

CONVERGENCE and DIVERGENCE

A study of British economic,
business and financial journalism

submitted by
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in fulfilment of the requirements of the PhD

**GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE
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DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented
in this thesis is my own

Gary James Merrill

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is the culmination of six years' work. For the vast majority of the time, it was a solo mission. But my isolated industriousness would have been wasted had it not been for my supervisor, Professor James Curran.

In the early years, Professor Curran patiently tolerated my swings between outright dimness and amorphous utopianism. At times, I doubted I would ever finish and yet my supervisor always seemed to say the right thing at the right moment. Professor Curran's quiet wisdom, his infinite knowledge and unequalled gravitas prompted me to *privately* call him the Jade Emperor. I hope he is not offended by this; after all, the Jade Emperor is the Chinese equivalent of Zeus in Greek mythology, and I am eternally grateful for his guidance, support and encouragement.

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Gary James Merrill

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ABSTRACT

Through the analysis of over 1,600 articles from four British news organisations, this thesis reveals distinct patterns in the political content of economic and business news in the first decade of the 21st century.

In each of the three case studies – economic globalisation; private finance and public services; and Tesco - the *Telegraph* newspapers, *The Times* and the *Sunday Times* were overtly supportive of *laissez faire*, the primacy of profit, and reduced government regulation. The *Guardian-Observer* gave some exposure and credence to ideas from the left but tended to exclude the more radical thinking. Although the BBC is often accused of having a left-wing/anti-business bias, this thesis demonstrates that its reporting has far more in common with the right-wing newspapers than the generally progressive *Guardian-Observer*.

Two further empirical chapters, based on interviews with 26 journalists and editors, explain these findings. The first describes the convergence of the mainstream news media around a shared set of deeply-entrenched assumptions and working practices that are hardwired to reproduce elite interpretations of the economic environment. The second explanatory chapter explores the concept of house tradition, and considers the extent of political divergence of the four mainstream news providers, and contrasts their positions with those of four ‘alternative’ news organisations, the *New Statesman*, the *New Internationalist*, *Corporate Watch* and *Private Eye*.

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PART ONE

Introduction

1 - LITERATURE REVIEW

Although they are interrelated and often cover similar territory, economic, business and financial (EBF) journalism are not synonymous. Previous scholarly work, however, has tended to blur distinctions between the three and some researchers (for example, Doyle 2006, Parsons 1989) attach the adjective ‘financial’ to all journalism in the broader field. Hayes (2014:60) argues that it is difficult to delineate and consequently, ‘business...has become the “catchall” term’. For the purposes of this literature review, the acronym EBF will be used when discussing general studies and for more specific work, the following categorisations apply: economic is concerned with macro-economic issues (inflation, trade, wages, poverty, etc.); business relates to the activities of companies and industries; and financial applies to financial markets, investments and consumer finance reporting. The lack of agreement in nomenclature is perhaps symptomatic of the historically low levels of interest awarded to EBF journalism (Gavin and Goddard 1998:451, Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch 2009:13.) This neglect is somewhat ironic because, although EBF journalism might appear to deal in abstract concepts, the subject matters affect every consumer, employee, investor and citizen and so accurate and engaging news is fundamental to ‘civic empowerment’ (Doyle 2006:435.) The EBF news media establishes ‘a community of economic discourse’ (Parsons 1989:7) and plays a vital role in furnishing the public with knowledge of the economic environment which is a prerequisite of ‘democratic development’ (Corner *et al* 1997:91.)

In recent times, researchers have shown much greater interest in EBF journalism. The pivotal event, of course, was the 2008 Financial Crisis which sent economic shockwaves around the globe¹. Over subsequent years, academics and journalists have debated the role of the news media in the prelude to, during and after the Crisis. Although there are some dissenters, particularly in the US (Schiffrin 2010), the consensus among scholars and practitioners alike is that EBF journalists failed to warn the public of looming dangers, and the most vibrant debate revolves around the reasons why this happened. Many researchers have concentrated on the relationship between journalists and their sources and recent British research has revealed

¹ There is some debate about the precise start date of what became known as the ‘Financial Crisis.’ Indeed, the relative importance of key events is discussed by a number of *ex post facto* books by British EBF journalists (Brummer 2008, Elliott and Atkinson 2008, Peston 2008, Pym and Kochan 2008, Bootle 2009.) It is generally agreed, however, that the initial shock was provided by the collapse of the US housing market in 2006. This led to liquidity problems among American sub-prime lenders through 2007 which subsequently infected the global banking system. For many commentators, however, the pivotal event occurred on September 15 2008 when Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy protection (*Economist* 2013)

widespread reliance on political and corporate PR which, by extension, meant sceptics and dissenters were given little opportunity to air their views (Manning 2014, Berry 2012, Schifferes and Coulter 2012, Davis 2011, Tambini 2010, Marron *et al* 2010, Schechter 2009.) Other reasons given – typically by practitioners - for journalism's inadequacies include: the rigidity of reporting beats; deficiencies in training; restrictions on airtime and page space; and the complexities of financial markets (Barber 2009, Mair and Keeble 2009, Islam 2009, Elliott 2009.) While this post-Financial Crisis debate is valuable and underlines the findings of some previous work, it only offers a partial explanation of the nature of EBF journalism, primarily because it is focused on a single, albeit important, episode. Furthermore, these studies tend to congregate around the question of sources, most are journal articles and conference papers and consequently, they are limited in scale. Many also have methodological limitations: some are based on relatively small numbers of interviews with practitioners, and others are predominantly learned commentary and analysis with little empirical grounding.

To gain a fuller understanding of EBF journalism, therefore, this work needs to be synthesised with the somewhat sparse and disjointed research prior to the Financial Crisis. As will be demonstrated, there is a paucity of detailed and focused studies of the sociology of EBF journalism and there has been no ethnography, nor any wide-reaching analysis, that comes close to matching the depth, scope and influence of the classic works in other areas of British journalism (for example, Tunstall 1971, Schlesinger 1978, Hetherington 1985.) Indeed, there is a considerable body of work in the sociology of journalism but it would be impossible to give a comprehensive summary within the limits of this chapter. Instead, this section concentrates on subsets of the grand corpus with the view of augmenting the EBF-focussed work. Hence, assuming theories that have been developed in the context of *general* journalism may be equally relevant to EBF news production, this chapter will help identify the focus of this thesis.

1 – The individual journalist

The sociology of journalism is concerned with 'people, patterned interactions, organisations, institutions and structures' (Zelizer 2004:45) and this strand of research has been subjected to theorising for over half a century. In the 1950s, the gatekeeper model, in which an editor either rejected or published in-coming information, dominated. In his seminal study, David Manning White (1950) found that

eight items of potential news were rejected for every one accepted, and attributed the selection to the editor's subjectivity. Although this simple model had intuitive appeal, it left information 'sociologically untouched' and it is now widely accepted that: 'news items are not simply selected but constructed' (Schudson 1989:265.) Selection is certainly a factor and, in itself, necessitates the presentation of a partial view of the world, but news is more complex: it is an authored narrative and a work of human agency and, consequently, news can never be a faithful and complete 'mirror of reality' (McNair 1998:6.) Instead of 'finding' news, journalists *create* news through a process of 'transformation... differential presentation according to numerous political, economic and social factors' (Fowler 1991:11.)

In the quest to better understand how this process contributes to the nature of the news product, researchers are sometimes drawn to journalists' backgrounds, education and beliefs. In the United States, for example, an oft-repeated observation is that journalists tend to vote Democrat and hence, the news media is inherently 'liberal', in the sense that its output is slanted toward the left of the political spectrum (Lichter *et al* 1986.) Other American research, however, has revealed that the country's journalists have very similar political constitutions to the general public (Weaver and Wilhoit 1991.) Michael Schudson suggests the actuality is more subtle: although American journalists do indeed tend to be *socially* liberal they: 'fully accept the framework of capitalism' (1989:274.) His critique is echoed by Croteau who noted that the general public tended to be to the left of journalists in economic matters (1998:8.) In the American context, Gans' (1979) assertion that most journalists hold 'progressive but safe' views is a neat synopsis.

In the UK, similar charges of left-wing tendencies have been levelled at BBC journalists even though they are committed to political impartiality (Budd 2007:14, Johnson 2012) and yet there is little empirical evidence to support the theory. In a significant comparative study, however, Patterson and Donsbach (1996) found that across all five countries in their sample, the mean political position of journalists was to the left. Their research placed British journalists slightly left-of-centre while the mean editorial position of British news organisations was to the right². Even so, it is clearly difficult to isolate the 'average' political position of a whole profession, and

² Respondents were asked: 'on a scale where 1 is left, 7 is right, and 4 is centre, where would you place yourself?' British journalists were the second least 'liberal' of the five national groups with a mean score of 3.45, and the mean editorial position of British news organisations was 4.36. Journalists in all countries also positioned themselves to the left of where they thought their audiences' views resided

some researchers prefer to infer the values of journalists according to their backgrounds and education. Edwards and Cromwell (2009), for example, suggest that British journalists lack genuine empathy with the general public because of their relatively privileged upbringing. The authors point to a Sutton Trust Report from 2006 which revealed 45 percent of leading journalists are Oxford or Cambridge *alumni* (*ibid*:234) and 54 percent of the top 100 newspaper editors, columnists, broadcasters and executives were educated privately, compared to just seven percent of the general population (*ibid*:235.) Four decades earlier, Jeremy Tunstall (1971) found a similar demographic among senior editorial staff - all of the seven 'prestige' national newspapers editors were university graduates, four of whom were Oxbridge – but he also noted that many journalists joined the profession straight from secondary school. In the present era, however, most journalists are university-educated and if, like other human beings, journalists most easily associate with issues that 'concern people like themselves', then the profession as a whole might find it difficult to relate to deeply-seated social problems (Schudson 2011:39.)

Even if journalists do have left-wing, or indeed right-wing, leanings, argues Croteau, output is surely no more influenced by the reporter's own politics than a General Motors' assembly line worker's voting record affects the way that cars are made (1998:8.) A journalist's own beliefs may well come to the fore in an opinion piece, but most news is typically based on the views of officials (Gans 1985.) Hard news, for instance, is the result of a formalised production process in which unequivocal information (the who, what, where and when) forms the main substance of the piece. Indeed, journalists often define their professionalism partly by adherence to objectivity: '(the) key marks of which are obsessive facticity and neutrality of attitude' (McQuail 1994:145.) Consequently, practitioners are reluctant to accept academic observations of 'bias' because doing so would challenge deeply-held professional principles. Nevertheless, Patterson and Donsbach argue that journalists are demonstrably 'partisan actors' and there is a 'significant... (but) modest' correlation between a journalist's beliefs and news decisions (1996:455.) Crucially, the authors also note that 'non objective' reporting is not the product of 'a conscious effort to take sides' but the inevitable exercise of 'judgement and selectivity of perception' (*ibid*.)

Demonstrating a causal relationship between the beliefs of reporters and the news they produce is problematic. One obvious limiting factor is that journalists typically work within a group, and studies have highlighted the powerful influence of senior colleagues and the culture of the news organisation on journalistic practice (Harrison

2000, Hetherington 1985.) Indeed, Patterson and Donsbach further qualify their findings in recognition of these extra-journalist forces. Once a new recruit becomes part of the editorial team, they wrote: 'partisan beliefs are clearly secondary to a professional orientation' (1996:466.) With any occupation, individuals modify their personal behaviour to some extent in order to perform their professional role and in news production, practitioners are: 'socialised quickly into the values and routines in the daily rituals' (Schudson 1989:273.) The strength of these forces should not be underestimated: as Golding and Elliott note: 'News changes very little even when the individuals that produce it change' (in Curran and Seaton 2003:264.) In these terms, personal beliefs are clearly subordinate to the organisation's goals³.

Tunstall (1971) makes particularly insightful observations about the socialisation of journalists, and how this contributes to the maintenance of a standardised news product. He extends the peer group beyond the newsroom and argues that values and practices are also picked up from 'competitor colleagues': journalists who work for other organisations but who have common goals and beats, and often exchange information amongst themselves. Competitor colleagues (and their sources) also tend to mix socially, and the effect of this habitual interaction, wrote Tunstall, is that small groups of relatively-homogenised journalists: 'can shape the flow of a certain type of information for tens of millions of people' (1971:279-80.) Journalists' first loyalty, however, is to their employer and with the other two roles (news-gatherer; and competitor colleague) secondary, journalists have: 'by experience and observation, a fairly specific idea' of what will be published. Senior journalists establish 'the tone of the reporting' and the organisation's 'ideology... is carried forward in a largely oral tradition.' The inevitable consequence is that journalists develop an instinct for news, and don't need to be told what to write (*ibid*:46.)

2 - Production factors

Journalists are clearly not sole operators, nor do they act according to ethical or political frameworks designed by themselves. The inevitable consequence of socialisation is that little of an individual journalist's character or personal beliefs can be found in their output. This conflicts with the common assumption that journalists have a 'high degree of professional freedom and autonomy' and it is therefore unreasonable, argues Steven Reese, to have normative expectations of balance and

³ This is discussed in detail in section 5 – political economy

fairness (2001:175.) The acceptance of group norms and values is evidently an important factor but it is just one of many constraints on a journalist's activities. Indeed, news is not so much the creation of individual journalists, rather the result of a process that, in many ways, mirrors a factory production line. As with any manufactured item, the process is determined by the nature of the product, and news is perishable and time-sensitive which means that media organisations are geared to supplying: 'an always new product to a large number of people, regularly and on time' (Gans 2003:49.) Journalists often see their job as involving reactions to unexpected events – 'the product of a *lack of organisation*' (Schlesinger 1978:47) - but sociologists generally agree that most news is not the result of the 'idiosyncratic and personal' but the 'patterned and the predictable' (Schudson 2011:27.) News is, therefore, a mass produced version of reality and journalists are mere 'links in a chain' (Machin and Niblock 2006:41-42.)

This perspective can cause friction between practitioners and scholars but it is derived from a considerable body of highly-influential and detailed ethnographic studies. Despite their different contexts, a succession of American works by Tuchman (1978), Gans (1979) and Fishman (1980), and research from British academics such as Tunstall (1971), Schlesinger (1978), Hetherington (1985) and Harrison (2000) revealed similar patterns of professional behaviour and output that are the consequence of shared bureaucratic structures, routines, cultures, pressures, constraints and assumptions. Much like car assembly workers, journalists work within highly-structured social, economic, political and technological environments. Journalists have more autonomy in that they are not restricted to a physical space, and have some latitude in the choice of 'components', but both professions need to create products of a certain size, shape and colour within a predefined schedule. The journalist's task is more complex, however, because they need to respond to uncertainty and still produce news to immovable deadlines. Tunstall (1971) argues that much journalistic activity can be attributed to how practitioners solve this conundrum. Speed of response is fundamental and so journalists intuitively apply a set of criteria that rapidly determines what constitutes news (see below.) Furthermore, the movement of news is an 'arterial process' from its news agency origins to the leading daily newspapers and finally, to the broadcast media. Hence, suggests Tunstall, 'the flow of news is the flow of standardisation' (*ibid*:262.) This tendency is exacerbated because editors and journalists 'get a feeling of security' by pursuing the same stories as competitor-colleagues (*ibid*:264.) Journalists often operate as a 'pack' with those on the same beat covering the same stories and tending to adopt

same angle and same perspectives (Schudson 2005:185, Harrison 2000:114, Schlesinger 1978:49-50.) Consequently, reporters are, to a large extent, homogenised in their appreciation of news values, their working practices, choice of sources, and hence, their production of news (Gavin and Goddard 1998, Harrison 2000.)

The convergence of journalistic routines is particularly evident in the origin of news, with agencies, such as the Press Association, Reuters and Bloomberg, playing a central role (Machin and Niblock 2006, Harrison 2000.) In essence, a small number of specialist organisations provide a steady stream of pre-packaged and verified news to journalists around the world. Some authors, for example Davies (2008), argue that by depending on the same few conduits, news providers offer a narrower choice of stories than many imagine⁴. There are also signs that the dependency on news agencies is increasing, primarily because there is a strong economic case for buying syndicated stories, or re-packaging news agency copy, at the expense of permanent editorial staff. John Hartley (2011) argues that news agencies⁵ have become so influential in setting the agenda that they could be regarded as modern-day gatekeepers. Indeed, although early versions of the gatekeeper model have been discredited, the role still exists at various points of the process. Within the news organisation, Steven Reese emphasises that subeditors have ‘advantageous structural “gatekeeping” powers’ in that they can spike, demote or change the emphasis of a story submitted by a reporter (2001:180.) As news gatherers, beat journalists are focused on their sources, whereas the news processors (the sub-editors) are focused on the audience, and it is the latter who has the final say in what is published (Tunstall 1971:11.)

Another area of convergence is news selection. Naturally, not every press release, announcement or event can be covered, so journalists need a mechanism for selecting news items. The world needs to be ‘tamed’ to meet the requirements of a bureaucratic production system (Schlesinger 1978:47) and to decide which stories merit inclusion, journalists apply news values, defined by Schudson as: ‘the unquestioned and generally unnoticed background assumptions through which the news is gathered and within which it is framed’ (1989:279.) Empirical research contradicts journalists’ belief that news selection is based on intuition and gut-feeling:

⁴ Schlesinger (1978:57) noted that TV journalists also derive many stories from newspapers and the news diary. Hence, the propensity to cover the same stories is further heightened

⁵ Hartley (2011) also suggests that media managers and internet search engine algorithms have gatekeeping powers

recurring patterns are apparent with different news organisations covering many of the same stories because they are consistent with ‘preordained criteria’ (Machin and Niblock 2006:179.) Although Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) landmark study on news values was limited⁶ it inspired numerous others that found the original suppositions still applied (for example, Golding and Elliott 2000, Harcup and O’Neill 2001.) There is, however, no universal news selection criteria and each news organisation has its own preferred perspective and story-telling style. But certain determinants - the perceived relevance to audience; drama; proximity; magnitude; etc - have been repeatedly observed, particularly in the context of hard news (Harrison 2000:11, Hetherington 1985:87.)

Dennis McQuail noted that the print media’s main emphasis was on ‘action, personality and conflict’ which, when combined with the ‘snowball effect’ of newspapers pursuing the same lines of enquiry leads to the establishment of a ‘dominant news angle’ (1976:44.) Adherence to such criteria, argues Tunstall, means that journalism tends to over-emphasise bad news, primarily because the UK is relatively safe, stable and secure. Hence, strikes and protest get coverage ‘because violence and overt conflict are rare’ (1971:264.) Conversely, long-term, deep-seated, socio-economic issues, such as poverty and homelessness, are either simplified or personalised (Schudson 2011:42), or receive little attention because the organisation of news demands daily, up-to-the-minute and dramatic events (Fowler 1991:16-17.) One of the most notable studies in this area was produced by Herbert Gans (1979) who concluded a decade of research with a list of values that influence American news. The components of this ‘para-ideology’ include altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism and individualism: ‘a worldview that was conservative, reformist, and embraced Progressive movement values from early 20th century America’ (Zelizer 2004:66.) In selecting news items against such criteria, journalists inevitably establish the public’s ‘field of socio-political vision’ (McNair 1998:34) and, although impossible to quantify, the ‘culturally dominant assumptions’ that influence news values are evident in the reporting of economic, business and political issues (Cottle 2003:10.) Furthermore, such assumptions form part of the cultural air of the newsroom and, through socialisation, the publication’s own version of news values is quickly imprinted in the minds of new recruits, and so the journalist’s ‘zone of operation’ – the framework within which news is understood and interpreted by staff - follows the house tradition (Harrison 2000:15.)

⁶ The study covered the reporting of crises in three countries - Cuba, Cyprus and the Congo - in four international newspapers

3 – EBF-specific production factors

Despite the absence of detailed ethnographic studies, it is possible to deepen the understanding of the sociology of EBF journalism by considering some specific factors highlighted by earlier works, many of which are based on interviews with practitioners. Notable British studies of this nature have been produced by Gillian Doyle (2006), Paul Manning (2010, 2014), Damian Tambini (2008, 2010), and Aeron Davis (2007, 2011) and in this section, their findings will be combined with international works, and commentaries from EBF journalists, in particular those who contributed to the *Saints and Sinners* debate⁷ at City University in London (2009.)

As noted above, much recent EBF research has revolved around issues raised by the Financial Crisis. While some elements of this sub-corpus argue that journalists engaged well with audiences and explained the reasons for the Crisis *after* the event (for example, Marron 2010, Schifferes and Coulter 2012), others, notably Damian Tambini (2010) in the UK and Dean Starkman (2014) in the US, have addressed an often-neglected question which is fundamental to EBF journalism, namely whether reporters have a more wide-ranging, watchdog role that would benefit the broader society. The EBF news media may indeed be adept at reporting events and *post-mortems* but journalism that anticipates far-reaching economic problems requires a different approach. Starkman argues that investor audiences benefit from journalists' focus on scoops and privileged information but citizens need journalists to explain complex problems, expose corporate wrongdoing, and hold the powerful to account. Mike Berry (2012) agrees that this type of journalism necessitates a wider range of sources, but he also argues that it is not the source type *per se* that restricts debate but the absence of competing perspectives. Berry's paper, and to a lesser extent work by Paul Manning (2010, 2014), brings an added dimension to the post-Financial Crisis research by emphasising the inherently political nature of economics and, by extension, business and finance. This element is absent from other studies that have tended to focus solely on the allegiance of sources, and yet it is crucial to understanding EBF journalism⁸.

⁷ This was chaired by Professor Steve Schifferes of City University and the panel included: Faisal Islam, business editor of Channel 4 News; Larry Elliott, economics editor of the *Guardian*; Hugh Pym, chief economics correspondent for the BBC, and Professor Alistair Milne of the Cass Business School, City University

⁸ The political content of EBF news is discussed in detail in section 6

EBF studies that have revealed disagreement among reporters about their purpose tally with research about the wider journalism profession which has noted a ‘plurality of roles and role perceptions’, and not all practitioners consider themselves as ‘active players in a democratic system’ (Zelizer 2004:57.) In his comprehensive study of the American news media, Starkman (2014) gives a particularly compelling explanation of the plurality of roles in an EBF context. The author argues that, in the prelude to the Financial Crisis, reporters became so embedded within the corporate information machine that they were unable to produce critical work. Starkman suggests that contemporary business and financial journalism is driven by ‘access’ to key sources rather than ‘accountability’ to the general public, and this tilts reporting in the favour of those who benefit from rising financial markets. Starkman’s differentiation between ‘access’ and ‘accountability’ reporting also resonates in the UK. Indeed, by asking the simple question ‘what are financial journalists for?’ Tambini (2010) uncovered uncertainty among British practitioners. Only a minority believed they had any wider ‘public interest’ remit and most restricted their ‘watchdog role’ to individual companies and corporate wrongdoing, rather than the economy as a whole. Also in the UK, Gillian Doyle found that some EBF journalists *do* see themselves performing Fourth Estate functions but most: ‘would not immediately recognise their role as embodying any broad public responsibilities’ (2006:450.) In the wake of the Financial Crisis, the profession showed signs of reassessing such roles. At the *Saints and Sinners* debate, Larry Elliot, economics editor of *The Guardian*, said journalists: ‘should be professional sceptics and doubters’ (Elliot 2009) and senior BBC economics correspondent, Hugh Pym, agreed that financial journalists do have a watchdog responsibility, but it was not the BBC’s role to be critical outside of the political-economic consensus⁹ (Pym 2009, Manning 2014:186.)

Research has also identified three further occupational factors that are particularly relevant to EBF journalism, namely: ethics and regulation; routines; and journalist knowledge. Firstly, given that the EBF media has the ‘the power to move markets’ (Tambini 2008:9, Robinson 2008, Hayes 2014), journalists have an ethical responsibility to cover events accurately but without inducing panic (Wu *et al* 2002:21, Kinsey 2009:167, Islam 2009, Marron 2010:274.) Unlike other specialists, financial journalists also need to be wary of breaking criminal laws, such as ‘market abuse’ (Tambini 2010¹⁰.) Secondly, routines and beats strongly influence EBF news

⁹ This raises an important question about the limits of debate which is discussed in section 6

¹⁰ The main areas of potential market abuse are: insider trading, market manipulation, conflicts of interest and non-disclosure (Tambini 2010:162-163)

production. ‘Diary events’ – such as government economic reports and corporate results – are marshalled by news agencies and provide an orderly and scheduled flow of ideas for stories for EBF journalists (Doyle 2006:448.) This might be convenient for editorial staff but Lawrence (1988) suggests that the regimented coverage of the 1980’s bull market gave rise to inconsequential reporting that missed the warning signs of the 1987 stock market crash. Such a predictable schedule of pre-packaged news means coverage becomes event-centred and episodic (Marron 2010:271), journalists tend to move as a herd (Payne 2008), become reliant on newswires and thus, there’s an increased risk of producing mere ‘churnalism’ (Davies 2008.) Similarly, competition for publicity is intense, so business and financial journalists are bombarded by PR companies attempting to frame stories in their clients’ interest (Davis 2002:70, Doyle 2006:435, Brummer in Manning 2010:4)¹¹, thereby further reducing the propensity to diverge and investigate.

A third occupational factor that is particularly relevant in EBF news production is journalist knowledge. A lack of training is commonly cited by practitioners as a reason for the failure to spot the warning signs of the Financial Crisis (Barber 2009, Brummer 2009:40, Fraser 2009:51) but some academics have noted that it has been an unresolved and neglected issue for years, particularly for business reporters in the non-specialist mainstream media (Tambini 2008:19, Henriques 2000a:120, Davis 2007a:163.) The lack of skills is so manifest, argues Doyle (2006), that journalists are unable to hold companies to account. This was evident in journalists’ response to criticism about the news media’s failure to spot the warning signs before Enron’s spectacular crash in December 2001. As with the Financial Crisis, there was a mismatch between journalists’ knowledge and financial complexity (Madrick 2003:6.) A year after the scandal broke Marjorie Scardino, CEO of Pearson, which owns the *FT*, offered a *mea culpa* by proxy: ‘We could have done a lot more digging... but business journalists often don’t know a lot about business’ (in Cassy 2003.) This stark and surprisingly candid admission could also be applied to senior editorial staff who may be accused of being ignorant - or at least unaware - of the importance of economic, business and financial issues, and consequently journalists find it difficult to ‘sell stories’ to editors (Harrison 2000:195.) At the *Saints or Sinners* debate both Faisal Islam of Channel 4 News and Larry Elliot of *The Guardian* spoke of the enormous effort needed to convince editors to give prominence to stories linked to the looming Financial Crisis (Islam 2009, Elliot 2009.) Some British scholars (for

¹¹ Sources are discussed in detail in section 4

example, Tulloch 2009), however, are not convinced that training is the central issue but others wonder if financial journalists should have a formal accounting qualification before being allowed to practice (Tambini 2009.)

4 - Sources

Research covering the sourcing patterns of EBF journalism generally concurs with studies in other areas that have found a tendency for reporters to gravitate to elite sources. For Michael Schudson (2011:xv), this is a defining factor because the relationship between journalists and their sources determines the substance of news. However, as with journalist's perceptions about their level of autonomy and the intuitive nature of news selection, there is often disagreement between scholars and practitioners about sourcing. The professional code of objectivity ensures that it is sources rather than journalists who express their views, so the selection of sources 'largely determines the way stories are framed' (Lasorsa and Reese 1990:60.) Journalists may claim that they dispassionately collect facts, 'much as a geologist collects rocks for research' but '...what is selected (as a fact) depends on what the selector thinks important' (Zinn in Edwards and Cromwell 2009:239.) This explains why journalists are attracted to sources whom they deem to be experts and authorities (Lippmann 1922, Berry 2012, Machin and Niblock 2006), particularly if the source can quickly supply them with the right type of information (Gans 2003:50), and sources who offer alternative perspectives tend to be 'ignored, devalued, delegitimised and villainised' (Schlosberg 2013:201.) Hence, primary sources are typically characterised by official authority, social status or commercial success. Such sources tend to be well-resourced and organised, with spokespeople and regular releases of information (Fowler 1991:22) which saves the journalist time and effort. News organisations are eternally constrained by cost, time and space (Harrison 2000, Schlesinger 1987) and so, as with the preference for drawing stories from news agency feeds, journalists tend to justify their dependence on certain sources in purely pragmatic terms.

Some scholars have characterised the association between journalists and their sources as a form of combat - 'a tug of war' (Gans 1979:117) – but others perceive a symbiotic relationship with information traded for publicity (McNair 1998:147, Tunstall 1971:7.) Irrespective of which party gains most, the consequence of the routine gravitation to elite sources is: 'political news comes to the public from the top-down' (Gans 2003:46), the citizen's perspective is rarely given, and news from the

periphery is seldom awarded coverage. In the latter case, the reason is not because such news lacks interest or impact, rather it doesn't have 'official sponsorship' (Schudson 2011:34.) Intended or not, 'journalists help legitimate and even glorify the sources and strata from which they report. In effect, journalists "follow the power"' (Gans 2003:47.) Furthermore, in using the same language as their sources, reporters inevitably reproduce the attitudes of the elite (Fowler 1991:23.)

Although there is a diversity of research in the sourcing patterns of EBF journalism, both from the UK and elsewhere, the findings generally agree that business people and politicians have far more presence in reports than representatives of other stakeholder groups, such as consumers, employees, local communities, tax payers and citizens. Consequently, economics, business and finance tend to be portrayed by the news media as the domains of the elite and, with little input from those who might offer different perspectives, issues are rarely contested. Some believe that this tendency is so pronounced that, in the words of Aeron Davis (2011), 'financial journalism (in the UK)... has been "captured" or neutralised by those it is meant to hold to account.' American researchers have observed similar patterns: according to Jonathan Weil¹², for example, journalists have: 'outsourced their critical thinking skills to Wall Street analysts' (in Sherman 2002:28.) This is an important issue because primary sources – such as stockbrokers, investment bankers or economists employed by financial organisations - often have a vested interest (Gans 2003:66, Madrick 2003, Budd 2007) and self-serving commentaries from sources whose 'agendas and biases are naturally instilled into the reporter' (Schiffrin 2006:189) can influence the trajectory of investments (Doyle 2006, Davis 2005.) Crucially, such information can be disseminated with little regard for the impact on the financial system (or indeed the economy) as a whole (Manning 2010:14.) Indeed, if journalists favour certain source types over others, the balance and objectivity of EBF reporting, and, therefore, its value to informed decision-making by citizens, is disputable.

These brief summaries are derived from a body of content-based research over the last four decades that has illustrated the extent to which politicians and the business elite dominate EBF news reports. In the United States, for example, Lasorsa and Reese (1990) analysed the reporting of the causes and effects of the 1987 stock market crash and calculated that 'Wall Street' accounted for nearly half of all quoted sources, and in contrast, academics made up just seven percent. Powell and Self

¹² Jonathan Weil was the Dallas correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* and one of the few reporters who raised questions about Enron's stockmarket valuation before its collapse

(2003) discovered that government officials provide most of the commentary during business crises, and an evaluation of sources in four business publications¹³ revealed heavy dependence on senior executives (McShane 1995.) Indeed, in the American news media, businesspeople and government officials are nearly always consulted on economic issues, and consumer advocacy groups and trade unions rarely (Croteau 1998, Gans 2003:63.) This was reflected in a major British study¹⁴ by Lewis *et al* (2008:3) which found that business is three times more successful than NGOs, charities and civic groups in turning PR activity into news. More recently, a content analysis of BBC *News at Six* revealed that business spokespeople outnumbered the representatives of trade unions by a factor of five to one in 2007, and 19 to one in 2012 (Berry 2013.) This imbalance was particularly surprising, argued Berry, in the context of immigration and the EU which, one would expect, would be an area of particular interest for trade unions, and yet: 'out of 806 source appearances, not one was... a representative of organised labour' (*ibid.*)

The exclusion of trade union – and workers' - voices from economic news has been a recurring phenomenon since the Glasgow University Media Group's [GUMG] pioneering work (1976, 1980, 1982) which found that, in the reporting of industrial disputes, employees and their representatives were often marginalised while disproportionate credence, airtime and context were given to management and the government. The GUMG's research was criticised¹⁵ partly because it challenged deeply held beliefs, particularly within the BBC, that TV news is impartial, and other British research has disputed the key findings. For example, Dennis McQuail's comprehensive study of newspaper content, published for the Royal Commission on the Press a year after the GUMG's first volume, revealed that trade union representatives accounted for 41 percent of all sources, compared to 24 percent for government and a 'relative invisibility' of management (McQuail 1977:137, 145.) Also, Neil Gavin's study of the reporting of unemployment suggested that economic news does *not* favour elite sources. Instead, he found a: 'wide and expansive commentary... sharply at odds with the dismal picture painted [by the GUMG]' (Gavin 2007:72.) Even so, this research must be seen in the context of numerous other studies that have noted the omission of dissenting voices (particularly those of trade

13 *Fortune*, *Business Week*, *Canadian Business*, and *Report on Business*

14 The researchers analysed 2,207 newspaper articles and 402 broadcast segments. The former did not include the business pages

15 For a brief summary of the criticism, see Deacon in Cottle (2003:102.) Alastair Hetherington was particularly critical. The GUMG, according to Hetherington, represented 'the most obvious case' of the 'Marxist tendency' in journalism research. Their first book (GUMG 1976) 'scored... a bull's-eye' but the next two (GUMG 1980, 1982) 'offered prejudiced evidence and suspect statistics' (Hetherington 1985:20)

union leaders, striking workers, etc.) Notable examples can be seen in Britain (O'Neill 2007), South Africa (Kariithi and Kareithi 2007), Ireland (Fahy *et al* 2010), and the United States, Chomsky (1998:187), Kollmeyer (2004) and Bekken (2005.)

The tendency to rely on elite political and business sources at the expense of others, notably workers, was also highlighted by Sir Alan Budd in his report about impartiality in BBC business reporting (Budd 2007:20.) The BBC was also the focus of Mike Berry's study of BBC Radio 4's morning news programme, *Today*, in the six weeks following the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008 (Berry 2012.) This was a crucial period for the British economy and the government had proposed a 'bail out' of debt-stricken banks which was the subject of much media attention. Berry revealed that over one-third of sources appearing on the programme were representatives of financial or other City of London institutions, and a further 32 percent were politicians, most of whom were in favour of 'free markets and light touch regulation.' In contrast, organisations that might offer counter-arguments barely featured: for example, there was only a single appearance by a trade union leader; and perhaps surprisingly, investors accounted for less than two percent of the total (*ibid*: 257-8.) As noted above, Berry also argued that it is not the source type *per se* that limits debate but the exclusion of certain viewpoints¹⁶.

Researchers who have endeavoured to find explanations for such dominance have often highlighted the prevalence of public relations (PR.) Some authors (for example Davies 2008, Ewen 1996, Rampton and Stauber 1995) suggest that PR tends to be an insidious force, primarily because of its use by the wealthy and powerful to influence the media's reporting in their favour and thus, to bend public opinion. The history of PR gives some credence to this viewpoint. Public relations and lobbying grew rapidly in the United States from the 1930s onwards, as corporate, free-market advocates attempted to roll-back the social and economic reforms of Roosevelt's New Deal (Ewen 1996), and it enjoyed a second boom from the late-seventies when American business mounted a 'ideological offensive' on public opinion to redress the perceived anti-business bias of the media (Dreier 1982, Dominick 1981.) The parallel between the rise of the neoliberalism and the expansion in corporate PR is also visible in the UK where consultancy income grew by around 25 percent per annum in the 1980s (Davis 2000:283) with even greater growth in the 1990s (Tambini 2008:21.) In these terms, PR seems to confirm its reputation as the servant of neoliberalism.

16 This is a crucial distinction and is addressed in detail in section 6

However, although corporations have the greatest fiscal means and, therefore, the most powerful PR operations, the discipline is not inherently pro-business. By developing their own in-house departments and using external consultants, non-commercial organisations such as trade unions, pressure groups and NGOs have had some success in persuading the media to cover their stories (Tumber 1993, Davis 2002, Wolfsfeld 2003, Bennett *et al* 2004, Gavin 2007:173) and they too can master the 'grammar of news' and learn how to exploit the needs of journalists (McNair 1998:154.) This is not to say, however, that non-commercial sources are equally successful in their hunt for publicity. The largest UK companies generally have an enviable record in turning their PR activities into news items in the financial media (Davis 2006:11) and up to 80 percent of financial news is directly influenced by PR (in Hobsbawm 2006:2.)¹⁷

Over the last decade, researchers have argued that PR is becoming an ever-more powerful force in EBF journalism. Paul Manning noted that journalists used to be able to approach senior contacts – such as chief executives - directly, but these days the PR professional has: 'effective control over information flows' (2010:11.) Some scholars have charged EBF journalists with being far too close to their nominal adversaries, and even deifying elite sources (McChesney 2003:313, Starkman 2014.) Indeed, Aeron Davis noted that reporters: '... tend to move in small exclusive circles consisting almost exclusively of City sources' (2000:285.) This is perhaps unsurprising when one considers that journalism textbooks emphasise the importance of building relationships in the pursuit of exclusive stories: 'contacts are a (business) reporter's life blood...make them almost friends,' advised Hayes (2014:31.) To compound matters, financial news reporters are more dependent on PR than other specialists and they are the least critical of their sources (Davis 2006:11.) Such reluctance to ask probing questions might be because sources are the sole repositories of information (Tambini 2008, Doyle 2006), or because the journalist fears a loss of access (Brummer in Robinson 2008), or to compensate for the generally poor level of journalist knowledge. The net result is that EBF journalists have become embedded with the corporate and government officials they are supposed to hold to account (Schechter 2009:19, Elliot 2009, Marron 2010:273, Starkman 2014.) A quarter of a century ago, Wayne Parsons warned of the consequences of such integration:

¹⁷ The proportion of general news in UK newspapers composed wholly or mainly from PR and/or newswire copy is estimated at 60 percent (see Davies 2008:52, Lewis *et al* 2008.) In the United States, the equivalent figure is between 40 and 70 percent (Machin and Niblock 2006:28)

The danger is that, as in the past, the financial press may become more participants and puffers than observers and more extensions of PR companies than independent commentators and reporters (1989:213)

According to Starkman (2014) Parsons' prophecy was evident in the prelude to the Financial Crisis. The reason that American journalists missed the 'brewing crisis', he suggests, was they did not consult dissenters. This was a consequence of an endemic, insular approach to reporting: 'an insistence on looking at (the) subject through frames set by the institutions' (*ibid.* 144) which, by their nature, have little interest in systemic, wide-ranging problems. Hence, by fostering harmonious relationships with sources in the financial industry, journalists habitually give the investor's perspective. In their defence, journalists note that they have little time to write stories, particularly if they work for TV news organisations, like CNBC and Bloomberg, in which rapid analysis of an endless stream of news releases and data is the main currency (Schifferes and Coulter 2012, Starkman 2014:156.) This is certainly a factor but the inevitable result, as noted by one of Aeron Davis's interviewees, is: 'the national (UK) financial press are written for the City by the City,' (Davis 2011.)

5 - Political economy

As demonstrated in the preceding sections, research in both EBF and general news production has revealed recurring patterns in terms of the origins of news; news values; and sourcing strategies. These are the inevitable consequences of shared working practices that, in turn, are determined by the bureaucratic needs of the news production process. However, this process does not take place in an economic or political vacuum: on the contrary, the routines outlined above are determined by 'the goals and policies of a larger social structure and how power is exerted within it' (Reese 2001:181.) In most instances, such structures are news organisations that are privately-owned, either by wealthy individuals or companies quoted on the stock market, and according to Tunstall (1971), they are typically driven by two economic goals (advertising revenue and audience) and one political goal (prestige.) For some critical political economy theorists, this means that senior managers of media companies are compelled to hold pro-business sympathies, support government policy that promotes neoliberalism and be active participants in political deliberations. Although senior journalistic staff appear to have considerable latitude in determining the content of the publication, the news product will inevitably be influenced by the economic and political goals of the owners. Consequently, journalists are

discouraged from producing work that is critical of neoliberalism, large corporations and the political *status quo*, and conversely, argues Fowler, the press is: 'bound to be preoccupied with the ogres of socialism and trade unionism and to condemn them because (they are) antagonistic to the business of making money' (Fowler 1991:20)

This scholarly interpretation is compelling but it clashes with journalists' own perceptions because few are ever told explicitly to suppress or change a story. Indeed, the political economic forces that influence news are subtle: hierarchical power is exercised 'periodically, implicitly and covertly,' and journalists effectively self-censor by anticipating organisational boundaries (Reese 2001:182.) In a classic work, Breed (1955) examined social control in an American newsroom. Social control, he argued, is present in all organisations because there must be some mechanism for ensuring a working consensus. Breed found that while the newsroom appeared to have a high degree of 'democracy', it was in fact the publisher who set policy and the reporters followed. The chain of command ensures that senior editorial staff 'applied institutional authority' and the resulting norms and values were accepted by the journalists (Machin and Niblock 2006:42.) Compliance is achieved by appointing editors who can be relied upon to steer the reporting in a direction that is advantageous to the proprietor's interests. Hence, editors intuitively 'second guess' the news values and framing preferences of the owners and so the journalism will be largely consistent with the organisation's needs (Petley 2011:85.) The structured nature of the organisation, noted Jackie Harrison in her study of British TV news: '... ensures that the real power is located at the top of the hierarchical pyramid' (2000:133.) Such explanations tally with the Gramscian conception of hegemony – 'the voluntary yielding to authority' (Zelizer 2004:73) – in that the news media habitually defines normality and sets the news agenda in the interests of the powerful. In effect, journalists are 'ideological agents who secure agreement by consensus rather than forced compliance' (*ibid.*)

Central to critical political economy is the question of whether journalists can be effective watchdogs of democracy if they are employed by organisations owned by the rich and the powerful. This was addressed in Herman and Chomsky's seminal 1988 study which argued the American news media is subject to five filters that remove the vast majority of critical perspectives. The research was conducted during a time of polarised Cold War politics and the authors' 'Propaganda Model' became very influential. Although it has arguably less relevance in a modern British context, the work still provides a useful framework for analysing the broad characteristics of

news. Taken at face value, Herman and Chomsky present a rigid view of a news media: ‘...working hand in glove with other large corporations to stifle dissent’ (Schudson 2005:177) but this interpretation is problematic. As shown above¹⁸ protestors, striking workers, social reformers and other radical voices are not totally excluded from news reports, and examples journalism that have exposed the abuse of power, corporate misdeeds and political corruption are often cited as evidence that the news media is an efficient watchdog for society. In a British context, however, Schlosberg (2013:196) argues that even some of the most celebrated examples of journalism that seemingly brought the powerful to account:

... painted a picture of transparency or restorative justice that was ultimately in tune with elite sources, to the exclusion or marginalisation of alternative frames

In these terms, dissent is not totally silenced but the news media generally: ‘reinforce the established society, uphold law and order and accept social reform only gradually’ (Hetherington 1985:12.) By gravitating to elite sources, who are unlikely to be radical reformers, the media make existing power structures seem normal, and hence opposition becomes: ‘unreasonable, quixotic or utopian’ (Schudson 2005:177.) This was evident during the early stages of the anti-Vietnam War protests in the late-1960s: Gitlin (1980) found that the US news media helped develop the movement by awarding exposure, and then subsequently destroyed it. According to Barbie Zelizer, in this case the media was ‘complicit with hegemonic structures’ and ultimately delegitimised the New Left by portraying it as ‘violent, deviant and silly’ (2004:75.) Also, as previously noted, journalists belong to the same social group as their business and political sources, and hence, their personal and professional relationships reinforce elite interpretations and further restrict the diversity of political discourse in the news. Indeed, the political economy reaches far beyond the news organisation, and some authors argue that the acceptance of the *status quo* reflects the wider dominant culture ‘within which and in relation to which reporters and officials go about their duties’ (Schudson 2005:187.)

With much of the UK - and virtually all of the US - news media privately-owned, it would be surprising ‘if the press was a hot bed of radical thought’ (Schudson 1989:268-269. Indeed, some scholars argue that the news media has been a crucial part of the establishment – and hence, antagonistic to dissenting perspectives - since

¹⁸ See section 4 - sources

at least the late 19th century (Petley 2009a:188) and other authors suggest that the tendency to under-report dissent is becoming more pronounced (Davies 2008.) The rise of the internet as a source of news, and particularly entertainment, has intensified the pressure on print and broadcast organisations to focus on economic imperatives. Indeed, in the UK the five national broadsheets lost an average of 22 percent of paying readers in less than nine years (*Guardian* 2001, 2010) and consequently, national newspaper advertising revenues were forecast to fall below £1 billion for the first time (*Guardian* 2014.) It is a similar story in broadcasting where the digital revolution has intensified competition and fragmented audiences (Curran and Seaton 2003.) As a publicly-funded, public service organisation, the BBC has a different set of priorities to profit-driven broadcasters but it still needs to attract audiences to justify its licence fee, and operates as an increasingly commercialised entity (Franklin 1997:11, McNair 1998:111, Gavin 2007:8, Harrison 2000:203.) Under such conditions, news organisations focus on delivering safe and entertaining news, largely generated by corporate PR machines and newswires to a selected audience, thus attracting premium advertising (McQuail 2000, Davies 2008.) Given the added uncertainty about the impact of the internet on future revenue streams, British news organisations have cut thousands of journalism jobs in an attempt to reduce costs: a Newspaper Society survey in 2007, for instance, revealed a decline in employment of 30 percent in five years (in Nel 2010) and another study found almost 10,000 journalism job losses were reported between January 2007 and June 2009 alone (AJE 2010.) The net result of declining audiences, plunging advertising revenues and reduced editorial staff is a diminishing ability of the news media to perform its Fourth Estate duties. Despite the noble intentions of journalists, uncovering deception and exposing injustice is inherently more difficult if newsrooms are under-resourced, and owners are increasingly reluctant to alienate their advertising clients and members of their elite social circles.

Research has also touched on the effect that political economic factors have on the production of EBF news. According to Starkman (2009), the current commercial challenges of the American business media began with the bursting of the ‘dot com’ bubble in 2000 when advertising revenues plunged and never recovered. Stock market values of newspaper groups shrank and: ‘the drip of newsroom cuts became a deluge - newspapers lost 13,000 jobs [in 2008] - and business news hasn’t been spared’ (*ibid.*) It was a similar story in the UK and there is little optimism for a return to any perceived golden age (Cassy 2003). As noted by Aeron Davis, ‘Like most news sections, financial media has suffered from an increase in output demands at

the same time as news resources have declined' (2011.) One solution is to reduce staff and replace original journalism with 'inexpensive syndicated material and fluff' (McChesney in McChesney *et al* 1998:18.) Under these circumstances, reporters hoping to honour their civic responsibilities, argued Diana Henriques, will be frustrated because investigations require time and resources that media organisations are reluctant to make available (2000a:121). As Gillian Doyle's interviews with British financial journalists revealed:

...the circumstances and constraints (reporters) work within ... make it unlikely that financial irregularities obscured within company accounts will be detected on a routine or consistent basis (2006:433.)

Furthermore, business news is more susceptible to political economic pressures than other specialisms – for example, political or sports journalism – because it is supported by advertising from the same entities upon which it reports. Hence, media organisations have little incentive to raise doubts over a booming economy, a buoyant industry or the activities of individual corporations (Davis 2000:285, Schechter 2009:21, Oborne 2015.) Some authors, notably Davies (2008), dismiss charges of explicit links between commercial needs and journalistic decisions as a 'conspiracy' but editors are 'all too aware that advertisers like their advertisements to appear within a sympathetic editorial ambiance' (Petley 2011:82.) Consequently, the commercial EBF news media is simply not designed to put investigative journalism - accountable to the public rather than investors - ahead of financial demands (Starkman 2009.) For many, this is the most noble form of journalism (de Burgh 2000, Pilger 2004,) but media organisations are increasingly cautious of embarking on expensive, and possibly fruitless, investigations that might cause conflict with powerful institutions (McChesney 2003, Schechter 2009:25, Raphael *et al* 2004:167.) Arguably the best British exponent of sustained criticism of business (and its relationship with government) is *Private Eye*. Sharon Lockyer (2006) suggests this is because of the publication's unique ownership structure, an apolitical editorial line and its disregard for reader sentiment and the threat of defamation suits. Hence, unlike the majority of the British news media, the *Eye* can follow a: 'citizen-led rather than customer-led approach to journalism' (*ibid*:777.)

Critical political economy arguments have strong rationality and advocates offer compelling narratives. However, demonstrating a consistent and direct, causal relationship between economic and political structures and the manifest characteristics of news output is problematic (Schudson 2005:174.) Furthermore,

political economy interpretations of the nature of journalism are diametrically opposed to the liberal pluralist perspective which maintains that the antidote to oppressive government and corporate monopolies is greater private ownership (Petley 2009a:184, Machin and Niblock 2006:15.) This perspective has been in the ascendancy for at least two decades, and the digital revolution and citizen journalism have seemingly confirmed its validity. Anyone can now produce their own news – as websites, blogs, podcasts, YouTube videos, etc. – and hence, there is tremendous competition for audiences. Consequently, power is dispersed, the public have near infinite choice and those news organisations that satisfy the needs of citizens will flourish. This analysis certainly has merit and it is indisputable that the advent of satellite TV, the internet, affordable technology and social media has democratised news production to an unprecedented degree. However, the assumption that competition delivers greater ‘diversity of representation and access’ has been contested for some time (Harrison 2000:2, Petley 2009a) and recent research suggests that the digital revolution has yet to diminish the prevalence of traditional platforms or news providers (Fenton 2011, Curran 2010.) An Ofcom survey revealed that almost four-fifths of the British public still rely on TV for their news, compared with 41 percent for the internet, 40 percent for newspapers and 36 percent for radio (Ofcom 2014.) There are also few signs that established news organisations are losing their appeal: the same survey found that the BBC accounted for three of the top five news outlets cited by respondents (*ibid.*)

Some scholars also dispute the nature of the forces at work in the political economy model. Brian McNair, for example, maintains: ‘the processes by which ideological dominance is achieved (or resisted and undermined) are random and unpredictable rather than systemised and hierarchically ordered’ (1998:33.) McNair also dismisses the assertion that news organisations act as the agents of: ‘conservative ideological control and systemic stability in favour of some ‘ruling class’’ and believes the news media: ‘is profoundly unsympathetic or at least indifferent to the interests of those in society’s elite positions’ (*ibid.* 17-18.) Furthermore, by taking a top-down, holistic view of news production, political economy theory: ‘does not account for the fuzzy territory in between the daily routines of journalism and the larger political economy of society’ (Zelizer 2004:78.) Political economy is indeed far from perfect and does not explain the disconnections between other powerful agencies. The media can reinforce the *status quo* but equally, it can amplify: ‘elite disagreement in unsettling and unpredictable ways’ (Schudson 2005:177.) Given its successes in exposing corporate and political scandals, the news media is clearly not the unquestioning

servant of big business or government as suggested by some crude interpretations of Herman and Chomsky's work. Debate is often polarised around the issue of whether the news media are either 'lap dogs' of power or 'watchdogs' for the public but it evidently performs both roles. Indeed, Patterson and Donsbach emphasise that although journalists tend not to hold radical views, the prevalence of 'liberal tendencies' among the profession may serve as: 'a partisan counterbalance to the news organisations in which they work' (1996:465.) In these terms, journalists may inhabit a culture that is sympathetic to the maintenance of the current order and discourages dissent but they still have sufficient autonomy to sporadically produce news that challenges power. Consequently, argues Michael Schudson, journalists can retain credibility with audiences and sources alike while also satisfying the needs of the organisation (2003:40.)

6 – The EBF news product

By synthesising sociological research from the broader corpus with the somewhat sparse EBF-specific literature, the analysis so far has considered the factors that influence the production of economic and business journalism. The next stage is to assess the characteristics of the EBF news product as uncovered by previous research. Given that recent studies have tended to concentrate on the reporting surrounding the 2008 Financial Crisis, a useful first step is to situate this sub-corpus within previous research that has looked at EBF journalism in the context of speculative markets.

Although rarely acknowledged in the post-Crisis literature, EBF journalism has a long track-record of collective over-enthusiasm - and a lack of scepticism - when markets are booming. Indeed, researchers have found that the news media habitually sustain booms which can lead to bubbles and, hence, financial crises (Uskali 2005:6.) Some scholars trace this tendency back to the Dutch tulip mania of the 1630s (Shiller 2000:71) and it was also present in the early eighteenth century when a combination of coffee house gossip and ebullient newspaper reports 'fed the frenzied trading of speculators' prior to the bursting of the South Sea Bubble in 1720 (Dale 2004:17, Balen 2002.) Financial journalism expanded significantly from the mid-nineteenth century in response to the increasing need for time-sensitive information about commodity and stock prices (Hayes 2014, Parsons 1989.) Hence, Starkman (2014) argues, business news was 'born of access reporting' and, since its early years, journalists have been vital cogs in the financial system and pursuit of privileged

information is foremost in journalists' minds. However, despite huge improvements in communication technology from the 1920s to 2000:

... the flaws of business journalism in writing about stock markets have remained almost the same: their reporting is too enthusiastic (or positive) and uncritical... (Ojala and Uskali 2004:1)

Indeed, researchers have noted the news media's contributory role in events as diverse as the Wall Street Crash in 1929; the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997; and the 'dot com' boom-and-bust of the late-1990s (Bow 1980, Choy *et al* 2002, Cassidy 2002.) In their detailed analysis of previous investment bubbles, Dyck and Zingales, found that the media's inability to warn of Enron's impending collapse in December 2001 was: 'not an occasional lapse, but a systematic problem that emerges during stock market booms' (2003:99.) In these terms, it is evident that business journalism was structurally incapable of warning the public about potential hazards prior to the 2008 Financial Crisis. Research from the US and UK has attributed such long-standing inadequacies to the embedding of reporters in the financial system itself (Schechter 2009:19, Elliot 2009, Marron 2010:273, Starkman 2014.) This tendency has become more pronounced since the late-1970s when the financial sector began to dominate the economies of industrial nations. This in turn was a consequence of fundamental shifts in government policy which reflected the displacement of Keynesianism by neoliberalism as the dominant economic model (Uskali 2005, Fahy *et al* 2010, Kjaer and Slaatta 2007, Mårtenson 1998, Augey and Brin 2004.)

In order to understand the nature of contemporary EBF journalism, it is imperative to emphasise the pervasive influence of neoliberalism. At the core of this paradigm is the belief that 'human wellbeing can be best advanced by liberating entrepreneurial freedoms and skills' (Harvey 2005:2.) Hence, markets are the 'primary means of organising society' (Mansell 2011:20) and together with low taxation; low inflation; and minimal government intervention, proponents hope to create a fertile environment in which private enterprise can create wealth (Heywood 1992:81-86.) True to its roots in classical liberalism, neoliberalism places faith in the individual rather than the collective and business, particularly the joint stock company, is seen as the engine of economic success. It is important to stress, however, that economics is an inherently subjective discipline and neoliberalism is just one of many models. For centuries theorists and politicians have striven to find a framework that can deliver enhanced, sustained and universal wellbeing. Such debates are perpetual and there is no definitive answer to the basic economic problem of

reconciling finite resources and infinite wants. The same is true of business: the joint stock corporation, owned by public shareholders and focussed on maximising investor returns, is just one form of commercial entity. Others include mutuals, worker co-operatives, private limited companies, state-owned enterprises, family-run businesses and freelances.

Alternatives to neoliberalism clearly exist and yet there is scant evidence of pluralism in mainstream political debate. Acknowledging Francis Fukyama's (1992) proclamation that the demise of the Communist bloc represented the 'end of history' and proved the intellectual superiority of capitalism, Žižek (2008) suggests that by adopting the tenets of neoliberalism, traditionally left-wing parties have negated its negation (2008:189.) Although political parties have no: 'convincing alternative grand narrative capable of challenging neoliberalism' (Cammaerts 2011:48), the doctrine still has plenty of credible opposition. For example, Nobel Prize winners Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman, and the renowned investor George Soros have questioned core neoliberal assumptions and asked whether markets serve the public interest well (in Mansell 2011:20, Krugman 2008, Soros 1998.) Other authors have focussed on the apparent brutality of a system that prioritises unfettered profit maximisation over social concerns (Klein 2000, 2008, Monbiot 2001, Pilger 2002, Bakan 2004, McChesney in Chomsky 1999.) Consequently, in the absence of co-ordinated criticism from left-of-centre parties, counter arguments to neoliberalism come from trade unions; anti-poverty, environmental and development NGOs; think-tanks and a scattering of intellectuals (Cammaerts 2011:48.) Hence, journalism researchers typically deduce the presence of different interpretations of the economic environment from the source type, but this can be misleading. For example, a business person could conceivably argue for policies that are normally the domain of NGOs or trade unions. Also, the narrative of a news item could take a different political stance than the sources might suggest, or in the case of an opinion piece, a journalist could argue for a particular policy without quoting a single source. Hence, one could argue that it is not the source profile of news *per se* that is important but whether a diversity of perspectives are provided. This is somewhat more difficult to gauge than simply categorising and coding source types, and few scholars even acknowledge that EBF news has an inherently political element. Even so, there is sufficient British and international research to suggest that much news reporting has normalised neoliberalism, and arguments that might question its assumptions are rarely aired.

This was particularly evident in Mike Berry's study of BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme (2012). As well as analysing sources, Berry also assessed the extent to which competing arguments about the UK government's bank rescue plan were given exposure. Injecting public money (the 'bank bailout') was just one of several options and was supported by virtually all key sources – mostly from the City of London - and yet an alternative policy, nationalisation, was barely mentioned or quickly dismissed (*ibid*:260-1.) These findings mirrored similar content studies by the GUMG (1976, 1980, 1982) which revealed that trade unions' interpretations of the issues facing British industry - poor management and under-investment – were largely absent in news reports, whereas right-wing explanations – typically, trade union militancy - routinely featured. Although Dennis McQuail's study contradicted the GUMG's in terms of sourcing patterns, he agreed that the 'point of (political) balance' is similarly placed by all newspapers and 'more often than not its location tends to be to the disadvantage of the unions' (McQuail 1977:147.) Part of the reason, argued McQuail, was that news angles tended to link union activity to 'developments inimical to public interests' (*ibid*:146.) Results similar to the GUMG's were obtained by Aeron Davis (2000) in his analysis of the take-over of Forte by Granada, in which the investor perspective dominated and, in contrast, just seven percent of articles mentioned the impact on workers, and four percent on customers. It would appear that audiences are typically offered a limited range of debate and the tendency of reporters is to gravitate to the perspectives offered by the elite. In a neoliberal environment, this typically means investors rather than other stakeholders.

Despite such empirical studies, some commentators maintain that business is unfairly represented in news reports. This charge is frequently levelled at the BBC which is institutionally sensitive to charges of imbalance of any kind (Gavin 2007:10.) Many see the Corporation as: 'culturally and structurally biased against business' (Randall in Boyle 2008:416) and this perception was the genesis of a major study of impartiality of BBC business reporting (Budd 2007:2.) The author found no 'evidence of systemic (anti-business) bias' (*ibid*:14) but, in contrast to the studies outlined above, he did discover a 'polarisation of views between business and consumer' (*ibid*:16.) and a neglect of news from the perspective of investors, as well as workers (*ibid*:3.) The exclusion of arguments from trade unions - and employees in general - is a recurring theme in EBF research. This could arguably be a simple reflection of societal changes: unions are less powerful, have fewer members and have been in decline for 30 years, so one might expect less coverage (McNair 1998.) But although trade unions are able to set the parameters of debate and many unions believe that

media coverage improved in the 1990s (Davis 2002), organised labour seems to be treated by the British media with, at best, indifference: ‘Unions believe … that the world of work does not really feature on the BBC – and even when it does it is without the workers’ (Budd 2007:20.)

The findings of these British studies are largely consistent with research from other countries that shows EBF reporters habitually accept and reinforce neoliberalism. In the United States, for example, Herbert Gans (2003:46) observed the irony that, although there are far more workers than bankers in the US economy, journalists reporting on worker issues tend to gravitate toward officials in the Treasury and Federal Reserve. Similarly, there has been very little mediated debate about whether ‘markets work’ (Sherman 2002:28), and the view that reduced corporate regulation and ‘free markets’ have delivered widespread prosperity has been largely accepted as ‘conventional wisdom’ (Goozner 2000:24.) Taking a global perspective, Kantola (2006) analysed the *Financial Times*’ coverage of 32 elections between 2000 and 2005 and discovered that candidates in favour of pro-market reforms were repeatedly favoured. This is, perhaps, to be expected from the *FT* but similar phenomena were also observed in the popular news media of South Africa (Kariithi and Kareithi 2007) and Finland (Ainamo *et al.* 2006:630.) In both of these examples, the news media also played an active role in delegitimizing conflicting (left-wing) perspectives: ‘In doing so,’ argued Kariithi and Kareithi, ‘the mass media rendered as common sense and natural the logic of the contemporary neoliberal global economy.’ Indeed, other studies confirm that EBF reporters seem to accept neoliberalism as a fact of life. For example, Gillian Doyle’s interviews with British journalists revealed: ‘passivity in relation to pro-market ideologies’ (2006:446), a mindset that tallies with Tumber’s (1993:358) observation that most business news is: ‘supportive, complimentary and consonant with the media’s role in reproduction of the dominant ideology.’

Neoliberalism has become a pervasive, hegemonic discourse which makes it: ‘part of the commonsense view of the world’ (Thussu 2007:134.) Mark Fisher maintains that faith in neoliberalism is now so entrenched that it is impossible to even *imagine* an alternative economic model (2009:2.) It is also a subtle discourse: many economic and business concepts are abstract so metaphors are commonly used by reporters (Augey and Brin 2004.) By characterising ‘the economy’ or ‘the market’ in anthropomorphic, meteorological, biological or mechanical terms¹⁹, it becomes a

¹⁹ For example, ‘a machine requiring fixing’ or ‘as a beast or animal… in varying degrees of health’ (Emmison 1986:91)

reified, mysterious force outside of the control of people or even government (Emmison 1983, 1986, Jensen 1987, Mårtenson 1998.)²⁰ The language and images: ‘which serve to constitute (the economy) are produced without reflection. It has become the ‘natural’ way to see … a world of normality’ (Emmison 1983:154.) What is more, by aggregating the needs of groups with opposing interests - for example, workers who want higher wages and shareholders who want increased dividends - ‘the economy’ itself becomes a constructed, ‘ideological category’ applied to the public as a whole (Emmison 1986, Gavin 1998:183.) This ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach is vividly apparent when news reports equate the health of the economy to stock market movements and, hence, the contentment of the investor community (Croteau and Hoynes 2000:169.)

According to British journalists Hugh Pym and Nick Kochan, the acceptance of this modern form of capitalism is a simple reflection of the convergence of mainstream political opinion (2008:3.) There is evidence, however, that the world’s publics are not so convinced. In 2009, a major international survey²¹ found widespread disillusionment with neoliberalism. In only two countries did more than 20 percent of people think capitalism was working well, and a higher proportion thought it ‘fatally flawed.’ Globally, there was also significant support for more government regulation of business and a fairer distribution of wealth (BBC World Service 2009.) Although this survey was conducted at a particularly traumatic time, it confirmed that the mainstream political consensus is not universally accepted. Hence, one might expect a pluralistic news media to give voice to critics of neoliberalism, but the research suggests that counter-arguments tend to be unexplored and the more vociferous are demonised. In the 1970s and 1980s, for example, Ken Livingstone, Tony Benn and other left-wing politicians were pilloried by the British press (Hollingsworth 1986, Curran *et al* 2005) and this tendency is mirrored in the context of popular dissent against neoliberalism. For example, Thomas Friedman’s²² description of World Trade Organisation protestors in 1999 was indicative of a common representation of misguided misfits fighting against an inevitable tide: ‘a Noah’s ark of flat-earth advocates, protectionist trade unions, and yuppies looking for their 1960’s fix’ (in Goozner 2000:24.) NGOs, trade unions and popular movements may have better access to the media than ever before, but it is debatable whether they have made

20 Gavin and Goddard’s (1998) study of TV coverage of the causes of inflation disputed the reification paradigm. Economic actors and phenomena were cited by news reports rather than forces beyond political or personal control

21 The researchers questioned 29,000 people in 27 countries

22 Friedman wrote *The Lexus and The Olive Tree* (1999), a seminal text for the advocates of (neoliberal) globalisation

much progress in the ‘contest over meaning’ (Wolfsfeld 2003:94.) Even if the news media does pay attention, a preoccupation with violent protest often ignores or undermines the merit of the political arguments (Solomon 2000, Smith *et al* 2001, Cottle 2003:158.) This ‘protest paradigm’ has been evident since the anti-Vietnam War and student demonstrations of the 1960s and was also apparent in the representation of the ‘anti-globalisation’ movement in the late 1990s (Gitlin 1980, Jha 2007, Gavin 2007.) *Ad hominem* attacks by journalists on protestors, strikers or socialist politicians may be deemed acceptable because, in Daniel Hallin’s (1986) terms, they are in the ‘zone of deviance’, outside of what mainstream culture accepts as normal, and hence beyond the professional journalistic codes of objectivity and fairness (in Schudson 2003:187.) In Stuart Hood’s words, journalists define ‘impartiality as the acceptance of that segment of opinion which constitutes parliamentary consensus’ (Curran and Seaton 1991:200.) Hence, if political parties do not offer a plurality of interpretations, then journalists feel no obligation to find and present views from outside of the mainstream spectrum (Petley 2009:606.)

With neoliberalism normalised, reified and constantly reinforced, it is perhaps inevitable that EBF journalism has a patchy record in warning of economic hazard. By the same token, the news media are also criticised for neglecting endemic problems associated with neoliberalism. Poverty, unemployment, shortages of affordable housing and social deprivation are long-term, inter-related issues that necessitate widespread and frequent mediated debate if they are to be resolved, and yet EBF news tends to be episodic, dealing with: ‘...single issues that emerge, occupy journalists’ and the public’s attention and then recede’ (Wu *et al* 2002:33.) Bob McChesney gave a blunt assessment of this propensity in American journalism:

... the virtual absence of news concerning the working class and poor is taken for granted by professional journalists. It is not seen as “self-censorship” to shape the news in such a manner. That is the genius of professionalism as a form of regulation (2003:313)

There are signs, however, that popular movements and campaigns orchestrated by NGOs and can make an impact²³, and there are times when ‘radical’ voices are allowed to contribute to debates about underlying systems and structures (Schudson 1989:267, Tumber 1993:358.) However, such deliberations in the mainstream media are rare (*Free Press* 2010, Milne 2009, Payne 2008) and the balance of reporting is still strongly tilted in favour of elite institutions, like the World Economic Forum,

23 For example, Make Poverty History in 2005

governments, business and, hence, the neoliberal *status quo* (Bennett *et al* 2004:437, Smith *et al* 2001:1414, Jha 2007.)

The inability to address economic issues critically and as part of a bigger picture, characterised the non-reporting of warning signals in the prelude to the Financial Crisis. Paul Manning argues that evidence of impending disaster was available to journalists but ‘few began to develop a comprehensive or holistic approach that might point to the broadest dangers’ (2010:6.) Professor Alistair Milne echoed Manning’s assertion and said journalists rarely analyse the capitalist system itself, and its impact on society as a whole (Milne 2009.) ‘Systemic criticism’ was also absent in the Irish news media in the days of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ economic boom, and it was not until the scale of the Crisis became apparent that previously marginalised voices were heard in news reports (Fahy *et al* 2010.) It would appear that meaningful and informed public debate about the foundations of neoliberalism only occurs in difficult economic times:

...the most high-profile examples of critical financial journalism occurred where the events had a large political dimension, giving stories a wider impact and allowing ... a wider range of sources (*ibid*:19)

In the light of these findings, it is useful to resurrect the questions about the purpose of EBF journalism. As Tambini (2010), Starkman (2014) and other scholars have noted, there is a public need for journalists to be critical about the structures of economic systems, not just individual actors and companies. Despite journalists showing signs of contrition over their profession’s performance in the prelude to the 2008 Financial Crisis, research has revealed few examples of practitioners acknowledging that they need to make any substantial changes to their approach to reporting. Some of Paul Manning’s interviewees, for instance, were surprised how much they had embraced: ‘received economic wisdom... a set of assumptions about the nature of the political and economic world that were profoundly ideological’ (2012:186) and yet they showed little sign of challenging beliefs or practices. Crucially, these assumptions²⁴ were shared with the business community and politicians, and as members of the same broad social group, EBF journalists do not believe it is their role to question the elite consensus (Pym in Manning 2012:186.) Hence, suggests Mike Berry, if the British news media, especially public service broadcasters, simply report on ‘shades of opinion at Westminster’, then citizens are

²⁴ Manning gives the example: ‘dominant neoliberal discourses promoting deregulated financial services as an unquestioned success’ (2012:186)

inevitably offered a restricted range of debate and are: 'denied the information necessary to make informed political decisions' (2012: 267-268.)

The research outlined above is illuminating but it only partially answers questions about the role of EBF journalists, and whether the news product reflects the plurality of political-economic thought which evidently exists, despite the mainstream political parties' convergence. Although the media are not simply 'passive transmission belts of capitalist propaganda' (Dreier 1982:123) and theories of elite domination are far from infallible, the research suggests that the UK - and other western democracies - does not have an inclusive EBF news media that might facilitate informed public debate about the economic environment. Furthermore, reporting from the point of view of citizens, rather than consumers or shareholders, would necessitate a fundamental change in working practices and sourcing strategies. Even with the benefit of post-Financial Crisis hindsight, however, Gillian Doyle's assessment still holds true: 'commercially-led financial news production... is not really designed for and is unlikely to succeed in any public educational role' (Doyle 2006:451.)

6 - Audiences

Although this thesis does not attempt to analyse the effects of EBF news, it is important to briefly consider the findings of audience research in this sphere. Given that EBF news is anthropocentric - in that its normative function is to inform and engage people about their economic environments - the scarcity of audience studies is striking. Most work is understandably concerned with lay audiences rather than those who are deemed to be specialists, such as the readers of the *Financial Times*, whom have more interest in EBF issues and far greater knowledge of related concepts. Naturally, lay audiences are far larger and the inherent complexities of economics, business and finance places a considerable burden on the news media to explain and contextualise while holding these audiences' attention. The most detailed analyses of audience understanding in the UK were carried out by researchers at Liverpool University. Taking inspiration from earlier TV reception studies (for example, Morley 1980 and Lewis 1985), the Liverpool Project, as it became known, found that, despite the inherently abstract nature of the economy, viewers do engage with economic news but in a way that is 'complex and ambiguous' (Gavin 1998:184.) A related study revealed cynicism over economic data and, at times, sheer incomprehension (Corner *et al* 1997) and Richardson (1998:235) noted that some viewers were sceptical about news of unemployment: 'the text is

convincing but (the viewer) is not convinced.' This inconsistency - between economic news and people's own experiences - was also raised in a comparative international study which discovered that Japanese and American TV viewers thought coverage of the economy was too negative, while Dutch participants thought it excessively optimistic (Arts *et al* 2002). The net effect of this fracture was 'disinterest in hard news' which, the researchers believed, was 'closely related to its content' (*ibid*:2, 11.)

