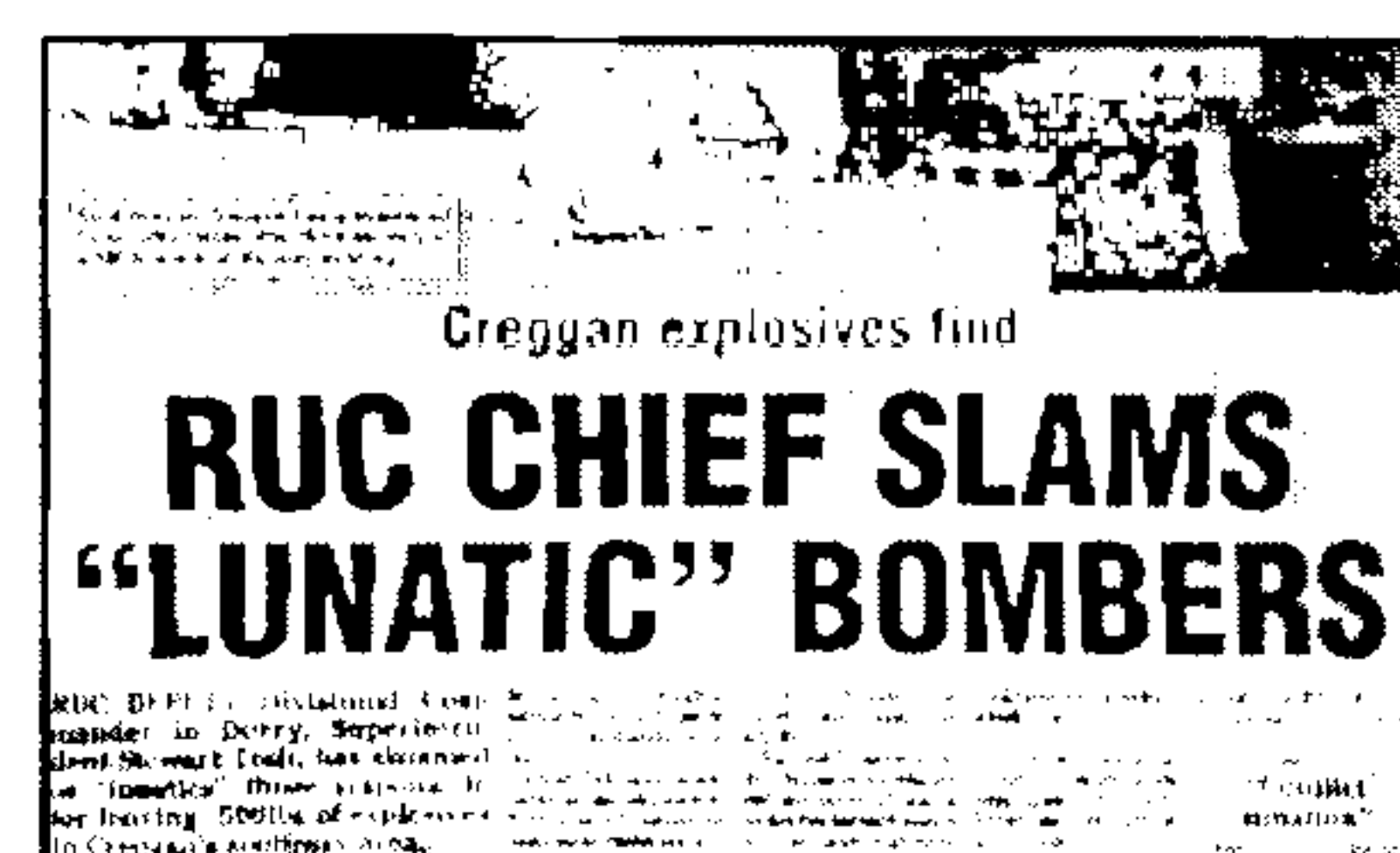
### **6. Reading locality through the contextual relevance of geographical location**

The central concern of the previous chapter was to investigate how location categories operate in headlines 3 and 4 with particular reference to how the reader understands the significance of locality and thereby the consequences of the crime for local people.

Analytically relevant issues included the utilisation of common-sense geographical knowledge; the use of local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practices and/or beliefs and interpreting the readable ambiguity of the headline. These mechanisms make it possible for news stories to be relevant to particular audiences through their orientation to the topic of the description.

This chapter will further investigate location categories, particularly the selection and utilisation of geographical formulations and the understandings these mechanisms invoke. In doing so, readable ambiguity will be discussed in terms of how it may invite readings associated with locality. The analysis will return to headline 1 and will also consider a new headline

(5), **“Creggan explosives find RUC CHIEF SLAMS ‘LUNATIC’ BOMBERS”**.



These headlines have been selected as they invite the reader to focus upon locality through the selection of geographical location categories and readable ambiguity.

In addition, the diverse geographical locations of the headlines provide an



opportunity to undertake a comparative analysis across different sites, comparing how such mechanisms operate in a number of headlines.

Consonant with previous observations about reading locality, this chapter shows how location is formulated for the purpose of the task at hand. I suggest that location categories operate in a highly complex manner and require the reader to recognise, differentiate and utilise common-sense knowledge, local common-sense knowledge and geographies. The investigation of locational formulations makes it possible for the analyst to show how newsmakers make news stories relevant to audiences and how readers make use of common-sense knowledge(s) to make the newspaper headline intelligible. Accordingly, the researcher is able to gain some understanding of the reciprocity of the publicly used and publicly available resources for newsmakers and for readers.

Location categories are a powerful tool for the analyst as they enable the investigation of real phenomena *in situ* and provide specific contexts of use to constitute meaning. As elsewhere, the analysis is concerned with members' methods and details how societal members "see" particular activities as those activities are being undertaken (Sacks, 1984:21). The focus of the research activity is to reveal the *social* organisation of reading newspaper headlines, not merely the linguistic organisation or an anthropological version of culture<sup>113</sup>.

As we have seen, Sacks' vision of the social science project was to understand the 'machinery' or resources that society members utilise to do everyday mundane

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<sup>113</sup> Although Sacks showed some respect for anthropological studies, he was critical of anthropologists' tendency to provide explanations of behaviour in terms of 'culture'. Sacks emphasised the importance of attending to how activity was achieved and therefore avoided a deterministic model of 'culture'.

activities (Sacks, 1992a). This chapter reflects Sacks' (and for that matter Garfinkel's) concern to make common-sense knowledge the topic in order to explain how the contextual relevance of newspaper headlines is utilised and recognised by the reader. The selection of locational formulations is a central part of this recognition process and therefore represents a vital contextual resource within the sense-making procedure.

A word of caution is required though. The notion of a machine might suggest a rationalist model of social activity where devices and rules are used with *intent* to produce certain end products<sup>114</sup>. Yet Sacks reminded us,

“Most of the things that we [other social scientists, laypeople] treat as products, i.e. the achieved orderliness of the world of some sort, are *by-products*. That is, there is machinery that produces orderly events, but most of the events that we come across that are orderly are not specifically the product of a machine designed to produce them, but are off-shoots of a machine designed to do something else or nothing in particular” (1992b:240).

Furthermore, as Watson pointed out, for Sacks,

“...categorisation was to be analysed as a culturally methodic (procedural) activity rather than in terms of an inert cultural grid” (n.d.:3).

Sacks adopted an “anti-cognitive stance” (Watson, n.d.:4) and was not concerned with psychological procedures such as the processing of information, but rather with showing how understandings come about. In this sense, the concern is not with the intentions of either the newsmaker or the reader, but the skilful interactional work that is undertaken.

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<sup>114</sup> Goffman (1981) was critical of Sacks for this reason and referred to his work on membership categorisation as being little more than ‘systems engineering’. Watson (1997) also pointed out that the wariness of ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts to use MCA is for this reason, as imagery associated with machinery or apparatus gives the impression of a static, inflexible, underlying structure of categories and not a praxiological approach.



Locational formulations therefore do not operate in a deterministic manner within these headlines; quite the contrary. These issues can only be resolved through attending to the details of “procedures, methods, maxims [which] can be used to generate the orderly features” (Sacks, 1992b:339) found in everyday mundane activities, such as interpretation of newspaper headlines in terms of locality<sup>115</sup>.

Turning to the analytical aims of this chapter, the initial aim is to develop an understanding of how location categories operate in newspaper headlines with particular reference to ambiguity, the co-presence of parties and the use, recognition and combination of different types of common-sense knowledge by the reader. In this way, the analysis will be directed by the observations made in chapter 5 and yet will remain flexible to follow interesting or new areas for investigation such as the inferential consequences associated with the selection of categories read as geographical locations.

An additional aim is to undertake a comparative analysis of headlines 1 and 5 to enable the researcher to gain (further) understanding of the orderly properties and use of local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practices and beliefs in different geographical locations. It will also provide an opportunity for the researcher to establish if the selection of a geographical location category is an alternative mechanism for reading locality or can be used in addition to other mechanisms.

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<sup>115</sup> This approach to understanding locality and geographical location is vastly different from research drawn from geographical disciplines such as perception geography. Here there has been much research into the area of cognitive maps in order to understand the complexities of how spatial knowledge is created, stored, used and measured for the purpose of revealing the complexities of spatial decision making processes. Reference to this type of work, again highlights the distinctive quality of Sacks' work and his “anti-cognitive stance” (Watson, n.d.:4).



## 6.1. The occasioned use of local common-sense knowledge: reading the contextual relevances of locality and geographical location

Schegloff's work on locational formulations is concerned with the occasioned and embedded properties of category selection. Much of his discussion about locational formulations is centred on society members' ability to recognise place terms<sup>116</sup>, membership, and topics within description, through attending to the contextual relevances of the categories selected. Schegloff stated that,

"What we mean by "recognisability" is that the hearer can perform operations on the name - categorise it, find as a member of which class it is being used, bring knowledge to bear on it, detect which of its attributes are relevant in context, etc" (1974:91).

Society members therefore undertake analysis of the categories selected and utilise "...the products of their analysis" (Schegloff, 1974:115) to reveal the context of the social interaction. This raises important analytical issues. First, context in this sense is distinct from the reification of culture that provides a background against which the interpretation of interaction can be understood. As Housley and Fitzgerald pointed out "...context is not imposed, it is achieved" (2002:68). The central concern is to show the analysis that members undertake and the shifts between location, membership and topic analysis and the interactional outcome of these analyses.

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<sup>116</sup> Kitchin, a perception geographer, also noted the importance of recognition of places. He identified three different types of recognition tasks,

"*iconic* tasks, which require the respondent to correctly identify features on a map or aerial photograph or familiar area. The second types are *configuration* tasks, which require a participant to identify which of several configurations displays the correct spatial relations. The third type of recognition task is one that requires the verification of statements" (2002:155-156).

Consequently, geographers' approach to the notion of recognition is conceptualised in terms of cognition, as opposed to social interaction.

Second, from this perspective, context is locally produced and developed incrementally<sup>117 118</sup> through drawing upon inferential frameworks provided by the categories selected (Drew & Heritage, 1992).

“What ‘collection’ the category belongs to, and what the collection is, are constituted in and how it is used this time (Hester, 1994: 242)

"Furthermore, the notion of context that is advanced does not merely refer to the parameters of social interaction but to context as an indexical and reflexive accomplishment by members" (op cit).

The analysis of location categories therefore provides an opportunity for the researcher to demonstrate how context is constituted through category selection and recognition in this instance. Hester’s use of the term "categories-in-context" (1994:222) reflects this stance and highlights the need to demonstrate how locally produced context happens to be brought about through attending to the members' analytic work.

With these issues in mind, let us turn to the analysis. The analysis of headline 1 is divided into three sections, where each section considers different aspects of the inferential framework that location categories provide for the reader. I suggest that associated inferences enable the reader to understand that this was a local crime as the “driver” and/or “employer” can be interpreted as being connected to the locality in some way, either through their employment or residence.

Ambiguity about co-presence powerfully encourages readers to understand the contextual relevance of the driver's and employer's membership of the locality,

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<sup>117</sup> This incremental development of context has been demonstrated through the analysis of location categories in headline 2.

<sup>118</sup> The issue of procedural consequentiality within the analysis of talk has focused upon the need to demonstrate how, for instance, an institutional context is displayed by the parties as a continuing and on-going process. As Schegloff reminded us, "not everything said in some context... is relevantly orientated to that context" (1991:62). It must be recognised that context in conversation is open to rapid and dynamic change depending on the social interaction that is taking place.



thereby providing readings that this incident may have consequences for the locality.

The location category “vanish” encourages the reader to differentiate between readings associated with geographical location and locality. Reading the location category “vanish” in this way is central to the intelligibility of the headline as readers use the products of topic analysis to bring about an orientation to the significance of the crime for the locality.

The final section is concerned with inferential consequences of reading ambiguity about the driver’s involvement in the crime, adding further weight to the significance of locality in the headline. The analysis therefore demonstrates how the news story is understood as being relevant to the reader through its association with the locality by showing the inferential consequences of reading geographical location, predicates and ambiguity operating in this headline.

The analysis of headline 5 is divided into two sections and focuses mainly on the selection of the geographical location categories “Creggan” and “RUC”. The first section of the analysis demonstrates how it is possible to understand that the “explosives” may be “illegal bombs” found on the “Creggan” housing estate through drawing upon common-sense knowledge of “explosives” in conjunction with the locational formulations “RUC” and “Creggan”. These locational categories invoke common-sense geographies and local common-sense geographies. Their “concentric structure” (Schegloff, 1972) makes it possible for the reader to understand the category “Creggan” as an area within the boundaries



of Derry. Further location analysis shows how the reader is also able to understand the category “Creggan” as a housing estate within the locality.

The second section of the analysis shows how the reader is able to understand that the purpose of the “illegal bombs” is linked to “terrorism” through the co-selection of the categories “RUC Chief”, “lunatic bombers” and “illegal bombs”. Together these categories encourage the reader to draw upon, and evaluate the morality of, CBAs associated with “terrorism” and the “RUC Chief”, which invokes the SRP “RUC officer/terrorist”. Furthermore, the reader is able to understand the possible target for the “illegal bombs” through drawing upon local common-sense knowledge of “Catholic terrorist” activities in Derry, such as “challenging Protestant parades”. The analysis demonstrates the interactional work that the geographical location categories encourage, thereby addressing the analytical concern of how society members make sense of the headline.

## **6.2. Analysis of Headline 1: “Driver and his £100,000 load vanish”**

### **6.2.1. Ambiguity about co-presence: reading that the crime has consequences for the locality**

The analysis in chapter 3 demonstrated how it is possible to read headline 1 as a news report about a crime where a valuable “load” had been stolen and the “driver” responsible for delivering the “load” was missing.

This section demonstrates the interactional outcome of reading ambiguity about the co-presence of the parties, where it is unclear whether the “driver” and/or the “employer” may have a connection to the locality, through the location of the delivery business or place of residence. Ambiguity provides a rich inferential

framework where the reader is encouraged to undertake membership analysis, the products of which invoke the MCD “local people”. The ambiguity about co-presence therefore provides the reader with the contextual relevance of category selection; that is, the importance of the locality within the news story.

As demonstrated earlier, the categories “driver”, “£100,000 load” and “vanish” are drawn from the MCD “transporting goods”. This provides the reader with inferences that the “driver” is employed to deliver goods from one destination to another through associated predicates and CBAs.

Commonsensibly, employees have employers, and this understanding invokes the typical SRP “employee/employer”. The team-like quality of the SRP invites the reader to understand that the "employee" and the "employer" are linked together through their mutual interest in transporting goods; the former in order to get paid and the latter to meet the demand for goods to be supplied<sup>119 120</sup>. These inferences invoke the notion of movement, encouraging the reader to consider the relevance of their location and consequently make inferences about the possible location of the delivery base<sup>121</sup>. The application of Schegloff’s (1972) rule on the

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<sup>119</sup> Commonsensibly, delivery businesses are understood to involve the delivery of goods and imply both an outward and a return journey. Furthermore, “delivery businesses” typically have a place where goods are stored. Such facilities are associated with CBAs such as “storing goods” and “collection points for deliveries”. The reader is therefore able to understand that part of the journey will include returning to the collection point or the base of the “delivery business”. The reader is therefore able to understand that the “£100,000 load” in terms of it being a “delivery job”.

<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, the “employee” is read not as anyone’s “employee”, but the “employee” of this particular “employer” through the application of the consistency rule. The SRP, alongside the consistency rule is a strong device, enabling the reader to gain information about how the work is organised (and the rights and obligations as a worker and employer through associated predicates).

<sup>121</sup> The reader may not be actually located in the Catford/Hither Green area at the time of reading the headline. In fact, the reader may not even (still) be a resident in the area. However, I suggest that the reader is able to draw upon common-sense knowledge of the area to interpret the categories selected and their associated inferences.



selection of a location formulation invites the reader to understand that the parties are co-present in the locality, as Catford and Hither Green have not been selected within the headline. The reader is therefore able to understand that the “employer” may be local and have a delivery business situated in the Catford and Hither Green area or that both or either of the “driver” and “employer” live in this area<sup>122</sup>.

How the parties are connected to the locality and whether the link is in terms of residence, employment or the geographical location of the delivery business is unclear. Equally, there is also ambiguity about whether the connection is with the “employee”, the “employer” or both.

Sacks suggested that ambiguities are resolved through referring to inferences associated with the selection of other categories in the text:

“The selection of the category, then, can have some impact in resolving potential ambiguities; that is to say, making them not-arisable; under, of course, but with another Member, who knows the categories’ use” (1992:585).

The ambiguity about the co-presence of the “driver” and/or “employee” encourages the reader to draw upon the inferential framework provided through category selection. Schegloff noted that,

“...formulation of locations accomplish and exhibit the particularities of an interaction, and they do this through general and formal structures” (1972:115).

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<sup>122</sup> Commonsensically, people often work and live in the same locality, which implies that this may be the case in this in this instance. I suggest this reading strengthens the relevance of the locality in the news story and provides the reader with further inferences about the consequences of the crime for people in the locality.



Ambiguity serves to highlight the “contextual resources” (Hester & Eglin, 1997:29) which are used in making sense of the categorisation within the headline<sup>123</sup>. These resources include the inferences associated with the categories selected and the location of the reader, and thereby the reader is encouraged to undertake membership analysis.

The inferential framework provided by the SRP "employer/employee" and the category “load” enables the reader to understand the significance of work, the workplace and the delivery base.

These readings are made possible through the application of the consistency rule corollary. Consequently, both the “driver” and the “employer” are interpreted as being drawn from the MCD “employment” which tends to weaken readings associated with residence, and strengthen readings that the delivery business is based within the locality. These inferences, in conjunction with the products of the readers' membership analysis, make it possible to understand that the "employer/employee" are drawn from the category "local people" (through their possible work connections). This is not to suggest that other readings are not possible, but merely to indicate that the contextual resources associated with the delivery base are stronger<sup>124</sup>.

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<sup>123</sup> The ambiguity about who is connected with the locality may be a mechanism to persuade the reader to complete the accompanying article, as noted by Lee (1984) in his paper analysing the rape of a girl.

<sup>124</sup> In the next section I discuss the issue of co-presence further in relation to the category “vanish” and suggest that the headline appears to be told from the perspective of the “employer” rather than the “employee”.

Furthermore, the interactional outcome is the same whether the link rests with residence or the location of the delivery base, as both readings invoke the contextual relevance of the locality and thereby downgrade the significance of the ambiguity. The reader is therefore able to transform the SRP “employee/employer” to “local employee/local employer” and this invokes readings that the crime is significant to the locality.

The crime is therefore not just a crime, but a crime in the locality, where either a local "driver" or local resident may have been involved with the vanishing "load" or where the crime may have consequences for a local business. The headline can be interpreted as a news story that has relevance to the locality and people living in this area.

The section that follows demonstrates the complexities of locational formulations through analysing the category “vanish”, which is an inferentially rich category which constructs a possible motive for the crime, and also provides a mechanism for the reader to differentiate locality from other geographical locations.

#### **6.2.2. Reading the inconsequentiality of the geographical location of the “load”: interpreting the location category “vanish”**

The selection of the location category “vanish” makes it possible for the reader to understand that the present geographical location of the “£100,000 load” is of less consequence than the impact of the crime. This reading is made possible through the reader being encouraged to undertake topic analysis (rather than location analysis). The products of the reader’s analysis thereby provide an inferential

framework that highlights the importance of the locality through inviting notions of the consequences of the crime for the locality.

As noted in chapter 3, the category “vanish” is frequently read as having a specific interpretation, which is commonly related to the MCD “magic”. In this instance the reader is encouraged to consider the relevance of selecting “vanish” alongside the categories “driver” and “£100,000 load” and draw inferences associated with the rights and obligations of the SRP “local employer/local employee”. Typical CBAs may include activities such as “giving orders about a delivery job/carrying out orders of a delivery job”, “managing the delivery base/collecting from the delivery base” and “building local links/supplying local links”. The reader is therefore able to understand that the employee carrying out the “delivery job” was expected to arrive at a designated geographical location within a certain time frame, and that this did not happen because the “load” may have been stolen.

Reading that a crime has taken place in the locality can be understood to relate to the “tellability” of the news story, where the story is written from the perspective of the “employer”. I suggest that this is consistent with Lee’s analysis of a newspaper headline about the rape of a Girl Guide by Hells Angels. On reading the headline Lee noted that,

“I was mundanely and unproblematically able to expect that the story would take up the girl's view of the events. In fact I was able without seeming plan or effort to see the story as a story told in a manner so as to reveal reality as experienced by the girl” (1984:70).

The reader is able to interpret the “employer” as possibly a “victim of the crime”, as commonsensically the “employer” does not know the whereabouts of his “load” and “£100,000” is a substantial amount of money to lose from a business.



Selecting the category “vanish” provides the reader with an inferential framework that implies that the “employer” knows the location of the “delivery base” and the *expected* geographical location of the “load”, but not its *present* geographical location.

On the other hand, the “driver” may know where the “load” is located through the inferences associated with his disappearance. In this way, the selection of “vanish” invites the reader to understand that the “employer” cannot locate the “load”, that a crime has taken place, and that crimes usually have perpetrators and victims. Therefore, reading the story from the employer’s perspective provides inferences that he is possibly the victim of the crime. This invites readers to undertake topic analysis and invokes notions of culpability for the crime and this subsequently downgrades the relevance of readings associated with the actual geographical location of the “load”.

An orientation to the topic of the headline enables the reader to identify two distinct locational formulations, that is, the expected geographical location and the present location of the “load”. The former can be interpreted in terms of the “orders” given by the “employer” drawing upon tied predicates to the SRP “employer/employee” while the present geographical location of the “load”<sup>125</sup> can be understood as ‘unknown’.

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<sup>125</sup> It is possible to read that the “£100,000 load” may be located within the locality. The significant issue here is that it can be understood that the “load” is not where it is expected to be. This reading tends to further strengthen the importance of the activity of stealing and downgrades the relevance of knowing where the “load” was expected to be located.

This reading is made possible through the application of the consistency rule, where it operates to organise the topic at hand<sup>126</sup>. Similarly, McHoul and Watson outlined how this operated in an extract from a geography lesson:

"Thus, if for members the topic focus is, say, 'types and locations of public buildings', then the consistency rule not only operates at the level of co-selection of place references but also at the level of (internal) topic organisation" (1984:296).

Such an orientation to the topic of the description powerfully encourages the reader to understand that this event is significant for the locality and therefore enables the reader to recognise the headline as a news story.

The final section considers how ambiguity is used in the headline to accomplish specific readings that imply the driver's involvement in the local crime. I suggest that the ambiguity tends to strengthen the significance of the locality and therefore enables the reader to read the "slant" of the headline.

### **6.2.3. The ambiguity about the driver's involvement with the crime: reading the contextual relevance of the locality**

As suggested above, there is a degree of uncertainty about the driver's involvement in the crime, where the driver's involvement is accomplished through drawing upon inferences about his level of trustworthiness and through inferences that the "driver" and the "load" may be located in the same place. The ambiguity strengthens the contextual relevance of reading locality, thereby providing the reader with a mechanism for making sense of the news story.

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<sup>126</sup> An earlier example of the topic being constituted through the application of the consistency rule is shown in chapter 5 in relation to the reader being encouraged to draw upon local geographies as opposed to general geographical common-sense knowledge.

### **6.2.3.1. Reading ambiguity about whether the “driver” is an untrustworthy “employee”**

The SRP “employer/employee” is a strong device as it invites inferences about the types of activities that may be undertaken and the structure of the working relationship. Drawing upon the associated predicates and CBAs makes it possible to read that the relationship between the “employee” and the “employer” is dependent upon a certain amount of trust and adherence to their respective rights and obligations.