In the United States, Wu *et al* (2002) charted the complex relationship between recession news, the state of the economy and public perceptions. This comprehensive study²⁵ revealed that these factors reinforce and influence each other, and the presence of 'distinctive predictive relationships' between the three (*ibid*:29.) Although far from conclusive, this research suggests: a greater interest in economic news during downturns; public expectation is influenced more by actual conditions than news coverage; and the centrality of people's own circumstances when decoding news. The findings were echoed in Schifferes and Coulter's (2012) study of BBC News online in the post-Credit Crunch period - September to December 2008 - which revealed a huge increase in traffic and usage of the business pages compared with less traumatic times. In addition to accessing more news in this crisis period, audiences actively sought out further information, particularly from blogs of senior journalists. While such studies show that audiences will engage with EBF news in certain circumstances, overall the research suggests British economic and financial journalists constantly struggle to explain, contextualise and maintain the interest of lay audiences, and the challenge is exacerbated by the limits of airtime and page space (Birt and Jay 1975, GUMG 1980:405, Corner *et al.* 1997:91, Tambini 2008:20.)

It is evident that much audience research is somewhat dated and tends to paint a rather pessimistic picture. Two more recent British studies, however, suggest some grounds for optimism. In his 2007 analysis, Neil Gavin found that economic news does not have a uniform effect on audiences: 'only some people, some of the time, pay attention', and among newspapers, the effect on the reader is rather weak and inconsistent (Gavin 2007:175.) But, in terms of presenting balanced, engaging and informative reports about the economy, the broadcast media are: 'more than just holding the line against the corrosive forces that assail the modern media' (*ibid*:4.) Also in 2007, Alan Budd's report on the impartiality of BBC business reporting found that the Corporation was regarded by audiences as a trusted source of accurate,

25 It covered the period 1987 to 1996 and included data from 3,000 participants

relevant and balanced business news (Budd 2007, Blinc Partnership 2007:42.) This study – and others - also highlighted another challenge for EBF journalism: namely, matching content with the needs of a heavily segmented audience (Milne 2009, Doyle 2006, Peston in Smith 2008.) News is intrinsically polysemic and it cannot be assumed that audiences make the same meanings (McNair 1998:35, McQuail 1997:19.) Hence, consumers, investors, employees, the unemployed, the retired and other sub-groups require different information, have varying levels of interest and understanding, and will decode messages in their own, unique ways. In the US, the investor audience tends to be given the priority in business news (Starkman 2009, Moon and Hyun 2009, Schudson 2003:189, Croteau and Hoynes 2000:168) and this preference has also been highlighted in the UK (Milne 2009, Marron *et al* 2010.) BBC business news, however, tends to focus on consumers and the buying public's relationship with companies (Budd 2007:16.)

Extending EBF research

Although researchers have uncovered a range of recurring patterns over the years, debates about the multi-faceted and sometimes amorphous forces that influence the nature of EBF journalism continue. Despite indications that EBF news and its production share many of the same characteristics as journalism in other contexts, there is clearly a need for more tightly-focussed studies in this niche. Hence, this thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of EBF journalism by systematically analysing how three contentious issues were covered at specific points in time by a selection of British news organisations. Furthermore, through interviews with journalists, this thesis also attempts to understand the social constitutions of practitioners; their working practices; and how the ethos and traditions of their employers contribute to the news product.

2 – METHODOLOGY

In any research project, time and resources are finite and so choices need to be made which inevitably restrict the scale and scope of the study. Some economic and business journalism research (for example, Bennett *et al* 2004, Budd 2007) has focused on one news provider's reporting at different points in time, while others have opted to look at one issue or event across multiple publications (for example, Dominic 1981, Jha 2007, O'Neill 2007.) This thesis takes a more ambitious approach and considers how three issues were reported by three different news organisations over the same periods.

The foci for the case studies are: economic globalisation; private finance and public services; and the largest British supermarket company, Tesco. These were chosen because each was particularly contentious in the decade before the Financial Crisis and so one might expect a high degree of interest from the news media. In addition, for each case study it was possible to centre the sample periods on important events. For economic globalisation, this was the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Seattle from November 30 to December 3 1999. The Conference represented a crucial moment in the development of modern economic globalisation and negotiations among senior politicians was accompanied by street demonstrations. Indeed, the future of world trade was heavily contested at the time with developed world governments favouring a model that removed tariffs, subsidies and other hindrances to 'free trade', while trade unions, environmental and development NGOs, and numerous authors argued for a more sustainable, humanised form of economic globalisation (Klein 2000, Hertz 2001, Pilger 2002.)

The key date for the private finance case study was September 30 2002 when the Labour Party conference defeated a motion to back the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) as government policy (Assinder 2002.) Again, PFI was highly contentious with trade unions, academics, accountants and others disputing the government's belief that it was the only effective way to finance public services (Monbiot 2001, Osler 2002, Pollock 2005.) Despite the Conference defeat, the Blair government remained committed to PFI and yet many of the doubters' concerns were confirmed on May 15 2007 with the publication of a damning parliamentary report on the performance of PFI contracts (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts 2007.) Hence, this case study has two sample points - five years apart - which gives an additional comparative element to the analysis.

Similarly, the third case study, which focuses on Tesco, has three sampling points. The first is May 9 2006 when the Competition Commission announced an investigation into the UK grocery sector; the second is January 23 2007, when the Commission released its interim findings; and the third is April 30 2008, the publication date of the final report (Wallop 2006, Mathiason 2007, Competition Commission 2008.) As with the other two case studies, competing interpretations were evident over the period of analysis: although supermarket chains provide choice and convenience to consumers, and had generated many new jobs and substantial profits, they were also accused of anti-competitive behaviour, having dubious environmental credentials, and homogenising the British High Street (Monbiot 2001, Simms 2007, Blythman 2007.)

A further advantage of choosing these case studies is that they represent three tiers of neoliberalism. ‘Free trade’ as envisaged by the WTO is, by definition, an overarching, international economic model; private finance in public services is a policy of national government; and Tesco epitomises the large corporations that dominate western economies. Hence, by looking at the economic world from three hierarchical perspectives over ten years, this study greatly widens the sphere of analysis. This element of the research design also gives a comparative dimension. As shown below, the content analysis coding schemes for each case study are functionally identical and, hence, one can assess the same characteristics of news product - for example, length and type of article, sources, etc. - for three distinct issues.

A second comparative dimension was obtained by including multiple news organisations. At the early stages of thesis design, the BBC was envisaged as the sole focus of study. This was because the Corporation’s journalism is universally-accessible by British audiences and despite increased competition, the BBC is still the UK’s primary news provider (Ofcom 2013, Lewis 2013.) The BBC is also highly-trusted by audiences (BBC Trust 2012) and journalists pride themselves in their adherence to the BBC’s statutory commitment to impartiality (BBC 2010a.) The initial intention was to concentrate on TV news but the practicalities of accessing and analysing sufficient quantities of broadcast material were prohibitive, certainly for a PhD thesis. The BBC News website presented a viable alternative on two counts: first, like the Corporation’s broadcast output, it is freely-available to huge audiences and subject to the same impartiality obligations; and second, the news website has a search facility that allows articles to be gathered against a keyword search in much

the same way as the newspapers. However, after reading a report on the impartiality of BBC business journalism (Budd 2007) in the early days of thesis development, the researcher decided to broaden the study and include two newspapers. Budd produced a comprehensive report but, despite its incorporation of written and oral evidence, audience research (Blinc Partnership 2007) and content analysis (Svennevig 2007), it was a general study with no focus on contentious issues, nor did it have a comparative angle. Furthermore, while Budd found no 'evidence of systemic (anti-business) bias' (Budd 2007:14), his assessment was made against a definition of impartiality from a previous BBC publication, the Neil Report:

...fair and open minded in reflecting all significant strands of opinion, and exploring the range and conflict of views (in Budd 2007:6)

What constitutes: 'significant strands of opinion' is clearly open to debate. The leading political parties' viewpoints naturally fall into this category, but because none offers an alternative economic discourse to neoliberalism, one could argue that views from beyond the parliamentary horizon are relatively insignificant by definition. However, in the light of capitalism's evident fragility - the Financial Crisis and the subsequent global recession - and the British public's detachment from the formal political process (Power Inquiry 2006), one might expect the BBC, as a public service organisation, to give credence to 'alternative discourse' (Tumber 1993:358.) Hence, two newspapers were included in the study, one from each side of the political spectrum. Unlike the BBC, British newspapers are free to express political opinion and take positions in public debates and so, by comparing their reporting with the BBC's, a more complete picture of the nature of EBF news would be gained. This approach would also facilitate a better understanding of the BBC's interpretation of 'significant strands of opinion' relative to other news providers and hence, a stronger appreciation of the political content of EBF journalism.

Although it was tempting to choose two popular newspapers - for example, *The Mirror* and *The Sun* – it was decided to focus on elite publications because these tend to set the news agenda (Davis 2000.) Hence, a newspaper traditionally associated with the right of the political spectrum, the *Daily/Sunday Telegraph*, and the left-of-centre *Guardian-Observer* were selected. This neat symmetry was challenged, however, at the beginning of the empirical research period (October 2010) when a LexisNexis search revealed that *Telegraph* articles from the first sample period (see *Table 2.1*) were not available. In a phone call, a LexisNexis representative said that the *Telegraph* had requested the removal of some material

from the database. No reason was given and, according to the staff member, such requests are not unusual. LexisNexis could not anticipate when the material would be reinstated and so the *Times-Sunday Times* replaced the *Telegraph* pair for the globalisation case study.

Table 2.1
News media and sample periods

Case study	News media	Sample periods	
		From	To
1	<i>BBC News website</i> <i>Guardian - Observer</i> <i>Times - Sunday Times</i>	1 Nov 1999	31 Dec 1999
2	<i>BBC News website</i> <i>Guardian - Observer</i> <i>Daily Telegraph – Sunday Telegraph</i>	1 Sep 2002	31 Oct 2002
		15 Apr 2007	15 Jun 2007
3	<i>BBC News website</i> <i>Guardian - Observer</i> <i>Daily Telegraph – Sunday Telegraph</i>	24 Apr 2006	28 May 2006
		8 Jan 2007	11 Feb 2007
		14 Apr 2008	18 May 2008

A pilot study was then undertaken to check that LexisNexis and the BBC News website search facility would yield the appropriate quantity and quality of articles. It became apparent that the search must cover the whole article text because some important news items did not include the keyword in the headline or the opening paragraph. The pilot study also helped fine-tune the search terms. To achieve a satisfactory hit rate, the first case study required five phrases: 'World Trade Organisation,' 'WTO,' 'globalisation', 'anti-WTO' and 'anti-globalisation.' LexisNexis was used to search the print-versions of the *Times-Sunday Times* and the *Guardian-Observer* for the 61 days that straddled the start date of the WTO Ministerial Conference on November 30 1999. The BBC News website was searched in the same fashion. In the second case study, the keywords were: 'PFI', 'PPP', 'private finance initiative' and 'public private partnership.' The *Guardian-Observer*, the *Daily/Sunday Telegraph* and the BBC News website were searched for two periods: four weeks either side of both the Labour Party Conference in late-September 2002

and the publication of the House of Commons report on May 15 2007. There was just one keyword for the third case study: the *Guardian-Observer*, the *Daily/Sunday Telegraph* and the BBC News website were searched for any mention of Tesco during the three sample periods. These were reduced for this case study to the five weeks - 35 days - straddling each of the key dates to produce a manageable quantity of data. Even so, the universal sample for this case study still dwarfed the other two²⁶.

In addition to the specific challenges outlined above, some authors have raised validity and reliability concerns about using LexisNexis to access newspaper archives (Kaufman *et al* 1993.) Database searches often exclude relevant articles that appeared in the original print version and polysemic keywords can give 'false positives' (Deacon 2007.) This was apparent in the private finance case study with the keyword 'PPP' yielding articles that mentioned the Pakistan People's Party and Purchasing Power Parity. These were removed manually before the content analysis began in earnest²⁷. Another issue with retrieving articles with LexisNexis is that the visual dimension of the news - size of headline, images, positioning of texts, etc. - is lost and, therefore, the linguistic element is over-stated. Because articles are not viewed in their original context, researchers must not infer too much meaning from the words alone (Kress and van Leeuwen 1998.) There are also issues with online news, particularly in comparative studies with newspapers because news websites and print media have some fundamentally different characteristics (Tian and Stewart 2005.) Page placement, for example, is incomparable and the 'fluidity of the internet' means that stories can be deleted, moved, and in theory, edited post-initial publication (McMillan 2000.)

1 - Quantitative content analysis

The next stage was to design the coding schemes, and this part of the process took methodological guidance from previous content-based studies that have investigated related spheres of journalism, including the coverage of business (Budd 2007, Lasorsa and Reese 1990, Dominick 1981); protests and social movements (Gitlin 1980, Solomon 2000, Smith *et al* 2001, Jha 2007); and the representation of trade unions (GUMG 1976, 1980, Martin 2004, Kariithi and Kareithi 2007, O'Neill 2007.) Indeed, quantitative content analysis has been very popular with media researchers for many years (Krippendorff 1980, Hansen *et al* 1998:92.) This technique can cope

26 The keyword searches yielded 492 articles for the globalisation case study; 344 for private finance; and 789 for Tesco

27 Duplicate articles were also removed at this stage

with large quantities of texts and, because variables are measured consistently, it is useful for comparative studies and longitudinal analysis (Fiske 2002:136, Bauer 2000:147.) Quantitative content analysis is a systematic and replicable method of measuring variables of news. It is highly procedural and, hence, open to scrutiny, and provides the foundation for this study (Berelson 1952, Messenger-Davies and Mosdell 2006:98.) For all its attractions, however, the method has inherent limitations. By concentrating on aggregates and proportions, quantitative content analysis is a rather blunt instrument and gives only a broad overview. Furthermore, although quantitative content analysis follows in the positivist tradition, it is not totally objective. Researchers inevitably exercise a degree of subjective delineation in choosing variables and samples, and in studies involving multiple researchers, different coding decisions are inevitable to an extent (Hansen *et al* 1998:98, 95.) Also, quantitative content analysis fragments texts and so the original context is lost. Consequently, although it may be tempting to assume that the coder sees the same as the audience, this technique has no inbuilt ‘theory of meaning’, so researchers must refrain from speculating about journalists’ intentions or wider audience effects (Wimmer and Dominick 2003:144, Altheide 1996:5.) Indeed, a researcher cannot make valid inferences about significance from the simple counting of occurrences or measuring the magnitude of a particular variable. It is essential, therefore, that coding schemes have mutually exclusive content categories that measure the manifest and ignore latent meanings (Schroder 2002:103.) Much criticism of quantitative content analysis, however, tends to be related to its misuse - or the researcher’s over-reliance - and so the integrity of an analysis can be maximised by careful design of the coding schemes, a rigorous pilot study, and the inclusion of complementary research methods.

The three coding schemes for this research were very similar. With the exception of the definition of themes and political positions (see below), all other variables were the same. Naturally, the scheme for the first case study took some time to develop, but once it had been piloted, modified and subsequently proved its robustness, it acted as a template for the other two. *Table 2.2* shows the twelve variables in the order the data was recorded. The date of publication of each news item was typed into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, followed by the appropriate codes for news organisation, topic - home news, international, business, etc. - and the placement of the search term in the article - headline, introduction, etc. The number of words was also recorded. Category A variables are unequivocal, but those listed as Category B have various degrees of subjectivity. In most cases, the type of news item was

evident, but there could conceivably be some variance between researchers. Similarly, assessments of how salient an article is to the search term; whether the article is episodic or thematic; and the themes could differ. There could even be disagreement about the category of a particular source. The most challenging variable, however, was political position and much thought was invested into defining the positions for each case study and devising a sliding scale that could be consistently applied by an imaginary second coder (see below.) Indeed, detailed guidance notes were written for all variables²⁸.

Table 2.2
Quantitative content analysis variables

	Category A		Category B
1	Date	6	Item type
2	News organisation	7	Salience
3	Topic	8	Thematic/episodic
4	Placement of search terms	9	Primary theme
5	Article length	10	Secondary theme
		11	Sources
		12	Political positions

The first goal of the quantitative content analysis was to assess the extent to which economic globalisation, private finance and Tesco featured on the news agenda over the sample periods. This was done by measuring the frequency and prominence of reporting (Coleman *et al* 2009:147.) Numerous scholars have noted the importance of agenda building: the news media: ‘may not be successful in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about’ (Cohen 1963:13.) Indeed, by selecting and then pointing the public at certain issues - and neglecting others in the process - the media determine criticality (Zhu and Blood 1996.) Consequently, the public’s awareness of issues – and therefore, what they discuss, think and act upon – is largely determined and influenced by choices made by editors and journalists (Larson 1994.) Hence, the coding schemes for this research recorded: the date of publication; the number of words; the type of article; and the placement of an article in a particular section of the medium. This stage of data collection was largely unproblematic but it was evident that, because the searches covered whole article texts, the focus of some news items were only tenuously connected to the keywords. For example, in the Tesco case study, the initial search generated 789 articles but after applying a salience filter, some 40 percent were removed because the reference to the company was in passing or

²⁸ Refer to the coding schemes in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 for more detail

inconsequential to the story²⁹. Such articles were excluded at this point of the analysis. Similar criteria were applied in the other case studies, and documented in the code books.

The articles of the refined samples were then subjected to more detailed analysis to establish how the issue was framed. While agenda setting is focused on selection and salience, framing analysis is concerned with attributes (Scheufele 1999, Ghanem 1997:3.) Framing is the culmination of a process which constructs a dominant perspective that makes information intelligible and, in setting parameters for discussion, encourages news to be interpreted in a certain manner (Thompson 2010, Kuypers 2006, Pan and Kosicki 1993.) Although previous framing analyses tend to suggest that a small number of frames account for most of the news (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000:95), this thesis adopted an inductive approach which made no prior assumptions about the nature of the frames. This was done by applying a manual-holistic approach which involved taking a sample of stories, scrutinising the content and then defining the frames (Ingeayar 1991.)

The framing analysis for this thesis is based on a combination of variables. First, each article was assessed for its episodic or thematic characteristics. To qualify for the former category, a story will have depicted concrete instances or events that happened within the previous 24 hours. Episodic articles tend to describe one-off occurrences and short-term implications which, in the realm of EBF news, often means the implications to investors rather than other stakeholder groups. Conversely, a thematic story includes information from different points in time, and focuses more on ‘collective outcomes, debates and trends’ and responsibility tends to be placed on macro-factors (Entman *et al* 2009:176.) Second, the primary theme of the article was recorded, in other words the context in which the search term appears. Some private finance articles, for example, covered the role of companies and thus had a business theme; others focused on the often-heated debate between the government and the trade unions and were coded ‘political’; but very few concentrated on employment issues. As one might expect, there was some difference in primary themes across the three case studies. For example, not one PFI article was concerned with global trade and yet this was one of the leading contexts in the globalisation case study. For the secondary theme, however, the articles of all three case studies could be placed in one of the same eight categories which were derived from the analysis of the

29 For example, Tesco products mentioned in recipes

defining verbs. Hence, if the news item covered consultations, negotiations, discussions, or debate, the secondary theme was ‘talk,’ but if the verbs were more belligerent - row, dispute, protest, battle, etc. - the article was categorised as ‘fight.’ Viewed as pairs, these two variables give considerable insight into the nature of the news product. During the coding process, there were surprisingly few instances of the themes not being immediately apparent. A brief glance at the headline and first paragraph was usually sufficient to assess the context and the defining verbs. Similarly, the researcher became adept at scan-reading the whole article to assess the extent to which the item was episodic or thematic. Although this stage of analysis had the potential for subjectivity, rigorous referrals to the written guidelines accompanying the coding schemes ensured this was minimised.

The third stage of quantitative analysis recorded sources. Sources have a major impact on the frame of a news story (Lasorsa and Reese 1990) and the journalist’s choice of sources: ‘can define the contours of debate’ (Gavin 2007:56.) Source analysis can be particularly revealing and if a study shows, for instance, a disparity in the use of sources engaged in an economic dispute: ‘the credibility of news coverage is challenged... at the first line of defence’ (GUMG 1980:408.) More significantly, argue some scholars, sourcing patterns: ‘reflect the hierarchies of nation and society’ (Gans 1979:119.) Indeed, as illustrated in the literature review, previous research, particularly studies of the representation of labour and protestors (GUMG 1976, 1980, Gitlin 1980, Smith *et al* 2001), has conceptualised sourcing in hegemonic frameworks. As Ang noted: ‘the production of knowledge is always bound up in a network of power relations’ (1989:97) and other research agrees that that voices critical of the economic *status quo* receive less: ‘access, recognition and responsiveness’ (Bennett *et al* 2004) than elite, dominant groups. Hence, the coding schemes for this research recorded: how many sources were quoted; how many were named; and the sequence of appearance. During the pilot studies, tables of discrete source codes were developed which, as more articles were analysed, naturally fell into groups. Across the three case studies, there was some commonality with politicians, businesspeople and ‘other’ as separate groups in each, but the other groups of sources reflected the participants in each of the respective debates. This technique was also employed by Atton and Wickenden (2005) whose study drew a distinction between elite and ordinary sources, from both the ‘dominant’ and ‘dissenting’ camps. Consequently, in the private finance case study, sources in the ‘trade unions, professional organisations and workers’ grouping tended to take the same line. Similarly, the supermarket debate was contested mainly between three groups of

sources: corporate representatives; stakeholder organisations, and 'individuals' (farmers, consumers, etc.) Few practical issues were encountered when recording source types and the vast majority could be confidently categorised without equivocation. Developing the source codes for the first case study was time-consuming but the resultant lists provided invaluable templates for the subsequent chapters.

Source analysis is a staple component of quantitative content analyses but, as noted in the literature view, the source type *per se* does not necessarily determine if a particular point of view is present in a text. Similarly, individual actors do not always take the line that their responsibilities suggests, and sometimes sources can hold seemingly conflicting opinions simultaneously. Such limitations became evident in the globalisation pilot study which revealed two specific challenges. First, some editorials and opinion pieces offered strong views about the merits of the WTO's vision for global trade, and the protestors' causes and tactics, and yet they were bereft of comment other than the journalist's own words. Second, the US government generally held one position (liberalisation) but sometimes argued for another (protectionism) and at times, showed sympathy for a third (progressive reform.) For these reasons, an extra dimension was added to the analysis and the extent to which political positions were evident was quantified. This measurement is important because, clearly, audiences can only judge arguments outside of their personal realms if they are exposed to them (Lasorsa and Reese 1990:60.) Hence, if certain viewpoints and interpretations are under-represented in news reports then citizens are ill-equipped to make informed decisions.

This part of the analysis was informed by the work of the Glasgow University Media Group whose members have applied this technique to a variety of issues, including industrial relations (GUMG 1976, 1980) and the Israel-Palestine conflict (Philo and Berry 2004.) This approach is, according to Mike Berry, 'based on the assumption that in any contested area there will be competing ways of explaining events or issues' and its purpose is to 'map which explanations are featured in news accounts and which are absent' (2012:256.) Consequently, the first step in devising a robust measurement was to establish the political positions in each of the three case studies. This involved much reading of academic work, popular books and journalistic articles from the sample periods³⁰ and it soon became evident that the debates were not

30 The results of these explorations form the initial sections of the case studies

delineated along traditional party political lines. For each of the three issues, dissidents tended to operate in loose associations, each with their own specific arguments. In both the globalisation and private finance case studies, however, there was sufficient common ground to condense the key characteristics of four political positions. The supermarket debate was rather more complex with the advocates of the *status quo* offering two distinct narratives and the reformists presenting arguments from five different stakeholder perspectives.

Table 2.3
Coding political positions and narratives

Code	Political position/narrative
1	extensive coverage
2	brief coverage
3	criticised or dismissed
4	acknowledged
5	not acknowledged

Once the key characteristics of each position and argument/narrative had been written into the code book, the researcher began gauging their visibility in individual articles. This was achieved by taking an holistic assessment of each news item based on: the quantity of words devoted to each position; the general tone and language used to describe ideas and actors; and the prominence of different viewpoints. From the outset, it was apparent that this had the potential to be a highly-subjective metric, and so the text highlighting function on Microsoft Word was used to colour-code sections of the articles according to their political content. For example, when analysing globalisation articles, blue was used to highlight passages that covered liberalisation, mauve for protectionism, green for progressive reform and red for fundamental reform. Next, to assess the degree of coverage, a sliding scale was applied to each political position or narrative (see *Table 2.3*.) The researcher soon became proficient at evaluating each positions' exposure, and assessing the tenor of the coverage. In most cases, it was apparent if the position was present, merely acknowledged, or criticised/dismissed. The only significant deliberations revolved around the definitions of 'extensive' and 'brief.' The former was selected if the position was described in depth and/or promoted explicitly; and the latter if the article did this more subtly and, hence, the position was deemed valid.

2 - Critical discourse analysis

As a notable study of EBF reporting argued: ‘news cannot be judged solely on the quantity of coverage or its general tenor’ (Gavin 2007:53.) Indeed, it is discourse that sets the: ‘parameters of relevant meaning that one uses to talk about things’ (Altheide 1996:31), so *how* something is explained and discussed is just as important, if not more so, than *what* is said (Marianou 2009:329.) Although discourse analysis has been the subject of much debate among theorists (Fowler 1991, van Dijk 1988, 1991, 2009, Fairclough 1989, 1995a, 1995b, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2003) it is accepted that its main function is to understand how meaning is shared and negotiated in society (Matheson 2005, Fürsich 2009:243.)

Discourse analysis deconstructs texts and looks for patterns of linguistic similarities and differences. It scrutinises the internal structure of texts, their thematic infrastructure, as well as their rhetorical and political leanings. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) takes these principles further by investigating how power is expressed and reinforced through language, and how mediated discourse reproduces or resists power structures. While it may seem reasonable to assume that language is neutral, it is a ‘refracting, structuring medium’ which, when used by journalists, presents an inherently subjective view of the world (Fowler 1991:10, Gill 2000:172.) Furthermore, the grammar of news is made meaningful through subtleties such as ‘unspoken assumptions, practices and perspectives’ (Eldridge 1995:211) and, ultimately, the language of news is socially constructed and distinctly ideological (Jensen 1987, Gunter 2000, Zelizer 2009:37.)

Critical discourse analysts have found that news reports tend to be written in the same authoritative style which the most frequently accessed sources, politicians and experts, habitually use (Fowler 1991:23.) Consequently, the media tend to reproduce the attitudes of the powerful and, in the process, attempt to convince the public that the power structures are ‘right and proper’ and, consequently, hegemony is perpetuated (Matheson 2005:6.) Such Gramscian concepts run deep in theories of discourse: Fiske (1991:347) directly equates the ‘textual struggle for meaning’ with the ‘social struggle for power,’ and according to Fairclough the ideology represented in news can: ‘contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation’ (2003:9.) Over time, news becomes self-reinforcing: language is repeated; images are entrenched and: ‘key ideological propositions [become] permanent, immutable and to be preferred as the code for

reporting and reading the story' (GUMG 1980:123.) In the process, authorities justify public acceptance of the underpinning ideology (Kariithi and Kareithi 2007:473) and consequently, alternative explanations and remedies are ignored, dismissed or belittled (Philo 2007:177.)

Previous studies of EBF journalism that have employed CDA have investigated whose 'version of reality' is dominant (Fürsich 2009:246), how the causes and possible remedies for specific economic problems are reported, and whether greater credence is given to the explanations of the elite and the economically powerful (Gavin and Goddard 1998, Travers 2001:122, Kariithi and Kareithi 2007, Ainamo *et al.* 2006.) Despite its popularity among researchers, however, the method has limitations. Discourse analysis involves the close reading of texts and so time places an inevitable restriction on how many items can be analysed, and to what extent³¹. Hence, researchers must select a relatively small sample of articles, and so questions can be raised about whether the data is representative of the news product in general. Clearly, using CDA to identify 'ideology' in news reports is wrought with subjectivity (Gill 2000:186), and 'conclusions based on close textual (discourse) analysis are among the most eagerly tested' (Gavin 2007:67.) Also, discourse analysis does not lend itself to the formalised rules of quantitative analysis and, because themes tend to emerge as the study progresses, insight is often derived from the researcher's own intuition and experience rather than irrefutable data (Fowler 1991:90, Tonkiss 1998:254.) Discourse analyses are indeed inherently selective and so it is vital to maintain an audit trail and explain one's reasoning so that others may examine the inductive process (Maykut and Morehouse 1994.) Analyses also often fail to convey 'a sense of what's being excluded' (Philo 2007:186) but this hazard was overcome in this thesis by the prior-identification of political positions during the quantitative analysis pilot studies.

The first stage in this CDA was to select the samples. Instead of setting temporal boundaries, the researcher initially focussed on leaders and opinion pieces because this is where partisan views, and editorial lines, would be most evident (O'Neill 2007.) Pilot studies discovered plenty of material from the newspapers but none from the BBC News website which, thanks to the Corporation's commitment to impartiality, rarely publishes journalism that carries such overt political opinion. Consequently, the BBC samples consisted mainly of standard news items which covered particularly

31 Bell (1998:64-104) demonstrates the numerous attributes that can be analysed and, hence, the enormous volume of data that can be generated

important announcements and events. In the globalisation and private finance case studies, the researcher gravitated to two pages of the BBC News website - *Battle for Free Trade* (BBC 1999v) and *Private Profit, Public Gain?* (BBC 2003a) – which acted as index pages for articles relevant to the respective debates. There was no equivalent page for the Tesco case study, so the focus initially fell on BBC articles published around the dates of the Competition Commission announcements which could be compared to newspaper reporting at the same time. BBC News articles with ‘Tesco’ in the headline were also extracted. With the political positions and general narratives already defined in the previous stage of the research, the next step was to gain a deeper understanding of the various discourses. This involved the detailed reading of political speeches; official statements; and first-person perspectives on each of the three issues. This process revealed the arguments and the key linguistic features of the groups’ respective narratives and with these established, the researcher then analysed: how the debates were constructed by journalists; how the actors were portrayed; and how journalists described different arguments.

3 - Interviews with editors and journalists

The final part of this thesis involves the interpretation of semi-structured interviews with 26 British EBF editors and journalists. These were carried out in spring 2013 after the content analysis chapters had been written. The purpose of the interviews was to explain the characteristics of the EBF news product uncovered in the previous chapters by analysing the backgrounds of practitioners; their organisational and cultural influences; and their working practices. Although most interviewees were employed by the organisations covered in the content analyses, there was no intention to discover why specific articles were written in a certain way. Such an approach would have been problematic for three reasons: first, it would be unreasonable to expect journalists to remember individual items they had produced several years earlier; second, few BBC articles have by-lines and so it would have been impossible to attribute articles to journalists; and third, this line of questioning could have created a confrontational atmosphere if journalists were asked to justify their decisions.

Following in the tradition of previous British EBF journalism studies based on interviews, editors and journalists of the BBC and the newspapers were targeted (Doyle 2006, Lockyer 2006, Tambini 2008, Manning 2010.) These were selected by noting the most active and prominent reporters from each publication and then

contacting them by email. This introductory message requested recipients devote 30 minutes of their time, either face-to-face or by phone, to help the researcher: 'investigate how and why economic and business journalists do what they do.' The request was intentionally vague to avoid deterring journalists from discussing potentially delicate issues³². In most cases, the recipients replied promptly and positively: 55 percent agreed to be interviewed, 11 percent declined, and a third of candidates ignored the initial request and a follow-up email.

Table 2.4
Organisational distribution of interviewees

Organisation	Interviewees
Alternative news media	5
BBC	8
<i>Telegraph Group</i>	4
<i>Guardian-Observer</i>	5
<i>Sunday Times</i>	3
<i>Times</i>	1
Total interviewees	26

In total, 21 editors and journalists from the mainstream news media were interviewed and these were joined by five others who worked for publications that traditionally offer different perspectives on economics and business, namely *Private Eye*, *Corporate Watch*, the *New Statesman* and the *New Internationalist*. For the purposes of this thesis, these publications are bracketed as the 'alternative news media' and these journalists were asked the same questions as their mainstream counterparts. Hence, by exploring the similarities and differences between the two cohorts' backgrounds, organisational and cultural influences, and working practices, it was hoped that the characteristics of the mainstream EBF journalism product could be better explained. The sample also provided a cross-section of journalistic roles and seniority. *Table 2.5* shows that two interviewees were editors and, as such, held ultimate responsibility for the content of their publications and a further 11 were section editors - business, economics, City, etc. The remainder were divided between three junior staff and ten established journalists with varying degrees of experience.³³

³² Similarly, the researcher did not present the findings of the previous empirical chapters in the interviews for fear of challenging journalists' self-perceptions, particularly of impartiality and objectivity

³³ See Appendix 4 for details of the sampling strategy and the list of interviewees

Table 2.5
Occupational grades of interviewees

Position	Interviewees
Editors	2
Section editors	11
Journalists, correspondents, reporters	10
Junior staff	3
Total interviewees	26

Inevitably, there was an element of selection when constructing this sample and, with the exclusion of the popular press, the local news media and commercial broadcasters, it is debatable how representative this sample is of British EBF journalists *per se*. Other limitations of this approach are the restricted number of questions, and the amount of time that one could reasonably expect busy journalists to devote to an interview. For these reasons considerable thought was given to fine-tuning and condensing a multitude of potential questions into ten. This process was far more difficult than expected, and the researcher was keenly aware that: 'interviews fundamentally, not incidentally, shape the form and content of what is said' (Holstein and Gubrium 1997:114.) Unlike content analysis, interviewers are actively involved in creating meanings that reside within the subjects, so a fine balance must be struck between gathering relevant, valid and useable data and giving subjects the latitude to develop their points. Similarly, the researcher was careful to avoid leading questions and to remove any hint of normative expectation. In the main, the final questions were directly connected to the strands of enquiry in the content-based chapters. Hence, interviewees were asked to describe their sourcing strategies; explain why certain issues are covered and others are not; and to give insight into their organisation's culture and journalistic *modus operandi*. In addition, interviewees were invited to talk about the influence of education and background of journalists on the news product; their views on the boundaries of political opinion in economic reporting; and their perceptions of audience³⁴.

At the start of each interview, it was emphasised that all comments would remain anonymous and that participants were at liberty to expand upon - or deviate from - the line of inquiry. Each interview was recorded and listened to soon after it had taken place. The researcher then made notes to highlight important or particularly insightful comments. About halfway through the data gathering period, with roughly

³⁴ For the complete list of questions, refer to Appendix 4.4

equal numbers of journalists from the mainstream organisations interviewed, patterns began to emerge and first drafts of the chapters were constructed. Subsequent material was added to this framework and earlier interviews were revisited for clarification and verbatim quotes. With each interview lasting approximately twice as long as anticipated, there was far more material than could be accommodated. Furthermore, no two interviews were the same: some subjects had more to say than others; some demurred on certain questions; and some interviewees digressed at length. Indeed, it was evident from the outset that this element of the research would be laden with selectivity. Consequently, great care was taken to maintain the accuracy and inclusiveness of recordings and notes, as well as the integrity of claims based on the subsequent analysis (Perakyla 1997:201.)

PART TWO

Case studies

3 - ECONOMIC GLOBALISATION

Globalisation was a defining issue of the 1990s but, despite the increasingly frequent use of the word,³⁵ it was a poorly understood concept (Ellwood 2002:8.) At the time, globalisation was often framed in public discourse as a new phenomenon: even the British monarch observed: '(It) is not only transforming our economies, it is changing every aspect of our lives' (Windsor in Hamilton 1999) and the then Archbishop of Canterbury noted: 'the forces of globalisation and the temptations of self-obsession and gratification are powerful and disorientating' (Carey 1999.) In reality, however, globalisation has existed for as long as humans have traded beyond political and national boundaries. Robbie Robertson (2003) suggests that it began with the pioneering navigators of the fifteenth century, accelerated during the Industrial Revolution and then adopted its modern complexion after WWII with the creation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT.) The liberalisation of global trade was boosted in the late 1970s with the free market reforms in China and, a decade later, the demise of communism in eastern Europe (Conway 2009:162.) For some, notably Francis Fukuyama (1992), these events represented the natural convergence of humanity's political and economic systems into a universally-applicable duet of liberal democracy and free market capitalism. This so-called 'Washington Consensus' appeared, in the 1990s, to be unassailable (MacEwan 1999:3) and there was agreement among British political parties that the trend was, as Tony Blair said in 1998: 'irreversible and irresistible'(in Buckman 2004:5.)

GATT was the forerunner of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which was established in 1995 with the remit of further reducing tariffs to promote free trade. Contemporary opinion polls, however, hinted at widespread ignorance about the central role of the WTO in determining the rules of the globalised economy (Vidal 1999a, Waller 1999) but equally, there was public concern that globalisation threatened democracy (Bremner 1999b.) Following the completion of the Uruguay Round of WTO trade talks and the advent of NAFTA in 1994, the impact of a liberalised trading regime on workers and the environment, and other social consequences, became apparent and critics became more vocal and better organised (Buckman 2004.) Although there was consensus among political parties in the developed world that the deregulated model of economic globalisation promoted

35 Chanda (2007:246-247) analysed a database of 8,000 newspapers, magazines and reports and found that 'globalization' appeared in just two items in 1981. Appearances increased significantly in the late-1990s and hit 57,235 in 2001

and legitimised by the WTO was desirable and inevitable (Riddell 1999, Owen 1999a, Smith 1999b, Moore in Juniper 1999a, Blair in *Guardian* 1999d, Short 1999a), a considerable body of opinion argued it was designed by a neoliberal elite, with no public consultation and little regard for worker and human rights, the poor and the environment (Jawara and Kwa 2003, Monbiot 2003, Peet 2003, Stiglitz 2002, Jospin in Bremner 1999d, Riddell 1999b, Pilger 2002, Gray 1998.)

1 - The WTO Ministerial Conference

To assess the extent and depth of the mediated debate about economic globalisation, this case study focuses on the WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle from November 30 to December 3 1999. Hence, for a 61 day period straddling the event, the LexisNexis database was searched for articles in *The Guardian* and *The Observer* and *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*³⁶. The BBC News website archive was also searched using the same terms, namely: 'globalisation'; 'anti-globalisation'; 'World Trade Organisation'; 'WTO' and 'anti-WTO.' The Conference was a pivotal event in the development of economic globalisation (Mortishead 1999b, Elliott 1999d) and was preceded by the signing of an historic trade deal between the United States and China, which, after 13 years' of negotiations, brought the latter a significant step nearer to becoming a full member of the WTO (BBC 1999e, BBC 1999m.) The Conference itself marked the beginning of the 'Millennium Round' of talks at which representatives from 135 member nations would negotiate the terms of the next stage of trade liberalisation with tariff cuts at the top of the agenda (BBC 1999j.) If the Conference achieved its stated goals, the WTO would move closer toward the ultimate goal of: 'freeing international movements of commodities and services from government restraint' (Peet 2003:146.) Conference delegates were united in their commitment to the WTO as 'the global policeman of free trade' (Curwen 1999) but there were considerable and complex differences between the developed and developing worlds, and individual countries. There were also divisions between European centre-left parties (Bremner 1999a, 1999c, *Guardian* 1999a.)

Also, outside the Conference, a plethora of opponents of the WTO *per se* broadly agreed that economic globalisation as advocated by the corporate-political elite would create a less just world (Burke 1999.) Consequently, Seattle also attracted '50,000 critics of global capitalism' (BBC 1999a) including some 1,200 NGOs (*Times*

³⁶ The *Guardian*/*Observer* will be henceforth be called '*The Guardian*' and *The Times*/*Sunday Times* will be called '*The Times*.' If relevant, the narrative will differentiate between the daily and Sunday versions

1999a) which promoted an alternative agenda encapsulated in the phrase ‘fair trade, not free trade’ (Yuen 2002.) With such a diversity of opinion, it would be misguided to simply divide the political positions at Seattle into ‘pro’ and ‘anti’, or ‘right’ and ‘left.’ Hence, the following four classifications are more accurate representations of the debate. These are guided by related American content studies of the WTO Conference (Wall 2003, Bennett 2004, Jha 2007) and augmented by the delineations of debate gleaned from a sample of British news items analysed during the pilot study.

Liberalisation

This position represents the ultimate objective of the WTO (Hutton 1999b) and was typified by actors that argued for faster, broader and deeper liberalisation. For example, the Cairns Group of 15 agricultural exporting nations lobbied for the ending of subsidies in the EU and Japan (Jawara and Kwa 2003:24, BBC 1999f) and many developing countries argued for unfettered access to the markets of rich countries (BBC 1999c, 1999e, Denny 1999a.) This viewpoint was shared by some development charities, such as Christian Aid and Oxfam, which saw free trade in agriculture as the fastest route out of poverty (BBC 1999f, Mortishead 1999b.) Accelerated liberalisation was also promoted by some from the developed world who, for example, pressed for lower taxation and lighter regulation (Hague in BBC 1999b.)

Protectionism

Few argued for protectionism in the long-term, but some countries advocated a gradual liberalisation, which amounted to a more selective transition toward free trade. Typically, this meant the retention of certain restrictions such as tariffs or quotas to protect fragile industries or to garner support from interest groups. This was the position of many industrialised countries who were eager to maintain, for example, subsidies for farmers (such as the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy) or, in the case of the US, extended quotas on Chinese steel and textile exports (Binyon 1999a, BBC 1999d.) Also, some developing countries called for slower liberalisation of their own markets (Elliott 1999c.) Protectionists were differentiated from the progressive reformers because the former argued for the maintenance or gradual phasing out of existing protectionist measures rather than a new agenda³⁷.

³⁷ A contemporary paper published by the Institute of Economic Affairs branded the ‘progressive reformers’ as ‘The New Protectionists’ and described them as ‘anti-trade’ (Smith 1999a)

Progressive reform

Progressive reformers generally believed the WTO was sound in principle but needed new terms of reference (Buckman 2004, Juniper 1999a, Vidal 1999g) which would put the environment, workers rights, public health and education, cultural diversity and other social concerns high on the agenda (Wall 2003:39, Burke 1999.) At Seattle, the progressives and fundamentalists (see below) were excluded from the Conference and they covered a similar spectrum of issues from a largely left-of-centre perspective, but their organisation and tactics differed (Wall 2003:37.) The progressives were embodied in a coalition of over 1,000 lobbying groups such as development NGOs; trade unions, faith organisations, environmental and other campaigning bodies (Juniper 1999a) which promoted their causes through the mainstream media using rational argument and empirical evidence (Wall 2003:40.)

Fundamental reform

Fundamental reformers believed that corporate power and capitalism had corrupted the WTO to such an extent that it had become a fatally-flawed institution. If it could not be modified to incorporate environmental, labour and diversity concerns, the WTO should be abolished and replaced with a more democratic system (Peet 2003:195, Monbiot 2003.) This position was epitomised in Seattle by the ‘protestors’ (Jha 2007) and ‘street groups’ (Wall 2003:38,) such as Reclaim the Streets; EarthFirst! and the Independent Media Centre. The fundamentalists’ preferred tactics were protest, direct action and emotive language. They were typically voluntary or poorly funded groups, had fluid hierarchies, and used new technology (mobile phones and online message boards) to organise and to promote their causes (ibid.40.)

2 – The WTO and globalisation on the news agenda

The keyword searches immediately revealed a significant difference in the quantity of reporting with the *Guardian* publishing 205 articles, the BBC 149 and the *Times* 134. News websites are not easily comparable to newspapers in certain respects (Tian and Stewart 2005, McMillan 2000) so it would be misguided to infer too much meaning from the comparatively low BBC tally. But the contrast in the newspapers’ figures is striking; the *Guardian* published 53 percent more articles than the *Times* which suggests that the WTO and globalisation had a far higher standing in the former’s editorial priorities. Also notable was the lack of collocations of search terms. Only 13 percent of articles - 62 out of 488 in the universal sample - featured both

'WTO' and 'globalisation' anywhere in the text. Indeed, all three publications were equally likely to *not* include both terms in the same news item. This suggests that journalists did not feel the need to routinely connect the organisation with the phenomenon. As outlined above, although they are not synonymous, the WTO played a central role in the development of modern globalisation. Naturally, one would not expect every article to contextualise the former with the latter, but with the vast majority of articles not even *mentioning* both words, the prospect for increased audience understanding of globalisation is greatly reduced. This tendency is exacerbated by dominance of 'WTO' which featured in all bar six of the BBC articles, three-quarters of the *Guardian* sample and two-thirds of the *Times*. In contrast, 'globalisation' appeared in around 40 percent of *Times* and *Guardian* articles but in a mere 11 percent of BBC news items. The initial analysis also revealed that the other search terms - 'anti-globalisation' and 'anti-WTO' - were present in just 18 articles. These phrases were used so infrequently by all three media that their value to this part of the analysis is minimal. This does not mean, of course, that dissenting voices were not acknowledged but opponents of WTO policies - or indeed globalisation - were not bracketed in these blunt terms.³⁸

Table 3.1
Prominence of search terms

Appearances		Headline	Intro	5 + mentions	4 – 2 mentions	Single mention	Total
BBC News	Globalisation	0	5	0	2	9	16
	WTO	39	41	7	20	36	143
<i>Guardian</i>	Globalisation	1	1	1	21	50	74
	WTO	51	20	3	19	63	156
<i>Times</i>	Globalisation	0	3	0	11	42	56
	WTO	10	33	2	11	35	91

The stark difference in the frequency of appearance of 'globalisation' and 'WTO' was mirrored in their respective prominence. *Table 3.1* shows the former appeared in just one headline, compared with 100 for the latter and was generally mentioned just

³⁸ The labels 'anti-capitalists' and 'anarchists' were also attached to dissenters. See below – critical discourse analysis

once, away from the top of the article. Across all three publications, 'globalisation' featured prominently in just ten news items, two percent of the universal sample. Clearly, the WTO Conference was considered worthy of detailed coverage but globalisation *per se* was not. The reporting over this period was event-centred, rather than issue-centred: the Conference had a specific time and place, and attracted delegates from the global elite which consequently drew editorial interest that waned considerably in the aftermath of the Conference. This tendency was evident in the distribution of articles over the nine week sample period. For all three publications, appearances of the search terms grew from a low base, peaked in week five and then declined to roughly the original level³⁹. The BBC's coverage was particularly centred on the immediate prelude to and the week of the Conference itself, with 57 percent of the total articles in weeks four and five (compared to 48 percent for *The Guardian* and 39 percent for *The Times*.) The prominence of the WTO was also heightened in the middle of the period. In weeks three through six, the *Guardian* published 62 articles featuring 'WTO' in the headline or introduction, and the *Times* printed 43. The BBC also gave increasing importance to the WTO, but its coverage jumped more sharply from 13 articles in week three to 37 in week four, 20 of which featured 'WTO' in the headline or introduction. In week five, 30 out of 47 BBC articles placed 'WTO' in a prominent position. By week six, however, the Conference was over and the WTO had fallen from the news agenda with just 12 relevant articles across the three publications, five of which featured the search term in the headline.

Overall, stories containing 'WTO' or 'globalisation' tended to be categorised as 'international' or 'business', with 114 (23 percent) of the 488 articles in the former category and 101 in the latter. The most populous classification for the BBC (56 articles or 38 percent) was *The Battle for Free Trade*, a special report that ran for much of the sample period. A further 45 of BBC articles resided in international sections of the website and 22 fell into 'business.' Very few articles were placed in 'economy'; just two in the *Guardian* and four on the BBC website. This was perhaps surprising because the influence of globalisation and the WTO stretch far beyond 'business.'⁴⁰ There was also a general trend in the newspapers for stories to move from the business pages to the international and home sections in weeks four and five (reflecting the geographical location of the Conference, the focus on public order and commentary by UK actors.) This arguably made the issues more visible.

39 See Appendix 1:3, table 1

40 The BBC News website lists 'economy' as a subset of 'business.' This is, arguably, the inverse of what one may expect and could reflect an editorial belief that the economy is subservient to business

However, with 83 percent of BBC articles filed as ‘international’, ‘business’ or ‘trade’, audiences with little interest in these topics would rarely be exposed to the debates.

3 - Salience, themes and framing

In many news items – typically those with a single occurrence of a search term – the mention of ‘globalisation’, ‘WTO’ and their antonyms was purely incidental to the story. Conversely, a search term was sometimes the primary focus of the article, and other stories connected the term to wider debates to varying degrees⁴¹. Removing the 156 items, a third of the total, with incidental salience to the search terms left 327 articles - 127 from BBC News, 122 from the *Guardian* and 78 from the *Times* - to be analysed in greater depth⁴². After this salience filter was applied, the number of articles mentioning globalisation anywhere in the text fell by 51 percent. This adds further credence to the earlier observation that globalisation *per se* was not deemed worthy of significant analysis over this key period. It should be noted, however, that the newspapers had far more incidental references to globalisation than the BBC News website, which lost only two of its 16 articles.

Fifty-four of the remaining BBC articles were published in the *Battle for Free Trade* special report⁴³ (BBC 1999v.) This was extension of a previous BBC series called *World Trade Wars* which accounted for a further five articles. In both cases, there was a bold graphic⁴⁴ below the first paragraph that branded each article with a combative phrase. Hence, almost half of the BBC articles were placed in a bellicose supra-frame and yet, as shown by subsequent analysis of the secondary themes (see below), the text of the articles rarely echoed the degree of conflict promised at the outset ('Battle' and 'Wars') and the combatants were often poorly defined. Hence, it could be argued there was a degree of sensationalism in this strategy. There was no comparable supra-frame in the *Guardian* nor the *Times*, but, as shown in *Table 3.2*, there were both strong similarities and some important differences between primary themes.

41 For the precise definitions of the four categories, see Appendix 1:1

42 See Appendix 1:2, table 2

43 See Appendix 1.4

44 See Appendix 1:3, section A

Table 3.2
Primary themes

	BBC News		<i>Guardian</i>		<i>Times</i>	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
China and world trade	29	23	4	<4	9	12
World trade	22	17	15	12	15	19
Public order	19	15	7	6	15	19
Political structures, processes etc.	16	13	39	32	21	27
Agriculture	9	7	7	6	7	9
Business	7	6	7	6	3	<4
Inequality and poverty	6	5	4	3	0	0
Developing world	6	5	13	11	0	0
Environment	3	<3	7	6	0	0
Labour	3	<3	8	7	1	<2
Other	7	6	11	9	7	9
Total	127	100	122	100	78	100

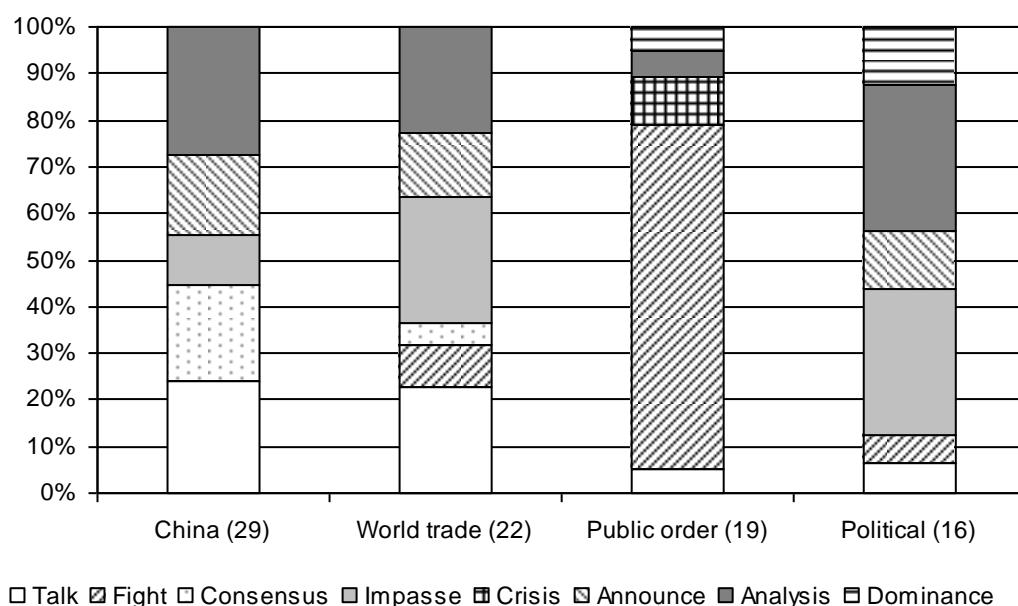
The four most common primary themes for the BBC, *Guardian* and *Times* accounted for 68, 62 and 77 percent of the total respectively. The BBC's top four were shared by the *Times*, albeit in a different order, and two of these ('world trade' and 'political structures') also featured at the top of the *Guardian* rankings with this newspaper's other two preferred themes being 'developing world' and 'labour'.⁴⁵ It is perhaps no surprise that 'world trade' was prominent across the board, but articles in this category conceived the search terms in rather abstract terms. Instead of relating the WTO and globalisation to specific areas of the economy or society (for example, business, environment, agriculture, health, etc.), 'world trade' was an over-arching theme which framed the search terms in a distant and rather amorphous realm. Indeed, as confirmed by many of the articles that viewed the WTO and globalisation through a political lens, the procedures and rules of economic globalisation are negotiated by the elite, and political structures and exchanges were far more newsworthy than the effects on people. As will be shown later, it was only when the protests began that the media, and the *Guardian* in particular, began to ask if those who argued for a more humanised version of globalisation ought to be included in the broader debate. This is apparent in the respective emphases on 'public order', with the BBC and the *Times* between two to three times more likely than the *Guardian* to conceptualise economic globalisation as protest or crime. In contrast, almost a third of *Guardian* articles – and 27 percent of *Times* articles - saw the WTO and globalisation as primarily political issues, whereas only 13 percent of BBC items fell into this category.

45 See Appendix 1:2, table 3 for the complete list of primary themes

Overall, in terms of primary themes, the BBC bore a closer resemblance to the *Times* than to the *Guardian*. As well as sharing the same top four themes, and having a stronger propensity to focus on protest, the *Times* and BBC were far less likely to highlight progressive and fundamentalist issues: a quarter of the *Guardian*'s articles viewed the search terms in the context of the developing world, environment, inequality and labour, compared to 16 percent for the BBC and less than two percent for the *Times*. The most striking feature of the BBC's reporting pattern, however, was the prominence given to China. The Sino-American trade negotiations, which culminated in an agreement on November 14 (BBC 1999p), were given far more coverage than by the newspapers. Again, like the 'world trade' theme, China was presented as an elite issue, with the emphasis on exchanges between politicians rather than the significant and wide-ranging impact of the country's inclusion into the global trading regime⁴⁶.

Figure 3.1

BBC News: Top four primary themes and their secondary themes



As shown in Figure 3.1, the most common primary themes for BBC articles had very different secondary characteristics. Naturally, 'public order' articles were framed in belligerent terms, and the lack of agreement at the Conference, the subsequent breakdown and post-event reflection is mirrored in the secondary themes for 'world trade' and 'political.' Contrary to the BBC's *Battle for Free Trade* supra-frame,

46 This is discussed in depth below – critical discourse analysis

however, combative debate hardly characterized the period and the *Times* was more than twice as likely to place the issues in disputatious terms⁴⁷. The *Guardian's* most common secondary theme reflected the newspaper's overt support for the progressive reform position with 14 of the 37 'announcement' items published as opinion pieces, five as editorials and four letters to the editor. Although the BBC News website had no direct equivalent of these latter two categories, it still gave exposure to partisan opinion with uncritical news reports of speeches (for example, Hague in BBC 1999b), sympathetic analysis of the fair trade argument (BBC 1999q) and opinion pieces written by environmentalists (BBC 1999r.) Conversely, the BBC also published articles that were pointedly critical of the reformist cause (Cooke 1999a, 1999b.)

Table 3.3
Type of news item

		BBC News		<i>Guardian</i>		<i>Times</i>	
		articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
A	News story	73	57	42	34	39	50
B	Editorial	0	0	11	9	3	4
C	Feature	5	4	29	24	13	17
D	Column/Opinion/Debate/Analysis	25	20	20	16	11	14
E	News in brief	14	11	3	<3	7	9
F	Letter to the editor	0	0	10	8	4	5
G	Other	10	8	7	6	1	<2
	Total	127	100	122	100	78	100

Table 3.3 illustrates that 68 percent of BBC articles were standard news items (rows A and E) compared to 59 percent for the *Times* and 37 percent in the *Guardian*. The BBC also published very few longer-format features (C) in comparison to the newspapers, and this is reflected in the average article length with the *Times* at 645 words and the *Guardian* at 757 words, some 40 percent more than the BBC. These data are largely consistent with the episodic-thematic profiles of the samples.⁴⁸ Some 40 percent of BBC articles were episodic and 44 percent were thematic and this ratio reflected a slightly lesser propensity to focus on recent and imminent events than the *Times* (58:34) but it was in stark contrast the *Guardian* ratio (28:63.) Taken in isolation, these data are not particularly illuminating but when synthesised with the findings of the primary and secondary theme analysis, patterns begin to emerge. Across all three publications, the search terms were typically framed as political or

47 See Appendix 1:2, table 4

48 See Appendix 1:2, table 7

economic (trade) issues that were debated – at varying levels of intensity - among the elite. The majority of items that reported these discussions and events were relatively short news stories which, one might assume, lacked the detail to discuss the complexities of world trade. Although the patterns are rather hazy at this level of analysis, it is apparent that the *Guardian* had a slightly higher propensity to contextualise the issues in themes consistent with the dissenters' causes - developing world, environment, labour, etc. - and devoted more space to articles that covered broader debates and macro-trends. In contrast, the BBC and *Times* were appreciably more likely to frame the dissent as a public order problem. These tendencies are discussed in greater depth in the discourse analysis section.

Table 3.4
Named sources per article

	BBC News N = 127		<i>Guardian</i> N = 122		<i>Times</i> N = 78	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
None	22	17	15	12	12	15
One	38	30	32	26	32	41
Two	21	17	31	25	13	18
Three	20	16	14	11	11	14
Four	15	12	18	15	5	6
Five +	11	9	12	10	5	6
Total	105	83%	107	88%	66	85%

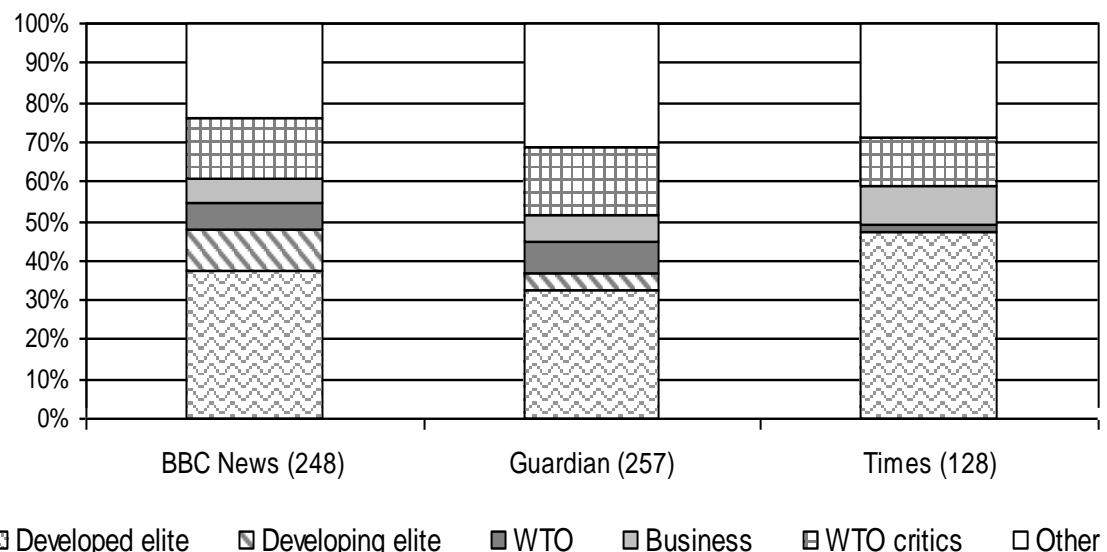
4 - Source analysis

Initial analysis of the sourcing data revealed that over four-fifths of all articles contained at least one named source (see *Table 3.4*.) Conversely, none of the news providers had a particular propensity to publish articles with no named sources and each was close to the universal average of 15 percent. Using the crude measurement of named sources per article, the BBC and *Guardian* were very similar with 1.95 and 2.10 respectively and the *Times* was noticeably lower with an average of 1.6 sources per article. However, these data are rather misleading because they obscure a surprising propensity to defy journalistic convention by citing just a single source: only 44 percent of the *Times* articles contained two or more named sources compared to 54 percent for the BBC and 61 percent for the *Guardian*. Also

noteworthy is the presence of unnamed sources in 60 percent of BBC articles compared to 38 percent for the *Guardian* and 26 percent for the *Times*.⁴⁹

Figure 3.2

Constitution of named sources



These findings are intriguing but they say nothing about the diversity of opinion in the samples. Hence, the next step was to organise the sources into six categories: developed world elite; developing world elite; business; progressive reform organisations; grassroots, protestors and street groups; and other, non-aligned⁵⁰. These classifications do not necessarily reflect the political positions outlined above but they are very useful for gauging the exposure given to different groups' actors and, hence they go some way to understanding journalists' sourcing strategies. Before analysing the data, however, it is important to note the following: first, the elite of the developed and developing worlds had delegations at the WTO Conference, whereas the business community, the progressive reform and grassroots groups did not. Second, although there were organisational and political differences between the latter two groups, they were bracketed as 'WTO critics' because they shared a general critical perspective. And third, WTO representatives were categorised as 'other, non-aligned' but they were included in this part of the analysis as a separate group because the organisation played a central role in the conference.

As *Figure 3.2* illustrates, actors from groups within the Conference - the two political elites and the WTO – accounted for more than half of all named sources in BBC

49 See Appendix 1:2, table 9

50 See Appendix 1:1

articles around 50 percent of Times' sources and 45 percent in the Guardian. The *Times* was most dependent on developed elite sources which accounted for almost half of the total. Even though the BBC and *Guardian*'s proportions were lower – 38 and 32 percent respectively - these data suggest that the debate was often expressed in terms preferred by politicians from the rich countries. Furthermore, if the two political elites, the WTO and business sources are grouped together – on the basis that all generally supported free trade⁵¹ – and compared to the incidence of sources critical of the WTO, then it is clear that the former greatly outnumbered the latter by a ratio of approximately 4:1 across the BBC sample, 6:1 in the *Times*, and 5:2 in the *Guardian*.⁵²

The data also illustrate the relatively low frequency of political voices from the developing world with just 38 of the 633 named sources - six percent - in the universal sample falling into this category⁵³. This apparent under-representation is ironic because many journalists noted how developing countries felt their views were marginalised at the Conference. Even though they were in Seattle in force, representatives complained about being excluded from discussions that were monopolised by the rich countries (Atkinson and Denny 1999a, Jawara and Kwa 2003:18, Vidal 1999e, Vidal and Wintour 1999a.) According to John Vidal: 'A petition of more than 1,700 groups, mostly from the Third World, was raised ... to object to the way the talks were being conducted' (1999g) and other articles noted the hypocrisy of the rich nations which demanded unfettered access to developing countries' markets while maintaining their own protective subsidies (Watkins 1999a, Bunting and Elliott 1999a, Whiteman in Watt 1999a.) Despite noting this exclusion, few journalists attempted to redress the balance by including the developing world elite in their own reports. Just one political representative from these countries was quoted by the *Times*. This was in stark contrast to the BBC's 25 citations but this was only 10 percent of the Corporation's total – and a quarter of the developed elite tally - which is insignificant when one considers that three-quarters of the WTO membership were from the developing world (Elliott 1999h.) More surprisingly, although the *Guardian* framed the WTO and globalisation as a developing world

51 The WTO is officially non-partisan but the then WTO director general Mike Moore 'believes that free trade is a force for good and spent his life savings... campaigning for the job of pushing forward the process of liberalisation' (Elliott 1999a)

52 Although the precise number of named sources was recorded, only the first four named sources were coded and, therefore, included in this part of the analysis. Twenty-eight of the 327 articles had more than four sources (see Appendix 1:2, table 8)

53 See Appendix 1:2, table 17

issue far more than the other two media (see above) members of these countries' political elite made up just five percent of the newspaper's total named sources⁵⁴.

The dependence on sources from rich countries is confirmed in *Table 3.5*. In around a third of BBC articles a member of the developed elite was the first named source and, hence, was more likely to establish the parameters of debate than subsequent sources. If WTO officials are placed in the same political space⁵⁵, then liberalisers accounted for the top four BBC first named sources. In contrast, the WTO critics - progressives and grassroots - were first source in only 13 articles and developing world sources accounted for a further 12. In the *Times*, it is apparent that WTO critics and developing countries were largely excluded and the rich world dominated. Only in the *Guardian* did the progressive organisations – but not grassroots voices – gain high visibility. But still, the 13 *Guardian* articles in which an NGO or trade union representative appeared first contrasts sharply with the 37 occasions that a member of the developed political elite opened the debate.

Table 3.5
First named source – rankings

Source type	BBC News N = 105		<i>Guardian</i> N = 107		<i>Times</i> N = 66	
	rank	articles	rank	articles	rank	articles
Leader - developed	1	16	8	6	2	9
WTO official	2	11	4	10	*	*
Minister - developed	3	9	1	15	3	7
Trade rep - developed	4	8	9	5	*	*
Journalist	5	7	2	14	1	13
Progressive groups	5	7	3	13	5	5
Grassroots groups	7	6	*	*	*	*
Leader - developing	7	6	*	*	*	*
Legal and police	7	6	*	*	*	*
Academic/scientist	*	*	5	8	6	4
Member of public	*	*	6	7	*	*
Civil servant - developed	*	*	6	7	3	7
CEO/senior manager	*	*	*	*	6	4

* negligible occurrences

Given that the BBC has often been accused of having left-wing sympathies⁵⁶, closer inspection of its source data, and comparison with the traditionally left-of-centre

54 See Appendix 1:2, tables 13a – 13c for detailed lists of named sources

55 See footnote 18

56 See Chapter 1

Guardian, offers further insight. If a news organisation tended to favour progressive or radical perspectives, audiences might expect to be frequently exposed to the views of socialist party politicians, union members, protestors and social campaigners. These groups' views were indeed represented in the *Guardian* and the BBC, but when compared to other source types, there is little evidence to suggest that either publication was particularly inclined to the left. For instance, grassroots campaigners were cited as named sources 13 times by the BBC and nine by the *Guardian*. But in both cases, voices of the business community were more prominent at 16 and 18 respectively. The BBC named far more protestors than the *Guardian* but these were no more prevalent than industry associations, and in the *Guardian* business lobbying organisations were thirteen times more likely to be cited than a demonstrator. Trade unions fared little better with just two appearances in BBC articles and seven in the *Guardian*. Also, in this composite sample of 212 articles, not one UK minority party representative was named and quoted⁵⁷. In terms of non-aligned sources, the *Guardian* gave considerable exposure to members of the public with 22 *vox populi* in comparison to the BBC's three. In addition, there was very little supporting data, for example, poverty or inequality figures, from supranational bodies such as the United Nations, World Bank or IMF. In the BBC sample, just one economist was quoted - as a fourth source - and a mere seven academics appeared. The figures for the *Guardian* were four and 21 respectively.

Despite the relative lack of input from left-wing sources – and independent sources who *may* hold similar views - the *Guardian* still managed to display distinctly progressive sympathies through its relatively strong coverage of the reformist agenda (see above.) By the same token, the *Times* was strongly pro-liberalisation⁵⁸ and in both newspapers, this could be partially explained by the frequent appearance of a journalist as the pre-eminent source (see *figure 3.7.*) Many of these instances were opinion pieces and editorials but it is perhaps surprising that journalists were the fourth most commonly-named source in BBC articles and the second most prevalent un-named source⁵⁹. Seventeen of the 31 journalistic sources were BBC correspondents⁶⁰ and in nine articles, a BBC correspondent summed up or gave context to the story (for example, BBC 1999g, 1999s.) Online news was still in its relatively infancy at the time so this relatively high frequency could possibly be explained by broadcast conventions being naturally extended to static media. Even

57 This includes the Green Party, Plaid Cymru, the Scottish Nationalist Party, and the Liberal Democrats

58 Political positions and discourse patterns are discussed in detail below

59 See Appendix 1:2, table 12 for a complete list of un-named sources

60 The remainder were typically foreign newspapers or anonymous 'correspondents'

so, these correspondents guided the reader's understanding to an extent, and in the table of contents page for the *Battle of Free Trade* series (BBC 1999v), three BBC journalists were named and positioned as guides for those perplexed by global economics. The two *Letter from America* articles (Cooke 1999a, 1999b) were partisan in their coverage of the debate but three further articles uncharacteristically featured a BBC journalist's name in the by-line and contained subjective assessment (Gallagher 1999, Giles 1999, Walker 1999.) As will be described in the discourse analysis, even un-named BBC journalists' choice of words were sometimes tinged with subjectivity.

Table 3.6
Constitution of named and un-named sources

Source group	BBC News		<i>Guardian</i>		<i>Times</i>	
	% of all named	% of all un-named	% of all named	% of all un-named	% of all named	% of all un-named
	N=248	N = 103	N=257	N = 67	N=128	N = 27
Developed elite	38	33	32	28	47	38
Developing elite	10	17	5	27	<1	4
Progressive organisations	10	12	13	4	7	11
Grassroots groups	5	11	4	<2	5	7

As noted above, for each of the three news organisations, the developed elite were the most-quoted group of named sources. *Table 3.6* shows that the same was true of un-named sources⁶¹, and there was little difference in the proportions. For example, 38 percent of the BBC's named and 33 percent of its un-named sources were in this category. In contrast, the developing world elite and WTO critics were more likely to feature as an un-named source. Likewise in the *Guardian*, the developing world elite appeared far more frequently as anonymous sources. Similarly, on the BBC News website, grassroots members – particularly protestors – tended to be un-named while the *Guardian* preferred to identify representatives of progressive organisations and virtually ignored the grassroots as both named and un-named sources⁶². The tendency to not name sources from the developing world and critics of the WTO further reduced the potency of these groups' arguments.

61 Although the precise number of un-named sources was recorded, only the first two were coded and, therefore, included in this part of the analysis. Twenty-one of the 327 articles had more than two un-named sources (see Appendix 1:2, table 9)

62 The *Times*' sample of un-named sources was considered too small for comparative analysis but the data suggest its sourcing strategy strongly favoured the developed elite

The final stage of source analysis considers the sequence in which sources appeared. The person to be quoted first in an article tends to set the parameters of debate and, naturally, will frame the issue in a way that suits his or her position. As illustrated above, members of the developed world elite were the most prominent group. However, so long as sources with contrasting views are included, news items can give credence to a multiplicity of positions, and such articles are more likely to stimulate debate and understanding than those with sources representing just one particular perspective. Hence, to gain a sense of the diversity of perspectives in the sample, developed elite and business sources were amalgamated into one group that shared a liberalising position; the developing world remained a distinct entity; and the progressives and grassroots were reunited as 'WTO critics.' The remaining sources were bracketed as 'others' and assumed to have no political persuasion.

In total, 829 named and un-named sources were coded for this study, and in half of the 327 articles, one group had a monopoly on sources⁶³. The proportion was strikingly similar with around half of each news organisations' news items including spokespeople from just one group, and in each case, the developed elite-business combination was clearly the most likely to dominate. Indeed, WTO critics or representatives from the developing world were totally absent in one-third of BBC and *Guardian* articles and 42 percent of *Times* articles. Conversely, WTO critics enjoyed a monopoly in just 12 percent of the BBC articles, 18 percent in the *Guardian* and eight percent in the *Times*. Developing countries fared worse with just six percent of BBC articles devoid of other groups' spokespeople, and none in either newspaper. In contrast, there was a diversity of source groups in a third of BBC articles, 28 percent of the *Guardian*'s and just 13 percent of the *Times*', and again the developed elite-business alliance was the most successful in setting the terms of debate. In the BBC and *Guardian* samples, this group was twice as likely to be quoted before a developing world source or WTO critic than after. Although the BBC did award access to WTO critics, their voices were present in just a quarter of articles⁶⁴ compared to a third for the *Guardian*. In contrast, the developed-business elite had a monopoly in 34 percent of BBC articles, and led the debate in a further 21 percent. Overall, the BBC favoured this group over the WTO critics by a factor of two, marginally lower than the *Guardian*, which favoured the developed-business elite in 48 percent of articles and WTO critics in 22 percent, a ratio of 2.2:1.

63 See Appendix 1.2, table 14

64 This was calculated by adding the 15 articles with a WTO critics monopoly to the 16 articles in which this group were involved in a bilateral debate and the two articles that featured all groups. Hence, 33 out of 127 gives 26 percent

5 - Coverage of political positions

The source analysis demonstrates that representatives from the developed world elite dominated the debate about trade and economic globalisation during the sample period. This was particularly true in the *Times*, but although the *Guardian* and the BBC gave far greater access and prominence to dissenting voices, these were distinctly muted when compared to those of rich countries' politicians and their spokespeople. However, within this elite group there were considerable differences in opinion which were epitomised in the arguments over the phasing out of tariffs and subsidies. As noted above, the EU, Japan and the US each had protectionist tendencies which co-existed with an over-riding commitment to work toward universal free trade. Hence, it would be reasonable to assume that some articles featuring developed world sources only contained a difference of opinions, namely between liberalisers and protectionists, or indeed elite advocates of progressive reform⁶⁵. Similarly, even though WTO critics were absent in the majority of articles, this does not necessarily mean that the reformist or radical agendas were not covered. Journalists could, for instance, describe and give credence to this position without citing an NGO spokesperson, a trade union official or a protestor. Hence, to assess the extent to which articles covered the four political positions, a multi-faceted criteria was applied to each news item.⁶⁶

Almost ten percent of the sample did not acknowledged any of the four perspectives and, consequently, these 31 articles gave the reader no indication of the existence of a debate. However, exclusion of the political positions was by no means equal. The fundamentalist perspective was absent from 59 percent of *Times*' articles and around three-quarters of BBC and *Guardian* news items. Overall, however, *The Time* was the most dismissive and criticised the fundamentalist position in a further 29 percent of articles, compared with nine and five percent for the BBC and *Guardian* respectively. The combined effect was the same with over four-fifths of all articles either ignoring, condemning or ridiculing the fundamentalist cause (see bottom row of *Table 3.7.*) The second most widely disregarded position was protectionism. The newspapers' lines were very similar with almost seven out of ten articles either criticising it or making no reference. The BBC coverage was less barbed but still, over half of the sample did nothing to support protectionism. From the negative

65 For example, President Clinton voiced his support for minimum international labour standards (BBC 1999g)

66 See Appendix 1.1 for the coding criteria

perspective, the *Guardian*'s reporting of the progressive reformers and the liberalisers was very balanced with each receiving no positive coverage in around a third of articles. In contrast, the BBC was 1.8 times as likely to criticise or ignore the progressives than the free-traders, a slightly larger ratio (45:25) than the clearly pro-liberalisation *Times* (54:32.)

Table 3.7
Incidence of criticism and exclusion of political positions

Position	BBC News % of articles		<i>Guardian</i> % of articles		<i>Times</i> % of articles	
	Criticised	Excluded	Criticised	Excluded	Criticised	Excluded
Liberalisation	6	19	14	22	3	29
Protectionism	6	46	20	48	23	46
Progressive Reform	5	40	4	31	13	41
Fundamental Reform	9	73	5	75	28	59

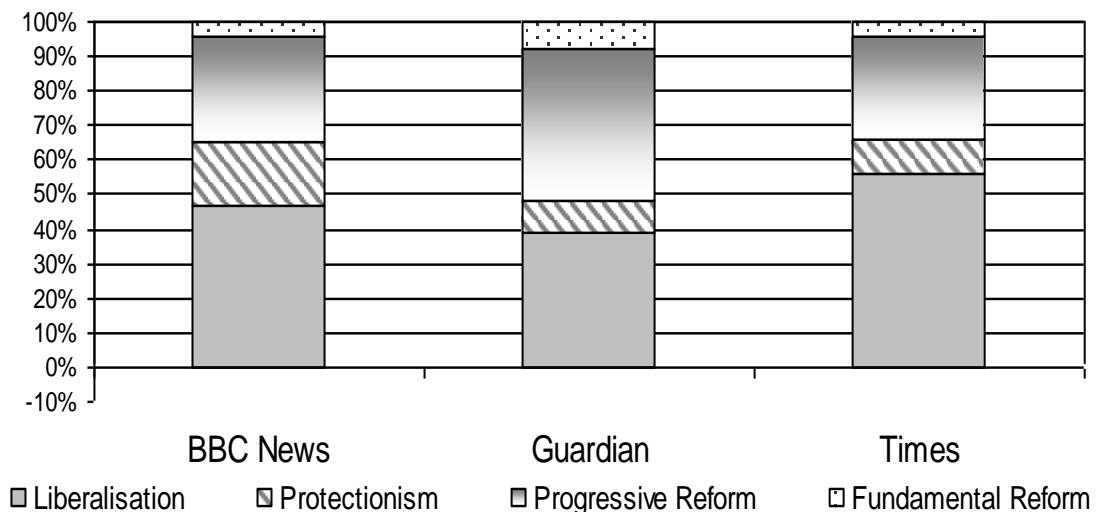
In terms of articles that gave significant exposure to the four positions, liberalisation clearly had the advantage across the board. Some 49 percent of BBC articles contained extensive or brief free-trade discourse, compared to 47 percent for the *Guardian* and 40 percent for the *Times*⁶⁷. The figures for progressive reform were 37, 37 and 22 percent respectively. Hence, by margins of 12, 10 and 18 points respectively, advocates of free trade had more coverage than those who argued for progressive reform of the WTO. By applying a simple weighting formula to these data, the dominant discourse of the samples becomes evident, and *Figure 3.3* illustrates the relative positions of the BBC, *Guardian* and *Times*. The latter clearly gave the most exposure to free trade which had almost twice as much sympathetic or neutral coverage than progressive reformers, 62 percent compared to 32 percent. The *Guardian*'s support for the progressive agenda was marginally higher than for the liberalisers (39:44) and in its entirety, this newspaper achieved greater balance than the BBC which leaned toward liberalisation (46:31), but not to the same extent as the *Times*. The BBC did, however, provide considerably more coverage of protectionist arguments than either newspaper. The fundamentalists had minimal support all round, and the *Times*' predilection to overtly criticise this position pushed its coverage to *minus* five points. These data suggest that the central debate was

⁶⁷ See Appendix 1:2, tables 15a – 15c

between liberalisers and progressive reformers. Hence, for the final part of this analysis the coverage of their mediated contest was assessed.

Figure 3.3

Weighted coverage of political positions⁶⁸



Articles that contained extensive explanations of both the liberalisation and the progressive positions (row C in *Table 3.8*) were the most likely to deliver balanced and detailed information to the reader, and the BBC was the most adept in this respect, with 26 percent of articles compared to 18 percent in the *Guardian* and 10 percent in the *Times*. Also, the BBC had relatively few articles that gave neither side exposure (row D.) In contrast, nearly half of the *Times'* and 43 percent of the *Guardian's* articles lacked any detail about either or both positions. The data also show that the BBC gave greater exposure to the liberalisers with almost a third of articles combining extensive coverage of this position and brief coverage of the progressive arguments (row A.) In contrast, the progressives dominated in just one eighth of BBC articles (row B) and overall, the BBC's tendency to favour free trade in articles that pitched the two positions against each other (row A/B) was very similar to the *Times*, with ratios of 2.7:1 and 2.4:1 respectively. The *Guardian* clearly gave more detailed coverage to the progressives than the other news organisations (row B) but, taking these data as a whole, this newspaper was the most balanced with almost identical numbers of articles favouring each of the two sides (rows A and B).⁶⁹

⁶⁸ This chart understates the liberalisation figure of the *Times* by five percent because the charting software doesn't accommodate the minus five percent score for fundamental reform

⁶⁹ See Appendix 1:2, tables 16a – 16c for more detail

Table 3.8
Coverage of the liberalisation *versus* progressive reform debate

	Coverage		BBC News		Guardian		Times	
	Liberalisation	Progressive	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
A	Extensive	Brief	41	32	23	19	23	29
B	Brief	Extensive	15	12	24	20	9	12
C	Extensive	Extensive	33	26	22	18	8	10
D	Other combinations		38	30	53	43	38	49
	Total		127	100	122	100	78	100

6 – Critical discourse analysis

The quantitative analysis gives substantial clues about the political content of the BBC, *Guardian* and *Times*' reporting. Sources associated with fundamental reform were generally ignored by all three publications and consequently, their arguments were rarely acknowledged, and they were never explored in detail. To a lesser extent, the protectionists were also sidelined and the primary debate pitched the liberalisers against the progressive reformers. Based on the evidence so far, the *Times* clearly favoured the former and the *Guardian* gave considerable exposure to the latter. The BBC's position, however, was more difficult to isolate: by some measures its journalistic output displayed balance and gave detailed coverage to the progressive agenda; and by others, it was comparable to the *Times*.

To gain a deeper understanding of the coverage of economic globalisation, critical analysis of journalistic discourses was undertaken. Before discussing the findings of this part of the analysis, however, it is important to emphasise that the BBC is bound by impartiality obligations (BBC 2010a, 2010b) and so one would not expect its journalists' descriptions of people and causes to be as explicitly judgemental as their print colleagues'. Nor did the BBC have editorials, letters pages⁷⁰ or, with a few exceptions, opinion pieces in which partisan views would be most evident. Nevertheless, close inspection of a sample of BBC articles and comparison with the newspapers' coverage confirms that liberalisation was the favoured position.

As noted above, around a third of the BBC items were published in a special report, the *Battle for Free Trade* (BBC 1999v.) This title immediately positioned the issue as

⁷⁰ In 1999, the BBC News website did have reporters' blogs nor the 'Have Your Say' reader comment facility

unambiguously combative and, with the inclusion of the word ‘free’, suggested a righteous outcome. It also implied that antagonistic forces were competing for a common, pre-established objective. Similarly, the previous BBC supra-frame, *World Trade Wars*, established confrontational expectations from the outset.⁷¹ Published on December 13 – ten days after the Conference finished - the *Battle for Free Trade* table of contents was essentially the home page of the section, and hence, it was crucial in setting the parameters of understanding for the audience, and a useful starting point for this part of the analysis⁷². The lead paragraph set the scene:

The failure to launch a new round of global trade talks in Seattle amid mass protests highlights deep divisions over the issue of free trade, once seen as the engine of world economic growth

Retrospectively at least, the BBC acknowledged the role of protest in challenging the belief that free trade is universally beneficial, and thus gave some credence, albeit implied, to the arguments of the WTO critics. In the six photographs on this page, however, there was scant evidence of the human or environmental impact of economic globalisation: only one featured a person, another showed a river and forest, and the other four were rather insipid shots of container ships and cities. The running order, the subtitles and the introductions to each of five sub-sections also tended to conceive trade as a complex and unruly beast with few hints of a human dimension, except when explanation was given by a sagacious journalists:

World trade talks collapse

The WTO's attempts to launch a new trade round in Seattle end in failure after four days of bitter disputes and street protests

Trade bullies and blocs

Trade has been growing faster than world output. But a free trading system has been difficult to fashion

Free trade flashpoints

It should be simple. But even constructing an agenda has stymied trade talks, as the BBC's Andrew Walker explains

Arguments and controversies

Everyone is in favour of free trade - but everyone interprets it differently. The BBC's Chris Giles supplies a guide for the perplexed

China moves to join the WTO

Advocates of free trade are encouraged as China reached a deal with the USA that moves it closer to joining the WTO

⁷¹ The bellicose theme was also evident in several article headlines. For example, ‘Hippies declare web war on WTO’ (BBC 1999i); ‘Developing countries fight for free trade’ (BBC 199f); and ‘Body blow for free trade’ (BBC 1999l)

⁷² See Appendix 1:4, section D

On the basis of these introductions, one might expect a thorough and impartial assessment of the various perspectives on the future of world trade. However, analysis revealed support for one political position in particular. On November 23, a week before the Conference, Andrew Walker's article (see above) gave a balanced assessment of the arguments for and against the liberalisation of agriculture and services. Despite this synopsis, the author narrowed the debate by stating that the protectionists were fighting an unstoppable force and were just delaying the inevitable: 'These countries all know that there is no escape from further liberalisation of agriculture' (Walker 1999.) The journalist concluded his article by normalising 'political pain' and paraphrasing un-named experts.

Taking the pain

Trade negotiations always require governments to accept political pain. Most economists will tell you that removing your own trade restrictions is good for you, even if others don't reciprocate

This second sentence clearly awarded intellectual superiority to 'free trade,' and although Walker ended by acknowledging that some human suffering was inevitable, he suggested that, despite the inevitable hardship that some people will experience, everyone should have faith in liberalisation.

But there are losers within countries who can see very clearly that their problems are due to the removal of trade barriers. The gains are often spread more thinly among many people who don't necessarily know that trade may be raising their standard of living (*ibid.*)

The fourth item in the running order was published on the same day as Walker's piece, and it too conceived liberalisation as the inevitable, virtuous outcome. The title - 'Arguments and controversies' - placed the article at the fulcrum of the trade debate and yet the introduction unequivocally stated: 'Everyone is in favour of free trade' (Giles 1999.) This is a powerful assertion and, given such intellectually credible opposition to liberalisation⁷³ highly contentious, and yet ironically, it was used to introduce competing arguments. Like Walker's piece, this article was pitched as a definitive guide to the debate, and again, it focused on concepts and arguments rather than the impact of trade on people. The article was titled 'Finding a way through the trade morass' and it began:

Keep your wits about you - the new round of global trade talks starting in Seattle will throw up plausible sounding arguments from all sides

73 See pages 60 and 61

The author then identified the ‘sides’ but gave no indication of their relative power. He also erroneously stated that all were included in the imminent Conference.

National governments, international trading blocks, trade unions, environmentalists, farmers, multinational companies and many other pressure groups will be represented and will try to convince the world their vision of the future for world trade is best

From the outset, the article promised to give a balanced assessment of the various positions but the author then hinted that one viewpoint had a greater claim: ‘They’ll all try to paint themselves as the good guys, but they can’t all be right.’ The article went on to discuss the different perspectives in plain terms but the final paragraphs accepted the position of the developed world elite:

If totally free trade is not on the agenda, then trade we have must be managed. And even though the WTO will come under fire from many... it’s the only management system for world trade we have

The author restricted the debate further by discounting bilateral agreements – ‘much less transparent, much more complex and inefficient’ - and in the last paragraph, Giles dismissed the fundamentalist position, gave little hope for reform, and clearly supported a WTO-led regime.

The WTO can be changed and improved but criticising everything the WTO stands for might mean the world ends up with a much worse system of managing its trade, completely dominated by the world’s big trading blocs (*ibid.*)

It is important to reiterate the timing and placement of these articles. Both were published a week before the Conference began; both featured prominently on the index page of a special BBC report; and both were offered as explanatory articles by impartial experts. To a large extent, the majority of the article texts were devoid of overt political opinion and gave measured exposure to conflicting arguments. But in both cases, the authors placed the WTO version of ‘free trade’ as a forgone conclusion, and framed the debate as technocratic disputes among the political elite. This pattern was also evident in other BBC articles, with titles and introductions suggesting a range of perspectives would be given comparable exposure and yet close reading often revealed acceptance of the WTO’s vision of world trade. For example, the ‘Arguments and controversies’ section also listed the following articles:

Stop environmental destruction
Free trade: good for all
Does free trade benefit the poor?

The first two titles could easily be the rallying cries of the environmentalists and liberalisers respectively, and the third – one of 12 published by the BBC the day after the protests became violent - asked a central questions from the broader debate. The lead photograph – a sitting protestor, hands outstretched with peace signs, facing a sea of menacing riot police – had echoes of King Canute, and the opening paragraph heralded the arrival of a worthy and yet still distant goal: ‘For the first time, the prospect of a genuinely free-trading world is in sight’ (Gallagher 1999.) The rest of the article provided a relatively balanced, albeit disjointed, synopsis of the pros and cons of free trade but the narrative never really addressed the title’s question. However, Gallagher’s choice of contextualising words before the end quote - from a senior member of the British political elite - confirmed the futility of dissent:

But they (critics) may not have a choice. Whether they like it or not, it is here to stay. "Globalisation, the very rapid movement of capital across the world, new technology, it's a transformation of the whole world system," says...Claire Short (*ibid.*)

In these terms, globalisation is conceived as a reified force that guides the trajectory of free trade. It’s a *fait accompli*: there is no alternative, opposition is pointless, and the only option is to embrace the future. This narrative is consistent with Tony Blair’s call to fellow left-of-centre parties, quoted in the *Times*: ‘not become the immobile keepers of out-of-date dogma in the face of the new facts of globalisation’ (Bremner 1999a.)⁷⁴ Indeed, these three articles are symptomatic of the BBC’s reporting throughout the period which generally did little to challenge the elite belief that liberalisation of the world economy was the preordained end-game.

Nevertheless, as stated in the title of the BBC’s special report, a ‘battle’ still raged and at the beginning of the sample period the combatants were identified as the free-trade advocates, particularly the UK and US governments, and the protectionists, typified by old-school Chinese Communists and recalcitrant EU socialists. When the protests began, however, opposition to came from a different quarter and the publications’ allegiances became more clearly defined. Although progressive reformers were given some exposure and credibility by all three news organisations, the *Times* often described members of this camp in terms heavy with casual and insinuating associations. On November 27, for example, a *Times* journalist bracketed *all* dissenters as outsiders:

⁷⁴ ‘Modernisation’, ‘change’ and ‘reform’ were defining words of the first half of Blair’s tenure as prime minister. See Chapter 4

They encompass trade unions, environmental clubs, human rights groups, assorted religions, farmers, Third World supporters and animal welfare activists, plus countless students whose stated aim is to cause a ruckus (Brodie 1999a)

On the eve of the Conference, a *Times* leader was particularly dismissive of the critics (note the speech marks, italics added):

At least 1,200 non-governmental organisations have formed a coalition to protest at the "evils" of globalisation. They have been joined by *anarchists, utopians, millenarians* - anyone, indeed, who believes that the ills of the world can all be laid at the door of the richer countries, America in particular (*Times* 1999a)

The newspaper continued the ridicule by association two days later:

... a *motley crew* of steel workers, environmentalists, poverty campaigners and *feminist witches* has succeeded in outwitting the most powerful governments in the world and hijacking the WTO agenda (Murray 1999a)

And an article in the *Sunday Times* pushed the scorn toward insult:

Fat old union bosses and multi-pierced grunge kids who last saw shampoo in 1992 joined hands with right-wing militia groups from the Rocky Mountains and frizzy-haired professors who still keep their Vietnam posters in the sideboard ... the anti-corporate, protectionist, isolationist bandwagon (Sullivan 1999a)

Despite labelling WTO critics in such disparaging terms, the *Times* occasionally acknowledged the intellectual basis of the opposition. One journalist, for example, agreed with the protestors that the WTO's 'rapid expansion into politically contentious territory' had illuminated a 'democratic deficit' (Murray 1999a.) Nevertheless, the *Times*' general timbre was intolerant of dissent and even Greenpeace was branded 'largely elitist' and involved in illegal acts⁷⁵ that were the 'first step towards the type of violent disruption' seen at previous demonstrations (Riddell 1999b.) In contrast, as shown in the quantitative analysis, the *Guardian* gave credence and support to the progressive reformers and its narrative often humanised the critics. On December 1, for example, the title of a leader cast the protestors as representatives of the world's citizenry and victims of oppression: 'Powerless people; Robocops face down protesters in Seattle and London: the globe's citizens are helpless before the future.' The article also gave a considered explanation of the protestors' unconventional tactics. Whereas the *Times* stated that their goal was to 'cause a ruckus' (Brodie 1999), the *Guardian* leader writer said the protestors had:

75 Destroying genetically-modified crops (Riddell 1999b)

...resorted to the demo and the TV-friendly stunt for the simplest, oldest of reasons: they have no other way of making their voice heard (*Guardian* 1999e)

This newspaper's description of the protest itself also created a very different picture to that of the *Times* (see above):

More than 60,000 people marched in carnival spirits on the conference hall. Environmentalists, students, and an eclectic array of causes, joined steel workers and dockers to fill the city centre with colour and noise (Elliott and Vidal 1999b)

The subheading of an *Observer* article four days later framed the 'real battle for Seattle' as 'a showdown between the world's most powerful nations and a new alliance of the Third World with ecologists and human rights groups' (Vidal 1999g.) The contrast between the peaceful demonstrators and the oppressive, futuristic law-enforcers was highlighted in the opening paragraph:

"Shame, shame, shame on you," chanted the protesters beyond the lines of Darth Vader-style police, the armoured cars, the horsemen, the National Guard and the dogs. The tear gas was heavy on the air, the police were now firing plastic bullets into the weeping crowd and the Ministerial Round of the Seattle world trade talks was in crisis (ibid.)

Whereas the protestors were 'colourful', 'eclectic' and in 'carnival spirits' (Elliott and Vidal 1999a), the 'Robocops' and 'Darth Vader-style police' were presented as the paramilitary wing of liberalisation. Some *Guardian* articles even playfully ridiculed the elite *per se*: for example, John Vidal (1999b) described a meeting at which: 'Three hundred greatly stretched suits from the powerful Alliance of Trade Expansion are jawing about the protests going on in the street far below' and in another article, he gently mocked a turgid and pompous WTO working party meeting (Vidal 1999e.)

The *Guardian*'s preferred discourse was clearly sympathetic to the progressives and sat in stark contrast to that of the *Times*. Although the BBC's reporting lacked the venom of the latter, it too lumped progressive reformers in with the fundamentalists and presented them as a disruptive, leaderless army. On the morning of the first day of the protests, for example, one article predicted imminent conflict:

Among the protesters were those from environmental groups, trade unions and the least developed countries...Some 50,000 critics of global capitalism arrived in the west-coast city at the weekend, in what is being dubbed the "Battle in Seattle" (BBC 1999a)

In a side-bar in the same article, BBC journalist Andrew Walker described the various events as 'mostly good-humoured ... with music, an inflatable dolphin and people dressed as turtles parading through the streets' (*ibid.*) Another article, also published on November 30, broke the movement into constituent parts:

Anarchists, environmentalists, union members, human rights activists and religious groups have descended on Seattle with a common purpose - to protest against the World Trade Organisation

'Anarchists' also featured in the *Times'* description of the protestors (see above.) Indeed, in language similar to that used by *Times* journalists, the BBC reporter cast doubts on the intellectual strength of the protestors' cause by highlighting the New Age spirituality of one particular group.

Among the protesters are Wiccans, feminist neo-pagan lovers of nature and magic, who say the WTO values free trade over the Goddess (BBC 1999o)

When accompanied by photographs of violent protest or demonstrators in fancy dress, such descriptions immediately created a distance between dissenters and the conventionally-dressed, well-organised and tightly-focussed, pro-free trade elite. Furthermore, the reformers' more rational concerns were diluted by their association with 'anarchists', 'witches', 'turtles' and 'inflatable dolphins' and, hence, their credibility became open to question. It was also noticeable that, unlike the *Guardian*, neither the BBC or the *Times* made negative comments about the appearance of the police or the delegates.

Other BBC stories appeared to give significant support to the protestors' arguments but the disruption narrative was still more prominent. An article on December 1, for example, contained an explanation of the broad reformist position and noted the support of President Clinton who agreed that labour and environmental issues should appear in trade discussions and 'strongly, strongly agreed' that the demonstrators should be included in the negotiations (BBC 1999g.) And yet, with a headline of 'Seattle declares civil emergency', a lead photograph of a window being kicked in, four more photos of rioting and protest, and the first third of the article devoted to details of the civil unrest, it is debatable if this news item helped readers better understand the critics' arguments. This photograph⁷⁶ was also the lead image for three more articles which further imprinted the association with violent dissent and anarchy in readers' minds. Of course, photographs of violence, arrests and general

76 See Appendix 1:3, section C

disorder were natural complements to the *Battle for Free Trade* supra-frame. But in addition to repeatedly publishing the aforementioned image in arguably a misleading context, the BBC also published photographs of violence at previous demonstrations, before the WTO Conference even began, and warned the current cohort of protestors might follow suit⁷⁷ (BBC 1999n.)

Photographs of violent protest were used by the BBC throughout the period, even as accompaniments to sober debates about the WTO and genetically-modified crops (BBC 1999h.) There were, of course, exceptions⁷⁸ but overall, the BBC's portrayal of WTO critics had much in common with the pro-liberalisation *Times*. Indeed, the words of BBC reports tended to award greater credibility to the liberalising elite than the critics, but this was done far more subtly than the *Times*. For example, in the article entitled 'Does free trade benefit the poor?' (Gallagher 1999) anonymous critics *claimed* that the WTO is 'trampling on less powerful countries in the name of commerce', whereas the named sources *said* their beliefs. Although this was not a universal tendency, 'claim' was frequently applied to dissenters' positions but not to the elites'. For example (italics added):

They (protestors) *claim* the clothes are manufactured in sweatshop conditions in developing countries. The company (Gap) has *denied* the allegations (BBC 1999x)

... the USTR (United States Trade Representative) will counter the *claims* of the protestors with *information* of its own (BBC 1999z)

The Electrohippies *claim* their attack will target three WTO websites (BBC 1999i)

Demonstrators in Seattle *claimed* that the World Trade Organisation... was unrepresentative and undemocratic... (BBC 1999l)

The BBC's proclivity to construct news around the discourse of the western elite was particularly apparent in articles about China which, as noted above, dominated the BBC's pre-Conference coverage. *Guardian* and *Times* articles around this time noted that China's trade deal with the United States was an important step toward full WTO membership and would have a seismic impact on businesses, workers and consumers across the world (Burke 1999, Hutton 1999a.) Western leaders were eager to emphasise the commercial benefits of the agreement: President Clinton, for instance, presented the deal as unequivocally beneficial for American business – and

77 See Appendix 1:3, section B

78 For example, some BBC articles that conceived the WTO-globalisation as a development, environmental or labour issue used images of life in Africa, plants and workers respectively. See Appendix 1:3, section D

therefore, Americans – and believed that Chinese exposure to the global business community would improve openness and, ultimately, enhance human rights in China (Elliott and Denny 1999a, Brodie 1999.) Significantly, both the left-of-centre *Guardian* and the pro-liberalisation *Times* also scrutinised the human impact of the deal. The *Times*, for example, noted: ‘WTO entry is likely to hurt workers in China as much as those in America’ (August 1999b); and discussed the inevitable consequences of ‘...a new tide of cheap Chinese goods heading west’ (Mortishead 1999a.) The *Times* also highlighted objections about China’s human rights record and the likely impact on manufacturing industry jobs (MacIntyre 1999.) In the *Guardian*, Will Hutton (1999a) stressed the historic gravitas of the moment in which: ‘a communist economy of 1.3 billion people surrendered to globalisation and the market’ and predicted that increasing the global workforce by 600 million would have a significant impact on the employment and spending patterns of the rest of the world.

With such coverage in the newspapers, one may have expected the BBC to also critically analyse the broader implications of China’s future accession to the WTO. However, close examination of the 29 BBC articles that featured the search terms in the context of ‘China and world trade’ confirmed that, despite such extensive coverage⁷⁹, arguments held by the western elite largely went unchallenged. Indeed, 21 articles from this subset gave extensive or brief exposure to free trade compared to six for protectionism. Progressive reform arguments were given no substantial exposure and were minimally acknowledged in just six news items. Fundamental reform was not even acknowledged and five articles made no reference whatsoever to any political position⁸⁰. In comparison with the newspapers, the BBC articles lacked analytical depth and most merely echoed the position of the Western elite. For example, the agreement was described as a ‘market opening deal’ (BBC 1999p) which involved China ‘coming in from the cold’ (BBC 1999w.) However, unlike the newspapers, the BBC barely considered the downsides of the trade deal to the British economy and society. One article (BBC 1999e) did so in brief, dehumanised terms - ‘some workers...could be laid off’ - and the only time detailed explanation was given, it was constructed in commercial legalese (BBC 1999k)

In the context of China, free trade was conceived by the BBC as self-evidently virtuous, rational and inevitable. This tendency was also present in the broader sample: with some notable exceptions, the descriptive tone of BBC articles was

79 This subset represents almost a quarter of BBC articles

80 See Appendix 1:2, table 5

consistent with that of the liberalising, developed elite whereas other political positions were pushed to the periphery. Indeed, throughout the period of analysis, BBC journalists wrote of 'battles', disagreements and opposing sides but rarely described them in any detail. In contrast, print journalists exercised far more linguistic latitude in their assessment of political arguments. *Times* writers were particularly scornful of anything vaguely anti-liberalisation. For instance, Charles Bremner (1999a) covered a meeting of the world's social democratic leaders that was expected to: 'endorse a manifesto that is likely to carry old-style gibes against capitalism.' The next day he quoted Tony Blair's opposition to such "outdated doctrine and dogma" on the Left', and juxtaposed this assessment with that of the 'Socialist French Prime Minister' who called for: 'Marxist methods to rein in capitalism' (Bremner 1999c.) In the *Sunday Times*, Irwin Stelzer conceived a misguided European Union which is: 'unprepared to abandon agricultural protectionism or its Luddite attitude towards genetically modified agricultural products' (Stelzer 1999.) The day before the Conference began, the *Times'* position was vividly expressed in a leader which conflated the protectionists with the WTO critics, and argued dissent was both confused and futile in the face of unstoppable progress. The 'real fear of the protestors', wrote the author (italics added):

... is not that the trade talks will fail but that they will succeed, for protectionism is a powerful force behind which shelter not only state monopolies, inefficient industries and cosseted farmers but *backward-looking and xenophobic ideologies* (*Times* 1999a)

There were, of course, exceptions. For example, Carl Mortishead (1999b) drew an explicit link between South Wales where: 'union leaders are negotiating with the owners of a mill over the future of hundreds of textile jobs' and '...(WTO headquarters on) the shores of Lake Geneva, (where) diplomats are wrangling over the text of an agenda for a summit meeting in Seattle.' Another journalist, Michael Gove (1999), described the 'spiritual poverty (that) globalisation engenders' and David Selbourne argued that globalisation is the: 'grandest of all idols ... (and) ... worshippers are everywhere on their knees (Selbourne 1999.) But despite this reporter noting that nation states were being 'reduced to a market', in most cases the *Times* offered little regard to those who might suffer. Bronwen Maddox, for example, warned readers not to: 'overestimate the significance of ... the diverse band of environmentalists and others who object to the organisation for some reason or other,' and echoed the British government's view that free trade was the only answer:

As Clare Short... said this week, if the demonstrators really want to help the world's poor countries, they should work to liberalise trade even further (Maddox 1999c)

Contrary to its support of progressive arguments, *Guardian* journalists occasionally equated liberalisation with the needs of the poor, too. Commenting on negotiations over the reduction of agricultural subsidies, for example, Larry Elliott ended an article: 'Very commendable. But not a lot of use to those in the world who suffer from undernourishment. All 790 million of them' (Elliot 1999b.) Such endorsements, however, were in the minority and in general, the *Guardian* took a critical line: Madeleine Bunting, for example, described the 'rough side of globalisation' in a feature about the effects of liberalisation in Peru (Bunting 1999.) In addition, the *Guardian* published opinion pieces by prominent progressive reformers (Coates 1999, George 1999a) and at the end of the Conference, a leader envisaged a future that promoted inclusivity:

The process should be weighted more towards pressure groups and NGOs and less towards national governments and multinational business. The lesson of Seattle is that global trade means truly global participation (*Guardian* 1999f)

The fundamental reform position, however, received short shrift in the *Guardian*, from both Elliott (1999d) and John Vidal who captured the irony of radicalism:

If the WTO itself collapses there will be no world forum for the poorest people to at least ventilate their concerns and protect their own interests (Vidal 1999g)

Indeed, there were few signs of support for the radicals in either the *Guardian* or the *Observer*. In the latter, William Keegan and Andrew Marr were unequivocal about the misguided idealism of those who challenged neoliberalism:

Britain's version of Seattle was a little local demonstration outside Euston Station. Here the most prominent voices seemed to be wanting to abolish capitalism. Perhaps nobody had told them about the dismemberment of the USSR in 1991. Capitalism will be with us for some time (Keegan 1999a)

In his article, Marr was also dismissive the progressive reformers, intolerant of the protectionists and adamant that liberalised trade was a non-negotiable and indelible characteristic of globalisation. He also gave a damning verdict on an alternative manifesto offered by the radicals: 'sounds like the Communist Manifesto rewritten by Christopher Robin' (Marr 1999a.) Although the arguments for progressive reform of the WTO were awarded exposure and credence by the *Guardian*, it was significant

that this newspaper accepted that managing, rather than challenging, neoliberal globalisation was the only option for the left:

Globalisation has created some ineluctable universal economic rules by which countries now abide or die - stability, low debt, low inflation. The aim of social democrats is to prove the iron will of the market does not rule alone and it is compatible with social justice (Guardian 1999a)

Summary

There were clear differences in the characteristics of the three news organisations' journalism over the period covered in this case study. The *Times* and the BBC both tended to reproduce the discourse of liberalisation, whereas the *Guardian* consistently expressed sympathy for the arguments of the progressive reformers. Newspaper journalists also tended to be much more expressive in their description of actors and arguments, and *Times* reporters in particular were particularly critical of opposition to liberalisation. Despite these differences, however, there were considerable and significant similarities. In all three publications, if globalisation was mentioned in an article, it was invariably once, and rarely was it the focus of the news item. That globalisation *per se* was not worthy of detailed analysis during this crucial period of its development was one of the most telling findings of this case study. Also, because 'globalisation' was rarely collocated with 'WTO', it is highly unlikely that uninitiated readers would have been aware that the debates surrounding the Conference had any relevance to the phenomenon. Furthermore, all three publications had a propensity to conceptualise the issues in the distant, abstract realms of elite politics and world trade. Only when the protests became violent did economic globalisation gain a human dimension, but instead of focussing on the long-term impact of liberalisation on families, communities, workers and the environment, the emphasis in the *Times* and BBC was on public order. Only the *Guardian* made a concerted effort to cover the issues thematically - usually in analytical articles - and in terms that reflected the WTO critics' agenda. This is not to say, however, that the key arguments of the fundamental reformers, such as the abolition of the WTO, were discussed in detail. Indeed, in the mediated debate about economic globalisation in late-1999, radical alternatives to neoliberalism were excluded – even by the left-of-centre *Guardian* - and in very few instances were arguments for a more humanised form of economic globalisation pitched on equal terms against the dominant discourse.

4 - PRIVATE FINANCE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Although the private finance initiative (PFI) was a flagship policy of Tony Blair's Labour government, it was conceived by the preceding Conservative administration (Craig and Brooks 2006:133). PFI was presented in 1992 by the then chancellor of the exchequer Norman Lamont as a way of bringing private sector management, efficiency and 'fresh flows of investment' into parts of the UK economy that were 'traditionally regarded as the exclusive domain of the public sector' (Clarke in Pollock *et al* 1997.) The rationale for PFI was clear: if private companies financed, built and managed projects, the government could procure the services on behalf of the public with relatively small payments over a protracted period⁸¹. Also, huge up-front capital investment could be avoided and thus, public sector debt would be minimised (Scott 2001.) Over the next five years, however, many recognised that PFI had limitations and the most vocal criticisms came from the Labour Party. In 1996, shadow health secretary Harriet Harman called PFI a: 'Trojan Horse for privatisation' (in Elliott and Atkinson 2007:131), and shadow chief secretary to the treasury, Alistair Darling, warned: 'Apparent savings now could be countered by the formidable commitment on revenue expenditure in years to come' (in Elliott and Atkinson 2007:131.)

In 1997, however, the new Labour government fundamentally revised its opinion of PFI and quickly placed it at the vanguard of economic policy. As chancellor, Gordon Brown was eager to fulfil his pre-election promise to reverse two decades of under-investment in public services but equally, he was hamstrung by a commitment to adhere to spending limits imposed by his Conservative predecessor (Elliott and Atkinson 2007:130-1) and had inherited a public sector debt that stood at 45 percent of GDP (Craig and Brooks 2006:134.) Two months after the general election, health minister Alan Milburn said: 'When there is a limited amount of public-sector capital available, as there is, it's PFI or bust' (Monbiot 2007a.) Indeed, PFI provided an ideal solution to Brown's conundrum and consequently, became the default model for financing public works (Smith, C 1999:2.) The extent of Labour's *volte-face* became evident during its first term in office: in 2000 the government announced some £20 billion-worth⁸² of public projects would be privately-funded by 2003 (Monbiot 2001:63) and by 2001, 450 PFI contracts had been signed (House of Commons Library 2001.) In comparison, the preceding Conservative government had approved a mere 50

81 With contracts between 30 and 60 years, PFI is akin to a mortgage (Schifferes 2002a) or 'hire purchase' (Pollock 2005: 56)

82 News reports tend not to specify whether the financial amount represents the capital value or the total revenue commitments (payments). Hence, the quoted figure for 2007 (HCCPA 2007) is lower than the BBC's figure for 2002 (BBC 2002a)

contracts in the four years to 1997 (Osler 2011a.) The Labour government's commitment to PFI meant that within four years: 'more capital projects (had) been undertaken for a given level of public expenditure and public service capital projects (had) been brought on stream earlier' (*ibid.*) thus confirming the government's main justification for PFI. Furthermore, argued proponents, the private sector would provide the antidote to the cost overruns and protracted delays that had become synonymous with public sector projects.⁸³ Profit-focussed management, it was argued, is far more adept at delivering projects on time and on budget, particularly if sanctions or bonuses are involved (Scott 2001.)

These were compelling arguments and yet even organisations usually sympathetic to the Labour Party began to raise concerns. In 2001, for example, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR 2001:6) found that PFI was providing: 'significant gains in roads and prisons but not in hospitals and schools' but it also said that the government's central premise - using private finance allowed more projects to be undertaken than would otherwise be possible - was a 'spurious argument.' The most common criticism, however, was the cost of finance. It is widely agreed that governments can always borrow more cheaply than private sector (Kelly in Scott 2001, Unison 2011) and, by extension, public enterprise is always the most cost-efficient way to build infrastructure (Osler 2011a.) There were also concerns about the disparities between the capital value and the lifetime payments of PFI projects. For example, the building cost of Swindon hospital was £76 million, whereas under a 30-year PFI contract the government would pay £500 million (Osler 2002:122.) Similarly, the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary would have cost £180 million if built with traditional funding but under a 30-year PFI contract, the total was £900 million (Toynbee 2002a.) Such extreme differences were noted by members of the Association of Certified Accountants (ACCA) who agreed it would be cheaper to finance projects through public funding (BBC 2002f), and that PFI was: 'such poor value for money that (it) should not be used for public sector investment' (Perkins 2002a.) PFI projects also have high set-up costs, including tortuous tendering procedures and protracted contractual negotiations. According to Unison, the first 15 NHS trust hospitals to adopt PFI spent £45 million on advisers (Unison 2011) and Richard Brooks⁸⁴ estimated that, by the end of 2005, advisers and consultants had earned around £15 billion from PFI (Craig and Brooks 2006:136.)

⁸³ The London Underground Jubilee Line extension and the Millennium Dome were completed in 1999. These high-profile projects were publicly-funded and managed, over budget and completed behind schedule (Scott 2001)

⁸⁴ Richard Brooks is a prolific journalistic critic of PFI/PPP. He has written numerous articles for *Private Eye* on the subject

With more expensive borrowing, high bidding costs and the profit imperative of contractors, the Treasury developed complex methods for appraising the value-for-money of proposed deals (*ibid.*) Officially PFI was only to be used if it proved to be better value than the traditional method of financing, but it became ‘the only game in town’ accounting for 90 percent of all completed schools and hospitals up to 2002 (Denny 2002a, *Guardian* 2002b.) Jeremy Colman, former deputy director general of the National Audit Office, said that some PFI appraisals were based ‘pseudo-scientific mumbo-jumbo’, and he also suggested that executives were effectively forced to accept PFI: ‘If the answer comes out wrong you don’t get your project. So the answer doesn’t come out wrong very often’ (in Timmins 2002.) There were also concerns about being locked into long-term contracts during which public needs may change (Pollock 2005:57, *Guardian* 2002b); poorly designed buildings (Mathiason and Morgan 2002a, *Economist* 2003); reductions in the number of hospital beds (Craig and Brooks 2006:143); the lack of long-term health care facilities (Hutton 2002:232) and the closure of older, local hospitals and schools in an attempt to realise economies of scale (Elliott and Atkinson 2007, Henry 2007.)

Other critics believed that the problems with PFI ran far deeper than cost and expressed concerns about its contribution to the increasingly blurred delineation between government and business (Whitfield 2001, Hertz 2001, Osler 2002, Ramsay 1998.) Allyson Pollock⁸⁵ argued that British businesses, particularly the construction industry, had been supportive of PFI since its inception (Pollock 2005), and with the most obvious opportunities for outright privatisation already exhausted, PFI provided an innovative route into previously sacred territory (Monbiot 2001:9, Whitfield 2001:5.) In 1997 Gordon Brown was eager to convince the City of London of his business credentials (Craig and Brooks 2006, Ramsay 1998) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) requested and was subsequently given direct involvement in designing PFI rules (Monbiot 2001:97, CBI 1996.) Proponents of PFI claimed that the high profit margins – which on some PFI schemes exceeded 50 percent (Timmins 2005) - were justified but it was clear that the state would assume the majority of the risk⁸⁶ (Harvey 2005:77, Elliott and Atkinson 2007:132.) Hence, the over-riding concern about PFI was that if public service provision was driven by commercial rather than social imperatives, then the nature of health, education and other

⁸⁵ In the early 2000s, Professor Allyson Pollock was head of the Public Health Policy Unit at University College London and is arguably the most learned and vociferous critic of PFI in the health service

⁸⁶ This was apparent when the government agreed to underwrite 95 percent of the money borrowed by private consortia for the London Underground PPP (Osler 2002:135)

services may be changed irrevocably (Pollock 2005:57, Osler 2002:119.) Despite the government's assertion that whether an asset is built and owned by the public or the private-sector is irrelevant (Blair 2002, 2002a), others argued that the means of public service provision fundamentally changed the ends (IPPR in Hutton 2002:232, Whitfield 2001.)

1 - The Labour Party Conference and the House of Commons Report

To assess the nature of the mediated debate about private finance in public services, this case study hinges on two key dates. The first is September 30 2002 when a motion at the Labour Party Conference to back PFI as government policy was defeated, and a union-sponsored motion demanding an independent inquiry into PFI was carried (Assinder 2002, BBC 2002a.) The second date is May 15 2007 when the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts published the report: *Update on PFI debt refinancing and the PFI equity market* (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts [HCCPA] 2007.) Before starting the analysis, however, it is important to place each event in a wider context. At the time of the 2002 Conference, the Treasury had approved contracts for 40 hospitals and 550 schools - under construction or in operation - with a further 60 hospitals in the planning stage (Guardian 2002b.) In total, the government had committed to more than £100 billion-worth of future payments (BBC 2002a.) Five years into Blair's premiership, however, the government was unpopular: public opinion was divided about a possible invasion of Iraq (Assinder 2002b) and there was widespread discontent among the electorate and disillusionment in the Labour Party membership⁸⁷. Until 2002, the Labour hierarchy had disengaged from intellectual discussions about PFI (Pollock 2005:57, Guardian 2002b) but now members had compelled the leadership to justify its position and 63 percent of the public supported the unions' call for a review of PFI (Travis and Maguire 2002a.) Even though the 2007 report was published in less contentious times, many of the problems predicted by critics since Labour's volte-face were becoming evident. The report confirmed some 750 PFI schemes costing over £54 billion had been approved (HCCPA 2007, Hencke 2007) and it also found that the government was being 'outwitted' when negotiating with consortia (Hencke 2007a.) In April 2007, fears were raised that Metronet, a company responsible for renewing three-quarters of the London Underground network, could collapse (Milmo

⁸⁷ Despite winning a second landslide election victory a year earlier, two-thirds of voters were dissatisfied with Tony Blair (Jones, G 2002.) Also, party membership had fallen from over 400,000 in 1997 to 250,000 in 2002 (Guardian 2002a)

2007a.)⁸⁸ In May, during the Labour Party leadership contest, Gordon Brown, was challenged about PFI by his opponents (Wintour 2007a, Woodward and Inman 2007) and the SNP renewed its pledge to create a not-for-profit alternative to public-private partnerships (PPP)⁸⁹ (Knox 2007a, SNP 2007:19.) For the first time, the Labour government was faced with focussed parliamentary opposition to private finance, albeit in a devolved assembly. Also in May 2007, concerns about PFI's poor value for money were confirmed by the *Daily Telegraph* which estimated that the government had bought £43 billion-worth of services that had a 'long-term cost to taxpayers of £150 billion' (Roberts *et al* 2007.)

As illustrated in the introduction to this chapter, opinion was divided about the merits of private finance in public services. One of the goals of this case study is to assess the extent to which different perspectives were awarded exposure and credence in news. Hence, before embarking on the data analysis, the researcher undertook a pilot study to identify the key characteristics of each position. This revealed that the mediated debate was dominated by PFI advocacy and PFI scepticism. Two further positions were also present but it was apparent, even at this early stage of analysis, that they received far less coverage.

Privatisation

Over the sample periods, detailed arguments for outright privatisation never appeared in debates about the funding of public services, but some commentators did call for an expansion of the private sector involvement beyond PFI. The *Economist*, for example, argued that Blair should be bolder with his reforms of the health service (*Economist* 2006) and senior Conservative politicians promoted 'radical and meaningful – not sham - reforms' (Fox in BBC 2002c), 'more private finance into health' (Johnson 2002), and hospitals with 'as much freedom as possible' (Fox in BBC 2000e.) The CBI also supported an expansion of PPPs with the government turning 'from being a provider of public services to a commissioner...and to introduce more competition and markets into public service provision' (Conway 2007a.)

88 Metronet called in the administrators in July 2007 (BBC 2007a) and the PPP was terminated in May 2010 when maintenance was brought back 'in house' (BBC 2010d)

89 Public private partnership (PPP) can be defined as: 'any collaboration between public bodies, such as local authorities or central government, and private companies' (BBC 2003b) and, hence, PFI is one type of PPP (Whitfield 2001)

PFI advocacy

The most committed advocates of PFI were government ministers who argued that it would bring greater efficiency, better value for money and faster delivery of new facilities (BBC 2002d.) Gordon Brown, sometimes acknowledged the existence of alternatives but dismissed the ideas of the left - particularly the trade unions - as 'reckless borrowing', and the right - typically the Conservative Party - as 'privatisation' (Elliott and Wintour 2002a.) Private finance was often presented as inevitable: Tony Blair conflated it with the broader public sector 'reforms' which, he claimed, would free: 'us from outdated doctrine and practice' (Blair 2002); Brown stressed that PFI would continue irrespective of opposition (Jones, G 2002, Wintour 2002b) and his stance was supported by the CBI (Jones, D 2002a.)

PFI scepticism

Opposition to PFI was multi-faceted and the most visible critics were the trade unions, which feared the creation of a 'two-tier workforce' (House of Commons Treasury Select Committee 2000, Batt 2002a, BBC 2002d), but also shared broader concerns with prominent journalists and intellectuals, particularly George Monbiot, Allyson Pollock and Richard Brooks; accountants (BBC 2002f, Symonds 2002a); the Liberal Democrats (Kennedy in Wintour 2002a); and dissident Labour MPs⁹⁰. This position shared many characteristics with the fourth (see below) but it did not offer a specific alternative. Indeed, prior to the Labour Party Conference in 2002, the unions softened their opposition by tabling a motion for an independent review of PFI rather than the original moratorium (BBC 2002h.)

Social alternatives

The Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) vowed to: 'halt Labour's privatisation juggernaut dead in its tracks' (Swinney 2002) and was the only political party to explicitly offer a social alternative to PFI, albeit a variation on the traditional model by which the government provides the capital, subcontractors build the project and the asset remains in public ownership (BBC 2002d, SNP 2007.) There was also broader opposition to private involvement in public services among the general public and, by extension, a desire to maintain the *status quo*. In one poll, 60 percent of respondents said that private firms should not run public services (BBC 2003a) and another survey found that 89 percent agreed that 'public services should be run by the government or local authorities, rather than by private companies' (Unison 2005.)

⁹⁰ For example, Kelvin Hopkins MP called the PFI 'irrational nonsense' and 'less popular than the poll tax' (BBC 2002g)

2 – Private finance on the news agenda

For one month before and one month after the key events, the BBC News website, the *Guardian/Observer* and the *Daily/Sunday Telegraph* were searched for articles that contained ‘PFI’, ‘PPP’, ‘private finance initiative’ or ‘public private partnership.’ The initial analysis revealed two major differences between 2002 and 2007. First, the relative visibility of the search terms. In 2002, 89 percent of articles featured ‘PFI’, whereas ‘PPP’ appeared in 17 percent. In 2007, however, the proportion of articles mentioning PPP more than doubled and those featuring PFI fell by 20 points. It is important to stress that these terms are closely related but not synonymous and the rise in hits for PPP may simply be due to an increase in contracts that were not pure PFI⁹¹. A more notable difference between the two years, however, was the quantity of articles. For the first period, the search generated 258 items, exactly three times more than the second which yielded 86. Although the periods were both nine weeks and the search terms identical, the disparity in the number of articles can be largely explained by the respective focal points.

As noted above, the 2002 Labour Party Conference debate was a set-piece confrontation between the trade unions and a Labour government, and such fraternal squabbles have far greater news value than the publication of a report from Westminster committee rooms. The massive journalistic presence at the Conference guaranteed extensive coverage of the conflict surrounding PFI⁹². In addition, one would expect speculation in the weeks prior to and after a premeditated political scrap to generate coverage: indeed, the distribution of articles in 2002 shows a gradual increase over weeks two to four and a fall from week six onward. Even so, the dominance of Conference week cannot be understated: it accounted for 99 of the 258 news items, including 44 percent of the *Telegraph’s* and a third of the *Guardian’s* and BBC’s (see *Figure 4.1*). There was no equivalent peak around the key event in 2007 and not one of the nine weeks accounted for more than a fifth of the articles published. It was also noticeable that weeks one, three and nine in 2002 had totals that were typical of 2007⁹³. Indeed, when viewed holistically, these data suggest that the spike in Conference week was an extreme aberration and ‘normal’ coverage of private finance in both years was in the order of ten to twenty articles per week.

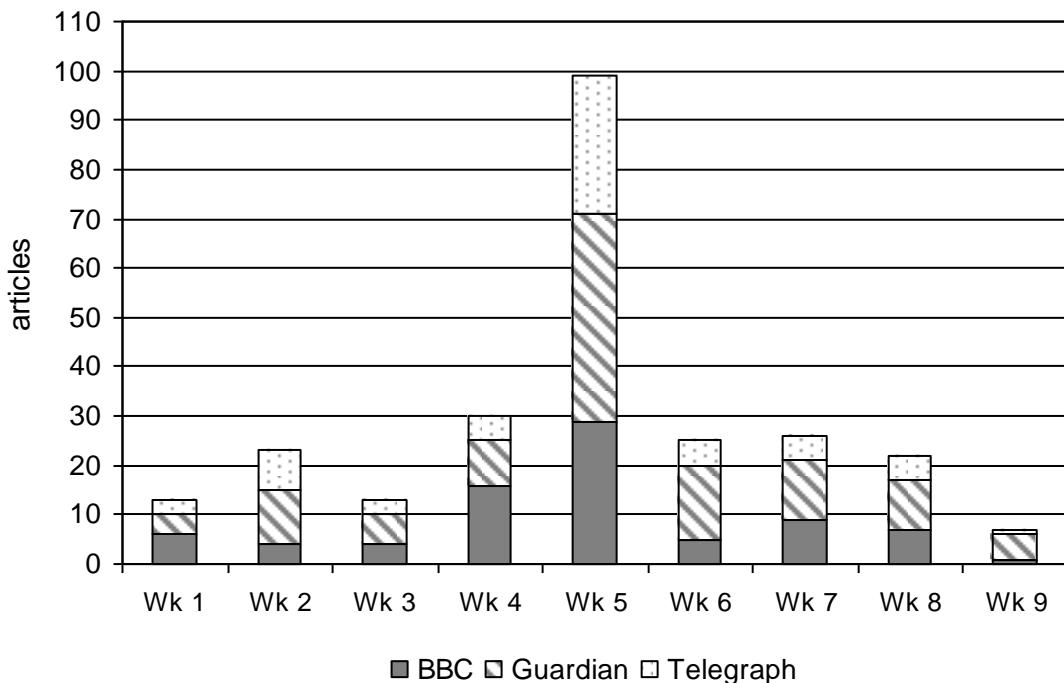
91 An alternative interpretation, given to the researcher by an anonymous journalist, is that the Labour Party deliberately avoided using ‘PFI’ in the mid-2000s because of its association with projects that appeared to offer poor value-for-money

92 At the Conference there were 26 reporters and editors from the *Guardian*; all of the *Telegraph’s* political team and some leader writers; and around 200 BBC staff (Addley and Fleming 2002)

93 See Appendix 2:2, tables 1a and 1b

Figure 4.1

Frequency distribution of articles (2002 sample)



In 2002 the *Guardian* gave far greater exposure to PFI/PPP than either of the other two media: it published 114 articles, some 40 percent more than the BBC and 80 percent more than the *Telegraph*. This is partially explained by eight articles relating to the TUC Conference - which preceded the Labour Party Conference by two weeks - at which the unions formulated their positions on PFI (Gow 2002a.) In contrast, the BBC News website published three articles related to the TUC Conference and the *Telegraph* just one. The *Guardian* also gave slightly more prominence to the search terms than the other two publications with 30 percent featuring PFI or PPP in the headline or introduction⁹⁴. Again, Conference week headed the rankings with the *Guardian* printing eighteen articles that mentioned the search terms in the title or introduction, and the BBC and *Telegraph* each publishing nine. As with the distribution of articles, across all three media the search terms were far less prominent outside of Conference week. Over the 2007 sample period, there was less variation with 33 articles on the BBC News website, 31 in the *Guardian* and 22 in the *Telegraph*. The search terms were also noticeably less prominent, appearing in the headline or introduction in around 20 percent of news items, and in 70 percent of articles 'PFI' or 'PPP' appeared just once, compared to about a half of the 2002

94 See Appendix 2:2, table 2a

sample.⁹⁵ The relative lack of interest in PFI/PPP in 2007 was particularly evident in the very limited coverage of the House of Commons report itself: the *Guardian* and the *Sunday Telegraph* published one article (Hencke 2007a, Halligan and Russell 2007) and the BBC did not mention the report at all.

For all three news organisations the most common topic was 'business' which accounted for around 30 percent of articles in 2002 and 2007⁹⁶. This was the most populous category for both newspapers in both years and second for the BBC in 2002 with 16 percent, behind 'politics' which accounted for 44 percent of articles. In the same year, the *Telegraph* published twice as many articles about PFI in the business section than on the politics pages, and in 2007 some 60 percent of articles appeared in its financial pages. Many of the *Guardian's* articles in 2002 covered the politics of PFI but these were categorised as 'home' or 'general' news. Indeed, inconsistencies between the three publications' naming conventions made topic comparison rather challenging. For example, unlike the newspapers, BBC employed regional classifications with 23 percent of articles in 2002 placed in the 'England', 'Wales', 'Scotland' and 'Northern Ireland' sections of the website. In the 2007 sample, 72 percent of articles appeared under 'Scotland' and 'England' and some of these were given an even tighter geographical focus ('Edinburgh', 'Cheshire', etc.) This suggests that the BBC had an increasing tendency to localise private finance rather than present it as a national issue in the general news pages. Indeed, none of the 33 BBC articles in 2007 were classified as 'politics' which contrasts sharply with the 44 percent in 2002.

In 2002, the *Guardian*, and to a lesser extent, the *Telegraph* also covered private finance in leaders, opinion pieces, feature articles, and letters to the editor, with around 20 percent of items falling into these categories. In 2007, over a third of the *Guardian* articles had such classifications but, of course, the absolute quantity of articles was far fewer. The relative lack of mediated debate in 2007 was also evident in the tallies for newspaper editorials: three each in 2002 compared to none five years later. The distribution of article type was also revealing. In 2002, the proportion of articles that were standard news reports or news-in-brief items accounted for around half of all three media's totals⁹⁷. In 2007, the vast majority of the BBC articles were standard news reports and, with the exception of seven letters to the editor in

95 See Appendix 2:2, table 2b

96 See Appendix 2:2, table 3a and 3b

97 See Appendix 2:2, table 4a

the *Guardian*, there was little indication of concerted analysis or detailed debate in any of the publications⁹⁸. Taken as a whole, these data suggest that although private finance was positioned on the news agenda as a matter of national political importance in 2002, it was often categorised as a business issue. In 2007 the BBC showed a tendency to localise PFI/PPP, whereas the newspapers, particularly the *Telegraph*, placed proportionately more articles in the financial pages. This shift in emphasis reflects the development of the government's private finance policy: in 2002 it was the subject of intense political debate, primarily at the Conference. But by 2007, discussion was essential over and PFI/PPP projects were being implemented across the country, thus promoting relatively limited coverage in sections that would be of interest to general readers (the recipients of private finance projects) and the business community (the providers.)

3 - Salience, themes and framing

During the pilot study, it became apparent that many of the 344 articles in the universal sample mentioned the search terms only in passing. Hence, before continuing the analysis, those articles that made incidental references to PFI/PPP were discarded. The 2002 sample lost 79 articles (31 percent) and the 2007 sample was reduced by 21 (24 percent.) In the refined samples, the proportion of news items in which a search term was the primary focus or featured strongly was remarkably similar with 41 percent in 2002 and 38 percent in 2007⁹⁹. There was, however, considerable variation in the degree of salience between the publications. Although the BBC had fewer articles with incidental references than the newspapers in both periods, it published a relatively high proportion of items in which PFI or PPP were peripheral to the overall thrust of the article. *Figure 4.2* shows that over a third of BBC articles in 2002 fell into this 'weak' category, and in 2007 the proportion was almost 60 percent. In the 2002 and 2007 universal samples, articles that made only weak references accounted for 28 percent and 37 percent of the totals respectively.

Removing the 100 articles that made purely incidental references to the search terms left 179 items from 2002 and 65 from 2007 to be analysed in greater depth. Applying this filter decimated the 2002 *Telegraph* sample which lost nearly half of its 63 articles. In fact, with the exception of the Conference week, the *Telegraph* printed no more than five articles per week that gave PFI/PPP any significant exposure, and in

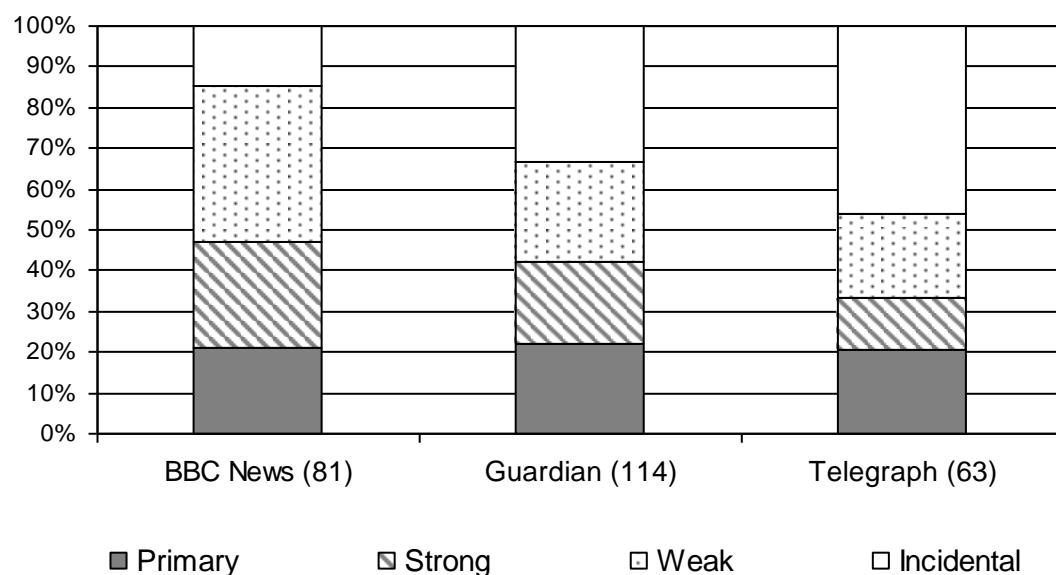
98 See Appendix 2:2, table 4b

99 See Appendix 2:2, tables 5a and 5b

weeks eight and nine, the *Telegraph* carried no substantial items at all. This was mirrored to a lesser extent in the BBC and *Guardian* samples, with the median number of articles per week falling to five and six respectively. The distribution of salience underlines the extent to which coverage of private finance was centred around the Conference week. Apart from this period, there was little evidence of sustained and detailed analysis of private finance in either of the sample years.

Figure 4.2

Salience of articles to search terms (2002)



With so many articles in 2002 tied to the Labour Party Conference, it was unsurprising that the dominant primary theme was ‘political.’ *Table 4.1* shows that the publications demonstrated similar propensities to conceive PFI/PPP as a policy issue. Overall, the second most common theme in 2002 was ‘business’ with the newspapers far more likely to view PFI/PPP from a commercial perspective than the BBC. Indeed, 20 percent of the *Guardian* and 35 percent of the *Telegraph* articles had business contexts, compared to just four percent of the BBC’s. The remaining rankings were shared among a variety of other themes that, in most cases, had greater direct relevance to lay audiences. Articles that explored the effects of private finance on health, education or employment have arguably broader appeal than items focussed on politics and business which are traditionally the domains of the elite. Although politics was also the dominant primary theme in 2007, it accounted for just 26 percent of articles, around half of its 2002 proportion, and business fell into

fifth place behind education, transport and health.¹⁰⁰

Table 4.1
Primary themes (2002)

	BBC News		<i>Guardian</i>		<i>Telegraph</i>	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Political or policy discussion	32	46	33	43	17	50
Health	9	13	4	5	0	0
Employment issues	6	9	6	8	3	9
Law and order	4	6	0	0	0	0
Macro-economy	4	6	1	<2	1	<3
Business	3	4	15	20	12	35
Education	3	4	7	9	0	0
Other themes	8	12	10	13	1	<3
Total	69	100	76	100	34	100

Although PFI/PPP was commonly conceptualised as a political issue, surprisingly few of the articles were characterised by bilateral dialogue. Indeed, in both periods the most common secondary theme for all three media was the unopposed announcement. This category included speeches, statements and predictions, and accounted for 48 percent of articles in 2002 and 67 percent in 2007¹⁰¹. Of course, this is not to say that these articles did not include contrasting views, but active discourse between opposing parties was not their defining characteristic. The second most common secondary theme in 2002 for all three publications was 'analysis.' These articles were summations or synopses which, although they may have included conflicting opinion, were typically less indicative of vibrant debate than those in the more disputatious categories ('talk', 'fight', 'consensus', 'impasse', etc) which collectively accounted for 21 percent of the 2002 sample. The BBC and *Guardian* generally portrayed the debate about PFI/PPP as a series of statements - typically from politicians, trade union leaders and business people¹⁰² - followed by analysis. The *Telegraph* was most likely to focus on conflict with a quarter of articles defined in combative terms. The overall profile of secondary themes mirrored the lack of opposition to PFI/PPP from the Conservative Party or from within the Parliamentary Labour Party¹⁰³. Furthermore, ministers tended to avoid direct debate with their union detractors (Pollock 2005:57, *Guardian* 2002b,) preferring instead to funnel their arguments through the media (see, for example, BBC 2002a.) The only forum for interactive debate was the Conference itself and, indeed, it was in weeks four and

100 See Appendix 2:2, table 6b

101 See Appendix 2:2, table 7a and 7b

102 See below – sources

103 Naturally, there were PFI sceptics in the House of Commons, but parliament was not sitting during the 2002 sample period

five in which the majority of articles with disputatious secondary themes appeared. In the 2007 sample, two-thirds of articles revolved around announcements, and, with the exception of 11 BBC articles which generally involved discussions about specific projects rather than PFI/PPP *per se*, there was scant indication of organised and sustained opposition to private finance.

As the introduction to this chapter illustrated, the arguments for and against PFI were multi-faceted and, at times, rather complex. Hence, to make sense of this issue, it would be reasonable to assume that the general public needed access to news items that placed PFI in wider contexts. This need was fulfilled to an extent in both years: in 2002, 36 percent of the universal sample and 44 percent in 2007 were coded as mainly or entirely thematic articles¹⁰⁴. However, news items that focused on immediate events and episodes were in the majority in both years - 56 percent and 51 percent respectively - but there were considerable differences between the three media. In 2002, three-quarters of *Telegraph* articles were episodic compared to 59 percent in the *Guardian* and 45 percent on the BBC website. The *Guardian* and the BBC were particularly keen to explain private finance in the context of broader debates: the former printed 27 articles and the BBC published 30 news items that gave the reader an understanding of why the issue was contentious. Indeed, in 2002 the BBC achieved an almost equal split between episodic and thematic articles. Parity was also achieved in 2007 by the *Telegraph* but this time, the BBC's reporting was predominantly episodic with 20 of the 30 articles focussed on the short-term. In contrast, 70 percent of the *Guardian* articles in 2007 were thematic.

Given the dissimilarities between the pivotal events, it is difficult to give a confident and illuminating synopsis of the contrasting quantities, temporal distribution, contexts, prominence and depth of reporting in 2002 and 2007. Nevertheless, the union-led debates at the Labour Party Conference clearly prompted all three media, the *Guardian* in particular, to give extensive and detailed coverage to private finance and frame it as a contested political issue, albeit outside of Westminster. Beyond the three weeks straddling the Conference, however, PFI/PPP did not appear to be significantly more newsworthy than in 2007. Indeed, perhaps the most striking findings are in the similarities, rather than the differences, between the two years and the three media. The search terms tended to be found in articles on the politics and business pages, and the articles were invariably short-format news or analysis items,

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix 2:2, tables 8a and 8b

with only around 40 percent of all articles highly salient to PFI/PPP. There was very little interactive debate between those holding disparate views; the unopposed announcement was the defining secondary theme; and the majority of articles were focussed on recent events rather than broader debates. Whereas private finance was framed as an active and contentious political issue in 2002, five years later, PFI/PPP was conceived as largely unproblematic. With short news reports about the progress of individual projects - and the providers of privately-financed services - dominating the coverage, private finance in 2007 was generally portrayed as an uncontested issue.

Table 4.2
Sources per article (2002 and 2007)

Named sources	BBC News		<i>Guardian</i>		<i>Telegraph</i>	
	2002 N = 69	2007 N = 30	2002 N = 76	2007 N = 20	2002 N = 34	2007 N = 15
	% of articles		% of articles		% of articles	
No named source	6	20	11	10	9	15
One	36	33	41	30	32	41
Two or more	58	47	48	60	59	44
Average named sources per article	2.23	1.86	1.97	1.95	1.94	1.93

4 - Source analysis

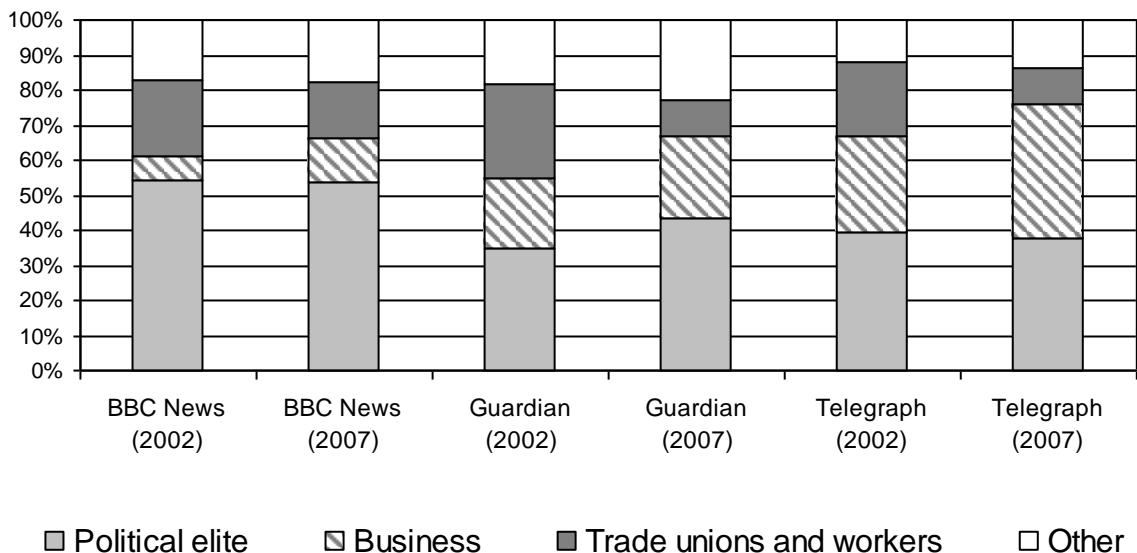
The first step to assessing the political content of the publications' reporting involves analysing the extent to which a plurality of source types were present in the articles. *Table 4.2* shows distinct similarities in terms of the number of named sources per article: the average for each media was close to two which suggests that differing opinions were present in the majority of news items. However, this index is deceptive as significant numbers of articles did not have multiple sources¹⁰⁵. In 2002, just over 40 percent of BBC and *Telegraph* articles and around half of the *Guardian's* contained just one or no named sources. Five years later, the figures were 53 percent, 56 percent and 40 percent respectively. Although this initial analysis suggests a rather patchy adherence to the journalistic convention of including multiple points of view, it reveals nothing about the exposure awarded to different groups and political positions. Hence, for the next stage of analysis, sources were organised into four categories: political elite; business; trade unions and workers; and

¹⁰⁵ The averages were inflated by 60 articles that contained three or more named sources (see Appendix 2, tables 9a and 9b)

other sources.