For instance, the category “employee” is read in terms of having employment rights such as “a lunch break”, “set working hours”, “being paid” and “driving a safe vehicle”. The associated obligations may include activities such as, “delivering the goods on time”, “obeying driving laws” and “ensuring the safe arrival of the goods and the vehicle”. Conversely, the category “employer” is read in terms of having the right to “have the goods delivered” and “have the vehicle returned safely”. Readings about obligations may include “paying the employees”, “organising and managing the work” and “paying for the vehicle’s maintenance”.

Selecting the category “his” does much work in the headline and invites the reader to understand that the “driver” may not have behaved in a trustworthy manner. The category “his” highlights the driver’s obligations and weakens readings that focus on the driver’s rights as an “employee” and encourages the reader to undertake topic analysis.



The products of the topic analysis tend to highlight the importance of the locality through an orientation to readings associated with crime in the locality. As Schegloff pointed out,

“...‘topic analysis’ or ‘activity analysis’ is also relevant to the selection and hearing of place formulation...the requirements of a hearer that he perform operations on names- categorise, analyse, etc. – to find the relevance respects in which it is used” (1972:96).

I suggest that one aspect of the reader's topic analysis is the utilisation of the “programmatically relevant collection R” (Sacks, 1972:38).

Collection R refers to a collection of paired relational categories,

“...that constitutes a locus for a set of rights and obligations concerning the activity of giving help”,

and programmatic relevance operates,

“...if R is relevant, then the non-incumbency of any of its pair positions is an observable fact, i.e. can be proposedly a fact” (Sacks, 1972:38).

Consequently, it is possible to understand that the driver's actions may have questionable morality as he may have abandoned his obligations and responsibilities as an "employee" and may have violated the employer's rights by not delivering the goods and not returning the vehicle or reporting to the delivery base. Thus, the reader is able to understand that the “driver” has not shown any loyalty to the “employer” despite the possible local nature of the delivery business. In this way, the ambiguity about the involvement of the “driver” encourages the reader to be suspicious of his actions and his association with the crime<sup>127</sup>.

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<sup>127</sup> I consider this issue further in relation to how it is possible to read that the “driver” and the “£100,000 load” are likely to be in the same location in the next section.

These readings encourage the distinction between a so-called honest deliveryman and a dishonest deliveryman. In this way, the reader is invited to draw upon inferences associated with dishonesty and lies. As Sacks noted,

“Lying is perfectly observable, in the same way that anything else is” (1992a:559).

Lynch and Bogen commented on the distinction between abilities and entitlements in relation to the observability of lies and lying within description, where,

“...moral entitlement has to do with grammatical, conventional, and sometimes legal, associations between categories of persons, actions, scenes, and identities” (1997:104).

The reader is encouraged to draw upon typical CBAs associated with honesty and dishonesty. The former may include activities such as “being reliable”, “integrity”, “completing the job”, “commitment to the job”, “taking responsibilities seriously”, and “being an independent worker”<sup>128</sup>. Conversely, typical CBAs associated with dishonesty may include activities such as “late deliveries”, “being unreliable”, “lack of commitment”, “uncompleted work”, and “being deceitful” and invoke suspicion about the driver's involvement with the crime.

Reading that the “driver” and the “load” have “vanished” implies that the “driver” has (some) responsibility for this situation, and again draws upon readings related to “his” responsibilities and obligations as an “employee”. As Lynch and Bogen pointed out:

“... moral entitlements and exclusions often are associated with specific occupational categories, and not just with what anybody would be expected, or required, to do or to know” (1997:105).

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<sup>128</sup> Note that these CBAs are value judgements and draw upon our common-sense notions of morality where efficiency is read in terms of honesty.

This raises questions about the competence of the “driver” who would be expected to have considerable knowledge about routes, roads and have navigational skills. Commonsensically, the reader is also able to bring about readings where the “driver” has the opportunity to steal the “load”.

Furthermore, the reader is able to draw further inferences about the potential guilt of the “driver” through the lack of contact with the “employer” as commonsensically a conscientious “employee” may be understood to be eager to clarify what happened in the incident and thereby discredit any possible slurs on his reputation.

However, the category selection does not invite readings associated with this type of activity, which tends to strengthen readings that imply the driver’s involvement. I suggest that this reading is highly significant if the “driver” is understood to be a resident in the locality, as these actions may encroach on his personal life as well as his working life.

The important issue is not how the “driver” was involved with the crime, but that there may be a link between the driver’s activities and the crime. Reading ambiguity is therefore a contextual resource for the reader, as it constitutes the topic of the description through orientating the reader to the activity of stealing a valuable “load” which can be understood to have consequences for the locality.



A further issue is the possibility that the “load” and “driver” may be understood to be in the same geographical location. Demonstrating how this reading is made possible is the subject of the next section.

### **6.2.3.2. Reading ambiguity about whether the “driver” and the “load” may be in the same geographical location**

The category "vanish" also invites the reader to understand that the "driver" and the "load" may have disappeared without a trace, through the predicates and CBAs conventionally tied to the category “vanish”<sup>129</sup>. The selection of the category “vanish” may also suggest that a search for the missing goods and “driver” may have taken place, but to no avail<sup>130</sup>. Reading that the “load” and the “driver” are not in their expected geographical location<sup>131</sup> draws upon common-sense knowledge of things that are visible, where objects are usually easily found and seen by the naked eye. Through the application of the consistency rule corollary, the reader is able to understand that the “driver” and the “load” are to be found in the same location. This is because the categories can be understood to be part of the same collection “delivery job”.

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<sup>129</sup> It is possible to read that the “driver” may have been kidnapped. However, I suggest that this reading is weakened though the non-selection of categories that would imply that the “driver” was being held to ransom. Categories read in terms of demands for a ransom may have included; “hostage”, “extortion” or “blackmail” that were not present in this headline.

<sup>130</sup> Consider an alternative category to demonstrate the strength of “vanish”. **Driver and his £100,000 load missing**. The category missing invites a different interpretation of the headline, where missing conveys a notion of being lost or that the “driver” was involved in an accident. This is significant as it invokes an obligation to search for the missing person or objects. Equally, the missing person has some responsibility to contact people that may be concerned about their whereabouts.

<sup>131</sup> Reading that the location of the “driver” is unknown provides the reader with further information about the delivery job. For instance, the reader is able to understand that the “driver” was more likely to be on his outward journey than his return journey, as the latter commonsensically implies that the “driver” may be in the locality as he may have returned home which may be in the locality.

This reading operates in the same way as Sacks' famous child's story, where the "mommy" and the "baby" can be interpreted as belonging to the collection "family". Reading that the "driver" and the "load" may be in the same location strengthens inferences associated with the driver's culpability for the crime. The news story is therefore highly relevant to the locality and thereby people who live or work there.

To summarise, the category "vanish" is central to understanding that the report was about a local crime through encouraging the reader to differentiate between readings associated with locality and location. The readable ambiguity about the driver's involvement with the crime strengthened the significance of reading that this was a local crime and the consequences for people living in the locality.

Within this analysis, I have demonstrated that location categories are far from being an inert grid, but are locally produced, locally utilised mechanisms by which the reader can make sense of newspaper headlines. The complexities and intricacies of locational formulations can be observed repeatedly throughout this analysis and these highlight the incremental development of readings associated with locality and the skilfulness of readers' movement between membership and topic analysis. I suggest that the active achievement of the intelligibility of the headline is integrally tied to locational formulations providing the reader with specific context in use, that is, the contextual relevance of the headline for the reader.

The upcoming sections demonstrate how the reader is able to make sense of headline 5. The selection of the geographical location categories “RUC” and “Creggan” are central for the reader to make the headline intelligible, highlighting the contextual relevance of the locality. The geographical location categories invite the reader to draw upon inferences, predicates and CBAs, which encourage readings associated with a breach of morality and the readable consequences of the crime for the locality. The selection of these categories therefore provides the reader with not only place terms, but also an inferential framework, and thereby mechanisms that then orientate the reader to the topic of the headline.

The sections that follow include an analysis of how the reader is able to understand that “illegal bombs” have been found in a residential area, that the “bombs” may be associated with “terrorism”, and the potential target for the “bombs”. All of these readings highlight the consequences of the crime for the locality and thereby enable the reader to understand the relevance of the news story.

### **6.3. Analysis of Headline 5: “Creggan explosives find RUC CHIEF SLAMS ‘LUNATIC’ BOMBERS”**

#### **6.3.1. Reading geographical location categories: illegal “bombs” have been found on the “Creggan” residential housing estate**

I will now consider how these readings are made possible through category selection and associated inferences with reference to the place terms “Creggan” and “RUC”. I suggest that the “concentric structure” (Schegloff, 1972) of geographical location categories invites the reader to undertake location analysis, the products of which invite the reader to understand the “bombs” as illegal



“explosives” that have been found on a housing estate. Locational formulations therefore enable the reader to understand the topic of the news story, namely, that the incident was connected to terrorist activities in the locality.

It is possible to read the category “explosives” as “bombs”<sup>132</sup> through drawing upon typical CBAs associated with “explosives”. These may include “demolishing a disused building”, “fighting an enemy”, “mining for a substance”, “terrorist activities”, or “hijacking an aeroplane” and thereby invokes notions of legal and illegal activities. The reader is therefore invited to assess the legality of the actions associated with the “explosives”. The selection of the category “find” and “RUC Chief”<sup>133</sup> are inferentially rich, and powerfully encourage the reader to understand that in this case the “explosives” are associated with illegal activity<sup>134</sup> and not legal activity.

The category “find” invites the reader to understand that the “explosives” were hidden, as tied CBAs may include “reveal”, “locate”, “come across” and “uncover”. The category “find” enables the reader to understand that the “explosives” were discovered as, commonsensically, concealed items can only be found if they were once hidden.

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<sup>132</sup> It should be noted that “explosives” are also understood as nuclear weapons, mines, booby traps or grenades. However, I suggest that these types of devices are weaker readings through the selection of the categories “find” and “‘lunatic’ bombers”. Category selection therefore tends to upgrade readings that the “explosives” are “bombs” and downgrade readings that the “explosives” may be other sorts of explosive devices.

<sup>133</sup> It should be noted that the RUC is the former name of the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

<sup>134</sup> There are several other categories selected in the headline that invite the reader to understand that the “explosives” are associated with illegal activity, such as “‘lunatic’ bombers” and “slams”. However, these categories will be considered later in order to simplify the analysis, as they are most notably associated with terrorist activity.

The reader is provided with further information from the selection of the category “RUC Chief”<sup>135</sup>, where commonsensically a “RUC Chief” may have been understood to have been associated with CBAs such as “co-ordinating campaigns against criminal activity”, “being a spokesperson for the “RUC” and “having responsibilities for lower ranking “RUC” officers. These types of activities are understood as being associated with official police business and invoke the SRP “police business/criminal activity”. Predicates associated with police activity may include obligations and responsibilities to ensure the safety and security of the local population and (perhaps) being expected to have knowledge about areas of high crime. These readings operate co-operatively through the application of the consistency rule and invite the reader to interpret that the “explosives” may have been found by the “RUC” through police activity. In this way, the category “explosives” can be understood as intended for illegal activities<sup>136</sup> and transformed into the category illegal “bombs”.

I suggest that this reading highlights the importance of attending to the active interpretative work involved in rendering understanding from description. Sacks’ (1992a) analysis of a news story in the New York Times of an interview with a “Navy pilot” exemplifies this point. “Bombs” in this case, were understood in terms of the SRP “military man/military man” which invokes tied predicates such as responsibilities, competencies and obligations to kill the enemy.

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<sup>135</sup> Later in this section I demonstrate the importance of reading the geographical location category “RUC”. For now it is sufficient to consider the inferential consequences of selecting the category “RUC Chief”.

<sup>136</sup> In the next section of the analysis I show how it is possible to read that this activity may be understood as terrorism through drawing upon inferences associated with categories “‘lunatic’ bombers”.



The category selection in this exchange therefore made it possible for the “Navy pilot” to be understood as operating within the bounds of the interviewer’s moral framework and yet be interpreted as an effective fighter.

Reading the geographical location categories “RUC” and “Creggan”, in conjunction with the category “illegal bombs”, provides the reader with an inferential framework and encourages location analysis to be undertaken.

The “concentric structure” of the geographical location categories invites the reader to draw upon a combination of common-sense geographical knowledge and local common-sense geographies in order to interpret the contextual relevance of the description and their location.

Before demonstrating how the reader utilises the products of their location analysis it is worth noting that this headline may allow an extension of Schegloff’s work<sup>137</sup> on the utilisation of common-sense geographies due to the reader’s use of local geographies and their co-presence. The analytical value of focusing on the practical actions and practical reasoning that society members undertake makes it possible for the analyst to demonstrate how the local production and recognition of contextual relevance occur in this instance.

Turning to the geographical location category “RUC”, I suggest that the reader interprets the “RUC” as an abbreviation that is commonsensically understood as

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<sup>137</sup> Schegloff’s (1972) data of a conversation between friends where one of the parties has returned from Peru suggested that the parties drew upon common-sense geographical knowledge to make sense of selecting a locational formulation. His unease about the concept of a common-sense geographical knowledge reiterates the need to attend to the indexicality of the description.



the “Royal Ulster Constabulary”. Sacks noted the importance of the selection of names and proposed that such selections will be used to find some person known to them if a Type 1 identification name is selected:

“In recipient terms, given a Type 1 identification it’s the recipient’s business to try to find from it who, that he knows, is being referred to” (Sacks, 1992b: 445).

This reading is significant as it enables the reader to understand that the “RUC” is a special police force that operates within the boundaries of Northern Ireland and thereby draws upon the reader's common-sense geographical knowledge. The reader is able to understand that the incident took place in some part of Northern Ireland<sup>138</sup>. Moreover, drawing upon common-sense knowledge of emergency services such as the police force, it can be understood that the “RUC Chief” undertakes his duty within a particular geographical location, typically a town or a city.

This reading makes it possible for the reader to understand the significance of their location and thereby undertake further location analysis. This includes the consideration of the relevance of their location and the inferences associated with the geographical location category “Creggan”. Thus, through the application of Schegloff’s rule on location formulation it is possible to understand that the reader is possibly not co-present in the “Creggan”, but may be co-present in Derry<sup>139</sup> through the selection and non-selection of locational formulations respectively.

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<sup>138</sup> I demonstrate the significance of the category “RUC” in terms of membership analysis in section 6.3.2.

<sup>139</sup> An important point to stress is that Schegloff suggested that there were cases when a locational formulation was provided even if the parties were co-present such as in the case of old friends organising a reunion (1972). Therefore, it is possible to understand that the reader may be present in the “Creggan”. The important issue here is that the reader undertakes the assessment of their location.

This is an important point as the reader may be able to understand that geographical location categories are organised in a concentric structure, namely, in terms of country, city and locality. The category “Creggan” may be understood to be an area within the boundaries of Derry within Northern Ireland. This reading, alongside the selection of a Type 1 identification name, powerfully encourages the reader to draw upon local common-sense geographical knowledge which makes it possible for the reader to understand “Creggan” as a residential housing estate. This reading in combination with the categories “illegal bombs” and “find” not only makes it possible to understand that the “bombs” were found on a housing estate, but also constructs a possible motive for the crime. The reader is therefore able to interpret the headline in terms of activities associated with terrorism. Showing how these readings are made possible is therefore the task of the section that follows.

### **6.3.2. Reading the purpose and possible target of the “illegal bombs”: the inferential consequences of the crime for the people in the locality**

This section demonstrates how it is possible for the reader to interpret the “illegal bombs” as being associated with terrorist activities based within the “Creggan” residential estate, thus providing the reader with inferences about possible motives for the actions described in the headline and a possible target for the “bombs”. The geographical location category “Creggan” is a central resource for the reader and draws upon local common-sense knowledge, geographies, and practices of the reader in order to undertake membership analysis. The reader is able to understand that the incident may have severe consequences for the locality, thereby rendering the contextual relevance of the news story.



Let us start with how the reader is able to understand that the purpose of the “illegal bombs” is likely to be associated with “terrorism”. This reading is made possible through the co-selection of the categories “RUC Chief”, “‘lunatic’ bombers” and “illegal bombs” which provide membership rich inferences, thereby making the headline intelligible.

Housley and Fitzgerald’s (2001) study on membership categorisation and devolution in Wales analysed radio news debates to demonstrate how accounts of national identity operated within the talk. The analysis showed instances where the category "Wales" was used to do membership work. As they stated,

“...the device ‘Wales’ is connected to two membership categories, namely ‘North’ and ‘South’. In terms of our membership of this category we hear this not merely as a geographical category but as one through which further predicates may be tied...” (2001:3).

It would seem that these categories do similar membership work and operate co-dependently<sup>140</sup> bringing about understandings associated with “terrorism”.

As Eglin and Hester noted,

“The ‘preference’ for category co-selection is a strong generative one” (1992:246).

For instance, reading the category “‘lunatic’ bombers” as terrorists is made possible through drawing upon associated CBAs such as “undertaking suicide missions”, “putting innocent people at risk of injury”, “bombing illicit targets”, “behaving unacceptably” and “being extreme and unpredictable”. Likewise, inferences associated with the categories “illegal bombs” make it possible for the

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<sup>140</sup> This raises some analytically interesting questions: why is a single category descriptor not referentially adequate for the purpose of this headline? What is the interactional purpose of co-selecting categories? I suggest in chapter 7 that the co-selection of categories powerfully encourages the reader to understand the headline as an accusation and thereby judge the actions undertaken by the terrorists. For simplicity's sake it is sufficient here to note that reading “terrorism” is accomplished by several categories working together.



reader to assess the morality of CBAs tied to this category and this provides information about potential types of people that may be involved with such activities (Sacks, 1992a, b).

In addition, the category “RUC Chief” may be understood to be associated with CBAs such as “co-ordinating campaigns against criminal and terrorist activity”, “being a spokesperson for the “RUC”” and “having responsibilities for lower ranking “RUC” officers”. These types of activities can be interpreted as being indicative of official police business and invoke predicates associated with limiting activities that may create civil unrest.

The products of membership analysis provide the reader with inferences, predicates and CBAs generated through reading these categories and invoke the oppositional SRP “RUC officer/ terrorist”. The reader therefore has little doubt that the “illegal bombs” were going to be used for acts of “terrorism”. In this sense, the headline can be understood to be embedded in the contextual relevance of the news story.

The reader utilises several contextual resources - the inferential framework provided through category selection, the readable significance of location and the activity of reading a newspaper - thus making the headline intelligible.

Hester and Eglin's discussion of sense-making procedures in talk between teachers and educational psychologists mirrors this observation where participants in a referral meeting utilised contextual resources to gain meaning from the talk. They noted that the contextual resources included,

“...the category membership of the subject (referring to the pupil), the setting (referral meeting), the category membership of the participants (teachers and psychologists) and the immediate context of the co-selected descriptions” (1997:29).

As I suggested earlier, a central contextual resource for the reader is the selection of the geographical location category “Creggan”, where the reader is encouraged to undertake membership analysis, the products of which provide the reader with a potential target of the “terrorist” activity. In this way, “Creggan” is not only understood in terms of geographical location, but may also be interpreted as indicative of the religious and political affiliations of residents living on the estate. Attending to how membership analysis is conducted therefore provides the analyst with an opportunity to demonstrate the relationship between location and all kinds of activity, including political activity, *in situ*.

The selection of “Creggan” encourages the reader to draw upon local common-sense geographies which makes it possible to understand that the city is divided into areas that are predominantly “Catholic” or “Protestant”. This reading tends to reflect Drew’s work on the production of accusations within descriptive scenes which pointed out,

“... that much of the talk involves the interactants producing descriptions of *locations*, and particularly names locations - where these can be attributed some known identity in the normally organised religious geography of Belfast” (1978:4).

Consequently, “Creggan” may be understood to be an area where “Catholics” live and this encourages the reader to draw upon local common-sense practices and beliefs of “Catholics” residing on the “Creggan” estate. I suggest that this reading is important as it enables the reader to understand that the category “Catholic” is

not unified and to distinguish between different types of CBAs that “Catholics”<sup>141</sup> may undertake.

For instance, some activities may be interpreted as being associated with “terrorism”, and others may be understood in terms of religious commitment, family tree, work or political belief, etc. Reading that “terrorist” “bombs” have been found on the residential estate therefore makes it possible to understand that the terrorists are “Catholics”.

The products of the reader’s membership analysis invoke inferences associated with the separate identities<sup>142</sup> of “Catholics” through the readable activities that they may be understood to undertake. As Drew noted, place terms are frequently used in scene description and are “used to accomplish the separate identity of each crowd” (1978:9). However, in this case, separate identities can be understood within the same religious category. Membership analysis orientates the reader to the topic of the news, that is, “terrorism” in the locality.

One further issue remains; the reader is able to understand that the “bombs” may be used for a specific target. This reading is made possible through drawing upon the local common-sense knowledge of “Catholic terrorist” activities in Derry, where typical CBAs may include “tit-for-tat tactics”, “challenging Protestant parades”, and “attacking the RUC quarters”. Once again the reader draws upon

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<sup>141</sup> The category “Catholic” demonstrates the indexicality of expression and the reflexive skills that the reader utilises in order to make sense of category selection.

<sup>142</sup> Chapter 7 demonstrates how it is possible to read that some “Catholics” living on the residential estate are understood to be potential “victims of a crime” and that keeping “bombs” on a housing estate is highly immoral and deplorable.



local common-sense knowledge of local events and the activity of reading a newspaper thereby makes it possible to understand that July represents the marching season in Derry.

It is possible for the reader to understand that the target of the “illegal bombs” may have been a “Protestant” march<sup>143</sup> taking place in the locality. The reader is able to understand that the news story could have grave consequences for the people living in the locality, where terrorism is understood to be taking place on their doorstep.

The analysis has shown that the geographical location categories “RUC” and “Creggan” are central resources for the reader to make sense of the newspaper headline and provide an inferential framework that make it possible for the reader to interpret the significance of readings associated with locality. I suggest that recognisability of geographical location categories is achieved in this case through location and membership analysis where the reader draws upon contextual resources such as local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practices and beliefs, thus orientating the reader to the contextual relevance of the news story. In this way, the reader is able to understand that the “explosives” were “illegal bombs” found on a Catholic housing estate in Derry for the purpose of “terrorist” activities, the target of which may have been the annual Protestant marches and this has serious consequences for people living in the locality.

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<sup>143</sup> This reading is further explicated in chapter 7, where I suggest that the “RUC Chief” can be understood to slate “Catholic” terrorists but remain impartial towards “Catholics” in general.

This analysis has therefore once again demonstrated the orderly, local and embedded properties of social interaction where an orientation to the task of the description is accomplished through category selection and the inferential consequences of selection. In other words, it can be observed that context is crucial to both sense-giving and sense-making procedures, and is a highly occasioned affair. This is a far cry from conceptualising context as a background against which meaning may occur. As Lepper aptly commented,

“The newspaper headline provides a particularly intensive site for analysis. The conditions of its production – ‘the relevance at hand’ – set a task for the writer and reader alike to deploy the categorial procedures to maximum effect” (2000: 61).

The final task of this chapter is to undertake a comparative analysis of how locality operates in headlines 1 and 5, thereby demonstrating how context is constituted, recognised and locally produced. Consequently, the comparative analysis aims to extend observations made in chapter 5 and highlight issues that require further analysis.

#### **6.4. A comparative analysis**

Consonant with the overall emphasis of the chapter, the comparative analysis is concerned with demonstrating how mechanisms associated with locality operate in both of the headlines. The key areas of comparison include:

- the mechanisms that invoke readings connected with locality;
- how co-presence of the parties operates;
- the impact of readable ambiguity in relation to locality;
- the use and products of location, membership and topic analysis; and,
- the contextual resources utilised by the reader.

Comparing the mechanisms that invoke readings associated with locality shows that headline 1 combined readable ambiguity and the locational formulation “vanish” and operated in an incremental manner. Alternatively, headline 5 included the selection of two geographical location categories which provided a complex inferential framework through drawing upon different types of common-sense knowledge and contextual resources related to the activity of reading a newspaper. In light of these observations I suggest that there are several mechanisms that operate to highlight the relevance of readings associated with locality and these can be combined in a variety of ways. How mechanisms are combined therefore presents an area for further research.

Both headlines made it possible to understand that the reader was co-present in the locality, but there were notable differences in how the mechanisms operated in each headline<sup>144</sup>. For instance, in headline 1 ambiguity about who and how the parties were connected to the locality was resolved by the reader undertaking membership analysis so that these parties were understood to be “local people”. In terms of headline 5, co-presence was readily established and was utilised as a component of the reader's location analysis.

The mechanisms utilised in headline 1 to imply co-presence operated quite differently from other headlines and once again highlight that co-presence is locally produced and locally recognised and is an expression of the task at hand. As noted in chapter 5, it would appear that co-presence is an important component of reading locality and may serve as a mechanism by which the reader recognises

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<sup>144</sup> The analysis of headlines 1, 2 and 4 also noted the use of co-presence.



the contextual relevance of reading locality. I propose, therefore, that co-presence is also an important area for further investigation to detail the relationship between the task of the description and the mechanisms of co-presence. This observation is in keeping with Schegloff's comments and queries associated with co-presence of the parties.