Figure 4.3

Constitution of named sources (2002 and 2007)



□ Political elite □ Business ■ Trade unions and workers □ Other

Figure 4.3 shows the proportion of named sources in each of these categories¹⁰⁶. In both years and across all three publications, the political elite were the most cited group. The BBC clearly had the greatest propensity to quote politicians and civil servants, with this group accounting for over half of named sources in 2002 and 2007. The *Guardian* and *Telegraph* were relatively consistent with around 40 percent of named sources taken from the political elite, but there were noticeable differences in the frequencies of business and labour sources. The *Telegraph* gave preference to business in 2007 with 11 citations compared to three for labour, and even in 2002, when trade union leaders were vociferous critics of PFI, the ratio was still tilted in business' favour (18:13.) In contrast, on the BBC website in 2002 trade union and worker sources outnumbered business voices by a factor of three, and by a quarter in the *Guardian*. In all three media, however, the ratio shifted toward business in 2007 and, with the exception of the BBC, the views of workers and their trade union representatives were rarely aired.

'Other sources' accounted for around 10 to 20 percent of the totals and 'journalist' was the most common sub-category in both years, typically as the author of an opinion piece. Journalists were as prevalent as sources in the BBC sample as in the *Guardian*, and in some cases (for example, Marr 2002a and Assinder 2002a), the journalist subjectively framed private finance and guided the reader's understanding

106 See Appendix 2:2, tables 13a to 14c

in the process. Research-oriented sources¹⁰⁷ were quoted 12 times in the 2002 universal sample and three in 2007, and members of the public and user group spokespeople¹⁰⁸ were cited on five and nine instances respectively. There was no significant difference between the media in the propensity to quote sources from the 'grassroots' but the BBC and *Guardian* each cited eight political party members in 2002 while the *Telegraph* quoted none. Even within the 'trade union and workers' category preference was given to the elite: in 2002 public sector managers made eight appearances against one - in the *Telegraph* - for trade union members or 'shop floor' workers¹⁰⁹. Given the inherent, multi-faceted complexity of private finance, the relative dearth of academics and economists is particularly noteworthy. One may have expected journalists to make extensive use of learned information but none of the publications did so. Similarly, given that the *raison d'être* of PFI/PPP is to provide high quality, value-for-money public services in exchange for tax revenue, the effective exclusion of workers and those who use and pay for the services is striking.

The categorisation of sources in *Figure 4.3* is rather blunt but it strongly suggests that the debate was dominated by elite sources and, in particular, groups that were generally in favour of private finance. As described in the introduction, British companies and industry associations welcomed PFI/PPP and, in some cases, pushed for greater private sector involvement in public services. More significantly, although it would be erroneous to assume that all of the 'political elite' were PFI-advocates, the prime minister, the chancellor of the exchequer and cabinet ministers were unequivocal supporters. *Table 4.3* shows that in 2002, the BBC featured members of this troika as named sources on 50 occasions compared to 29 for the representatives of trade unions and professional associations who were universally sceptical of PFI.¹¹⁰ *The Telegraph* also favoured the troika over worker representatives by 21 to 13, whereas the *Guardian* gave greater access to the latter (32:38.) In 2007, far fewer sources were named by all three media but in each case, the trio of political PFI-advocates outnumbered sceptical spokespeople by at least two-to-one¹¹¹.

107 This category includes academics, scientists, economists and think-tanks

108 For example, parent-teacher, passenger and hospital user associations

109 In 2007, the ratio was 6:4 in favour of public sector management

110 This group does not include other sub-categories, such as senior managers in the public sector, trade union members or workers, as it would be erroneous to assume that these would hold PFI-sceptical views

111 The simplified ratios were: BBC 2:1; *Guardian* 3:1; *Telegraph* 6:1 (see *Table 4.3*)

Table 4.3
Incidence of partisan named sources (2002 and 2007)

Named sources	BBC		<i>Guardian</i>		<i>Telegraph</i>	
	2002	2007	2002	2007	2002	2007
Prime minister and cabinet ministers	50	6	32	6	21	6
Business actors	10	7	30	9	18	11
Total	60	13	62	15	39	17
Trade union and professional association representatives	29	3	38	2	13	1
Advocates-to-sceptics	2.1 to 1	4.3 to 1	1.6 to 1	7.5 to 1	3.0 to 1	17.0 to 1

Table 4.3 also shows that if business sources are added to the pro-PFI political triumvirate, the dissenting voices of the trade union movement were firmly in the minority in both years and across all three publications. Before assessing the significance of these data, it is important to note two caveats. First, as mentioned above, 30 percent of articles in the universal sample appeared in the business pages. Hence, many business sources appeared in articles that made no reference whatsoever to the political debate. Indeed, business and labour spokespeople appeared together in just nine percent of the 2002 sample¹¹². Second, although MPs and journalists often had strong feelings about private finance, these categories of sources were excluded from this part of the analysis because not all actors in these groups shared the same perspective.

Assuming that the advocates and sceptics among these groups cancelled each other out¹¹³ and, assuming that the three groups in *Table 4.3* constitute the majority of those with distinct and unequivocal political positions, it is evident that PFI-advocates were far more visible than the sceptics across the board. In 2002, the *Guardian* featured 1.6 advocates to every sceptic compared with 2.1 for the BBC and three in the *Telegraph*. In 2007, the ratios were considerably higher, reflecting the increased relative frequency of business sources and the virtual disappearance of trade union voices. Indeed, these data add credence to the earlier observation that the PFI/PPP debate had largely evaporated by 2007.

112 See Appendix 2:2, table 17

113 This is a reasonable assumption given that Labour spokespeople (nine appearances in 2002) and many MPs toed the party line, and the Conservatives (ten appearances) were inherently in favour of the private sector. Balanced against these probable advocates were 13 minority party source citations who were probably sceptics. All other source categories were assumed to be politically neutral

With such a strong dominance in frequency of appearance, it is unsurprising that PFI-advocates also tended to be the most prominent sources. Despite the impetus for the debate coming from the unions, the prime minister, Tony Blair, was the most common first named source on the BBC website in 2002 and second in the *Telegraph*, behind CEO/chairmen of PFI contractors. Blair shared the top spot in the *Guardian* with national trade union leaders which suggests a degree of parity, but if other political PFI-advocates are added, it is clear that trade union spokespeople were considerably less likely to set the parameters of the debate than the Labour Party troika of prime minister, chancellor and cabinet ministers, and indeed business representatives. Overall, the first voice belonged to member of the troika in 28 percent of articles, with a similar proportion in each of the three media. In contrast, business people led in 18 percent of articles and trade union leaders in 11 percent. The BBC awarded equal billing to these latter two groups - with nine percent each - but only one *Telegraph* article featured a union representative as the first source, and in the *Guardian* business outscored unions by 15 articles to 12¹¹⁴. Also notable in 2002 was the near invisibility of Conservative politicians who appeared just ten times as a named source and not once as an unnamed source¹¹⁵. Patterns were much harder to identify in 2007 as the distribution of first sources were scattered across more source categories. Nevertheless, there was still evidence that preference was awarded to PFI-advocates. Worker representatives were the first source in just six percent of articles whereas spokespeople from PFI contractors accounted for 14 percent. As in 2002, senior cabinet ministers headed the list, and led the debate in 17 percent of articles¹¹⁶.

For the final phase of source analysis, Conservative politicians and Labour Party spokespeople were added to the troika, thus giving a more representative group of 'political PFI advocates.' Likewise, minority parties were combined with trade union and professional association representatives to create a more complete group of 'PFI sceptics.' Unnamed sources were also added according to their likely allegiance and the composite figures are shown in *Table 4.4*. Overall, the advocates had the greatest presence in 2002, appearing in 45 percent of articles compared to 37 percent for the sceptics and 26 percent for business sources. However, these aggregates obscure considerable differences. The BBC and *Telegraph* gave far more

114 See Appendix 2:2, table 11b

115 In 2002, Conservative MPs accounted for 2.2 percent of all named and unnamed sources. Although the party fared better proportionately in 2007 (4.2 percent) it was striking that the opposition party made such a limited contribution to this debate

116 See Appendix 2:2, table 11c

exposure to the advocates than the sceptics and only in the *Guardian* was there parity between the groups. Indeed, the *Guardian* achieved remarkable balance with advocates, sceptics and business sources each appearing in about a third of articles. In contrast, business-people appeared in 40 percent of *Telegraph* articles but just one in five on the BBC News website. It is important to stress, however, that the business community was in favour of PFI, and consequently these data suggest that only around a third of each publications' articles in 2002 contained a sceptical viewpoint.

Table 4.4
Presence of groups of sources (2002)¹¹⁷

Source group	BBC News (n = 69)	Guardian (n = 76)	Telegraph (n = 34)	Overall (n = 179)
	% of articles	% of articles	% of articles	% of articles
Political PFI advocates	57	34	56	45
Business	19	35	39	26
PFI Sceptics	33	36	30	37
No or 'other' sources only	28	21	15	23

The data for 2002 also revealed that in almost half of the articles, one of the three groups aligned with political positions had a source monopoly. The PFI advocates went unchallenged by other groups in 21 percent of articles, compared to 15 percent for business and 11 percent for the sceptics¹¹⁸. Hence, with a further 23 percent of items containing 'other sources' or no sources only, just 30 percent of the articles in 2002 involved exchanges between spokespeople of two – or in seven instances, all three - of the groups. In terms of monopolies, the BBC favoured political advocates over sceptics by a factor of two-and-a-half but the *Guardian* achieved almost perfect balance between the two groups. No source monopolies were given to the sceptics by the *Telegraph*, but business voices had a free reign in around a fifth of articles. Although the *Guardian* awarded more monopolies to the sceptics than the other media (17 percent), it also gave the highest proportion to business (22 percent.) Indeed, the data show that business sources were the least likely to be challenged across the board: they appeared with members of other groups in just 24 articles; compared to 45 for the political advocates and 43 for the sceptics¹¹⁹. The defining debate, however, clearly pitted the political advocates against the sceptics and accounted for 21 percent of BBC articles; 18 percent of the *Telegraph*'s and 13

117 See Appendix 2:2, table 17 for complete data

118 See Appendix 2:2, table 17

119 Includes all bilateral debates plus the seven articles in which all three groups were represented

percent of the *Guardian's*. Crucially, in 27 of these 30 articles, a PFI advocate was quoted ahead of a PFI sceptic, and only the BBC published articles in which the sceptic was cited first. Hence, on the relatively few occasions when the source profile of a news item was conducive to an exchange of viewpoints between the pro-PFI political elite and the sceptics, the former invariably opened the debate.

5 - Coverage of political positions

The source analysis gives strong hints about the likely political content of news items but it makes no allowance for journalistic input and interpretation. An article with a monopoly of business sources, for example, could conceivably be laden with criticism about private finance in public services. Nor does source analysis measure the quantity of words devoted to each voice. Hence, to assess the political content of the sample, an holistic reading of each article was taken. This incorporated the appearance and prominence of actors; the quantity of words attributed to each; and an assessment of the general tone. In this way, it was possible to assess the coverage given to each of the four political positions identified in the pilot study.

Table 4.5
Exclusion of political positions (2002 and 2007)

% of articles making no reference to...	2002			2007		
	BBC	Guardian	Telegraph	BBC	Guardian	Telegraph
Privatisation	77	82	82	97	95	79
PFI-advocacy	16	0	6	3	0	7
PFI-scepticism	19	24	26	70	30	33
Social alternatives	86	80	82	70	85	100

Table 4.5 demonstrates that two positions – privatisation and social alternatives – were totally absent from around four-fifths of the 2002 sample. In 2007, their exclusion was even more pronounced with only eight percent of articles making any reference to the increased private involvement in public services, and nine percent mentioning social alternatives to PFI/PPP. The majority of this latter category were published by the BBC and focussed on the SNP's pledge to introduce an alternative to PPP in Scotland (for example, BBC 2007g.) It was particularly ironic that social alternatives were largely excluded from the debate, given that the traditional model of public finance had prevailed in the UK since 1945. Indeed, if an actor argued for the

maintenance of the *status quo*, it was coded as ‘social alternatives,’ but as the broad coverage of the PFI-sceptical position confirms, the vast majority of dissent could be described as contrary opposition rather than constructive criticism¹²⁰. With privatisation and social alternatives effectively ignored, this data set confirms that the mediated debate was dominated by advocacy and scepticism.

Table 4.5 also shows that scepticism was ignored in far more articles than advocacy in both years and, with the exception of the BBC in 2002, all three media. This can partially be explained by the prevalence of articles that perfunctorily reported the delivery or announcements of private finance projects (for example, Henry 2007) or the commercial health of contractors (for example, Gow 2002b.) In such cases, PFI was simply acknowledged as a ‘fact of life’. In 2002, a tenth of articles paired a minimal acknowledgement of PFI/PPP with no mention of scepticism. In 2007, over a third of news items fell into this category, including 60 percent of the BBC sample.¹²¹ Indeed, as previously noted, sceptical sources – and the associated arguments – had virtually disappeared from reports in 2007, and to a large extent, private finance had become depoliticised and a non-contentious issue. Indeed, a weighted index of the political content of samples¹²² revealed a considerable fall in all three media: the BBC sample dropped from 178 to 56; the *Telegraph* from 73 to 32, and the *Guardian* saw the largest relative decline from 132 to 16. This contrast can largely be explained by the low frequency of articles in 2007 - and the extreme aberration of Conference week in 2002 - but this was exacerbated by a dearth of items giving detailed explanations of political positions and, as highlighted above, a tendency to exclude privatisation, social alternatives and, to an extent, PFI-scepticism.

Although the 2007 sample lacked quantity and diversity of perspectives, *Figure 4.4* confirms that the reporting was not devoid of politics. Of the three publications, the BBC’s coverage of the private finance debate in 2002 and 2007 exhibited the greatest balance; the *Guardian* clearly favoured the sceptics; and the *Telegraph* was most sympathetic to PFI-advocacy and, to a lesser extent, privatisation. These positions tally neatly with the newspapers’ traditional political allegiances, and in 2002 the BBC ably fulfilled its commitment to political impartiality with near-perfect equality between advocacy and scepticism. Closer examination of the data reveals the nuances of coverage: the *Guardian* carried the highest proportion of articles that

120 See below – critical discourse analysis

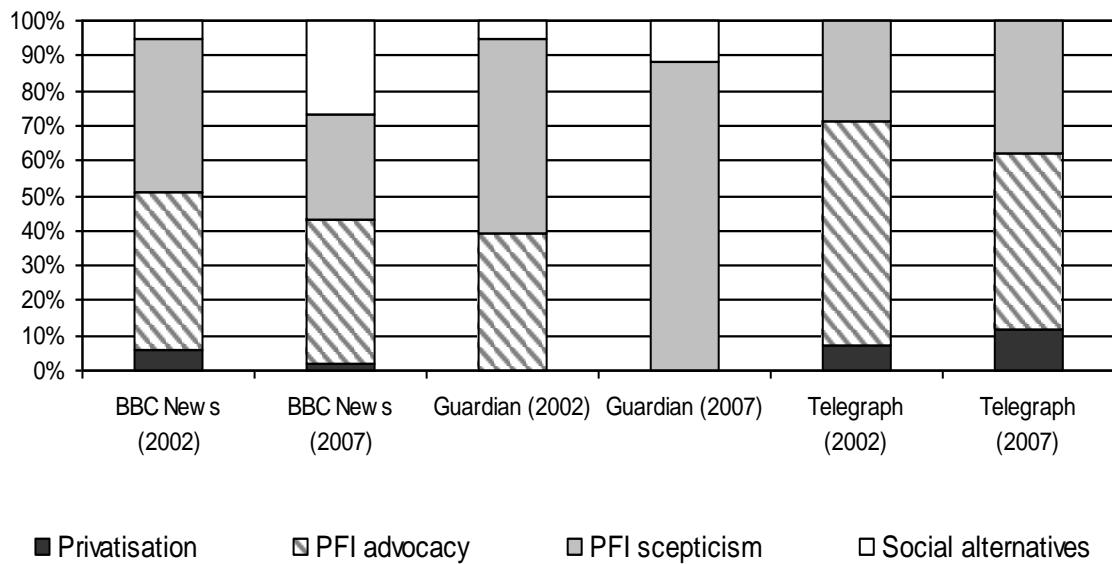
121 These figures are taken from the cells ‘ADV acknowledged/SCE ignored’ in Appendix 2:2, tables 18a – 19c

122 See Appendix 2:2, tables 15a – 16c

were critical of PFI in both years - 34 percent in 2002 and 75 percent in 2007 - and, conversely, the *Telegraph* had the greatest propensity to criticise the sceptics and was the least likely in both years to give exposure to social alternatives.¹²³

Figure 4.4

Weighted coverage of political positions (2002 and 2007)



These political sympathies are confirmed in *Table 4.6*. The *Telegraph* gave preferential coverage to PFI advocacy over PFI scepticism in 32 percent of articles (row A), and vice versa in 9 percent (row B). The *Guardian* favoured scepticism in a fifth of articles and advocacy in 14 percent, and again, the BBC came closest to equality with 16 percent of news items leaning toward advocacy and a tenth to scepticism. The Corporation also published by far the highest proportion of articles that provided detailed accounts of both positions (row C.) It is also important to note that around half of all articles across the board contained no substantial debate between advocates and sceptics (row D.)

¹²³ In 2002, the weighted total for social alternatives in the *Telegraph* was minus 4. Likewise the *Guardian's* weighted coverage of PFI advocacy in 2007, and privatisation in both years, was also in negative territory. These data do not appear in *Figure 4.4* - and are recorded as 'zero' - because of the limitations of the charting software

Table 4.6Coverage of the advocacy *versus* scepticism debate (2002)¹²⁴

	Coverage		BBC News		Guardian		Telegraph	
	Advocacy	Scepticism	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
A	Detailed	Limited	11	16	11	14	11	32
B	Limited	Detailed	7	10	16	21	3	9
C	Detailed	Detailed	19	28	9	12	5	15
D	Other permutations		32	46	40	53	15	44
Total			69	100	76	100	34	100

6 – Critical discourse analysis

The analysis thus far demonstrates that the mediated debate predominantly pitched PFI-advocates against PFI-sceptics. Few sources argued for privatisation or, in particular, social alternatives and, consequently, these two perspectives were effectively excluded from the debate. Hence, the next stage of analysis assesses the extent to which the media narrative reproduced those of the most favoured source groups, namely senior government ministers; trade union leaders; and business.

To better understand the combatants' respective discourses, it is important to first consider the macro-narrative that dominated Tony Blair's tenure as Labour Party leader. This was underpinned by the acceptance of contemporary capitalism, if necessary at the expense of traditional Labour principles. Such apparent pragmatism was based on the belief that the 'real world' was immutable, and hence, political parties, party members and citizens must modify their expectations. This assumption was the essence of 'New Labour', the 'rebranding' of the party which was introduced to the public at Blair's first party conference as leader in 1994 when he launched the campaign to rewrite Clause Four of the party's constitution which would formally drop Labour's defining commitment to public ownership. Although the plans were resisted by some in the Party (Sopel 1995), the rewrite was finally approved in April 1995.

Some believe this made a significant contribution to Blair's landslide election victory two years later (Anderson and Mann 1997:31-34) but as Tony Benn observed, Labour had such a huge, persistent lead in the opinion polls that 'abandon(ing) our

124 Row A is derived from the sum of the vertical striped area in tables 18a – 18c, Appendix 2.2; row B is the sum of the horizontal striped area; and row C is the sum of the grey shaded area. The remainder are grouped as 'other permutations'

faith' was totally unnecessary and by insisting on a rewrite, Blair was showing his true Thatcherite credentials (Benn 2002:316.) Indeed, the new Clause Four endorsed: 'the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition ... joined with the forces of partnership and co-operation,' and these words: 'for the first time made it explicit that Labour was in the business of managing capitalism rather than transcending it' (Anderson and Mann 1997:33.) In his victory speech, Blair stressed that the rewrite of Clause Four was the first of many steps (*ibid.*) Indeed, change and modernisation were at the heart of New Labour philosophy from the outset (Campbell 2007:16). In 1996, for instance, Blair wrote:

... we live in a radically changed world... (and) we need to construct a new and radical politics to serve the people in the new century ahead (in Radice 1996)

Crucially, it was the Labour Party and Britain that would be changed rather than capitalism or 'the world', and Blair's numerous reiterations snuffed out any chance of a resurgence from the radical left. On the day the new Clause Four was approved, Tony Benn observed: 'the (broadcast) media tonight are dancing on the grave of socialism' and he cited an article by Blair - in the next day's *Sunday Mirror* - which argued for a reduced role in Labour Party policy making for those whom had dissented, particularly the trade unions (Benn 2002:316, Sopel 1995:299.) Indeed, Benn had previously noted Blair's insistence that he would ignore Conference defeats (Benn 2002:273) and saw signs in Blair's 1994 Conference speech of a divisive narrative thread that complemented the acceptance of the market:

... by attacking Marx and saying he would end Clause Four, Blair opened up a huge and unnecessary debate... in the hope of isolating the left and making them look like troublemakers (*ibid.*)

Although Labour secured a huge popular mandate in 1997, Blair was 'preoccupied with the knowledge' that Labour had only been elected with substantial majorities on two prior occasions – 1945 and 1966 – and both times, the party had gone on to lose the next election through the 'absence of a sustaining strategy' (Straw 2011.) Hence, the 2001 manifesto introduced the next modernising step : '... a big ambition for Britain - a mission for reform of public services' (Blair in *Guardian* 2001a.) The manifesto reaffirmed the 1997 pledge of no increase in income tax and focussed on quantifiable improvements in public services with more nurses, doctors, teachers and police officers. It also confirmed that companies would have greater involvement:

Where private-sector providers can support public endeavour, we should use them. A "spirit of enterprise" should apply as much to public service as to

business (Labour Party 2001:17) Labour won a second landslide in June 2001 and public service reform was high on the agenda at the Party Spring Conference in February 2002 where Blair, eager to fulfil the manifesto pledge, angered union leaders by using the phrases 'reformers versus wreckers' and 'small C conservatives' to describe those whom resisted public service reform (BBC 2002i.) Indeed, the discourse of senior Labour ministers in the first period of this case study - autumn 2002 - conceived PFI as an essential component of an all-encompassing modernisation of the public sector which was both desirable and unassailable (Brown in Jones, G 2002, Clarke in Stone-Lee 2002a.) As Gordon Brown stressed in his 2002 Party Conference speech, there was no place for the policies of yesteryear (emphases added):

If we *retreat* from the PFI and still say that schools and hospitals have got to be built, we will end up with the *old* quick fixes and *retreat into unsustainable borrowing*. That I am not prepared to do (Brown in Elliott and Wintour 2002a)

In these terms, alternatives to PFI that involved government borrowing did not represent the *status quo* so much as a retrograde step. According to the New Labour philosophy, the policies of the past were incongruous with the present by definition, and they certainly had no role to play in the future. In a pamphlet reproduced in the *Guardian* shortly before the 2002 Conference, Blair restated the 'political case for change', stressing that 'radical reform' was the 'route to social justice' (Blair 2002a.) Hence, PFI epitomised the Blair government's strategy that combined social liberalism (improving public services) with neoliberalism (the involvement of the private sector.) This credo was also prominent in the prime minister's Conference speech (Blair 2002), delivered the day after delegates defeated the motion to back PFI, in which he stressed the necessity of reform in a world driven by the irresistible forces of globalisation and technology. These forces brought both 'opportunities' and 'insecurity', said Blair, and they had produced conditions under which left-of-centre parties could thrive, but only if they embraced change (emphases added):

The values of *progressive politics - solidarity, justice for all* - have never been more relevant; and their application never more in need of modernisation

Evoking the spirit of Clement Atlee's post-war government, Blair said the there was an historic opportunity to create a new type of society (emphases added):

...it means taking the *great progressive* 1945 settlement and reforming it around the needs of the *individual* as *consumer* and *citizen* for the 21st century

Blair's use of 'individual' and 'consumer' is telling, and by combining words embedded in free market thinking with those of 'progressive' politics ('solidarity, justice for all') he encapsulated the belief that no trade-off was necessary between the two positions, providing the Party supported reform:

What we did for the Labour Party in the new Clause Four, freeing us from outdated doctrine and practice, we must now do, through reform, for Britain's public services and welfare state

Blair urged the Party to 'quicken the march of progress' (Blair in Davies, M 2002a) and the only impediments on this 'journey of modernisation' were, as with Clause Four, 'outdated doctrine and practice' (Blair 2002.) Although, in his speech in early September 2002 at the TUC Conference, Blair had been pointed in his criticism of: 'self-indulgent rhetoric from a few that belong, frankly, in the history books' (in Maguire 2002b), he was generally vague about the location of this anachronistic resistance and he usually avoided using inflammatory labels. Labour Party chairman, Charles Clarke, however, was much more direct and said that by opposing PFI, the trade unions had created a 'classic producer-consumer division' which threatened the delivery of new and improved public services (Clarke in Stone-Lee 2002a.) At the party conference, Gordon Brown branded the unions' stance as 'ideological dogma' (in BBC 2002a). Consequently, the unions - and other members of the 'old left' - were conveniently positioned as the enemy within, whose contrary views were, by definition, outdated, divisive and therefore, easily dismissible.

Faced with such a finely-honed, coherent and tightly co-ordinated onslaught, the PFI-sceptics within the Party were fighting a rearguard action. There was clearly an intolerance of dissenting views and, as Tony Benn observed, Blair's rhetoric showed no sense of participation; it was a 'managing director's speech' (Benn 2007:63.) The Labour leadership's representation of the unions' position and motives was also disputed: TUC general secretary John Monks, for example, maintained that the unions were eager to contribute but they had been hit with a blunt ultimatum. The exclusion of the unions from policy debates said Monks, showed: 'everything that is wrong with British corporate governance.'

The government has not said to the unions 'how can you help us to solve these problems?' Instead we just get told that we must modernise or die (Monks in Maguire and Kettle 2002a)

John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB, also refuted the troublemaker charge. He too highlighted the unions' desire to 'be part of the solution' and stressed that

support from the workforce, not business, was the key to improved public services:

The years of experience that our members have in public service could be used to shape real improvements that will make a difference to the public rather than allowing private firms to make a profit to the detriment of quality services (Edmonds in BBC 2002h)

Other union leaders focussed on the rationale of PFI. The general secretary of Unison, Dave Prentis, accused the government of ignoring the ‘evidence’ and being driven by ‘ideology’ (in BBC 2002h.) He also highlighted the shortcomings of a policy that: ‘...wastes money, wastes time and fails any objective test of value for money.’ Like Edmonds, Prentis objected that ‘during a period of unprecedented public investment, huge profits are going into private pockets’ when the money would be better spent on ‘essential public services’ (in Schifferes 2002b.) Some trade union leaders also believed that their position was wilfully misrepresented by the Labour hierarchy. Bill Morris, general secretary of the TGWU, dismissed the accusations that the unions would ‘shut up shop ... to stop this particular policy (PFI).’ Instead, he saw the union movement as the voice of caution:

...the cost ... is so horrendous for the next generation because some of the people who are funding the capital up front are taking 30 year profit up front (Morris in Davies B, 2002a)

Indeed, union leaders reiterated the rationale for their opposition to PFI. It was not, as the government claimed, ‘outdated doctrine and practice’ (Blair 2002) that motivated their actions but a wholly reasonable scepticism which, ironically, mirrored that of the Labour Party’s senior figures five years earlier while in opposition (Darling in Elliott and Atkinson 2007:131.) This was neatly summed up in a letter from Dave Prentis to constituency Labour parties before the debate:

There is widespread concern that PFI is inherently flawed and we believe it is now time for the government to review its position and explore other funding options (Prentis in Travis and Maguire 2002a.)

These first-person statements from union leaders during the 2002 sample period demonstrate that they saw themselves as integral members of the Labour movement who had a right, indeed a duty, to express their members’ – and the public’s – rational concerns about PFI. Indeed, the union leaders positioned themselves as the guardians of Labour values (see Simpson in Maguire 2002a.) Tactically, the unions hoped to stimulate public support by framing PFI as poor value for money and an insidious form of privatisation. The government deflected such accusations and pointed at the Tories as the true standard-bearers of privatisation (Brown in BBC

2002a.) In addition, the government emphasised that the unions were stubborn contrarians, inhibitors to the ‘march of progress’ (Blair in Davies, M 2002a), and blind to the inevitability of change, reform and modernisation. Ministers maintained that PFI was the only financing mechanism that could realise the Party’s electoral promise to rapidly rejuvenate public services, and by objecting to PFI, the unions showed that they would selfishly deny the public new schools and hospitals. These two political discourses competed for media exposure during the 2002 sample period and the next section considers the extent to which the publications reproduced the positions.

The reproduction of political narratives

The logical starting point for assessing the BBC’s preferred discourse was the index page of an ‘In Depth’ report called ‘Private Profit, Public Gain?’ (BBC 2003a.) BBC editors obviously considered private finance an important issue in the first period of this case study as this report carried articles dated September 3 2001 to February 12 2003. With the title phrased as a question, the contents were immediately cast in a contentious light. Indeed, the index page invited readers to vote on whether private firms should run public services¹²⁵, and the lower page provided hyperlinks to articles grouped in six sections generally congruent with government departments: defence; health; education; etc.¹²⁶ The upper three sections gave more general perspectives of PFI/PPP, and the lead section listed eight hyperlinked titles (emphases added):

Blair denies *rift* with Brown
Blair: *No compromise* on PFI
Blair backs foundation hospitals
Brown takes up private cash *battle*
Labour’s *public* row over privatisation
Blair woos unions over PFI
Brown and Prescott *maul* the unions
Taxpayers cash ‘wasted’ on PFI

Although this version of the web page was last edited in February 2003, seven of these eight stories were published immediately before or during the Labour Party Conference in 2002, so this was clearly deemed to be a defining period. In these articles, conflict was the dominant theme (‘rift’, ‘no compromise’, ‘public row’, ‘battle’), Tony Blair was the protagonist in half of the items, and the only other named actors – Gordon Brown and John Prescott – were involved in particularly belligerent scenarios. The unnamed ‘unions’ were both wooed and mauled, and taxpayers cash

125 Sixty-one percent of the public were against (BBC 2003a)

126 See Appendix 2:4

was ‘wasted’ (with the inverted commas suggesting that this was merely an opinion.)

The second section of the index page was titled ‘Union malaise’ and the lead article featured a colour photograph of Tony Blair in mid-speech against a background shot of a teacher and pupils. The title and standfirst read (emphasis added):

Unions to tackle Blair on privatisation

The trade unions and the government are heading for a *major confrontation* over the private finance of public services

The headline suggested agreement with the unions that PFI was synonymous with privatisation, a word which was commonly used in pejorative sense (Monbiot 2001:9, Whitfield 2001:5.) Indeed, the unions’ discourse often incorporated the use of ‘privatisation’ to galvanise public support but this headline was a rare glint of exposure for the PFI-sceptic position and the majority of article titles in the remainder of this section presented the unions as self-centred and aggressive. No mention was made of *why* the unions were so animated and, unlike the first section list, PFI was not even mentioned. The only named actor in this section was Tony Blair who was awarded a disciplinarian role (emphases added):

Unions *flex their muscles* *

Unions warned over 'self-indulgence' *

Public sector *fears*

Why unions are *militant* *

Number 10 denies 'wreckers' apology **

Union *fury* at Blair *warning* **

Blair *takes on* public service 'wreckers' **

Blair speech: Key quotes

Ringside view of union *fightback* **

Unions *erupt* in public services row **

Don't blame it all on us – Blunkett **

Only three of the 12 articles in this section were included in the quantitative analysis: six (marked with a double asterisk) referred to the private finance debate at the 2002 Labour Party Spring Conference and three (single asterisk) were not picked up by the search¹²⁷. Nevertheless, it is clear from the references to ‘wreckers’, ‘muscles’ and ‘fury’ that the unions were framed by the BBC as a problem. Indeed, the section title - ‘Union malaise’ - explicitly linked the unions to sickness, although it is not clear if the malady afflicted the country, the Labour Party, Tony Blair or indeed the unions themselves.

¹²⁷ None of the four search terms were present in these articles. Instead, the articles made reference to the ‘privatisation of public services’ and ‘the private sector’

It was evident from the layout, the running order, and the titles on this index page that the BBC largely conceived PFI/PPP as conflict. Crucially, this was not a battle of ideas but a visceral war between named senior ministers and an anonymous mass of ‘unions.’ Furthermore, with one possible exception¹²⁸, the index page gave no exposure to the preferred discourse of the PFI-sceptics. In contrast, the upper half of the page resonated with the government discourse. The second subheading – ‘Union malaise’ - bracketed the unions as an illness that was, according to the subsequent article titles, destructive, volatile and selfish. Only in the third section – ‘analysis’ - were questions posed that might help readers make an informed decision about the merits of private finance. It was also notable that ‘business’, and the private sector in general, were never criticised and each of the subheadings for the ‘government departments’ (defence, education, health, etc.) was positive or neutral about private finance. Although the comparison is far from perfect, if ‘Private Profit, Public Gain?’ were a book, and the index page was the table of contents, a casual reader might conclude that this was primarily an account of how a trio of determined politicians delivered new life into public services, with the help of the private sector, in the face of blind opposition from the unions.

This is not to say, however, that the arguments of the PFI-sceptics were ignored by the BBC. On the contrary, many articles with links on the index page contained substantial explanation of the dissenters’ position. As the quantitative analysis showed, trade union leaders were frequently quoted, often at length, and two articles in the sample period gave them *carte blanche*. The first featured around 100 words from each of four union leaders who outlined their hopes for the TUC Conference. There was no journalistic narrative and yet the choice of title - ‘Trade union demands’ – suggested that the leaders were far less reasonable than their own words had stated (BBC 2002m.) Similarly, the outgoing general secretary of the TGWU, Bill Morris, was the subject of an interview (Davies, B 2002a) in which he used an accounting metaphor to describe the current relationship between the government and the union movement which, said Morris, had over the last five years:

...significantly addressed the debit side: we've delivered on every single count in terms of days lost through industrial disputes, in terms of the quality of what we do, in terms of the relationship supporting government. Now we want the government to address the credit side

¹²⁸ Taxpayers cash ‘wasted’ on PFI

The journalist immediately added detail to Morris' statement:

By that he means issues like low pay, the current crisis over pensions, the plight of British manufacturing and working conditions

For many people, these are eminently virtuous causes yet the title of the article condensed the interview into an uncompromising and selfish position: 'Morris: Payback time for the unions.' The lead photographs in these two articles were montages of suited union leaders who, in most cases, were captured with earnest expressions¹²⁹. The photos had a purple tint which presented the subjects in a distinctly dim light. Lead photographs of Blair, Brown and Prescott, however, were discernibly sharper, more colourful and dynamic than any of the union leaders'. Furthermore, two photographs featured senior ministers with public service workers in the background, whereas in their photographs, the union leaders lurked alone in the shadows¹³⁰.

In the prelude to the Conference debate, BBC articles informed readers that 'left-wingers' had taken '..control of many of the UK's unions' (Davies M, 2002a) and unions were: '... more militant than for years and are being led by more left-wingers than for almost two decades' (Assinder 2002a.) Readers were also reminded that unions had been: 'previously fingered as "wreckers" and "the forces of conservatism"' (Assinder 2002b) by senior ministers. A PFI critic within the Parliamentary Labour Party, Llew Smith, was described as an: 'old-fashioned socialist' (BBC 2002n), and a sceptical Conference attendee, James Conway, was 'on the left of the party' (Stone-Lee 2002b.) By lumping opponents of PFI in the 'left', these articles echoed the divisive, 'them and us' discourse of the government. Revealingly, Blair *et al* were never referred to as being on the 'right' of the Labour Party: indeed, in an informative and otherwise evenly balanced article about private finance and the NHS, there was no recognition that 'ideology' might also guide the PFI-advocates:

Unions have been up in arms over many of these policies but ministers insist ideology must not stand in the way of better healthcare (BBC 2002j)

Rather than highlighting that the sceptics had effectively won the argument, the BBC article covering the crucial PFI debate was framed in personal terms. Blair, rather than the policy, was defeated, and he was the victim of fratricide (emphases added)

129 See Appendix 2:3

130 See Appendix 2:3

Blair suffers conference defeat

Tony Blair has suffered an overwhelming defeat *at the hands of his own conference* over *his* programme of using private cash to run public services (Assinder 2002)

However, twenty-four hours after this ‘embarrassing defeat’ (Assinder 2002d), the same journalist clearly enjoyed a ‘defiant’ prime minister’s speech. Again, there was no acknowledgement of the debate, and the author celebrated the growing distance between Blair and a significant proportion of the Party:

In what all would agree was a powerful and defining speech...Blair set his sights on the horizon, pressed his pedal to the metal - and waved goodbye to a large section of the Labour movement (Assinder 2002c)

Later, in his review of the week, Assinder conceived the speech as ‘Blair’s turning point’ (Assinder 2002e), not because his arguments had prevailed, but because he had strengthened his reputation through dogged determination. The prime minister was ‘at the top of his game’ and he had told ‘delegates to like it or lump it.’ Blair was again credited for creating distance between himself and a disgruntled rank-and-file. Indeed, ignoring the party membership was presented as a virtue and the union-led dissent was characterised as little more than anachronistic posturing. This was the Conference, wrote Assinder (emphases added):

...where Tony Blair finally took the step he has been hesitating over from day one. And it was a million mile long stride away from the *old comrades who were trying to flex their muscles* (ibid.)

Assinder’s admiration had echoes of an earlier article by Andrew Marr who described Blair’s speech to the TUC Conference as ‘masterful’ (Marr 2002a.) Marr’s preview of the Labour Party Conference conceptualised the debates as a spectator sport rather than serious politics: ‘Book your tickets now,’ he advised. Indeed, as evident in the article titles on the ‘Private Profit, Public Gain?’ index page, the arguments for and against PFI were secondary to the conflict. Furthermore, even when the debate was dissected, there were hints of trivialisation. For instance, the key explanatory article, ‘What is PFI?’ (BBC 2002b), began (emphases added):

The *creeping privatisation of public services* under New Labour is one of the *main gripes* of the trade unions, and is certain to *sour the air* at the party’s conference this week. But does anyone really understand what a “public-private partnership”, or a “private finance initiative” is? Never fear: BBC News Online has the answers¹³¹

131 See Appendix 2.4 for the full article

During the 2002 sample period, the BBC journalists strongly reproduced the narrative of the Labour leadership. The contest was framed as a battle of wills, rather than ideas, between New and Old Labour with the latter desperately hanging on to *passé* 'ideology'. Private finance itself rarely featured in the analysis, and discussions about its merits and pitfalls were pushed to the periphery. Some BBC journalists expressed overt admiration for Blair's tactics and rhetoric, which were seemingly more significant than Conference's rejection of Party policy. Furthermore, the light-hearted tone of some articles contrasted sharply with the serious and wide-ranging implications of private finance to the general public.

There was no hint of levity in the *Guardian's* coverage of PFI in autumn 2002. Indeed, the newspaper published a focused and sombre leader on the day of the PFI debate - September 30 - and another before Blair's speech a day later. The former wondered why, with the Conservatives in disarray, the Labour Party only had a single digit lead in the opinion polls. The reason, suggested the author, was:

...Labour's tin ear towards what its supporters are saying and the cracked tone in which it often addresses them. It is not enough to say that Labour is merely a victim of modern political disengagement. Labour is also the author of too many of its own worst problems (*Guardian* 2002a)

The next day's leader unequivocally stated the *Guardian's* position: 'The PFI needs a review: Tony Blair must address party concerns'; and the final lines were equally direct and unequivocal:

The unions were right to want a review and ministers wrong to deny them. The prime minister needs to seriously address delegates' concerns today (*Guardian* 2002b)

Two of the *Guardian's* most prominent columnists were vehement sceptics. During the TUC Conference, George Monbiot wrote an impassioned article praising the union campaign (Monbiot, G 2002a.) The unions were not just fighting for better pay and conditions for their members, argued Monbiot, they were fighting for the future of public services:

(the unions) see part-privatisation as symptomatic of the corporate takeover of Britain, and ... in turn, as symptomatic of its willingness to side with power against the powerless

Monbiot predicted that the unions would soon become 'the United Kingdom's official opposition' and looked forward to a time when 'a revitalised union movement will encourage the rest of us to organise more effectively' (*ibid.*) Like Monbiot, Polly

Toynbee was in favour of a review and believed government accusations of union stubbornness were groundless and hard evidence of PFI's merits was lacking. She also said there was a 'gaping hole' in Tony Blair's pamphlet, *Courage of Our Convictions* (Blair 2002a), published on page six of the same newspaper. Toynbee used emotive language to describe this void which she perceived as (italics added):

... the convictions themselves. There is no understanding of the value of the public sphere just because it is public. There is no *warmth* that recognises the *affection* people feel for public institutions, the *trust* and *pride* felt by *stakeholding citizens who are not mere customers* (Toynbee 2002a)

The day before the debate, a comment piece in the *Observer* from TGWU general secretary, Bill Morris, was headed with a poignant and graphic title: 'This knife in our heart... private profit will destroy our core public services' (Morris 2002.) This stood in stark contrast with the title of Morris' BBC's interview: 'Morris: Payback time for the unions' (Davies, B 2002a) and, indeed, like Toynbee, Morris believed that Blair was blind to the political, moral and even spiritual arguments for public services remaining in the public sector: Public services are immiscible with the private sector, wrote Morris, because the former:

... define our society and are a measure of our humanity. They are the basis of our common capital and the embodiment of the contract between citizen and state (Morris 2002)

However, PFI-sceptics did not have a monopoly on the *Guardian's* op-ed pages. On September 30, Digby Jones, head of the CBI compared union leaders to 'latter day (King) Canutes' (Jones, D 2002.) Jones said PFI was an part of a ceaseless 'tide of change' and the unions were only delaying the inevitable. Dissent was pointless because there was simply no alternative: the world is constantly changing and the unions risked being flattened by the: 'impatient waves of public satisfaction.' For Jones, the consumer was sovereign and unions had a patriotic duty to concur:

The tax-paying, voting customer must come first, not political ideology, power broking or vested interests. Business will play its part, the government clearly is - now it is up to the unions to put country first and do the same (*ibid.*)

This article's distinct neoliberal discourse sat in sharp contrast with the *Guardian's* other PFI-related content. Indeed, Jones' language resonated strongly with Blair's pamphlet (Blair 2002a), his Conference speech (Blair 2002), and an *Observer* interview (Rawnsley and Ahmed 2002), all of which were founded on the inevitability of change; the need for reform; and the centrality of the consumer-citizen. Some phrases were almost identical: Jones wrote of 'politically motivated rhetoric' and

'indulgent voices of the left' and, in his speech to the TUC Conference, Blair condemned: 'the "self-indulgent rhetoric" of his most vocal leftwing union critics' (Maguire 2002b.)

Naturally, senior ministers' PFI-related speeches and statements were covered in detail by the *Guardian* but the newspaper's accompanying narrative was, unlike the BBC's, generally neutral with no praise for resoluteness and certainly no barely-disguised admiration for Blair the performer, as displayed by the BBC's Marr and Assinder (see above.) Like the BBC, the *Guardian* employed bellicose language for headlines and key explanations: Tony Blair, for example, gave a 'full-blooded defence' of PFI (White and Walker 2002a), 'unions square(d) up to Brown for fight on PFI' (Maguire 2002c); and the TUC declared: 'outright war on the private finance initiative' (Gow 2002c.) Despite their widespread use, however, belligerent labels in the *Guardian* tended to be less prominent, and their timbre somewhat gentler than the BBC's. For example, in the *Observer* there was a 'union-led revolt' and a 'grassroots' rebellion' from 'people parked well to the left of Tony Blair' (Rawnsley and Ahmed 2002.) Elsewhere, 'increasingly vocal' critics (White and Walker 2002a.) were urged to 'step back from confrontation' (White 2002a,) while union leaders 'toughened (their) criticism' (Maguire 2002a.) The BBC's grammar of division and conflict, by which, for example, militant unions 'flexed their muscles' (Schifferes 2002c) and Blair 'waved goodbye to a large section of the Labour movement' (Assinder 2002c), was absent in the *Guardian's* reporting.

As essential reading for both the Labour Party and trade union leaderships, the *Guardian* was the most obvious forum for detailed, balanced and impassioned debate. The *Telegraph*, however, had a potential editorial dilemma: its preferred political party was effectively absent from the debate and traditionally, the *Telegraph* was antipathetic to both the Labour Party and the unions. Furthermore, with such a relative dearth of *Telegraph* articles in the 2002 sample, vivid examples of political discourse were fewer in number and yet no less illustrative of this newspaper's position. This was most clearly displayed in a leader on October 1: 'Blair's day of judgement' (*Daily Telegraph* 2002b.) The author awarded no significance to Conference's rejection of PFI – it was nothing more than a 'symbolic ear-boxing' for Blair – but there was unambiguous support for the prime minister's single-mindedness:

These motions and speeches have, of course, no power to change government policy - and a good job, too. The Prime Minister is right about

PFI, just as he is right about Iraq

The next day, another editorial paid tribute to Blair's speech in which he: 'showed once again why he is the leading political operator of his generation' (*Daily Telegraph* 2002c.) Echoing the BBC's Assinder and Marr (see above), the author acknowledged that Blair: 'remains a class act, the best tactician in any party and an increasingly skilful speaker' and found little to disagree with in terms of policy:

Nearly everything he had to say about the need to replace "the monolithic provision" of health and education with services tailored to individuals could have been lifted straight from a Right-wing pamphlet

Blair's speech clearly plucked at the *Telegraph*'s political heart strings - another article observed 'a Thatcherite tone' (Jones, G 2002c) - and the only frustration with the prime minister was his apparent immunity from criticism from both sides of the political spectrum:

Neither the malcontents on his own side nor the Conservatives have yet been able to lay a glove on him (*Daily Telegraph* 2002c)

Perhaps surprisingly, the Labour 'malcontents' were not given divisive or pejorative labels in the *Telegraph*, nor was the debate reported in particularly warlike language. Unions were 'bitterly opposed' to PFI (Sparrow 2002a), and were 'angry' about private finance (Jones, G 2002b.) But there was no talk of 'battle' (BBC 2002k) merely a less harmful 'collision course' (Jones, G 2002b) with the government, upon whom the unions inflicted an 'embarrassing defeat' (Brogan 2002.) Instead of mauling the unions (BBC 2002a), Gordon Brown: 'rejected out of hand their demand for a freeze (of PFI)' (Jones, G 2002.) Apart from a reference to a 'bruising confrontation between the unions and the Government' (Jones, G 2002a), the *Telegraph*'s language when reporting the debate bore a closer resemblance to the *Guardian*'s than the BBC's.

The normalisation of the business narrative

Like the *Guardian*, there was a plurality of opinion from *Telegraph* commentators. Former chancellor Norman Lamont backed a PFI review on the grounds of the cost of finance (*Daily Telegraph* 2002a); and Boris Johnson described PFI as 'a fraud on the public purse' (Johnson 2002a.) These words may suggest that Lamont and Johnson – and indeed the *Telegraph* – had sympathy with the PFI-sceptics. On the contrary, the *Telegraph*'s dominant discourse combined personal admiration for Blair with subtle yet persistent arguments for *more* private sector involvement in public

services. For example, while agreeing that the government needed to: 'dismantle what Blair called the "monolith" of state provision', Johnson was adamant that PFI was 'not the method' to deliver reform. His prescription was: 'to inject more private finance into health', and, one might presume, other public services too (Johnson 2002a.) Janet Daley thought the unions' arguments 'hysterical' and, although she welcomed the introduction of the private sector, she lamented the persistent 'government monopoly of health and education' (Daley 2002.) *Sunday Telegraph* columnist Matthew D'Ancona advised Blair not to worry about the unions' dislike of PFI because it introduced: 'precisely the sort of labour market flexibility to the public sector that they exist to oppose.' Instead the prime minister should be concerned: 'that the scheme has thus far been so modest in its scale' (D'Ancona 2002a.) This privatisation discourse was also present in the leader on October 1 (*Daily Telegraph* 2002b) which noted the debate on PFI had (emphases added):

...illuminated the fault-lines between Labour's *old-fashioned* politics of tax and spend and the Blairite project of *mobilising the private sector to rescue the public services*

The article also speculated that Blair's speech would make 'no concessions...' demanding instead that Labour *embraces* the private sector even more *warmly*' (emphasis added.) Throughout the *Telegraph* articles, the private sector – and business in particular – was conceived as a dynamic force that could, if freed from restrictions, 'rescue the public services' (ibid.) Large companies were also benign: the private sector was simply 'paid to build and manage government infrastructure projects' (Sparrow 2002a), and, like Janet Daley, Labour Party member Phil Graham, could not understand why union leaders were: 'vehemently against any kind of dealing with the private sector' (Graham 2002.) There was little evidence that the unions held such an absolute 'anti-private sector' position but, on the only occasion that criticism of the business of PFI was aired in the *Telegraph*, the journalist immediately categorised the unions' focus on executive pay as part of an insidious left-wing campaign. The article's first paragraph read: (emphases added)

Trades unionists widened their attack on corporate Britain yesterday condemning "privatisation pay pirates" - company directors who have earned huge pay rises from Government contracts (Millward 2002a)¹³²

The *Telegraph*'s support for increased private sector involvement was also evident in

¹³² The *Guardian* also covered this story but its lead paragraph began: 'Tony Blair yesterday came under union pressure to condemn publicly the excessive pay awards given to senior directors of companies involved in a host of lucrative (PFI) projects' (Gow 2002a)

an explanatory item in which the questions – and their sequence – indicated a priority for fiscal concerns rather than any social consideration: (Batt 2002b)

What is PFI?

Does a PFI contract involve long-term commitments?

Is PFI different from privatisation?

Does PFI reduce government borrowing?

Does PFI offer value for money for the taxpayer?

What don't the unions like about PFI?

Noteworthy here is that 'the unions' were the only apparent dissenters and another *Telegraph* article, by the same author, dismissed union fears of the creation of a 'two-tier workforce' as a 'jibe' (Batt 2002a.) In contrast, the *Guardian* was appreciably more aware of the potential dangers of deeper private sector involvement in public services. George Monbiot (2002b) noted that PFI had 'less public support than Mrs Thatcher's poll tax' and yet one reason it had not been abandoned was it kept: 'a very powerful corporate constituency quiet.' Elsewhere, Monbiot wrote that PFI was symptomatic of 'the government's capitulation to big business' (Monbiot, G 2002a), a view shared, albeit in less colourful language, by other columnists (Morris 2002, Toynbee 2002a.) In the *Observer*, Nick Cohen also focussed on how private companies - in this case defence manufacturers - were profiting excessively from public contracts. Cohen only mentioned PFI in passing but his verdict was scathing (emphases added):

Even a Treasury which had imposed the *state-sponsored larceny* of the Private Finance Initiative had had enough (Cohen 2002a)

One may have expected the BBC's position on the 'business of PFI' to lie somewhere between the *Telegraph*'s enthusiastic support and the *Guardian*'s instinctive suspicion. Yet closer inspection of the 'Private Profit, Public Gain?' index page reveals a distinct lack of scrutiny. There was, for example, no focussed assessment of the potential size of the PFI 'industry', nor did any article investigate the discrepancies between the capital cost and total payments of PFI projects. This information was in the public domain and had been highlighted by several other commentators (for example, Osler 2002:122, Toynbee 2002a) and yet, out of 53 hyperlinks on this page, only three led readers to articles that examined the extent to which companies and shareholders would benefit from PFI. Only one (Gould 2002) was published in the sample period and although the journalist did raise questions about 'excessive profits', these were trumped by a discourse that accepted the concept of private prisons from the start of the article:

Liverpool's profitable prison

Altcourse is one of the new generation of privately built and run prisons. It was designed, constructed and financed by a private consortium, Group Four, and opened at the end of 1997. The company is now responsible for running the establishment

These plain, descriptive words would have been equally at home on Group Four's corporate website. The point of contention was raised in the second paragraph but it was framed in rather muted terms:

Early reports about the management of the prison have been very favourable. But the financing of the project has raised questions about the amount of money than can be made ... in the prison business

The casual use of these final two words – and the lack of speech marks - suggests that the commercialisation of incarceration was non-contentious, and there was no indication within the remainder of the article that PFI had generated impassioned debate. Similarly, the most critical article of this trio (BBC 2001a) opened in celebratory mood:

Private company bonanza

Rarely do companies have such good fortune as the government's private finance initiative.... which moves the provision of public services like health and education into the private sector

In these terms, PFI is rather innocuous - services are simply 'moved' - and again, there was no acknowledgement of the surrounding debate. The second paragraph positioned the business of private finance as a source of national pride:

UK plc, or more accurately, a small number of the country's largest companies have reported healthy profits from their involvement in PFIs, which analysts estimate could be worth £30bn in revenues a year

The third critical BBC article (Scott 2001b) pointedly asked 'Is PFI a good deal?' and the journalist purposefully answered the question. Even so this was a rare exception in the BBC sample and it is ironic, given the precision and inquisitiveness of the report's title - 'Private Profit, Public Gain?' - that it was the *unions'* motives and goals, rather than those of senior managers, directors and shareholders, that were examined most closely. This is not to say, of course, that the business of PFI went unreported in 2002. On the contrary, 16 percent of BBC news items, a third of the *Guardian's* and nearly a half of the *Telegraph* articles in this year were placed on the business pages and the majority of these articles had purely commercial themes¹³³. But as already demonstrated, the primary debate in 2002 pitched PFI-sceptics

133 See page 104

against *political* advocates and, consequently, the business of PFI – and the corporate credo of maximising shareholder value through expanding market share and profit growth - went largely unchallenged. Although some significant *Guardian* articles did question the societal impact of the profit-focussed provision of public services, many simply reported on PFI contractors' business issues (share price, debt, personnel changes, etc.) with no reference whatsoever to the broader debate (for example, Mathiason 2002a, Macalister , 2002c, 2002d.) Indeed, for the BBC, the *Telegraph* and even the strongly sceptical *Guardian*, the business of PFI existed primarily in an hermetically-sealed domain, outside disputed territory and within these numerous articles the discourse was purely commercial.

In 2007, both the 'New Labour' and PFI-sceptical narratives were largely absent. Indeed, as noted above¹³⁴, business voices were more prevalent, albeit marginally, than senior ministers or trade union sources. Furthermore, some 37 percent of articles contained only weak references to private finance with the search terms appearing as snippets of background information. In all three media, although criticisms were occasionally raised, the dominant discourse was non-contentious. Many BBC items were short news pieces about a non-financial issue at a school, hospital or other public sector facility. For example, the only reference to PFI in an article about a school closing because of the discovery of the Legionella bacteria was in the fifth paragraph:

The school, which is maintained under a council Private Finance Initiative by engineering firm Jarvis, saw a similar incident in May last year (BBC 2007d)

Some BBC articles in this category were akin to corporate press releases that succinctly stated, for example, work had begun on a new hospital (BBC 2007e) or that new fire stations would be built in Suffolk (BBC 2007f.) The only sign of a political contest appeared in three articles about the Scottish Parliamentary elections, and of these, only one gave private finance a high billing (BBC 2007g). Although the SNP was 'accused by Labour of ditching its previous *hard line* on PFI and copying its policies instead' (emphasis added), readers were given no reminder that PFI had ever been disputed in the UK as a whole. The BBC also published three articles about the public-private partnership of London Underground and again, although there were significant financial problems, there was only the merest suggestion that PFI/PPP was contentious:

134 See Table 4.3

... the overspend is expected to reach £1bn. BBC business editor Robert Peston said this equated to "taxpayers cash disappearing down a black hole" (BBC 2007i)

Crucially, the BBC did not cover the publication of the parliamentary report that provides the focal point of the 2007 sample period (HCCPA 2007), and apart from a two-paragraph, balanced assessment of the impact of PFI on the NHS, written by a surgeon and buried in an item that reviewed Tony Blair's influence on the health service (BBC 2007h), the 2007 BBC sample was characterised by muted acceptance. Overtly pro- or anti-PFI narratives were equally rare in the newspapers in 2007. Unlike 2002, no editorials or opinion pieces focussed on private finance and, consequently, neither the *Guardian* nor the *Telegraph* portrayed the same degree of allegiance to their respective political positions. Nevertheless, the *Guardian's* reporting maintained a sceptical tone, albeit deep in article texts or in letters to the editor, most of which passed pithy judgement on private finance. For example, Kate Liddell said Gordon Brown's should be remembered: '...as the PFI chancellor who has shovelled public-sector money into the pockets of big business' (Liddell 2007.) There was no coverage of the SNP's plans for a social alternative and the political debate about PFI was restricted to two articles about the Labour leadership contest. In the first, a single paragraph summed up the differing views of the candidates:

Some of the fiercest attacks on Mr Brown came over... his alleged ideological commitment to the Private Finance Initiative. Mr (Michael) Meacher described the PFI as a disaster waiting to happen, but Mr Brown said that, without it, the schools, hospitals and transport programme would be stalled (Wintour 2007a)

In the second article about the leadership contest Gordon Brown's defence of the 'controversial' PFI was briefly mentioned (Woodward and Inman 2007) and the same adjective was applied to the crisis-stricken London Underground PPP (Milmo 2007b.) Although the *Guardian* did cover the publication of the key parliamentary report (Hencke 2007a), this article did not criticise PFI/PPP *per se*, merely the extent to which 'Whitehall' was being 'outwitted by sharp business people when it negotiates private finance initiative deals.' The most cutting criticism, however, came from columnist Nick Cohen who suggested that much of Labour's increased spending on the NHS was wasted:

...readers are well aware that far too much of it went on extortionate PFI contracts, a pig-out at the public's expense by management consultants (Cohen 2007a)

In 2007, the business pages were the natural home for PFI-related articles in the

Telegraph, and most displayed little or no acknowledgement of the debate. Like the BBC and *Guardian*, mentions of PFI were brief and served as background information. For example, paragraph nine of a piece about problems with 'a new generation of "super-size" schools' read:

A £250 million private finance initiative, drawn up by Lancashire County Council, has seen nine high schools in Burnley and Pendle closed down to be replaced by five "super-schools" (Henry 2007)

However, among the purely descriptive accounts of the business of PFI, several articles had a sceptical tone. One, written by a doctor, branded PFI as: 'Perfidious Financial Idiocy... (a) "smoke and mirrors" policy (that) involves mortgaging the future to build shiny new hospitals' (Le Fanu 2007); another described how unsuccessful bidders for PFI contracts 'may pocket millions of pounds in compensation from the NHS' (Donnelly 2007a); and a third reported:

Developers will be handed huge swathes of land worth hundreds of millions of pounds, if the NHS fails to maintain a string of controversial Private Finance Initiative contracts (Donnelly 2007b)

The use of the words 'pocket' and 'handed' suggest that the gains were ill-gotten, with private contractors benefiting from corporate welfare at the expense of NHS budgets. Even so, the *Telegraph* was only a part-time watchdog of taxpayer interests and other news items conceived PFI as a boon for companies and investors. One article in the business section of the *Sunday Telegraph* speculated positively about the prospects of industry-friendly policies from the new prime minister - '(Gordon) Brown is said to want to surprise those who fear a return to socialist business-bashing' – and although PFI 'represents absolutely terrible value for taxpayers' money,' the article reassured readers that 'the PFI bandwagon will continue to roll' (Roberts *et al* 2007.) Also in the business section of the same newspaper, a detailed analysis of the market in PFI equity focussed on the prospects for continued profitability and the threat of changes in legislation. The danger came not from companies profiteering at taxpayers' expense but from the state which might 'claw back a share' in which case, PFI would stand for 'punish freeloading investors' (Halligan and Russell 2007.)

Summary

Although criticisms were occasionally aired in 2007, none of the three publications deemed PFI/PPP worthy of rigorous debate, and the focus was on the delivery of

projects or the impact of private finance on service providers. It was only in the weeks straddling the 2002 Labour Party Conference that disparate narratives were given regular exposure and at all other times, there was a lack of sustained mediated debate. Indeed, for the remainder of 2002 - and the whole of the 2007 sample period - private finance was invariably presented in descriptive, rather than evaluative, terms and, consequently, it was framed as inevitable and non-problematic. Perhaps the most striking finding of this chapter, however, is the extent to which the established form of financing was absent from the debate. Not one article in either year analysed the merits of the public funding method that had prevailed for the previous half century and the arguments tended to be anti-PFI rather than pro-social alternatives. In terms of political sympathies, the quantitative analysis demonstrated that the *Telegraph* supported more private sector involvement in public services, the *Guardian* took a sceptical view and the BBC awarded generally balanced coverage to both positions. However, this observation must be synthesised with the discourse analysis which revealed that the BBC generally reproduced the Labour government's narrative of essential reform and modernisation. In the process, the trade unions were portrayed as belligerent troublemakers who were standing in the path of progress. It is ironic that the public generally shared the unions' opposition to PFI/PPP (BBC 2003a, Unison 2005) and yet the reporting of the debate was generally restricted to the interactions between the political elite and trade union leaders. Indeed, the news media gave only a partial representation of available opinion. In 2002, for example, grassroots actors collectively accounted for six percent of all named sources, research sources made up just three percent, and none of the three publications had a particular propensity to quote either group. Hence, in both years large portions of British society were excluded from the debate. The views of front-line medical staff, teachers, parents, patients, passengers, tax payers, academics and economists were generally ignored by the three media and consequently, the pro-PFI discourse, as promoted by the political elite and business, was, with the exception of the Conference period, uncontested.

5 - TESCO

When measured against a purely commercial yardstick, British supermarkets flourished in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Over this period, supermarkets greatly increased their range of products; the number and size of stores; their presence in the convenience store market; and their geographical reach (Humby *et al* 2008, Seth and Randall 2005.) By 2008, the so-called Big Four - Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury and Morrison - accounted for almost two-thirds of a British grocery market that was worth £120 billion a year (Competition Commission 2008:29, Wood 2008.) Supermarkets have been credited with helping to reduce inflation, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs; transforming shopping habits and redefining the economics of agriculture (Hall 2011, Bevan 2005, Sampson 2004:305, NEF 2003.) Supporters claim these are the inevitable consequences of adapting to changes in society, competing ferociously and satisfying public demand for choice, value and convenience (in Monbiot 2001:165, Bevan 2005.)

The primary focus of this case study is Tesco which consolidated its position as the UK's pre-eminent supermarket chain throughout the 2000s. During the decade, it became a Britain's most valuable retail brand (Gibson 2006, Foxwell 2008), a corporate role model (Seth and Randall 2011:43) and even a 'bellwether' for the UK economy (Kleinman 2008, *Sunday Telegraph* 2008.) In 2000, Tesco had one-fifth of the UK grocery market and by 2008, its share had risen to 28 percent, twice as much as its nearest competitor, Asda (Competition Commission 2008:29) and by some estimates, Tesco takes one-eighth of *all* British consumer expenditure (Simms 2007:24, Wood 2011.) The company generated annual net profits in excess of £1 billion every year between 2001 and 2010 and it had the highest operating profit margins of the top seven grocery retailers (Competition Commission 2008:35.) In 2011, Tesco had some 2,700 stores and almost 300,000 employees in the UK, and a further 2,500 stores and 200,000 staff in 13 overseas markets (Tesco 2011.) Ever-growing market share and high profit margins made Tesco increasingly attractive to investors, and from 2002 to 2008, share price growth outstripped the UK food retailing sector and the FTSE-100 (Hemscott 2011.) At the end of the decade, Tesco was the third largest retailer in the world, and arguably the most innovative and ambitious (Duff *et al* 2010, Wood 2011.)

It is evident that supermarkets, Tesco in particular, have been a boon for investors, and many argue that British society as a whole has benefited from lower prices,

increased employment and unquantifiable improvements in convenience. Opinion polls have confirmed widespread public support: a major survey in *Which?* magazine, for example, revealed that 73 percent of Britons approved of supermarkets (Consumer Association 2010.) However, other commentators (Laurence 1998, Fishman 2007) have noted the public's 'love-hate relationship' with supermarkets: an ICM poll revealed that 80 percent of people thought competition rules should be tightened, and almost half agreed that Tesco was 'too big and powerful' (Tooher and Laurence 2005.) A War on Want survey found a similar proportion would welcome 'new laws to redress the balance of power between stores... and their employees... and suppliers' and just 40 percent of people said that low prices were intrinsically beneficial for society (in Hall and Watts 2006.)

Some authors, both in the US and UK, have suggested that large supermarket chains are inherently insidious entities that pay minimal and begrudging attention to the needs of other stakeholders (Quinn 2000, Fishman 2007, Spotts and Greenwald 2006, Bianco 2006, Monbiot 2001, Blythman 2007, Simms 2007.) Such works were part of a broader, contemporaneous narrative that disputed the belief in the inherent, self-evident virtue of markets driven by sovereign consumers and supplied, predominantly, by large corporations. Dissenting voices highlighted corporations' lack of respect for local cultures; antipathy to organised labour; ambivalence to workers' and animal rights; and poor environmental records (Klein 2000, Hertz 2001, Pilger 2002.) Joel Bakan (2004) was particularly pointed and personified the joint-stock corporation as a 'psychopath' with no genuine concern for the negative social consequences of its actions.

Hence, in the period covered by this thesis, admiration for British supermarkets was hardly universal, and as their power grew, so did criticisms from think tanks, such as the New Economics Foundation (NEF 2003); MPs from all parties (Mathiason 2005, Derbyshire 2007a); and numerous stakeholder groups including: farmers; small retailers; environmentalists (FoE 2003, 2004, 2005); development NGOs; trade unions; and heritage groups¹³⁵. Although there was no tightly co-ordinated campaign and these bodies represented disparate arguments, they broadly agreed that the social costs of unfettered expansion of supermarkets must be addressed. Some advocates of the *status quo* were eager to dismiss such objections as part of an 'ideological battle' (Bevan 2005:5-6) and others noted 'little sign in shopper

135 Andrew Simms estimated over 100 groups were involved in campaigns against supermarket power (2007:336)

'behaviour' of the anxieties about the demise of local shops (Seth and Randall 2011:43.) Nevertheless, in the first decade of the century, there was a vibrant debate about the power of British supermarkets.

1 – British supermarkets: advocate and reformist narratives

One goal of this case study is to assess the extent to which different perspectives of British supermarkets, and Tesco in particular, were given exposure and credence by the news media. It is important to note, however, that unlike other issues of the era - the euro, the Iraq War, identity cards, etc - this debate lacked polarisation as few Britons could honestly claim to be vehemently 'against' supermarkets in general, or indeed Tesco. Hence, for the purposes of this case study the debate is defined as a contest between advocates of the *status quo*, typically the supermarkets themselves, and reformists who argued for constraints on supermarket power. A pilot study revealed that the advocates had two distinct narratives: investor and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR.) In contrast, each member group of the reformist coalition had its own agenda and so, before embarking on the content analysis, it is important to define the corporate narratives and describe the reformist arguments in detail¹³⁶.

The primary advocate narrative focused on **investors**. This is clearly visible on Tesco's website where the foundations of corporate success – customer loyalty, store numbers, geographical expansion, etc. - are prominent alongside key financial data (Tesco 2011.) The narrative is also evident in news of annual results (for example, BBC 2006c); and the continuously updated share prices on financial websites and satellite TV. Indeed, a rising share price is paramount to all joint-stock corporations (Spar in Bakan 2004:35) and the Big Four supermarket chains are focused on achieving this goal by placing profit maximisation ahead of all other concerns (Blythman 2007:xvii.) The investor narrative is often rather bland and rarely extends beyond confirmations of strategic directions, financial statements and renewed commitments to sovereign consumers. Audiences are, however, intermittently exposed to the single-mindedness of the profit-making process. In 2004, for example, Tesco's chief executive, Terry Leahy gave a glimpse of the company's limitless aspirations: 'Our market share... is 12.5 percent.. that leaves 87.5 percent to go after' (Leahy in Blackhurst 2004.) On another occasion, in a

¹³⁶ The choice of categories for the reformist arguments was informed by the pilot study and the existing critical literature on supermarket power, in particular Simms (2007), Blythman (2007), Monbiot (2001), FoE (2003) and NEF (2003)

speech to investors, Leahy defined the barriers between the company and its goals:

What saps our strength are high taxes: excessive regulations; inflexible working practices; and the gold plating of EU directives. All of this undermines British businesses... (in Corporate Watch 2004)

In these terms, Tesco is engaged in a righteous¹³⁷ war against legislation and organised labour, and this belligerent form of the investor narrative is also evident in books celebrating the success of supermarkets. Indeed, business writers tend to be more candid than CEOs and often reiterate the amoral, natural Darwinian principles that underpin big business: 'creative destruction', for instance, is a force of nature (Seth and Randall 2011:167) and markets always favour the strong over the weak (Bevan 2005:169.) With its focus on the investor, Tesco is driven by an insatiable appetite for growth¹³⁸ and this manifested itself in the company's expansion overseas, into convenience stores in the UK and diversification away from groceries (Irving 2006, Simms 2007:86-118, Tesco 2011a.)

The reformist arguments against this seemingly irresistible force were founded on the issue of **competition** and its impact on **consumers**. As noted above, four supermarket groups shared almost 70 percent of the UK grocery market (BBC 2000b, Competition Commission 2008:29) which made it one of the most concentrated in Europe (*Economist* 2007) and the supermarkets' steady rise to dominance was closely monitored by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) and the Office of Fair Trading (OFT.) The regulators had investigated the market in 1981 and 1995 and on both occasions, ruled that supermarkets were generally beneficial to consumers (Monbiot 2001:187.) By 1998, however, some newspapers, most notably *The Sunday Times*, had begun campaigns against the comparatively high prices of goods in the UK compared to continental Europe. This put the supermarkets back in the spotlight and prompted the OFT to note: 'concern about the power of the main players' (Laurance 1998.) The OFT deemed the high profitability of the major chains 'required further investigation' (BBC 2000b) and referred the case to the Competition Commission¹³⁹. Initial findings revealed that claims of relatively high prices in the UK were generally unfounded and the Commission concluded that British supermarkets were neither making excessive profits nor 'ripping off' customers (Competition Commission 2000). There was, however, a 'complex monopoly situation' and the supermarkets' collective buying

137 Meeting Leahy, wrote the author, was 'like meeting a religious leader faithfully reciting a creed' (Blackhurst 2004)

138 The growth imperative was neatly summed up by George Monbiot (2007): 'Less is the one thing the superstores cannot sell us'

139 The Competition Commission replaced the MMC in 1999

power made it difficult for other retailers to compete (Bevan 2005:6.) Although concerns were also raised over local concentrations of stores, supplier relationships and below-cost selling, overall the market was ‘broadly competitive’ (Competition Commission 2000, BBC 2000d.)

In 2003, another Competition Commission inquiry considered the takeover of Safeway by Morrison (Competition Commission 2003.) But this - like the 2000 inquiry into Wal-Mart’s purchase of Asda (BBC 2000c) - did little to dampen criticism. Reformists argued that the parameters of the investigation were so limited that the inquiries were fundamentally flawed. Indeed, the 2000 inquiry set the boundaries of subsequent investigations as it drew a distinction between bulk ‘one stop’ and ‘top up’ shopping and thus excluded local, independent stores from deliberations (Blythman 2007: 210-211.) Effectively defining the grocery market as the ‘supermarket market’ ignored evidence that fresh food is considerably cheaper at traditional markets and independent retailers (Monbiot 2001:186, Marks 2005.) On this basis alone, the inquiries had taken a restricted view of consumer choice and, furthermore, their tightly defined briefs had no room to assess the impact of supermarkets on the broader society (Monbiot 2007, *New Statesman* 2003.) Most worrying to the reformists was the self-reinforcing nature of market dominance. By 2006, Tesco had accumulated a ‘land bank’ that, if developed, would double its size (Simms 2007:118.) Massive profits also financed cross-subsidies that pushed down the cost of staple products, thus putting even more pressure on small retailers (Simms in Mesure 2005.)

The second category of reformist arguments relates to supermarkets’ relationships with farmers and other elements of the **supply chain**. The Big Four were often accused of abusing their commercial power by imposing contracts on food producers that were so punitive that the relationship was akin to ‘lord and vassal’ (Blythman 2007:xviii.) This was only possible because of the degree of concentration in the industry: four purchasing departments effectively controlled 75 percent of most categories of supermarket products (Seth and Randall 2011:180.) Agricultural suppliers in particular are so dependent on supermarket orders that they are powerless to oppose onerous buying conditions (Sampson 2004:305.) The 2000 Competition Commission inquiry found a ‘climate of apprehension’ across the supply chain and many suppliers refused to give evidence in name for fear that they’d be punished or delisted by the supermarkets (Tooher and Laurance 2005.)

Nevertheless, the Commission still found that buying practices: ‘adversely affected the competitiveness of some suppliers and distorted competition in the supply market’ (BBC 2000e.) Significantly, the Commission concluded that suppliers were *not* subject to the abuse of buying power but supermarkets were still instructed to develop a new code of conduct (Monbiot 2001:187.) Initially, the code was welcomed by some reformist groups but others were unconvinced from the outset (BBC 2000d.) In 2003, a survey of food producers and suppliers found that the code ‘had done little to protect them from the supermarket chains’ (Stewart and Treanor 2003) and a diverse coalition began lobbying for substantive legislation¹⁴⁰. A year later, however, not one complaint about contravention of the code had been received by the OFT. This was interpreted by the supermarkets as evidence of contentment but others reaffirmed that dissent could be easily traced (Bevan 2005:180.) *The Mail on Sunday* was scathing about the code which ‘had done nothing to break... the stranglehold over everyone from small farmers to major food processing companies’ (Tooher and Laurance 2005.) Indeed, the worsening plight of British farmers was highlighted over the first half of the decade and juxtaposed with record profits of the supermarkets. Many farmers were selling below cost price in the 2000s and this period was characterised by increasing numbers of farm closures, a reduction in supplier diversity, and historically low incomes (Monbiot 2001:180, Bevan 2005:169-170, Purvis 2003.) For Friends of the Earth, the root cause was the ‘unchecked growth’ of the market-leader, Tesco (in Mesure 2005.)

The third group of reformist arguments concerns the impact of supermarkets on **local communities and the environment**. Although advocates of the *status quo* reject a causal relationship, there is compelling evidence of a correlation between the expansion of supermarkets and the demise of independent retailers (Kingsnorth 2008, Purvis 2004, DETR 1998, Monbiot 2001:166-172.) The net effect of this corporate supremacy, argue the critics, is the creeping homogenisation of British High Street and an accompanying diminution of product diversity (Simms 2007:10, 50, Blythman 2007:xix.) The New Economics Foundation suggested that the problem extends far beyond aesthetics or choice: a new out-of-town supermarket can drain so much money from local circulation that the whole micro-economy can reach a ‘tipping point’ as shoppers desert the traditional centre *en masse* (NEF 2003.) The closure of independent shops also has a negative multiplier effect as other local businesses lose trade - because supermarkets tend to negotiate national deals with ancillary

¹⁴⁰ Groups included the British Independent Fruit Growers' Association, the National Farmers' Union, and Friends of the Earth (Stewart and Treanor 2003)

suppliers - and this further erodes community cohesion (*New Statesman* 2003, Blythman 2007:215.) Also, in their ceaseless quest for growth, supermarkets in the 1990s began to diversify into sectors as disparate as personal finance, fashion, books, mobile phones, and property, and greatly expand their range of products in other areas, notably alcoholic drinks (*Guardian* 2006, Rickett 2008, Thelwell 2008, Bowers 2008, Jack 2008.) Inevitably, traditional suppliers in these niches struggled to compete with and many went out of business. Tesco also moved into the High Street during the 1990s (Simms 2007:25) and in 2003 it announced intentions to quadruple the number of local Tesco Express stores (Finch 2004.) Critics believed, however, that this encroachment would abstract even more money from the local economy as profits flowed to remote shareholders.

With relatively few supermarket product lines sourced locally (BBC 2005, FoE 2005, Purvis 2004), threats to localism extend the debate to the broader environment. Sourcing the vast majority of products from remote – often overseas - suppliers significantly increases ‘food miles’: an externalised, largely hidden but considerable cost which if included at the checkout would add 12 percent to the average food bill (Connor 2005.) Supermarkets were also accused of using excessive packaging (Purvis 2004, Jardine 2007) and often dictate that fresh produce is delivered ‘just-in-time’, so stock is effectively held on the road in fleets of trucks that oscillate between farms, depots and stores which further adds to pollution, carbon emissions and congestion (Breach 1998.) To the environmentalists, supermarkets’ procurement and distribution policies defies logic: nationally-grown fruit and vegetables remain unpicked while comparable produce is shipped halfway around the world (Paxton 1994, Sustain 1999.) With free parking in out-of-town locations, supermarkets have also contributed to congestion, pollution and road accidents. The average distance of shopping trips increased 14 percent between 1991 and 1996 (GSS 1996) and much was attributed to the increased tendency to drive to supermarkets (Sunderland *et al* 2007.)

The fourth category of reformist arguments relates to **employment**. In 2003, the top four supermarket chains employed 650,000 staff, including Tesco’s 250,000 (O’Hara 2003), and in these naked terms, claims of significant job creation appear irrefutable. However, research commissioned by the retail industry itself, in the guise of the National Retail Planning Forum, found ‘strong evidence’ of a ‘net negative impact on

'retail employment' in the catchment area of superstores¹⁴¹ (Porter and Raistrick 1998.) Furthermore, the NEF calculated that a supermarket had to take five times as much in sales to create a single job than a small local shop (in Monbiot 2001:172.) As well as destroying local jobs and businesses, supermarkets were also accused of being miserly employers that engendered 'a social and economic culture of poverty' (Simms 2007:11) which extended from shop-floor staff to agricultural workers in the UK and overseas (FoE 2005:7.) Less than half of supermarket staff are trade union members and rates of pay are traditionally low. The supermarkets stressed the 'package' (flexible working hours, pensions, etc.) rather than the pay rates (O'Hara 2003), but supermarkets consistently appeared at the bottom of pay league tables, and many positions are part-time and staff retention rates are poor (Blythman 2007: 132.) In addition, some NGOs were critical of the pay and conditions of developing world suppliers and the lack of shelf-space for Fairtrade products¹⁴². War on Want, for example, found garment workers in Bangladesh 'slaving in dangerous factories for 80 hours a week for just 5p an hour,' and Tesco was one of the companies 'named and shamed' (Sunderland *et al* 2007, Finch 2008.)

These four categories of arguments are closely associated with distinct groups of stakeholders: consumers, suppliers, local communities, and workers. The fifth category is less tightly linked with a specific group and these arguments were less likely to be aired than other categories. Nevertheless, the **political influence** of supermarkets, particularly Tesco, is worthy of inclusion, not least because it has a considerable impact on all the others so far discussed. Over the period covered by this thesis, the governing Labour Party received advice and funding from supermarket executives. For example, David Sainsbury was the Party's largest private donor and when he stood down as chairman of Sainsbury PLC, he was elevated to the House of Lords and served as minister for science and innovation (Oliver 2007.) Peter Salsbury of Marks and Spencer was head of the Better Regulation Task Force's Consumer Affairs Group and Lee Scott, chief executive of Wal-Mart, served on the International Business Advisory Council (Monbiot 2001:210, 217, BBC 2006b.) The companies were also represented by the British Retail Consortium which was credited with successfully lobbying to sway government policy, notably amendments to the minimum wage and competition legislation (in Monbiot 2001:205.) As the leading supermarket company, Tesco was first among equals in terms of access and influence (Corporate Watch 2004.) Prior to the 1997

141 The net impact on employment of 93 new store openings was 25,685 job losses, or 276 per store (Porter and Raistrick 1998)

142 Less than one percent of Tesco's product lines were Fairtrade accredited (FoE 2005:6)

general election, Tesco was invited to join Labour's Industry Forum, through which companies were consulted on policy (Osler 2002:53.) The company also made considerable financial donations to the Labour Party and sponsored the Millennium Dome (ibid:165, 232, Oliver 2007) and in 2001, Tesco representatives sat on the boards of six government task forces, including the Competitiveness Advisory Group (Monbiot 2001:203.) Chief executive, Terry Leahy, who was knighted in 2002 (Madslien 2004), served on chancellor Gordon Brown's International Business Advisory Council (BBC 2006b), was a member of the government's National Council for Education Excellence (Paton 2008) and was among a select group of business leaders to have a private meeting with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown in the prelude to the 2001 general election (Osler 2002:209.) Reformists argued that such connections gave supermarket companies – and Tesco in particular - privileged access and, hence, influence over policy that was denied citizens, communities, trade unions and NGOs (Monbiot 2001:165.) Furthermore, supermarkets' lobbying and informal meetings with policy makers occurred largely in private and consequently, they lacked transparency and undermined democracy (Corporate Watch 2004, Osler 2002.)

These five reformist arguments were often countered by the advocates' second narrative: **corporate social responsibility** (CSR.) This contrasted sharply with the investor narrative: instead of stressing the importance of maximising profit, market share and shareholder value, supermarkets positioned themselves as responsible corporate citizens whose role is to satisfy the consumer while remaining sensitive to the needs of other stakeholders (Tesco 2011b.) Although it is debateable if supermarkets have succeeded in their quest to become 'green' and ethical (Sunderland *et al* 2007, Murray-West and Wallop 2006) retailers are particularly adept at emphasising the positive consequences of their actions. Tesco, for instance, regularly highlighted its credentials as a 'good neighbour' (in Finch 2006a) and a 'responsible company' (in Cronin 2005.) However, while some agree that the investor and CSR narratives can happily coexist (Seth and Anderson 2011: 35-6) others believe the two are mutually exclusive¹⁴³. Some reformists view CSR as a cynical public relations exercise that over-emphasises the company's 'good' works but does little, if anything, to change the corporate *modus operandi* (Monbiot 2007, FoE 2005, Simms in Finch 2006a.) Indeed, companies are legally obliged to put shareholders first and directors would be fired if they pursued social priorities (Mickelthwait and

143 This was evident in the subtitle of Robert Greenwald's 2005 film *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Prices* (Bradshaw 2006)

Wooldridge 2005) and, by extension, some notable scholars on the right believe CSR to be a worrying distraction from the true purpose of business¹⁴⁴ (Friedman, Drucker and Spar in Bakan 2004:35.) In 2005, an *Economist* leader was pointed in its criticism of CSR which, it said, was based on a ‘dangerously faulty...analysis of the capitalist system.’ Echoing Adam Smith, the author argued that a company’s greatest social purpose is served by the ‘selfish pursuit of profit’ (*Economist* 2005a.)

2 – Tesco on the news agenda

The content analysis pivots on three dates around which one might reasonably expect supermarkets to be of particular interest to the news media. As illustrated above, the early-2000s had witnessed vigorous debates about supermarket power and on May 9 2006 the most comprehensive Competition Commission investigation of the decade was launched (Wallop 2006.) This promised to address some of the reformists’ criticisms as the investigation had a far wider scope than previous inquiries and included the convenience store sector, land banks, the abuse of buying power and anti-competitive pricing (*Guardian* 2006a.) The second key date is January 23 2007 when the interim report was released (Mathiason 2007) and the third is April 30 2008, the publication date of the final report (Competition Commission 2008.) Hence, LexisNexis was searched for articles in the *Guardian-Observer*, and the *Telegraph-Sunday Telegraph* that mentioned Tesco anywhere in the text for the five weeks straddling each of these key dates. The BBC News website archive was also searched for references to Tesco over the same 35 day periods.

The three years generated 228, 282 and 279 articles respectively and, hence, a total of 789 items form the universal sample. At this stage, it is impossible to determine if the 24 percent increase between 2006 and 2007/8 is significant: it could hint at growing debate about supermarkets, but equally it could also indicate an increase in other Tesco-related news. It is also important to stress that the samples cover different months. There is significant overlap between the 2006 and 2008 periods, but the 2007 sample covered January/February which traditionally have rather different news agendas to the spring months. The most striking feature, however, is the disparity between the media. In each of the three years, the BBC published far

¹⁴⁴ Milton Friedman said corporate executives have just one: ‘social responsibility... to make as much money as possible for their shareholders.’ According to Harvard Business School Professor Debora Spar, corporations are: ‘...not set up to be moral entities... they really only have one mission, and that’s to increase shareholder value’ (in Bakan 2004:34-35)

fewer articles than either of the newspapers: in 2006, Tesco appeared in just 30 BBC articles, compared to 113 for the *Guardian* and 85 for the *Telegraph* and in 2007 and 2008, the newspapers each published over twice as many articles as the BBC¹⁴⁵.

These data show that Tesco had a constant presence in the news but it was apparent that many mentions were totally incidental to the story. These articles invariably contained a single reference to Tesco, for example, as the scene of a crime, or as a source of product, wine or recipe ingredient, with the BBC website most likely to cite the company in the former context and the newspapers in the latter. Some 40 percent of articles¹⁴⁶ in the universal sample fell into this ‘incidental’ category and were removed by the first salience filter¹⁴⁷.

These articles are not directly pertinent this research but it is worth noting that seemingly trivial appearances demonstrate the extent to which Tesco has permeated society. There were numerous citations in the food and drink pages of the newspapers and, more significantly, Tesco was also mentioned in passing as the sponsor of a football skills programme (*Guardian* 2008a) and the British Fashion Council awards (Derbyshire 2007); as a holder of vast quantities of public data (White 2007); and as a benchmark for customer satisfaction (Reid 2007.) Tesco also cropped up in a plethora of cultural contexts including song lyrics (Sawyer 2006); a Banksy artwork (Sooke 2007); a fruitful paparazzi hunting ground (Odone 2007); the brand of peace campaigner Brian Haw’s biscuits (Searle 2007); a shopping destination that proved the everyman credentials of a wealthy boxer (*Guardian* 2007); and as a place of alternative employment for an inept cricket team (*Guardian* 2007a.) Incidental references to Tesco were far more prevalent in the newspapers than on the BBC website: in each of the three years, between a half and a third of *Guardian* and *Telegraph* articles fell into this category, compared to a quarter of BBC articles¹⁴⁸. This is a reflection of the intrinsic differences between commercial newspapers, with opinion pieces and supplements with a variety of consumer-focussed articles, and a public service news website that has very few of the former and none of the latter. For the composite samples, the proportion of articles with incidental references was very similar across the three years at around 40 percent and, on this basis, Tesco appears to have substantial and constant exposure irrespective of any other more significant issues, *ad hoc* announcements or

145 See Appendix 3.2, tables 1a to 1c

146 See Appendix 3.2, tables 2a to 2c

147 See Appendix 3.1 for the criteria of the salience filter

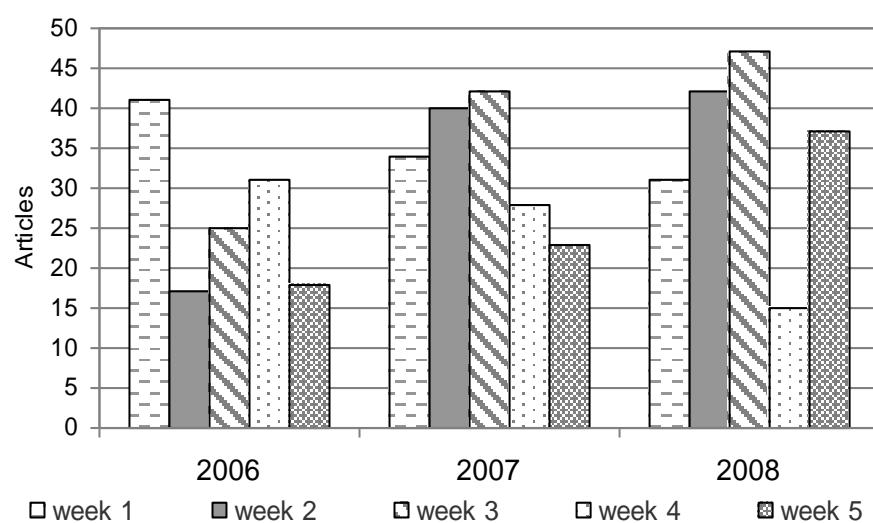
148 The exception was 2006 when 43 percent of BBC articles featured incidental references to Tesco

exceptional events that may push it higher on the agenda. Indeed, such copious references in such diverse contexts underlines Tesco's omnipresence across all spheres of modern life.

Hence, the post-first filter samples for the three years were 132, 167 and 172 articles respectively: a total of 471 items¹⁴⁹. The removal of the incidental references revealed a peak in reporting in the middle weeks of 2007 and 2008. *Figure 5.1* shows growth over the first three weeks of both years and a corresponding fall in the fourth. This pattern was reproduced by each of the media in both years¹⁵⁰ and approximates to the normal distribution one would expect around an important event or announcement. In 2006, however, the first week provided the peak.

Figure 5.1

Weekly distribution of articles (post-first salience filter)



The financial pages were the most common location of articles in the newspapers. Around half of all *Guardian* and 60 percent of *Telegraph* articles that mentioned Tesco appeared in the business sections¹⁵¹. Again, there was a high degree of evenness with no significant change between the years. The second most populous category for the newspapers was general/UK news, which consistently accounted for around a fifth of articles. Generally, the *Guardian* and *Telegraph* were equally likely to mention Tesco in features, weekend magazines and in the personal finance pages, but the former published over four times as many articles in the leaders,

149 See Appendix 3.2, table 2d

150 See Appendix 3.2, tables 3a to 3c

151 See Appendix 3.2, tables 5a to 5c

letters and opinion section than the latter. This could be an indication that the *Guardian* was more active in the debate than the *Telegraph* and the majority of these appeared in 2007. In contrast to the newspapers, nine-tenths of BBC articles fell into two categories: UK news¹⁵² and business. In the absence of comparable supplements, features or personal finance sections on the BBC website, this concentration of articles was to be expected. Likewise, the BBC does not have the same variety of business articles as the newspapers (for example, share tips, opinion pieces, and stock market reviews.) In addition, many BBC articles focussed on issues that might normally appear in the local press but probably not the nationals¹⁵³. Business articles, on the other hand, tend to be national or international and fewer of the BBC news items fell into this category than the newspapers' with the exception of 2007 when around a half appeared in the business pages. The BBC also had a propensity to report with relative brevity¹⁵⁴. On average, four-fifths of BBC articles were standard news items compared to 40 percent for the *Guardian* and 48 percent for the *Telegraph*. This difference is again attributable to the broader range of article type in the newspapers. Whereas the BBC ran just seven long-format feature articles over the three years the *Guardian* published 41 and the *Telegraph* 28. The newspapers also mentioned Tesco in more opinionated¹⁵⁵ items than the BBC: there were 21 such occurrences in the *Guardian* and 45 in the *Telegraph* compared to two for the BBC.

In terms of prominence of the search term, there were again significant similarities between the *Guardian* and *Telegraph*. In all three years, Tesco appeared in either the headline or introduction of between 33 and 41 percent of newspaper articles¹⁵⁶ and had just a single mention in around a third of items. In the BBC samples, however, Tesco was far more prominent and appeared in the headline or introduction in two-thirds of articles. The BBC was also far less likely to give Tesco a single mention: on average, one in three newspaper articles made a lone reference to Tesco compared to one in seven BBC items. The composite annual figures demonstrate that Tesco appeared in the headline or introduction of 42 percent of articles and was mentioned just once in 30 percent. By this measurement, none of the years were exceptional and, apart from the BBC's tendency to feature Tesco prominently, these data give scant indication of the degree of mediated debate.

152 Unlike the newspapers, the BBC News website regionalises UK news into England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

153 For example, local council planning decisions on new store proposals (BBC 2006d, BBC 2006e)

154 See Appendix 3.2, tables 6a to 6c

155 This category combines columns, opinion pieces, debates, sketches, editorials, *vox populi* and letters to the editor

156 See Appendix 3.2, tables 4a to 4b

Indeed, closer examination of the articles revealed that Tesco played a cameo role in some extremely pertinent and detailed articles. For instance, Tesco made two rather lowly appearances in the *Guardian's* analysis of the announcement of the Competition Commission inquiry (Walsh 2006) and had just one mention in the equivalent article in the *Telegraph* (Reece 2006.) It was noticeable that when supermarket power *per se* was the focus of the article, Tesco was rarely singled out. Conversely, Tesco sometimes appeared in the headline or introduction in articles that made no reference whatsoever to the broader debate. These tended to be routine news items in the business sections of the newspapers (for example, Macalister 2006, Hall 2006a) or BBC articles about local issues (see above.) Consequently, it was apparent that prominence of search term was no guarantee that a news item was relevant to the objectives of this research. Hence, to further distil the sample, a second filter was applied which removed the articles with weak salience. This provided a highly refined and far more manageable sample of 294 articles, 37 percent of the universal sample of 789 items to be analysed in greater detail.

Table 5.1
Annual distribution of articles (post-second salience filter)

	2006	2007	2008	Total	%
BBC	16	22	30	68	23
<i>Guardian</i>	34	35	39	108	37
<i>Telegraph</i>	36	40	42	118	40
Total	86	97	111	294	100
%	29	33	38		

For this sub-sample, the quantity of reporting increased steadily between 2006 and 2008 and, as shown in *Table 5.1*, the majority of the growth was attributable to the BBC which by 2008 was almost on a par with the newspapers. Even with the removal of peripheral articles, *Guardian* and the *Telegraph's* distribution profiles remained highly congruent with similar quantities of coverage across the years. Indeed, there was no significant change in the metrics so far discussed¹⁵⁷. However, assuming that particularly detailed and contextualised information is found in features, and that opinionated articles are most likely to contain strong views, the data suggest that 2007 was the peak year for concerted debate with 43 percent of articles in these categories compared to 38 percent 2006 and 22 percent in 2008¹⁵⁸. Once again these aggregates obscure differences: the BBC published just nine features or

¹⁵⁷ Application of the second salience filter had a relatively minor impact on the weekly frequency, prominence, and length profiles discussed thus far

¹⁵⁸ See Appendix 3.2, tables 7a to 7c

opinionated articles overall, whereas the *Guardian* printed 49 and the *Telegraph* 42, with almost half of the former's in 2007, and 2006 was the peak year for the latter.

3 - Themes and framing

It was evident from the pilot study that the majority of articles framed Tesco in a limited number of contexts. Furthermore, many of the themes of the articles were consistent with the corporate and reformist arguments described above, and closer analysis of the data gave some indication of the extent to which the competing positions were given exposure¹⁵⁹. The data revealed that although corporate themes were dominant overall, some 40 percent of articles followed broadly reformist themes, with two categories - local communities and the environment, and competition and consumers - gaining far more coverage than the other three.

Figure 5.2
Primary themes

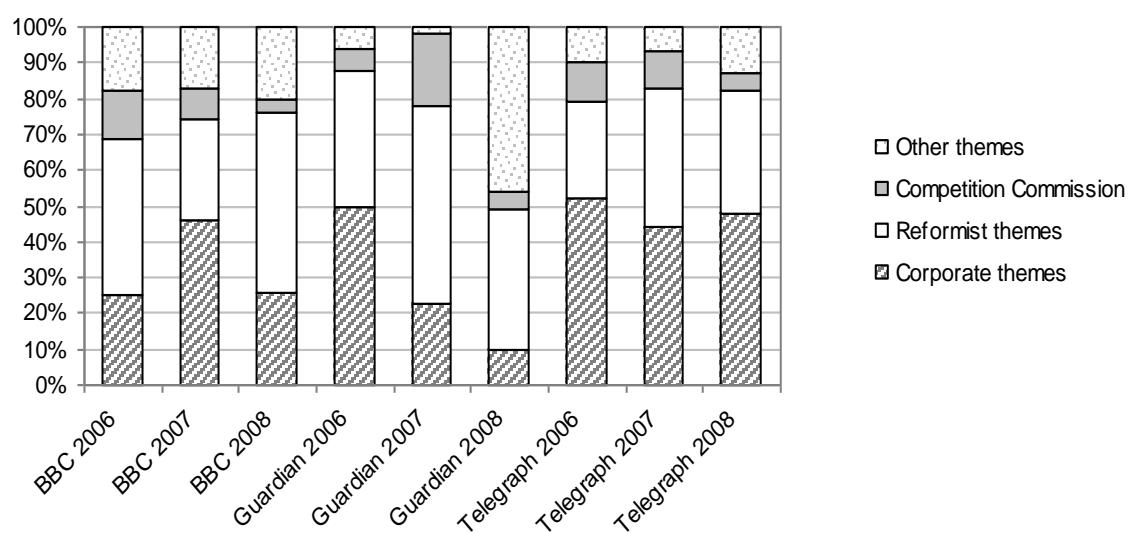


Figure 5.2 shows that the *Telegraph* was clearly the most consistent: in each year, between 44 and 52 percent of articles focussed on investor or CSR themes (corporate) and around a third had reformist themes¹⁶⁰. The *Guardian* favoured corporate contexts in 2006, as did the BBC in 2007, but the emphasis for both in the other two years was on reformist themes¹⁶¹. Overall, the data suggest the most active year for debate was 2007 with the *Guardian* and *Telegraph* printing their highest

159 See Appendix 3.2, tables 8a to 8c

160 Competition and consumers; local communities and the environment; supply chain; employment; and political influence

161 The *Guardian* value for 'other themes' in 2008 is an aberration because the sample period coincided with three Tesco-related legal issues which generated 14 articles

proportion of articles with contentious reformist themes, and the former publishing an inordinately high number of articles about the Competition Commission investigation. In contrast to the newspapers, almost half of the BBC's coverage in 2007 focussed on investor and CSR issues and its peak year for reformist themes was 2008. Averaging the proportions of articles with corporate or reformist contexts revealed that the newspapers generally confirmed their traditional allegiances: across the three years, 48 percent of *Telegraph* articles followed corporate themes compared to 33 percent for reformist whereas the *Guardian* preferred the latter to a similar degree (28:44.) Similarly, the BBC appeared to favour the reformists (32:41) but it is important to note that the its most common reformist theme was 'local communities and the environment' (LCE) and many of the articles in this category were concerned with parochial planning issues. Indeed, LCE was the top reformist theme for all three media in all three years with the exception of the *Guardian* and *Telegraph* in 2008 when 'competition and consumers' headed the list. But again, many of these newspaper articles looked at relatively minor investigations by the OFT (for example, Fletcher 2008b and Hall 2008) or the general increase in food prices (for example, Finch 2008d) and such articles were invariably unconnected to the Competition Commission report or reformists' defining concerns.

Table 5.2
Incidence of articles with reformist primary themes

Articles (N = 294)	2006	2007	2008	Total	%
Local communities and environment (LCE)	18	24	16	58	20
Competition and consumers	4	8	24	36	12
Supply chain	0	5	3	8	<3
Employment	2	3	3	8	<3
Political	4	0	0	4	<2
Total reformist themes	28	40	46	114	39
Other themes	58	57	65	180	61
Total	86	97	111	294	100

At a macro-level, although corporate themes dominated, the media gave considerable coverage to reformist issues. But, as illustrated by *Table 5.2*, only two strands received significant exposure and, as noted above, these articles were often only tangentially relevant to the arguments offered by reformist campaigners. Furthermore, three themes - supply chain, employment and political - collectively accounted for less than seven percent of the universal sample. It is evident that when debate about supermarket power was aired, it was primarily framed in terms of the

impact on local communities and the environment and, to a lesser extent, competition on consumer prices. In contrast, workers, suppliers and those concerned with the political influence of supermarkets had very few opportunities to express their views in detail.

Table 5.3

Secondary themes

Articles (N = 294)	Total	BBC %	Guardian %	Telegraph %	Overall %
Uncontested announcement	92	31	23	40	31
Analysis (synopsis, review, etc.)	69	16	33	19	23
Contested announcement	55	22	18	18	19
Conflict (dispute, fight, etc.)	47	15	18	15	16
Talk (debate, discuss, etc.)	17	6	3	8	6
Other	14	10	4	2	5
Total	294	100	100	100	100

At first glance, the secondary theme data suggest that news about supermarkets was rarely characterised by bilateral dialog with just 17 articles – six percent - defined by talk, discussion or negotiation.¹⁶² This is not surprising, however, given the nature of the issues. Unlike a mainstream political contest, in which the two sides are routinely pitched face-to-face, the supermarket debate was an extended and rather amorphous phenomenon that was linked to a formal investigation over a number of years. Hence, there was no physical forum – for example, parliament or a political conference - in which the participants could compete for media attention in set-piece encounters. This is not to say, of course, that the interaction of ideas was absent and, as illustrated in *Table 5.3*, around one fifth of articles were classed as ‘contested announcements’ and a further 23 percent were largely analytical, so there were clearly opportunities for different viewpoints to be expressed. The leading secondary theme across all media, however, was the uncontested announcement which accounted for 31 percent of items. In such articles, an organisation or person typically made a statement which the journalist relayed and contextualised but excluded conflicting views. Just over half of these 92 articles contained corporate sources only, with the BBC the least likely to include a voice from outside of the business world. In contrast, a reformist group had a monopoly on comment in less than three percent of articles. Further analysis revealed that in 11 percent of the universal sample, Tesco was the first-named source in an article classed as an

¹⁶² See Appendix 3.2, tables 9a to 9c

uncontested announcement. These data suggest all three media gave considerable unchallenged coverage to the corporate sector in general and Tesco in particular¹⁶³.

Given that reformist arguments were often complex and inter-related, it would be reasonable to assume that the most informative articles would be those that placed the issues in a wider context and explained the various viewpoints in detail. The data suggest that the public need for such analysis was fulfilled to an extent with around a third of items coded as mainly or entirely thematic¹⁶⁴. Conversely, 59 percent of articles covered immediate events and episodes and, by definition, these gave scant indication that the issues were connected to the macro-debate. The data also revealed that the proportion of thematic articles fell over the three years from around 40 percent in 2006 and 2007 to 18 percent in 2008. Indeed, only one-eighth of the *Telegraph*'s articles in 2008, and none of the BBC's, gave detailed and contextualised analysis in the period surrounding publication of the final Competition Commission report which suggests that editors believed the debate had been resolved.

With around 40 percent of articles following reformist themes, a similar proportion revolving around contested announcements or journalistic analysis, and a third of articles giving considerable context and background, it would appear that there was plenty of fertile ground for mediated debate. Indeed, the data suggest that supermarkets were often framed as a contentious issue by all three media with the *Guardian* and the BBC showing the greatest propensity to follow the reformists' agendas and the *Telegraph* favouring corporate themes. It is important to emphasise, however, that only two of the five reformist narratives were given significant exposure and very few of the 294 articles focussed on the relationships between supermarkets and their suppliers and workers, and their involvement in British politics. It is also important to stress that even in 2007, when the debate appeared to be most active, all three publications carried numerous articles that followed investor or CSR themes. Hence, a significant proportion of all news items – 44 percent in 2006, 34 percent in 2007 and 28 percent in 2008 – were framed according to corporate agendas and were seemingly untouched by the ongoing debate.

163 This is explored in greater detail in section 4 – source analysis

164 See Appendix 3.2, tables 10a to 10c

4 – Source analysis

In order to gauge the extent to which a plurality of viewpoints were present in the articles, the next stage of investigation assessed sourcing patterns. This revealed a clear preference in all media for corporate sources and, although reformist spokespeople were widely quoted, many stakeholder groups appeared so rarely that they were effectively excluded from the debate. Indeed, the initial stage of source analysis demonstrated a wide-spread propensity to *not* feature a multiplicity of named sources.

Table 5.4
Named and un-named sources

Percentage of articles containing...	BBC News			Guardian			Telegraph		
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
Named sources									
Fewer than two	63	64	67	58	55	49	44	63	67
Two or more	37	36	33	42	45	51	56	37	33
Un-named sources									
One or more	56	73	63	24	66	85	47	60	81
Three-year average	65			59			64		

Table 5.4 shows that, with the exception of the *Telegraph* in 2006 and the *Guardian* in 2008, the majority of articles contained fewer than two named sources¹⁶⁵. Given the journalistic principle of presenting multiple perspectives to achieve a degree of balance, this is surprising, particularly with so many articles following potentially-contentious, reformist themes. Also noteworthy is that the BBC had the greatest tendency to cite fewer than two named sources but it would be misguided to assume that such articles were necessarily bereft of a dissenting voice. Indeed, the data also show that all three publications frequently quoted un-named sources - 337 in total over the three years – but as one might expect with ‘Tesco’ as the search term, the majority of these spokespeople - 62 percent - represented this company or other corporate interests¹⁶⁶. Although business sources often disagree, it is reasonable to assume that they shared a commitment to the primacy of profit and, hence, they would generally follow either the investor or the CSR narrative. Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that the main opposition to corporate narratives would be

165 See Appendix 3.2, tables 11a to 11c

166 See Appendix 3.2, tables 14a to 14c

delivered by stakeholder organisations. These groups were certainly present among the un-named sources but they accounted for just 13 percent of the total which gave corporate spokespeople an overall advantage of almost five-to-one. The *Guardian* confirmed its traditional sympathies for social movements to an extent with the highest proportion of un-named sources from stakeholder groups but these were still outnumbered by corporate voices by a factor of more than three. The *Telegraph* favoured business sources over stakeholders by around five-to-one and in the BBC articles, there were eleven un-named corporate spokespeople for every one stakeholder counterpart. The overall rankings were remarkably consistent in 2006 and 2007 but corporate sources strengthened their position in 2008 with 65 percent of that year's anonymous appearances, whereas stakeholder groups were relegated to joint fourth position with just seven percent.

Business actors also dominated as named sources¹⁶⁷ with 'other corporate' and Tesco heading the category rankings in each of the three years, and overall accounting for 44 percent of all appearances¹⁶⁸. Corporate voices outnumbered named spokespeople of stakeholder groups by a factor of more than five in the *Telegraph*, three on the BBC News website and two-and-a-half in the *Guardian*. The peak year for stakeholders was 2006 but this was only marginally higher than 2007 and in these two years, these groups never exceeded 18 percent of appearances in any dataset. It is important to note, however, that stakeholder groups did not have a monopoly on dissent and many 'individuals' quoted were often associated with critical views. However, although it is tempting to lump farmers, independent shop owners and other local businesses in with stakeholder groups, thereby creating an arguably more representative reformist category to counter the corporate lobby, it would be misguided to assume that they share the same perspective. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that this category's contribution was only a few points lower than the stakeholder groups' and, in all three media, 'individuals' accounted for between 11 and 18 percent of named citations.

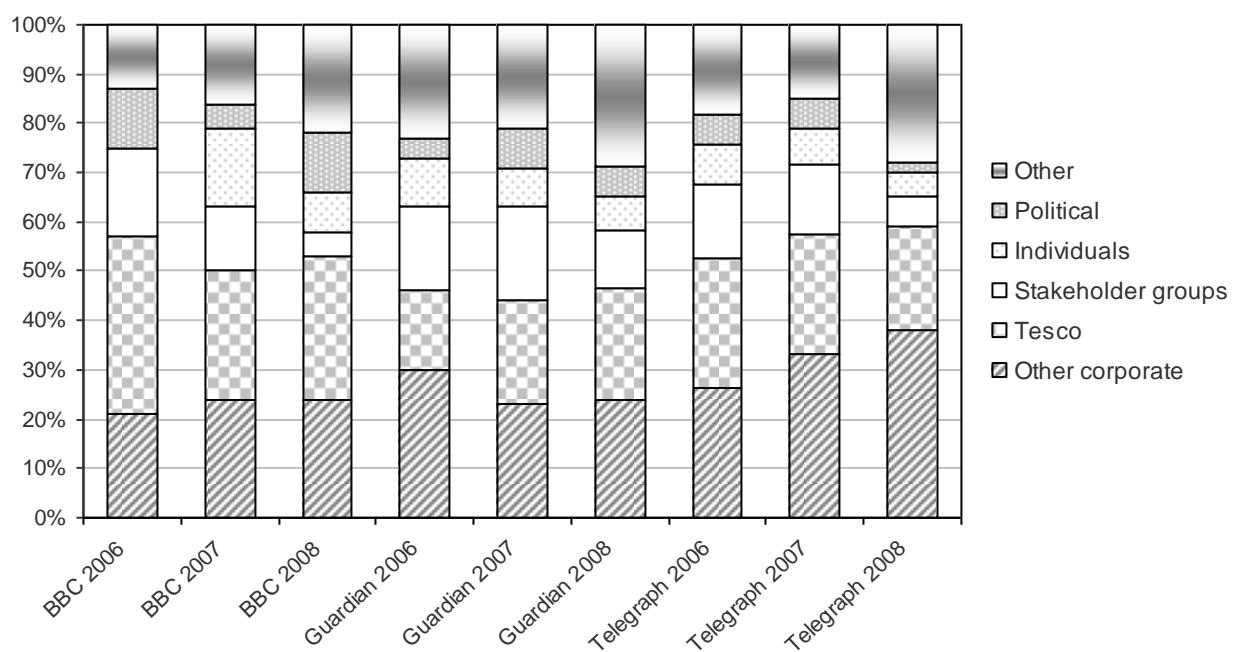
Similarly, journalists might express a view on supermarket power, and this category accounted for 10 percent of all named sources, with the BBC least likely to quote a journalist and the *Guardian* the most. One might also reasonably expect politicians to have contributed to this debate and yet this group had a meagre tally. Just seven

167 See Appendix 3.2, tables 15a to 15c

168 Forty-three percent of the BBC's named sources were corporate, compared to 38 percent for the *Guardian* and 51 percent for the *Telegraph*

percent of named sources across the three years were ‘political’ and in just ten instances these were either Labour or Conservative MPs.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, the total absence of the prime minister and just two appearances by government ministers confirmed that the supermarket debate was contested outside of Westminster. This is not to say, however, that the debate was bereft of input from political bodies: on the contrary, Competition Commission spokespeople were quoted 16 times as a named source - and 17 anonymously - over the three years, and the Office of Fair Trading was cited 15 and 11 times respectively

Figure 5.3
Constitution of named and un-named sources



Aggregating the named and unnamed sources confirmed the dominance of corporate sources¹⁷⁰. Figure 5.3 shows that for the BBC and *Telegraph*, business actors – Tesco and other corporate – accounted for the majority of sources in all three years, and only in the *Guardian*, did they constitute less than half of the citations¹⁷¹. Even so, stakeholder groups were still outnumbered in this newspaper by a factor of three. This was considerably lower than the BBC and *Telegraph*’s ratio of five-to-one, but this figure alone illustrates that, even in a newspaper traditionally associated with social causes, large corporations still had far more exposure than groups

169 See Appendix 3.2, tables 17a to 17i

170 See Appendix 3.2, tables 16a to 16c

171 Corporate actors accounted for 53 percent of all BBC sources, 45 percent of the *Guardian*’s and 56 percent of the *Telegraph*’s

representing reformist concerns¹⁷². Stakeholder organisations accounted for almost a fifth of *Guardian* sources in 2007 but in 2008, these groups made up just 12 percent and were displaced primarily by ‘other categories.’ This shift was mirrored in the BBC and *Telegraph* articles to a lesser extent and reflected the prevalence of items covering the relatively minor OFT investigations and various legal actions. The fall in the number of spokespeople from stakeholder groups in 2008 lends weight to the earlier observation that 2007 was a peak year for debate.

Table 5.5
Source monopolies and debates

Articles (N = 294)			2006	2007	2008	Total	%
Corporate source monopoly			31	40	70	141	48
Stakeholder source monopoly			4	8	3	15	5
Debates							
Corporate	followed by	Reformist	16	12	7	35	12
Reformist	followed by	Corporate	8	18	15	41	14
Other categories			27	19	16	62	21
Total			86	97	111	294	100

These data are illuminating but as aggregates they are rather blunt instruments for assessing the extent and nature of debate within articles. A more representative metric is the first-named source as this person typically establishes the trajectory of the narrative within a news item¹⁷³. Again, the top two categories across all years and media were ‘Tesco’ and ‘other corporate’ which collectively accounted for 44 percent of the first-named sources, with BBC articles the most likely to open with a business voice. In contrast, stakeholder groups featured as the first-named source in seven percent of articles. The *Guardian* had the greatest propensity to quote stakeholders first, but at nine percent of the total, the tally was dwarfed by the 40 percent of items that were led by a business actor. The supremacy of corporate sources is underlined in *Table 5.5* which shows that almost half of all articles totally excluded people and organisations that might hold reformist views¹⁷⁴. In contrast, stakeholder groups had a source monopoly in just five percent of items. Some 60 percent of BBC articles restricted comment to corporate voices compared to around 45 percent for each of the newspapers. The BBC was also the most likely to award Tesco a source

172 The ratios of corporate-to-stakeholder sources were: BBC – 90:18, *Guardian* – 152:51; and *Telegraph* – 182:36

173 See Appendix 3.2, tables 13a to 13c

174 See Appendix 3.2, tables 18a to 18c for source monopoly and debate data

monopoly with 28 percent of articles excluding other corporate and stakeholder spokespeople¹⁷⁵.

The peak year for debate was clearly 2007, with 31 percent of articles in this year featuring both corporate and reformist sources¹⁷⁶. In 2008, however, just one fifth of articles included both categories and, with corporate sources enjoying monopolies in a further 63 percent of articles, the opportunities for mediated argument would appear slim in this year. Assuming that the first-quoted party has the advantage in an article that contains conflicting views, reformist voices enjoyed a modest edge over their corporate opponents overall. This was most pronounced in 2008 (15:7) and reformists also opened the debate most often in 2007 (18:12) but corporate spokespeople clearly dominated in 2006 (16:8.) There were distinct similarities between the media with all three favouring corporate voices in debate articles in 2006 and reformists in 2008. In 2007, the *Telegraph* and BBC gave preference to reformists and the *Guardian* marginally favoured corporate sources.

Table 5.6
Stakeholder groups: named and un-named sources

Appearances (N = 105)	BBC	Guardian	Telegraph	Total	Overall %
Independent trader groups	3	7	5	15	14
Environmental NGO	4	6	4	14	13
Suppliers	2	4	8	14	13
Local and heritage groups	2	6	1	9	9
New Economics Foundation (NEF)	1	7	1	9	9
Labour organisations	1	5	2	8	8
Consumer groups	0	1	5	6	6
Development NGO	1	1	1	3	3
Food campaigners	0	2	0	2	2
Other NGO or social groups ¹⁷⁷	4	12	9	25	24
Total	18	51	36	105	100

It is also useful to look at the composition of stakeholder sources. *Table 5.6* shows that independent traders and environmental NGOs appeared relatively frequently in all three media which reflected the emphasis on the local community and environmental themes highlighted earlier. The *Telegraph* had the greatest propensity

175 The *Guardian* and *Telegraph* granted Tesco a source monopoly in 16 percent and 10 percent of articles respectively

176 For the purposes of this section of the analysis, 'reformists' combine 'stakeholder groups' and 'individuals' (see Appendix 3.1.) Although not all of this latter category held reformist views, many, such as farmers and independent traders, were critical of supermarket power. Hence, the figures in *Table 5.5* represent the best case scenario for the reformists

177 This category covered organisations that did not fall easily into the other groupings, including 'campaigners' and 'critics'

to quote suppliers and their pressure groups, typically the National Farmer's Union, and only the *Guardian* sought the views of trade unions or, most significantly, the New Economics Foundation. As noted above, the NEF had published comprehensive critical studies about the power of supermarkets (for example, NEF 2003) and its policy director wrote a seminal book about Tesco's impact on society (Simms 2007)¹⁷⁸. Naturally, this information was also readily available to the news media, as was research produced by other stakeholder groups (for example, FoE 2003, 2004, 2005), and yet journalists, particularly at the BBC, showed little interest in referring to these organisations in their reports.

5 - Coverage of narratives and arguments

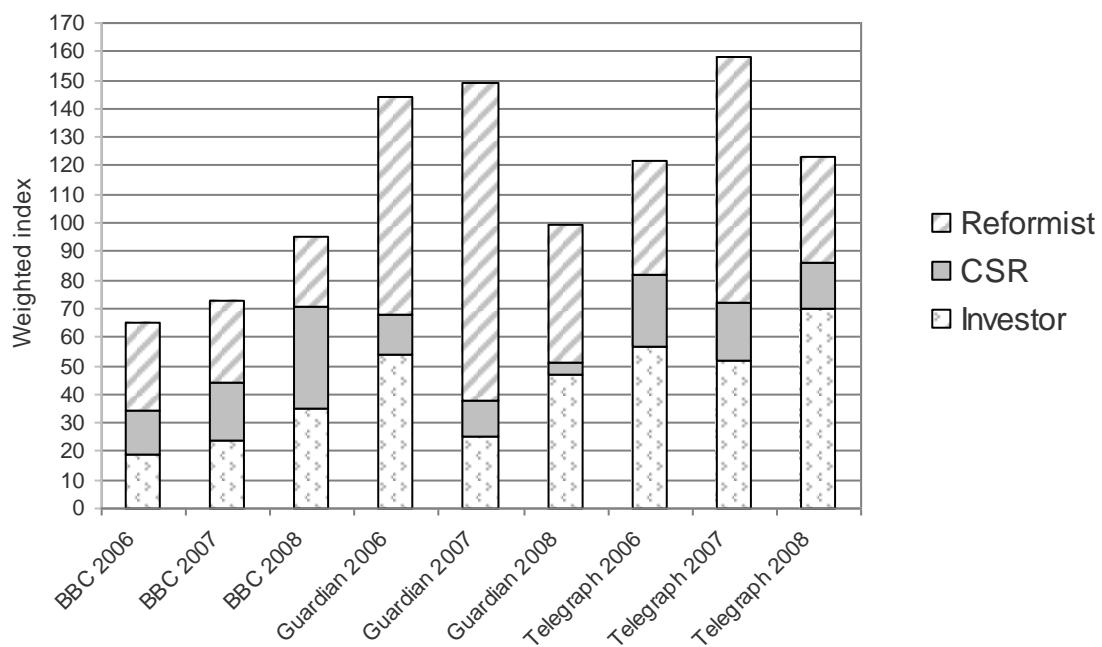
In comparison to corporate sources, none of the stakeholder groups were particularly well represented. Indeed, the source analysis demonstrates that the corporate sector had a clear advantage across the board. This was particularly pronounced in BBC articles which, collectively, favoured business over stakeholder groups even more than the traditionally pro-corporate *Telegraph*. The *Guardian* showed signs of sympathy to those who held reformist viewpoints but even this newspaper favoured business spokespeople overall. This is not to say, of course, that reformist views were equally rare. It is important to remember that almost 40 percent of articles followed reformist themes and the relative dearth of stakeholder spokespeople does not necessarily mean that the arguments were absent. Hence, the next stage of analysis considers the extent to which the two corporate narratives and the five reformist argument strands were given exposure. The data show that the *Guardian* plainly gave the greatest coverage to the reformists, in both relative and absolute terms. In contrast, the *Telegraph* favoured corporate narratives and, although one might expect the BBC to give similar amounts of exposure to both camps, it too clearly favoured the business agenda.

By taking an holistic reading of each item, it was possible to synthesis the viewpoints of all sources - including 'political', 'individuals' and 'other sources' - with the nuances of the journalistic narrative and assess the quantity of coverage of the corporate and reformist positions *Figure 5.4* illustrates the political content of each media's annual sample and shows that the most concerted debate occurred in the *Guardian* and the

¹⁷⁸ This book was accompanied by a website that acted as a central resource for campaigning groups (Tescopoly 2012)

Telegraph in 2007¹⁷⁹. In this year, the former favoured the reformist over the corporate position - investor and CSR - by a factor of almost three whereas the *Telegraph's* coverage was marginally tilted toward the reformists. The *Guardian* also favoured the reformists in 2006, albeit by a rather modest margin. The BBC's coverage in 2006 – and the *Guardian's* in 2008 - was almost perfectly balanced between the two camps, but the corporate position dominated the BBC's news output in 2007 and, in particular, 2008. The *Telegraph's* weighted coverage indices for the first and last years were strikingly similar and in both cases, corporate content outscored reformist by a factor of two¹⁸⁰.

Figure 5.4
Weighted coverage of political positions ¹⁸¹



The investor narrative was clearly more prevalent than CSR in the newspapers, with the *Guardian* in particular giving little exposure to corporations' positive impact on society. Indeed, this newspaper exhibited net criticism of CSR in 15 articles across the three years compared to just two in the *Telegraph* and none among the BBC samples. The BBC was more likely to positively report CSR than the newspapers with some 26 percent of its coverage over the three years following the lead of companies, particularly Tesco, eager to promote themselves as good corporate citizens (for example, BBC 2008d, BBC 2008e and BBC 2007m.) In comparison, just

179 The weighting criteria is explained in the methodology chapter

180 See Appendix 3.2, table 23

181 See Appendix 3.2, tables 19a to 19i

eight percent of *Guardian* and 15 percent of *Telegraph* articles followed the CSR narrative. It was also evident that the investor narrative *per se* was rarely criticised over the three sample periods, with just three instances in the *Telegraph*, two in the *Guardian* and one on the BBC News website.

Table 5.7
Weighted coverage of reformist arguments

	BBC News			<i>Guardian</i>			<i>Telegraph</i>			Total	%
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008		
Competition	13	13	8	29	41	13	15	35	16	183	38
Supply chain	1	5	2	8	14	6	5	16	14	71	15
LCE	17	8	13	33	51	26	14	33	7	202	42
Employment	0	3	1	3	4	2	1	2	0	16	3
Political	0	0	0	3	1	1	6	0	0	11	2
Total points	31	29	24	76	111	48	41	86	37		
Three year total	84			235			164			483	100
Proportion of total weighted coverage	50%	40%	28%	58%	75%	49%	33%	54%	30%	48%	N/A

Table 5.7 shows that the BBC also gave the least coverage to the five reformist arguments. As noted above, the newspapers' sample sizes were considerably larger than the BBC's, so one would expect greater exposure.¹⁸² But the differences in the number of articles were far smaller than the disparities in weighted coverage: over three years, reformists recorded 84 points on the BBC News website, about half of the *Telegraph*'s tally and a third of the *Guardian*'s. Table 5.7 also confirms that the reformist arguments had the greatest exposure in 2007 and the least in 2008. Indeed, in 2007 the reformists notched up a total of 226 points, some 47 percent more than the corporate tally. In the other years, however, the corporate position dominated with a 13 percent margin in 2006 and an 82 percent advantage in 2008¹⁸³. It is also evident that two reformist arguments were consistently awarded far greater credence than the others. Collectively, the 'local communities and environment' (LCE) and the 'competition' strands accounted for between 86 and 73 percent of the publications' coverage of reformist narratives. Arguments relating to the supply chain were in a distant third place and only the *Telegraph* showed a propensity to voice the

¹⁸² See Table 5.1

¹⁸³ The total weighted points for the corporate and reformist positions for 2006, 2007 and 2008 were: 167 to 148; 154 to 226; and 198 to 109 respectively. These figures are derived from tables 19a to 19i in Appendix 3.2

concerns of farmers and food producers¹⁸⁴. The other two reformist arguments, however, received very little exposure in any of the media. Employment issues were barely acknowledged across the three years. Furthermore, not one article in the distilled sample of 294 made a direct reference to the political influence of supermarkets. Of course, the relative strength of these five argument strands is a matter of opinion and one must remember that the news hook for the mediated debate was an investigation which, in the words of the chairman of the Competition Commission, was wholly ‘focused on competition issues’ (Freeman in Fletcher 2007)¹⁸⁵ and so one would expect journalists to mirror this in their articles. Nevertheless, reporters still gave an inordinate amount of sympathetic coverage to LCE arguments while effectively ignoring employment and political influence. The extent to which these two arguments were excluded is apparent in *Table 5.8*.

Table 5.8
Exclusion of narratives and arguments¹⁸⁶

% of articles making no reference to...	BBC News			Guardian			Telegraph			Average %
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	
Investor	56	45	43	56	43	31	25	43	21	40
CSR	38	64	47	71	63	51	61	70	71	60
Competition	56	68	87	71	37	69	64	45	62	62
Supply chain	94	86	97	79	77	92	89	73	79	85
LCE	31	64	67	50	26	64	58	50	88	55
Employment	100	86	97	88	89	97	97	95	100	94
Political	100	100	100	91	97	97	89	100	100	97

For the final stage of analysis, the reader is directed to Appendix 3.2, tables 26a to 26i. These tables list the articles of each data set in chronological order and, through the use of colour to denote the strength of coverage, they provide a graphic illustration of the distribution of the debate over the sample periods. Although universal patterns are difficult to isolate, some datasets have similar profiles. For example, in 2007, all three media gave the reformist arguments far more exposure than the corporate narratives in the days straddling the key date. Indeed, in many cases the investor and CSR narratives were totally excluded from articles. This pattern was also visible in the *Guardian* sample in 2006 and, to a lesser extent, in

¹⁸⁴ ‘Supply chain’ accounted for 21 percent of the *Telegraph*’s weighted coverage of reformist arguments compared to ten percent of the BBC’s and 12 percent of the *Guardian*’s

¹⁸⁵ Freeman said the Competition Commission is: ‘...not the commission for small business or the commission for food producers’ (in Fletcher 2007)

¹⁸⁶ These data are derived from the ‘no mention’ columns in tables 19a to 19i, Appendix 3.2

2008. Conversely, in 2008 the BBC and *Telegraph* both gave the corporate narratives virtually unopposed coverage at either end of the sample period. These tables also illustrate the balance of opposing viewpoints within individual articles. For each item, the points for the corporate and reformist positions were added, and the position with the highest tally was deemed to have ‘won’ the article. The greatest density of reformist victories and the highest margins were in the middle of the sample periods across all three media in 2007 but, with the exception of the *Guardian* in 2006, the distribution was far more dispersed in the other data sets.

Table 5.9
Proportion of articles exhibiting net support

% of articles showing net support for...	BBC News			Guardian			Telegraph		
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
Corporate (C)	47	68	78	50	26	49	68	46	71
Reformist (R)	53	32	22	50	74	33	32	54	29
Winning position	R	C	C	R*	R	C	C	R	C
Winning margin	6	36	56	0	48	16	36	8	42

* Although the number of articles won was tied, the 2006 *Guardian* data set was awarded to the reformist position by virtue of it receiving 58 percent of the weighted coverage (see *Table 5.7*)

Table 5.9 summarises the proportions of articles won by the two positions and the corresponding margins of victory. In bald terms, the contest favoured the advocates of the *status quo* overall with the corporate position prevailing in five of the nine datasets, and gaining four of the top five winning margins. Only the *Guardian* in 2007 gave the reformist arguments a clear and sustained advantage, with the dissenters’ other victories, the BBC and *Guardian* in 2006 and the *Telegraph* in 2007 having rather modest margins.

6 – Critical discourse analysis

Although the quantitative analysis has revealed distinct patterns, it would be misguided at this point to assert that the *Guardian* was simply ‘pro-reformist’ or the BBC and *Telegraph* were ‘pro-corporate.’ Even though the analysis thus far suggests these leanings, support for the positions was far from universal or unwavering and, in all three media, both narratives enjoyed considerable exposure. Hence, to gain a deeper and more complete understanding of the political content of the samples, the next stage of analysis assesses the language used to present the various arguments

and the extent to which journalists reproduced the corporate and reformist discourses.

Before embarking on the analysis, however, it is important to emphasise an inherent difference between the BBC News website and the newspapers. Unlike their counterparts at the *Guardian* and the *Telegraph*, BBC journalists are constrained by the Corporation's statutory obligations to impartiality (see BBC 2010a, 2010b) and so one would not expect reporters to describe actors, institutions or ideas in overtly judgemental terms. Similarly, within the BBC sample, there were no editorials, no opinion pieces and, with one exception (BBC 2008f), no set-piece debates. In contrast, almost a fifth of newspaper articles over the three-years provided fertile ground for the expression of liberated journalistic opinion¹⁸⁷. For these reasons alone, the BBC's coverage was generally couched in far plainer language, and was bereft of the explicit opinion that peppered newspaper reports. Nevertheless, closer examination confirmed that the BBC gave more credence to the corporate than the reformist discourse and, although its journalists did not express the investor narrative as vehemently as the *Telegraphs'*, they tended to follow the corporate line more closely than their print colleagues.

Even a cursory glance at BBC articles that included Tesco in the headline reveals a clear preference for the investor narrative¹⁸⁸. Very few of the items opened with a phrase that strongly resonated with the reformist arguments and yet the language of business was evident throughout. Typically for online news, the BBC article titles were far shorter and less descriptive than the newspapers' and adjectives were scarce. Nevertheless, the choice of words gives scant indication that supermarkets, or Tesco, might be the subject of widespread criticism. If an hypothetical reader were to base her opinions of Tesco solely on the BBC headlines over the three years, she would deduce that, apart from a rather humdrum Competition Commission inquiry, some local planning and consumer disputes and fines for out-of-date food, Tesco's activities were generally benign or beneficial. Indeed, of the 42 article headlines that contained the word 'Tesco,' more than half were positive phrases¹⁸⁹. Many of the titles in this category utilised the investor narrative and the liberal use of 'growth', 'rise', 'boost,' 'windfall', 'enjoys', 'build', 'offer' and 'new' portrayed Tesco as a

187 See categories 'column, opinion, debate, sketch' and 'editorial' in Appendix 3.2, tables 7a to 7c

188 See Appendix 3.2, table 24

189 This is inevitably a subjective assessment. The headline's positivity is measured against a simple question: does the wording cast the subject in a positive light? This question was informed by the author's previous career in corporate PR

vibrant, generous and innovative organisation. The key words in the ten negative headlines are muted in comparison – ‘banned’, ‘suspended’, ‘fined’, ‘shelved’ - and while the positive titles speak of international expansion, the ‘bad’ news is generally framed as parochial issues and the sanctions are rather mild.

Reporting the Competition Commission announcements

In comparison to the newspapers, there was scant indication in BBC articles titles of Tesco’s negative impact on the broader society. Indeed, more detailed analysis of texts revealed that the *Guardian*, and to a lesser extent, the *Telegraph*, gave credence to the alternative framework of competition offered by the reformists. The BBC, however, adhered closely to the state-defined parameters of the Competition Commission inquiry. This was evident in the BBC article that covered the initial announcement of the inquiry in 2006 which led with rather innocuous language when compared to the equivalent items in the newspapers (BBC 2006g.) The *Guardian* highlighted the gravity of the inquiry, and in reminding the reader that this is the third investigation in seven years, supermarkets were bracketed as habitual offenders who were being carefully monitored on behalf of the public (emphases added)

Supermarkets face third inquiry in seven years: *Watchdog* promises most *thorough scrutiny* yet: Focus on land banks and below-cost pricing (Walsh 2006)

The *Telegraph*, however, concentrated on the companies’ future prospects and speculated that they might be ordered to restrain their growth: ‘Supermarket inquiry could force the big companies to sell stores’ (Murray-West 2006.) The BBC’s headline was plain by comparison and the word ‘probe’ implied an exploratory examination rather than a meticulous investigation: ‘Supermarkets in competition probe’ (BBC 2006g.) Indeed, the BBC also used ‘probe’ in headlines covering the announcement of the interim report (BBC 2007n), a more detailed account of this report (BBC 2007o), and for an article about alleged price fixing of tobacco (BBC 2008g.) Only one BBC item about the regulatory authorities opened with a title that hinted at punishment for repeated wrong-doing: ‘OFT in new supermarket crackdown’ (BBC 2008h.) It would be misguided, however, to infer any substantial meaning from such short phrases and beyond the headlines, key BBC articles did incorporate elements of the reformist discourse. For example, the 2006 opening paragraph of the article that covered the announcement of the investigation read:

The market dominance of UK supermarket giants Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's and Morrisons is to be investigated for the third time in seven years (BBC 2006g)

Although there was no indication if 'market dominance' was good or bad, this paragraph echoed the title of the equivalent *Guardian* article (see above, Walsh 2006) but the second paragraph used a colloquial phrase which, like 'probe', suggested casual reconnaissance rather than thorough investigation (emphasis added):

The stores control almost 75% of the £120bn UK grocery market and the Office of Fair Trading wants the Competition Commission *to take a look* (BBC 2006g)

Again, in the BBC report there was no sense of the importance of the investigation that was stressed in the second sentence of the *Guardian* article: 'In what will be a significant inquiry, the commission will look far more widely into the food retailing market than it has done in the past' (Walsh 2006.) The equivalent *Telegraph* article conceptualised the investigation as an inquiry into the 'abuse of power' by the supermarkets and although its focus was on the impact of possible constraining directives on the Big Four, it at least included a quotation from the Association of Convenience Stores [ACS] (Murray-West 2006.) The equivalent *Guardian* article also directly relayed the concerns of small traders and featured an additional statement from Friends of the Earth (Walsh 2006.) The BBC article, however, only quoted the chief executive of the OFT (BBC 2006g) and overall, it was a perfunctory account of a routine investigation and the only objections came from unnamed 'critics' whose sole concern was that large supermarkets were: 'driving local convenience stores from the High Street.' Although this pattern was not universal in BBC articles that covered the Competition Commission inquiry, there was a tendency to report criticism in dehumanised terms. The key article in 2007, for instance, again merely paraphrased 'campaign groups' who criticised supermarkets for 'stifling competition' (BBC 2007n), and although a second, more detailed article did briefly quote representatives from Action Aid, the ACS and an academic, their words followed a guiding narrative from the BBC's business editor, Robert Peston who said the Commission: '...seem to imply that there is not sufficient competition at the local level' (BBC 2007o.)

In 2008, the only BBC article to directly address the final report posed a polarised question in its title - 'Grocery inquiry: success or failure?' - and featured first-person assessments from the chief executives of Asda and Tesco, and the British Retail

Consortium (BBC 2008f.). These advocate voices were apparently trumped by four reformists – a dairy farmer, an independent shop owner, and representatives from FoE and the ACS - but, although readers were seemingly encouraged to formulate their own answer, the journalist's opening words suggested a satisfactory outcome had been achieved:

The powers of the major supermarkets are set to be curbed by a series of measures recommended by the Competition Commission.

Changes to the planning system should improve the number of large supermarkets consumers can choose from in a local area. And an independent ombudsman will investigate how retailers treat their suppliers (BBC 2008f)

It is noteworthy that competition was defined as the number of *large* supermarkets available to consumers: independent retailers were ignored and although the concerns of suppliers were mentioned, other reformist sub-narratives - environmental, employment and political influence - were excluded.

These examples illustrate that although the BBC achieved a degree of balance by quoting concerns of stakeholder groups, its reports tended to tightly adhere to the remit of the official investigation rather than those of the reformist camp and, hence, the journalistic narrative was detached from the concerns of individuals and communities. This pattern contrasted markedly with the newspapers, particularly in 2007 which, as identified in the quantitative analysis, was the peak year for debate. Over a period of six days surrounding the release of the interim report, the *Guardian/Observer* published ten substantial articles – compared to the BBC's two - which underlined the newspapers' critical position. These included two editorials, three opinion pieces and a case-study about the travails of an independent chain of shops in rural Wales (Bowers 2007.) Over the same period, the *Telegraph* published nine significant articles including three opinion pieces but no editorials. Although the general tenor of this newspaper's reporting was congruent with the advocacy displayed in the titles of the key 2006 articles (see above), the reformist narrative was still evident, albeit in qualified or jocular terms. For example, in an opinion piece, editor of *Country Life* magazine, Clive Aslet wrote:

We cling to the Competition Commission's inquiry into the grocery trade as the last hope of halting this Beelzebub (Aslet 2007)

Nevertheless, the author was more persuaded by the positives of supermarket power, such as bringing: 'fresh, cheap food to places that it could never be bought

before' and although 'some of the moans (of the critics) are on target,' the author was satisfied that, on balance, supermarkets acted in the public interest (*ibid.*)

Another *Telegraph* article visited the Oxfordshire town of Bicester, a place that had been: 'Tesco'd six times over' (Derbyshire 2007b.) But like the BBC's reporting, the parameters of investigation were limited to competition among the big supermarkets, and the thoughts of local retailers and, indeed, local shoppers were absent. Apart from these articles, and a letter to the editor that sang the praises of buying from independents (Holden 2007), the *Telegraph*'s reporting during this crucial period was firmly underpinned by opposition to regulation. For example, Richard Fletcher positioned the inquiry as an interrogation that had to be endured by the large supermarkets (emphases added):

Supermarket retailers are *braced for further questioning* as the Competition Commission focuses its inquiry on a number of specific *allegations*, including predatory pricing (Fletcher 2007)

Another article began by raising the spectre of legislation (emphases added): 'Supermarkets could be *forced* to sell land and alter their relationships with suppliers' (Murray-West 2007) and, although this article noted that 'thousands of local specialist stores (are) being *killed off* by big supermarkets', and aired the concerns of a dairy farmer, the reformist narrative was overshadowed by the commercial. This was also evident in two comment pieces in the business pages which, *in lieu* of an editorial in the main sections of the *Telegraphs*, most clearly demonstrated the newspapers' commitment to *laissez-faire*. In the first, *Sunday Telegraph* business editor Dan Roberts castigated supermarkets for becoming sidetracked by Corporate Social Responsibility. 'Barely a day passes,' he wrote:

...without another public relations stunt from one supermarket or another to show how green, healthy, and cuddly to suppliers (delete as appropriate) they all are (Roberts 2007)

Echoing Clive Aslet (see above), the author urged the supermarkets to focus on 'the big stuff' and be proud of their central role in reducing inflation and unemployment. Tesco's greatest achievement, wrote Roberts, was putting: '...food on the nations' dinner tables with ever-increasing variety and quality and at ever-decreasing cost and inconvenience' (*ibid.*) In the second comment piece (Fletcher 2007b), the author's satirical eye was attracted to both the chief executive of Tesco, who delivered a 'well-rehearsed sermon' following the publication of the interim report, and unnamed 'critics', whose objections to the company amounted to little more than 'noise.' Despite acknowledgements to the plight of suppliers and independent

traders, the article was founded on the assumption that market forces must remain unimpeded. Tesco is, wrote Fletcher, 'one of our most successful exports' and the company 'has driven down prices - not only benefiting customers but also helping the Government to keep a lid on inflation.' While the author noted that 'concerns about the balance of power between suppliers and retailers' identified in the 2000 inquiry were still relevant, he concluded with a redefined conundrum for the chair of the Competition Commission, Peter Freeman, that confirmed the primacy of competition:

The real question is, can (Freeman) work out how to stamp out these worst excesses of competitive behaviour without stifling healthy competition? (ibid.)

It is important to reiterate that the BBC's reporting at this crucial stage of the investigation was relatively brief, dispassionate and closely followed the regulator's agenda. Compared to the *Telegraph*, the BBC used less combative language and, although there was little sense of the fear of regulation - nor overt support for *laissez-faire* economics - the BBC gave far greater credence to the *status quo* than to the arguments of the reformists. Even though the *Telegraph* was primarily worried about the impact of regulation on an axiomatically virtuous market, it still managed to give significant, yet piecemeal, exposure to the critical discourse. In contrast to both the BBC and *Telegraph*, the *Guardian* strongly doubted the potential of the inquiry to address the concerns of the broader reformist movement. Although the newspaper welcomed the inquiry, an editorial printed the day after the release of the interim report underlined the *Guardian's* reformist assumptions:

There is no doubt that ... dominance can hollow out town centres, diminish local shops and impose a dreary sameness across once very different towns (*Guardian* 2007a)

The author then highlighted the inherent weakness of the current inquiry and pressed for a different strategy:

These are important matters that deserve to be weighed carefully against the lower prices. But the Competition Commission cannot do that balancing. A wider review is needed to resolve the doublethink (ibid.)

This line was pursued in an opinion piece in the financial pages on the same day (Pratley 2007.) One might have expected a business journalist to focus on the financial prospects of the supermarket chains - sales growth, profits, share price, etc. - but after passing a quick judgment on the findings so far ('There was nothing here to frighten Tesco or any other supermarket') the author reminded readers that:

... the main grumbles ... concern damage to local communities, town centres and the environment; treatment of workers, ... and animal welfare (ibid.)

The most frustrating aspect of the inquiry, concluded Pratley, was that these issues lay outside the official remit and, although they *could* be addressed by a government-commissioned inquiry, he didn't believe this would occur:

... any broader investigation of supermarket behaviour and power would have to be commissioned by government itself. Don't hold your breath. It would have happened by now (ibid.)

Finally, in a third *Guardian* opinion piece, one of the most prolific critics of supermarkets, Felicity Lawrence, said the interim report was:

...a case of Nelson's Eye... with the commission holding its telescope to the one that has partial vision. But if its vision is poor, it is because its statutory powers require it to wear blinkers (Lawrence 2007)

Like the rest of the *Guardian*'s 'opinionated' coverage in this crucial period, Lawrence took the view that the Competition Commission report was blind to the reformist concerns and inevitably this: 'will mean victory for excessive supermarket power' (ibid.) Indeed, there was considerable consistency across the *Guardian*'s reporting which took a highly critical position, namely that the scope of the inquiry was too restricted and, hence, the negative consequences of the *status quo* would perpetuate. In contrast, the dominant discourse of the *Telegraph* was vociferously corporate. Despite frequent acknowledgement of the victims of supermarket power, the newspaper's columnists and senior journalists vigorously objected to threat of constraint on a successful grocery market. The dominant discourse within the BBC sample, however, was harder to determine. In general, journalists adopted the detached language of the inquiry and, apart from occasionally reflecting the views of stakeholders, its reproduction of the corporate discourse was far less impassioned than the *Telegraph*'s.

The reproduction of the CSR narrative

Outside the weeks in which the inquiry dominated the news agenda, however, the BBC's reporting followed the corporate line more closely than even the overtly pro-business *Telegraph*. This tendency was subtly expressed but a vivid illustration can be found in the coverage of CSR-themes, particularly Tesco's announcement of several environmental initiatives on January 18 2007 (Leahy 2007.) The next day, three articles on page three of the *Guardian* analysed the announcement, followed by

a leader in the *Observer* on January 21 and an opinion piece in the *Guardian* two days later. The *Telegraph* covered Tesco's announcement in two standard news items, and it also featured in a *Sunday Telegraph* opinion piece. Although the announcement generated just one article on the BBC News website, the relative lack of quantity was far less significant than the language of the article.