A notable difference between the headlines was that headline 5 did not utilise readable ambiguity. Ambiguity was a central component of reading the contextual relevance of locality in relation to co-presence and the driver's culpability in headline 1. The ambiguity provided the reader with the 'slant' of the news story. Similarly, ambiguity was also a central component of readings associated with locality in headlines 2 and 4. This raises a point for further investigation; to establish the impact, use and mechanisms associated with readable ambiguity. I propose that this line of enquiry will provide insight into the relationship between ambiguity and the use of contextual resource for both the writer and reader of the headline.

Both headlines encouraged the reader to undertake a combination of location, membership or topic analysis. The sense-making procedures in headline 1 included membership analysis, the products of which made it possible for the reader to resolve the ambiguity about co-presence. In addition topic analysis was undertaken in relation to readings associated with the trustworthiness of the "driver" and the differentiation between the expected and the actual location of the "load". The tied inferences, predicates and CBAs utilised in the membership and topic analysis were understood through the reader drawing upon general

common-sense knowledge. These observations raise an interesting point; the significance of reading locality was not diminished through the utilisation of general common-sense knowledge. I propose that this case therefore reiterated the importance of parties being co-present and the need to focus on this area in the future.

In the case of headline 5 the reader was encouraged to undertake location-work in relation to readings associated with the “illegal bombs” being found on a residential estate. Through this analysis the reader utilised a range of combined mechanisms such as co-presence, the concentric structure of locational formulations, type 1 name selection, common-sense geographical knowledge and local common-sense geographies.

Membership analysis was undertaken in relation to readings associated with the terrorist activities and possible targets for the “illegal bombs”. Once again, the reader utilised a diverse range of mechanisms to make sense of the headline. These included the contextual resource of reading newspaper headlines, local common-sense geographies, practices and beliefs. I suggest that the utilisation of specific local common-sense knowledge seems to be related to the specificity of the task at hand. This was also found to be the case in headline 4. I therefore propose that the specific use of local common-sense knowledge provides the analyst with information about how media makers target their presumed audiences and how they make stories recipient-designed (Hester, 2002) and provides an opportunity to demonstrate how identities are produced and constituted by media makers and readers.

The final point of comparison is related to the contextual resources that the reader utilises to make the headline intelligible. In terms of headline 1 these consisted of the inferential framework provided through category selection and readings that made it possible to understand the description in terms of a news story. This was also the case in headline 5, but with the notable difference that the reader was encouraged to draw upon the activity of reading a newspaper more centrally, particularly in terms of reading possible targets for the “illegal bombs”. I propose that this is an important area and may provide the analyst with a means to explicate the reciprocity of publicly available, publicly used resources in newspaper headlines, and therefore represents an area for further investigation.

The analysis shown in this chapter serves to highlight three important points. First, that the mechanisms associated with locational formulations can be combined and that these combinations reflect the purpose of the description. This indicates the necessity of gaining an insight into the intricacies of how media makers target audiences as the same audience may be targeted differently depending on the circumstances. The second issue is related to the observation that locational formulations are a resource for the media maker and the reader. This provides the analyst with information about the reciprocity of interpretation and understanding and how this operates in newspaper headlines. The final point is that there seems to be a relationship between the specificity of reading and the utilisation of common-sense knowledge. Once again, this observation appears to provide the analyst with information about how audiences are targeted and how the reader consumes media products.



All that remains is to outline the concerns of the final data chapter. The central analytical aim is to further explore the mechanisms associated with locational formulation. Special reference will be given to:

- the combination of mechanisms utilised to highlight locality;
- the specificity of readings and use of common-sense knowledge;
- the relationship between co-presence and the task of the description; and,
- the relationship between mechanisms used to target audiences and the contextual resources readers utilise to make sense of the headline.

For this reason a single incident reported in regional and local newspapers has been selected for analysis.

## Chapter 7

### **7. Reading accusation and counter-accusation: the embedded and occasioned use of locality and regional common-sense knowledge**

In the previous chapter, analyses of headlines 1 and 5 were undertaken to investigate how locational formulations operate within newspaper headlines, with special reference to the selection of geographical location categories and readable ambiguity. Locational formulations were an essential component of these headlines and made it possible for the reader to recognise the contextual relevance of the news stories; that is, the incidents being reported were recognisably of consequence to the people living within the locality.

Three points arose from this analysis. First, it was found that locational formulations are a resource for both the newsmaker and the reader and provide a means of production and recognition of news stories. Second, there appeared to be a relationship between the specificity of readings and the utilisation of common-sense knowledge. Finally, when mechanisms were combined, they appeared to be combined reflexively depending on the task of the description.

The analytical focus of this chapter is to compare how locational formulations operate in local and regional newspapers which report the same incident. In particular, attention is paid to the embedded and occasioned properties of location categories and how these are utilised to make the headlines intelligible and

understandable in terms of accusations<sup>145</sup> or counter-accusations, and consequently how they provide the contextual relevance of the news story.

The analysis in this chapter will be undertaken on headlines 5, 6 and 7 which are shown below:

### Headline 5

**“Creggan explosives find RUC CHIEF SLAMS ‘LUNATIC’ BOMBERS”**  
The Derry Journal, page 2



### Headline 6

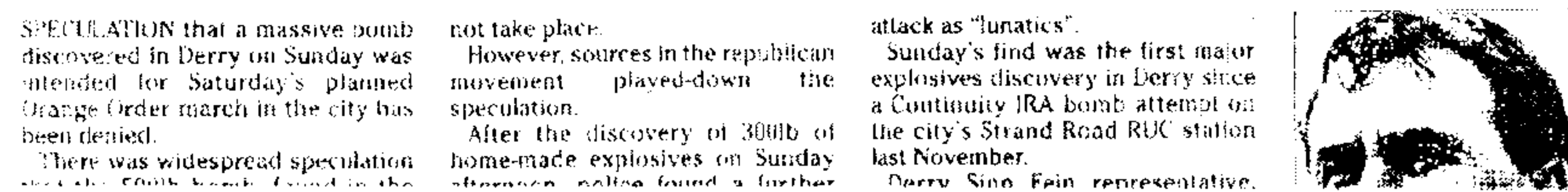
**“Provos ‘were planning massive bomb outrage at Orange parade’”**  
The Newsletter (Ulster edition), page 8

**Provos ‘were planning massive bomb outrage at Orange parade’**

### Headline 7

**“Orange march ‘was not target for bomb’”**  
The Irish News, page 1

**Orange march ‘was not target for bomb’**



<sup>145</sup> The analysis considers readings associated with breaches of morality and criminal activity, but only as a means to explicate how it is possible to read the headlines in terms of accusations where the intention of the “lunatic bombers”/“Provos” was to undertake “terrorist” activities in the locality/region.



These headlines were all published on Tuesday 15th July 1997. They were selected to provide the analyst with the opportunity to compare the mechanisms that operate in local and regional newspapers in order to gain further information about the interactional work that locational formulations may bring about. Put more directly, the task of the analysis is to build upon previous observations, and retain criticality of method through subjecting observations to cross-site comparative analysis.

This analytical stance mirrors Sacks' commitment to building a cumulative science<sup>146</sup> rather than merely demonstrating the reflexivity of society members' accounts in single examples of data. As Sacks commented,

“The gross aim of the work I'm doing is to see how finely the details of actual, naturally occurring conversation can be subjected to analysis which will yield the technology of conversation... The idea being, then, to come back to the singular things we observe in a singular sequence, with some rules that handle those singular features, and also necessarily handle lots of other events as well, other than this fragment” (1992b:339).

The implication is that this requires the analyst to take the notions of validity and reliability seriously in order to claim the objectivity of the knowledge gained from the analysis and avoid criticisms of being anecdotal<sup>147</sup>. The analyst must also not fall into the trap of letting the management of the research override the essential qualities of the phenomena under investigation.

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<sup>146</sup> The use of Sacks' imagery of locating the 'machine' reflects this point. Sacks aimed to make observations across different sites and thereby increase the generalisability of the findings. As noted earlier, Sacks' work has come under considerable criticism for the use of 'machinery talk' (Goffman, 1981; Hester, 1997). However, Silverman reminded us,

“Sacks is consistently interested in how members *use* the machinery” (1998:66).

<sup>147</sup> The procedures related to validity and reliability which are used in this analysis include; the constant comparative method; comparative analysis of a single site and across geographical sites; deviant case analysis; and transparency of method, as discussed in chapter 1.

As stated throughout this research, to identify a phenomenon requires the analyst to attend to the locally produced and locally constituted nature of the social interaction in specific pieces of data, and then to compare the observations of how the mechanisms operate in order to check the validity of the findings. In essence, the approach requires analytical attention to the details of text *in situ*.

Empirical analysis of the orderly properties of description and activities that describe the very definition of context provide insight into “culture-in action” (Hester and Eglin, 1997:20).

The first aim of this chapter is to compare local and regional newspapers to show how locational formulations are used as a reader’s resource in order to make it possible to understand the headlines in terms of an accusation and its rebuttal. In specific terms the analysis considers:

- the combination of mechanisms utilised to highlight locality and regional consequentiality;
- the specificity of readings and use of common-sense knowledge;
- the relationship between co-presence and the task of the description; and
- the relationship between mechanisms used to target audiences and the contextual resources readers utilise to make sense of the local and regional headlines.

Consonant with earlier chapters, the second aim is to undertake a cross-site, comparative analysis of the utilisation of locational formulations, drawing from findings in headlines 1, 2 and 4 as well as headlines 5, 6 and 7.



The final aim is to consider the relationship between the production and recognition of “newsworthiness” and the reporting of crime in these headlines.

### **7.1. Reading the contextual relevance of accusations and counter-accusations**

Drew’s (1978) and Watson’s (1978) seminal papers on accusation, counter-accusation and culpability highlight the importance of members’ resources such as local common-sense knowledge of religious geographies and inferential intentions drawn from category selection. Both writers commented on the centrality of “descriptions of the scenes” (Drew, 1978:1) or in Watson’s words, the “general state of affairs in society” (1978:107). These descriptions provide the reader with an inferential framework or “moral profiles” (Watson, 1978:107) to set up the interactional work of ‘doing’ an accusation or counter-accusation, where these ‘facts’ can be accepted, denied or modified.

Moreover, as Drew pointed out, accusations can be understood as one component of an adjacency pair:

“It routinely happens that if an utterance is heard as an accusation, then this can set up some sort of expectation concerning what kind(s) of utterance will, or should follow: that is, there is a conventional procedure whereby the class(es) to which an utterance following after an accusation can be expected to belong is delimited to denials/acceptances/modifiers. Sacks has called this conventional procedure for ‘pairing’ utterance types ‘adjacency pairs’ (Drew, 1978:5).

These observations raise some interesting analytical points in relation to the data presented in this chapter. First, members of society draw upon the contextual resources of the description such as the ascription of action, intention, motive, and common-sense knowledge(s) to “address the ‘substance’ of the accusation” (Drew, 1978:18). Focusing analytical attention onto the production, construction



and recognition of accusations and counter-accusations can therefore provide the analyst with details about how the reader utilises and combines contextual resources to make judgements and apportion blame.

Readers of text orientate their actions to the task at hand and make use of contextual resources to accomplish recognition work (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2002). Recognition work includes the assessment of the applicability of contextual resources available in this instance which is informed through category selection.

As several writers have commented (Silverman, 1998; Watson, 1997; Housley and Fitzgerald, 2002) there are analytical grounds for arguing about the complementary nature of MCA and conversation analysis (CA):

“This seems to be equally true, say, of the analysis of how pronouns or place terms take on local meaning in Drew’s (1978) discussion of the use of adjacency pairs in the context of accusations” (Silverman, 1998:152).

Reading an accusation or counter-accusation therefore acts as a contextual resource for the reader of newspaper headlines, where the reader utilises common-sense knowledge about accusations as part of their sense-making procedure.

Contextual resources are not merely drawn from membership analysis, but also include the sequential features of description that highlight the complementarity of MCA and CA.

The analysis of headline 5 builds onto the readings outlined in chapter 6, and has been divided into two sections. The analyses in these sections demonstrate how the reader is able to understand that the “RUC Chief” has condemned the

activities undertaken by the “Catholic terrorists” and that the terrorists have been accused of having intended to cause injury and civil unrest in the locality. Once again, the selection of locational formulations encourages the reader to undertake topic analysis and thereby utilise local Catholic common-sense knowledge(s) to make sense of the headline. The products of these analyses highlight the significance of the duties and responsibilities of the “RUC Chief” and provide the reader with an inferential framework about the “Catholic terrorists” actions, which are then interpreted as an accusation. The selection of a quote strengthens these readings and enables the reader to understand that the accusation has been made by a person in authority and that the accusation is not necessarily the opinion of the editor of the newspaper.

Bearing these readings in mind, the analyst is therefore able to gain some insight into the intricacies of how newsmakers may target audiences. Readings that the actions of the “Catholic terrorists” were extreme may serve to dissociate the (Catholic) reader from these types of activities through highlighting their ordinariness.

The analysis of headline 6 has 2 sections and shows how it is possible for the reader to understand the headline as an accusation of sectarian violence in the region where the IRA planned these acts of terrorism as a way of challenging the Orangemen’s annual march. The first section of headline 6 is concerned with the readable severity of the breach of morality which later in the analysis I demonstrate can be understood to have far-reaching consequences for the people in the North of Ireland. The selection of the locational formulations “Provos”,

“Orange parade” and “bomb outrage” invoke the utilisation of regional common-sense knowledge, practices and beliefs which invoke the SRP “evil IRA/innocent Orangemen” and thereby provide a possible motive for the “planned bomb attack”.. In this way, readings associated with breaches of morality are mapped onto locational formulations through the reader undertaking membership analysis.

In juxtaposition to the immorality of the acts, the products of the reader’s topic analysis invite readings that sectarian violence was going to take place at a specific geographical location. This may create a puzzle for the reader due to the unknown geographical location of the “parade”. As I demonstrate below, this mechanism strongly encourages the reader to read the accompanying article in order to resolve the puzzle of where the sectarian violence was going to occur. Even so, the puzzle does not hinder the reader from understanding the contextual relevance of the headline and once again reveals the power and intricacies of the interactional work that members of society undertake.

The analysis of headline 7 contains only one section and demonstrates how the reader draws upon contextual resources of reading news stories to understand the headline as a counter-accusation. As with the other headlines, the selection of locational formulations invites the reader to undertake topic analysis, the products of which provide an inferential framework that highlights the significance of the military style of the event and that there were no intentions to “bomb” the “march”. Through the readable puzzle about the actual site for the “bomb” attack the reader is orientated to the contextual relevance of the news story. In this way,



the reader is able to interpret the headline in terms of sectarian disputes being unrelenting so that this has serious consequences for people living in the region.

## **7.2. Analysis of Headline 5: “Creggan explosives find RUC CHIEF SLAMS “LUNATIC” BOMBERS”**

### **7.2.1. The utilisation of locality as a contextual resource: the “RUC Chief” condemned the immoral activities of the “Catholic terrorists”**

The analysis in chapter 6 demonstrated how the reader was able to understand that “illegal bombs” found on a residential estate were linked to “Catholic terrorist” activity where the possible target might have been a “Protestant” march and that these events may have had serious consequences for people living in the locality.

This section considers how it is possible to read headline 5 in terms of the “RUC Chief” condemning the terrorist activity. As I show below, the reader is encouraged to undertake topic analysis, the products of which invoke notions of a breach of morality and the inferential consequences of the terrorist actions for the people in the locality.

So how is the reader able to understand the condemnation? The co-selection of the categories “RUC Chief”, “slams”, and “‘lunatic’ bombers” provides the reader with a rich inferential framework about the types of duties, responsibilities and obligations associated with the category “RUC Chief”. For instance, as demonstrated in chapter 6, typical CBAs that the “RUC Chief” may undertake include the “denouncement of violence”, “combating terrorist activity” and “acting as a representative of the RUC”. By reading these typical activities, the reader is encouraged to undertake topic analysis.

The last CBA would seem to be particularly relevant as the category “lunatic” is written in quotation marks and therefore can be understood as a quote from the “RUC Chief”. The selection of a quote therefore invites readings that this is an authoritative opinion<sup>148</sup> about finding the “illegal bombs”, where these actions may be understood to be appalling and disturbing. The application of the consistency rule aligns the reader to the topic through the co-selection of the categories “lunatic” and “bombers”. The reader is able to understand tied CBAs such as being “crazy”, “mad”, “outrageous”, “unreasonable”, and “extreme” from the selection of the category “lunatic”. The “bombers” therefore may be considered to be fanatical and brutal “Catholic terrorists”.

In McKinlay and Dunnett’s (1998) work on self and identity, an analysis is undertaken of interviews with members of an American gun club. They noted that the spokesperson from the National Rifle Association of America (NRA) selected contrastive devices thereby making it possible to understand that the NRA has different sub-groups. As they put it:

“These ‘fringes’ are depicted as ‘wild’, with the implication that they are wilder than the average gun-owner” (1998:41).

It would appear that a similar mechanism is operating in headline 5, where the “terrorists” can be understood to be fanatical and beyond reason<sup>149</sup>.

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<sup>148</sup> Newspapers may use quotations for other purposes too. For instance, quotations may be used if the news item may be interpreted as controversial in some way and therefore provides a mechanism for the newspaper to report the news story but limit the opportunity for allegations of slander to be made.

<sup>149</sup> This issue is considered further later in the analysis in section 7.2.2 which relates to how the reader is able to understand which “terrorist” organisation may have undertaken these actions.

Furthermore, the selection of “slams” provides the reader with further inferences that the “RUC Chief” condemns this “terrorist” activity. Drawing upon common-sense knowledge of the activity of “slamming”, it is typically associated with CBAs such as “demonstration of anger”, “banging a door”, “to strike or beat vigorously”, “criticise harshly” and “to put down or throw noisily and violently”. This reading invokes notions of the disapproval, outrage and anger of the “RUC Chief” about the actions of the “Catholic terrorists” and therefore orientates the reader to the slant of the newspaper headline.

The reader is encouraged to undertake further topic analysis through the inferential framework provided by the location category “Creggan” in conjunction with readings about the duties of the “RUC Chief”. The products of the topic analysis make it possible for the reader to interpret the terrorists’ actions in terms of there being potential unintended “victims” of the bomb attack. As I demonstrated in chapter 6, the location category “Creggan” is not only understood in terms of geographical location, but may also be interpreted as indicative of the religious and political affiliations of residents living on the estate. In this way, the categories “Catholic”, “resident” and “political affiliation” can be understood to be mapped onto each other and are therefore constituted as incumbent of the category “Catholic Creggan resident”. This observation seems to mirror Watson’s analysis of data drawn from a suicide prevention centre where he noted that,

“...mapping of categories has the further property that, as a category-bound predicate, incumbents both of categories ‘white’ and ‘British’ may be seen as ‘sticking together’ in terms of ‘in-group loyalty’” (1978:108).

This notion of “in-group loyalty” strengthens inferences associated with the breach of morality where the “Catholic terrorists” did not adhere to their



obligation to ‘group loyalty’<sup>150</sup>, and are understood to have potentially put the lives of the residents at risk. The reader therefore is able to understand the activity of hiding the “illegal bombs” as highly immoral and irresponsible. Consequently, the reader is left in little doubt that the “RUC Chief” condemns the “Catholic terrorist” activity.

### **7.2.2. The “Catholic terrorists” intended to cause injury and civil unrest within the locality**

As noted above, the readable condemnation can be understood as an accusation that the “Catholic terrorists” intended to injure people and create civil unrest in the locality. Once again, locational formulations encourage the reader to undertake topic analysis and thereby orientate the reader to the intention and potential outcomes of the “terrorist” activity through the RUC Chief’s duties and responsibilities.

Reading intention is important as it encourages the reader to invoke “blame-allocation” (Watson, 1978:108) through the duplicative organisation of the SRP “peace keeper/political terrorist”. This observation is in keeping with Watson’s analysis of a call to a suicide prevention centre from a middle-aged woman where he noted that,

“...one activity which members can achieve through categorisation is to claim incumbency as a means of presenting themselves as being heir to the relevant category-based entitlements, such claims being redoubled by turning the category into a device and a duplicatively-organised one at that” (1978:108).

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<sup>150</sup> Later in the analysis I further explicate the complexities of this notion of the “in-group loyalty” through considering the intentions of the “Catholic terrorists” and their allegiance to the “Catholic” cause.

The inferential consequence of drawing upon predicates associated with the “RUC Chief”, in conjunction with co-presence in the locality, makes it possible to understand that the “RUC Chief” has obligations and responsibilities to ensure the safety and security of the local population, that is, people living in Derry. This reading is made possible through the reader drawing upon local common-sense knowledge of the types of activities the “RUC Chief” is understood to undertake in the locality. These may include activities such as “having knowledge about local terrorist organisations”, “challenging terrorist activities”, “utilising local intelligence”, and “protecting the local inhabitants”.

Moreover, the reader is able to interpret that these responsibilities are deliberate and *intentional* outcomes of the RUC Chief’s duties, where these activities can be understood in terms of maintaining safety, peace-keeping and moral acts for the good of the locality. This is a powerful reading that not only provides the reader with information about the intentions of the “RUC Chief” but also tends to heighten the breach of morality associated with the terrorist activity and thereby the impact of terrorism on the locality<sup>151</sup>. Furthermore, the reader is invited to invoke the duplicative organisation of the SRP “local peace-keeper/local peace-breaker”.

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<sup>151</sup> As Watson pointed out, in relation to the church offering no support to the woman caller, was this because the church members deliberately neglected her or as a result of lack of information about her circumstances?

“...in this context, as in many others, ‘knowledge’ can index ‘intention’” (1978:112).

Thus, in the case of the “Catholic terrorists” this raises the question of whether they can be understood to have knowledge that the “illegal bombs” posed a potential threat to the residents living on the estate.

Reading the intentions of the “Catholic terrorists” encourages the reader to draw upon local Catholic common-sense knowledge, practices and beliefs of terrorist organisations in the locality. Typical CBAs may include “causing damage to property in the city centre”, “antagonism towards Protestants”, “inciting civil unrest in the locality” and “local political activism”. In this way, the products of the reader’s topic analysis invite readings that the “Catholic terrorists” are being accused of intending to undertake tied CBAs and predicates and these are understood to be action ascribed<sup>152</sup>.

In Drew’s discussion about the device “Protestant” he pointed out that there was an,

“...integral relationship between certain groups to the Protestant cause: so that to be an ‘adequate’ or proper member of the Orange order, the Unionist party, the Ulster Workers Council, or a resident of a given area, one has also to display consistency with or loyalty to the Protestant cause” (1978: 15).

The category “Catholic terrorist” may be understood in a similar way, in terms of allegiance to the “Catholic” cause within the locality (and not to the “in-group” “Creggan residents”). The contextual relevance of “Catholic causes” in the locality is therefore highlighted for the reader. This reading, in conjunction with the locational formulation “Creggan”, encourages the reader to draw upon local Catholic common-sense knowledge of “Catholic terrorist” organisations and ‘causes’ in the locality. In this way, the reader is able to interpret the categories “‘lunatic’ bombers” as representing organisations such as the “IRA” or perhaps

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<sup>152</sup> Jayyusi referred to the “moral ascription rule” in her analysis of describing a scene where “Ken shot John” (1984:158). She described the rule in the following terms:

“In intentional-action ascriptions, the ascriptive vector stops at the point of highest value of moral implicativeness” (1984:159).



the “Irish National Liberation Army” (INLA). Once again, drawing upon local common-sense knowledge and geographies the reader is likely to understand that the “INLA” may have been involved with the incident due to the location of the “illegal bombs”<sup>153</sup> and the fanatical and extremist nature of this organisation’s actions<sup>154 155</sup>. This is not to suggest that this is the only possible reading; merely that the category selection provides a rich inferential framework that encourages the reader to understand the headline in this way. The accusation can be understood to be targeted at a specific group of “Catholic terrorists” in the locality and not “Catholics” in general or “Creggan residents”. This orientates the reader to the topic of the headline; that is, the activities of “terrorists” in the locality.

These readings raise a final analytical point relating to how audiences may be targeted by newsmakers and how readers consume media products. The analysis above demonstrates how the reader utilises contextual resources such as the category membership of the subject (i.e. terrorism in the locality), the setting (i.e. the activity of reading a newspaper) and the topic (i.e. specific “Catholic terrorists” in the locality have been accused of immoral, reckless and extreme terrorist activities). Specifically, these contextual resources seem to operate in the following ways. First, the reader utilises local common-sense knowledge to recognise locational formulations and the inferences associated with these

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<sup>153</sup> The “Creggan” can be understood to be an INLA ‘stronghold’ drawing upon local common-sense knowledge and geographies.

<sup>154</sup> Drawing on the reader’s local common-sense knowledge and practices of the INLA, this organisation may be understood to be associated with CBAs such as “ruthless killings”, “unpredictable activities” and “impulsive and reactionary responses to events”.

<sup>155</sup> In contrast the terrorist organisation “IRA” can be understood to have (some) ethical codes of practice and demarcation between legitimate and non-legitimate targets. Again, these readings are made possible through the reader drawing upon local common-sense knowledge and practices of Catholic terrorist organisations in the locality.

geographical areas. Second, the reader makes use of local “Catholic” common-sense knowledge, geographies, practices and beliefs to make the headline intelligible and therefore is understood to be a Catholic reader. In this way, the local Catholic common-sense knowledge is distinguishable from other types of local common-sense knowledge. Third, the reader is able to understand the headline as a news story through orientating to the topic of the description. Finally, the reader draws upon local common-sense knowledge of Catholic terrorist organisations to interpret who may be the target of the RUC Chief’s accusation.

As noted earlier in previous chapters, contextual resources provide the reader with a sense-making procedure. They also provide the newsmaker with a mechanism to target specific audiences. The implication is that contextual resources are utilised in both news production and news recognition. However, this is not to suggest that this relationship is straightforward as I highlight below. Commonsensically, if the target audience of the headline is “Catholics” then the reader could potentially be a member or have some loyalty to the cause of the “IRA” and/or “INLA”. This may present a potential problem for the newsmaker as the reader may be understood to be held to account for the “Catholic terrorists” actions. This potential interactional ‘trouble’ seems to be avoided through reading the severity of the breach in morality where the fanatical extremism can be understood to be undertaken by a small section of the community, thereby dissociating the reader from these activities and highlighting the “ordinariness” of the reader. As Sacks noted,

“It’s not just that somebody *is* ordinary, it’s perhaps that that’s what their business is. And it takes work, as any other business does” (1992b:216).



Thus, it would seem that headline 5 provides an example of how ordinariness is accomplished as a social activity. An additional mechanism may be the inclusion of the quote from the “RUC Chief” which makes it possible for the reader to understand that this opinion has authority, but it is not necessarily the view of either the newspaper or for that matter the editor<sup>156</sup>.

To summarise this analysis, reading the breach of morality and the inferential consequences of the “terrorist” actions for people in the locality is accomplished through interpreting the duties and responsibilities of the “RUC Chief” in conjunction with the locational formulation “Creggan”. In this way, the reader is able to understand that there may be unintended “victims” of the bomb attack (Catholics living on the residential estate) and that these actions are condemned by the “RUC Chief”.

The condemnation is upgraded to an accusation that there was intent to create civil unrest within the locality through the reader undertaking topic analysis. The products of this topic analysis provide the reader with information about the intentions of the “RUC Chief” and consequently the intentions of the “terrorists”. This reading invokes the notion of blame allocation and therefore makes it possible to understand the headlines as an accusation.

In the following sections I demonstrate how the reader is able to understand headline 6 as an accusation, where the IRA planned a terrorist attack targeted at

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<sup>156</sup> I am not suggesting that the newsmaker utilises these mechanisms intentionally or deliberately – the analytical focus here remains faithful to Sacks’ “anti-cognitive stance” (Watson, N.D.:4) – but merely to observe that newsmakers and media consumers utilise contextual resources in the production and recognition of meaning and contextual relevance.



the Protestant “Orangemen” undertaking their yearly march. The reader is therefore able to understand who may have been responsible for planning the “bomb” attack, that it was designed to cause injury and harm, and that this type of activity is morally wrong and should be condemned.

Reading the headline as an accusation is accomplished through the reader being encouraged to undertake membership analysis due to the selection of locational formulations. The products of the reader’s analyses provide a rich inferential framework associated with breaches of morality and the consequences of the incident for the region and thereby enable the reader to make the newspaper headline intelligible.

### **7.3. Analysis of Headline 6: “Provos ‘were planning massive bomb outrage at Orange parade’”**

#### **7.3.1. Reading an accusation of sectarian violence through membership analysis: the “Provos” are evil-doing terrorists targeting “innocent Orangemen”**

As I demonstrate below, the products of membership analysis invoke the SRP “IRA/Orangemen” and provide the reader with information about the intentions and construct possible motives for the “massive bomb outrage”. The activities described in the headline can be understood in terms of sectarian terrorism with the intention of creating the maximum impact on the Orangemen’s commemorative marches and can be understood as a severe breach of morality.

Further inferences understood in terms of immorality are provided through the selection of the categories “parade” and “planning”<sup>157</sup> and tend to highlight the injustice of the sectarian violence. These readings enable the reader to transform the SRP “IRA/Orangemen” into the SRP “evil IRA bombers/ innocent Orangemen victims”, thereby upgrading the condemnation into an accusation.

The co-selection of the locational formulations “Provos” and “Orange parade” encourages the reader to undertake membership analysis, providing an inferential framework about the duplicative organisation of the “Orangemen” as the victims of the “bomb outrage” and the “IRA” as the perpetrators. The reader, therefore, is able to understand that the possible motive for the proposed “bomb” attack is as part of a terrorist campaign.

Let us start with how the reader utilises the products of membership analysis to interpret the location category “Provos” as the terrorist organisation “IRA” which are both understood through regional common-sense knowledge to refer to the Provisional Irish Republican Army. This is made possible through tied CBAs associated with the categories “massive bomb outrage” – such as “acts of war” and “terrorist activities” – which make it possible to understand that the purpose

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<sup>157</sup> It is unclear why the “bomb” attack did not take place. However, it is possible to read that the “bomb” attack may have either been intercepted or the plans were abandoned independently. This raises an interesting point; the news story was reported even though the “bomb outrage” did not take place. I suggest that this observation tends to highlight the contextual relevance of the headline; that is, the impact of sectarian activity on the lives of people living in the North of Ireland.

of the explosives may have been to bring about mass death and destruction<sup>158 159</sup>.

The “bomb outrage” invokes notions of the scale of the operation and enables the reader to understand that the “bombs” were going to be planted by an organisation and not by an individual. The skilful work that the reader undertakes whilst reading the headline is made observable, where regional commonsense knowledge of “bomb” attacks is utilised.

In this case, the reader is able to distinguish between this “bomb outrage” and other “bomb” attacks due the size of the “bomb” and the potential target. Thus, reading the size and target of the “bomb” weakens readings that this incident is merely another “bomb” attack which may not necessarily be understood as a particularly notable event. The reader not only draws upon common-sense knowledge of the reported events; they also draw upon common-sense knowledge of *previously reported* events.

Lepper pointed out that this was the case in her data drawn from the ‘duty-rotation logbook’. She noted that:

“What became obvious, on reading the logbook, was the way in which reports about day-to-day events – mainly about disciplinary matters – were entered and referred back to by subsequent reporters, who, linked subsequent events and comments to earlier reports” (2000:77).

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<sup>158</sup> Commonsensically, the category “bomb” could, possibly, be understood as a water-bomb. However, the selection of the categories “massive” and “outrage” are not conventionally associated with water-bombs. Equally, the “bomb” may have been understood as a nuclear bomb, but I suggest that the selection of the categories “Provos” and “Orange parade” invite readings associated with political activity.

<sup>159</sup> The selection of “massive” provides the reader with further information about the “bomb outrage” and invokes inferences about the amount of damage that the “bomb” may have caused to both people and property and the immense personal and financial costs of such an attack. Reading the cost to human life and property commonsensically enables the reader to understand that the activity of “planning” to plant a “bomb” is an immoral (and for that matter illegal) activity.



Thus, it would appear that these mechanisms operate in a similar manner, and provide the reader with a contextual resource to make sense of description within the text.

The category “Provos” can be understood as a shortened version of an organisation’s name that was likely to be known to the reader. This reading is made possible through drawing upon Sacks’ reference to “identification as Type 1” (1992a:445), where the reader is invited to search for an organisation that is already known to them. Additionally, the non-selection of Ulster or Northern Ireland implies that the reader is co-present (Schegloff, 1972) in the region, highlighting the significance of their own geographical location. The use of regional common-sense knowledge (from co-presence), in conjunction with the selection of the categories “massive bomb outrage”, invites the reader to understand “Provos” as the shortened name for the “Provisional IRA”.

Consequently, the “Provisional IRA” can be interpreted as a terrorist organisation associated with civil unrest and political disharmony in the North of Ireland, where political and terrorist organisations have been established in the long-standing territorial disputes in the region. A rich inferential framework is therefore provided highlighting the contextual relevance of readings associated with terrorism within the headline.

The selection of the category “Orange parade” tends to encourage the reader to undertake further membership analysis, the products of which invite readings associated with the category “Orange order” through drawing upon regional common-sense knowledge, practices and beliefs of “Protestants” in Northern

Ireland. For instance, “Orange parades” may be understood to be the annual commemoration of the Battle of the Boyne and interpreted as a (physical) display of the “Orangemen’s” support for the continuance of the Union and therefore continuing division of Ireland. This allegiance may be understood through the selection of the category “parade”, where participating in this activity may be a tied predicate of the category “Orangemen”.

This reading invokes the duplicatively organised SRP “IRA/Orangemen” and constructs a possible motive for the “massive bomb outrage”. In this way, the oppositional SRP “IRA/Orangemen” encourages the reader to draw upon tied CBAs which may include, “politicised civil rights/ Freemasonry activities”, “opposing Orange parades/participating in Orange parades” and “allegiance to the Catholic cause/ allegiance to the loyalist cause”. The parties, therefore, may be understood to hold opposing views and undertake different sorts of activities dependent upon their political and religious beliefs. The reader is able to understand that the “IRA” may have wanted to attack the “Orange Order” due to its allegiance to Protestant (loyalist) convictions and to the Orangemen’s commemorative march.

The category “IRA” can be understood to be drawn from the MCD “sectarian group”. Reading the intentions of the “IRA” is central to the sense-making procedure of the headline, as it invites the reader to draw upon the MCD “parties to a bomb attack”. This invokes the SRP “perpetrator of a bomb attack/victim of a bomb attack” which makes it possible to further transform the SRP to “evil IRA perpetrated bomb attack/innocent Orange Order victims” through drawing upon

inferences about each party's possible motives for undertaking the actions described in the headline<sup>160</sup>. In the case of the "IRA", typical CBAs may include activities such as "political activism", "targeting military units", "bombing property", "fighting the Catholic cause" and "targeting known Loyalist organisations". Conversely, readings associated with the "Orange order" are understood in terms of their innocence.

Again, it is important to note that activities are not innately immoral or moral activities, but rely upon the inferences associated with a particular category.

Activities such as murder or terrorism, for example, can be understood in terms of a heroic action in the case of war or in response to an oppressive dictator.

As Sacks discussed in his lecture, the "Navy pilot" (1992:206), where a "military man" accounted for the activity of killing people as legitimate (as military men shoot other military men), they too are the targets of other "military men's" attacks. The breach of morality associated with the activity of potentially killing people is therefore weakened.

Conversely, reading that the activity of potentially killing people may have been undertaken by only one party makes it possible for the reader to understand the innocence of a "victim of the bomb attack". Similarly, Drew pointed out the importance of the reader understanding intent in relation to the production and construction of an accusation. He noted that,

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<sup>160</sup> The SRP "evil-doer/ innocent victim" has been discussed extensively in chapter 4 in relation to the typical sorts of activities that categories may be understood to undertake.



“...the incident cited there to be interpreted as Protestants *invading* Catholics. This work can be critical, because it provides for the identification of who were ‘aggressors’, and who were ‘victims’” (1978:12).

Reading that the “Orangemen” may have been innocent victims can also be understood through the co-selection of the categories “planning” and “parade”. For instance, drawing upon common-sense knowledge of “planning” makes it possible to understand that the action is intentional – a plot or conspiracy – where in this case the plan can be understood to be to injure “Orangemen” taking part in the “parade”. Furthermore, it provides the reader with inferences that the “bomb” attack could have been an attack on the whole section of the community, that is, people affiliated with the Orange Order and their families and friends<sup>161</sup>. Thus, it is possible to interpret that the planned “bomb” attack was particularly unjust and unfair. Once again, these readings highlight the regional significance of the incident and thereby provide the reader with the contextual relevance of the headline.

Reading that there were plans to plant a “massive bomb”, and that a possible motive for the “bomb” attack on the “Orange parade” may have been to challenge the “Orange men’s” right to hold a “parade”, enables the reader to understand the headline as an accusation. The centrality of the accusation seems to rest upon readings that these types of actions may be typically associated with the category “IRA” where the actions are understood to be outrageous, extreme and unwarranted.

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<sup>161</sup> Typical CBAs associated with the category “parade” include activities such as “having a good time”, “listening to music”, “meeting lots of people”, “developing a community spirit” and “watching the procession”, invoking a notion of celebration. The category “parade” may therefore be understood as a family event which involves much of the community who come together to enjoy themselves.

The inclusion of a quote (as in the previous headline) tends to further highlight the relevance of the accusation. The significance of the quote seems to be twofold.

First, the reader understands that the source is likely to be someone that may have (inside) information about the intentions of the terrorists or knew about police activities that may have been undertaken to intercept the “bomb” attack.

Commonsensibly, people are typically asked about subjects they are knowledgeable about or, at least, questions to which they are capable of giving a response<sup>162</sup>. The reader is thereby provided with the notion that this is authoritative information. The second and related point is concerned with how accusations are achieved. As Drew pointed out,

“Such work can include the production of ‘facts’, and description of events” (1978:6).

Commonsensibly, a quote from an authoritative person tends to upgrade the authenticity of the ‘facts’ and thereby the legitimacy of the accusation.

On a final note, as this event can be understood as taking place in Northern Ireland, the reader is provided with the contextual relevance of the headline; that is, that the incident has grave consequences for people living in the region, and this is the subject of the section that follows.

### **7.3.2. Reading a puzzle – where is the “parade”? Understanding the contextual relevance of the headline**

As I demonstrated above, this headline can be understood to be a report about an incident which took place in Northern Ireland through category selection and the

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<sup>162</sup> I am not suggesting that the person being asked a question has to be an authority on the subject, but that they need to have sufficient knowledge to be able to address the question in a meaningful way. Hence, commonsensibly people are not generally asked about topics that are unfamiliar unless the person asking the question has assumed that they know about this topic or asking a question is fulfilling some other purpose, such as putting someone down.



readable co-presence of the parties. Bearing this in mind, and drawing upon the contextual resources of the reader undertaking the activity of reading a newspaper, I notice that this creates a puzzle for the reader about where the geographical location of the “parade” and consequently the “planned bomb outrage” may have occurred. This raises some interesting analytical questions; what interactional work does this puzzle create for the reader? And how does the reader interpret the headline in this case?

The answer may lie in the reader orientating to the contextual relevance of the headline which tends to downgrade the significance of the parade’s geographical location in preference to understanding the wider consequences of the incident for (all) people living in the region. This orientation powerfully encourages the reader to read the accompanying article in order to resolve the puzzle and thereby provides the reader with information about current ‘flash points’ in the region. A number of writers (Cuff et al, 1979; Anderson and Sharrock, 1979; and Lee, 1984) have commented on the use of puzzles in newspaper headlines as a means to gain the interest of the reader. As Hester and Eglin stated:

“Indeed the ideal headline presumably contains some slight feature of a puzzle, sufficient to whet the news reader’s inquisitive interest for what’s new” (1997:38).

In this case, I am suggesting that the puzzle has duality; orientating the reader to the contextual relevance of the story and gaining the interest of the reader.

Turning to the interactional work that the reader undertakes whilst reading the puzzle, it can be observed that locational formulations are a central part of the reader’s sense-making procedures. For instance, the reader utilises contextual resources in relation to the activity of reading a news story, where stories may be



understood as reports about events that may have occurred over the past few days. Moreover, the headline appeared on 15<sup>th</sup> July which encourages the reader to draw upon regional common-sense knowledge of events that take place at this time of year: thus July 12<sup>th</sup> can be understood to be a public holiday and a day when “Orangemen” undertake marches throughout Northern Ireland<sup>163</sup>.

The date that the headline appeared can be understood by the reader to suggest a locational formulation and therefore seems to be in accordance with Lepper’s observation that,

“Time can also act as a location category, imparting information about what inferences are to be made from the text” (2000:28).

So the selection of the category “parade” invites the reader to utilise regional common-sense geographical knowledge and practices of marches on “the 12<sup>th</sup>”. Drawing upon tied CBAs of “Orange” parades such as “marching on specific routes”, “playing military style music”, “flag waving”, “violence between Catholics and Protestants”, “policing the event”, “Protestants walking through Catholic areas” and “being proud”, the reader is able to understand where marches are likely to take place, typical routes, types of activities undertaken, the past outcomes and areas where conflict may arise.

This latter reading is made relevant through the selection of the category “massive bomb outrage” and encourages the reader to undertake topic analysis of areas where sectarian violence may occur and where the “bomb” attack was likely to make a big impact on the event.

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<sup>163</sup> Orangemen also undertake marches in Scotland and in some parts of the Republic of Ireland, but this reading is less likely because of the co-selection of the category “Provos”.

For instance, the reader is able to understand through tied predicates that locations such as the Garvaghy Road in Drumcree, the Ormeau Road in Belfast and the city walls of Derry are conventionally and generatively associated with conflict due to the close proximity of “Catholic” and “Protestant” residential areas and disputes over routes prior to the marches.

This observation about regional common-sense geographical knowledge and practices seems to have similarities to Drew’s work on religious geographies and accusations where he pointed out that,

“...members may occasion their already-constituted knowledge of typical patterns and of social structures in order to document or decide what is happening in a particular setting” (1978:13).

In this case, however, the utilisation of regional common-sense knowledge(s) does not enable the reader to identify where the “bomb” attack was “planned” to take place, but orientates the reader to the contextual relevance of the headline for people within the region. This makes it possible to understand the news story as a report about the sectarian violence in the region and the consequences of the ‘troubles’ for people living in the North of Ireland<sup>164</sup>.

It would seem that the puzzle acts as a contextual resource for the reader and this provides a means for the reader to make the newspaper headline intelligible. The implication is that, although reading the puzzle may encourage the reader to follow on to the accompanying article – as the reader may very well want to resolve the issue of where the incident was intended to take place – this does not

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<sup>164</sup> The choice in the use of terms North of Ireland as opposed to Northern Ireland is deliberate. Northern Ireland refers to the six counties which are in the UK. There are, however, other counties in the North of Ireland which form part of the Republic of Ireland and these are inclusive in the data selected due to the circulation of the newspapers which is not exclusive to Northern Ireland.

detract from the regional relevance of the incident. In this headline, the mechanisms associated with the puzzle seem to operate in a more complex and inter-dependent manner than has been suggested elsewhere and again highlights the benefits of careful of analytical attention.

Bearing these issues in mind, a further point is raised about the targeting of audiences and consumption of media products, and this highlights the reciprocity of media production and recognition of contextual relevance. The readable puzzle may be a mechanism to avoid interactional ‘trouble’, such as the reader not reading the article due to the specificity of the incident. Thus, creating a puzzle may be a mechanism both to maintain interest from a wide readership and make it possible to report specific events. The puzzle may then be a mechanism to gain interest and yet ‘hold-back’ details that might make the news story appear to be less relevant to some audiences.

To summarise this section, interpreting headline 6 in terms of an accusation of sectarian violence is made possible through reading the SRP “evil IRA bombers/innocent Orangemen victims” which constructs a motive for the actions undertaken. Moreover, reading the puzzle about where the “parade” may have been enables the reader to understand the contextual relevance of the headline, namely that this incident has important consequences for people living in the North of Ireland.

In the analysis of headline 7, I demonstrate how the reader is able to understand the news story as a counter-accusation. The selection of locational formulations



“Orange march” and “bomb” encourage the reader to undertake topic analysis, the products of which invoke the SRP “Orangemen/Republican terrorist”. This invites the reader to understand that the “bomb” attack was associated with terrorism and provides inferences about the possible motives associated with these actions which are further strengthened through the selection of “march”. In this way, the reader is able to understand the “march” as a potentially provocative display of loyalty to Unionism in Northern Ireland, thereby orientating the reader to the contextual relevance of the headline; that is, sectarian disputes in the region.

The category ““was not”” is a central component of the headline which encourages the reader to undertake further topic analysis and to invoke contextual resources associated with reading a newspaper, such as the date that the news story was published and the inclusion of a quote. Consequently, the reader is able to understand that the prior accusation has been denied and thereby interprets the headline as a counter-accusation.

The final remaining issue is how reading a counter-accusation creates a puzzle for the reader, as the actual ““target”” of the terrorist activity is unknown. Once again, it would seem that reading a puzzle tends to orientate the reader to the contextual relevance of the headline; that is, the inferential consequences of sectarian disputes in the region.

#### **7.4. Analysis of Headline 7: “Orange march ‘was not target for bomb’”**

##### **7.4.1. Reading the contextual relevance of a counter-accusation: the intention was not to “bomb” “Orangemen” at the “march”**

The analysis that follows demonstrates how the reader is able to interpret the headline as a counter-accusation through their own practical action and practical reasoning<sup>165</sup>. Once again, the reader can understand the headline as an event in Northern Ireland through the application of Schegloff's rule on locations<sup>166</sup>. In this way, the non-selection of the category "Northern Ireland" is understood in terms of the reader being co-present in this region.

So how does the reader recognise the proposed attack in terms of terrorist activity? The co-selection of the location categories "Orange march" and "bomb" encourages the reader to undertake topic analysis, the products of which invoke the oppositional, duplicatively organised SRP "Orangemen/Republican terrorist". This is in keeping with Watson's notion of "blame-allocation" (1978:108). The category "Orange" makes relevant the tied predicate of the category "Protestant" and therefore the "Orange march" may be understood as being undertaken by "Protestant Orangemen". As noted in the analysis of headline 6, "Orange" marches can be interpreted as a source of dispute between "Catholic" and "Protestant" communities living in Northern Ireland and this interpretation draws upon regional common-sense geographies and practices of "Orange" marches. Typical CBAs may include "marching through the streets", "banging drums", "wearing orange sashes" and "promoting the Unionist cause" which provide the reader with category bound motives (Watson, 1983) of the "Orangemen". These possible category bound motives may be associated with

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<sup>165</sup> The analysis of headline 7 will only include references to breaches of morality in relation to the counter-accusation and will draw upon the analysis of categories found in earlier headlines where appropriate.

<sup>166</sup> Schegloff's location rule is detailed in full in chapter 4.



the physical display of the Orangemen's support for the continuance of the Union and therefore the continuing division of Ireland.

Selecting "bomb", in conjunction with the category "Orange march" and the readable co-presence in Northern Ireland, invokes readings associated with the proposed attack as being a challenge to the Unionist cause which may be understood to be a predicate tied to the category "Republican terrorist". The reader is able to understand that a "bomb" attack on the "Orange march" may have been legitimate, where the "march" could be interpreted as provocative action<sup>167</sup> as it is a display of the Orangemen's support and allegiance to Britain<sup>168</sup>. Again, this reading is made possible by drawing upon regional common-sense knowledge and practices of sectarianism in Northern Ireland, as noted earlier<sup>169</sup>.

The selection of the category "was not" encourages the reader to undertake further topic analysis, thereby providing the inference that, despite the potential

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<sup>167</sup> The category "Orange march" does much work to enable the reader to understand that this event was undertaken in a regimented and military fashion. Commonsensically, marches can be understood as being a "military walk", "a type of music", or "to walk purposefully". The reader is able to interpret that the activity of "marching" was undertaken in an organised, regimented, formal and orderly fashion. This downgrades the significance of readings associated with spectators, particularly children.

<sup>168</sup> This is not to suggest that "bombing" the "Orange march" is not an immoral activity, merely that it is possible to understand that the "march" may be interpreted as a provocative act and provides the reader with a possible motive for potentially undertaking the activity, rather than a justification of the action.

<sup>169</sup> The important issue is that selecting the category "march" is significant as it can be understood to be quasi-military. In addition, the action of a "bomb" attack can be understood to be undertaken by a terrorist organisation which "represents" (Sacks 1992a:207) a specific political viewpoint rather than the view of a particular individual. These readings show some similarity to the SRP "military man/military man" (1992a:206) discussed by Sacks in his analysis of the "Navy pilot". He noted that this SRP was a strong device that did much work to account for the activity of killing "military men", where "military men" on both sides would expect to kill and be the target of military action. Thus, in this case it is possible for the reader to understand that the "bomb" attack may have been a legitimate action as it may be understood to be a reasonable military target.



provocative nature of the “march”, there was no intention to “bomb” the “march”.

As Stetson noted,

“The sense, intelligibility, and the very reality of any possible world is *constructed* by members’ capacity to see what is going on with reference to the category of person or persons performing some action or set of actions” (1997:83).