The primary article in the *Guardian* covered the announcement in plain, factual terms (Finch and Vidal 2007.) Tesco's initiative was 'significant,' wrote the authors, but it was left to commentators to consider the implications. These included one corporate voice - Tesco chief executive, Terry Leahy – and three named representatives from stakeholder groups: the green think-tank Forum for the Future, FoE and Greenpeace. These spokespeople greeted the announcement with guarded enthusiasm, a position also adopted by an opinion piece in the *Guardian*'s financial section (Pratley 2007b). Here, the author hinted at mystery surrounding the company's precise motives: 'This does not appear to be a superficial exercise. Nor is it charity or even altruism' and he also observed that 'cynics' might link the timing with the impending release of the Competition Commission's report. Although Pratley was also sceptical about the arithmetic of the proposals, he concluded the public had to trust the architects:

One assumes it will pay for itself, but the economics seem to have slotted in to place with miraculous ease (*ibid.*)

Similarly, as a committed environmentalist and long-standing supermarket critic, George Monbiot was both confused and amazed at the revolution that was apparently sweeping through the sector¹⁹⁰:

The superstores' green conversion is astonishing, wonderful, disorientating. If Tesco and Wal-Mart have become friends of the earth, are there any enemies left? (Monbiot 2007)

Previously, Monbiot had 'scorned the idea of corporate social responsibility' but he was now delighted that companies he still branded as 'the most arrogant of the behemoths' had finally succumbed to the arguments of the environmental lobby. But, like Pratley and the environmentalists (see Finch and Vidal 2007) he believed Tesco's 'bold' commitments were: 'weeviled with contradictions and evasions.' Most importantly, argued Monbiot, the only way to achieve true sustainability is to 'consume less' and this is fundamentally incompatible with a grocery market dominated by large suppliers. This assertion challenged one of the core assumptions

¹⁹⁰ In 2005, Wal-Mart made a commitment 'to use 100% renewable energy, create zero waste and cut greenhouse emissions by 2009' (Finch and Vidal 2007.) Also, Marks and Spencer had pledged to become carbon neutral by 2012 (Monbiot 2007)

of neo-liberalism – the primacy of growth – and although the *Observer*'s stance was noticeably less critical than that of its sister paper,¹⁹¹ the dominant discourse in these traditionally 'left-wing' newspapers resonated with sceptical optimism.

Doubt over Tesco's environmentalism was also apparent in the *Telegraph* but the reasoning was based on different principles. Like the *Guardian*, the standard item that reported the news was a functional summary of the main points of Leahy's speech but in this article, scepticism was limited to a single paraphrased and unattributed statement:

Environmental campaigners who have criticised Tesco's green record, welcomed the announcement as a step in the right direction (Derbyshire 2007c)

Using the Tesco announcement as a news hook, a second article focussed on the consumer and asked: 'How sinful is your shopping basket?' (Jardine 2007.) An independent expert, Joanna Yarrow, reviewed the contents of the journalist's Tesco basket with 'disdain' and gave the supermarket a 'green rating' of just three out of ten. This tallied with a similar *Guardian* article on the same day which reported that Tesco had scored a 'D' in a National Consumer Council environmental report (Hickman 2007.) The *Sunday Telegraph* business editor, Dan Roberts, categorised the environmental initiatives as peripheral to the supermarkets' primary goals (Roberts 2007.) By focusing on their green credentials, said Roberts, Tesco *et al* were distracted by 'window dressing' and, particularly with the Competition Commission report imminent, 'there is a real danger that the most powerful pro-market arguments are lost.' These sentiments tallied with the *Telegraph*'s dominant discourse around the key Competition Commission announcements (see above) and confirmed the newspapers' strong commitment to the corporate agenda. In contrast to the newspapers' reporting, however, the single BBC article was a faithful and unquestioning reproduction of Tesco's announcement (BBC 2007p.) Headed with a photograph of the company's chief executive, the article's title personalised the commitments ('Tesco boss unveils green pledges') and a prominent pull-quote from Leahy could equally have been said by the head of Greenpeace:

If we fail to mitigate climate change, the environmental, social and economic consequences will be stark and severe

¹⁹¹ The *Observer* leader framed corporate environmentalism as good for business: 'It is a simple, clever idea, born of commercial logic... Tesco recognises the growing power of climate-conscious consumers and wants, quite reasonably, to profit from them' (*Observer* 2007)

The only other source quoted in the BBC article was the head of the government-funded Carbon Trust, who unconditionally supported the initiative. Unlike the newspaper articles, the journalist expressed no scepticism, either in the narrative or by proxy through spokespeople from stakeholder groups. Nor was the announcement connected to the broader debates surrounding supermarket power nor, indeed, the imminent publication of the interim report. This article was indicative of the BBC's reporting of Tesco's CSR initiatives in general. As noted in the quantitative analysis, the BBC gave far more exposure to the 'good works' of supermarkets than the newspapers and rarely did the narrative challenge the company's claims. For example, both the *Daily Telegraph* and the BBC covered Tesco's intention to build flats for staff in London (Fletcher 2007a, BBC 2007m.) Whereas the *Telegraph* journalist limited his report to the bald facts and passed no judgement, the BBC article quoted the words of a Tesco spokeswoman who hoped the scheme would be:

... "beneficial for staff retention" in London, where (Tesco) suffer from a high turnover of workers..."It is being led in London because there is more need for affordable housing... the sites in London are more constrained so you need to be a lot more imaginative" (BBC 2007m)

Again, the BBC report contained no balancing perspective from, for example, a housing charity that might explain why there is such a dearth of affordable housing in London. Nor did the article consider the other side of the affordability equation and consult a trade union representative who might describe the extent and implications of poor pay in the capital, nor indeed did the journalist interview a Tesco staff member. Even though the actual number of homes available in the pilot project was negligible,¹⁹² the article portrayed Tesco as an altruistic company that prioritises the welfare of its employees. Also in 2007, the BBC was the only publication to cover a new partnership with the Open University that would allow students to put Tesco loyalty card points toward the cost of their degrees (BBC 2007q.) Like the housing article, the quantity and positivity of the words far outweighed the actual significance of the news¹⁹³ but this time, there was a dissenting voice, albeit quoted at the end of the article. Although the president of the National Union of Students was worried about: 'the extent to which consumerism is becoming integral to the student experience,' she too agreed that the plan was 'well-intentioned' and she offered no direct criticism of Tesco.

¹⁹² Tesco: 'allocated 13 of the 250 flats it is building ...to staff.' This equates to six percent of the total (BBC 2007m)

¹⁹³ The article stated: 'To receive this £40 fees discount, students would need to have spent £1,000 in the store' (BBC 2007q)

The reproduction of the investor narrative

Over the three years, the BBC also published other Tesco CSR announcements that were ignored by the newspapers¹⁹⁴. The Corporation's reporting of such news was not totally devoid of criticism but typically, journalists reproduced Tesco's CSR narrative and in sharp contrast to the *Guardian* and *Telegraph*, all BBC articles covering CSR initiatives were sympathetic. The sample periods conveniently coincided with the announcement of Tesco's annual results in 2006 and 2008 and this presented an ideal opportunity to compare the language used to interpret the same events across the three media. Although the differences between the BBC and the newspapers were less pronounced than around the Competition Commission announcements or when covering CSR, the BBC was again the least likely to deviate from Tesco's preferred discourse.

On April 25 2006, the BBC published a standard news item that reported the details of Tesco's annual results (BBC 2006c), and a feature-length analysis of the company's overseas expansion (Stamp 2006.) The former's headline described Tesco's record profit as 'bumper' and although the opening paragraphs prioritised growth achievements¹⁹⁵ the fourth described a rather incongruent, detached and arguably insignificant CSR initiative: 'The retailer also said it would dedicate £100m to a new fund to invest in environmental technology' (BBC 2006c.) Criticism was limited to an accusation, halfway into the piece, about Tesco's considerable 'land bank', which chief executive Terry Leahy dismissed ('There is no such thing...') and, at the foot of the article, a brief synopsis of the case for a competition inquiry. Although Leahy's view was contrasted with that of an unnamed FoE representative, this final section of the article was sub-headed 'Not dominant' which, although speech-marks were used, presented the null hypothesis as the strongest proposition. The BBC feature article (Stamp 2006) also included criticism of Tesco but again, the reader was not made aware of any arguments against constant growth until the middle of the article. Furthermore, there was no indication in the opening paragraphs that international expansion had a downside. Indeed, the journalist was evidently impressed as soon as he entered Tesco's headquarters' building:

In the lobby of Tesco's head office, you can't help noticing a row of clocks telling the time in 12 different countries. Unlike for some businesses, this display of internationalism is no empty gesture (*ibid.*)

194 Such as 'All Tesco bags 'to be biodegradable' (BBC 2006i) and 'Shares windfall for Tesco staff' (BBC 2007r)

195 'Profits 17% higher', 'UK sales rising 10.7%', 'foreign sales up 23%' (BBC 2006c)

Although the tone was upbeat – Tesco was ‘stacking up sales’ and ‘expanding at full throttle’ - the views of dissenters were present, and to an extent, both BBC articles in 2006 contained contrasting perspectives. But the lowly placement of reformist arguments; the use of the word ‘critic’ as a label for anonymous dissent; and, most importantly, the priority given to Tesco’s financial achievements demonstrated the articles’ close adherence to the corporate narrative.

In contrast, the reformist discourse was much more evident in the *Guardian* articles in 2006. In a standard news item covering Tesco’s results, for example, the Competition Commission inquiry featured in the standfirst: ‘Rise and rise of Tesco: Chain rings up £2.2bn profit as inquiry looms: ... Competition body to look at pricing and property’ (Finch 2006.) This latter fact was far more prominent than in the equivalent BBC article (BBC 2006c) and although the *Guardian* piece carried much of the same investor-focussed information, it devoted more space and gave greater credence to reformist concerns. Toward the end of the article, for instance, the journalist illustrated the trade-off between high profits and the plight of workers and suppliers:

The group (Tesco) cut costs and held its margins - suggesting that suppliers were asked to cut their prices. The Transport and General Workers Union, which has more than 100,000 members working in farming, food processing and distribution, said Tesco's profits were in stark contrast with its suppliers'¹⁹⁶

Another *Guardian* journalist demonstrated the ability to construct business journalism with a social dimension in a feature article about Tesco’s first store in China (Watts 2006.) Unlike the author of the BBC feature about the company’s overseas expansion (Stamp 2006) the reporter balanced the views of a Tesco executive and a stock market analyst with two stakeholders - a shop worker and a shopper - who might be affected by the arrival of a foreign company. The author also quoted supermarket wages in China - ‘usually less than £70 for a 160-hour month’ - and in doing so, this article was a far more humanised representation of Tesco’s activities than the equivalent piece in the BBC. In a third article on the same day, Neil Pratley suggested that the company’s growth was impervious to public criticism:

¹⁹⁶ The article continued: ‘Farming is on its knees and food processors are issuing repeated profit warnings as they struggle to meet the demands of the Tesco monopoly,’ said Brian Revell, the T&G national organiser for food and agriculture’ (Finch 2006)

Tesco's shareholders need not worry yet. Acres of hostile coverage in the press and the arrival of the word Tescopoly into dinner party conversation seem to have had precisely zero effect on the group's financial performance (Pratley 2006)

In quoting the title of the definitive book about Tesco's power (Simms 2007), the author assumed that the issue was high in the *Guardian* reader's consciousness. Pratley also hinted that Tesco cannot be trusted: '(Tesco's) selective disclosure ... hints at the reason why it generates so much suspicion.' As noted above, it is somewhat unusual for a business journalist to take such a critical position. But again, this is indicative of the *Guardian*'s consistent and, at times, strident, criticism of Tesco and large supermarkets.

Perhaps surprisingly, the *Telegraph*'s primary report about Tesco's 2006 annual results was an assault on the environmental initiatives that were announced alongside the key financial data. The latter only appeared in the middle of the article and the first half elaborated on the provocative title: 'Tesco accused of going green to boost reputation' (Murray-West and Wallop 2006.) The grounds for the attack was a statement from a spokesperson from FoE who said the relative insignificance of the initiatives amounted to 'greenwashing.' The article also included criticism from the Association of Convenience Stores and an environmental consultancy that had ranked Tesco bottom of five retailers in its ethical index, and the chief executive's words were greatly overshadowed by the reformists'. In the context of other *Telegraph* reporting around this announcement, however, this article was an aberration. In a comment piece, Henry Wallop framed Tesco's annual results as the latest checkpoint in an endless race: even though the company had posted record profits, the rate of increase was down, the 'shine was taken off' and other supermarkets were 'nipping at Tesco's heels' (Wallop 2006a.) Although the author mentioned Leahy's insistence that the environmental initiative was not 'a PR stunt', reformist organisations and their arguments were totally excluded. Likewise, an anonymous comment piece in the City section (*Daily Telegraph* 2006) was wholly focused on the strategic genius of Tesco. It began:

Tesco and its chief executive, Sir Terry Leahy, have had the monopoly on forward thinking in the supermarkets sector, at least over the past decade, which is why it has come to dominate

Such was the praise for Leahy that the title suggested that he had the powers of a soothsayer ('Watch Terry Tesco, he knows how the wind's blowing.') The author also revealed a belief in the inherent virtue of the market: Tesco 'had the foresight to buy

up land to give it a pipeline of sites that it can roll out' and although some had suffered from the company's growth, this was simply an inevitable consequence of Darwinian capitalism: 'The chain has admittedly been the death knell for many local shops but a large number of these offered poor choices at high prices' (*ibid.*) As for Leahy's 'greening' of Tesco, the author dismissed the charge, made in the leading article (see Murray-West and Wallop 2006, above) that this was 'a vacuous political statement to buy off the "green lobby"' and explained that it was just another part of the corporate strategy (emphases added):

...simply the latest *investment*, and there will be more to come, in what in Terry Tesco's judgment will be *the next big thing* for supermarkets (Daily Telegraph 2006)

In these terms, environmentalism is good for business because it will become fashionable and Tesco, under Leahy's guidance, is the trendsetter. Whatever a financially successful company does, according to the *Telegraph*'s dominant discourse, is self-evidently honourable. Indeed, three days later, the newspaper's *Questor* column placed a 'buy' notice on Tesco shares (Wallop 2006b.) The author described 'suspicion' of Tesco as: 'one of the great mysteries of modern life' and wondered how '15 million shoppers every week' could represent anything other than unequivocal endorsement. Before justifying the share tip, the author reminded readers of the controversy surrounding the company and trumped it with a pithy synopsis of Tesco's positive impact on society:

If you read some reports you might believe that Tesco is responsible for all of society's ills, rather than the largest private-sector employer, creating significant amounts of wealth (*ibid.*)

These sentiments echoed with an opinion piece in the *Sunday Telegraph* (Stevenson 2006) which first acknowledged the opposition to Tesco's activities, and then promptly suggested that the criticisms were overblown (emphasis added:)

No one would claim Tesco is an unqualified force for good. Allegations that it is destroying town centres and squeezing suppliers out of existence have gained widespread credence because there is a *grain of truth* in them

Like *Questor*, the author posited that such accusations were nothing more than 'paranoia (that) says as much about us, and our distrust of success, as it does about the company itself', and, therefore, any restriction on Tesco's natural trajectory was unjustified and abhorrent (emphasis added): '(The) Competition Commission should think carefully before pursuing a *vendetta*.' The *Telegraph*'s discourse around the

2006 annual results revolved around the belief that corporate success must not be punished and this tallied strongly with the editorial line during the key dates for the inquiry (see above.) There was also consistency in the *Guardian*'s focus on the reformist agenda and its purposeful representation of the views of individuals and other stakeholders. The BBC, however, gave only minimal credence to the reformist discourse and tended to follow Tesco's corporate narrative most enthusiastically.

This reporting pattern was also evident in a BBC article that covered the announcement of Tesco's results in 2008. The text incorporated a hyperlink to a four-minute audio interview with Terry Leahy (BBC 2008k) that focussed entirely on Tesco's ability to maintain growth in difficult financial times. Neither the grocery market inquiry nor any of the concerns of the reformists were put to Leahy by the journalist. Similarly, although the audio piece and the article (BBC 2008i) were published two weeks before the final Competition Commission report, the latter made the barest reference to the inquiry: Tesco 'said it was continuing to work with the Competition Commission on the final stages of their investigation.' Instead, the article dissected the company's 'sparkling results' that had 'confounded analysts... whom had predicted that the wheels had started to wobble on the Tesco juggernaut' (*ibid.*)

The newspapers also showed demonstrably less interest in Tesco's financial performance in 2008 than two years earlier. The single *Guardian* article that covered the news (Finch 2008a) led with details of an environmental announcement that accompanied the key data ('Tesco labels will show products' carbon footprints') and the first half of the article was a faithful reproduction of Tesco's CSR message. No sceptical source countered Leahy's promises to create: 'a revolution in green consumption' and 'bring the environmental movement into the mass market' and overall, the article reproduced both elements of the corporate discourse, CSR and investor, and excluded the reformist.

The *Telegraph*'s coverage of the 2008 annual results focussed on the debate between unnamed 'critics' of the performance of Tesco's US operations, and Terry Leahy who: 'rubbished reports that Fresh & Easy ... is struggling' (Hall 2008a.) The chief executive was presented as a strong leader who 'hit back' at the sceptics and put up a 'stauch defence of the chain.' No other source was cited in the article and no reference was made to the Competition Commission inquiry nor the reformist arguments. It is fitting that the second *Telegraph* article in 2008 was another 'buy' notice from *Questor* (Essen 2008.) Two years previously, the column had tipped

Tesco (Wallop 2006b, see above) and this time, the author was unequivocal in her assessment of the company's prospects: 'We think that the shares are worth buying.' This statement implied that the Competition Commission and the reformists had been dealt with and no longer represented serious menace. Indeed, these parties were so insignificant that neither were mentioned, and the most pertinent issues, according to the author, were a 'perceived slowdown' in Tesco's domestic sales growth and unspecified 'problems' with its US operations (Essen 2008.).

Overall, the *Telegraph*'s coverage of Tesco's 2008 results resonated with a feeling of business as usual. The Competition Commission and the arguments of the reformists were now irrelevant, and these perceived threats to Tesco's growth, which had generated such strong opinion from the newspaper columnists two years earlier, had dissipated. Similarly, by reproducing the dual corporate narratives, the *Guardian* article seemed to accept Tesco's position, as both a successful commercial enterprise and a responsible corporate citizen. Indeed, unlike in 2006 when the views of reformists and the Competition Commission featured in all three articles, the *Guardian* in 2008 followed the corporate lead. Likewise, in 2008 the BBC's reporting of Tesco's record results focussed entirely on the company's future. The impending Competition Commission final report was a mere side-note and the arguments of the reformists were totally excluded from the debate which now centred squarely on Tesco's ability to further enhance its profits.

Summary

With some 40 percent of the 294 articles in the refined sample placing Tesco in the context of reformist arguments, one might presume that concerns about supermarket power received significant and detailed coverage. This is true to an extent but it is important to note five points about the extent and nature of the mediated debate. First, the most vibrant and detailed discussions were clustered around the three key dates and at other times, the coverage of Tesco was largely bereft of opposing viewpoints. Indeed, outside of the weeks immediately surrounding the Competition Commission announcements, reporting clearly favoured the *status quo* with the investor and CSR narratives far outweighing the reformist arguments. This was evident in all three media and suggests that the normal pattern of reporting tends toward the corporate position. Second, three of the five reformist narratives – supply chain, employment and political influence – were virtually excluded from the debate, and only two - local communities and the environment, and competition and

consumers – were given regular exposure. Third, corporate voices were dominant and accounted for between 40 and 60 percent of all sources in each of the nine datasets. In contrast, spokespeople from stakeholder organisations never accounted for more than 18 percent of sources in a dataset and were outnumbered by business representatives by a factor of at least three-to-one. Fourth, although one might expect the BBC to have the most balanced sourcing profile, it clearly gave preference to corporate spokespeople and, in this respect, it was very similar to the *Telegraph*, and only in the *Guardian* were non-corporate sources in the majority. This pattern was mirrored in the coverage given to the competing narratives: the *Guardian* largely gave the greatest exposure and credence to reformist arguments while the BBC and the *Telegraph* generally favoured the corporate position. Finally, it is also important to stress that the refined sample represents just 37 percent of the articles that were picked up by the original search. As noted, Tesco was mentioned in each of the remaining 495 articles and, although these citations were devoid of overt support for the corporate or reformist positions, their apparent neutrality confirmed that Britain's most powerful supermarket has an indelible, far-reaching and immeasurable cultural presence.

PART THREE

Explanation

6 - CONVERGENCE

The three preceding chapters revealed distinct patterns of reporting across the mainstream media. In each of the case studies, there were distinct spikes in coverage around the time of the key event, only for the issue to quickly fall down editorial priorities. Sometimes economic globalisation, private finance or supermarket power were portrayed as contentious but these issues were often described in plain, non-problematic terms. Some groups of people – particularly the political and business elite – were given far more access to the news media than others, and overall, the predominant narrative tended to favour the neoliberal consensus. These were by no means universal tendencies, however, and the *Guardian* was unique as it generally gave more exposure and credence to the views of NGOs, trade unions and other organisations traditionally associated with the left than the other two newspapers. In contrast, the *Times* and the *Telegraph* consistently gave greater support to corporate arguments and at times argued for *laissez-faire* economics with strident conviction. Although the BBC News website rarely carried articles with overt opinion, it too showed a preference for elite sources and generally adhered to the free-market discourse. This was invariably more subtly expressed than in the *Times* and *Telegraph* but it was clearly present across all three case studies.

Differences in the political substance of news will be discussed in depth in chapter 7. This chapter, however, focuses on an equally significant finding of the content analyses, namely the manifest similarities in journalistic output. The extent of the common ground is sufficiently pronounced to suggest that the production of British economics and business journalism has generally converged around a set of common assumptions and an accepted *modus operandi*. Hence, this chapter will investigate the roots of this convergence which, it will be argued, can be traced to the similar backgrounds and social profiles of journalists which, when combined with newsroom cultures, professional norms and practices determines what is published.

1 – Sources

Perhaps the most compelling evidence for convergence is visible in sourcing patterns and, for this reason, journalists' approach in choosing their sources is a useful starting point for investigation. But before assessing the answers given in the interviews with practitioners, it is worth reiterating the extent to which certain voices

were excluded. Economists and other academics, for example, were barely consulted and when one considers that globalisation, private finance, and supermarket power were three of the most contentious economic and business issues of the time, the exclusion of independent scholarly input is remarkable. In addition, in each of the case studies swathes of opinion were largely ignored by all four news organisations. For instance, in late-1999 the coverage of globalisation was bereft of radical voices who called for the WTO to be replaced with a more democratic – and socially-focussed – institution. Even the *Guardian*, which exhibited considerable sympathy with the progressive reformers, marginalised those calling for a fundamental rethink. In the case of private finance, there was almost blanket exclusion of those who use, pay for and work in public services. Taxpayers; patients; medical and support staff; parents; teachers; and other public sector workers had minimal input in a debate which the BBC, *Guardian* and *Telegraph* framed as a fraternal squabble in the Labour Party¹⁹⁷. In the context of Tesco, the three publications gave little exposure to a host of stakeholder groups - independent shopkeepers; farmers; shop floor workers; animal welfare campaigners - and, perhaps surprisingly, politicians. Hence, the debate was contested primarily by representatives of the Big Four supermarkets; the OFT; the Competition Commission; local community groups; and journalistic commentators.

In the interviews, questions about sourcing strategies elicited rather short and insubstantial responses. Some journalists appeared bemused when asked the initial question – ‘what influences your choice of sources?’ – and others said that the process was ‘complicated’ and then did not offer an answer. Nevertheless, the collective responses confirmed that the political and business elite are given preference. More significantly, there was no indication that strategies could be any different and, effectively, sources chose themselves. Opinion was divided, however, about the extent to which sources drive the news making process: a senior BBC economics journalist, for instance, said: ‘you work out what the story is and then you go and find interviewees who can contribute’ but the *Sunday Times* business editor said: ‘It’s the other way around. You speak to people, find stuff out and then write the story.’ This process, said the editor, ‘becomes automatic’ and a colleague said source selection in a standard news story is ‘obvious’ and all of the examples of primary sources given by *Sunday Times* and *Times* journalists were based in the City and Westminster. Two *Telegraph* reporters agreed that these same types of sources

¹⁹⁷ This is even more significant in the context of a contemporaneous BBC poll that revealed 60 percent of the public believed private firms should not run public services (BBC 2003a)

are natural ports of call and one added there is a distinct ‘pattern’ to business reporting with senior managers and their PR representatives taking priority. Likewise, a BBC business journalist said most news items are: ‘simple... you’re just looking for comment and you know who the people are who will put one side and the other.’ Across the board, there was little indication of journalists being instructed by senior colleagues and it was apparent that sourcing strategies are largely determined by convention, habit and experience which together ensure that the news product conforms with editorial expectations.

In some cases, organisations have an effective monopoly on the supply of information, and the Office of National Statistics (ONS), the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) and the Treasury were cited as key sources. Similarly, in business reporting companies are obviously the originators of data and comment about their own performance, so journalists gravitate to these sources. But beyond these bodies, there are numerous choices for additional input and most interviewees agreed that different perspectives were fundamental. An *Observer* reporter, for example, said finding diverse viewpoints is: ‘One of the joys and challenges of the job and ... your duty’ and a *Sunday Times* journalist was equally aware of the importance of multiple sources:

If you are doing a piece on unemployment and you only speak to politicians, that’s probably an inadequate piece of journalism... (you) need to get a broad range of views if you want to do a good job

Although several interviewees said they tried to ‘talk to as many people as possible’, and recognised an obligation to inclusivity, there was scant evidence that a balance of *political* opinions was a priority. The BBC was a possible exception but interviewees here only gave the merest hints that they considered a true diversity of political thought to be appropriate. BBC journalists tended to be rather defensive when pushed about impartiality, and so the researcher resisted the urge to pursue this line of questioning. Nevertheless, it was evident that their output, like their newspaper counterparts’, was far more likely to contain two or more *corporate* viewpoints - which share the same profit-focussed goals - than a corporate and a critical voice. Indeed, there was no discernible proclivity to include the views of those who might challenge neoliberal assumptions. A former *Observer* journalist, for example, said that when covering the grocery market debate he: ‘did try to speak to everyone... the Big Four plus PRs and council planners and politicians’ but he did not mention bodies that have a track-record of challenging supermarket power - for

example, the New Economics Foundation [NEF], Friends of the Earth, and CorporateWatch.

It was only when the researcher asked specifically if unions, NGOs and research organisations such as the NEF featured in sourcing deliberations that journalists even acknowledged their presence. Given the overt political position of the *Telegraph*, it was unsurprising that a reporter said he might quote an organisation from the left if it 'had credibility' and quickly added that such a source would 'most likely be quoted three-quarters down the story.' Most interviewees' answers to this question, however, were vague and, although never in the negative, somewhat unconvincing. The senior *Guardian* writer, for instance, said he chose sources not from an 'ideological perspective (but from) ... an attitude perspective' and then highlighted financial institutions as the best suppliers of stimulating data and comment. When asked if unions and NGOs provided information of similar quality, he concurred and said: 'but not as frequent... and not much from the unions. Most don't have big economics (research) teams.' Even though most journalists did not give critical organisations equal credence as elite sources, there was still a widely-held belief that balancing perspectives are the pillars of, in the words of a *Sunday Times* journalist, 'responsible journalism.' But if journalists do not select viewpoints on the basis of political position, what factors do influence which sources are consulted?

Before answering this, it is important to appreciate two inter-related challenges that face journalists: the productivity expectations of the employer; and the volume of information delivered by sources. Only a few journalists quantified either but the brief insights they gave were revealing. Reporters working for daily news operations are clearly the most productive: a junior journalist at the *Telegraph*, for example, said that during her normal working day of ten hours, she will write six stories of around 400 words each for the website. A part-time *Guardian* journalist typically writes two news articles of a similar length a day plus one longer feature article during her three-day working week. Whatever their schedule, journalists are bombarded with information and an essential part of their job is to firstly decide which is relevant, and then which merits inclusion in the story. A veteran economics writer gave a glimpse of the sheer volume of information received. In the days before the internet, he said: 'On a Friday, I would receive 80 to 100 phone calls from people who are very keen to get their names in the *Sunday Times*.' These days, he said, phone calls are rare but he still receives 'two to three hundred emails' every Friday.

This clearly necessitates a sophisticated and highly efficient filtering system. For the *Sunday Times* journalist, this is primarily based on the reliability of the source and whether he ‘trust(s) what they do.’ In economics, he said, this means official sources – for example, the ONS and OBR – and industry bodies, such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI.) Other journalists took a similarly practical approach: a BBC business reporter gravitates to those with the ‘most up-to-date information’; a colleague said if time was particularly tight, ‘safe sources’ are preferred; and an *Observer* journalist said he liked dealing with people he knew to be ‘co-operative.’ For journalists working to deadlines, accessibility is key and this naturally favours those who can supply the right type of information on demand. ‘Media-friendly’ organisations, said a *Sunday Times* journalist, and ‘people who are happy to talk... make life easier.’ Indeed, several interviewees highlighted the importance of personal connections, and some mentioned the reciprocation of ‘favours.’ A former *Guardian* reporter, for example, said people ‘provide great stories if you treat them well.’ Other interviewees displayed emotions usually associated with friendship. An editor said he felt ‘guilty’ if someone had ‘helped’ with an article ‘but because of the constraints of space, their efforts are not reflected.’ He then underlined the *quid pro quo* nature of journalist-source relationships (emphasis added): ‘I don’t often get complaints because people realise *you owe them one*, and at some point, you’ll give them recognition ... in a future story.’

In return for their assistance, sources ‘appreciate a bit of publicity’ and it was apparent that, despite the huge volume of information freely available online, human interaction still lies at the heart of journalism. Relationships with sources are cultivated and, as noted by a senior *Times* journalist: ‘the parameters of who you speak to will be a reflection of your own world view.’ As will be discussed below, journalists and their elite sources often share backgrounds, education and location, and some, notably at the *Sunday Times*, socialise with their information providers. One might presume that journalists from other publications form similar, amiable bonds of trust with regular sources, and, by extension, rather perfunctory relationships with the sources they rarely consult. Hence, sourcing strategies become self-perpetuating and the likelihood of alternative viewpoints being elevated to the same heights is limited.

The responses from interviewees explained some of the findings of the previous empirical chapters. Sourcing strategies in mainstream economics and business news do indeed favour the political and business elite, and journalists tended to justify

these choices in pragmatic terms. Organisations with efficient PR operations; people with 'the most up-to-date' information; and 'safe sources' are given priority and, so long as a second point-of-view is included, journalists showed little cause for concern. It is also clear that persistently gravitating to the same sources facilitates relationship building so these patterns tend to become entrenched, and consequently, critical voices are further marginalised.

This synopsis certainly lends weight to the argument that similar sourcing patterns explain the convergence of economics and business journalism but it is not satisfactory by itself as it fails to acknowledge that favouring the elite is the inevitable result of a process that begins long before a journalist starts to write an article. Reporters could, in theory, consult a more diverse set of opinions and, consequently, news would be more representative of a wider spectrum of political ideas. But, as will be shown, all journalists work in environments that have distinct expectations based on a combination of implicit, though clearly understood, cultural norms, editorial priorities and working practices. Hence, the sourcing patterns illustrated in the content analyses are just symptoms, albeit evident and compelling, of a deep-rooted condition that permeates the news production process.

2 – The news production process

Before evaluating other elements of the production process, it is important to draw a distinction between two types of journalist. First, reporters specialise in daily news and are primarily concerned with covering the details of recent events - what happened, where, to whom, how, and why - with relative brevity, and typically take a short-term perspective of the implications for the future. Second, analysts, including leader and feature writers, and columnists, give a more detailed and long-term analysis of events, and tend to cover issues beyond the current news horizon. *Table 6.1* shows that reporters were in the majority and, although all four mainstream news organisations also produce analytical output, it was apparent from interviewees' responses that the emphasis of their employers is on short-term deadlines. It was also evident that reporters' *modus operandi* are remarkably similar, with little variation in the origin of their stories; the basis on which they select or reject news items; the extent to which they follow a news agenda; or how an issue is framed. When combined with similar sourcing strategies, the inevitable consequence is limited disparity in the publications' news product.

Table 6.1
Distribution of reporters and analysts

Organisation	Reporters	Analysts
Alternative media	0	5
BBC	4	4
<i>Telegraph Group</i>	4	0
<i>Guardian/Observer</i>	3	2
<i>Sunday Times</i>	3	0
<i>Times</i>	1	0
Total interviewees	15	11

The origin of news

Economics and business reporters depend heavily on the news diary: a schedule of events and announcements from UK and international government departments and agencies; professional organisations; industry associations and companies.

Interviewee estimates of the proportion of stories derived from the diary ranged from a third to ‘the vast majority’ in the case of the BBC’s business reporting, with an approximate average of 40 percent. There was no discernible difference in this perceived proportion¹⁹⁸ across the four mainstream organisations, nor any noticeable variety in the bodies that provide the information, nor indeed the stories selected.

Some key economic data – for example, inflation, unemployment - are released monthly, company financial results are quarterly, and there is also a constant flow of information from news agencies¹⁹⁹ and the financial markets, particularly the Regulatory News Service (RNS) from the London Stock Exchange. Reporters all draw from this same stream of information and so it is inevitable that the business pages, BBC broadcast bulletins and its news website tend to carry the same stories.

Reporters also cover the same unexpected events - disasters, surprise resignations, steep falls and rises in the stock market, etc - so differentiation is derived from the speed at which news is produced, ongoing campaigns²⁰⁰, and ‘off-diary’ reports in which journalists can pursue their own ideas. Casting the net beyond the diary is seen as an essential part of the reporter’s role and there was a sense that this is a nobler form of journalism as it involves discovery on behalf of the audience rather than the repackaging of information delivered by a third-party. Estimates for the proportion of off-diary stories were around a third and most examples given were

¹⁹⁸ This figure is based on journalists’ own estimates. Most interviewees qualified their statement - ‘roughly,’ ‘there are no hard and fast rules,’ ‘it is incredibly fluid,’ ‘not straightforward,’ ‘fairly open-ended’ - and no one cited a formal study

¹⁹⁹ Three news agencies were mentioned by interviewees: Bloomberg, the Press Association and Reuters

²⁰⁰ During the data collection period the *Telegraph* ran two campaigns : ‘Reinventing the High Street’ and ‘Good News Britain’

long-term and deeply-seated issues which, in some cases, tallied with answers given by the analysts.²⁰¹ There are large variations in how much off-diary reporting the journalist is able to do and this depends on his or her specialism and seniority. A junior online business reporter at the *Telegraph*, for example, said her job is 'pretty much dictated' by the diary and the RNS. In contrast, a senior economics writer at the *Guardian* noted a less frantic 'rhythm' to his work: the middle two weeks of the month are particularly busy with announcements but at other times, he has greater opportunity to move away from the schedule and explore other avenues.

Despite the ubiquity of the news diary, and a tendency to gravitate to the same news wires and report the same unexpected events, most interviewees believe they have a large degree of autonomy in story selection, and reporters are rarely instructed which stories to cover by senior colleagues. Nevertheless, it was clear that convention, rather than explicit editorial direction, acts as a very effective and subtle filter, and journalists' perceived freedom is largely illusory. Items on the news diary clearly take priority, and certain announcements - such as GDP, unemployment, inflation, annual results of FTSE-100 companies - will always be reported ahead of news from non-governmental or non-corporate sources. Journalist autonomy is further reduced in morning editorial meetings, in which ideas can be modified, and less formally throughout the day by the news editor who will check the validity of a remodelled diary story or the strength of an off-diary idea. Reporters for the Sunday newspapers and analysts have greater opportunity to pursue off-diary ideas or exclusive stories, so the potential for variety is certainly greater. But like the dailies, many items are derived from the news diary, as either more detailed analyses of existing stories, or anticipatory articles on the next week's scheduled events.

Selection and rejection

Even though reporters from all four organisations generally share the same conduits of news, are equally focussed on the news diary, and have limited scope to go off-diary, they still have opportunities to select different stories from the huge volume of data, reports, press releases and research produced by government, corporations, NGOs, analysts and academics. Much of this is easily accessible and, consequently, reporters are never short of a diversity of potential stories. One might expect, therefore, different approaches to choosing what is worthy of coverage. However, when asked *how* they decide which stories to cover, business reporters used

²⁰¹ These included long-term unemployment and housing shortages

precisely the same phrase – ‘market moving’ - to describe the chief characteristic of a compelling story. By actively searching for information that could cause a company’s value - or better still, the whole stock market – to change dramatically, the news media are evidently central participants in the economic model that places share price above all other indices of economic success. Interviewees from the *Guardian* and the *Sunday Times* also singled out well-known corporations – ‘big consumer names’, ‘big-quoted companies’ – as prime candidates for coverage, and a BBC business correspondent, a *Guardian* reporter and a *Telegraph* editor all expressed a belief that this approach to story selection is what their audiences wanted. Only *Telegraph* staff made overt reference to politics: an editor acknowledge the newspaper’s Conservatism and said story selection ‘supports this position’; and a junior colleague added that she tends to ‘ignore Labour (Party) announcements because they don’t appeal to our readers.’ Beyond these specifics, however, reporters were vague when describing their selection criteria - ‘judgement’, ‘whatever takes our fancy,’ ‘whichever stories are the best’ – and this underlined the unwritten convention exhibited in comments about editorial line (see chapter 7.)

Interviewees were then asked if they could think of issues that, in retrospect, they believed the news media *in general* had either missed, under-reported or neglected in the decade before the Financial Crisis. It was striking that only one journalist mentioned the other major bubble of the decade prior to the Financial Crisis: the dotcom boom which spectacularly collapsed in 2000. In both cases, the news media was credited with playing central role in ‘hyping’ the preludes²⁰² but only in the case of the Financial Crisis did journalists accept culpability. Perhaps this is simply a function of magnitude and recency, but it was clear that journalists’ radar is primarily focussed on the financial sector. Indeed, the under-reported issues highlighted were money-related, rather than socio-economic, and episodic rather than thematic. In most cases, the stories cited were either contributory factors to the Financial Crisis (debt markets; sub-prime in the US; and the credit boom) or the Crisis itself.

This question was also revealing as it demonstrated a division between the publications. It was noticeable that the right-wing newspaper journalists - and a significant proportion of BBC staff - deliberated at length before answering and then highlighted financial stories that had previously been ‘hidden’ but then, because of a

202 See Frank (2000) and Cassidy (2002) for comprehensive accounts of the dotcom boom

burst bubble, a sudden collapse or a disaster, had become unavoidable. Two *Guardian* and three BBC analysts, however, quickly made nominations that were, tellingly, not individual events or protracted episodes but widespread economic issues with strong social and international dimensions, or criticisms of the neoliberal doctrine *per se*. Most BBC journalists, however, struggled to think of examples of neglected issues but one – a senior economics analyst – said the human dimension of economics is consistently under-reported, and pointed to the crisis in Greece as a stark example. The inability to present economics in holistic terms, he said, is the greatest problem with mainstream journalism: ‘We don’t have a silo for social collapse. But that’s the story.’ Two other BBC journalists also hinted at the tendency for journalists to follow the herd and report superficially: the veteran radio presenter suggested that the disruptive effect of the internet had still not been appreciated²⁰³, and a former senior editor believed that the economics of the developing world is largely ignored.

In contrast to these forthright opinions, most BBC and all *Times*, *Sunday Times* and *Telegraph* journalists gave hesitant and rather unconvincing answers, but this pattern was no less illuminating. The subtext of many responses was that few issues escaped their attention and some were explicit in their belief that they covered all of the important stories. For example, a BBC journalist said: ‘If there’s a big story out there, I like to think we get it on air’ and a *Telegraph* editor said missing stories is ‘not an endemic issue; we don’t get it wrong often.’ Some were puzzled by the question: the issues they covered were the most significant by definition and, by extension, if stories were *not* covered it was simply because they were not significant. In these terms, coverage awards significance, even if fundamentally misguided editorial decisions were made in the past and huge stories had been missed *in toto*.

The grand *nostra culpa*

Because of time constraints, the researcher was unable to specifically ask why the issues cited had been neglected but it is possible to infer a plausible explanation from a follow-on question. Interviewees were unanimous in their belief that the news media as a whole failed to warn of possible negative outcomes prior to the Financial Crisis. The researcher asked why this might be and the reasons given were edifying as they could equally be applied to the news media’s tendency to limit their field of vision in less traumatic times. The most common explanation was a lack of

²⁰³ The presenter said that technology tends to be reported ‘gadget-by-gadget’ and yet the internet is still in its ‘incubatory phase’

understanding: if journalists had a better knowledge of, in the words of a BBC reporter, ‘exotic financial products’, then maybe the public would have been better informed. A colleague argued that there was indeed a lack of understanding, but it was excusable to a large extent. Journalists, he said, were unaware of the influence of the ‘shadow banking system’ and the criminal acts that were later uncovered: ‘We didn’t realise how many players were crooks. And financial journalism is not set up to find crooks.’ Some suggested the knowledge deficiency runs deeper than financial products. A senior *Guardian* journalist said: ‘If we are meant to be watchdogs … then we fail if we don’t understand’ the complex workings of contemporary markets.

Journalists from all mainstream news organisations also said scepticism had been in short supply and assumptions reigned supreme. The business editor of the *Sunday Times* noted ‘a failure of critical intelligence’ and a *Telegraph* journalist said the profession failed in a basic journalistic task: selecting and analysing the right data. A BBC journalist suggested that the dearth of understanding among his profession caused ‘the debate (to be) led by the elite’, and because the politicians, regulators and bankers didn’t understand the underlying weaknesses either ‘the media dutifully followed’ down the same misguided path. A senior *Guardian* analyst said journalists ‘wanted to believe’ in the apparent, universally-beneficial characteristics and permanence of the boom, and the profession must carry responsibility for ‘talking up markets.’ He said this was also evident in daytime TV schedules with programmes about property speculation reinforcing the mass delusion. Hence, what proved to be erroneous assumptions were shared by many. A *Sunday Times* journalist conceded in hindsight:

(Journalists) wrote stories (about increases in debt) with incredulity but we didn’t ask follow on questions. We were just as bad as people in the City because we didn’t believe it could go wrong

Other false assumptions included the effectiveness of ‘soft-touch’ regulation and self-correcting markets. Both are tenets of neoliberal thought but no mainstream journalist extended their introspection to the robustness of the doctrine itself, nor indeed the possible merits of alternative economic models. The only mainstream journalist to suggest that the news media might be fundamentally at fault was a BBC economics analyst who believed that journalism ‘did not so much miss the story (Financial Crisis) as misunderstand the holistic impact’, and the reason for this, he suggested was: ‘There are specialist economics journalists but most news organisations don’t have specialists in social collapse.’

In addition to deficiencies in knowledge and scepticism, and too much faith in assumptions, interviewees also said that a shortage of time and resources, and adherence to established journalistic procedure played a significant role. A senior BBC journalist reiterated that the reporting of scheduled events takes precedence and only on rare occasions can a journalist convince broadcast editors to find space for off-diary stories. Such items might appear on extended news programmes²⁰⁴ but main bulletins are geared toward the short-term. A colleague added that explaining the ‘big picture’ is ‘difficult, tricky and abstract on radio and TV.’ Indeed, with just a few minutes at their disposal, broadcast journalists have little time to contextualise and explore other threads and arguments. Journalists who write for websites are also driven by the minute-hand of the clock. Although online news is inherently more immediate than print, a *Guardian* reporter suggested that trying to compete with the real-time business news specialists, like Bloomberg and Reuters, is unwise. She recounted a typical exchange with an editor: ‘(I say) “do you want this now or would you rather wait half an hour and have a better story?” They usually say “now.”’

Even if journalists *had* been equipped with knowledge of ‘exotic financial products’, scepticism about neoliberal assumptions and more air time or page space, it is still not certain that the public would have been any better informed. The veteran BBC radio presenter underlined the ‘coverage awards significance’ argument and said that no major issues had been missed because the news media:

...are part of the process. News *has* to go with the flow. That’s how it works. It is very difficult for a news machine to become contrarian

In these terms, it is events, not issues, that drive the news agenda, and hence, mainstream reporters have little effective choice in the stories they cover, both in the prelude to the Crisis and in normal times. At this point, it is worth incorporating the views of the alternative journalists to further illuminate the deficiencies of mainstream reporting. Overworked and under-staffed newsrooms have increased reliance on PR, said the *Corporate Watch* researcher, and so naturally, journalists report the obvious and have little knowledge of underlying problems. The corporate media are also loathe to upset other corporations – advertisers and sources of information – and so there is little appetite to diverge from the dominant narrative. The *New Statesman* analyst said it is: ‘very difficult to report prophecies’ and consequently, there is a ‘systemic barrier to going against economic convention.’ The most comprehensive criticism, however, was given by the *Private Eye* journalist who gave the ‘small ‘c’

²⁰⁴ BBC Radio 4’s *Today* and *PM* programmes, and *Newsnight* on BBC2

conservatism of the business pages' as the greatest hindrance to prophetic journalism. This journalist's scepticism is so pronounced that he prefers the word 'prejudice' and this is evidently at odds with mainstream journalists' instincts toward objectivity. The credit boom – and the eventual crash - could not have happened, he said, without financial deregulation and it was only when boom turned to bust that the news media asked probing questions. But, he added, 'the important time to look at it was ten years before that.' The journalist emphasised his point with a telling analogy which could equally apply to the Financial Crisis, and indeed, other economic and business issues that have not captured the attention of the mainstream news media:

You ... stop someone running under a bus. You wouldn't say 'let's see what happens if the bus hits them before we do anything.' You've got to look at something and say 'that just doesn't look right'

It is also noteworthy that the definition of 'business' among all journalists was limited to large companies, typically FTSE-100 members, and financial markets. Indeed, the contribution of freelances, the self-employed, partnerships, co-operatives and small firms does not register in the minds of most economics and business journalists. This is even more remarkable when one considers that three million Britons are sole proprietors and the vast majority of the UK's 4.9 million private sector businesses are SMEs²⁰⁵ which employ around 14 million people (BIS 2013.) Consequently, by focussing almost entirely on big business, journalists are excluding great swathes of the nation's wealth creators from the news agenda. Similarly, only two BBC analysts acknowledged the inherent inability of mainstream reporting to cover the social impact of macro-economics. As the senior BBC economics analyst said, news organisations do not have a 'silo' for stories about the effect of neoliberalism on humanity.

Hence, by not conveying socio-economic realities and gravitating to large corporations and financial markets, the mainstream news media habitually give a highly restricted view of the economic environment. Furthermore, journalists' self-diagnosis suggests that few think there is anything seriously amiss with their selection and rejection of stories. This is paradoxical given that most said the news media was negligent in the prelude to the Financial Crisis. A poor understanding of complex markets; a dearth of scepticism; too many blind assumptions about the virtues of capitalism; and persistent shortages of time and resources combined to produce a news media that inevitably exacerbated, rather than questioned, the credit

²⁰⁵ Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises with fewer than 250 employees

boom. It follows that if journalism missed the warning signs then - and with no intervening change in sourcing strategies, story selection, newsroom culture or mindset - the profession will continue to neglect important issues. In the case of the Financial Crisis, the mainstream news media tightly converged around a set of assumptions and conventions, and although there is now a degree of contrition among practitioners, there is little indication that the dominant *modus operandi* has been challenged.

Agenda setting and framing

This assessment is compelling but it cannot be applied universally and there are, of course, exceptions. As illustrated in previous chapters, economic and business issues are normally covered in descriptive, non-problematic terms and with little evidence of differences in political opinion. In some instances, however, an issue becomes contentious, a wider range of sources are consulted and the journalism becomes more evaluative. Hence, formerly-neglected issues can be thrust to the fore if the right conditions prevail. In the case of economic globalisation in 1999, for example, it was the protests at the WTO Conference that raised the news media's interest, albeit marginally, in more radical ideas. Private finance only became controversial on the promise of a row between the Labour Party leadership and unions at the 2002 Party Conference; and it was a Competition Commission report in 2007 that promoted higher billing for those who contested supermarket power.

When interviewees were asked about the processes that elevate a previously-neglected issue to the top of the schedules they gave explanations that generally fall into four categories. The first is an unexpected event that has such persuasive news value that it is impossible to ignore. This might be a burst bubble – as graphically demonstrated in 2008 – or a smaller-scale disaster. A vivid example of the latter occurred during the data gathering period for this chapter when the Rana Plaza clothing factory in Bangladesh collapsed, killing 1,200 people and injuring many more (BBC 2013.) As the mediated debate unfolded, questions about the ethics of buying products produced in 'sweatshops' were posed. For decades, development and human rights NGOs and international labour organisations have campaigned against western corporations' manufacturing activities in the developing world, and yet it took a human tragedy to bring it to the attention of the news media.²⁰⁶ This episode was highlighted by two interviewees who said it was a prime example of disaster being a

²⁰⁶ Journalists, notably Naomi Klein (2000) and John Pilger (2002), and the alternative media, particularly the *New Internationalist* covered 'sweat shops' in great detail many years before the disaster in Bangladesh

catalyst for debate which fizzles momentarily and then recedes. A BBC reporter explained that his World Service colleagues ‘tend to look more at the moral aspects of business’ in normal times, but his role was to cover ‘the activities of commercial organisations … wealth creation.’ It was notable that this journalist did not cite the news media’s role in setting the agenda; it was the disastrous event that irresistibly pushed sweatshops to the fore and journalists merely responded in line with their perceptions of news values. A *Telegraph* journalist said the same principle applied in other contexts: the news media rarely ask why food, for example, is so cheap, or link this to the conditions of production, unless there is a scandal. When asked why this happens, he said there is: ‘no appetite from readers or editors,’ and added an enigmatic footnote: ‘see no evil, hear no evil.’

Several interviewees expressed a belief that newspapers do not set the news agenda at all. A senior *Guardian* economics writer said editors ‘tend to be at the end of the process rather than the beginning’ and a *Telegraph* business editor said newspapers are merely ‘conduits of debates’ that are happening in the broader world. Again, a sense of inevitability pervaded answers and it was only when gently pushed that interviewees considered the effect of editorial decisions. The *Telegraph* editor agreed that he does indeed use his judgement to decide what is contentious; a BBC reporter said that sometimes ‘diktats come from on high’ instructing journalists across the Corporation to cover a certain issue; and two journalists gave intriguing examples of how corporate lobbyists can capture the interest of editors and, hence, influence the news agenda.

The first, a *Sunday Times* reporter, said that the contents of the newspaper are ‘generally driven by the outside world’, including what journalists hear from their sources. Journalists are, he said, ‘a reflection of conversations we have in the background.’ The *ST* actively cultivates relationships with senior business people and this includes lunches for chief executives. Sometimes, said the journalist, issues raised over lunch are adopted by the editor who then instructs journalists to cover them. The second illustration came from a former *Observer* journalist who sketched out the process that culminated in the Competition Commission inquiry into the grocery market (see chapter 5.) The *Sunday Times* published a story about Tesco’s accumulation of land banks which was, he believed, ‘planted by a rival’ supermarket. The *Observer* editor read the story and said ‘we should do something on this,’ and other newspapers were soon contributing to the debate. This spurred on various campaigning organisations and eventually MPs pressed for an Office of Fair Trading

report. Although this is just one person's account of a single issue, a *Telegraph* journalist agreed that the key to an issue becoming contentious is when media interest 'snowballs.'

Editorial decisions are clearly central to agenda setting, but they are part of a process that usually begins with an external stimulus, either in the form of a disaster that dominates the newswires or social interaction in the guise of lobbying. The third factor mentioned by interviewees was campaigning which is an extended version of the latter. News organisations sometimes instigate their own campaigns but usually, the impetus is external. Newspapers are generally averse to supporting campaigns because, according to a *Guardian* economics writer, there is no certainty of victory. These sentiments were shared by a senior *Sunday Times* journalist: 'No one wants to be pushing something that doesn't have a cat in hell's chance of going somewhere.' Such reluctance is frustrating for social movements which need sustained media coverage of endemic issues to convey their often-complex arguments to the public. Even so, several interviewees agreed that the Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign in the mid-2000s did secure the news media's attention. This was relatively successful because it was 'credible and well-orchestrated,' generated support from celebrities, and happened at a stable period in the economic cycle. The time was right in 2005, said the *Guardian* writer, but in 2013: 'The public are less receptive and the politicians are worried about other things', and so there is little chance that contemporary radical ideas, such as the so-called Robin Hood Tax (RHT), will gain favour. Although supporters of the RHT have, according to a *Observer* journalist, taken a 'strategic view', recruited high profile figures, focused on specific editors, and made a 'big noise' about the merits of an international financial transaction tax, it has not gripped the media's interest to the same extent as MPH²⁰⁷.

The contrasting fortunes of MPH and the RHT demonstrate the importance of the fourth factor in agenda setting, namely political support. The former was, said the *Guardian* writer, 'a confluence of grass roots campaigns... meshed with a political desire (from a Labour government) and a pretty quiet time' in western economies. Although the RHT has been discussed by European Union governments, unlike MPH it has not achieved a 'critical mass' of political support, said the *New Statesman* journalist: if an issue is raised by a senior politician then it becomes 'fair game' for

²⁰⁷ A BBC business journalist suggested that the RHT has not taken off because the financial industry has managed to control the debate and convinced editors and politicians that banks need to be 'protected'

discussion by the news media, but to gain sustained coverage it needs to feature in parliamentary debates. A senior BBC economics journalist agreed that interest at Westminster increases chances of coverage but he established clear boundaries. If politicians subscribe to a campaign then ‘naturally, you do it,’ but (emphasis added:)

If they (campaigning groups) were breaking the law or there was something *subversive* about it, then they wouldn’t get covered

This journalist did not give a definition of ‘subversive’ but he did emphasise that rumours of an all-encompassing ‘BBC grid’ - that determines which issues gain exposure – are baseless. A colleague, however, said the Corporation’s news operation is ‘run by a mechanism.’ Journalists and politicians have common backgrounds and mindsets, he said, and therefore they share frames of reference which might include what is classified as ‘subversive.’ Furthermore, the BBC has ‘a lot of political staff’ and so news gathering antennae are fixed on Westminster. To achieve elevated status, therefore, an issue needs support from elected representatives. The *Private Eye* journalist gave the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) as a prime example. He had covered PFI for many years and yet its pitfalls were only analysed by the mainstream media, he said, when they became ‘officially recognised’ by the House of Commons’ Public Accounts Committee (PAC.) Hence, PFI became significant when Parliament thrust it onto the agenda, *not* when journalists independently selected it as a story. This clearly has a serious ramifications for democratic accountability: the PAC and other government bodies are notoriously cumbersome and so ‘big public policy issues don’t get covered until it’s too late.’

As with other questions, it was the similarities in answers about agenda setting, rather than the differences, that were most evident. Across all four media organisations, the news agenda is determined by the same combination of factors – disasters, editorial decisions, lobbying, and political support – and yet, ironically for an industry that purports to be focussed on consumer need, it appears that public sentiment is not considered. Not one interviewee mentioned letters to the editor, emails, blog comments, mass demonstrations, or opinion polls as catalysts for extended coverage of economics or business issues. In the case of the latter, it would appear that, with journalists perpetually hunting for ‘market moving’ stories, the business pages are the domain of shareholder – not public – interest. This was apparent when interviewees were asked how frames were chosen. There was a widespread belief that journalists made their own decisions but again, self-direction is merely perceived. The *Sunday Times* business editor, for instance, said that framing

is '85 percent autonomous' on the part of the journalist and swiftly added: 'we don't hire people who don't know what a story is' and a *Times* journalist said that he: 'Literally never had editors telling me I have the wrong story or wrong slant.' Hence, because journalists are not *told* how to frame an issue, they presume that they have autonomy.

This freedom is a largely illusory, however, because business articles that adopt a perspective other than that of the investor are likely to be rejected. There was little indication of conditionality in interviewees' answers - for example, if X circumstances apply, we look at the worker's viewpoint - nor that business could be meaningfully covered from perspectives other than investors. Indeed, when the announcement of record supermarket profits was given as an example of a story that could be framed in different ways, journalists seemed puzzled that workers, citizens, suppliers or local communities could offer valid, alternative perspectives. Business, it seems, is reported from the owners' viewpoint by default. This was demonstrated by a senior BBC journalist who, when asked how he would treat the announcement of a supermarket's profits, showed an instinctive focus on the investor (emphasis added):

It should be fairly clear: they're either better or worse than expected. If you're a business journalist, it's not difficult to reach the *correct* line

In theory, BBC reporters have freedom to pursue numerous stories and angles but there is 'a strong need for consistency' across TV, radio and web. Inevitably, this means that ideas are modified by negotiation – in morning editorial meetings and less formally throughout the day – and framing choices are limited. As with the *Sunday Times*, BBC journalists have a deep understanding of what is expected: the business reporter said he had been with the BBC: '...long enough to understand the nature of the programmes I serve.' There was a sense that framing is a simple extrapolation of the preceding processes. A junior business reporter at the *Telegraph*, for instance, said editors had never told her which line to take, and then on reflection she added: 'Maybe this is because I know what's required.' Variations on this phrase appeared frequently - and in several different contexts - throughout the interviews and it neatly illustrated that economic and business journalism is far more than the product of procedure and process. There is a significant social element and journalists' interactions with their colleagues, editors and sources clearly play a central role.

3 – The social constitution and professional culture of journalists

The news production process across the four news organisations is clearly very similar. Although there was some differences in their answers, the substance of interviewees' responses to questions about sourcing strategies; the origins of news; news values; agenda setting and framing were virtually interchangeable. Reporters at the BBC, *Guardian*, *Telegraph*, *Times* and *Sunday Times* all follow very similar working practices and so it is to be expected that the news product has converged in the manner described in the previous empirical chapters. Strong similarities were also apparent in the social constitution of journalists, and the professional cultures in which they work, and the interviews confirmed that these factors tend to reinforce established practice and hence, the news product.

Background and education

Although the news media may give the impression of diversity, there are conspicuous similarities in the people they recruit. The majority – over 60 percent - of the 26 journalists interviewed for this chapter were white British men aged approximately between 40 and 70. All bar five of the sample are based in London – and, one would presume, live in the south-east of England - and at least nine-tenths are university graduates. The median age of interviewees was estimated at 44 years; just four participants were women; all except one were British by birth and upbringing; and only two had an ethnicity other than 'white.' In these terms, it would appear that British economic and business journalism is produced by a very limited section of society that does not reflect the diversity of the population. Indeed, the 'typical' journalist is a white, middle-aged, 'middle-class', university-educated man living and working in the most prosperous region of the UK. This observation is of little value in isolation but it raises an important question: to what extent does this social profile explain the nature of the journalism produced?

Of the 12 questions that form the foundations of this chapter, this elicited the longest, most varied and least conclusive responses. Some journalists hesitated at length before giving jumbled answers, others made a rapid affirmation – 'very much', 'enormously', 'very important', 'quite a large influence' – and then struggled to give substance to their belief. Only two interviewees – a BBC Wales reporter and a senior *Telegraph* journalist – believed background and education made no difference to a journalist's output. Although this pair were in the minority, their claims that the professional persona overrides an individual's own views carries more weight than

the counter argument. Both perspectives have merit, however, and this is highly contentious territory with no direct, causal link between a journalist's background and the political content of the news product. Indeed, the widespread inability to explain how the dominant social profile influences journalistic output – and a number of apparent contradictions - underlined the amorphous nature of the relationship.

One would expect that economic and business journalists are educated and trained in their specialism as the public depend on them to explain inherently complex issues in terms that a lay reader will understand. This requires contextual knowledge and professional skills, and the vast majority of interviewees agreed with that discipline-specific education and vocational training are important. It was ironic, however, that just four – 15 percent of the sample - read economics at university and only one had a business qualification²⁰⁸. This widespread lack of academic grounding may partly explain why the news media as a whole tends to have a restricted view of economics and business. In addition, less than a quarter of the sample has a formal qualification in journalism²⁰⁹ so it is doubtful if many of the interviewees have read any critical academic research or been exposed to learned arguments about, for example, objectivity, balance or bias. Junior journalists also pick up knowledge from senior colleagues, and by consuming news from other media which, as demonstrated in the earlier empirical chapters, tends to reinforce the neoliberal consensus. Furthermore, there has been little public debate about alternatives to capitalism since the early 1990s. Only half of the 26 journalists – those in their late-40s and above – would have any personal memory of an authentic choice of economic systems and so, unless the younger half of the sample had purposefully explored the arguments for nationalisation, stronger trade union rights, progressive taxation and redistribution of wealth, it is doubtful they will have any substantial understanding of alternative thought in economics.

As stated above, at least 90 percent of the interviewees went to university and a quarter of the sample are Oxford and Cambridge graduates, including the economics editors of the *Guardian* and the *Times*. Furthermore, three very senior BBC economics and business journalists - not interviewed for this chapter - are Oxford alumni²¹⁰ and other economics and business news providers also show a preference

208 See Appendix 4.3

209 Only two interviewees - both BBC - have formal qualifications in both economics/business and journalism

210 Stephanie Flanders (BBC economics editor), Robert Peston (business editor) and Linda Yueh (chief business correspondent) were asked to participate in this study but were unable to do so

for Oxbridge graduates²¹¹. Hence, the higher reaches of this cohort are not only unrepresentative of the UK population, but are also subtly distinct from the ‘middle-class’ metropolitan dwellers who constitute the bulk of the sample. It is debateable whether Oxbridge graduates are any more likely to follow a political consensus than those who studied elsewhere. But these universities still have the greatest cachet on a *curriculum vitae* and private school students are still far more likely to gain a place at these elite institutions than pupils from state schools. It is also much more likely that children from rich families will go to private schools than those from modest backgrounds. Hence, an over-representation of Oxbridge graduates in any profession, particularly one with a strong social dimension, suggests a perpetuation of the class system which places the agenda of the privileged above that of the majority.

The *Sunday Times* business editor admitted there was an ‘upside’ to this phenomenon. Oxbridge graduates make good leader writers, he said, but ‘most of them … don’t know what it is to work hard for a living.’ Journalism is not a profession, he said, it is a trade, and the importance of hard work and learning on the job is underlined by his recruitment strategy:

I want people who have done the cat up the tree and the cheque presentation to the WI (Women’s Institute) … people who are hungry (for the story) and hungry to prove themselves. Perseverance is 95 percent of the job. The people out there (in the newsroom) … work their bollocks off

This might be termed the ‘traditional’ route and yet there was scant evidence that other news organisations placed equal value on a career trajectory that included, effectively, an apprenticeship that involves interaction with the general public and local communities. A veteran BBC radio presenter said that the prevalence of middle-class, largely white, graduates at the Corporation has caused a ‘detachment’ from the audience. He lamented the disappearance of journalists with backgrounds in local news because, by ‘knocking on doors’ they had ‘connected’ with the lives of ordinary people. These days, he said, BBC journalists ‘don’t react with their gut, they react intellectually.’ A *Times* journalist, however, believes that apprenticeships are overrated and reflected fondly on the 1980s when breaking into business journalism was a way of circumventing the ‘old NUJ (National Union of Journalists), three years in the provinces rules… pre-Wapping.’ Many journalists hired thirty years ago had

211 A *Guardian* economics journalist began her career as a Reuter’s graduate trainee and said ten of the twelve students in her cohort were Oxford or Cambridge graduates

worked in the City and had ‘some practical experience of what they were writing about.’ But now, he said, they are largely bereft of first-hand knowledge.

These days it would appear that British economics and business journalism has the worst of all worlds: very few practitioners have any academic, contextual or experiential knowledge of their specialism, nor do they have formal journalistic training, nor have they completed an apprenticeship in local media. In addition, an inordinately high proportion of journalists were educated at elite institutions and, consequently, spent their formative years detached from the lives of ‘ordinary people.’ Indeed, there was also a strong feeling that journalism is becoming a profession that is open to a select few only. The *Sunday Times* business editor noted that many British journalists are hired: ‘because their dad knew someone...or because they’ve got the right sort of degree from Oxford or Cambridge, and they are utterly useless.’ As outlined above, this editor takes a fiercely meritocratic stance on recruitment but his newspaper may be an exception, and it appears that careers in economic and business journalism are far easier to pursue if one has a relatively privileged background.

According to a senior *Guardian* writer, journalism is ‘becoming much narrower’ in terms of who it attracts. When he began in journalism in the late-1970s, it was possible to join a newspaper as a school leaver²¹² but now journalism is the exclusive domain of the graduate and consequently, the door is effectively closed to much of British society. But even a degree is no longer enough. The young *Telegraph* reporter emphasised the centrality of internships as the first step on the career ladder and this clearly favours students from rich families who can fund unpaid work. The young *New Statesman* journalist acknowledged that his progress would have been far slower had his parents not helped him financially during protracted periods of work experience. Furthermore, he and a senior BBC journalist both agreed that their common educational backgrounds - private school and PPE from Oxford - had been advantageous for meeting people who had helped kick-start their journalistic careers.

The evidence thus far is somewhat nebulous and it is difficult to assess the extent to which background and education affect the news product. There was certainly a strong belief among the sample that it does, but there is no simple, causal relationship and the findings so far are riddled with ironies. For instance, the bulk of

²¹² Only one journalist in the sample – a BBC business reporter - had taken this route

economic and business journalists are white, middle-class, middle-aged, metropolitan men and this was generally identified as a negative, even though the critics themselves generally fitted this description. Likewise, most journalists believed that training needs to improve in their niche, and yet few had any formal education in economics, business nor indeed, journalism. Furthermore, although the lack of diversity in social class, education and ethnicity was recognised as an issue, *political* diversity among reporters was never mentioned.

This was graphically illustrated by the *Sunday Times* business editor who applied the word 'diversity' to the complementary talents and nationalities of his team. The by-lines of the *ST* business section certainly reflect the non-elitist, globalised, aspirational editorial line of the newspaper²¹³ but a range of nationality, ethnicity, and background does not guarantee diversity of product. This was confirmed by another senior *Sunday Times* journalist who noted the individual characters in the newsroom but, stopping himself mid-sentence, questioned how much difference there is in the journalism produced:

We (the journalists) all approach things in a different way... but... I don't think... I'm arguing against myself here... if you read the paper, you wouldn't know that. It's written in a certain way

A colleague said that journalists will inevitably retract their own opinions because 'there is a certain way to write a story' and they would be criticised if they allowed 'their own views to take over the underlying truth.' These last two words are telling and underline the importance of adhering to editorial expectations (see chapter 7.) This sentiment was echoed by a *Telegraph* journalist who said she 'liked to think' her background did not affect her journalistic output, and gave the example of friends working at the *Daily Mail* whom: 'Don't believe in what they're writing. It's a job at the end of the day and they write the line that's expected of them.'

The argument that a journalist's background and education makes a major contribution to his or her journalistic output would have merit if the main economic and business news product was the opinion piece. But, as shown in the content analyses, the predominant article type is the standard news item which generally follows a structured format and allows little opportunity for journalists to air their

213 The editor, a New Zealander, listed the rest of his team as follows: 'North London Jewish... Irish... Scotsman... second generation Pakistani immigrant, went to Oxford... Welsh guy whose dad was in the pits....'

personal views. The largely-formulaic nature of the news product helps to resolve some of the contradictions outlined above. This was neatly illustrated by a *Sunday Times* journalist who said that a reporter's background has a major impact in how the journalist interacts with his sources and colleagues, but when writing the story, the person is replaced by the professional:

The way you approach the people you meet in your job and the story gathering and reporting process is ... informed by your background and the kind of person you are. But when it comes to writing ... if you had a chip on your shoulder about capitalism and the City, the chances are you probably wouldn't have ended up on the *Sunday Times* anyway

As noted by other journalists, there is a 'certain way' to write a story. Each publication has its own editorial expectations and, consequently, journalists are recruited on the basis of their potential to understand and fulfil these with the minimum of guidance. Staff are hired in the image of the incumbents and any applicant who has *overt* political views that clash with the publication's is unlikely to even be interviewed. Hence, it is not background and education *per se* that act as a filter, rather recruitment. This is best illustrated with a hypothetical example. If the young *New Statesman* reporter applied for a job at the *Telegraph* he would have to hide his conflicting opinions on the application form and at the interview. And if he did this convincingly, he would then have to consistently follow the editorial line without injecting his own brand of left-wing scepticism. It is unlikely, of course, that he would be comfortable working at the *Telegraph*, but even at the BBC, he would need to suppress his political beliefs. A less extreme example was provided by a senior *Guardian* economics journalist. When asked if he would be the same journalist if he worked for the *Economist* or the *Daily Telegraph*, he said:

I'd be the same person but I wouldn't last long. I don't think they'd hire me... If they *did* want me, they'd want me as the 'token leftie'

Both of these journalists fit the white, middle-class, metropolitan stereotype, and both are Oxbridge graduates. Both are talented journalists but it is doubtful if either could happily work for publications that did not accommodate left-wing views. Indeed, it is not inevitable that journalists automatically succumb and blend into the apparent consensus that spans politics, business and journalism, and some interviewees demonstrated an overt concern for the less privileged. A former *Guardian-Observer* journalist, for example, who described his background as 'nice, middle class', is driven by a desire to 'expose injustice and see social change.' Similar motivations were also evident among BBC journalists but there was a sense that they had rather

less freedom to pursue stories that cast a more critical eye. A senior BBC business reporter agreed that he fitted the dominant social profile - 'mostly middle class, mostly white, mostly very well educated and well paid' – but he consciously took a close interest in socio-economic issues that *didn't* affect him directly (for example, youth unemployment and shortages of affordable housing.) The reporter also conceded, however, that, although his proposals were often successful, the majority of his journalism followed the corporate diary. A senior colleague – the product of private school and Oxford – disagreed strongly with the notion that one needed to have been the victim of an economic phenomenon - for example unemployment - to produce a balanced and meaningful report. He compared economics to other branches of journalism:

As a journalist, you may never have been to Afghanistan but you can still comment on policy. You may never have been mugged, and yet you still report on crime

This BBC journalist was also adamant that 'professionalism' overrides opinion among his colleagues, and personal views have no place in BBC reports. Even if this is true, impartial, balanced reporting is far from assured. As previously demonstrated, the news agenda is not determined by journalists' own preferences. Newswires, economic data and diary announcements, and corporate calendars are the main catalysts for coverage, and these sources are controlled by the same broad social group. Employees of news agencies; politicians; civil servants; and business people have very similar constitutions and backgrounds to journalists and, one would assume, similar agendas.

This is vividly apparent at the *Sunday Times* where, in pursuit of the scoop, the business editor expects his journalists to 'get to know' directors and senior managers from the companies they cover. In doing so, they become embedded in the corporate information machine. This is, in the editor's words, a 'systematic' method of gathering privileged information and he encapsulated the constant mingling of his journalists with senior business people in the phrase: 'the *Sunday Times Club*.' A senior *Times* journalist said such close interaction with senior corporate personnel gives journalists: 'a better idea of how business people think and how big company decisions get made.' As noted above, journalists and their elite sources often have relationships that straddle the line between professional and social. The news gathering process goes far beyond the formal interview and friendships are inevitably formed as information is exchanged and 'favours' are done. Thus, personal

connections are strengthened, other sources are marginalised, and so the tendency to report from the perspective of the business and political elite is reinforced.

Professional culture

Although a lack of time in the interviews precluded specific questions, some hints of professional culture were evident, both from the answers about journalistic practice, and the researcher's observations of working environments. In the case of the latter, there were again striking similarities. Save for the logos and the corporate colour schemes, the headquarter buildings of the four mainstream news organisations are very similar: modern office blocks predominantly constructed in steel and glass, located in central London, either in redeveloped areas - The *Guardian-Observer* in Kings Cross and the *Times/Sunday Times* in Wapping - or in traditionally-upmarket locations - BBC News is in Portland Place; and the *Telegraph* Group is on Buckingham Palace Road. The locations offer plenty of places to eat and drink, shops, other amenities and an excellent transport infrastructure. They are also, of course, close to the UK's centres of political and commercial power - Westminster and the City of London - and the country's advertising and PR communities.