Put more directly, the accusation of the proposed “bomb” attack on the “Orange march” is made intelligible through reference to the intentions of the “Republican terrorists”. The reader is able to understand that the accusation was based on inaccurate information or prejudicial assumptions so that, either the terrorists were behaving atypically, or they did not behave in such extreme ways as anticipated.

As Jayyusi commented in relation to the attribution of prejudice and bias,

“The distinction here between category-organised belief and knowledge is that the former can be identified as that set of substantive features that are (loosely) perceivable as category-bound, but whose use thus in talk by a speaker is treatable as a display (or implication) of *belief* as opposed to knowledge (even if it is claimed to be knowledge by the speaker)” (1984:146).

This observation seems to be congruent with Watson’s comments in his paper entitled *Categorisation, authorisation and blame – negotiation in conversation*.

He commented that counter-accusations tend to challenge the ‘factual status’ (1978:109) of the account. The headline can therefore be understood to be a dispute about the ‘believed’ motives and ‘believed’ potential actions of the “Republican terrorists” and makes relevant readings that the counter-accusation is likely to be a response to an earlier accusation.

The reader is invited to draw upon contextual resources associated with activity of reading a newspaper. As noted in the analysis of headline 6, a central contextual resource is the date that the headline appeared in the newspaper, which invokes

readings associated with the 12<sup>th</sup> of July “Orange” marches. The location category “July 15<sup>th</sup>” also strengthens readings that there had been a prior accusation through the reader drawing upon regional common-sense knowledge of the distribution patterns of the newspaper.

A further contextual resource is the inclusion of a quotation, which as I demonstrated earlier in this chapter is understood to be an authoritative account of someone with inside information or an expert in the field. The categories selected in the quote invite the reader to understand that the accusation has been denied, where “were not” is commonsensically understood in these terms. Moreover, the reader is able to understand that this challenge has come from an authoritative source.

The reader is invited to draw upon associated inferences such as that the “bomb” was intended for some other “target” or for some future use and that the actual “target” of the “bomb” is unknown and this creates a puzzle. The implication of the puzzle is that the reader is able to understand that *not* “bombing” the “march” is still an important event and orientates towards readings associated with the dispute about the ‘believed’ intentions rather than the actual “target” of the “bomb” attack. Consonant with the puzzle in headline 6, it would appear that the puzzle provides the reader with the contextual relevance of the news story; that is, the inferential consequences of sectarian disputes for people living in the region. As noted earlier, the puzzle may well be a mechanism to gain the interest of the reader and encourage them to read the accompanying article. Yet, in juxtaposition, the puzzle acts as a mechanism to retain and target audience

interests across and within the region through ‘holding off’ the details of the reported incident. The utilisation of puzzles in newspaper headlines appears to be a vital contextual resource for both the newsmaker and the reader of the news story and once again highlights the reciprocal relationship between the production and recognition of news stories.

The contextual relevance of headlines appears to operate in a *specific* manner that seems to reflect Sacks’ comments about how people talk about topics:

“And that is this thing I mentioned earlier, turning *something for us*, where what is done first is to turn it into *something for you*” (1992b:568).

Equally, as Hester noted in his study about national identities using a MCA of news coverage about a steel company,

“The task for the programme maker is to make a programme for an audience... In other words, how are stories told in such a way that they are relevant for, and take into account, their recipients, with respect to their design features?” (2002:26).

Perhaps then, puzzles serve as a means to make newspaper headlines recipient-designed through invoking the curiosity of the reader and orientating them to the contextual relevance of the headline.

One further issue related to the targeting of audiences by newsmakers remains.

Reading the headline in terms of a counter-accusation invokes the reader’s common-sense knowledge of the adjacency pair “accusation/counter-accusation” (Drew, 1978). As demonstrated above, the counter-accusation can be understood as a dispute about the intentions of the “Republican terrorists” which in turn invites the reader to draw upon contextual resources associated with ‘beliefs’ of those who made the initial accusation. The initial accusation may be understood



in terms of the disjunctive pair “terrorist/freedom fighter”<sup>170</sup> and this encourages the reader to draw upon regional common-sense knowledge and practices of terrorism in the area. Once again, this may be a mechanism to target audiences by newsmakers. This observation highlights the centrality of regional common-sense knowledge in the sense-making procedures undertaken by the reader and provides further insight into the fine detail of how audiences may be targeted by newsmakers.

To summarise: the reader is able to understand headline 7 in terms of a counter-accusation through the co-selection of locational categories “Orange march” and “bomb” which invoke the SRP “Orangemen/Republican terrorist”. The selection of “Orange march” also implies that the march may be viewed as a legitimate target and that it represents the physical display of the Orangemen’s support and allegiance to Britain. The selection of “was not” made it possible for the reader to understand that the accusation was based on inaccurate or prejudicial information as the typical activities associated with this category did not take place. Drawing upon contextual resources associated with the activity of reading a newspaper the reader can interpret 12<sup>th</sup> July can be understood in terms of the marching season. We are also able to assume that a prior accusation had been made and that this headline represents a counter-accusation.

The section that follows includes a comparative analysis of the mechanisms associated with locational formulations observed in headlines 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 in order to attend to the validity of the findings and thereby increase the

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<sup>170</sup> Disjunctive pairs have been discussed further in chapter 4. For now, it is sufficient to note that this is a “Type 1 disjunctive pair” (Jayyusi, 1984:123).

generalisability of the observations. The final section concentrates on the relationship between the production and recognition of “newsworthiness” and the reporting of crime in the headlines.

#### **7.5. A comparative analysis of mechanisms associated with locational formulations**

The comparative analysis that follows is undertaken with the overall aims of the chapter in mind. It discusses four main points:

- the combination of mechanisms utilised to highlight locality and regional consequentiality;
- the specificity of reading and use of common-sense knowledge(s);
- the interactional task of readable co-presence; and
- the relationship between mechanisms to target audiences and the use of contextual resources by the reader.

Comparing how mechanisms are combined together highlights the centrality of readings associated with possible intention and motive for the actions, and how these impact on the locality or region. In headline 5 these readings were accomplished through the selection of two geographical location categories, invoking the co-presence of the parties.

The products of topic analysis highlighted the significance of the responsibilities and intentions of the “RUC Chief” and that “Creggan” residents may have been “victims” of the “bomb” attack. The contextual resources were also drawn upon and implied that potential “Catholic terrorist” organisations were at the centre of

the accusation through the use of local “Catholic” common-sense knowledge(s) which again highlighted the importance of the incident for the locality rather than “Creggan” residents. The combinations of mechanisms used in headline 5 were highly complex and operated in an inter-dependent manner. Incremental readings demonstrated their co-dependency and complexity, but equally demonstrated how readers ‘close down’ other possible readings within description. All the headlines operated incrementally. However, headline 2 showed a notable additional variation, as a more straightforward, almost linear, approach was shown.

Reading the regional consequences of the incident in headline 6 is accomplished through the combination of a number of mechanisms which include the selection of two geographical location categories and co-presence of the parties which highlight the contextual relevance of category selection. The products of the membership analyses invited the reader to draw upon regional common-sense knowledge, practices and beliefs and thereby invoked the SRP “IRA/Orangemen”. Further membership analysis transformed the oppositional pair to the SRP “evil IRA perpetrated bomb attack/innocent Orange Order victims” and provided the reader with information about the intentions and possible motives of the “planned” sectarian terrorism. The possible motives for the actions, therefore, were linked to the severity of the breach of morality, which makes it possible to understand the condemnation of the terrorists’ actions as an accusation. These mechanisms were combined with topic analyses invoked through the creation of a puzzle about which “parade” was the target of the “bomb outrage”. Regional common-sense knowledge and geographies were utilised to identify possible



‘flash-points’ where ‘trouble’ may occur and orientated the reader to contextual relevance of the headline.

The combinations of mechanisms used in headline 6 again displayed a highly complex incremental pattern, where readings operated co-operatively to highlight the significance of the ‘troubles’ for people living in Northern Ireland. In this way, the news story was constituted through reading regional consequences and indicated that there may be a relationship between common-sense use and contextual relevance. As noted in the analysis of headline 2 this may be task-driven, as in this case locality was accomplished through drawing upon geographical common-sense knowledge of the organisation of a (clergyman’s) “parish” which subsequently invoked the use of local common-sense knowledge.

Complex combinations of mechanisms were also found in headlines 4, 5, and 7, including the use of local and regional common-sense knowledge(s), contextual resources, and the multiple uses of location, membership and topic analyses. This raises an important analytical issue: what is the interactional purpose of complex newspaper headlines? These highly complex headlines have all been selected from Northern Ireland, and this may reflect the representation of crime in this area, where crime is not merely a moral issue but is also a political matter.

Reading regional consequentiality in headline 7 is accomplished through the selection of one geographical location category, co-presence of the parties, topic analyses and contextual resources associated with the activity of reading a newspaper. The products of topic analyses invoked the SRP “Orangemen/

Republican terrorist” through the utilisation of regional common-sense geographies and practices associated with “Orange” marches. In this way, “Orange” marches invited readings associated with the potential legitimacy of the proposed “bomb” attack due to the military style of the event. The ‘believed’ intentions of the “Republican terrorists” were central to reading the counter-accusation and thereby the denial of a prior accusation. This invoked the use of contextual resources associated with reading newspapers, reading puzzles, the authoritative nature of quoted categories and common-sense knowledge of adjacency pairs. The elaborate combination of mechanisms used in this headline highlights the intensity and sophistication of the work undertaken by the reader to make sense of the description. Once again, this raises the question about the interactional purpose of such descriptions and the relationship between their complexity, how audiences are targeted, and the resources that readers bring to the activity of reading a headline.

The utilisation of contextual resources was fundamental to reading the contextual relevance of the headline and the use of the sequential features of the description which have not been observed elsewhere. Other headlines that have drawn upon contextual resources include headlines 1, 5, and 6, so that it appears to be an important mechanism. However, in these cases contextual resources were used to supplement readings rather than provide the contextual relevance.

Interestingly, the mechanism of ambiguity did not operate in headlines 5, 6 and 7, and yet was highly relevant to the intelligibility of headlines 1, 2, and 4. This would seem to reflect the earlier observation that mechanisms can be combined reflexively and on an *in this case* basis.

Turning to the specificity of readings and use of common-sense knowledge, it can be noted that only headlines 6 and 7 utilised regional common-sense knowledge(s), where this was frequently coupled with contextual resources. Moreover, headline 6 primarily invoked the use of regional common-sense knowledge, whereas headline 7 drew upon regional common-sense practices more frequently. This demonstrates the differential use of common-sense knowledge in relation to the task at hand, where in the case of headline 6 inferences were provided through knowledge about sectarian organisations rather than the predicated activities that they may undertake. This is not to suggest that the use of regional common-sense knowledge is less specific than regional common-sense practices, merely to note that the reader is invited to draw upon different common-sense knowledge depending on the social interaction of reading a newspaper.

In both cases, however, regional common-sense knowledge was highly specific and related to knowledge about sectarianism in Northern Ireland. The implication is that there is a relationship between reading regional contextual relevance and the use of regional common-sense knowledge(s). This reflects earlier observations about the specificity of local common-sense knowledge used in headlines 4 and 5, where the reader was encouraged to draw upon local common-sense knowledge of communities within the locality. For instance, headline 5 drew upon local Catholic common-sense knowledge of terrorism in the locality in order to understand the possible target of the RUC Chief's accusation. Conversely, as noted earlier, this was not the case in headline 2 where common-sense geographical knowledge was drawn upon, and not local geographies.



Locality was also made relevant through co-presence. Less importantly, headlines 1 and 5 utilised common-sense geographical knowledge in order to distinguish between locality and location and the concentric organisation of locations respectively. The implication is that the relationship between specificity of reading and use of common-sense appears to be task-dependent. The analysis of description therefore can not be conducted in a mechanistic manner – the inclusion or exclusion of particular mechanisms does not determine a certain outcome – so that the use of mechanisms needs to be considered in relation to how the social interaction is accomplished rather than through a decontextualised model of culture.

The next point of comparative analysis concerns the relationship between co-presence and the task of the description. Co-presence is fundamental to headlines 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 and operates as a mechanism to orientate the reader to the contextual relevance of locality and the regional consequences of the news story. In the case of headline 5 co-presence invoked readings associated with the duties of the “RUC Chief” within the locality and made relevant his intentions and responsibilities as a local “peace-keeper”. Reading these intentions provided an inferential framework about the possible motives for the actions of the “‘lunatic’ bombers” and made it possible to understand the headline as an accusation and thereby the contextual relevance of the headline.

A similar relationship was also found in headline 6, where co-presence, in conjunction with the co-selection of the categories “Provos” and “massive bomb outrage”, utilised regional common-sense knowledge and thereby provided the

reader with a rich inferential framework and therefore provided the contextual relevance of the description. In the case of headline 7, co-presence and the co-selection of the categories “Orange march” and “bomb” invoked the SRP “Orangemen/Republican terrorist” which was central to reading the counter-accusation and thereby the regional consequentiality of the incident.

The analyses of co-presence in headlines 2 and 4 also reflected the observation that an integral part of reading the contextual relevance of locality rests upon reading that the parties are co-present. This mechanism operated differently in headline 1 where there was readable ambiguity about which of the parties was co-present, which was resolved through the reader’s membership analyses. I propose that this difference merely reflects divergent tasks as the mechanism of co-presence is imperative to reading the contextual relevance of all of these headlines.

The implication is that co-presence seems to act *specifically* and invokes not only common-sense geographical knowledge but also local and regional common-sense knowledge(s) and contextual resources associated with reading newspapers. These observations seem to go some way to extend Schegloff’s notion of co-presence and address his concerns about the indiscriminate nature of common-sense geographical knowledge through attending to the indexical properties of the social interaction. Co-presence operates reflexively and in accordance with the task at hand and would seem to be a fruitful area to pursue in other analytical sites such as telephone conversations between friends and family, organisational emails and local poster campaigns.

The final comparative analysis is concerned with the relationship between mechanisms used to target audiences and the utilisation of contextual resources by the reader. There was a clear relationship between the use of contextual resources and targeting audiences in headlines 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 which indicated that this too is an important mechanism. In headline 5, the reader was predominately encouraged to draw upon contextual resources relating to the activity of reading a newspaper and inferential frameworks provided through category selection, particularly local Catholic common-sense knowledge. The implication is that the production and construction of the headline assumed that the reader would be able to utilise these resources to make the headline intelligible. Due to potential interactional ‘trouble’, further work was engendered to avoid holding to account, not only the person(s) undertaking the crime, but also the reader. In the case of headline 5 this additional work appeared to be accomplished through the readable immoral actions associated with the crime, highlighting the “ordinariness” (Sacks, 1992b) of the reader, and this being juxtaposed with the use of a quote from an authoritative source.

The analysis of headline 6 revealed similar observations in relation to the use of quoted categories and regional common-sense knowledge(s). A notable difference was the creation of a puzzle that tended to orientate the reader to the contextual relevance of the headline. The observations about how the puzzle operated, in terms of raising the reader’s interest and providing the contextual relevance, extended earlier work in this area and once again demonstrated the benefits of attending to the accomplishment of interaction.



I proposed that puzzles may be mechanisms to ‘hold off’ the details of the news story to retain and maintain the interest of audiences. This is not to suggest that puzzles are a guaranteed means of either retaining readers or avoiding potential interactional ‘trouble’, but merely that there is an embedded and occasioned relationship between how audiences are targeted and the resources they use to make sense of the description.

The use of contextual resources by the reader in headline 7 was more dominant than in any other headline and included the selection of quoted categories, a puzzle and the date of the headline. A further resource was the utilisation of the sequential features of the headline that appeared to be aligned to the targeting of Catholic audiences through reading the accusation as based on prejudicial facts or supposition. The implication is that the combination of mechanisms in the headline had a clear link to the targeting of audiences from a specific section of the community. This was also the case in headline 4, where the reader was encouraged to draw upon local Catholic common-sense knowledge and practices<sup>171</sup> of “crossing the border” in order to make sense of the headline.

A notable difference is observed in headline 1 where the use of contextual resources was linked to the readable ambiguity of the co-presence of the “driver” and the “employer”. The ambiguity invoked the use of membership analysis and provided the reader with the MCD “local people”. Ambiguity about co-presence, therefore, would appear to be a mechanism to target audiences.

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<sup>171</sup> Once again, it is possible to observe that there is a relationship between the specificity of the reading and the utilisation of common-sense knowledge.

The analytical ‘pay-off’ of making mundane and everyday activities the centre of our investigations, where the reciprocity of news production and construction and the use of contextual resources operate co-dependently and co-operatively through the utilisation of the newsmakers and readers’ common-sense knowledge, is that it is possible to show how audiences are targeted and news is consumed. Clearly, these issues need to be an integral part of any investigation of news production and recognition.

The final section below considers how “newsworthiness” is collaboratively accomplished in the representation of crime in local newspapers by focusing on the production and recognition of readings associated with crime, breaches of morality, locality and location. Put more directly, the intention is to examine how “newsworthiness” is constituted through members’ common-sense understandings and resources. The discussion focuses upon key issues in relation to the production and recognition of “newsworthiness” in local newspapers, such as the immediacy of the presentation of news.

#### **7.6. The production and recognition of “newsworthiness” and the reporting of crime in local newspaper headlines**

“Newsworthiness” is achieved collaboratively through a two-party interaction between the text and the reader, where sense is constituted through the reader orientating to the task of reading a newspaper headline. Headlines are therefore understood to announce that the story is “tellable” (Sacks, 1992b:13) or as Anderson and Sharrock put it,

“The essence of this particular newsworthiness resides in its outstanding mentionability” (1979:381).

As I have shown, “newsworthiness” is produced and recognised using the same processes; that is, publicly available and publicly used resources are utilised to make sense and gain sense. In this way, the reader utilises contextual resources associated with the task of reading headlines and inferential frameworks provided through category selection in order to understand the contextual relevance.

The analyses have demonstrated the complexity and intricacies of this interactional work, where readers are encouraged to combine and move between specific common-sense knowledge(s), contextual resources and the task of reading the ‘news’. Hester and Eglin, in relation to their analysis of headlines, noted that,

“Looking for the news is itself a complex matter” (1997:37).

As I have shown, the representation of crime in local and regional newspapers configures “newsworthiness” in a variety of ways so that it is dependent on the task and is not produced or consumed in a unified manner. Stetson has noted that “newsworthiness” in relation to crime,

“...depends in part on being intriguing, dramatic, disturbing or threatening” (1997:83).

As it relates to crime, “newsworthiness” in local newspapers seems to have additional purposes, such as the targeting of specific communities in a locality, or highlighting the consequences of the news item for the people in the locality, or even denoting the moral decline or political agendas of an area.

Therefore, as with conversational news giving, “newsworthiness” in local newspapers is presented and understood to be construed for particular audiences



(Silverman, 1998). However, this seems not to be a straightforward task for local newspapers, as it brings potential interactional ‘trouble’ which may undermine the notion of “newsworthiness”. How, for instance, do local newspapers deal with the need for immediacy<sup>172</sup> of news, particularly if newspapers are only distributed on a weekly basis, or in the case of the “Catford and Hither Green Newsreel” on a monthly basis?

One solution is related to the contextual relevance of the headline, where stories about crime may be understood in terms of breaches of morality, locality and, in the case of this data, through a combination of both. In this way, the reader is able to interpret crime headlines not merely in terms of “newsworthiness” but *local* “newsworthiness”.

Unlike Watson’s example of a local headline – “LOCAL MAN LOSES RECORD LARGEST POOLS WIN” (1996:8) – the headlines from this data set do not derive their intelligibility from the selection of categories instructing the reader to read them as local. Local “newsworthiness” is accomplished through mechanisms such as co-presence, the selection of geographical location categories, readings associated with intention and motive for actions, puzzles, and the utilisation of specific common-sense knowledge(s).

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<sup>172</sup> The issue of immediacy needs some clarification, as there seem to be different issues for local newspapers, such as the degree of immediacy. On the one hand, being a local newspaper may make it easier to make the “newsworthiness” understood on the ground, via co-presence, so that the story might be of interest to the reader, since the reader is a ‘local’ person. However, care is required, as “newsworthiness” in local newspapers does not always invoke co-presence as was shown to be the case in headline 3. Furthermore, the presumption that co-presence is the most important mechanism for reading local “newsworthiness” has not been shown to be the case in the analysis found in this thesis, where many mechanisms operate inter-dependently.

The reader is able to understand the specificity of the contextual relevance in relation to the headline. The assumption therefore is that the reader is able to draw upon specific common-sense knowledge(s). This was shown to be the case in a large proportion of the headlines analysed in this thesis including those drawn from regional newspapers. The reader's recognition work includes contextual resources drawn from the activity of reading for the news, and also draws upon temporal and spatial predicates which invoke the utilisation of local common-sense knowledge, geographies, practice and beliefs.

This raises an interesting point in relation to the targeting of audiences and the intelligibility of "newsworthiness". Hester and Eglin refer to the collectivity "parties to a newspaper reading" (1997:36). In the case of the activity of reading a local newspaper this can be transformed into "parties to a local newspaper reading". As Sacks pointed out in relation to the request for information,

"We will see that it is utterly routine for stories, that the tellers have ways of showing their recipients that the telling of the story is done with an orientation to who it is being told to" (1992b:230).

The implication is that, not only do newsmakers target audiences; readers 'request' the story so that it can be understood as being for *them*. I propose that the local "newsworthiness" serves the purpose of providing and requesting local news and that this was found to be the case in both headlines drawn from the "Catford and Hither Green Newsreel" which is only issued once a month.

A second solution to the problem of the immediacy of "newsworthiness" in local newspapers may be solved through crime stories being constituted in moral terms and where the headline was placed, which was found to be the case in headline 3.



Once again, this reiterates the reciprocity of the production and recognition of “newsworthiness”, where two tasks are intricately inter-woven. The selection of categories associated with breaches in morality maintains the “mentionability” of the story through telling the story from the “victim’s” perspective. However, placing the headline in the body of the newspaper invites the reader to draw upon the contextual resources associated with reading newspapers. The headline can be interpreted as “newsworthy” but less so than stories found in the front pages. This may well be an important mechanism, particularly if the newspaper is issued infrequently, and this highlights the specificity of the task of reading a local newspaper. Another possible solution to the problem of immediacy may be related to the utilisation of the sequential features of the description, as demonstrated in headline 7. The “newsworthiness” was constituted as a local counter-accusation turning ‘old’ news into something “tellable” (Sacks, 1992b:13). A second function of the adjacency pair was to make relevant readings that the initial accusation may have been supposition or ‘believed’ facts. This would seem to be an important point as this mechanism provides a means to make ‘old’ news new and thereby neatly deals with any delays in delivering the news. Perhaps more importantly though it seems to be a device<sup>173</sup> for targeting specific sections of the community.

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<sup>173</sup> The mechanism of accusation/counter-accusation is often used by in newspapers and would appear to be a means to prolong the life of the story. It would appear in local newspapers, however, that further interactional work is being undertaken in relation to identity. This observation has similarities to Housley and Fitzgerald’s work on national identity as they note that:

“...it would seem to us that an understanding of the local accomplishment of identity at this level is very important in combating prejudice and developing pedagogical approaches sensitive to other cultures and changes being brought about by globalisation. At the most fundamental level an understanding of this form of interactional work will also enable us to question the mundane logic of prejudice and discrimination” (2001:14).



The above discussion has gone some way to explain how local “newsworthiness” is accomplished and the issues that are associated with its production and recognition. As has been shown in the analyses and in this section, reading local “newsworthiness” is task-dependent and relies upon the reciprocity and utilisation of contextual resources to render the contextual relevance.

In chapter 8, I discuss the notion of “newsworthiness” further and address Schegloff’s criticism of MCA using the research findings. Finally, I consider the implications of the observations in this thesis for those interested in MCA, for media studies researchers, and those interested in locality, morality or crime.

## Chapter 8

### **8. Implications**

In this chapter, I develop the notion of “newsworthiness”, address Schegloff’s concerns about MCA and discuss the implications of the findings for different audiences; media studies researchers, researchers interested in MCA and those interested in locality, morality or crime. These conclusions need to be considered within the context of the limitations of the study and with acknowledgement that the readings presented in the analysis represent “possibilities” rather than proofs.

As Sacks commented,

“What I intend to prove is that it’s *possible* that that’s so. I won’t always say that, but for me ‘possibility’ is an extremely strong kind of relationship, and it’s the strongest relationship I will ever be intendedly proposing. I want to prove possibilities, and I take it that proving a possibility is other than asserting “Well it’s possible that,” i.e. I don’t intend to be using “It’s possible that” as a way to say anything I please. I intend the proofs to be weak in the sense that they only prove possibilities, but where that takes some sort of proof” (1992b:252).

#### **8.1. Local “newsworthiness” as an interactional accomplishment**

The analysis contained in this thesis has shown that local “newsworthiness” is not a static or fixed phenomenon. Reading local “newsworthiness” does not depend on the inclusion of specific categories in the headline or even specific combinations of mechanisms to alert the reader to the importance of the locality or regional consequences of the headline. Instead, local “newsworthiness” is collaboratively produced and recognised reflexively and in accordance with the task or purpose of the interaction.

The section that follows develops the discussion about the construction and configuration of local “newsworthiness”, and focuses upon the work that mechanisms such as ambiguity, puzzles and co-presence invoke for the writer and reader of the headline. This once again reveals the interactional complexities of this phenomenon.

As the analysis in this thesis has shown, ambiguity is an important contextual resource for the reader and the writer of the headline, where this mechanism operates reflexively depending on the task at hand. For example, demonstrating how the recognition of ambiguity operates also provides the researcher with precise details about how audiences may be targeted. This interaction was shown to be accomplished in headline 4 through the reader understanding ambiguity in terms of a warning to Catholics in the locality and through Catholics being encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions associated with the categories selected, such as “border officials”. In this instance, ambiguity invited the reader to utilise local common-sense knowledge(s), understand inferences about the moral decline of the locality, invited membership work to be undertaken, and provided inferential consequences of the crime for the locality. As a result, the reader was able to understand the local “newsworthiness” of news stories.

By demonstrating how the reader understands the headline, the analysis reveals the taken-for-granted resources that the local newsmaker uses to target audiences. Understanding how ambiguity operates therefore provides information about how



local news is recipient-designed to make the news story relevant to the lives and interests of potential readers.

The analysis in this thesis has shown that it is analytically inadequate to consider concepts – such as the targeting of audiences - in isolation because an integral part of targeting audiences is the reader’s recognition work. This observation highlights the need to consider local “newsworthiness” as a social interaction rather than presuming that “newsworthiness” is standardised, or operates in a fixed manner.

Ambiguity in the headlines has been shown to be a mechanism to whet the appetite of the reader, arousing curiosity about the details of the news report. Consequently, ambiguity can be readily understood as an important contextual resource for the newsmaker as it encourages the reader to complete the accompanying article to resolve issues such as who was involved with the crime? Or was the crime premeditated or opportunistic? On the other hand, it also provides the researcher with details about how the reader orientated to and utilised the activity of reading the (local) news; where ambiguity has been shown to be understood as a typical component of newspaper headlines reporting crimes. Once again, this highlights the analytical benefit of this approach, as the details of how the interaction came about are revealed through focusing on “newsworthiness” at an interactional level.

Within this thesis I have also suggested that puzzles operate as contextual resources for the reader and the writer of the headlines, creating an interest in the news items and orientating the readers to the contextual relevance of the stories.

Puzzles shown in headlines 6 and 7 made it possible for the reader to understand the news report in terms of the consequences of the crime for people in the region. The analysis of these headlines provided the analyst with information about the mechanisms used by newsmakers to (attempt to) retain their readers and provides some insight into how local “newsworthiness” is produced, recognised and maintained, whilst reading local newspaper headlines. This observation raises an important point: in order for audiences to be maintained and retained, the reader has to recognise (and assess) the *relevance* of the “tellability” (Sacks, 1992b:13) of the news item. Considering the construction and configuration of local “newsworthiness” therefore provides information about how the interactional task of maintaining audiences is collaboratively and reflexively accomplished.

The co-presence of the parties has been shown to be an important contextual resource for the reader and the writer of the headlines. It was shown that co-presence seemed to act *specifically* and invoked not only common-sense geographical knowledge but also local and regional common-sense knowledge(s) and contextual resources associated with reading newspapers. Considering the utilisation of co-presence by the reader and writer therefore provides some insight into how local newsmakers and audiences collaboratively constitute local “newsworthiness”. For instance, audiences are not merely targeted; they recognise and consume local news, through the same publicly available and

publicly used resources that newsmakers use to target audiences. Most importantly these publicly available and publicly used resources have been shown to operate in a highly specific manner and in accordance with the purpose of the interaction. This makes it possible for newsmakers to target certain sections of a community or communities associated with particular types of activities, and for readers to utilise their specific local common-sense knowledge(s) to recognise and consume the local “newsworthiness” of a newspaper headline.

As the analysis in this thesis has shown, how local “newsworthiness” is accomplished is an empirical question which demands detailed analysis of the collaborative processes that bring about its production and recognition. The analytical benefits of this approach are that the researcher preserves the phenomenon under investigation by acknowledging the skilfulness of both the reader and the writer of the newspaper headline. The issues raised in this section also address some of Schegloff’s concerns about MCA.

## **8.2. Addressing Schegloff’s concerns about MCA**

“In my view, Sacks abandoned the use of “category-bound-activities” because of an incipient “promiscuous” use of them, i.e., an unelaborated invocation of some vernacularly based assertion (i.e., that some activity is bound to some category) as an element of an account on the investigator’s authority, without deriving from it any analytical pay-off other than the claimed account for the data which motivated its introduction in the first place” (Schegloff, 1995: xlii).

Schegloff’s concern was that MCA risked being analytically promiscuous through the importation of the analyst’s concerns over and above those of the interactants, resulting in the use of common-sense knowledge to make theoretical claims; a position that Sacks was (so) critical of in the work of other sociologists.



For Schegloff (and other CA researchers) (so-called) analytical looseness is avoided through considering the sequential organisation of talk-in-interaction, where theoretical claims are made by demonstrating how the conversationalists interpret utterances on a turn-by-turn basis. Thus, a question is only a question if the conversationalists interpret it to be so. Conversely, MCA does not insist upon sequential analysis of textual data in the same way, and therefore concerns about the analytical and empirical value of this research tool may arise. The implications of this for the analysis shown in this thesis are twofold:

- that the analysis may not be providing information about the processes that members use to produce and make sense of description; and
- that the researcher may be tempted to over extend the theoretical claims of the analysis resulting in the analyst adopting a privileged and decontextualised position.

I propose that the analysis in this thesis has demonstrated that the risk of ‘analytical promiscuity’ is not inevitable, through remaining conceptually and empirically committed to the study of social structure-in-action. This was shown in this research study through a continued commitment to demonstrating how “newsworthiness” operated as a two way process in naturally occurring data. Thus, focusing upon how the story was produced and understood conceptualised the phenomenon as social activity and showed how this was accomplished in this instance.

The analyst’s primary concern was therefore to show the *procedures* used by (both of) the interactants *in situ*. Like Sacks’ work, this commitment to the study

of social structure-in action has ensured that the social activity of “newsworthiness” was analysed as a “culturally methodic procedural activity rather than an inert cultural grid” (Watson, n.d: 3), and that categories are viewed as having “meaning in specific contexts” (Silverman, 1998: 129) rather than being “storehouses of decontextualised meaning” (Watson, n.d.:4). The significance of focusing on “newsworthiness” as a social activity is that it enables the analyst to remain aware of the dangers of analytical promiscuity at each stage of the analysis and ensures that theoretical claims focus on the relationship between categorisation and culture for members of society.

A further facet of Schegloff’s critique raises another concern. If context is all important for members, why not look at the practices in newspapers newsrooms through which headlines are selected and fashioned. Surely newspaper headlines cannot be considered separately from their production process – just as Sacks showed that jokes, for instance, are understood through their telling.

However, to demand that any analysis of a text must return to the local site of its production seems over-prescriptive. For instance, it would rule out analysis of many historical texts whose origins may be unknown, such as the bible or other historically important scripts.

Moreover, despite the fact that ordinary newspaper readers will not know much about the social organization of (local) newsrooms, they are able *somehow* to read some sense into headlines. By focusing on this ‘*somehow*’, or in Garfinkel’s words ‘quiddity’, I believe I have remained true to the ethnomethodological

project in which context cannot be merely reduced to some quasi-structural ‘input’ such as, the site where headlines are assembled.

The sections that follow discuss the implications of this research for different audiences such as media studies researchers, researchers interested in MCA and those interested in locality, morality or crime.

### **8.3. The implications for media studies researchers**

The task of media studies research is to reveal the social constructions that make it possible to understand the world. One component of this task is to explain the concept of “newsworthiness”. This project is rarely addressed in terms of social interaction and remains in the realms of theoretical abstractions with all their associated problems<sup>174</sup>.

From the findings in this study, it would seem that orientating to the internal logics of social structure may provide a media studies researcher with an alternative ‘method’ with which to address such issues<sup>175</sup>. To clarify my use of the term ‘method’, this should be taken as to include all of the points raised below

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<sup>174</sup> For instance, “newsworthiness” is often explained in terms of media production. Schlesinger and Tumber (1994) in their book *Reporting crime: the media politics of criminal justice* commented on the need to consider how news sources interact with news media. They conducted semi-structured interviews with people in official sources, professional associations and pressure groups and found that sources in the crime and criminal justice arena have developed strategies of information management when dealing with journalists.

<sup>175</sup> This certainly is not a new idea; as noted elsewhere Sacks (1992a) used MCA on data from *The Times* which contained an interview of a “Navy pilot”. More recently, Jalbert (1999) has commented on the concern over what counts as analysis in media studies research and suggested that ethnomethodology could provide a way forward in developing “workings of criticality... in the domain of media studies” (1999:49). In addition, ethnomethodologists have used newspaper articles, headlines or both as sources of data, including for example Lee, 1984; Hester and Eglin, 1997; and Stetson, 1997, all of whom used MCA as their analytical tool.



and be considered in relation to the limitations of this research, which are discussed in relation to my aims and objectives<sup>176</sup> at the end of this section.

I propose that an alternative approach to investigations addressing the issue of “newsworthiness” is drawn from the findings listed below:

- readers use contextual resources to gain the contextual relevance of the headlines;
- the specificity of readings and the use of common-sense knowledge(s) is task dependent; and
- there is a relationship between the use of contextual resources and the targeting of audiences.

First and foremost, media studies researchers are offered a ‘topic’, where the orientation is to reveal the locally produced, locally occasioned production and recognition of local “newsworthiness”. Realigning the topic of “newsworthiness” makes it possible to report on the phenomena without losing them, and produces findings that are not generalisations, and this demonstrates how interaction is accomplished. Garfinkel summarised the analytical gains of ethnomethodological studies in these terms:

“...they show for ordinary society’s substantive event, in material contents, that, and just how members concert their activities to produce and exhibit coherence, cogency, analysis, consistency, order, meaning, reason, methods – which are locally, reflexively accountable orderliness – in and as their ordinary lives together, in detail” (1991:17).

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<sup>176</sup> Refer to chapter 1, section 1.3.

Furthermore, as Stetson commented, such analysis,

“...transcends the particularity of a newspaper (or television) account: one can generalise from the analysis of their resources to the analyses of the resources shared by a wider public, because the news media must do this themselves for practical purposes in working up *their* (vernacular) accounts” (1997:84).

Undertaking research on the topic of local “newsworthiness” enables media studies research to be inclusive of the reader, the text and their interconnection in a specific, meaningful manner. The method therefore offers a way to address the ‘problem of meaning’<sup>177</sup> within different geographical locations. This position avoids analysing text and reader as separate entities (which raises the problem of how to reconcile them). As Watson commented, analysis of the production and recognition of meaning requires detailed consideration of both parts of the social activity of reading a newspaper headline:

“The text makes available various interpretative schemata and the reader activates these schemata in particular instances by bringing his/her interpretative work into alignment...One thing seems sure: we can not have anything approaching an adequate textual analysis without including an intricately-interwoven consideration *both* of textual organisation and of reading as an activity” (1996:13).

As shown from the analysis in this thesis, both elements operate in a reciprocal manner particularly in relation to use of local contextual resources and understanding the local contextual relevance of the headline. This indicates that text and readers are indeed active, but more importantly it delineates the activity of reading a local newspaper as a specific social activity.

Media studies researchers are offered a research tool which operates within an analytical framework that acknowledges that “newsworthiness” is a multi-

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<sup>177</sup> Chapter 2 included a discussion of this issue in section 2.1.

dimensional and multi-task phenomenon. In this thesis, the analyses provided the fine details of social interaction and task accomplishment, where the specificity of readings and use of common-sense knowledge(s) were task-dependent. Showing the details of common-sense knowledge-in-use makes it possible to undertake investigations concerned with interactional tasks such as warning local people, apportionment of blame, reporting moral decline in a locality, or providing a local political context. Orientating to the task of the interaction therefore demonstrates context-in-use rather than the analyst's presumption of the context. The advantage of this approach is that the specific details of local "newsworthiness" are shown rather than an analyst's gloss such as 'this is a human interest story'.

The specific details of how local audiences are targeted in particular geographical areas is made possible by considering the contextual resources that the reader uses to make the headlines intelligible. This approach is advantageous over conventional media research – such as, reception analysis or ethnographic studies – as it is inclusive of reader and text and reveals the precise details of the mechanisms used to target local audiences. For instance, the analysis in this thesis demonstrated that headlines may use puzzles as a means to 'hold-off' the details of the news report so as to maintain and retain the interest of the reader.

In addition, attending to the internal logics, practical actions and practical reasoning of readers of headlines negates the macro/micro divide. As Hester and Eglin concluded in their book *Culture in action studies in membership categorisation analysis*,



“... the theoretical payoff of ethnomethodological membership categorisation analysis is a view of culture as internal to action.... In contrast to the macro-micro distinction so dear to sociology’s mainstream, the studies collected here may be used to exhibit the incarnation of social structure *in agency*” (1997:153-154).

Whilst this study does put forward some insight into how local “newsworthiness” is constituted in local newspapers with regard to the representation of crime, there is a need to recognise the limitations of the study and therefore the boundaries of the findings.

The overall aim of this research was to explore the production and recognition of “newsworthiness” in local newspapers reporting crime. The data was selected from the geographical areas of Catford and Hither Green in London, Derry in Northern Ireland and regional papers from the North of Ireland.

The findings should be used as a *guide* for other studies investigating local “newsworthiness”, as other local newspapers from different geographical areas may use other mechanisms, may be undertaking different tasks, or may target more diverse communities. This is not to undermine the value of gaining detailed information about how local “newsworthiness” operates, but to note the need to proceed carefully in its application to other local newspapers.

Additionally, these newspaper headlines were selected within a specific time frame. This is an important point as the contextual relevance of the headlines may have reflected the local community *at that time*. It needs to be acknowledged that communities are not static or fixed, but undergo social change.

Not only do communities change, so too do the categories in use, where they shift to reflect the process of social change. Sacks presented an explanation of how social change is possible without creating conflict between society members and noted that some revolutions,

“...are attempts to reconstruct how it is that things are seen” (1979:10).

Stetson discussed shifts in category use in relation to his analysis of a newspaper headline about an incident that took place at Nishifunabashi station, where a drunken teacher was bothering a woman which resulted in him being killed by a train. He commented on members’ knowledge about ‘African-Americans’ being distinct from knowledge about ‘Blacks’ and similarly in relation to knowledge about ‘women’ and ‘ladies’.

“What we have here is not a mere name change. This is a revolution, a shift in *categories*. Again, categories are competent members’ culturally-furnished, intersubjective resources for the characterisation (including description, inferences and judgements) of themselves and others *and* who someone is, is a function of what one is doing, when, where and with whom. Change any element in the “equation” and we have a change in intelligible characterisation. Each of these revolutionary categories was a change in *activities* accompanied by a change in the ways incumbents of those categories *viewed themselves*” (1997:83).

Some caution is required in the *direct* application of these findings as they may reflect the political and community agendas of that time. Additionally, perhaps ‘time’ needed to be a stronger focal point of the study which may have included a comparison of local “newsworthiness” across time. Nevertheless, this does highlight an interesting area for future research where the focus may be to explore the utilisation of common-sense knowledge across a time frame to review the interactional accomplishment of social change.



#### **8.4. The implications for researchers interested in MCA**

For researchers conducting studies using MCA, the value of the approach lies in its ability to reveal the precise sets of relationships locally constructed in the data. Such studies have conventionally been located within the territories of micro studies and have little to say about the influence of social structure on members of society. However, as many writers have indicated, the,

"...set of distinctions between macro and micro, culture and action, structure and agency and above all, society and the individual quite fail to capture the nature of ethnomethodology's phenomenon and that of its claims" (Hester and Eglin, 1997:154).

For researchers using MCA, the starting point of the study is not to distinguish between the individual and society, but to focus upon members' phenomena where social structure is revealed in and through their everyday practices. Thus, the findings from this study offer more than micro detail about local newspapers and readers of local newspapers; they also provide information about the structural organisation of local news media and local communities. As Hester and Eglin noted,

"...it is identities for the organisations/setting/occasion/activity/turn in question that are relevant. In the exercise of the multiple methods which members use for producing and recognising categorical identities they thereby produce society" (1997:156).

Put more directly, I suggest that this study provides some insight into "culture-in-action" through demonstrating the production and recognition of local "newsworthiness" in specific geographical locations.

This study restates the value of using naturally occurring mundane text as the driving force of investigations that aim to identify issues of social order in everyday life. Such data is readily available, and yet remains an under-utilised



resource, as there seems to be a preference for transcribed materials which can be subjected to both sequential and membership categorisation analyses (for example, Fitzgerald and Housley, 2002; Paoletti, 2001; Housley and Fitzgerald, 2002; and Hester and Housely, 2002). This is not to denigrate the value of such work; merely to note the fruitfulness of analyses of non-conversational textual data. Moreover, much can be gained from conducting studies using textual data from a specific setting, as impressively shown by Lepper's work on organisational trouble in a local further education college (2000) and from the findings of this study.

I suggest that this study also provides evidence of the complementarity of CA and MCA (Watson, N.D.; and Silverman, 1998), since the sequential features of the description were a central component of understanding a counter-accusation in a regional newspaper. This has been demonstrated by other descriptive work – for example Drew, (1978); Hester and Eglin, (1997) – and this serves as a *reminder* to researchers using MCA of the sequential features of interaction in non-conversational data. Consequently, researchers should not feel compelled *only* to work with transcribed conversational data, since the investigation of social order in everyday practices can be diversified by investigating texts.

This study also raises issues relating to the investigation of the practical management of potential interactional 'trouble'. This came about here through analysing the mechanisms utilised to target specific communities in local newspaper headlines. It would seem that local newspaper headlines provide MCA researchers' with a rich source of data to conduct such investigations, so that they

may demonstrate the embedded and occasioned properties of the use, production and recognition of local common-sense knowledge(s) in social action. One instance of this arose in my discussion of the use of puzzles in headlines.

Although this aspect of the study was not a focal point and came about through other analytical concerns, I hope that other researchers view this type of data and analysis of puzzles as valuable to their investigations of the organised character of everyday social events, such as practical management of interactional 'trouble'.

Finally, I suggest that this study adds another dimension to the matter of identity<sup>178</sup>, through focusing on identity use in communities. I fully acknowledge that the research findings are in their infancy with regard to this area and are an unintended outcome of the study.

However, I propose that focusing on the use of local common-sense knowledge(s) in different localities may provide valuable information about how community identities are locally produced, locally recognised and locally managed as practical actions. Such research may have far reaching implications not only for MCA researchers but also may have a practical application for statutory organisations to fulfil their legal and social obligations to provide appropriate and sensitive services.

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<sup>178</sup> Identity research has proliferated since Garfinkel's and Sacks' studies in the 1960s and includes such diverse areas as social identity in youth subcultures (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995); membership ascription and resistance of ethnic groupings (Day, 1998); and national identity (Hester and Housley, 2002).

Despite the generic nature of these observations, there are grounds for suggesting that this research study may guide future research in terms of the sources of data or potentially interesting areas to pursue. The discussion that follows considers the implications of reading local “newsworthiness” for researchers interested in locality, where it is presumed that the audience will include those currently using MCA as a research tool.

### **8.5. The implications for researchers interested in locality**

“What such a common-sense geography is and how it is organised...and whether there is a single layman’s geography or alternative geographies from which a selection is made on particular occasion of use – these are empirical questions, and not ones to be settled by consulting geography books. Such geographies are a cultural fact to be discovered and perhaps subjected to a sort of “component analysis” of place terms” (Schegloff, 1972:85).

At the inception of this research study, my interest was to explore and characterise the nature of “newsworthiness” in local newspapers, to know how it was that they were indeed local newspapers, and what, if anything, readers do whilst reading them to make them understood in this way.

A constituent of this interactional work is Schegloff’s (1978) notion of co-presence. In my study co-presence operated *specifically*, invoking the utilisation of common-sense geographies, local and regional common-sense knowledge(s), and contextual resources associated with reading a newspaper. The implication of this finding in relation to locality is that it seems to develop the notion of co-presence and provides fertile ground for future research activity. This is not to suggest that this research is complete in this area, but merely to note the possibilities that it may provide for future development.



I propose that the specificity of co-presence starts to address Schegloff's (1972) concerns about the notion of a common-sense geography. Common-sense geographies have been shown to include local and regional knowledge as well as more general knowledge about geographical locations. In terms of their organisation, they operate through the reflexive property of co-presence inviting the reader of local newspapers to understand the relevance of utilising different types of common-sense knowledge(s) and contextual resources. Analysing how co-presence operates, therefore, offers a way to explicate how readers are 'doing' reading locality.

The implication is that locality can be understood in terms other than physical boundaries, maps, and the like, through attending to how common-sense knowledge is used in particular instances. The notion of locality is therefore transformed in terms of interactional – rather than physical, geographical or cognitive – 'space', and makes observable members' publicly available, publicly used resources to undertake everyday activities.

It is insufficient for locality to be an object of analytical attention, from a purely theoretical standpoint; it also needs to be something to which members are orientated. Adopting this approach provides an opportunity to demonstrate how locality operates *in situ*, by acknowledging that locality can be understood to have different meanings depending on the circumstances at hand.

This is also borne out in the consideration of Drew's "occasional use of members' knowledge of religious geographies" (1978:1) and Schegloff's notion of "territorially based membership". Schegloff noted that members,

"... place, and its environment of places, have characteristics, character, a population composition, etc. These categories are filled by persons with their particular situations, their house, *their* street, *their* neighbourhood, *their* part of town, *their* city, *their* state, etc., on which they are knowledgeable and can speak, while others can respond accordingly. The sharing of particulars at one another of these levels is perhaps one sense of membership in a 'same community'" (1972:93).

I have shown that membership in the 'same community' also includes local common-sense knowledge of practices and beliefs which are utilised to do further recognition work, providing the contextual relevance of the local headline. As Drew (1978) showed, recognition work was understood as inclusive and delineated different sections of communities. How such further recognition work operates has been shown in the utilisation of local common-sense knowledge of religious practices and beliefs which invite readers to differentiate between different activities that sections of communities undertake<sup>179</sup> and thereby demonstrates the complexities and intricacies of this work.

Once again, this shows that recognition work is *particular*. For this study, therefore, the methodological constraint was to demonstrate the contextual relevance of readings for the reader.

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<sup>179</sup> For example, as demonstrated in the analysis of headline 5, the category "Catholic" can be understood to be associated with "terrorist" activities, but terrorism is not a tied predicate of "Catholic". How the category is understood will depend on the task of the description.

Analysing the internal logics, practical reasoning and practical actions of local readers provides researchers with a method to demonstrate the meanings of communities for local people, and works towards respecifying the notion of community into a members' phenomenon. Clearly, this is an important area of work for future study.

The co-presence of the parties operates reflexively and in accordance with the *task* at hand, and this has been shown to be central to the findings in this study. The specificity of co-presence has been shown to make it possible for the reader to understand locality in terms of a combination of ambiguity, morality, and/or local political conflict, where these understandings provide the contextual relevance of the headlines for the reader. I suggest that this seems to provide greater detail to Drew's (1978) work, as political conflict may be only one component of the contextual relevance of the news story and demonstrates the complexities of understanding *intentions* within description.

Analysing the interactional work that the co-presence of the parties accomplishes provides researchers with a method to address locality from a member's perspective through attending to the contextual relevance of the local headline.

Demonstrating how co-presence operates shows the reciprocity of the task for the local newsmaker and the local reader, and brings about mutually constituted meaning through their attendance to the interactional task. The implication is that investigations concerning how audiences are targeted provides the researcher with information about the presumed taken-for-granted resources – such as



local/regional common-sense knowledge(s), geographies and contextual resources associated with newspaper reading – available and used by the local reader.

Equally, attending to how the reader renders meaning in terms of locality provides the researcher with the intricacies of the mechanisms that newsmakers utilise to target their audiences.

Showing how common-sense knowledge(s) are invoked by the readable co-presence of the parties provides researchers with an opportunity to demonstrate how readers differentiate between different geographical locations. The production and recognition of locality is therefore a highly complex social activity, which requires careful analytical attention to demonstrate the orderliness of social interaction.

Analysing how co-presence operates in relation to interactional tasks therefore seems to be a powerful tool for the analyst, and provides opportunities to pose questions about locality-in-use through respecifying locality as a members' phenomenon.