Without further research, preferably an ethnographic study, it would not be credible to posit theories about how such working environments might influence the journalism produced. It is reasonable to assume, however, that a person's immediate surroundings will colour his or her view of the world and hence, their perception of what constitutes normality. A long-term unemployed steelworker, for example, receiving Job Seeker's Allowance in Ebbw Vale, would see the economic world through a very different lens to a journalist in central London. Whereas the steelworker is surrounded by stagnation and struggle, the journalist's world is one of vibrant opportunity. Even if the BBC reporter visited Ebbw Vale, she would no doubt travel in comfort, and perhaps stay at an hotel of reasonable quality. In these terms, there is clearly no guarantee that even the most enthusiastic roving reporter could grasp the meaning of this alternative normality, unless she immersed herself in the environment of others²¹⁴. This re-raises the question of whether a reporter needs to personally experience an economic phenomenon to produce a representative, balanced and accurate piece of journalism. The senior BBC economics journalist quoted above was adamant that first-hand experience of unemployment was not a prerequisite. Although there's no doubt that he – or any other metropolitan journalist

²¹⁴ Guardian journalist, Polly Toynbee, took this approach in her book, *Hard Work: Life in Low Pay Britain* (Toynbee 2003) which was, in many ways, a contemporary take on George Orwell's 1933 classic, *Down and Out in Paris and London*

– could indeed write an accurate and balanced article, it would inevitably be constructed from the journalist's terms of reference, rather than the steelworker's. The reporter could empathise with and attempt to reflect an unemployed person's experience, but this would be an exception to the journalist's personal 'normality' which would return when back in London.

Despite the absence of an ethnography, it is possible to give a few snapshots of the culture within newsrooms. Again, there were many similarities between the organisations but also noticeable differences. The over-riding impression given by *Guardian* interviewees was the importance of debate, both within the news product and among staff. It is noteworthy, however, that the parameters of debate are consensual: leader writing, for example, is a 'collegiate activity' and it is 'very rare' that the writers do not have a daily conference to discuss the 'newspaper's view' on an issue. In the newsroom itself, the team of four economics reporters sit together and instead of going over ideas in detail at a morning meeting, discussions usually take place informally, over the partitions, throughout the day. The close proximity of colleagues can sometimes be restrictive and one *Guardian* journalist spoke in hushed tones throughout her phone interview. When asked if her work is ever critiqued by colleagues she said: 'Of course! It's a newsroom – people are watching over your shoulder all the time.' Given her nervousness and non-committal answers, this was probably meant literally. One can only speculate about the extent to which journalists modify their behaviour when working in open plan offices but it seems reasonable to presume that they are more guarded than if in their own space. For example, if a *Daily Telegraph* reporter had an agreeable phone interview with a Marxist economist his colleagues might voice concerns about the politics of the reporter's next piece.

It was evident that the *Sunday Times* is particularly competitive, both in terms of beating other publications to the scoop, and fraternal rivalry between the reporters, upon whom the editor places great expectations to 'get to know' the key people on their respective beats and to 'get the story.' In the newsroom, the journalists face each other in two rows of desks that are visible through the glass wall of the editor's office. Although there are few occasions when all journalists are present, one can imagine how this configuration would promote unity of purpose and intra-team competition. Whereas *Sunday Times* journalists exuded energy and were generally forthright with their comments in interviews, their BBC counterparts chose their words extremely carefully and there was a distinct undercurrent of sensitivity when

questions relating to balance and impartiality were raised. The senior economics reporter and the radio presenter both alluded to the ‘BBC’s recent traumas’ and although neither was specific, one can assume that they meant inquiries into the failure of BBC journalism standards which extend from the Hutton Report in 2003 to the Pollard Report of 2012. Such tightly-focussed, public inquisitions inevitably put strain on journalistic confidence and, with the BBC Charter renewal a perennial concern, they have added to journalists’ caution. The net effect is a culture of restraint and understatement both in terms of the journalism produced and the answers given to academic researchers. There was scant evidence that BBC reporters do, in the words of the senior economics journalist, want to ‘stick their necks out.’

Summary

It is apparent that the convergence of mainstream economic and business journalism cannot be satisfactorily explained by focussing on a single factor. On the contrary, the various elements explored in this chapter must be considered holistically if one is to understand how an outwardly-diverse news media can consistently produce news that exhibits so many similarities. Sourcing strategies, for example, that habitually favour the political and business elite offer compelling evidence by themselves, but such patterns are the inevitable result of a formalised, common news production process which begins when journalists draw their news from the same newswires and the same corporate fonts of information. As illustrated by comments about the reporting of the Financial Crisis, reporters have very similar conceptions of what constitutes news, and will follow the same news agenda unless a disaster or mainstream political interest in other issues diverts their attention. Business reporters, and their economics counterparts to a lesser extent, adopt the investor frame by default, and routinely present news in terms of its impact on profit and other forms of financial wealth. Hence, given the similarities in the production processes, the news product is destined to have very similar characteristics. This tendency is exacerbated when one considers that journalists have very similar social constitutions, which they share with their political and business sources, and spend their working and personal lives in the most prosperous part of the country. In these terms, it would be remarkable if economics and business journalism had *not* converged.

7 - DIVERGENCE

The previous chapter demonstrated that convergence is the consequence of a common news production process that spans the mainstream media. Although there are some variations between publications, the main factors of production are interchangeable. As revealed by the interviews, the backgrounds and social profiles of journalists; the location of the newsrooms; the conduits of 'raw news'; perceptions of news value; framing strategies; and sourcing patterns are very similar and, hence, it is inevitable that there is often very little difference in news product. What has not been explained, however, are the differences in political content, as identified in the content analyses.

The key to understanding these phenomena is to assess the effect of house tradition and to do this, it is useful to compare the mainstream news media to a political federation. Although the analogy is imperfect, the mainstream media is akin to the European Union. To gain membership, individual countries – or publications – need to adhere to certain common principles. In the case of the EU, constituent states are democracies that share a commitment to human rights, the market economy and various legal structures. Similarly, to be considered mainstream, publications share a *modus operandi*: for example, they draw news from certain conduits; they focus on large companies and mainstream politics; and give prominence to elite voices. If nation states do not agree with the core principles of the EU, they do not 'qualify' for membership and likewise, organisations that follow different news agendas remain outside the dominant media federation and are considered 'alternative'. Mainstream journalists are effectively 'citizens' of the federation and hence, they generally accept its common values.

However, journalists and EU citizens are also members of distinct sub-entities. Like Britons, French, Germans and other nationalities, journalists working for the BBC, *Guardian*, *Telegraph*, and *Times/Sunday Times*, exist in environments that have their own cultures. Differences are far more pronounced between nation states - language, history, customs, etc. - than between news organisations. Nevertheless, as will be demonstrated, each of the three newspaper groups and the BBC has its own set of largely-implicit values that underpin the ethos of that publication. Both EU citizens and journalists *appear* to have autonomy but their freedoms are exercised within well-understood legal, ethical and cultural boundaries which are imposed by

both the federation - the mainstream media/the EU - and the constituent parts - the publication/the nation state. In these terms, publications are rather like tribes with their own mores, expectations and values and these in turn are encapsulated within the concept of the house tradition.

Although rather blunt and rarely used by the interviewees, the labels 'left' and 'right' will be used to describe political positions. This delineation is encapsulated in *Table 7.1* which shows some fundamental differences between left and right-wing thought. Whereas the left traditionally promotes the collective, common ownership, restrictions on commercial and economic power, and hence, the active redistribution of wealth for public benefit, the right favours *laissez-faire*, private ownership and individualism and, by extension, the pre-eminence of the investor, a smaller public sector, lower taxes, weaker trade union rights and minimal corporate regulation. This is not a polarised scale and modifiers will be used to show the extent to which the publication subscribes to the position (for example, 'centre left.') It will also be shown how the alternative news media differs from the mainstream and why the former habitually produces radical journalism while the latter only rarely gives exposure and credence to different interpretations of economic and business.

Table 7.1
Characteristics of left- and right-wing economic thought

LEFT		RIGHT
Common	Ownership of resources	Private
Mutuals, co-operatives	Preferred organisation	Entrepreneurs, corporations
Larger	Public sector	Smaller
Higher	Income and wealth taxes	Lower
Stronger	Workers' rights	Weaker
Stronger	Environmental protection	Weaker
More	Corporate regulation	Less

1 – *Guardian/Observer*

The *Guardian* and *Observer* are often categorised as 'left-wing' but, as shown in the preceding empirical chapters, this is a clumsy generalisation and the reality is more subtle. The former *New Statesman* (NS) editor writes for his old magazine and for the *Guardian*, and imagines the typical reader of both as: 'probably working in the public, or the voluntary, sector, probably of broadly liberal views, like myself.' Indeed, the *Guardian* and the *NS* occupy a similar space in the political spectrum. Both cater for a well-educated audience that is generally sympathetic to left-wing ideas but both

lack the overt radical activism of *Corporate Watch* and the *New Internationalist*. The *Guardian's* centre-left position has been confirmed by the former deputy editor (Katz in Wells 2004) and a senior columnist, Jackie Ashley, who explained that the *Guardian* is a broad church of competing perspectives including 'right-wing libertarians, greens, Blairites (and) Brownites.' Although she identified the *Guardian* as 'clearly left of centre and vaguely progressive,' Ashley believes the newspaper should be a 'conversation, even a daily argument' but one that excludes the 'ideological purity' that might be found in the *Socialist Worker* on the left and the *Spectator* on the right (Ashley 2008.)

These statements go some way to explaining the findings of the content analyses which demonstrated that the *Guardian* gave greater credence to left-wing opinion than the other newspapers and the BBC, but tended to exclude radical perspectives, particularly in the context of economic globalisation. The content analyses also showed the *Guardian* gave considerable, sustained and *non-critical* exposure to viewpoints from the right. Indeed, some argue that this tendency is sufficiently strong to cast the *Guardian's* widely-assumed centre-left position as a 'myth' (Edwards and Cromwell 2005.) In the minds of *Guardian-Observer* reporters, however, the editorial position is undoubtedly centre-left, and although there is no written, formal statement of the newspaper's line, there is a pervasive understanding of what is appropriate. As one reporter said:

You will only offer a story that you know will be accepted by the editor.
You are conditioned to know what's required of you

In his first week at the *Guardian*, an economics writer was told by a senior colleague that there was no defined editorial line and, consequently, he based his early work on his own understanding of the newspaper's 'historical preoccupations' from his many years as a reader. Likewise, a former *Guardian* business journalist was never given explicit editorial guidance on which stance to adopt but he – and his colleagues – were sure of the audience and, hence, the editor's requirements. The newspaper 'knows its readership' and most readers, he said: '...are not City (of London) people; they are public sector types, arty, slightly lefty.' He consciously tried to take a 'reasonably populist' angle that appealed to these 'everyday folk' and consequently, one that contrasted with that of the *FT* or the *Telegraph*. These newspapers, he said, typically report on mergers and acquisitions, for example, from a financial standpoint because their readers are predominantly investors, whereas he would focus on the impact on jobs as this would have more chance of capturing his audience's interest.

Public sector workers, young people and academics were cited by most of the *Guardian* interviewees as their perceived audience, but the newspaper has a much more diverse readership. According to a business reporter, the increasing popularity of the *Guardian* website in the US and elsewhere is ‘starting to colour the way we write’ and a senior economics journalist noted around an eighth of *Guardian* readers vote Conservative. From the other end of the spectrum, he also receives emails urging him to discuss sustainable, ecological alternatives to capitalism. Although he does write such articles, they do not appear often because ‘this is not where the vast bulk of readers are’, and when he does cover radical ideas they are ‘normally discussed within an orthodox framework.’ There was a sense that this journalist’s work was guided more by perceptions of an audience need for news that was ‘fresh and interesting’ rather than the strength of argument. This is somewhat ironic because, in his comment pieces, he has praised those who are sharply critical of the economic *status quo* - ‘ultra-Keynesians and Marxists … had a good (Financial) Crisis’ – but, echoing the comments of his fellow columnist, he said if people want a regular critique of the dominant economic system, they can ‘buy *Resurgence*… or get the *Socialist Worker*.’

The *Guardian* clearly has well-established, and yet unwritten, editorial boundaries that are understood and accepted by the journalists. While radical thinking from the left is not banished *in toto*, it is only given occasional billing. This was evident when journalists were asked if they felt it their *responsibility* to challenge capitalism *per se*. Despite the commitment to debate, there was little evidence of a desire to routinely include alternative viewpoints from the left. A business reporter was most conscious of giving the readers - those ‘who pay £1.40’ for the print version of the *Guardian* – ‘value for money’ and the senior economics journalist said simply praising the *status quo* was ‘boring.’ He evidently takes his Fourth Estate duties seriously – ‘journalists are paid to be the public’s eyes and ears’ - but he stressed that his ‘primary responsibility is to challenge whatever is the prevailing wisdom’ and avoided singling out the current orthodoxy. This underlines the *Guardian*’s emphasis on reader engagement rather than radical ideas, and this was further illustrated by a colleague who said the *Guardian* editor, post-Financial Crisis, had told his leader writers: ‘everything is up for discussion.’ However, the examples this journalist gave of particularly powerful economics leaders since then were modifications to - rather than a fundamental redesigns of - the dominant economic system²¹⁵. Perhaps the most

215 The writer said the *Guardian* was first to ‘call for direct lending to companies’ and has ‘always been tough on bank reform...’

illuminating comments, however, came from a former *Guardian* journalist who wondered aloud why he'd not criticised the structures of capitalism during his tenure. On reflection, he had perceived his 'role to make markets better for more people' and the examples he gave – arguing for affordable HIV/AIDS drugs in Africa and exposing 'sweatshops' - were congruent with the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) model. He admitted that he 'didn't see the big picture' and although he 'learned and became more critical along the way,' his approach at the time was, in retrospect, 'not adequate.'

2 - Times and Sunday Times

The *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraphs*, and the *Times* and *Sunday Times* all sit firmly on the right of the spectrum. Staff from these newspapers gave similar answers to questions about audiences and editorial lines that clearly contrasted with those of *Guardian* journalists. Their views also largely confirmed, and to some extent explained, the findings of the content analysis. There are, however, subtle differences which will be explored below. It is important to note here that journalists for the Telegraph Group work for the daily and the Sunday newspapers - and the online versions - and so their comments can be safely amalgamated. The *Times* and *Sunday Times* (*ST*), however, share a building and an owner but operate as distinct entities.

Unfortunately, only one *Times* journalist was interviewed, and so it would be misguided to take his testimony as definitive. Nevertheless, with three years at the newspaper, his views carry significant weight and give substantial clues to audience perceptions, the editorial line and house tradition of the *Times*. Despite his nine years' experience writing about economics, this journalist was initially stumped when questioned about his audience. After much thought, he defined a typical reader as: 'curious, probably quite well educated, broad minded' with an interest in international as well as local matters. He didn't characterise this hypothetical reader in terms of profession or political persuasion, as *Guardian* journalists did, but he did say the audience does not 'expect the *Times* to espouse Communism.' The comment pieces in his section of the newspaper are 'centre-left, centre-right' which indicates a commitment to the middle ground. When asked if the editorial position of the *Times* had ever been explained to him, he said 'Emphatically not' and added he'd never had 'editors telling me I have the wrong story or the wrong slant.' These comments confirm the importance of recruitment: he was clearly the right person for the job

because, as he acknowledged, his own views inform his reporting which was ‘why the *Times* hired me.’ Inevitably, he said, ‘the truth that reporters see will be very different to the truth other people see’ and his account of how he establishes the limits of relevant opinion echoed those of his counterparts at the *ST* (see below.) There was a twist, however. Although he couldn’t remember the last time he quoted a ‘neo-Marxist’, the journalist believed that views from the deep left could become relevant again:

I completely disagree that socialism is dead in the west. If conditions in Europe continue to deteriorate, you could certainly see socialism gaining more prominence

He also emphasised that he had no personal sympathy for such views and only partially agreed with the proposition that his responsibility might be to challenge the received wisdom about capitalism’s *de facto* supremacy. Post-Financial Crisis, he said, reporters should put ‘some of the cosy assumptions²¹⁶ about capitalism under the microscope’ and although he noted that there are variations of this economic model, ‘my own view is that the capitalist system is the best one.’ These comments were very similar to those of the senior *Guardian* economics journalist and suggest a relatively inclusive editorial line that covers all bar the far left of the spectrum.

Sunday Times journalists were precise when describing audience and editorial line. An economics reporter said he covers a ‘wide spectrum’ of ideas but writes for the ‘middle 60 percent... that reflects mainstream but diverging opinion.’ This was confirmed by the business editor who highlighted a diverse constituency - ‘the million or so who read the paper’ – that ranges from ‘chief executives...whom we need to show we know what’s happening in the boardroom’ to:

People who know nothing about business for whom we need to make it like *Coronation Street*: we have to bring people into it, make it colourful, exciting, give them reason to read it

Comparing the coverage of business to a soap opera could raise accusations of ‘dumbing down’ but this statement underlines the *ST* culture of anti-elitist inclusivity reflected in its recruitment policy (see chapter 6.) Business is relevant to everyone and it is the *ST* journalists’ responsibility to make it accessible and compelling. The business editor stressed the importance of using the appropriate language and instructs his staff to ‘assume a reading age of twelve.’ Again, this was a surprising

²¹⁶ He gave two examples of ‘cosy assumptions’: markets are self-correcting; and companies do not pursue strategies that end in self-destruction

statement but the newspaper's enduring popularity confirms this strategy's effectiveness. Typically, new hires learn the *Sunday Times*' ethos by having a 'crash course' in writing and then pick up technique by 'sitting next to' a senior member of staff. Feature writing in particular is 'very structured' and the editor painted a surreal yet oddly illuminating image of the ease by which journalists are taught to write for their audience: 'If you can teach a dog to drive a car, then I can make reporters write the way I want.' It was evident that these principles are shared in the newsroom. A business reporter, for example, said he was aware that a Sunday newspaper is part of the reader's leisure time and, hence, articles need to be 'as accessible as possible.' Writing for the business section is a 'delicate balancing act' and the journalism needed to be 'sophisticated, informed, and informative' while appealing to the broadest possible audience: 'We need to make sure the chief executive of BP can get something out of it as well as his ten year old kid.'

According to the business editor, the editorial line is 'painted in water colours rather than in oils' but he is clear on the section's purpose: 'to be supportive of British business... supportive of wealth creation and aspiration.' A business reporter used very similar words, and added a few more to emphasise the newspaper's commitment to right-wing economic ideas:

We're pro-business; we don't think profit is a dirty word; we support and applaud wealth creation and success and entrepreneurialism.

Similarly, a senior economics journalist described the editorial line as 'pro-free enterprise, pro-business' and it was evident that this is deeply entrenched in *ST* reporters' minds. This does not, however, equate to unquestioning support for large corporations. Although no interviewee said it was their responsibility to challenge capitalism on a broad ideological front, all stressed their role in 'making sure capitalism remains honest.' The business reporter said the *ST* is not trying to 'bring down (economic) systems and governments' but to 'ensure that companies behave ethically and responsibly within the (existing) framework', and a colleague saw the newspaper's role to 'challenge when capitalism goes wrong.' In these terms, the *ST* is a critical friend of large companies: it supports the current economic model but frowns upon - and eagerly uncovers - excess and wrong-doing which could conceivably open the door for less business-friendly orthodoxies. Even though, as the *Times* journalist noted, ideas from the left could gain momentum, none of the *ST* journalists gave these ideas any credence. For example, the economics journalist said he sometimes receives emails from people who say:

'We find it disturbing that you've never advanced the Marxist alternative in your columns' and I've responded with 'I think most of us grew out of that at quite an early age'

The *ST* is interested in the 'real world' and not abstract political discussions. This was illustrated by the business editor who quoted a former boss who impressed on young reporters that 'a change in the shape of French thought is *not* a story.' The debate about the strengths and weaknesses of capitalism is valid, he said, and part of his reporters' role is to reveal facts that will inform philosophical deliberations, but *ST* readers want to see stories about 'companies or people *doing* something.' There was no indication that this strong culture, nor the *ST*'s editorial line, is ever overtly expressed. The economics journalist said there is no explicit direction 'from on high...' but over time, a mechanism develops' by which journalists know what will be well received. Again, like at the *Guardian* and *Times*, the house tradition – political stance, news values and writing style – are absorbed through professional osmosis. So long as the right person is recruited, and then learns techniques and ways of working from senior colleagues, the distinctive *Sunday Times* product is assured. And on the rare occasion that the recruitment filter fails and new hires are not up to the task, in the words of the business editor, 'they don't last long.'

3 - Telegraph Group

Although the Telegraph Group shares the *Times-Sunday Times*' political position, the perception of its audience is quite different. Unlike journalists for the latter, *Telegraph* interviewees do not deem casual readers to be important and none of the journalists gave any indication that they are writing for people with little interest in business, or indeed a limited commercial vocabulary. This was spelled out by an editor who said his mission was to 'deliver varied and sophisticated content to our varied and sophisticated readers' whom, he said, are 'intelligent... very engaged and often expert' in business. The editor said several sub-audiences need to 'get something out of what we produce' but it was noticeable that, unlike the *ST*, there was no mention of the young or lay audiences:

Small business owners; FTSE-100 chief executives; policy workers at the Treasury; general readers... retired, live in the Cotswolds, have investment portfolios; the retired bank manager; board members...

Like his editor, a young *Telegraph* business journalist instantly said he writes for 'the readers', and perceived his audience in very similar terms to his boss: 'City and corporate... retired stockbrokers and shareholders' but he also hoped he could tempt

'everybody's mum and dad' to read his work²¹⁷. A colleague prioritised investors, too but she also saw her readers as consumers whom expected a more critical line on the activities of large companies. She categorised the readership in terms of age and social class rather than profession, and drew a distinction between the typical newspaper reader - 'late-40s, mid-50s businessman' - and online readers - 'much younger, still right-wing, still middle-upper class.' Like the *Guardian*, the *Telegraph's* stereotypical reader profile is becoming less dominant thanks to the growth of its online audience. Nevertheless, the editor recognised that the core readership has certain expectations, in terms of content and political position, and stressed the centrality of 'the readers' on several occasions during the interview. Most markedly, he connected the importance of satisfying audience needs with the company's future success: 'We think about our readers first and last. If we don't sell papers, we're out of business.'

Two *Telegraph* editors were interviewed and both said readers expected a broad range of perspectives; 'our readers don't just want a one-eyed approach to an issue,' said one. But when asked about the limits of relevant opinion, the newspapers' traditional political leanings were confirmed. The economics specialist said, while he believes radical viewpoints are sometimes useful as 'counterpoints for arguments', ideas are not taken seriously unless they 'play into the newspaper's agenda.' This journalist did not attach left-right labels to the limits of opinion but said common sense was sufficient to weed out 'the nutters': people who propose ideas that were totally impractical and would cause the 'country to fall apart.' Although he acknowledged that outlandish ideas exist at both ends of the spectrum, it was clear that the *Telegraph's* editorial line is unambiguously supportive of the primacy of profit and shareholders. A senior economics journalist began one answer with: 'Obviously, we have a politically Conservative position...' and a reporter emphasised the business section's masthead: 'backing business and enterprise.' Another reporter brought the focus back to the readers whom, he said, 'expect us to have a free-market, capitalist take on the world' and his junior colleague said reporters tend to automatically give the 'right-wing view' because it appeals to the readership. Although trade unions and NGOs are sometimes 'useful' sources, this journalist avoids taking a critical line on business *per se* because such articles would not be 'picked up' by the editor, nor would they appeal to readers. This is not to say, however, that corporations are assumed to be self-evidently virtuous and all four

²¹⁷ This journalist added: 'It would be disingenuous not to say that I write for the editor too. I need to impress'

Telegraph interviewees emphasised the importance of holding companies and economic policy makers to account. Again, interviewees were keenly aware that their readers expected them to ask questions on behalf of investors and, to a lesser extent, consumers. The young business journalist, for example, saw it as her responsibility to ask probing questions of companies that took advantage of their powerful position: 'If we (journalists) don't challenge, who does?'

Unsurprisingly for a newspaper with such a solid right-wing position, none of the journalists thought it their responsibility to challenge the capitalist-free market consensus among political parties. Indeed, many 'conventional wisdoms are worth supporting very strongly,' said the senior business journalist, and he saw his main responsibility as providing the readership with a variety of compelling content that appealed to their interests. Although he believed that 'people made too much of the old-fashioned notion of left and right,' his – and his colleagues' – comments were more unequivocally from the right of the spectrum than any of the other newspaper interviewees. Like the *Guardian* and the *Times-Sunday Times*, none of the *Telegraph* journalists said the editorial line had been impressed on them explicitly, but there was a tacit acknowledgement that stories that were counter to the *Telegraph* 'pro-business' stance were, in the words of the junior business reporter, 'not even worth pitching.'

4 - The BBC

Analysing the BBC's house tradition and comparing it with those of the newspapers, is challenging for three reasons. First, the BBC is the only organisation featured in this chapter with codified editorial guidelines (BBC 2010a, 2010b, 2011) and unlike print journalists, BBC staff have a statutory obligation to impartiality. Unlike their newspaper counterparts, BBC journalists cannot pass overt opinion on politics and, by extension, express a preference for one party or another, or a political philosophy. Second, the BBC produces a far broader range of economics and business news - in terms of medium, format, content and target audience – than any of the other news organisations. Third, as part of its public service remit, the BBC also has a duty to go beyond pure reporting and to educate a public which generally have a low understanding of economics, business and finance (BBC Trust 2012, BBC Journalism Group 2007.) Hence, BBC journalists arguably face far greater challenges than their newspaper counterparts: they are often required to work across different platforms - TV, radio and website - and need to cater for huge, disparate

audiences while not allowing personal opinion to appear in their work. For these reasons, the BBC is unique among the sampled publications and direct comparison with the other media is indeed problematic. Nevertheless, it is possible to focus on the common ground, namely the editorial line, how this is interpreted by BBC journalists, and the extent to which this contributes to the inclusion of political viewpoints in economics and business news.

It is also important to reiterate that the content analyses showed the BBC excluded left-wing opinion more than the *Guardian*, and to a comparable extent as the *Telegraphs* and *Times-Sunday Times*. Conversely, the BBC also gave more exposure and credence to ideas from the right than the *Guardian*, though not as stridently as the other newspapers. Although the BBC strives for impartiality, balance and reflecting a broad range of opinions, its *actual* position in the context of economic and business reporting is centre-right. This was largely confirmed and explained in interviews with eight BBC journalists, and in documents produced by – and on behalf of - the Corporation (Neil 2004, BBC Journalism Group 2007, Budd 2007, Coyle 2012, BBC Trust 2012, 2012a.) The discrepancy between the BBC's stated political neutrality and its actual position is a key finding of this thesis, and demands far more detailed analysis and greater explanation than that awarded to the newspapers. A useful starting point is to assess the BBC's understanding of impartiality and how this is applied to the Corporation's output.

The quest for impartiality

The BBC is rated as a highly trustworthy source of financial news and this, when combined with a substantial increase in audience interest²¹⁸, has significant implications for the Corporation (BBC Trust 2012.) Post-Financial Crisis, the BBC recognises an even more pressing need to provide EBF news that is: 'high quality, accurate, impartial, and above all explains' complex issues in 'accessible ways' (Coyle 2012.) But to achieve this, BBC journalists face additional challenges: audiences don't fully understand the coverage, would like it to 'relate more to their own circumstances' and 'only 22 percent believe it gives a fair and balanced picture' (BBC Trust 2012.) The latter statistic suggests that the BBC is some way from achieving its impartiality aspirations. This is a concern because the BBC arguably offers the greatest hope for improving public knowledge of the economic environment

²¹⁸ Pre-Financial Crisis most people kept up with financial issues 'about once a month, and 40 percent never, or rarely. Post-Crisis, one third are doing so daily and more than three quarters are doing so at least weekly' (Reuters Institute in Coyle 2012)

and offering a plurality of perspectives on related issues. The Corporation acknowledges its central role in ‘sustaining citizenship and civil society’ (BBC Journalism Group 2007:1) and consequently, impartiality features strongly in internal BBC discussions.

Impartiality is a legal requirement of the BBC Charter and a core editorial value (*ibid*:4, Neil 2004.) It applies equally to all output and the Corporation acknowledges that its perceived impartiality is the reason why it continues to be so highly regarded. It is impossible to be perfectly impartial in every news item, however, and so BBC journalists are obliged to show ‘due impartiality,’ which (*emphasis added*):

... requires us to be fair and open minded when examining the evidence and weighing all the material facts, as well as being objective and even handed in our approach to a subject. *It does not require the representation of every argument or facet of every argument on every occasion or an equal division of time for each view* (BBC 2010b)

Achieving due impartiality clearly requires high-level editorial decisions that take into account the reporting of an issue over time. The BBC has a devolved editorial structure by which authority is given to programme editors who follow the principles of the Corporation’s code of conduct but take responsibility for their team’s output (Neil 2004.) Hence, although the BBC has clear guidelines on impartiality at an institutional level, how these are implemented is largely the decision of editors.

Before looking in more depth at the influence of the economics and business editors, it is important to consider how the BBC assesses impartiality. The Neil Report established four key issues: accuracy; context; independence; and bias which was defined as ‘the deliberate, or knowing, inclusion or omission of viewpoints’ (BBC Journalism Group 2007:9.) To avoid bias, therefore, BBC journalists endeavour to include multiple, diverse perspectives in their reporting which will reflect the ‘complexity of the relationship between consumers, employees, owners, shareholders and competitors’ (*ibid*:5.) Consequently, one way to assess the bias of the BBC’s coverage of business is in terms of:

... how successfully it reflects the views of major stakeholders. Is the BBC unfairly sympathetic to some... notably consumers and employees, at the expense of managers and owners? (*ibid*:9)

For many years, the BBC was accused of ‘not giving business enough airtime, being “anti-business” and suspicious of profits and markets’ (*ibid*.) and in response to such

charges, in 2007 the BBC Trust commissioned a study of impartiality in business reporting. The chair, Alan Budd, uncovered no evidence of a bias against business *per se*, but he did find that BBC reports tended to focus on investors, consumers and the buying public's relationship with companies (Budd 2007:14, 16.) Contrary to widely-held perceptions of left-wing tendencies at the BBC²¹⁹, some witnesses expressed concern about the lack of coverage of workers' issues. In his narrative, Budd showed sympathy:

Around 29 million people work for a living in the UK and spend a large proportion of their waking hours in the workplace. However, little of this important part of UK life is reflected in the BBC's business coverage (*ibid*:19)

Budd's assessment suggests that, in the quest for impartiality, BBC business journalists may have over-compensated in their attempts to counter the perceived 'anti-business bias'. This theory is backed up by the written submission from the BBC Journalism Group which stated its intention to avoid reducing 'stories to simple polarities, for example labour versus capital.' It also saw the main challenge as an over-propensity to focus on *consumers* rather than owners (BBC Journalism Group 2007.) Hence, to redress this perceived imbalance, journalists may have tilted their reporting toward investors with the consequence that workers, the environment and other stakeholders were often excluded. This hypothesis was strengthened by the comments of the BBC's economics editor - and former business editor - Robert Peston who said the Corporation tends to follow the agenda of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail*. 'If I'm honest,' he added:

... the BBC's routinely so anxious about being accused of being left-wing, it quite often veers in what you might call a very pro-establishment, [a] rather right-wing direction, so that it's not accused of that (in Sommers 2014)

Assuming that the tendency to over-compensate also applies to the BBC's economics and business journalism, this evidence goes some way toward explaining the conflict between the BBC's own perceived house tradition of impartiality, and the findings of the content analyses which placed the Corporation's reporting in the right of the political spectrum. In the absence of research that provides a compelling argument to the contrary, the next step is to investigate the editorial processes through which BBC journalists produce news that tends to favour 'pro-business' perspectives.

²¹⁹ For example, Johnson (2012) and Sewell (2012)

The influence of editors

BBC editors have considerable influence over the output of their staff, and while it is important to understand *how* this influence is exerted, it is helpful to first assess the careers, beliefs and *modus operandi* of the current and previous holders of the post. It would be misguided to believe that one person could determine the nature of British business journalism but Jeff Randall's influence is pervasive. Randall became the BBC's first business editor in 2001 and he has played a central role in the expansion of the genre for the last two decades. In the early 1990s, Randall worked for the *Sunday Telegraph* and the *Sunday Times*. In 1998, he became the first editor of *Sunday Business*, and during his tenure Randall employed the current business editors of the *Sunday Times*, *Guardian* and *Observer*. He now writes a column for the *Daily Telegraph* and presents a business programme on Sky News.

Randall has expressed strong public views on how business is reported by the BBC. At the start of his editorship, for example, he shared the belief that the organisation 'was culturally and structurally biased against business' (in Kelly and Boyle 2011:232.) This tendency was so pronounced that: 'on the whole, they [the BBC] treated business as if it was a criminal activity' (Randall in CBI 2007.) Three years after he arrived, however, Randall said BBC editors now 'get' what business is about:

If you tell the story properly, business is every bit as compelling, every bit as soap opera as politics. It's about power and influence, treachery and betrayal, money, big names and brands. Not about accountants in grey suits sitting behind desks shuffling paper (in Burrell 2004)

Randall was appointed on the recommendation of the then Director General, Greg Dyke, who had himself 'publically criticised the BBC's attitude to business' (BBC Journalism Group 2007:15.) Hence, with the endorsement of the DG, Randall reset the parameters of business reporting at the BBC, focussed his journalists' attention on certain facets - 'money, big names and brands' - and injected a sense of drama that he felt was previously lacking. Again, this characterisation of business is far closer to the newspapers of the right than those of the centre-left.

Jeff Randall's successor, Robert Peston, brought with him attitudes about reporting that were cultivated in largely pro-business environments²²⁰. Indeed, in a written submission for the Budd Report, Peston said his 'overarching responsibility (is) making business stories seem exciting and relevant to the maximum number of

²²⁰ Peston's career spans numerous publications including – in chronological order – *Independent*, *Independent on Sunday*, *FT*, *Spectator*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Times*, *New Statesman* and the *Sunday Telegraph*

people' (in BBC Journalism Group 2007:24-26.) This chimes with his predecessor's take and, less than a year into his BBC career, Peston highlighted a lack of understanding about business among his fellow news staff as an issue. Hence, he saw part of his role as being to 'widen and deepen' knowledge, and he does this by 'cajoling, lobbying, leading by example, mentoring, instructing and sharing information' (*ibid*:25.)²²¹ Peston also urged his colleagues to reflect on the words they use in reports and advised his fellow journalists to employ the 'long-term language of the owner.' He justified this on the grounds that most British people are owners of companies through their pension funds. Hence, by directly connecting citizens' prosperity with the financial success of large companies, Peston was encouraging BBC journalists to assume that profit-maximisation is inherently good for all. He quoted no empirical study as the basis for this view, so one can only assume it is based on his own perception. Although Peston dismissed the pro-anti business opposition as a 'category error,' his submission places him on the right of the spectrum and, assuming journalists follow his guidance, inevitably pushes the BBC's business reporting in the same direction (*ibid*:26.)

A former senior editor at the Corporation confirmed that the influence of BBC economics and business editors extends beyond reporting. While no 'meta-narrative' on how the BBC covered the early stages of the Financial Crisis was established by senior managers, he said the 'tone and approach' was set by Peston and the then economics editor, Stephanie Flanders, as leaders of seminars and group discussions. This was by no means a dictatorial process but the two editors ensured that there was a 'central thread... a shared approach ... (and a) shared understanding' in the journalism produced. Seminars led by BBC editors are regular events in less hazardous times, too, and they are often used to help journalists appreciate the 'big stories, the big trends that are changing our world' (BBC Journalism Group 2007:7) According to a former BBC economics editor, Evan Davis, economics produces 'too many facts for anyone to digest' and journalists need to put 'a shape to the facts' (Davis in BBC Journalism Group 2007:29.) Crucially, Davis said part of his role was to 'guide programme editors on the economics agenda.'

In these terms, the BBC economics and business editors clearly have a significant influence on how other journalists 'shape the facts.' BBC journalists also attend

²²¹ Peston also sends a daily email – called *Peston's Picks* – to all members of the Business Unit, programme editors, producers and news managers. This varies in content – from terminology to business trends – but its aim is always to keep 'the wider BBC abreast of important business developments'

seminars given by business people, including the chief executives of FTSE-100 companies. These seminars complement another initiative - a secondment scheme - that puts 'senior BBC editors... at the heart of a big company' for a few weeks. Its goal is 'to address':

...mutual misunderstandings, allowing BBC editors an insight into how a profit-making organisation runs and helping persuade the corporate sector to ... engage more with the BBC (BBC Journalism Group 2007:19)

These initiatives may have noble intentions but they are at odds with the concept of impartiality²²². Although NGOs and regulators are also invited to give seminars, BBC journalists have far more exposure to corporate executives. In contrast, there was no mention in any of the aforementioned documents, statements, nor in the interviews with BBC staff that economics and business journalists spend time with unions, workers, environmental groups or social campaigners.

With the exception of the former senior editor, none of the BBC interviewees mentioned the influence of the economics and business editors on their reporting. 'There is no (editorial) line from on high,' said a senior economics reporter and this was echoed by several of his colleagues. Nevertheless, it is apparent that BBC economics and business editors 'play an important influencing and educating role' (BBC Journalism Group 2007:17) and have considerable power to establish the terms of reference for other journalistic staff. Indeed, there are signs that Peston's guidance to focus on business owners has become imprinted in reporter's minds. One experienced BBC business journalist, for example, acknowledged the BBC's previous 'anti-business' reputation and lamented the historic lack of journalists with experience of the City and 'wealth creation.' Now, he said, BBC journalists have a better understanding of 'our dual role' of holding companies to account 'on behalf of the consumer' while also 'recognising the wealth they (companies) are creating.' This journalist also contributes to World Business Report on the BBC World Service whose listeners 'might be more concerned with (the impact of an issue) on UK PLC.'

These quoted phrases are heavy with assumptions of the right, namely that 'wealth' is primarily 'created' by financial professionals; economic actors are either investors or consumers, rather than workers; and a nation is primarily an economic, rather than a social, entity. They are also congruent with a contextualising sentence in the BBC

²²² Arguably, they also clash with Robert Peston's belief that BBC journalists should be 'arms length from individual companies' (Peston in BBC Journalism Group 2007:26)

Journalism Group's submission to the Budd Inquiry: 'It is business that generates the wealth that pays for the rest of society to function' (BBC Journalism Group 2007:3.) The notion that the needs of business are paramount has become axiomatic for British policy makers and underpins the economic reporting of newspapers of the right. It may seem, at first glance, to be self-evident but the statement is loaded with assumptions, particularly as most BBC business journalists spoke only of large companies quoted on the stockmarket, thus neglecting the contribution to wealth creation of myriad small, family-owned businesses, the self-employed and, indeed, employees. Nor did any of the BBC interviewees suggest that the converse could be equally true: the rest of society creates the conditions which allow business to function. While the Corporation's huge range of output and devolved editorial structure ensures that the BBC can remain true to its goal of giving voice to a wide range of opinions over time and across media, the direction of the news reporting that citizens hear, watch and read every day is set by a handful of people. Hence, the backgrounds, personal beliefs and priorities of the editors will have a considerable and homogenising influence on the political content on the journalism produced by other BBC reporters²²³.

Defining the consensus

Impartiality applies to the BBC's economics reporting as much as it does to business, but in economics the related concept of 'consensus' adds another dimension to how editorial guidelines are enacted by journalists. The Neil Report said practising impartiality required the BBC to be (emphasis added): 'fair and open minded by reflecting *all significant strands of opinion*, and by exploring the range and conflict of views' (Neil in Budd 2007:6.) What constitutes 'significant strands of opinion' is crucial to understanding the political boundaries of BBC economics reporting which tends to orbit a perceived consensus on the right of the spectrum.

As with business, the terms of reference for BBC economics journalists are largely defined by the editor in his or her role as a guide and mentor and again, the written submission for the Budd Report is revealing. The strategy of looking at business from multiple viewpoints is, said the BBC Journalism Group, 'set in the context of how the UK economy has changed in last couple of decades.' The submission then laid out

²²³ In the absence of interviews with current and previous BBC economics editors, one can only speculate about their personal interpretations of economics. But it is striking that all three of the post-holders since 2001 - Evan Davis, Stephanie Flanders and Robert Peston - read PPE at Oxford University in the 1980s. Also noteworthy is that Davis published a book which argued that private companies should have a greater role in the provision of public services (Davis 1998)

the main characteristics of the British economy in early 2007:

The service sector dominates...Labour relations have changed. In place of strife there are employee share ownership schemes... Unemployment is less of a serious problem Now the big issues are around globalisation, pensions, personal debt, house prices and the technological revolution (BBC Journalism Group 2007:5)

Inevitably, this is a selective assessment of the state of the nation and makes no mention of significant issues that were affecting millions of Britons at the time²²⁴. To illustrate the subjectivity of this key contextualising paragraph, imagine an alternative synopsis which *may* have read:

Despite a decade of robust economic growth, income disparities in the UK are widening; average wage increases are only marginally higher than inflation; and 1.7 million people are still unemployed, a figure higher than at any time in the supposedly-dark days of the 1970s (BBC 2007u, BBC 2007v, BBC 2007w)

This would have been equally as true as the published statement and yet its strikingly different interpretation demonstrates the power of selection. By establishing an economic field of vision in this way, an author can define which issues are important and, by omission, which are not. Such a restriction of focus is inevitable, however. Economics is inexorably tied to parliamentary politics and, consequently, the three main parties' viewpoints are immediately categorised by BBC reporters as 'significant.' Hence, if the government announces, for example, a cut in the top rate of income tax, a BBC journalist would probably include the views of an opposition spokesperson who might argue for the existing rate. This is, in BBC terms, impartial and balanced reporting because the policy has been challenged and the viewer has received a different perspective. There is no obligation, however, to include opinion beyond Westminster. The journalist could interview, for example, academics who put the case for an *increase* in the tax rate but the limits of space and time provide reason to exclude them. In journalists' minds, this is not a premeditated attempt to restrict debate, rather a pragmatic prioritising of mainstream political voices. The relationship between consensus and impartiality at the BBC was neatly summed up by Evan Davis, in his submission to the Budd Inquiry:

It is not a goal to be impartial between sense and nonsense. In an area where there is clear expert consensus, it is right for the audience to be told that (Davis in BBC Journalism Group 2007:30)

²²⁴ There is also the spurious suggestion that the poor labour relations of the past had somehow been solved by share ownership schemes, and, of course, there is a conspicuous absence of any hint that the world might heading toward a financial precipice

This demonstrates a conscious, albeit imprecise, limitation of debate, with ‘experts’ defining ‘sense’ and other views excluded, one would assume, on the basis of intellectual weakness. As no mainstream party offers an alternative economic discourse to neoliberalism, one could argue that views from beyond parliament are relatively insignificant by definition. But, of course, credible left-wing perspectives still exist: indeed, nationalisation, state-support for industry, higher taxes on the rich and other pillars of post-war Keynesianism were rediscovered by the British and American governments as the Financial Crisis unfolded. Clearly, left-wing thinking in economics is still worthy of discussion and was not consigned to the history books in the 1990s as some had suggested (notably Friedman 1999.)

The Financial Crisis was potentially a seminal episode for BBC journalism as it demonstrated that following and reporting on a consensus is inherently risky. Economics is, by its nature, prone to shattering deeply-held beliefs about, for example, the ability of markets to self-correct and produce socially-beneficial outcomes. This was recognised by the BBC Trust which, in November 2012, emphasised its commitment to impartiality by running a seminar for trustees, editors, journalists and selected outsiders. Its stated purpose was to consider how the BBC could:

...ensure its news coverage of economics... reflects the full range of views and voices... and avoid giving undue weight to specific institutional perspectives (BBC Trust 2012)

Most seminar attendees thought a diversity of opinion was essential for two reasons: first, a ‘clear consensus’ in macroeconomics was much harder to isolate than prior to the Financial Crisis; and second, a number of attendees believed that ‘specifically challenging a dominant narrative’ is an essential part of an economics journalist’s role. Other contributors said that ‘intellectual and institutional orthodoxies’ needed to be questioned and one person noted that the BBC found it more difficult than other news media to ‘present counter-intuitive views.’ The main finding of this seminar, however, was the importance of ‘questioning, challenging and explaining’ a complex and uncertain economic world while ensuring that the BBC continues to reflect different opinions. There is no doubt that this seminar was important²²⁵ and there is clearly an internal dialog at the Corporation that has substantial implications for the

²²⁵ The attendees included seven BBC Trustees; senior BBC executives; heads of news, programme editors and the BBC’s economics and business editors. The 14 people from the BBC were joined by three from Ofcom, four economists; the economics editors of the *FT*, Sky and Channel 4; and representatives from research groups, the Treasury, the Office for Budget Responsibility, the CBI and TUC (BBC Trust 2012a)

BBC's economics reporting in the future. Nevertheless, there was no definition of what the past or present 'consensus' might be, nor indeed did the seminar outline how the Corporation will assess whether journalists follow the findings.

Furthermore, there was little indication among the eight BBC journalists interviewed for this chapter that the Financial Crisis had precipitated an extension of the range of opinions consulted. This was epitomised by a senior economics journalist who conceded that 'boundaries (in BBC economics reporting) are a bit narrower than in some areas of public debate.' He also said that BBC journalists 'don't often feel the need to represent very extreme views' but did not define the nature of such views, nor did he explain why they would be excluded. Indeed, it was apparent from the hesitations and the lack of precision in answers that none of the journalists had previously given much thought to how they decide on the limits of relevant opinion. A business reporter from Nations and Regions recoiled slightly and said with a smile he had never been asked this question, but on reflection, he said he tried to cover 'different business models', such as those offered by the Co-Operative and Occupy, and 'to gauge if they are gaining ground.' This suggests that public opinion is an important factor in coverage, but clearly, so is his own assessment of whether a perspective has 'a semblance of reality.' Occupy was mentioned, without prompts, by half of the BBC interviewees, but only the veteran radio presenter gave any sign that this organisation warranted regular coverage: Occupy, he said, had '...potent things to say about the assumptions that most reporting makes about capitalism.' Another BBC business journalist said some organisations from the left approach him with ideas for stories but he rejects them because: 'it seems that they have an inbuilt hostility to the commercial world.' Occupy 'have their place' in the BBC's coverage, he said, but it is beyond the scope of daily business reporting because Occupy is 'political.' There was scant sign, however, that the economic system against which Occupy campaigns was deemed to be equally political.

The interviews confirmed that BBC economics reporting generally follows a line that accepts and reinforces the notion that contemporary capitalism brings prosperity to all and, consequently, ideas deemed to be on the periphery of the radar, like those offered by Occupy, do not merit frequent exposure. Furthermore, there was little indication among BBC journalists that, despite the findings of the BBC Trust seminar, the 'consensus' would be challenged more than it was pre-Financial Crisis. All bar one of the interviewees accepted the premise that, in the words of the BBC's former senior economics correspondent, Hugh Pym, 'rocking the capitalist boat went out of

fashion some time ago' (Pym and Kochan 2008:3), but there were signs of discomfort when journalists were asked if they thought it was their *responsibility* to challenge this apparent consensus. One business reporter gave a very short, clipped answer - 'it's part of a journalist's role to challenge accepted wisdom' - and seemed eager to move on to the next question. The comments of another resonated with those of reporters from the *Telegraph* and *Sunday Times*: the journalist 'wouldn't go so far' as to say it was his responsibility to challenge 'general assumptions' but:

It is my job to look ... for times when the capitalist system falls short and is clearly short-changing some people... or when the public is ... unhappy about winners and losers, or the unfairness of the system

The conditions he described have arguably been present for some time, certainly since the Financial Crisis began. But this reporter's focus was the next day's story rather than the bigger picture. He acknowledged that the BBC is a 'broad church' with some journalists – he cited *Newsnight*'s former economics editor Paul Mason - 'more skilled and keener' to undertake detailed analysis of socio-economic issues. But this reporter saw his role as putting 'tough questions to people involved in stories.' He is not an 'apologist for capitalism by any means' but:

If my watchword was constantly challenging the *status quo*, it would make my job very difficult because for every story I would have to interview *Corporate Watch*

Again, this journalist seemed impatient for the next question, so the researcher was unable to discover *why* the inclusion of radical viewpoints would make his job 'very difficult.' A fourth business journalist also gave a hurried answer to this question and was the only BBC interviewee to challenge the premise:

It's not capitalism red in tooth and claw like it was in the Victorian Age.
It's socio-capitalism and has been for a very long time

Unusually for BBC interviewees, this journalist gave his own assessment of political boundaries. Whether or not he challenged received wisdom depended on 'how conventional and correct the opinion is.' Many people have, he added, 'very misguided opinions about business and economics' and this journalist saw his main responsibility as 'education', explaining reality rather than challenging the consensus. Again, he chose not to expand on the meaning of 'misguided' but one can deduce an acceptance of a comparatively benign form of capitalism.

The ‘consensus’ is clearly sensitive territory for BBC journalists who either gave swift and somewhat vague answers that skirted the issue, or made bold statements but displayed irritation when asked to elaborate. This was epitomised by a senior economics journalist who began by saying that the economy has been in ‘uncharted waters’ since the Financial Crisis. For the next five years, he said, there was no consensus but: ‘So long as we’re reflecting a range of views … then we are doing our job (which is) to say what the debates are.’ The researcher then asked a follow-on question: ‘Is it your job to reflect views, or challenge the consensus or…’ The journalist interjected sharply:

That’s the point I’m trying to make: there *isn’t* a consensus anymore. And therefore, our job is different: to make sure the viewer understands (the nature of the post-Crisis economy.) It’s a puzzle

This journalist seemed to suggest that the ‘consensus’ had been shaken to destruction by the Financial Crisis yet his answers implied that journalistic scrutiny should not extend to capitalism *per se*. Current debates are not focussed on the near-collapse of the economic system but on individual components and remedies, for example, whether austerity is an effective way to get the economy back on track. Despite this, the journalist acknowledged the media was culpable in the prelude to the Credit Crunch. There had been:

no real desire… to get under the skin (of the boom.) Maybe we (the media) were part of the same delusion. We just didn’t challenge enough

In the light of such evident doubt, one might have expected a redoubled commitment to challenging received wisdom. But it was somewhat ironic that even this senior journalist seemed uncertain about his profession’s role now:

Is it the BBC’s, the media’s job to challenge a political consensus? Or can you excuse the media because we were all part of that consensus?

When asked if these questions were rhetorical, the journalist chose his words very carefully and ended with another question. The hesitant preamble to his answer is illuminating as it illustrates the caution that pervades the BBC newsroom:

Particularly at the BBC, you’re very aware of.. there’s a lot of focus on it…and…less so then as there is now, post the BBC’s recent traumas…but even so… if you went on air with a piece… you might be aware that doing a serious piece challenging the foundations of the housing market, such a key bit of the economy… you’d need to think quite hard about why you would do that and what the likely reaction

would be, and the reaction is bound to be ‘what right has the BBC got to say “things will end in tears”’?

It was a rhetorical question but... probably buried in there ... a reluctance to stick your neck out. You can *hint* at it but do you really want to stick your neck out?

There was no unanimity among BBC journalists about whether their role is to challenge the consensus or not. There was, however, a sense that some felt a professional obligation to do so but were hamstrung by a paradoxical editorial code that expects them to ‘challenge the dominant narrative’ and yet, thanks to the guidance of editors, effectively limits debate to the ground occupied by the main political parties. There are also, of course, the hovering critics who would descend on the BBC if a journalist showed radical sympathies. Drawing on three decades of experience with the BBC, the veteran radio journalist gave a succinct and perfectly-phrased answer to this conundrum: ‘It is my responsibility to report on the challenging of the consensus *not* to challenge the consensus itself.’ He promptly added apologetically: ‘that is a very BBC answer’ but then concisely summed up the BBC’s political field of vision:

You can only widen the view a bit, actually. If you widen it too far, you become an irrelevant reporter. We’re part of a consensually-owned broadcasting system. You can’t be *too* disruptive

Although none of the BBC’s past or present economics and business editors were available for interview, it was apparent that these few people’s opinions, experiences and interpretations of the economic world are central in establishing the terms of reference for other journalists. Hence, BBC editors’ definition of the consensus effectively removes the bulk of left-wing opinion from daily reporting. Although the Corporation is a broad church and radical views are given exposure in long-format programming and elsewhere, editorial influence is sufficiently strong to filter out the vast majority of opinion that might challenge free market assumptions which, even after the Financial Crisis, still underpin the thinking of the main political parties.

5 – Mapping the politics of EBF news

Table 7.2 shows that the British mainstream economics and business news media offer a variety of political viewpoints, from the *Guardian* on the centre-left to the *Times-Sunday Times* and Telegraph Group on the right. The BBC is placed on the centre-right and is noteworthy for two reasons. First, it is the only one of the four news organisations covered by the content analysis whose actual position is

demonstrably different to its stated house tradition. Second, the BBC has by far the largest audience and its reporting of economics and business reaches every household in the UK. Such is the size, influence and reputation of the BBC that its interpretation of the ‘consensus’ and how this is reflected in its journalism has considerable ramifications for the health of British democracy. The consensus represents the fulcrum of the debate, the middle ground around which the BBC produces its news, and the answers to questions relating to audience, the limits of relevant opinion and whether journalists have a responsibility to challenge the consensus explains why the BBC’s economics and business journalism has far more in common with the newspapers on the right than the centre-left *Guardian*.

Table 7.2
Political positions of news media with 2013 circulations/audiences

LEFT	CENTRE-LEFT	CENTRE-RIGHT	RIGHT
		BBC News	Daily Telegraph 549,000
	Guardian 196,000		Sunday Telegraph 421,000
New Internationalist 75,000	Observer 224,000		The Times 400,000
Corporate Watch N/A	New Statesman 25,000		Sunday Times 882,000
Circulations/Audiences			
75,000 +	445,000	Multiple millions	2,252,000
Private Eye 228,000 (2011 figure)			
Sources: <i>Guardian</i> 20013a, <i>Guardian</i> 2013b, PPA 2013, Dowell 2012			

With the *Guardian* only giving limited exposure and credence to ideas from the left, audiences need to look elsewhere for news that presents economics and business in a critical light. As outlined above, this is the domain of the ‘alternative media’, organisations that approach news gathering and production with distinctly different principles to the mainstream. To illustrate these differences, interviews were also conducted with journalists and editors from the *New Statesman* (NS), *Corporate Watch* (CW), the *New Internationalist* (NI) and *Private Eye* (PE.) Before examining these publications in depth, however, it is vital to add two *caveats* that arguably limit the value of comparison. First, none of the alternative publications are news

gatherers in the same sense as the mainstream organisations which report on day-to-day events. Consequently, all alternative interviewees are classified as analysts rather than reporters and, therefore, have more inherently more freedom to pursue off-diary ideas. Second, the alternative media are published either weekly (*NS*), fortnightly (*PE*), monthly (*N*) or, in the case of *CW*, have no fixed publication schedule, so journalists for these organisations are not under the same time pressure as their mainstream counterparts. Despite these differences, however, the alternative media have an embedded ability to perform a function that the mainstream is structurally and culturally unable to do, namely produce journalism that takes a highly critical view of the dominant economic system. With this freedom, the alternative media can also produce prophetic journalism and cover neglected issues which, if conditions permit, can sometimes be elevated to the mainstream news agenda.

The interviews with alternative practitioners gave considerable insight into their working practices, social constitutions and professional environments, and to a large extent explained why these journalists take a consistently critical stance. The interviews also provided further grounds to question two arguments that are offered by scholars to explain the political content of news. Firstly, alternative journalists tend to choose sources on their ability to provide the right information at the right time, rather than on the source's political leanings. Furthermore, many of the primary sources cited were the same as those mentioned by the mainstream journalists - government departments, large companies, etc. Although alternative journalists might access the same types of information as their mainstream counterparts, the journalism is different because they view it through a more sceptical lens and are not bound by the same professional conventions. The *New Statesman* reporter, for example, said he 'doesn't need to express an opinion in someone else's voice,' and at *Private Eye*, journalists are: 'happy to be opinionated.' Clearly, it is not the source *per se* that influences the political content of news but how information is framed.

Secondly, there is little outward difference in the social profiles and educational backgrounds of the two cohorts of journalists²²⁶. This greatly weakens the theory that middle-class, middle-aged, university-educated men who live and work in the south-east of England inevitably produce journalism that accepts the political and economic consensus that has served them well. Nevertheless, there was a thread of dutiful contrarianism running through the alternative journalists that was rarely – and then,

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only mildly – evident among their mainstream counterparts. For example, the former editor of the *New Statesman* traced the roots of his scepticism to his ‘very right wing father’ with whom he had numerous heated political debates in his teens. This proved to be a precursor for his adult life: ‘I tend to wait for a consensus to form and then be against it,’ he said about his career. His father ‘treated newspapers with suspicion’, so it seemed only natural that the defiant son gravitated to the press at the opposite end of the political spectrum. The *Private Eye* journalist took scepticism several steps further and said, with a smile, that he is driven by ‘prejudice.’ When asked about the origin of this trait, his answer resonated with a sense of visceral responsibility, and conflicted sharply with the principle of journalistic objectivity (emphases added):

You’ve got to have a view, haven’t you? You can’t approach things neutrally. You’ve got to be pretty sceptical

The alternative media evidently offers a professional haven for journalists who are driven by desire to challenge the consensus. These findings also add weight to the argument that a journalist does *not* need to have experienced poverty personally, for example, to produce work that is critical of the political-economic system that has awarded him a relatively comfortable life. An example was provided by a *NS* reporter who was extremely aware of his privileged background – private school and Oxford University – and yet took a very different career path to his peers, many of whom worked in the City. ‘There is a massive tendency for people to think as their peers think,’ he said, but the dominant political influences in *his* life clearly lay elsewhere:

For a long time I have tried to open myself up to the views of people who are less privileged. I have left-wing parents and fell in with a group of Communists when I was 17

In this journalist’s case, the seeds of dissent were sown at home and, in contrast to his senior predecessor at the *NS* who had kicked against domestic opinion, the young reporter had followed his family’s politics and then hardened his position. The *Corporate Watch* journalist underlined the unpredictable influence of this factor. He agreed that journalists with the prevalent social profile tended to work in environments that reinforced dominant values, but said this ‘doesn’t mean we are slaves’ to our background and social group. There are, no doubt, complex socio-psychological theories about why a few people rebel against authority, the consensus and even their own upbringing, whereas the vast majority acquiesce. Many mainstream journalists adopt a professional persona and leave their own politics at home, while others concur naturally with the house tradition. In contrast, alternative journalists have great freedom to pursue issues they personally think are important

because their inner drives and own political views are congruent with their publication's. This observation neatly brings the analysis to the essential difference between the mainstream and alternative news media. Whereas the former have house traditions that are supportive of the consensus, the latter are defined by their commitment to challenge the *status quo*.

Corporate Watch, the *New Internationalist*, the *New Statesman* and *Private Eye* have so far been lumped together as the 'alternative' news media. This is, of course, a clumsy generalisation and while all four publications specialise in critical journalism there are considerable differences. Of these publications only *Corporate Watch* and the *New Internationalist* give consistent exposure and credence to ideas from the deep left of the spectrum. Indeed, the *NI* and *CW* are overtly critical of the capitalist paradigm and both give resolute support to popular causes, grassroots activism and the pursuit of social justice. Both were established and funded by not-for-profit organisations, and both are co-operatives. Hence, these two publications are also organisationally distinct from the others as financial and editorial decisions are taken collectively, and this in turn contributes to their similar political positions. The *NI* was founded by a coalition of NGOs and charities and, although such groups now carry no direct influence over editorial direction, the magazine remains, in the words of a senior cooperative member 'a platform for alternative voices.' From its inception, the *NI* has focused on the inequities of a global economic system which, said the spokesperson, 'functions for the benefit of the powerful and wealthy.' This is encapsulated on the *NI*'s website (emphases added):

(The *NI*) exists to report on the issues of *world poverty* and *inequality*; to focus attention on the *unjust* relationship between the *powerful* and *powerless worldwide* (*New Internationalist* 2013)

Although this description is bereft of labels usually pinned on 'the left', the italicised words reverberate with the principles of international socialism. Indeed, the *NI* sees itself as a forum that debates and campaigns for (emphases added): '*radical changes... to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for global justice*' (*ibid.*) This commitment to a battle of ideas was confirmed by the spokesperson who said that the *NI*: 'partly exists to counter the notion' that the 'free market brings prosperity to all.' There are strong parallels here with *Corporate Watch* which is particularly concerned with the 'social and environmental impact' of large corporations. The *CW* website explains its goal as a society that is: 'truly democratic, equitable, non-exploitative and ecologically sustainable' (*Corporate Watch* 2013.)

This vision sits in opposition to ‘the present socio-economic system’ and CW plainly resides on the left of the political spectrum. Like the *NI*, there is a perception of endemic injustice and the need for activism: a more just society can only be achieved, says the CW website, by ‘dismantling the vast economic and political power that corporations have come to exert.’ CW’s editorial line is founded on the premise that large companies are inherently insidious and, consequently, CW provides ‘deep critical analysis of the structural features of corporations’ which, when combined with CW’s own research, provides campaign groups and the public with ‘information for action’ (*ibid.*) Again, like the *NI*, strategic editorial decisions are taken collectively, at twice-yearly meetings, and this, according to a CW member, allows ‘us to take a long-term view’ and produce a research strategy that ‘fills gaps in knowledge’ and ‘provides resources for people struggling against corporate power.’

Both the *New Internationalist* and *Corporate Watch* take a long-term, analytical perspective rather than reacting to individual examples of the symptoms of neo-liberalism’s apparent failings. The news horizons of the *NI* and CW are the furthest removed from the mainstream dailies and this distance allows these publications to give concerted coverage to persistent issues. Such a strategic approach is clearly incongruent with mainstream publications’ primary function, namely to produce up-to-date news about unfolding events. But the extended news horizon alone does not explain the radical journalism. Again, the influence of house tradition pervades the production process: at the *New Internationalist*, for example, the editorial team interprets article briefs sketched out by the committee and possible frames are tested against a guiding question: ‘does it fit in with our mission... to represent the downtrodden and the voiceless?’ There is, said the *NI* spokesperson, ‘an understanding’ among journalists of how to fulfil this mission and thus, framing is effectively set by editorial policy. The CW spokesperson also tied framing to the ‘standpoint’ of the publication, namely to: ‘Expose corporate power and expose structures that underpin corporate power.’ Clearly, stories and research that were counter to this line would not even be considered by the editorial committees, and hence, a critical frame is predetermined and consistently applied.

The *New Internationalist* and *Corporate Watch* are clearly the most ‘left-wing’ publications in terms of their collectivised organisational structures, their unequivocally radical editorial lines and a shared perception of an activist audience. Although the *New Statesman* has also been associated with left-wing thinking since its foundation a century ago, in recent times the magazine has adopted a more

pluralistic stance and is less critical of the foundations of capitalism than the *NI* and *CW*. In 2008, the *NS* had a change of owner²²⁷ and a new editor, Jason Cowley, whose guiding principle was to ‘broaden the political range’ of the magazine. He described the *NS* political position as ‘centre-left liberalism’ (in Ponsford 2012) which is somewhat less disputatious than that favoured by the former *NS* editor whom, from the start of his tenure, guided his journalists to ‘write about economics and business from a left-wing perspective’, adding the condition ‘... without being anti-business.’ Unlike the *NI* and *CW*, there is little indication that either the present or the former *NS* editor feels – or felt - a *responsibility* to challenge the apparent free-market consensus. The self-description on the *NS* website makes no mention of ‘fighting’ or ‘dismantling’ and instead stresses the publication’s ‘progressive politics, boldness, independence and scepticism’ and the ‘rigorous examination of political culture’ (*New Statesman* 2013.) The contrast with the impassioned voices from the *NI* and *CW* was emphasised by the *NS* reporter who said his responsibility was ‘accuracy’ and soundness of argument rather than explicit promotion of a left-wing agenda.

In contrast to the other publications classified as ‘alternative,’ *Private Eye* takes a defiantly apolitical stance (Lockyer 2006) and is detached from the left-right spectrum. This is a fundamentally distinct position to the BBC’s impartiality: whereas the latter is compelled to give balanced accounts of political debates and is careful to include the words of the appropriate spokespeople, *Private Eye* scrutinises all political parties’ policies and arguments with equal vigour and scepticism, and tends to ignore spokespeople altogether. *Private Eye* is renown for exposing the often-opaque interactions between government, the civil service, lobbyists and business, but organisations promoting left-wing agendas – for example, trade unions, NGOs and environmental groups – are not spared. This lack of favouritism for political position was underlined by the *Private Eye* interviewee who said ‘the whole point’ of his work is to ‘challenge what people are saying... especially if it’s widely accepted.’ This journalist noted the tendency of politicians of all parties to ‘repeat a line without any evidence’ and if this is not challenged, then the public tend to accept it. These lines – such as ‘austerity works’ – become ‘mantras’ that often become the hook for *Private Eye*’s journalism. In terms of audience, the journalist pictured people ‘like me, who are interested in these things.’ But he also writes for ‘people of influence’ in the hope that ‘someone who can do something’ will read and act on his findings.

²²⁷ From 1996 to 2008, the *NS* was owned by Geoffrey Robinson MP who sold the *NS* to a holding company, Progressive Digital Media, quoted on the London Stock Exchange. One would assume, therefore, that the *NS* now has an obligation to prioritise profitability which may explain why the new editor purposefully ‘broadened the political range’ of journalism

There are also striking differences between *Private Eye*'s production process and that of the mainstream media, and again this is influenced greatly by the publication's house tradition. Journalists don't need to follow the news diary and are free to develop their own agenda so long as it complies with the magazine's ethos of exposing deceit, hypocrisy, opaque practices and the abuse of power²²⁸. To be accepted, a story must hit at least one of these targets and, therefore, the frame is largely pre-determined. The magazine's fortnightly news cycle - which gives journalists a: 'week to do your research and find out what's really going on' - also promotes probing analysis but this is underpinned by a belief that the 'traditional approach' to reporting, which revolves around 'that he-said-she-said journalism', is inadequate. Newspapers, said the journalist, 'feel a cursory need for objectivity' but this is illusory because it restricts the debate to the carefully-chosen words of politicians and corporate PRs. *Private Eye*, on the other hand, 'takes a line' and its journalists make bold statements which can typically be condensed into either: 'isn't this terrible or isn't this hilarious?' Despite the somewhat incongruous mix of investigative journalism and biting satire, the *Eye*'s house tradition is tightly-focussed on transparency and democratic accountability and, as a privately-owned publication with little revenue derived from advertising, takes a: 'citizen-led rather than customer-led approach to journalism' (*ibid*:777.) For these reasons, the magazine has a claim to being the most politically-balanced of all the publications featured in this chapter.

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that each publication has a distinctive and firmly-entrenched house tradition which caters for the perceived needs of a specific audience and, in the process, determines the political content of the news. Two newspaper groups are unequivocally on the right of the spectrum: the *Times* and *Sunday Times* which produce news for a general audience, and the Telegraph Group which aims at a financially-literate, investor audience. The BBC is focussed on a huge, disparate audience and although its stated aim is impartiality, the evidence strongly suggests that it sits on the centre-right. Only the *Guardian-Observer* specifically targets readers with centre-left leanings, and its speciality is debate. These four organisations are akin to 'tribes' with their own distinct cultures and values, within a larger 'federation' of mainstream news media that has a common

²²⁸ The *Private Eye* journalist neatly encapsulated the editorial line of the magazine in the context of his own work: '...we're after stories that demonstrate that there's something going on, that's not been admitted... the truth is different to the headlines and public position of the government'

ethos and *modus operandi*. Journalists and editors of this federation tacitly agree that their role is to report without being too disruptive. While it is acceptable to ‘keep capitalism honest’, it is not within their remit to overtly challenge underpinning assumptions of the dominant economic system. Indeed, news organisations that routinely perform this function are outside the mainstream by definition, and are classed as ‘alternative.’ *Corporate Watch*, the *New Internationalist*, the *New Statesman* and *Private Eye* each have their own house traditions that permeate their own news production processes. While there are some similarities with the mainstream – notably elements of sourcing strategies and the social constitution of the journalists – house traditions dictate that these publications are geared to taking a far more sceptical view of prevailing economic and business doctrines. Whether mainstream or alternative, house tradition subtly promotes compliance and consistency. Journalists have *some* latitude to deviate but their freedoms are exercised within well-understood but implicit cultural norms, editorial priorities and working practices that form the ‘air’ of newsroom and these in turn ensure that the journalism tends to follow the path of least resistance.

8 - CONCLUSION

This thesis demonstrates that British economic, business and financial (EBF) reporting is the inevitable product of a news media that is structurally, culturally and economically geared to cover issues within relatively restricted parameters of debate, around a ‘consensus’ that is consistent with the views of the corporate and political elite. There is also divergence, however, and each organisation has its own house tradition that gives some political variety. But despite these differences, the mainstream news media have generally converged around a set of common procedures, practices and assumptions that determine what reaches the agenda, how news is reported, and which interpretations are awarded exposure.

The three content-based chapters revealed distinct and consistent similarities across the four publications. From a macro-perspective, it was evident that there were pronounced spikes in coverage around the key event, after which the issue slipped off the news agenda. This was particularly apparent with economic globalisation and private finance which presented editors with the compelling news value of vigorous exchanges between well-defined combatants in a specific place. In comparison, the supermarket debate was rather amorphous and muted, and did not have a physical location to compare with the streets of Seattle or the Labour Party Conference, nor were the opposing parties so clearly isolated. Even so, the three news providers gave the greatest and most detailed attention to supermarket power around the time of the Competition Commission announcements.

Similarly, the media tended to frame economic globalisation, private finance and Tesco as either political or business issues and on relatively few occasions were they given a human angle. Global trade, for example, was frequently framed in abstract terms and its impact on workers, the environment and consumers was rarely considered. Similarly, private finance was primarily conceived as a battle of wills between two wings of the Labour movement rather than a debate that had considerable implications for all British citizens. Again, the supermarket case study was an exception to a point, in that many articles adopted themes that were sympathetic to stakeholders but still, the tendency was to place the activities of Tesco in a commercial context.

The propensity to favour elite interests was reflected in sourcing patterns. In each case study, greatest access was awarded to spokespeople from mainstream political organisations, including regulators and lobbying groups, and large companies. Indeed, the implied definition of ‘business’ generally equated to multinational corporations and the financial services sector, and small enterprises, family firms and the self-employed were excluded. Workers were rarely quoted either, and trade union leaders only made frequent appearances in the private finance case study around the time of the Labour Party Conference. A particularly striking finding, however, was the near-invisibility of independent experts: academics, research organisations and economists were absent from the vast majority of articles. Voices from stakeholder organisations, such as NGOs, social movements and community groups, had greater presence but they, and other non-aligned source categories, were outnumbered by the political-corporate duopoly.