#### **8.6. The implications for researchers interested in crime and morality**

“The question of ‘values and moral judgement’ has pervaded the human sciences and philosophy since their inception” (Jayyusi, 1991:227)

The “question of ‘values and moral judgement’” is not only relevant to the human sciences; it is also true of media coverage, where issues of crime, deviance and immorality are endlessly the topic of news reports.

Traditionally, the sociological study of crime aims to provide explanations about why people undertake criminal activity, through social theories<sup>180</sup> that emphasise the importance of social context. Research studies tend to be large-scale<sup>181</sup> with the aim of addressing social problems associated with crime. As Eglin and Hester pointed out,

“...what members of society do and say is viewed as constitutive of sociologically defined events and processes, including “the construction of social problems,” the “exercise of power,” the “social construction of gender,” “race relations,” the “manufacture of crime,” “social class,” the “social construction of deviance,” and so forth. This approach conceives of social action, including language use, as a resource for the solution of sociological problems” (1999:197).

The nature and functions of deviance and crime are therefore matters of theoretical debate, the extent of which can be seen in the Muncie’s (2000) paper<sup>182</sup> which raises fundamental questions about the current premise of the discipline of criminology.

For ethnomethodologists, however, there is no need to adopt a particular theoretical stance, as crime and deviance are conceptualised as *members’*

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<sup>180</sup> Criminologists draw from an array of theoretical perspectives. Early work utilised Durkheim’s approach in relation to subcultures and the societal functions of crime. Interactionist theory of labelling, focused on the impact of labelling on behaviour, highlights power relationships, where certain sections of society can define and impose definitions of right and wrong. The classic Marxist approach has been used by Young and Mathews (1992) in their realist radical position which advocates a social democratic approach to the analysis of crime and the development of effective policies to control it. Another major theory of crime is differential association theory (DAT) and is used widely to reveal how social power arises and is deployed. While other research considers the social incidence of crime in terms of gender, poverty and ethnicity and may adopt a Foucaultian methodology.

<sup>181</sup> This is not to suggest that criminologists do not undertake small-scale studies, but to point out that this type of study is less frequent. An example of research within a specific locational area is provided by Pain, Williams and Hudson’s (2000) study, entitled *Auditing fear of crime on North Tyneside: a qualitative approach*. They used focus groups to elicit from a range of social groups their fears about crime and their coping strategies.

<sup>182</sup> Muncie’s paper stated that criminology should be more than a reflection of current political and policy directives. He commented that what is needed is not merely a deconstruction of crime, but a deconstruction of the concept of social harm.



*phenomena*. As Eglin and Hester showed in their analysis of a newspaper story about a “Montreal Massacre”<sup>183</sup>,

“... ethnomethodology seeks to examine the ways in which concerns with ‘deviance’ inform members’ locally ordered practical action and practical reasoning” (1999:197).

In this way, research about crime and deviance is no longer about social theorising, but describes the mundane practices of members and the significance of deviance within their everyday lives. Once again, this avoids the researcher taking the privileged position – where only they have special ‘access’ to the functions of crime and deviance – and acknowledges the skilful work that society members undertake in their daily lives.

The findings from my study reflected this latter position, and demonstrated that the representations of crime operate in a highly complex, task-driven manner inviting the reader to understand the *intentions* associated with the crime via a combination of different mechanisms. Using MCA on local newspaper headlines displayed the formal categorical and contextual resources which comprise the ‘apparatus’ or ‘machinery’ used to produce and recognise the local “newsworthiness” of the newspaper headlines.

The implication for criminologists is that MCA offers a method to attend to the functions of crime and deviance from the members’ perspective rather than a politically driven conceptualisation of ‘social harm’. For instance, as I have

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<sup>183</sup> Eglin and Hester’s analysis of this newspaper story about a brutal crime showed how the reader was able to understand the news report in terms of; finding and making news stories; a tragic story; a horror story; a story about men killing women; a gun control story; a story about a killer; and various commentaries about the crime. The analysis therefore sought to respecify the functions of deviance and crime as a members’ phenomenon through using a range of news stories, headlines and the accompanying articles.



shown, reading crime in local newspaper headlines not only shows how the reader does moral work but reveals that this can be combined with reading locality. Intention, therefore, is shifted from moral work to moral evaluation in terms of the inferential consequences for the locality.

I suggest that these findings offer a valuable line of inquiry for those researchers interested in examining what crime and morality *is* for members of society, and offer some insight into members' mundane practices in and through their orientation to the issue of how crime is represented.

The examination of members' locally ordered, practical actions and practical reasoning regarding the representation of crime may also inform researchers about the relationships between crime, morality and locality. As has been shown in the analysis in this thesis, these relationships appear to be task-dependent, where crime may be understood in terms of morality, locality, political conflicts or any combination of these meanings.

It is recognised that these findings are only tentative, but it would seem to indicate that this area of research might be useful to pursue for researchers with a variety of interests. The implication is that using MCA on local newspaper headlines provides criminologists with an opportunity to pursue areas of research that show how crime is understood in everyday circumstances.

The value of such work has already been recognised by other ethnomethodologists, for example, Housley and Fitzgerald who commented that such research may contribute to their work:

“The normative power of categorisation and the sociology of inference, assessment, moral evaluation, prejudice and identification represents an extremely prevalent and rich vein of enquiry to which the reconsidered model of membership categorisation can make a positive contribution” (2002:80).

What remains to be seen is whether researchers from other disciplines can see the benefits that MCA can bring to textually mediated research.

### **8.7. Concluding remarks**

The aim of this research was to explore the production and recognition of “newsworthiness” in local newspapers reporting crime. In this thesis I have demonstrated that:

- readers are able to understand local newspaper headlines in terms of criminal activity through their analysis of the relevance of the categories selected and associated inferences through common-sense understandings;
- reading morality is accomplished in the practical activity of interpreting crime in local newspapers, and this makes news stories relevant to the reader;
- readers recognise and utilise mechanisms that invoke the relevance of locality so that they may interpret the headlines as consequential to the locality;
- there are different types of common-sense knowledge(s) and their use impacts on reading local “newsworthiness”; and
- mechanisms in the newspaper headlines provide a means for the reader to make the newspaper headlines intelligible and also enable newsmakers to target audiences.

In addition to the original objectives, I have also demonstrated that co-presence operates specifically, invoking the utilisation of common-sense geographies, local and regional common-sense knowledge(s), and contextual resources associated with reading a newspaper; and that reading intention reconceptualises moral work to moral evaluation in terms of the inferential consequences for the locality.

In short, this thesis shows the worth of careful analytical attention, and of considering how mundane everyday activities are accomplished:

“Now if one figures that that’s the way things are to some extent, then it really wouldn’t matter very much what it is that you look at – if you look at it carefully enough. And you may well find that you got an enormous generalisability because things are so arranged that you *could* get them” (Sacks, 1992b:485).



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## Appendix 1 – List of headlines

### **1. The Catford and Hither Green Newsreel March 1995**

#### **PG 1**

- \* “Clergyman wakes to find man with knife standing over him  
ROBBERY IN A RAILWAY CARRIAGE” pg 3 Curate robbed.
- \* “Spending waste, says Tory”
- \* “Driver and his £100,000 load vanish”

#### **PG 2**

- \* “Curry chips and condoms”
- \* “LEWISHAM VC'S Royal Tank Regiment Association joins the fight for recognition”
- \* “The elusive "Catford" gentleman”
- \* “Remanded on murder charge”

#### **PG 3**

- \* “Unanimous re-selection of Jim Dowd confirmed”
- \* “West accused of killing Lewisham man”
- \* “Pet" writing contest a big success”
- \* “Catford civil servant fined £350 for drugs offences”

#### **PG 4**

- \* “Brave mother thrust raider's knife away from child”
- \* “Murdered ex-Catford women – allegation”
- \* “Police car overturns”
- \* “A new way to take out teeth”
- \* “Riddle of accident man solved”
- \* “Women stole £11,000 and cheques – allegation”
- \* “Hither Green steroids man jailed”

#### **PG 5**

- \* “A Catford patient's experiences. The healer's hands radiate warmth, and that comes as a surprise”

#### **PG 6**

- \* “The midnight courage of a nurse”
- \* “Ruby Eirlys Megan Ashdown - the 5ft 2 in. angel who shielded patient with her body” pg 11 “Bravery of a nurse”

#### **PG 7**

- \* “What Labour's policies mean” “The prospective Tory candidate for Lewisham East”
- \* “Growing independence campaign "attracts Labour voters".
- \* “Go - ahead for motorcycle workshop”

**PG9**

- \* "THE BIG DEBATE Hospital changes a huge experiment in human life - Lewisham consultant"
- \* "Tenants" owe Lewisham Council £8.49m - but arrears are falling"
- \* "Lewisham life-saving campaign"
- \* "Lewisham-Catford shops to go in big shut-down"

**PG 10**

- \* OBITUARY "Death of two veteran Ladywell swimmers"
- \* "MP's "tell me" plea to disabled"
- \* "U-turn on wage boards "good for people of Lewisham".
- \* "Vigus wins for third year"
- \* "A touch of verse"

**PG 11**

- \* "Aid small businesses in fighting crime, says MP"
- \* "£100,000 haul from Lewisham van"
- \* "Catford clerk stabbed on his way home"
- \* "Rise in Lewisham jobless"
- \* "Catford precinct company record"

**PG 12**

- \* "Lee woman raped and thrown from car"
- \* "Lewisham's Tidy Britain Triumph hailed by MP"
- \* "Council tax "up by 6.5%"
- \* "Rail link move"

## 2. Derry Journal Friday 10<sup>th</sup> February 1995

### PG1

- \* "Pregnant mum stabbed and sister threatened DRUGS PUSHERS IN CROSS-BORDER TERROR"
- \* "Horse sense...."
- \* "S.D.L.P. support for Bloody Sunday campaign"
- \* "Fund raiser"
- \* "Executive rained under in storm"
- \* "250 at cross-border tax meeting"
- \* "Outbreak of brucellosis"
- \* "Team on t.v. quiz"
- \* "Less people signing on"

### PG 2

- \* "A night of infamy"
- \* "Thugs" condemned: Attack on young girl"
- \* "Finance Minster to form committee"
- \* "Irish language information day"
- \* "Drugs scene out of control –Nelis"
- \* "Estimated 1,000 vehicles imported"
- \* "Ballyarnett W.I"

### PG 3

- \* "RM's forged note warning"
- \* "'Professional shoplifter" jailed"
- \* "Accused of stealing sheep"
- \* "Ballymagroarty disturbance - PUNISHMENT BEATING DENIED- court hears"
- \* "Unionist leaders creating panic – McGuinness"
- \* "Teenagers found with Tom Jones hits COURT ORDERS RETURN OF CD'S TO DJ"
- \* "Letterkenny Star Trek news"
- \* "Teenager accused of buggery"

### PG 4

- \* "'You're not fit to be on the road" Resident Magistrate"
- \* "The rights of the unborn"
- \* "New era of trust and co-operation"
- \* "Easter walk in Rome"
- \* "What's going on?"
- \* "Devine, Kerr attacked"
- \* "Looking for Danny Moore"
- \* "Apology"
- \* "Unionists to topple Mayor? Like turkeys voting for Christmas"



## **PG 5**

- \* “Hears from brother after 50 years SURPRISE, SURPRISE FOR RALPH”
- \* “Rosemount picket on Sunday”
- \* “Computer training course”
- \* “Charged with kidnapping”

## **PG 6**

- \* “AMBUSH AT WESTLAND STREET THE FIRST SOLDIER TO DIE IN DERRY”
- \* “Busy time for Irish speakers”
- \* “Jobclub ends year on high note”
- \* “DHSS offences admitted”
- \* “Strabane man bound over”
- \* “Health centre arrests”
- \* “Minister confirms allocation”

## **PG 7**

- \* “U.S. envoy says: CLINTON HAS PERSONAL INTEREST IN PEACE”
- \* “Strabane museum plan shelved”
- \* “Euro fund row- Border regions have suffered”

## **PG 8**

- \* “Strabane test centre call”
- \* “Time to talk, says McLaughlin”
- \* “It's weird, weird World”
- \* “Of times gone by”
- \* “50 years ago”

## **PG 9**

- \* “Irish language: "Hijacked by murdering gangsters" claims Campbell”
- \* “"Abortion allegations highly offensive" Dr Mc Daid”
- \* “Going from strength to strength”
- \* “Stole children's clothing”
- \* “New drink laws "A nation of gamblers and drunkards" - Strabane Councillor”
- \* “Entries invited Euro song contest”

## **PG 11**

- \* “Sexual abuse "Soapbox"”
- \* “Inaccurate, misleading potentially damaging HEALTH BOARD”
- \* “"Hotel room would have been cheaper" – RM”
- \* “Landsdown road violence It could have been worse”
- \* “Birds to come under the hammer”

### **PG 13**

- \* "Packie's wake" - Sold out again"
- \* "Tickets available for Cathedral concert"
- \* "Top line-up at Frankies"
- \* "Ritz back to back"
- \* "Coronation Street writer's new play"
- \* "Big band continue to turn up the heat"
- \* "Rea in town for Uncle Vanya"

### **PG 14**

- \* "Tenth anniversary of Strabane SAS killings Commemoration plaque to be unveiled"
- \* "Talking point" A greasy fry-up or fruit and veg"
- \* "Krisstofferson at Rialto"
- \* "Live at three date for Maureen"
- \* "Amateur Operatic Society Pajama game - a musical masterpiece"
- \* "Paper in fire at Doherty's"

### **PG 17**

- \* "Letterkenny Urban Councillors clash"
- \* "McGlinchey defends NWHB on St. Conal's issue"
- \* "Water charges draw"
- \* "Strabane Festival '95"
- \* "Directory warning"

### **PG 21**

- \* "Joint investment Forum needed Time to end Strabane's neglect - local industrialist"
- \* "Creggan residents call for traffic control"
- \* "Excess alcohol"
- \* "Cosy Irish night"
- \* "Fined and banned"
- \* "Made rude gesture to RUC"

### **PG 22**

- \* "Treatment of prisoners"
- \* "Disgusted with judiciary"
- \* "Animal experiment"
- \* "Bloody Sunday seminar"
- \* "Council to fight closure plans Coal advisory service to be axed"
- \* "Suspended sentence"

## **PG 24**

- \* "BUNCRANA Good turnout at angler's meeting"
- \* "BALLYLIFFIN/CLONMANY Deaths of local men"
- \* "It's triplets"
- \* "MOVILLE Prestigious GP post for Dr. Ken"
- \* "QUIGLEY'S PT. Social in lecture hall"
- \* "Women's group"
- \* "CARNDONAGH step into dancing classes"
- \* "CULDAFF Competition winners"

## **PG 25**

- \* "Jimmy's memories of Dunree Fort 1941 - '46"
- \* "Put Buncrana back on the map"
- \* "Buncrana must demand ambulance" - Council Chairman"
- \* "MUFF Parish confirmations"
- \* "INSHOWEN CONFIRMATIONS"
- \* "Budget"
- \* "Inshowen Ladies dart league"
- \* "Community info centre"

## **PG 26**

- \* "Band shortage forces cancellation No St Patrick's day parade in Buncrana"
- \* "By the way"
- \* "Rasheney school's "night of drama""
- \* "Local bride for Movice man"

## **PG 27**

- \* "Malin's money from American"
- \* "Looking glass Brae repairs"
- \* "Grace ticket winner"
- \* "20 years ago"
- \* "Buncrana pedestrian crossing "ignores red tape" - says Councillor"
- \* "Malin corner danger"
- \* "Council support for leisure centre"
- \* "Inishowen environmental group"
- \* "Clonmany I.C.A."
- \* "Carnand Clonmany roads"
- \* "Environmental poster competition"

## **PG 28**

- \* "Donegal civil defence sailing towards 2000"
- \* "Civil defence sea borne"

## **PG 29**

- \* "End of the line for G.N.R"
- \* "Fight against HIV infection"
- \* "Templemore parish history"



**PG 32**

- \* “Letterkenny U.D.C.briefed on programme”
- \* “MP fined £600 for reckless driving”
- \* “No longer lives here”
- \* “T.V. licence draw winner”

**PG 34**

- \* “Dairy herd management 1995”
- \* “"Harness optimism" – minister”
- \* “Cereal growers are under starters orders”

### 3. **Belfast Telegraph North West Edition Friday July 11th 1997**

#### **PG1**

- \* “Orangemen’s rights should be respected” “Mowlam denies deal with order”
- \* “‘Courageous’ Orange decision praised”
- \* “THE RELIEF OF DERRY”
  - \* “Call for boys’ Orange parade to be given go-ahead decision”
  - \* “DUP and hardliners attack no walk”
- \* “Molyneaux plays down his role”

#### **PG 2**

- \* “Row over care. Councils angry at future of elderly”
- \* “Two families speak of parades in Derry”
- \* “The first parade terrified the children”
- \* “Bishops urges calm in the weeks ahead”
- \* “Still have right to protest”

#### **PG 3**

- \* “WHAT THE LODGES SAID. Orangemen’s statements in full”
- \* “Orange Order in parade re-think over flashpoints”
- \* “Arsonists hit halls”
- \* “Buses returning to normal”

#### **PG 4**

- \* “Soaring cost of riots worries city councillors”
- \* “Dramatic time in store for Coleraine’s visitors”
- \* “Beer up 5p a pint”
- \* “Success by design”
- \* “Residents complain of stone attacks”

#### **PG 6**

- \* “Derry’s Boys to wait and see”
- \* “GESTURE OPENS A DOOR TO DIALOGUE. Hume appeals for new IRA ceasefire”
- \* “Guarded welcome by resident’s groups”
- \* “Churches laud marches’ gesture”
- \* “Leaders welcome parades decision”
- \* “Dublin calls for a positive response to march U-turn”
- \* “Traders join in praise of Orange U-turn”
- \* “Woman stoned by gang of thugs”
- \* “Police probe mystery in empty flat”
- \* “North West deaths”
- \* “Rivals in peace move”
- \* “HOME FIRE HORROR FAMILY IN BURIED”
- \* “College gets inspectors’ seal of approval”
- \* “Plastic bullet victim stable”

## **PG 7**

- \* “BONFIRES PRIMED TO LIGHT UP SKIES. Brigade experts appeal for care”
- \* “Villagers’ gossiping drives out clergyman. Preacher resigns ministry”
- \* “Watchdog calls for new seatbelt laws after crash”
- \* “Ulster pupils top of class”

## **PG 8**

- \* “Fantasy cash wins dream holiday”
- \* “ULSTER HOUSE PRICES SPIRAL”
- \* “Fresh warning of shuttle disruption”
- \* “Merger doubts in hit BT”
- \* “Boxmore buys up strategic Euro base”
- \* “Abbey holiday”
- \* “Troops braced for backlash. Wanted man “pulled gun” on Bosnia soldiers”
- \* “Fined Tyson buys a Ferrari”

## **PG 9**

- \* “Barrow babies”
- \* “Pipistrelle’s progress sends experts batty”
- \* “Thugs gouge pony’s eye out in attack”
- \* “New war declared on Spartan “triffid”
- \* “LAND WINDFALL FURY. Council’s anger at spending plan”

## **PG 10**

- \* “ON PRECIPICE our own footsteps have taken us to the edge” “Northern Ireland is a deeply disordered place where people feel passions beyond anything the rest of us know”
- \* “Back from the brink”
- \* “We learn from this little affair. Never, ever, let either side think it has won or lost”

## **PG 11**

- \* “Stark contrast in reactions”
- \* “Time to explore earthly mysteries”
- \* “Shoe now on the other foot”
- \* “Man-made fires of hell not emphasised”
- \* “Response well prepared”
- \* “Call Sinn Fein’s bluff”



## **PG 12**

- \* “THE TWELFTH IN PICTURES. Four pages marking the weekend parades...”
- \* “STEPS BACK FROM CRISIS. Orangemen’s “hearts left heavy” by outcome”
- \* “How history may judge the Order’s momentous decision. They were faced with Hobson’s choice”
- \* “Countdown to parades gesture”
- \* “Traders welcome move with “huge sign of relief”
- \* “Newry picks up the pieces after five days of madness and mayhem”

## **PG 13**

- \* “Parade issue Lord Jim in plea to back leaders” “New peer reveals advisory role”
- \* “Alliance praise “generosity” of Orange order”

## **PG 14**

- \* “Club scene” “Don’t go out before checking”
- \* “Changing line-up for the Fly”
- \* “A revealing look at the life of Jane”
- \* “Culdaff its leading man”
- \* “Write a song of note”
- \* “Come on, tell us a story”
- \* “German theatre group on tour”

## **PG 15**

- \* “BA FACES A STRIKE ON NEW FRONT” “Union votes against catering sell-off”
- \* “New heartbreak in store on the street of sorrows”
- \* “Schiffer “illusion”
- \* “Hynde marries”
- \* “McCririck attacked”
- \* “SUMMER ACTIVITIES GO AHEAD AFTER STAY OF EXECUTION”  
“Special schools pupils delighted”
- \* “Charity takes message onto national airwaves”
- \* “Grenade attack charges”
- \* “Liam in “handbags at 20 paces” club row”
- \* “Year of spice”
- \* “Editor dies”
- \* “Children upset by “Jackson” hoaxer”
- \* “Tracey’s big hit with her man”

#### **4. Irish News Monday 14th July 1997**

##### **PG 1**

- \* "Politicians blast sick Land Rover logo" "RUC caught with "king rat" motif"
- \* "Mowlam "did not betray nationalists" "Decision on Drumcree was at 11th hour" "Bomb discovered in Creggan estate"
- \* "Letters provide graphic account of Tianic tragedy"
- \* "IRA imposes peace curfew on city pub"

##### **PG 2**

- \* "Family notices/news"
- \* "Peace obstacles remain says SF" "Time is right for new ceasefire insists Hume"
- \* "Compromise prevails as Orangemen re-route"
- \* "Warring tribes' must forge pact: historian"
- \* "IRA admits responsibility for ambush on patrol"
- \* "Youths shot at bonfire"

##### **PG 3**

- \* "ORMEAU DECISION "HALTED CIVIL WAR"
- \* "NEW STRAIN OF DINOSAUR TAUNTED AGAIN BY NATURE"
- \* "RESIDENTS CRITICISE RUC AFTER LOYALISTS STONE CATHOLIC AREA"
- \* "Orange hall fire-bombed"
- \* "Aitken goes to ground"
- \* "Corrections and clarifications"

##### **PG 4 BUSINESS**

- \* "Valucabs get there first with a little help from a database"
- \* "Newsagents chain to start cards discounts"
- \* "Firms urged to look at life"
- \* "Beware of sabotage"
- \* "Phone bill Net surfers chief worry, survey shows"
- \* "Business expecting growth"
- \* "Workers need support to change"

##### **PG 5**

- \* "Rice raps Paisley: Show some leadership"
- \* "Residents claim RUC ran amok in estate"
- \* IN BRIEF
- \* "*Man killed in car accident*"
- \* "*Huge protest in Hong Kong*"
- \* "*Appeal over gay priest*"
- \* "*Chapel attack baffles priests*"
- \* "*Police probe church fire*"
- \* "March cancellation defuses tension"
- \* "ORANGEMEN 'BROKE FAITH' OVER MARCH Confusion over Derry parade leads to rioting on twelfth"

- \* “Derry men on riots charge”
- \* “Nationalist protest silences accordions”
- \* “Long-faces as new route spoils the party”

#### **PG 6**

- \* “ORANGEMEN MARCHING ALONG THE RIGHT ROUTE”
- \* “Time is right for ceasefire”
- \* “Protestants fed up with the Orange Order”
- \* “Sectarianism has a spiritual cure”
- \* “Britain plays ball with sectarianism”
- \* “Drumcree takes us back to 1969”
- \* “Mowlam betrays TU political levy”
- \* “Drumcree points” “An eternal optimist” “No more brutality”

#### **PG 7**

- \* “BELFAST MAN GETS LIFE FOR STAB MURDER Court told of attack in Dublin flat”
- \* “Return of the “Heroic Guerrilla” Guevera’s remains flown back to Cuba”
- \* “BA disruption continues despite ending of strike”
- \* “U2 fans keeping their fingers crossed for second concert”
- \* “‘Sexist’ Street star score a barring order”
- \* “Greenpeace ‘pirates’ hamper sea oil search”

#### **PG 8**

- \* “SLAIN WAR CRIMINALS HONOURED British to apprehend more suspects”
- \* “Trouble flares after kidnap victim dies ETA MURDER SPARKS WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE”
- \* “War dead are remembered in ceremony”
- \* “Case to test if thalidomide exists in genes”
- \* “Destiny smiles on broken Mir”

#### **PG 18 agenda**

- \* “The cruelty of putting a prisoner’s health at risk”
- \* “Nationality is but a ‘a fable agreed upon’”
- \* “Warring tribes now need to agree a non-aggression pact”



## 5. The Irish News Tuesday 15th July 1997

### PG 1

- \* "UUP CALLS FOR STRICT WEAPONS 'SCHEDULE' Stiffen SF entry into talks says Maginnis"
- \* "Everything's coming up roses"
- \* "Bloody Sunday inquiry demand is 'political'"
- \* "Ravers blamed for brutal attack"
- \* "Orange 'red herring'"
- \* "Orange march 'was not target for bomb'"
- \* "Riddle of hunger solved in the sands"

### PG 2

- \* "Family notices/news"
- \* "MOWLAM IN CLASH WITH GARVAGHY SPOKESMAN Residents 'will not talk to me' says Mo"
- \* "Loyalists 'threaten Catholic families'"
- \* "Get tough on terror says DUP"
- \* "HEART ATTACK LINK TO COMMON CHEST 'BUG' New medical evidence reveals infection risk"
- \* "IRA claims Newry attacks"
- \* "RUC to scrub 'offensive' King Rat logo"
- \* "Police baffled by arson attack"
- \* "Mortar incident is condemned"
- \* "IT'S ALL ROSY AT 32ND FLORAL SHOW"
- \* "Computer failure hits Mars link"
- \* "Top actors blaze across screen"
- \* "Irish language must be promoted say activists"

### PG 4

- \* "GAY LAW PLEA TO NORTH'S MP'S 'All we want is parity - not special favours'"
- \* "One killed as bridge collapses at Israel games"
- \* "Globe-trotting Diana makes a splash at home TORRIES PUT PRINCESS UNDER FIRE"
- \* "Gun attack man may be caught by camcorder"
- \* "In brief"
- \* "*Men charged with arson*"
- \* "*Fire attack on centre*"
- \* "*Three injured in car crash*"
- \* "*Militants kill 44 villagers*"
- \* "*Hong Kong's knicker nicker*"
- \* "*Floods claim over 100 lives*"
- \* "Book prompts call for award"
- \* "MAZE PRISION OFFICER KILLED BY TRAIN Inquest finds holiday death was accidental"
- \* "Lotto win boosts heart-op man"
- \* "West loses 300 jobs in plant closure"

## **PG 5**

- \* “NO REST FOR NORTH BELFAST Clashes ‘will be disaster for links across divide’”
- \* “I DIDN’T KILL MY FINANCE- ANDREWS Daughter is only reason for living says suspect”
- \* “Man jailed for IRA blasts granted leave to appeal”
- \* “Maze escaper released on bail”
- \* “In brief
- \* “*Campaign for killing inquiry*”
- \* “*Front window broken by can*”
- \* “*Island’s week of culture*”

## **PG 6 BUSINESS**

- \* “BA AT LESS THAN FULL POWER AFTER STRIKE”
- \* “Double win in war on inflation”
- \* “Weather hits retail sales”
- \* “Pound hits new heights”
- \* “Bloomsberg on satellite”
- \* “Euro debt to Britain”
- \* “Euro alert on interest rates”
- \* “Man Utd boss unlocks £2.3m”
- \* “Mortgage gloom from A&L”
- \* “Trading soars to record high close”
- \* “DeLorean case may come back to London”

## **PG 7**

- \* “a big day out for all the family with an American flavour.
- \* “HOSPICE HELPED BY US FUN DAY”

## **PG 8 VIEWPOINT**

- \* “DANCING WITH DEATH CAN PUT THE SPARKLE INTO LIFE”
- \* “Talks must be top priority”
- \* “Blair must face up to his responsibilities”
- \* “Residents must talk to Mowlam”
- \* “Attorney-general at the Twelfth”
- \* “Agreement on Garaghy Road”
- \* “Tradition doesn’t equate with right”
- \* “Blame for trouble lies with us all”
- \* “Abusing the name of Christianity”
- \* “Drumcree points .Sickened”

## **PG 9**

- \* “SWEET TASTE OF NEW FOUND FAME FOR DANCE DIVA”
- \* “BAD CASAE OF KISS AND PAY UP”
- \* “Bob Marley tribute band headlines at reggae party”
- \* “Musical feast which caters for all tastes”

**PG 10**

- \* "NUN'S FAREWELL TO WEST BELFAST Teacher calls it a day after 51 year's service"



## 6. Newsletter Ulster edition Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 1997

### PG 1

- \* "MOWLAM IN TRUTH ROW WITH McKENNA 'He has misled me... he has played funny games with me and I don't like people who do that'"
- \* "Shadow of the gun"

### PG 2

- \* "Secretary of State confirms Unionist fears ANGER AS Mo ADMITS SINN FEIN CONTACT"
- \* "Mowlam in truth row with McKenna"
- \* "Probe forces plants to close"
- \* "£6.5m Gulf"

### PG 3

- \* "Thousand turn out at Scarva to see King James and his men put to the sword"
- \* "WILLIAM KEEPS THE CROWN IN BIG FIGHT REPLAY"
- \* "Nations united to share concerns"

### PG 4

- \* "Strange sights as Rose Week blooms"
- \* "Record Great White Shark"

### PG 5

- \* "LVF in show of strength in Portadown housing estate LOYALISTS TERRORISTS FLEX THEIR MCUSCLES IN MID-ULSTER"

### PG 5

- \* "Ulster folk are sick of duplicity"
- \* "Mo to lead change"
- \* "Labour is forced to get off its high horse"
- \* "Crazy court ruling is far from divine justice"
- \* "Leaders get in tune"

### PG 6

- \* "Tory MPs furious over royal holiday with 'cash-for-questions' tycoon"
- \* "Diana defiant over holiday with Al Fayed"
- \* "Mir crisis worsens as captain's health suffers"
- \* "Spain in mourning for dead politician"

### PG 7

- \* "Early free vote on gay sex age"
- \* "Ulster homosexuals demand legal parity"
- \* "Provos 'were planning a massive bomb outrage at Orange parade'"
- \* "Armed gang shoots two men in Newry"
- \* "Video plea in RUC hunt"

**PG 8**

- \* “Grandfather determined not to move in spite of nights of sleepless terror”  
“Blind resident lashes out over house attacks” “Sort this out before someone gets killed”

**PG 9**

- \* “PUPILS ARE ALL HART”
- \* “Jennifer paints her way to success”
- \* “Salesman well grilled”
- \* “Blackboard jungle champions”

**PG 10**

- \* “Holding the moral high ground is very tall order” “Fears of slippery road to surrender must be eradicated”

**PG 11 - 15**

- \* “THE TWELFTH SPECIAL – THE PICTURES”

**PG 16 - 17**

- \* “Hat tip for the ladies” “Ulster Harp Derby”

**PG 18**

- \* “Chemical giants propel market to a record high”
- \* “Turbulent times for construction”

**PG 19**

- \* “Oasis single top seller”

## 7. Derry Journal Friday 15th July 1997

### PG 1

- \* "Durkan makes dramatic plea to IRA: 'GIVE SINN FEIN A CHANCE'

### PG 2

- \* "An appalling act"
- \* "Outlook still gloomy"
- \* "Creggan explosives find RUC CHIEF SLAMS 'LUNATIC' BOMBERS"

### PG 3

- \* "Herdsman at Hong Kong show"
- \* "Suspected drugs find at Greencastle"
- \* "Orange decision broadly welcomed DERRY BACK FROM THE BRINK – AGAIN"
- \* "Protesters attempts to stop march in Donegal"

### PG 4

- \* "'A child could have been killed' SECURITY FORCES DAMAGE CREGGAN WALL – claim residents"
- \* "Table highs and lows for Altnagelvin"
- \* "Wedding bells"
- \* "New drugs advice Internet site"

### PG 5

- \* "Feile debate"
- \* "Five remanded in custody"
- \* "CHURCHES DAMAGED IN SEPARATE INCIDENTS"
- \* "Hospice 'breakfast run' raises £1,300"

### PG 6

- \* "Education reform welcomed 'A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION' Western board Chief"
- \* "Safeways take-over 'TOO EARLY TO DETAILS' - Company spokeswoman"
- \* "Finn bridges may be replaced"

### PG 7

- \* "United technologies close COMPANY ACCUSED OF 'LACK OF SINCERITY'"
- \* "Government to release McCole papers"

### PG 8

- \* "'GOOD NEIGHBOUR AWARD 1997'"
- \* "March transfer BIG ORANGE BOYCOTT?"
- \* "Orange Order decision a 'limited pause' – RSF"



**PG 9**

- \* “Derry model talks sizes on TV”
- \* “Shop-owners ‘relieved’ at Orange Order decision BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR CITY CENTRE TRADERS”
- \* “Cursillo pilgrimage walk to Knock”
- \* “The ‘Cope’ welcomes new proposals”

**PG10**

- \* “Father left to cope after wife’s murder A HUSBAND REMEMBERS”

**PG 12**

- \* “Anti-Irish racism in Britain”
- \* “200 camps out on North coast”
- \* “IFAW Action week ANIMAL LOVERS CAN HAVE A WHALE OF A TIME”
- \* “Daniel O’Donnell on tour – in the USA”

**PG 13**

- \* “DAY OF TENSION”
- \* “Call for riot amnesty”
- \* “Licence for your second home”

**PG 14**

- \* “NOT HAPPY ABOUT SERVICE”
- \* “Foreign coins for cancer”
- \* “‘Irish’ motion passed”
- \* “Unique attraction earns rave reviews DERRY LOOKS FORWARD TO TIME TRAVEL DISPLAY”
- \* “Ardara show looks to increase entries”
- \* “Respect and tolerance required”

**PG 15**

- \* “WOMEN MAKE WAVES IN DERRY POOL ROW”

**PG 16**

- \* “Donegal woman’s amazing experience”
- \* “Health matters LOOK AFTER YOUR LEGS”
- \* “Senate race heats up”

**PG 17**

- \* “SQUALID SURRENDER, PERNICIOUS PRINCIPLE AND RAYS OF HOPE”
- \* “Age concern’s tour of Scotland”

**PG 21**

- \* “150<sup>th</sup> anniversary marked BISHOP LEADS COCKHILL CHURCH CELEBRATIONS”

**PG 31**

- \* “VISIONS OF DERRY”
- \* “Out of the past”

**PG 34**

- \* TYRONE IN FOCUS Strabane named regeneration action area”
- \* “Strabane Orange Lodge cancels parade”
- \* ““Leadership out of touch’ ‘ORANGE’ MP CRITICAL OF PARADES DECISION”

**PG 35**

- \* “Nationalists demand inquiry RUC ‘ran amok’ in Ballycolman estate – residents claim”
- \* ““Mob rule and faked outrage’

## **8. Derry Journal Friday 25th July 1997**

### **PG 1**

- \* "Seagate Limavady goes on the line as: 100 JOBS BOOST FOR DERRY"
- \* "Congressmen urge UTA closure rethink"
- \* "'We'll go more than half way' - say Bogside Residents"
- \* "Residents fuming at foam plans"
- \* "Thompson stands firm"

### **PG 2**

- \* "Visitor numbers jump by 300% CEASEFIRE BOOM FOR DERRY TOURSIM"
- \* "Ingram meets Boys' chief"
- \* "McGuinness meets leading Americans"
- \* "THREE MONTHS WAIT. COURT VENUES DECISION DELAYED"
- \* "Agreement must be reached"
- \* "Good news"
- \* "Deeds, not just words, required"
- \* "A hornet's nest"
- \* "Tab blunder"
- \* "Missing molar"
- \* "Comeback kid"
- \* "Fascinating"
- \* "Turkish delight"
- \* "Edna bites blue bottle"

### **PG 3**

- \* "'DERRY CITY IS BIENG ABANDONED' - O'CONNELL"
- \* "Hume receives US praise"
- \* "Twelfth gathering sparks Council row. EX-MAYOR ATTACKS 'peacekeeper' Nelis"
- \* "Colmunber returns for Iona"
- \* "DERRY FOOTBALLER KILLED IN TRAGIC ACCIDENT- inquest told"
- \* "Sharks meet their match"
- \* "Waiting list in Strabane YOUNG PEOPLE SEEK SEX EDCAUTION"

### **PG 4**

- \* "MARCHING TOGETHER THROUGH THICK AND THIN"
- \* "Date fixed for retrial RAPE TRIAL COLLAPSES"

### **PG 5**

- \* "DUP abandon Stormont talks process 'IT OFFERED UNIONISTS NOTHING' - says Gregory Campbell"
- \* "Poignant scenes at brothers' funerals"
- \* "Students fees plan sparks backlash"
- \* "SSF chair raps Boys over pageant"
- \* "Mayor praises Order and IRA"
- \* "JIBES FLY IN POOL ROW"



## **PG 6**

- \* "July 31st 1972 MOTORMAN MARS ROSEMARY'S BIG DAY"
- \* "Ulster Unionist urges 'compromise and change'"
- \* "Returned for trial"
- \* "Neighbours stole Hospice charity box"
- \* "Mews lanes upgrading"

## **PG 7**

- \* "PEACE PROCESSS CANNOT BE HELD TO RANSOM' - UDP Chairman"
- \* "Factory closure 'not yet sunk in' DOLE OFFICES AWAIT UNITED TECHNOLOGIES INFLUX"
- \* "Man returned for trial"
- \* "Sponsored walk for Chernobyl"
- \* "Civic pans deferred"

## **PG 8**

- \* "Fight for peace SOUTH AFRICA - A MEANINGFUL COMPARISON FOR IRELAND?"
- \* "Special award for Letterkenny mother"
- \* "Derry musician plays an Ayr"
- \* "Culmore Road lighting"

## **PG 9**

- \* "Art bursary"
- \* "Despite unionist 'No' vote DURKAN BELIEVES TALKS WILL GO AHEAD"

## **PG 10**

- \* "DERRY'S GREATEST EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE"
- \* "Amelia Earhart 1897- 1997 DERRY MARKS AVIATOR'S BIRTH"

## **PG 11**

- \* "Drama at Strbane Council RUC CALLED TO REMOVE DUP COUNCILLORS"
- \* "Derry man honoured"
- \* "Nationalists intimidated, claim"
- \* "Tragic death of doctor recalled"

## **PG 12**

- \* "Pictures form the past"
- \* "WITHDRAW RUC FROM NATIONALIST AREAS - urges SF Colr."
- \* "Human rights report being overlooked- Sin Fein"
- \* "Call for DSS compassion"
- \* "Fit smoke alarms warning"
- \* "Culmore best kept garden"

**PG 13**

- \* “Children welcome Gasyard development”
- \* “Donegal journalist suggests Hong Kong solution”
- \* “Spanish students welcomed”
- \* “Road work welcomed”

## 9. Londonderry Sentinel Wednesday July 9th 1997

### PG 1

- \* "Young fighters prepare for fun"
- \* "Parade will take 'usual' route to Orange Field, Orange Order CALL FOR CALM"
- \* "Patrol bombers condemned"
- \* "City counts cost of riots"

### PG 2

- \* "Rostrevor hosts All-Ireland Pipe Championships"
- \* "RUC band were forced to pull out of contest"
- \* "Bogside youth charged with making threats"
- \* "Restricted motorist drove too fast"

### PG 3

- \* "Orange Church parade passes off peacefully, RUC"
- \* "Rota chemist on duty"
- \* "Local police welcome drugs survey findings"
- \* "Campbell slams city centre violence CALL FOR TWELFTH PARADE TO PASS THROUGH DIAMOND AREA UNHINDERED"
- \* "Youth and RUC officers injured"
- \* "Motorist caused accident"
- \* "Bomb hoax"
- \* "Petrol bomb"

### PG 4

- \* "COULD YOU SAVE LIVES?"
- \* "Local company lead the field"
- \* "Call for Protestants to remain calm"
- \* "Brothers fined for insurance offence"

### PG 5

- \* "Sadness as former councillor passes away TRIBUTE PAID TO ULSTER UNIONIST VETERAN"
- \* "Lorraine scoops top design at Magee"
- \* "Motorist had no insurance"
- \* "Trade council chair"

### PG 6

- \* "Orange Order resolutions for Twelfth of July in Londonderry INSTITUTION TO REMAIN CONSTANT IN ITS STAND FOR THE UNION"
- \* "Relief fund jump"
- \* "PEACE FUND REVIEW TEAM VISITS"
- \* "Foyle Hospice weekly draw"



## **PG 7**

- \* “EXPLOSION OF VIOLENCE FOLLOWS DAY OF TENSION”
- \* “Welcome for initiative on employment crisis”
- \* “Grant environmental project”

## **PG 8**

- \* “LOCAL MAN MADE CALLOUS COMMENT ON MURDERED POLICE OFFICER”
- \* “Bumbling Bertie only adds to the Drumcree problem”
- \* “DUP man says trouble will escalate in city centre before Saturday, but warns that... ‘VIOLENCE MUST NOT HALT THE TWELFTH’”
- \* “Grand Lodge welcomes Forum report”
- \* “‘Old Rectory’ Tea rooms - an excellent historical attraction at Bellarena”

## **PG 10 CHURCHES**

- \* “It’s time for new horizons”
- \* “Thought for this week”
- \* “A word from Graham Elliot FACE UP TO THE QUESTION AND DISCOVER UNDERSTANDING”
- \* “Church service times for this week”
- \* “Cricketer Jesus Christ played a perfect innings”
- \* “‘Little acorn’ now available”

## **PG 11**

- \* “Orangemen parade top St Columb’s Cathedral”
- \* “TOWN CENTRE MANAGER FOR LONDONDERRY”
- \* “Petrol bombs”
- \* “RUC attacked”
- \* “Staff encouraged to participate in ‘Welcome Host’ scheme”

## **PG 13**

- \* “Police condemn attack on school buses”
- \* “LOCAL SITE MANAGERS SHOW ‘PRIDE IN THE JOB’”
- \* “Wreaths damaged”
- \* “Postal arrangements”
- \* “Road accident fatalities on the increase”
- \* “Interested in teaching? Yes? Then Manchester University wants you!”

**Appendix 2 – Headline selection process**

**Table 1: Number of headlines and circulation detail of local newspapers**

Name of newspaper	Number of local headlines	Circulation
Catford and Hither Green News Reel	43	Monthly
Derry Journal (10/2/95)	136	Bi-weekly
Total	179	

**Table 2: Number of headlines and circulation detail of local and regional newspapers**

Name of newspaper	Number of local headlines	Number of regional headlines	Circulation
Belfast Telegraph		93	Daily
News Letter		42	Daily
Irish News		131	Daily
Derry Journal (15/7/97 + 25/7/97)	124		Bi-weekly
Londonderry Sentinel	52		Weekly

**Table 3: Subject coverage in the local newspapers from The Derry Journal and The Catford and Hither Green Newsreel**

	Crime	Politics	Health	Local People	Local Events	Farming	Council	General/ National Issues
Derry Journal	31	15	5	12	25	2	22	25
Catford and Hither Green Newsreel	14	10	7	7	5	0	0	0

Appendix 3 – Devices and mechanisms that operate in headlines

**Table 4: Summary of devices and rules used in headlines 1, 2, 3 & 4 in relation to reading crime**

Device, rule or format	Headline 1	Headline 2	Headline 3	Headline 4
MCD	√	√	√	√
CBA's	√	√	√	√
Economy rule	√	X	√	X
Consistency rule	√	√	√	√
Consistency rule corollary	√	X	X	X
Oppositional pairs	X	√	√	√
SRP "victim/perpetrator"	X	√	√	√
Motive	√	√	√	√
Disjunctive pairs	X	X	X	√
Transformation of categories	X	X	X	√
Appears on pg 1	√	√	X	√
Appears on pg 9	X	X	√	X
Capitals, two part headline	X	√	X	√
Story in two newspapers	X	X	√	√



**Table 5: Summary of devices and rules used in headlines 3 & 4 in relation to reading morality**

<b>Device, rule or format</b>	<b>Headline 3</b>	<b>Headline 4</b>
MCD “family”	√	√
MCD “motherhood”	√	X
MCD “parenthood”	X	√
MCD “evil-doer”	√	√
MCD “innocence victim”	√	√
Story from victims perspective	√	√
Psychological response to crime	√	√
CBA-tied motive	√	√
Severity of the crime	√	√
Severity of breach of morality	X	√
Category read as act not MCD	X	√
Disjunctive pair “terrorist/ freedom fighter”	X	√
Morally contrastive categories	√	√
Characterisation of victim from perpetrator inferences	√	√
Characterisation of perpetrator from inferences victim	√	√
Locational categories	X	√
Reader’s location invoked	X	√
Reader makes judgement of morality	√	√
Morality and location linked	X	√

**Table 6: Conceptual map of the mechanisms used in headlines 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7**

Device, rule or format found in each headline	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
MCD	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
CBA's	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Economy rule	√	X	√	X	X	√	√
Consistency rule	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Consistency rule corollary	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
Appears on pg 1	√	√	X	√	X	X	√
Appears on pg 9	X	X	√	X	X	X	X
Transformation of categories	X	X	X	√	√	√	√
Incremental readings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
SRP "victim/perpetrator"	X	√	√	√	√	√	X
Motive	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
MCD "family"	X	X	√	√	X	X	X
MCD "motherhood"	X	X	√	X	X	X	X
MCD "parenthood"	X	X	X	√	X	X	X
MCD "evil-doer"	X	√	√	√	√	√	X
MCD "innocence victim"	X	√	√	√	√	√	X
Story from victims perspective	X	√	√	√	X	√	X
Psychological response to crime	X	√	√	√	X	X	X
CBA-tied motive	X	√	√	√	√	√	X
Severity of the crime	√	√	√	√	√	√	X
Severity of breach of morality	X	√	X	√	√	√	X
Category read as act not MCD	X	X	X	√	X	X	X
Disjunctive pair "terrorist/ freedom fighter"	X	X	X	√	X	X	√
Morally contrastive categories	X	√	√	√	√	√	X
Characterisation of victim from perpetrator inferences	X	X	√	√	√	√	X
Characterisation of perpetrator from inferences victim	X	√	√	√	√	√	X
Reader judgement of morality	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Morality and location linked	√	√	X	√	√	√	√
Programmatic relevance	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
Locational categories	√	√	X	√	√	√	√
Co-presence	√	√	X	√	√	√	√
Inferences of movement	√	√	X	√	X	√	√
Common-sense geographical knowledge	√	√	X	X	√	X	X
Local common-sense geographies	√	√	X	√	√	X	X
Local common-sense knowledge	√	√	X	√	√	X	X
Local common-sense beliefs	X	X	X	√	√	X	X
Local common-sense practices	X	√	X	√	√	X	X
Ambiguity	√	√	X	√	X	X	X
Puzzles	X	X	X	X	X	√	√
Local common-sense knowledge of communities	X	X	X	√	√	X	X
Reader judges competency	√	X	X	√	X	√	√
Information about readership	X	X	X	√	√	X	√
Different local common-sense geographies in community	X	X	X	√	√	X	X
Geographical location category	X	X	X	X	√	√	√
Ambiguity about co-presence	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quoted categories	X	X	X	X	√	√	√
Membership analysis	√	X	X	X	√	√	X

<b>Device, rule or format found in each headline</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Topic analysis	√	X	X	X	√	√	√
Location analysis	X	X	X	X	√	X	X
Consistency rule topic	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
Locality contextual relevance	√	√	X	√	√	X	X
Regional consequences contextual relevance	X	X	X	X	X	√	√
Concentric structure	X	X	X	X	√	X	X
Type I identification name	X	X	X	X	√	√	X
Separate identities	X	X	X	X	√	X	X
Use of contextual resources	√	X	X	√	√	√	√
Accusation	X	X	X	X	√	√	X
Counter-accusation	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
Regional common-sense knowledge	X	X	X	X	X	√	√
Regional common-sense beliefs	X	X	X	X	X	√	√
Regional common-sense practices	X	X	X	X	X	√	√
Regional common-sense geographies	X	X	X	X	X	√	√



## Appendix 4 – Headlines selected for analysis

### Headline 1

**“Driver and his £100,000 load vanish”**

Catford and Hither Green Newsreel, page 1  
March 1995 (monthly publication).

### Headline 2

**“Clergyman awakes to find man with knife standing over him  
ROBBERY IN A RAILWAY CARRIAGE”**

The Catford and Hither Green Newsreel, page 1  
March 1995 (monthly publication).

### Headline 3

**“Drug pusher threatens mother with knife”**

The Londonderry Sentinel, page 9  
16<sup>th</sup> February 1995 (weekly publication)

### Headline 4

**“Pregnant mum stabbed and sister threatened DRUGS PUSHERS IN  
CROSS-BORDER TERROR”**

The Derry Journal, page 1  
10<sup>th</sup> February 1995 (bi-weekly publication).

### Headline 5

**“Creggan explosives find RUC CHIEF SLAMS ‘LUNATIC’ BOMBERS”**

The Derry Journal, page 2  
15th July 1997 (bi-weekly publication).

### Headline 6

**“Provos ‘were planning massive bomb outrage at Orange parade’”**

The Newsletter (Ulster edition), page 8  
15th July 1997 (daily publication).

### Headline 7

**“Orange march ‘was not target for bomb’”**

The Irish News, page 1  
15th July 1997 (daily publication).