With such a disparity in access, it follows that the news media give only sporadic exposure to ideas that challenged neoliberalism. Arguments for reform of the WTO were present in the globalisation case study, as were those of the PFI-sceptics in private finance, and the various strands of dissonance in the supermarket debate. However, the more radical viewpoints were given no sustained coverage or credence. Indeed, the news organisations were united in their definition of the limits of debate: economic globalisation was a contest between the rich world elite who supported ‘free trade’ and those calling for progressive reform of the WTO, but the views of the developing world and groups campaigning for a fundamental rethink were excluded. Similarly, instead of airing arguments for the maintenance of the traditional public sector funding model, the news media focussed on the often-heated exchanges between Tony Blair’s ‘modernising’ government and trade union leaders who formed the vanguard of opposition to PFI. The supermarket debate was somewhat more complex but again it was simplified, as a contest between the advocates of the *status quo*, and consumers and, to a lesser extent, local communities, but not workers, suppliers or those concerned about supermarkets’ political influence. Crucially, the quantitative analyses demonstrated that although issues were contested around the key events, reporting over the rest of the sample periods tended to be constructed in non-problematic terms. Hence, despite a sometimes spirited mediated debate, news organisations normalised three tenets of neoliberalism: the WTO’s vision of globalisation; private finance in British public services; and oligopolies led by dominant companies.

The critical discourse analyses added detail and colour to patterns uncovered by the quantitative data. In particular, they emphasised differences in the political constitution of the news. Across all three case studies, the *Guardian-Observer* most consistently gave exposure to ideas from the left, and this tendency was confirmed in its journalistic narratives. Editorials, opinion columns and, in many cases, standard news items were often consistent with the arguments of the moderate WTO critics; the newspaper described the effects of globalisation in human terms; and expressed sympathy for the treatment of protestors by riot police. Similarly, the *Guardian-Observer* took a sceptical line on private finance, it was critical of the underpinning political philosophy and sometimes argued its case in emotive language. In the context of supermarket power, the newspapers often framed the debate in broad, social terms, it was dubious about corporate social responsibility (CSR) and, unlike the other publications, there were hints of compassion even in its business reporting.

It must be noted, however, that dissident narratives coexisted with considerable amounts of news constructed in plain, descriptive language which did little to challenge the *status quo*. The *Guardian-Observer* exhibited few signs of radicalism and yet it had a tendency to challenge elements of neoliberalism that was rarely evident in the *Times-Sunday Times* and the *Telegraph* newspapers' reporting. Indeed, the political positions of these organisations was unequivocally on the right and this was most apparent in editorials and opinion pieces that adopted an axiomatic, free market discourse. In the context of economic globalisation, *Times-Sunday Times* journalists were intolerant of dissent and were particularly scathing in their descriptions of protestors. Conversely, 'free trade' was conceived as self-evidently virtuous and inevitable. The *Telegraphs* took similar positions in the other two case studies, although their preferred discourse was somewhat less damning of the opposition. These newspapers subtly pressed for greater private sector involvement in public services, and in the supermarket debate, journalists were overtly antagonistic to regulation. Restrictions on commercial operations were anathema for the *Telegraph*, particularly if they were state-imposed and by promoting *laissez-faire* as the only viable economic model, the *Telegraph* reproduced a Darwinian form of the corporate narrative.

Contrary to a widely-held belief that the BBC favours left-wing interpretations, this thesis places the Corporation on the right of the spectrum. Reporting across the three case studies tended to follow the discourse of the political and business elite and overall, BBC journalistic narratives had more in common with the newspapers of the

right than the *Guardian*-*Observer*. These tendencies were evident in the descriptions of protestors in Seattle and the belittling of their arguments by senior BBC journalists. In the case of private finance, BBC journalists closely reproduced the New Labour discourse: Tony Blair's dogged determination and his rhetorical skills were admired; trade union leaders were portrayed as defenders of outdated beliefs; and, despite Party policy being rejected in a Conference vote, the marketisation of the public sector was presented as a virtuous *fait accompli*. In the supermarket debate, the BBC, like the *Telegraph*, gave preference to the investor narrative. But, whereas the *Telegraph* saw CSR as a distraction, the BBC consistently framed Tesco as a responsible corporate citizen. The tenor of the BBC's coverage may have lacked the conviction of the *Telegraph*'s but its journalists followed the corporate line far more faithfully.

To explain the patterns uncovered in the case studies, interviews were conducted with editors and journalists, and the results are discussed in chapters six and seven. The former attributes the convergence of the mainstream news product to the limited variation in the origins of news; shared perceptions of news values; and common framing and sourcing strategies. There is also little variety in the backgrounds and education of journalists and, in these terms, it is hard to distinguish between the four organisations. Indeed, mainstream EBF reporters are typically 'middle-class', middle-aged, university-educated males living in SE England. They work in central London and draw from the same fonts information, primarily news agencies; depend heavily on the news diary; gravitate to corporate and government sources; and are constantly looking for 'market moving' stories. As a consequence of these factors, the mainstream media habitually present issues in a manner that favours the elite, and only rarely give exposure to arguments from outside the apparent consensus. Although interviewees agreed that the news media as a whole lacked a sceptical edge in the prelude to the Financial Crisis, not one person argued for a fundamental change in journalistic practice. Consequently, the production of British economic and business journalism has converged around a set of shared assumptions and immutable procedures that routinely exclude radical viewpoints.

Despite these similarities, chapter seven explains the nature of the divergence evident in the content analyses. Interviewees revealed contrasting perceptions of audience and editorial positions and these are embodied in the respective house traditions. *Guardian* journalists spoke of serving a left-leaning audience and the importance of promoting debate; *Telegraph* staff focus on business-savvy,

Conservative-voting readers; and *Sunday Times* reporters pride themselves on finding scoops for the diverse readers of this overtly pro-enterprise publication. House traditions are widely-understood by staff and yet no interviewee said they had been ever been explicitly instructed on which stories to cover, nor which angle to adopt. It appears that house tradition forms the culture of the newsroom and staff learn the *modus operandi* through professional osmosis.

The BBC was an exception in that it is the only one of the four providers to have a statutory obligation to impartiality, and yet the content analyses placed the Corporation's reporting on the centre-right. The explanation for this discrepancy is partly founded on the Corporation's sensitivity to accusations of 'left-wing' bias. Hence, to ensure that the BBC's economic and business output does not tilt in this direction, the limits of relevant opinion are restricted to the 'consensus' as defined by large corporations and mainstream political parties. This interpretation is subtly impressed on reporters by editors through briefings, seminars and less formal means, and consequently, the BBC tends to reproduce elite interpretations. Interviews with reporters and editors from the alternative news media further illustrated the importance of house tradition. While there were vivid similarities with mainstream journalists in terms of their social constitutions, education and some professional practices, *New Statesman*, *New Internationalist*, and *Corporate Watch* journalists are guided by sharply-contrasting editorial priorities that are focussed on traditional left-wing principles. Arguably, the only publication featured in this thesis to offer politically-independent news is *Private Eye* which applies its unique brand of scepticism equally to all concentrations of power.

Positioning the thesis in the literature

In comparison to previous studies, this thesis has a distinctive design. By looking at three tiers of neoliberalism, it gives an holistic perspective of the reporting of the British economy over a ten year period. Furthermore, by analysing the journalism of four news organisations, it provides a rare and detailed comparative study of EBF news. In addition, this thesis offers an explanation through interviews with journalists from the publications covered by the content analyses. As noted in the literature review, there are few book-length studies of EBF news, and certainly no recent British work that connects the product to the producers and their working practices. Indeed, taken as a whole, this thesis is difficult to categorise. However, in terms of its component parts and significant findings, it can be placed in several sub-sets of journalism research.

By virtue of its timing and broad subject matter, this thesis will inevitably be slotted alongside the numerous works of the post-Financial Crisis era. In one respect, this would be misguided because the intention was not to explore the same specific episode. Furthermore, by concentrating on such a unique and relatively recent event, such tightly-focussed studies are rather parochial and ignore the history and indelible characteristics of EBF news. Nevertheless, this thesis *does* contribute to this sub-corpus because it reveals that mainstream British journalism tends to follow elite agenda. The inadequacies of journalism in the prelude to the Crisis were the logical result of a production process that, despite leaps in technology, has remained largely unchanged for many years. The failure by journalists, therefore, to adequately interrogate the root cause of the Crisis – the Credit Boom of the 2000s - should not have been a surprise: the episode may have been exceptional but the reporting patterns were predictable. Hence, this study can also be placed with works that have revealed a deeply-entrenched tendency to produce news that favours elite interests, particularly investors, over the last 300 years.

The propensity for EBF news to be ‘too enthusiastic (or positive) and uncritical’ (Ojala and Uskali 2004) was most recently underlined in Dean Starkman’s 2014 study of the American news media’s contribution to the Financial Crisis. In addition, Starkman, like Damien Tambini in the UK, posed a question that is absent from much post-2008 work, namely whether EBF journalists have a watchdog role that would benefit citizens rather than investors. This thesis also addresses this vital question in two ways. First, like Tambini, and Gillian Doyle (2006), the interviews with British practitioners revealed mixed understandings of responsibilities to other stakeholder groups and whether journalists had an obligation to challenge the foundations of free-market philosophy. Second, this thesis assumes that there are multiple interpretations of economic and business issues. Hence, for the news media to perform its Fourth Estate duties and adequately equip the citizenry with the information needed to make political decisions, journalists need to give exposure to a wide range of arguments. In much the same way that Mike Berry found alternatives to the ‘banking bailout’ were rarely discussed on BBC Radio 4’s *Today* programme, this study reveals that none of the four news media organisations awarded sustained coverage to dissenting interpretations. Thus, it can also be situated alongside other British and international works that have highlighted the marginalisation of arguments that challenge the ‘consensus’ as defined by the political and corporate elite.

The definition of the ‘consensus’ is vital for understanding reporting patterns. Dennis McQuail argued that the ‘point of (political) balance’ is similarly placed by all newspapers (1977:147) and, according to Berry, the news media reflects ‘shades of opinion at Westminster’ rather than across the broader civil society (2012: 267-268.) Political views in close proximity to this point are awarded exposure and significance, but those on the periphery are considered to be in the ‘zone of deviance’ and are thus unworthy of impartial coverage. Hence, the protestors at Seattle, the trade union leaders at the Labour Party Conference, and supermarket workers and suppliers were promoting ideas so detached from the political-corporate ‘consensus’ that they did not deserve fair treatment. Consequently, an air of inevitability was evident across the case studies: globalisation, for example, was presented in numerous contexts, from war to motor sport, and on the few occasions it had an economic context, globalisation was invariably conflated with neoliberalism and, moreover, presented as a mystical force which was ‘stalking the land’ (Travers 1999.)

Similarly, despite widespread opposition and the Conference defeat, the Private Finance Initiative was positioned as a rational next step in Tony Blair’s ‘modernisation’ of Britain. The large, dominant company was also conceived as ‘natural’: Tesco was mentioned in passing in 40 percent of the universal sample of articles which reflected its unproblematic omnipresence in British society. Furthermore, the company’s huge profits and political influence were never questioned, and outside of the periods around the Competition Commission announcements, Tesco was rarely criticised. Hence, these key elements of neoliberalism – ‘free trade’; private companies in public services; and the profit-focussed, joint stock company were normalised by the news media. For this reason, the empirical elements of this thesis complement a largely theoretical body of work that has noted the reification of the market and the portrayal of capitalism’s inevitable supremacy.

Perhaps the most logical categorisation for this thesis, however, is alongside the landmark content studies of the Glasgow University Media Group in the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, this thesis was inspired by these works and employs similar methods, and by focussing on relatively recent economic and business issues, it goes some way toward reinvigorating the British critical tradition. The findings relating to the representation of dissenting perspectives are consistent with these earlier studies, and it is important to note that four decades after the GUMG’s first work was published, the mainstream news media has no greater inclination to reflect the views

of those who challenge elite interpretations. For the GUMG, the dissenting voices belonged to trade unions and workers, whereas this study identifies a wider range of stakeholder organisations that offer competing visions. By contemporising dissent, this thesis also adds to recent British research which has underlined the reliance on political and corporate sources. However, with the exception of Berry's 2012 study – which, as a journal article, was somewhat limited in scale – there is no comprehensive British EBF content analyses, and so observations about sourcing patterns have tended to be based on learned commentary or interviews with journalists. As a wide-ranging, data-rich study, this thesis makes a contribution to this deficiency in EBF-specific source data and, although it is not quite the same magnitude as Lewis *et al*'s (2008) content analysis of general British news²²⁹, it still has sufficient breadth and scale to add to the broader corpus. In addition, the globalisation case study, and to a lesser extent private finance, revealed evidence of the delegitimisation of dissent through negative representations of groups and individuals. The *Times-Sunday Times*' disparaging descriptions of protestors in Seattle and the BBC's - somewhat more subtle - portrayal of trade union leaders as trouble-makers diverted attention from their arguments. Elite actors and groups, however, were rarely criticised in the same manner. These findings are consistent with previous research, mostly American, that has identified a tendency for the news media to ridicule protestors and British studies that have noted the demonization of radical spokespeople.

This thesis also makes a contribution to debates about professional practice in EBF journalism which, in recent years, has been the focus of much British research. As noted above, this thesis adds to the understanding of role perceptions and sourcing strategies, but it also extends practitioner research to give a fuller picture of the production process from news selection to framing. Indeed, the interviews with editors and journalists that informed chapters six and seven were consistent with the holistic strategy of the thesis. In contrast, the earlier article-length studies tend to be tightly-focussed on individual factors. Consequently, by considering the key stages of the production process and gaining insight into the intellectual deliberations of journalists, chapter six reveals a high degree of convergence not only in professional practice, but also in the social constitutions of practitioners. In these terms, this thesis adds to the considerable body of sociological work that revealed similar patterns of

²²⁹ Lewis *et al* (2008) analysed 2,207 newspaper articles and 402 broadcast segments, compared with 1,625 articles for this study

professional behaviour and output were the consequence of shared bureaucratic structures, routines, cultures, pressures, constraints and assumptions.

Finally, this thesis also adds a new dimension to EBF journalism research by investigating house tradition and its impact on the political content of news. The divergence of EBF journalism is particularly uncharted territory, and its neglect is evident in the absence of comparative critical studies. As noted in chapter two, this thesis was partly inspired by Alan Budd's report on the impartiality of the BBC's business journalism. This comprehensive, mixed-method study was illuminating in many respects but it assessed 'impartiality' according to the BBC's own interpretation and lines of inquiry did not extend beyond the Corporation. In some respects, this thesis is the logical extension of Budd's work because it compares the BBC's journalistic output and working practices with those of news organisations that are overtly political, thus giving benchmarks of what constitutes left- and right-wing news. One of the most significant findings of this study is the discrepancy between the BBC's statutory commitment to impartiality, and its observed position on the centre-right of the political spectrum.

This brings the focus back to the definition of the 'consensus' and the professional practices that consistently produce journalism that remains within acceptable parameters of debate. Chapter seven provides considerable insight into these processes among BBC economic and business reporters, and in this respect, it resonates with Philip Schlesinger's classic study. Schlesinger noted the discordance between the BBC's output which is generally 'supportive of the existing order' and the Corporation's operating principles which claim that it has 'no place in the political spectrum' (1978:167.) As demonstrated in the empirical chapters of this thesis, BBC economic and business journalists' antennae are directed at Westminster and the City of London, and views from outside of this narrow corridor of debate are rarely awarded exposure and credence. Indeed, the BBC is a vital component in British power structures and its journalists are adept at consistently producing news that adheres to the agendas and perspectives of the elite which inevitably 'uphold(s) the established society' (Hetherington 1985:41.)

Promoting greater inclusivity: towards a more critical EBF journalism

Although this thesis makes a significant contribution to the understanding of British EBF journalism, its empirical foundations are restricted to three case studies, four news organisations, and interviews with 26 editorial staff. Furthermore, despite the multiple sampling points over a ten year period, this thesis is temporally limited. To

address questions about representativeness, therefore, a similar methodological approach could be applied to other issues and publications, and hence, a more complete picture of the nature of EBF journalism would emerge. Future studies could look at post-Crisis economic issues, such as austerity; the impact of immigration; the representation of a new generation of protest groups, like Occupy; and how income and wealth inequality are reported. Similarly, analysis could be extended to mid-market and 'red top' newspapers which have far larger readerships than the broadsheets analysed in this thesis. Similarly, the BBC offers opportunities for more research. The BBC News website was chosen for this thesis partly because it offers researchers easy access and, as a text-based medium, its content is comparable with newspapers. But the Corporation's broadcast output has arguably greater impact on much larger audiences, and so the analysis of prime time TV news coverage of economics and business would be illuminating, particularly when compared to other broadcasters.

Further research into the contribution of the alternative news media to public debate would also be useful. As revealed in chapter seven, some magazines and websites on the periphery of the 'consensus' take a critical perspective and do not follow the mainstream news agenda and so they have the ability to be prophetic. *Private Eye*, for example, revealed the inadequacies of private finance in public services way before the mainstream media took an interest, and the *New Internationalist* has been covering the inequities of neoliberalism for decades. Alternative publications have limited audiences but they are arguably the most intriguing element of the news media because they can perform Fourth Estate duties in ways that mainstream journalism clearly cannot. With the mainstream political parties showing few signs of challenging the assumptions of neoliberalism, the most revealing future research would take a critical perspective, and consider how arguments on the edges of the political spectrum are covered by the news media. Although Westminster politicians tend to ignore such interpretations, they still have intellectual validity.

Another important line of inquiry is audience research. This thesis gives no indication of the extent of public knowledge of economics and business, nor indeed political opinion, and how this tallies with the positions of the parties or the news media, nor how public opinion is influenced by media coverage. This is a particularly complex and very important area of research that is grossly underdeveloped. If scholarly interest in economic and business news were to increase, however, then journal articles, conference papers and books would naturally follow. Given the centrality of

economics and business, there is also a case for a *Journal of Economic and Business Journalism*. Obviously, this sphere of research will take time to develop and one can only hope that the journalism scholars of the future take a greater interest in the economic world and, in particular, the alternative lines of thought that are barely acknowledged by mainstream politicians and their journalistic shadows.

From the perspective of the general public, there is clearly a need for economic and business journalism that is more representative of a fuller diversity of perspectives. These evidently exist in the alternative news media but this, by definition, sits on the edge of public consciousness. Even so, there are compelling arguments why this form of journalism should colonise the mainstream. In the UK, for example, MediaLens promotes the view that journalists should focus on the needs of humanity. Indeed, the founders of this organisation believe that the failings of mainstream journalism can be traced to its founding principles:

Not only is journalistic “objectivity” impossible, the attempt to achieve it is morally abhorrent. How can we remain neutral in a world afflicted by poverty and war? (Edwards and Cromwell 2009:239)

This compassionate ethos is shared by John Pilger who tells: ‘...stories of humanity from the ground up, not from the point of view of the powerful and those who, in one way or another, want to control or exploit us’ (in Hayward 2001:1.) While such opinions carry noble intentions, however, they are utopian because the mainstream media is hardwired to prioritise the agenda and the views of the political and corporate elite. Hence, without a seismic shift in working practices and organisational structures, it is unlikely there will be any significant change in the news product that most audiences consume. Consequently, academics and other media commentators need to have realistic expectations about mainstream EBF journalism.

This is a rather depressing prognosis but, as this thesis demonstrates, it is based on a solid foundation of evidence. Despite the ubiquity of laptops, broadband, mobile phones, social media and cheap, immediate access to near-infinite online information, the practices and preferences of contemporary EBF journalists are largely indistinguishable from their forebears who were the subjects of the great ethnographies of the past. There are evidently strict and narrow limits of what changes can be made and even if individual journalists wanted to challenge the

consensus – within their organisation or the British economy – the barriers are considerable. Despite these challenges, however, improvements are possible.

Naturally, for meaningful change to occur, there first needs to be sustained and constructive engagement between researchers and journalism professionals. This is, however, a significant issue because of a widely-perceived ‘theory-practice divide’ (Machin and Niblock 2006:2.) Such a fracture between practitioners and academia would be unthinkable in other fields – for example, medicine, engineering and business - and yet it appears entrenched in journalism. Whatever the explanation, the researcher’s interviews - and less formal discussions - with practitioners revealed that few people working in the news media have ever read any critical academic work about their profession or industry. The first step to rectifying the disconnect is to habitually include journalists, editors, media executives and regulators – through interviews, conferences, research projects, etc – and for academia to *actively* work with news organisations to improve skills, knowledge and understanding. As this thesis has demonstrated, journalists are happy to talk about their work but equally, they are very sensitive to criticism about their practices. This is particularly true of BBC staff and their pursuit of impartiality. But if researchers acknowledge that journalists are sentient beings whose humanity is often constrained by a highly-formalised production process that exists within indelible and largely profit-focused cultures, then maybe the link between the professionals and academia can be strengthened.

Researchers, and almost all of the practitioners interviewed for this thesis, have highlighted the need for better training among EBF journalists. The most obvious way to achieve this is to address the near-universal absence of contextual knowledge, and there are signs that institutions are responding. City University, for example, launched an MA in Financial Journalism in 2009 and other journalism schools offer economic and business reporting as an elective module. Most significantly, in 2013 the NCTJ introduced a Business and Finance module but again, this is optional. Clearly, journalism students can choose these routes if they correspond with their own professional aspirations but the researcher’s observations from 15 years of teaching journalism at five British universities suggests that most undergraduates envisage careers as sport, music or lifestyle reporters. There is a strong intellectual case, however, to make such modules compulsory: the reach of economics and business extends across all other journalism niches and so it is imperative that *all* journalism students have a working knowledge of both. But because the British

education ‘market’ is driven by demand, this is far harder to achieve than might appear for two reasons. First, the curricula of many courses are determined by the industry which is expressed through the training councils, and so if the NCTJ and BJTC do not specify economics and business as core subjects, there is little reason for journalism schools to include them. Second, teaching hours are finite and so, in the face of little enthusiasm from fee-paying student-customers, it would be a brave course designer who replaces a module such as ‘reporting celebrity’ with economics. Demand needs to come from newspapers and broadcasters and so again, constructive engagement is fundamental. If universities can approach the training councils with compelling justifications for new modules, then the prospects for improved EBF journalism may be enhanced. However, even if university courses *did* include modules on economics and business, there is no guarantee that reporting would become any more critical. As illustrated in chapter six, few EBF practitioners have qualifications in journalism – or, indeed, economics and business - and unless recruitment strategies change dramatically, then skills and knowledge are unlikely to improve. For these reasons, and despite evidence that the inability to understand contemporary capitalism played a central role in journalism’s neglect in the prelude to the Financial Crisis, there is little chance that the EBF journalists of the future will be any more informed or sceptical than their predecessors.

This synopsis paints a depressing picture for those hoping for EBF news that routinely offers wider interpretations of the economic environment. Trade unions, NGOs, left-wing research organisations, think-tanks, social movements and other stakeholder groups are perennially frustrated by the lack of media interest in their causes. However, if an issue *does* gain the news media’s attention, then the immutability of journalistic practice can actually work in their favour. Over the last two decades, the rise in prominence and public support of some issues traditionally associated with the left - for example, FairTrade, climate change and Make Poverty History - demonstrates that once-radical ideas *can* capture the news media’s interest and be covered sympathetically if they can be pushed onto the agenda. Although mainstream news organisations typically favour elite voices, the highly-mechanised news production process is still geared to include multiple perspectives. The likelihood of radical ideas entering public discourse is further enhanced if groups can engender support from politicians. Clearly, this is no easy task, particularly as competition comes from well-financed political and corporate PR machines in which journalists are already embedded. Perhaps the answer is for critical organisations to collaborate and form a social news agency, along the lines of the Press Association,

that is dedicated to channelling press releases, research, and packaged items direct to news rooms. If these organisations can consistently generate material that is congruent with editors' conceptions of news values, provoke debate with strong arguments, high-profile spokespeople and supporting data, and follow up with timely, helpful and personalised PR support, then mainstream publications may begin to include left-of-centre thinking as a matter of course. Naturally, this would require much planning, co-ordination and compromise on the part of groups that are only loosely connected in terms of their political beliefs. In the meantime, if the British public want to explore different perspectives, their only effective choice is the alternative news media.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Economic globalisation

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Appendix 1:1

Economic globalisation

Coding scheme

V1 Item ID

Every item has a unique four digit number, starting at 1001

V2 Date

V3 Month

V4 Year

V5 News Organisation

- 1 – The Guardian
- 2 – The Observer
- 3 – The Times
- 4 – Sunday Times
- 11 – BBC News website

V6 Topic

- 0 – Not applicable
- 1 – General
- 2 – UK/Home
- 3 – International/world
- 4 - Politics
- 5 - Economics
- 6 – Business/City
- 7 – Personal Finance/Money
- 8 – Society
- 9 – Media
- 10 – Science, Technology, Online
- 11 – Environment
- 12 - Health
- 13 – Education
- 14 – People (interviews, profiles and obituaries)
- 15 – Leaders, letters and opinion
- 16 – Culture and lifestyle (art, books, film, food, music, property, TV, etc)
- 17 – Sport
- 18 - Travel
- 19 – Other (for example, G2, features section, etc.)
- 20 – Battle for Free Trade (BBC only)

V7 Length

Number of words

V8 Item Type

- 1 – Headline: page one
- 2 – Other item on page one
- 3 - News story
- 4 – Editorial
- 5 – Feature
- 6 – Column/Opinion/Debate/Analysis/Comment
- 7 – News in brief
- 8 – Interview/Profile/Obituary
- 9 - Index/table of contents/hyperlink/diary
- 10 – Review (book, film, music, media, etc.)
- 11- Fact file (Q and A, bullet points, etc.)
- 12 – Letter to the editor
- 13 – Don't know

Frequency of search phrases

Code 3, 4 or 5 only if 1 or 2 do not apply

V9 – Globalisation

- 0 – No mention
- 1 – In headline, subhead or standfirst
- 2 – Mentioned in introduction
- 3 – Five or more mentions
- 4 - Two to four mentions
- 5 – One mention

V10 – Anti-globalisation (or anti-WTO)

- 0 – No mention
- 1 – In headline, subhead or standfirst
- 2 – Mentioned in introduction
- 3 – Five or more mentions
- 4 - Two to four mentions
- 5 – One mention

V11 – World Trade Organisation (or WTO)

- 0 – No mention
- 1 – In headline, subhead or standfirst
- 2 – Mentioned in introduction
- 3 – Five or more mentions
- 4 - Two to four mentions

5 – One mention
Salience and framing

V12 – Salience

- 1 – one or more search phrase is the primary focus of the story
- 2 – one or more search phrase features strongly in the story
- 3 – one or more search phrase features partially to the story
- 4 – the appearance of the search phrase(s) is incidental to the story

Note

Only code 1 if any of the search terms are covered specifically and in detail. For example, an article that discusses the debates at, or the workings of, the WTO would be a 1. Likewise, an article that discusses alternative visions of globalisation. Code 2 if the article strongly features one or more search terms in the context of another, related issue. For example, the impact of the WTO on poverty reduction or how globalisation affects the motor industry.

Code 3 if the search term is only weakly connected to the thrust of the article. For example, an article that focuses on the violence of 'anti-globalisation' protests would be a 3. However, if the article made the protestors' grievances prominent, it would be a 2. Code 4 if only a passing reference is made to the search term. For example, 'President Clinton, who was at the WTO meeting last week...' is a 4. Likewise, all appearances of search words in tables of contents and indexes are coded 4.

If 4, stop coding and move on to next news item

V13 – Thematic/episodic

- 1 – mostly/entirely focuses on episodes
- 2 – mainly focuses on episodes
- 3 – roughly equal
- 4 – mainly focuses on themes
- 5 – mostly/entirely focuses on themes
- 6 – N/A

Note

Code 1 if 100 to 80 percent of the story describes concrete instances and/or events in the short-term (what happened yesterday, what might happen tomorrow, etc.)
Code 2 if 80 – 60 percent of the story is episodic. Code 4 if 60 to 80 percent of the article gives historical context, looks at macro-issues, covers ongoing debate, etc.
Code 5 if 80 to 100 percent of the article is thematic. Code 3 if the balance between episodic and thematic is about equal. Code 6 if it is impossible to say.

V14 – Primary theme

1 – Economy	2 – World trade	3 – China and trade	4 - Regulation (laws, taxes, etc.)
5 - Business	6 – Developing world issues	7 – Inequality and poverty	8 - Environment
9 – Labour	10 - Health	11 - Education	12 – Agriculture
13 – Political exchanges, processes and structures	14 – Media, science and technology	15 – Public order (crime and protest)	16 – War and human rights

Note

In the vast majority of cases, the primary theme is apparent at a glance. Some articles, however, are not easy to categorise. Some WTO-focussed articles, for instance, make no mention of the competing political positions and look instead at the workings of the Conference or rather inane commentaries from delegates. Hence, these should be coded 13 along with more abstract political debates. Articles are only coded 2 if reference to one or more political position is made (for example, liberalisation or protectionism), and only if the article looks at world trade generally. If it focuses on a specific issue (health, business, education, etc.), the theme is chosen accordingly.

V15 – Secondary theme

1 – Talk (consult, negotiate, discuss, debate, confer, argue, etc.)	2 – Fight (row, demonstrate, dispute, protest, battle, war, conflict, struggle, violence, etc)	3 – Consensus (agreement, deal, unity, etc)	4 – Impasse (breakdown, stalemate, stalled, need to accelerate or resolve, etc)
5 – Crisis (chaos, emergency, etc)	6 – Announcement (statement, speech, manifesto, prediction, prophecy, etc.)	7 – Analysis (review of events, synthesis, summary, etc.)	8 – Dominance (victory, defeat, resignation, etc.)

Coverage of political positions

Note

It was clear from the pilot study that some actors appeared to hold more than one position. For example, the United States was generally in favour of rapid liberalisation but it also argued for the retention of certain subsidies (protectionism) and even hinted at new global labour standards (progressive reform.) Likewise, NGOs generally campaigned for progressive reform (with additional protective measures for labour and the environment) but some, such as Christian Aid and Oxfam, also called for liberalisation, particularly in agriculture. There was also considerable overlap between the liberalisers and the protectionists (both committed to free trade), and the progressive and fundamentalist reformers (who both advocated fair trade.)

Hence, for V16 – V19, assess the extent to which the case for each position is made in the article. This assessment is based on the number of words devoted to the position, the tone and language used to describe ideas and people, the prominence, accompanying photographs and captions, etc.

Code 1 if the position is described in depth and/or promoted explicitly. Code 2 if the article does this more subtly and, hence, the position is portrayed as valid. Code 3 if the article's coverage of the position is generally critical or dismissive. Code 4 if the existence of the position is noted in but not described. Code 5 if the position is not mentioned in the article.

- 1 – extensive coverage
- 2 – brief coverage
- 3 – criticised or dismissed
- 4 – position acknowledged
- 5 – position not acknowledged
- 0 – unable to say

Position	Defining characteristics
V16 Liberalisation	Accelerated, multilateral removal of tariffs, subsidies, legislation and other restrictions on free trade
V17 Protectionism	Commitment to free trade but with the selective maintenance of protectionist measures
V18 Progressive reform	The WTO is valid but with needs a new agenda that includes non-commercial considerations, such as labour rights, environmental protection, animal welfare, etc.
V19 Fundamental reform	The WTO is flawed beyond reform and should be replaced by a more democratic institution that puts the needs of the poor, the environment and other social concerns at the heart of policy in world trade

Sources

V20 – Number of named sources cited

For V21 – V24, refer to ‘extended codes’ (see below.)

Include people named, and quoted, cited or paraphrased only. If no one is quoted, code 0 and go to V34. If it is an opinion piece or editorial, include ‘journalist’ as the first source.

Sources should be listed according to their order of importance (i.e. the space dedicated to the position in the article); if roughly equal, they should be listed according to the order they appear in the article.

V21– First source type

V22 – Second source type

V23 – Third source type

V24 – Fourth source type

V25 – Number of unnamed sources cited

For V26 and V27, refer to ‘extended codes’ (see below.)

Include people quoted, cited or paraphrased only but unnamed.

Sources should be listed according to their order of importance (i.e. the space dedicated to the position in the article); if roughly equal, they should be listed according to the order they appear in the article

V26 – First source type

V27 – Second source type

Sources - Extended Codes

A Developed world elite

- 1 Prime Minister, President, Chancellor, etc.
- 2 Cabinet minister
- 3 Governing party politician – MP, representative, senator, etc
- 4 Spokesperson for senior politician or representative
- 5 Trade representative/diplomat – including official negotiators
- 6 Opposition party – leader or shadow minister
- 7 Opposition party – MP, representative, senator, etc.
- 8 Minority party – Liberal Democrats, Green, SNP, Plaid Cymru, etc.
- 9 See category F
- 10 Civil servant, government department or agency, including EU

B Developing world elite

- 11 Prime Minister, President, Chancellor, etc.
- 12 Cabinet minister
- 13 Governing party politician
- 14 Spokesperson for prime minister or cabinet minister
- 15 Trade representative/diplomat – including official negotiators
- 16 Opposition party – leader or shadow minister
- 17 Opposition party – MP, representative, senator, etc.
- 18 Not allocated
- 19 Civil servant, government department or agency
- 20 Other

C Business

- 21 CEO, senior manager or company representative
- 22 Shareholding institution, investors, financial research
- 23 Industry association – spokesperson or research
- 24 Other lobbying group
- 25 Not allocated
- 26 Not allocated
- 27 Business person
- 28 Not allocated
- 29 Not allocated
- 30 Other

D Progressive reform organisations

- 31 Development or anti-poverty NGO (eg. Oxfam, Cafod, War on Want)
- 32 Environmental NGO (eg. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, etc.)
- 33 Human rights NGO (eg. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, etc.)
- 34 Trade union or other labour organisation (including farmers' groups, etc.)
- 35 Other NGO or social movement (eg. Faith groups, animal rights, etc.)
- 36 Not allocated
- 37 Not allocated
- 38 Not allocated
- 39 Not allocated
- 40 Other ('critics', etc.)

E Grassroots, protestors and ‘street groups’

- 41 Development or anti-poverty
- 42 Environmental
- 43 Human rights
- 44 Workers’ rights
- 45 Animal rights
- 46 Media
- 47 Anti-war
- 48 ‘Anti-capitalist’ or ‘anarchist’
- 49 ‘Protestor’, ‘activist’, etc.
- 50 Other – or unidentified

F Other, non-aligned

- 9 WTO official
- 51 Monarchs, aristocracy, etc.
- 52 Religious (bishops, imams, priests, etc.)
- 53 Other political bodies (mayor, governor, United Nations, World Bank, etc.)
- 54 Legal (police, judiciary, lawyers, etc.)
- 55 Military
- 56 Member of the public
- 57 Think-thank or research
- 58 Business person
- 59 Academic/scientist/doctor
- 60 Journalist/correspondent/editorial
- 61 Celebrity (artist, musician, sports person, actor, etc.)
- 62 Farmer
- 63 Economist
- 64 Observer/commentator

Appendix 1:2

Economic globalisation

Data tables

Table 1

Incidence of articles containing any of the search terms

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
BBC News	5	14	14	37	47	13	9	5	5	149
%	3	9	9	25	32	9	6	3	3	100
<i>Guardian</i>	3	17	29	38	59	23	19	7	10	205
%	1	8	14	19	29	11	9	3	5	100
<i>Times</i>	7	12	16	16	36	22	10	9	6	134
%	5	9	12	12	27	16	7	7	4	100

Table 2

Salience of articles to search terms

	Primary	Strong	Weak	Incidental	Total
BBC News	72	28	27	22	149
%	48	19	18	15	100
<i>Guardian</i>	63	32	27	83	205
%	31	16	13	40	100
<i>Times</i>	31	24	23	56	134
%	23	18	17	42	100
TOTAL	166	84	77	156	488
%	34	17	16	32	100

Table 3

Primary themes

	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Times</i>			
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
China and world trade	29	23	4	<4	9	12
World trade	22	17	15	12	15	19
Public order	19	15	7	6	15	19
Political structures, processes etc.	16	13	39	32	21	27
Agriculture	9	7	7	6	7	9
Business	7	6	7	6	3	<4
Inequality and poverty	6	5	4	<4	0	0
Developing world	6	5	13	11	0	0
Environment	3	<3	7	6	0	0
Labour	3	<3	8	7	1	<2
Regulation	2	<2	0	0	0	0
Economy	2	<2	4	<4	3	4
Media and science, etc.	2	<2	3	<3	0	0
Health	1	<1	2	<2	4	5
War, etc.	0	0	2	<2	0	0
Total	127	100	122	100	78	100

Table 4

Secondary themes

	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Times</i>			
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Talk (debate, discuss, negotiate, etc)	25	20	32	26	9	12
Fight (dispute, battle, protest, etc.)	21	17	12	10	29	37
Consensus (agree, deal, etc.)	9	7	2	<2	2	<3
Impasse (breakdown, stalled, etc.)	14	11	10	8	5	6
Crisis (chaos, emergency, etc.)	2	<2	1	<1	2	<3
Announcement (statement, manifesto, etc.)	27	21	37	30	21	27
Analysis (synopsis, review, etc.)	26	20	28	23	10	13
Dominance (victory, defeat, etc.)	3	<3	0	0	0	0
Total	127	100	122	100	78	100

Table 5
Coverage of political positions

BBC News articles categorised as ‘China and world trade’
(not in chronological order)

	Liberalisation	Protectionism	Progressive Reform	Fundamental Reform
1	1	2	5	5
2	1	1	5	5
3	1	4	5	5
4	1	5	5	5
5	1	2	4	5
6	1	4	4	5
7	1	4	5	5
8	1	4	4	5
9	1	2	5	5
10	1	1	4	5
11	1	4	4	5
12	1	5	5	5
13	2	4	5	5
14	2	4	5	5
15	2	4	5	5
16	2	4	3	5
17	2	4	5	5
18	2	4	5	5
19	2	5	5	5
20	2	5	5	5
21	2	1	5	5
22	4	5	4	5
23	4	5	5	5
24	4	5	5	5
25	4	4	5	5
26	5	5	5	5
27	5	5	5	5
28	5	5	5	5
29	5	5	5	5

KEY

- 1 extensive coverage
- 2 brief coverage
- 3 criticised or dismissed
- 4 position acknowledged
- 5 position not acknowledged

Table 6

Item type

	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Times</i>			
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
News story	73	57	42	34	39	50
Editorial	0	0	11	9	3	4
Feature	5	4	29	24	13	17
Column/Opinion/Debate/Analysis	25	20	20	16	11	14
News in brief	14	11	3	<3	7	9
Interview/Profile/Obituary	0	0	2	<2	1	<2
Index/table of contents	2	<2	0	0	0	0
Review (book, film, media, etc.)	8	6	0	0	0	0
Fact file (Q and A, bullet points, etc.)	0	0	5	4	0	0
Letter to the editor	0	0	10	8	4	5
Total	127	100	122	100	78	100
Average article length (words)		539		757		645

Table 7

Episodic - thematic

	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Times</i>			
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Mostly/entirely episodic	18	14	17	14	21	27
Mainly episodic	33	26	17	14	24	31
Roughly equal	19	15	9	7	6	8
Mainly thematic	27	21	5	4	3	4
Mostly/entirely thematic	29	23	72	59	23	30
Not applicable	1	<1	2	2	1	<2
Total	127	100	122	100	78	100

Table 8

Named sources per article

Named sources	BBC News N = 127		Guardian N = 122		Times N = 78	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
None	22	17	15	12	12	15
One	38	30	32	26	32	41
Two	21	17	31	25	13	17
Three	20	16	14	11	11	14
Four	15	12	18	15	5	6
Five +	11	9	12	10	5	6
Total	105	83%	107	88%	66	85%

Table 9

Un-named sources per article

Un-named sources	BBC News N = 127		Guardian N = 122		Times N = 78	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
None	51	40	76	62	58	74
One	49	39	22	18	13	17
Two	14	11	17	14	6	8
Three	11	9	4	3	0	0
Four	1	<1	1	<1	1	<2
Five +	1	<1	2	2	0	0
Total	76	60	46	38	20	26

Table 10

No sources and un-named only

No named sources and...	BBC News N = 127		<i>Guardian</i> N = 122		<i>Times</i> N = 78	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
No un-named	8	6	11	9	5	6
One un-named	6		2		5	
Two un-named	4	10	0	3	2	9
>Three un-named	2		2		0	
Total	20	16	15	12	12	15

Table 11

First named source – rankings

Named sources	BBC News N = 105		<i>Guardian</i> N = 107		<i>Times</i> N = 66	
	rank	articles	rank	articles	rank	articles
Leader - developed	1	16	8	6	2	9
WTO official	2	11	4	10	*	*
Minister - developed	3	9	1	15	3	7
Trade rep - developed	4	8	9	5	*	*
Journalist	5	7	2	14	1	13
Progressive groups	5	7	3	13	5	5
Grassroots groups	7	6	*	*	*	*
Leader - developing	7	6	*	*	*	*
Legal and police	7	6	*	*	*	*
Academic/scientist	*	*	5	8	6	4
Member of public	*	*	6	7	*	*
Civil servant - developed	*	*	6	7	3	7
CEO/senior manager	*	*	*	*	6	4

* negligible occurrences (see tables 13a – 13c for complete lists)

Table 12

Un-named sources

	BBC News N = 103		<i>Guardian</i> N = 67		<i>Times</i> N = 27	
	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%
2 Cabinet minister	1		0		2	3
3 Governing MP/rep.	0		0		1	1
4 Spokesperson	12		2		1	15
5 Trade representative	3		2		0	5
8 Minority party	1		0		0	1
10 Civil servant, etc.	17		15		6	38
Total	34	33	19	28	10	38
B – Developing elite						
12 Cabinet minister	3		0		0	3
14 Spokesperson	2		0		0	2
15 Trade representative	3		3		0	6
19 Civil servant, etc.	10		15		1	26
Total	18	17	18	27	1	4
C – Business						
21 CEO	0		3		0	3
22 Shareholder	0		1		2	3
24 Other lobbying	2		0		0	2
27 Businessperson	0		2		1	3
Total	2	<2	6	9	3	12
D – Progressive groups						
31 Development NGO	3		1		1	5
32 Environmental NGO	3		1		0	4
33 Human rights NGO	1		0		0	1
34 Trade union	1		0		2	3
35 Other NGO	2		1		0	3
40 Other ‘critics’	2		0		0	2
Total	12	12	3	4	3	12
E – Grassroots groups						
46 Media	1		0		0	1
49 Protestor	10		1		2	13
Total	11	11	1	<2	2	7
F – Others, non-aligned						
9 WTO official	2		5		2	9
53 Other political	0		4		0	4
54 Legal and police	6		3		3	12
55 Military	0		1		0	1
56 Member of the public	2		3		1	6
57 Think-tank/research	1		1		0	2
59 Academic/scientist	1		1		0	2
60 Journalist	13		1		0	14
62 Farmer	0		1		0	1
63 Economist	1		0		0	1
64 Observer	0		0		1	1
Total	26	25	20	29	7	27

Table 13a
BBC News website – named sources

		First	Second	Third	Fourth	Total
A - Developed world elite						
1	Leader	16	8	5	3	32
2	Cabinet minister	9	6	5	7	27
3	Government MP/rep.	2	0	0	0	2
5	Trade representative	8	6	6	1	21
6	Opposition leader	2	1	0	0	3
7	Opposition MP/rep.	1	0	0	0	1
10	Civil servant, etc	2	3	1	1	7
Number of articles		40	24	17	12	93
B - Developing world elite						
11	Leader	2	2	0	0	4
12	Cabinet minister	6	7	0	1	14
13	Governing MP/rep.	0	0	0	1	1
15	Trade representative	4	1	0	1	6
Number of articles		12	10	0	3	25
C - Business						
21	CEO/senior manager	1	3	0	0	4
23	Industry association	3	1	0	2	6
24	Other lobbying	1	0	0	0	1
27	Businessperson	3	2	0	0	5
Number of articles		8	6	0	2	16
D - Progressive groups						
31	Development NGO	1	2	2	0	5
32	Environmental NGO	2	2	2	1	7
34	Trade union	0	1	1	0	2
35	Other NGO/social movement	4	3	3	1	11
Number of articles		7	8	8	2	25
E - Grassroots groups						
42	Development	3	0	0	0	3
43	Human rights	0	1	1	0	2
47	Anti-War	1	0	0	0	1
48	Anti-capitalist/anarchist	1	0	0	0	1
49	Protestor	1	2	2	1	6
Number of articles		6	3	3	1	13
F - Others, non-aligned						
9	WTO official	11	1	4	1	17
36	Think-tank/research	0	0	0	2	2
53	Other political organisation	4	4	4	2	14
54	Legal and police	6	2	2	0	10
56	Member of the public	1	1	1	0	3
59	Academic/scientist	1	3	3	0	7
60	Journalist	7	5	5	2	19
62	Farmer	1	1	1	0	3
63	Economist	0	0	0	1	1
Number of articles		31	17	20	8	76

Table 13b
Guardian/Observer – named sources

		First	Second	Third	Fourth	Total
A - Developed world elite						
1	Leader	6	10	4	2	22
2	Cabinet minister	15	7	3	2	27
3	Government MP/rep.	1	1	0	0	2
4	Spokesperson	1	1	1	1	4
5	Trade representative	5	7	1	1	14
6	Opposition leader	1	1	0	1	3
7	Opposition MP/rep.	1	0	0	0	1
10	Civil servant, etc	7	1	2	0	10
		Number of articles	37	28	11	7
						83
B - Developing world elite						
11	Leader	3	1	1	0	5
12	Cabinet minister	0	0	1	0	1
13	Governing MP/rep	1	0	0	0	1
15	Trade representative	0	1	0	2	3
19	Civil servant, etc	0	1	0	1	2
		Number of articles	4	3	2	3
						12
C - Business						
21	CEO/senior manager	2	0	2	0	4
23	Industry association	0	1	4	5	10
24	Other lobbying	1	1	1	0	3
27	Businessperson	0	1	0	0	1
		Number of articles	3	3	7	5
						18
D – Progressive groups						
31	Development NGO	6	3	2	3	14
32	Environmental NGO	2	2	2	1	7
33	Human rights NGO	0	0	1	1	2
34	Trade union	5	1	1	0	7
35	Other NGO/social	0	2	1	2	5
		Number of articles	13	8	7	7
						35
E – Grassroots groups						
41	Development	0	1	0	0	1
42	Environmental	1	1	0	1	3
43	Human rights	0	1	0	0	1
46	Media	0	0	0	1	1
48	Anti-capitalist/anarchist	2	0	0	0	2
49	Protestor	1	0	0	0	1
		Number of articles	4	3	0	2
						9
F – Others, non-aligned						
9	WTO official	10	4	6	0	20
52	Religious	1	0	0	0	1
53	Other political organisation	1	1	0	0	2
54	Legal and police	2	1	1	0	4
56	Member of the public	7	8	4	3	22
57	Think-tank/research	1	1	0	2	4
59	Academic/scientist	8	5	5	3	21
60	Journalist	14	4	0	0	28
62	Farmer	1	2	1	0	4
63	Economist	1	3	0	0	4

Number of articles	46	29	17	8	100
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Table 13c
Times/Sunday Times – named sources

A – Developed world elite	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Total
1 Leader	9	6	2	1	18
2 Cabinet minister	7	2	6	2	17
4 Spokesperson	0	0	1	0	1
5 Trade representative	2	0	0	1	3
6 Opposition leader	1	2	2	1	6
8 Minority party	1	0	0	0	1
10 Civil servant, etc	7	7	0	0	14
Number of articles	27	17	11	5	60
B - Developing world elite					
13 Governing MP/rep	1	0	0	0	1
Number of articles	1	0	0	0	1
C - Business					
21 CEO/senior manager	4	2	1	1	8
22 Shareholding institution	1	2	1	0	4
23 Industry association	0	0	1	0	1
Number of articles	5	4	3	1	13
D – Progressive groups					
31 Development NGO	1	0	0	0	1
32 Environmental NGO	1	0	0	1	2
34 Trade union	3	1	0	2	6
Number of articles	5	1	0	3	9
E – Grassroots groups					
42 Environmental	2	1	0	0	3
48 ‘Anti-capitalist’/‘anarchist’	0	1	0	0	1
49 Protestor	0	1	1	0	2
Number of articles	2	3	1	0	6
F – Others, non-aligned					
9 WTO official	1	1	0	0	2
51 Monarchy	1	0	0	0	1
53 Other political	0	0	1	0	1
54 Legal and police	2	1	0	0	3
56 Member of the public	2	0	0	0	2
57 Think-tank/research	0	1	0	0	1
59 Academic/scientist	4	0	1	0	5
60 Journalist	13	5	1	0	19
61 Celebrity	0	0	0	1	1
62 Farmer	2	0	0	0	2
63 Economist	1	0	0	0	1
64 Observer	0	1	0	0	1
Number of articles	26	9	3	1	39

Table 14

Combinations of sources		BBC News N = 127		<i>Guardian</i> N = 122		<i>Times</i> N = 78	
Monopolies*		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
Developed elite and business only		43	34	41	34	33	42
Developing elite only		8	6	0	0	0	0
WTO critics only		15	12	18	15	6	8
	Total	66	52	59	49	39	50
Debates		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
Developed and business followed by	Developing	16	13	8	7	1	<2
Developed and business followed by	WTO critics	10	8	8	7	4	5
Developing followed by	Developed and business	7	6	4	3	1	<2
Developing followed By	WTO critics	1	<1	0	0	0	0
WTO critics followed by	Developed and business	5	4	5	4	3	4
WTO critics followed by	Developing	0	0	4	3	0	0
All three groups (any permutation)		2	<2	5	4	1	<2
	Total	41	32	34	28	10	13
Other		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
‘Other, non-aligned’ only		12	10	18	15	24	31
No sources		8	6	11	9	5	6
	Total	20	16	29	24	29	37

* monopolies may also include ‘other, non-aligned’ sources

Table 15a
BBC News website – weighted coverage of political positions

Articles N=127	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted Total	Weighted %
Liberalisation	39	21%	35	28%	22	17%	7	6%	24	19%	202	46
Protectionist	5	4%	19	15%	37	29%	8	6%	58	46%	82	19
Progressive	22	17%	26	20%	22	17%	6	5%	51	40%	134	31
Fundamentalist	1	<1%	5	4%	16	13%	12	9%	93	73%	17	4
											TOTAL	435
												100

Table 15b
Guardian/Observer – weighted coverage of political positions

Articles N=122	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted Total	Weighted %
Liberalisation	17	14%	28	23%	33	27%	17	14%	27	22%	123	39
Protectionist	1	<1%	13	11%	25	20%	25	20%	58	48%	29	9
Progressive	20	16%	26	21%	33	27%	5	4%	38	31%	140	44
Fundamentalist	1	<1%	4	3%	19	16%	6	5%	92	75%	24	8
											TOTAL	316
												100

Table 15c
Times/Sunday Times – weighted coverage of political positions

Articles N=78	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted Total	Weighted %
Liberalisation	16	21%	15	19%	22	28%	2	3%	23	29%	98	62
Protectionist	4	5%	4	5%	16	20%	18	23%	36	46%	15	11
Progressive	8	10%	9	12%	19	24%	10	13%	32	41%	81	32
Fundamentalist	0	0%	4	5%	6	8%	22	28%	46	59%	-8	-5
											TOTAL	159
												100

Note – weighted total was calculated by multiplying the frequency of articles in the ‘extensive’ category by 3; ‘brief’ by 2; ‘acknowledged’ by 1, ‘critical’ by minus 1, and ‘no mention’ by zero.

Table 16a
Coverage of liberalisation versus progressive reform
BBC News website

Articles	LIB extensive	LIB brief	LIB critical	LIB acknowledged	LIB ignored	Total
REF extensive	9	6	6	0	1	22
REF brief	5	13	1	3	4	26
REF critical	3	1	0	2	0	6
REF acknowledged	10	1	0	8	3	22
REF ignored	12	14	0	9	16	51
Total	39	35	7	22	24	127

Table 16b
Coverage of liberalisation versus progressive reform
Guardian/Observer

Articles	LIB extensive	LIB brief	LIB critical	LIB acknowledged	LIB ignored	Total
REF extensive	6	5	7	1	1	20
REF brief	2	9	3	9	3	26
REF critical	3	2	0	0	0	5
REF acknowledged	5	7	4	13	4	33
REF ignored	1	5	3	10	19	38
Total	17	28	17	33	27	122

Table 16c
Coverage of liberalisation versus progressive reform
Times/Sunday Times

Articles	LIB extensive	LIB brief	LIB critical	LIB acknowledged	LIB ignored	Total
REF extensive	2	1	1	3	1	8
REF brief	4	1	0	4	0	9
REF critical	3	2	1	1	3	10
REF acknowledged	4	3	0	8	4	19
REF ignored	3	8	0	6	15	32

Total **16** **15** **2** **22** **23** **78**

Table 17
Constitution of named sources

	BBC News	Guardian	Times	Total	%
Developed elite	93	83	60	236	37%
Developing elite	25	12	1	38	6%
WTO	17	20	2	39	6%
Business	16	18	13	47	7%
WTO critics	38	44	15	97	15%
Other	59	80	37	176	28%
Total named sources	248	257	128	633	100%

Appendix 1:3

Economic globalisation

BBC News website images

A



B

Tuesday, 23 November, 1999, 14:25 GMT
Protesters gather in Seattle



The last round of trade talks led to widespread protests in Europe

Wednesday, 24 November, 1999, 12:13 GMT
Agriculture trade battle looms



French opposition to agricultural trade deals led to riots

Friday, 26 November, 1999, 13:36 GMT

Online activists plan global protest



The J18 riots took police by surprise

Monday, 29 November, 1999, 13:23 GMT

Police braced for city protests



Fourteen people were injured in the June riots

C

Wednesday, 1 December, 1999, 02:57 GMT

Seattle declares civil emergency



Protesters kick in a window during the clashes

Wednesday, 1 December, 1999, 09:07 GMT

WTO boss: Protesters harm the poor



Helping the poor and disadvantaged?

Wednesday, 1 December, 1999, 16:58 GMT

Clinton hopes to revive talks



Helping the poor and disadvantaged?

Thursday, 2 December, 1999, 15:56 GMT
US press advises WTO to heed protests



"Punks and vandals" said the Seattle Times

D

Tuesday, 23 November, 1999, 22:17 GMT
Free trade flashpoints



Agriculture is always controversial

Tuesday, 23 November, 1999, 21:52 GMT
Developing countries fight for free trade



Developing countries say calls for labour standards are veiled protectionism

Thursday, 2 December, 1999, 16:02 GMT

Clinton gets tough at troubled talks



Countries like India depend on cheap labour

Thursday, 2 December, 1999, 22:12 GMT

Clinton signs child labour ban treaty



Child labour will be banned by the ILO

Appendix 1:4

Economic globalisation

BBC News web pages

Monday, 13 December, 1999, 18:23 GMT

The Battle for Free Trade



The failure to launch a new round of global trade talks in Seattle amid mass protests highlights deep divisions over the issue of free trade, once seen as the engine of world economic growth. BBC News Online provides full coverage of the events and controversy.

World trade talks collapse

The WTO's attempts to launch a new trade round in Seattle end in failure after four days of bitter disputes and street protests.

Other stories:

- [WTO tarnished by Seattle fiasco](#)
- [Developing countries claim victory](#)
- [The battle of Seattle](#)
- [Anatomy of failure](#)
- [Who's to blame?](#)
- [Clinton drive on labour rights](#)
- [Who's afraid of the WTO?](#)
- [Picture gallery: Protests in Seattle](#)
- [Timeline: four days in Seattle](#)



Audio/visual media

► "Labour proved the sticking point"

Andrew Walker analyses the negotiations

► "Together we have common responsibilities"

President Clinton at the WTO

► "A disaster for world trade"

Paul Reynolds on the collapse of the trade talks

Texts and transcripts

[World trade organisation official briefing](#)

Trade bullies and blocs

Trade has been growing faster than world output. But a free trading system has been difficult to fashion.

Other stories:

- [An illustrated history of free trade](#)
- [WTO: policing world trade](#)



- [Developing countries fight for free trade](#)
- [Global hopes, global fears](#)
- [Trade: engine of world growth](#)

Free trade flashpoints

It should be simple. But even constructing an agenda has stymied trade talks, as the BBC's Andrew Walker explains.

Other stories:

- [Investment puzzle for WTO](#)
- [WTO counters eco-critics](#)
- [The WTO's labour battle](#)
- [EU makes biotech concessions](#)
- [WTO tackles the internet](#)
- [Clashes on agriculture](#)



Arguments and controversies

Everyone is in favour of free trade - but everyone interprets it differently. The BBC's Chris Giles supplies a guide for the perplexed.

Other stories:

- [Stop environmental destruction](#)
- [Free trade: good for all](#)
- [Does free trade benefit the poor?](#)



Audio/visual media

"Labour standards will hurt the poor"

Robert Pigott on developing countries' concerns

China moves to join the WTO

Advocates of free trade are encouraged as China reached a deal with the USA that moves it closer to joining the WTO.

Other stories:

- [China's big gamble](#)
- [Business eyes China market](#)
- [Deal to boost economy](#)



Wednesday, 1 December, 1999, 12:36 GMT

Does free trade benefit the poor?



WTO summit has provoked strong passions

By BBC reporter Michael Gallagher

The meeting in Seattle is the most important trade summit since the World Trade Organisation was created five years ago. For the first time, the prospect of a genuinely free-trading world is in sight.



For the organisation's Director-General Mike Moore, these are promising times for all the world's economies - great and small, thanks to WTO rules:

"There's 1.5 billion people that are trying to join this organisation. I think that says something," he says.

"The principle is that a huge country like the United States, the most powerful, can go into a dispute with a small country like Costa Rica, and Costa Rica can win. Isn't this a civilised way of doing it?"

Not according to many of the WTO's critics. From environmentalists to human rights activists, there is no shortage of people who claim it is trampling on less powerful countries in the name of commerce.

Different rules for rich and poor

They say indigenous producers cannot compete with big multinational companies, while in certain areas, like agriculture, the wealthy northern hemisphere still shuts out imports from the south by subsidising its own produce. In short, critics say, it is one rule for the rich and another for the poor.

"In the previous round of talks, developing countries opened up their markets considerably, bringing down tariffs and largely taking away [import] controls," says Tagendra Kana, India's former commerce secretary.

"They now have a very fair claim that there should be a stronger opening up of the services market, where they



Thousands have converged on Seattle

have some skills and advantages."

"There should be liberalisation of agricultural trade, where, because of continued subsidies, prices are kept artificially low internationally."

The growth of hi-technology industries means there is now the prospect of an ever-widening gulf between the developing and developed worlds.

One of the most controversial areas at present is gene technology. Europe and the United States want patents to apply to modified genes in plants and animals. That will protect the interests of biotechnology companies.

"It's definitely a big, big problem," says Brazilian aid campaigner Anna Tonie. "By allowing patenting for some international firms to patent knowledge and bio-safety and other things from developing countries you are obviously instigating bio-piracy.

"It's easier for a firm, for example, to come to Brazil, to do their research and take their research back, say to the US, to Germany, or any other countries, without having to give in any kind of feedback or compensation for the indigenous people or local people that have developed that technology or has been looking after a plant for many, many years."

There is some evidence the WTO has been stung by this kind of criticism. It is trying to present the summit as one where Third World concerns will be heard. The message is that free trade can work for everyone.

Mr Moore wants the west to cut its own tariffs to zero on almost all imports from the world's least developed nations, a step the European Union is already planning to take.

"We're saying that essentially all goods coming from the 49 least-developed countries will be able to have access to the European Union with no duties being imposed upon them," says UK Trade Secretary Stephen Byers.

"That will make a massive difference as far as those countries are concerned. It will give them access to a market of 370 million people. It's a radical change that'll begin to lift them out of poverty."

Here to stay

It is likely much more will be needed to rebut the claim that free trade is not fair trade, and to satisfy the thousands of demonstrators who have converged on Seattle.

Among their complaints are that the WTO itself is inherently undemocratic, its treaties thrashed out behind closed doors by unaccountable lawyers, with few opportunities for countries to appeal. International free trade, it seems, is far from ideal.

Trade talk targets

- ▶ **Expand tariff cuts to agriculture and services**
- ▶ **Set agenda for other areas of trade liberalisation**
- ▶ **Discuss labour rights**
- ▶ **Set standards for 'fair' trading**



US seen as enemy of fair trade

But they may not have a choice. Whether they like it or not, it is here to stay.

"Globalisation, the very rapid movement of capital across the world, new technology, it's a transformation of the whole world system," says UK Overseas Development Minister Claire Short.

"The nation state can't operate in the way it used to. There are a lot of people who say they can't cope. And they're shouting and protesting.

"But I think it's a waking-up to how big the historical change is that is taking place in this era."

Appendix 2

Private finance and public services

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Appendix 2:1

Private finance and public services

Coding scheme

V1 - Item ID

Every item has a unique four digit number, starting at 3001

V2 - Date

V3 - Month

V4 - Year

V5 - News Organisation

- 1 – The Guardian
- 2 – The Observer
- 5 – Daily Telegraph
- 6 – Sunday Telegraph
- 11 – BBC News website

V6 - Topic

- 0 – Not applicable
- 1 – General
- 2 – UK/Home
- 3 – International/world
- 4 - Politics
- 5 - Economics
- 6 – Business/City
- 7 – Personal Finance/Money
- 8 – Society
- 9 – Media
- 10 – Science, Technology, Online
- 11 – Environment
- 12 - Health
- 13 – Education
- 14 – People (interviews, profiles and obituaries)
- 15 – Leaders, letters and opinion
- 16 – Culture and lifestyle (art, books, film, food, music, property, TV, etc)
- 17 – Sport
- 18 - Travel
- 19 – Other (for example, G2, features section, etc.)
- 20 – Private Profit, Public Gain? (BBC only)
- 21 – England (or region of England)
- 22 – Scotland (or region of Scotland)
- 23 – Wales (or region of Wales)
- 24 – Northern Ireland

V7 - Length

Number of words

V8 - Item Type

- 1 – Headline: page one
- 2 – Other item on page one
- 3 - News story
- 4 – Editorial
- 5 – Feature
- 6 – Column/Opinion/Debate/Analysis/Comment/Sketch
- 7 – News in brief
- 8 – Interview/Profile
- 9 - Index/table of contents/hyperlink/diary
- 10 – Review (book, film, music, media, speech, ‘City gossip’, etc.)
- 11- Fact file (Q and A, bullet points, etc.)
- 12 – Letter to the editor
- 13 – Preview (of speech, etc.)
- 14 – Speech (transcript or extracts with no journalistic narrative)
- 15 – *Vox populi*

Frequency of search phrases

Code 3, 4 or 5 only if 1 or 2 do not apply

V9 – Private finance initiative or PFI

- 0 – No mention
- 1 – In headline, subhead or standfirst
- 2 – Mentioned in introduction
- 3 – Five or more mentions
- 4 - Two to four mentions
- 5 – One mention

V10 – Public private partnership or PPP

- 0 – No mention
- 1 – In headline, subhead or standfirst
- 2 – Mentioned in introduction
- 3 – Five or more mentions
- 4 - Two to four mentions
- 5 – One mention

Salience and themes

V11 – Salience

- 1 – one or more search phrase is the primary focus of the story
- 2 – one or more search phrase features strongly in the story
- 3 – one or more search phrase features partially to the story
- 4 – the appearance of the search phrase(s) is incidental to the story

Note

Only code 1 if any of the search terms are covered specifically and in detail. For example, an article that discusses the PFI debate should be coded 1. Code 2 if the article strongly features one or more search terms in the context of another, related issue. For example, the success (or failure) of a hospital built under PFI or the fortunes of a PFI contractor. Code 3 if the search term is only weakly connected to the thrust of the article. For example, an article that focuses on foundation hospitals but mentions PFI. Code 4 if only a passing or inconsequential reference is made to the search term. Likewise, all appearances of search words in table of contents and indexes are coded 4.

If 4, stop coding and move on to next news item

V12 – Thematic/episodic

- 1 – mostly/entirely focuses on episodes
- 2 – mainly focuses on episodes
- 3 – roughly equal
- 4 – mainly focuses on themes
- 5 – mostly/entirely focuses on themes
- 6 – N/A

Note

Code 1 if 100 to 80 percent of the story describes concrete instances and/or events in the short-term (what happened yesterday, what might happen tomorrow, etc.)
Code 2 if 80 – 60 percent of the story is episodic. Code 4 if 60 to 80 percent of the article gives historical context, looks at macro-issues, covers ongoing debate, etc.
Code 5 if 80 to 100 percent of the article is thematic. Code 3 if the balance between episodic and thematic is about equal. Code 6 if it is impossible to say.

V13 – Primary theme

1 – Business	2 – Health	3 – Education	4 – Employment issues (jobs, pay, pensions, etc.)
5 - Environment	6 – Local government	7 – Political or policy discussion	8 – Law and order
9 – Macroeconomy	10 - Housing	11 - Transport	12 – Other government services (DSS, CSA, DVLA, etc)
13 – Defence	14 - Energy	15 – Science and technology	

V14 – Secondary theme

1 – Talk (consult, negotiate, discuss, debate, confer, argue, etc.)	2 – Fight (row, demonstrate, dispute, protest, battle, war, conflict, struggle, violence, etc)	3 – Consensus (agreement, deal, unity, etc)	4 – Impasse (breakdown, stalemate, stalled, need to accelerate or resolve, etc)
5 – Crisis (chaos, emergency, etc)	6 – Announcement (statement, press release, speech, manifesto, prediction, prophecy, etc.)	7 – Analysis (review of events, synthesis, summary, etc.)	8 – Dominance (victory, defeat, resignation, etc.)

Political position

Note

For V15 – V18, the coder judges the extent to which the case for each position is made in the article. This assessment is based on the number of words devoted to the position, the tone and language used to describe ideas and people, the prominence, accompanying photographs and captions, etc.

Code 1 if the position is described in depth and/or promoted explicitly. Code 2 if the article does this more subtly and, hence, the position is portrayed as valid. Code 3 if the article's coverage of the position is generally critical or dismissive. Code 4 if the existence of the position is noted in but not described. Code 5 if the position is not mentioned in the article.

- 1 – extensive coverage
- 2 – brief coverage
- 3 – criticised or dismissed
- 4 – position acknowledged
- 5 – position not acknowledged
- 0 – unable to say

Position	Essential characteristics
V15 Privatisation	Business and private finance should have greater involvement in public services beyond the present limitations of PFI/PPP
V16 PFI advocacy	Private finance brings greater efficiency, better value for money and faster delivery of new facilities than traditional public funding
V17 PFI scepticism	The case for PFI/PPP has not been proven. Sceptics argued for a both a moratorium and a thorough review of PFI
V18 Social alternatives	PFI/PPP is unequivocally and fundamentally flawed and should be replaced with a social alternative, such as the established public funding model

Sources

V19 – Number of named sources cited

For V20 – V25, refer to ‘sources - extended codes.’

Include people named, and quoted, cited or paraphrased only. If no one is quoted, code 0 and go to V30. If it is an opinion piece, include the author as a source. Sources should be listed according to their order of importance (i.e. the space dedicated to the position in the article); if roughly equal, they should be listed according to the order they appear in the paper.

V20 – First source type

V21 – Second source type

V22 – Third source type

V23 – Fourth source type

V24 – Fifth source type

V25 – Sixth source type

V26 – Number of unnamed sources cited

For V27 – V31, refer to ‘sources - extended codes’

Include people quoted, cited or paraphrased only but unnamed. Otherwise code 0. Sources should be listed according to their order of importance (i.e. the space dedicated to the position in the article); if roughly equal, they should be listed according to the order they appear in the paper.

V27 – First source type

V28 – Second source type

V29 – Third source type

V30 – Fourth source type

Sources - Extended Codes

A Political

- 1 Prime Minister
- 2 Chancellor of the exchequer
- 3 Government minister (including Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly)
- 4 Labour Party MP (or member of House of Lords, MEP, MSP, AM, etc.)
- 5 Spokesperson for Labour politician or Labour Party
- 6 Conservative Party – leader or shadow minister (or spokesperson)
- 7 Conservative Party – MP (or member of House of Lords, etc.)
- 8 Minority party – Liberal Democrats, Green, SNP, Plaid Cymru, etc
- 10 Civil servant, Parliamentary committee, government department or agency
- 11 Local government elected representative (Mayor of London, councillor, etc)
- 12 Council chief executive, or other senior appointee
- 13 Non-UK politician

B Business

- 21 CEO or chairman – PFI contractor or consortium
- 22 Senior manager – PFI contractor or consortium
- 23 Other representative – PFI contractor or consortium
- 24 CEO or chairman – not identified as PFI contractor or consortium
- 25 Senior manager – not identified as PFI contractor or consortium
- 26 Other representative – not identified as PFI contractor or consortium
- 27 Shareholding institution, investors, financial research
- 28 Industry association – spokesperson or research (CBI, IoD, etc.)
- 29 Other lobbying group

C Trade unions, professional organisations and workers

- 41 National trade union leader
- 42 Other trade union representative (including TUC and regional officials)
- 43 Trade union member
- 44 Professional association (BMA, RCN, NUS, etc.)
- 45 Senior manager – public sector (chief executive of hospital, vice-chancellor, etc)
- 46 Health worker (consultant, doctor, nurse, etc)
- 47 Education worker (lecturer, teacher, classroom assistant, etc.)
- 48 Transport worker (train or bus driver, etc.)
- 49 Other worker

D Other sources

- 9 Rank and file party member
- 61 Monarchs, aristocracy, etc.
- 62 Religious (bishops, imams, priests, etc.)
- 63 Other political bodies (IMF, United Nations, World Bank, etc.)
- 64 Legal (police, judiciary, lawyers, etc.)
- 65 Military
- 66 Member of the public (patient, student, passenger, author of letter to editor, etc.)
- 67 User group (patients' association, NUS, passenger group, PTA, etc.)
- 68 Economist
- 69 Think-thank or research organisation (including opinion polls)
- 70 Academic or scientist
- 71 Journalist/correspondent/editorial
- 72 Celebrity (artist, musician, sports person, actor, etc.)
- 73 NGO, charity or social movement

Appendix 2:2

Private finance and public services

Data tables

Table 1a

2002

Incidence of articles containing any of the search terms

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
BBC News	6	4	4	16	29	5	9	7	1	81
%	7	5	5	20	36	6	11	9	<2	100
<i>Guardian</i>	4	11	6	9	42	15	12	10	5	114
%	<4	10	5	8	37	13	11	9	4	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	3	8	3	5	28	5	5	5	1	63
%	5	13	5	8	44	8	8	8	<2	100
Overall	13	23	13	30	99	25	26	22	7	258
%	5	9	5	12	38	10	10	9	3	100

Table 1b

2007

Incidence of articles containing any of the search terms

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
BBC News	6	2	3	6	3	2	3	5	3	33
%	18	6	9	18	9	6	9	15	9	100
<i>Guardian</i>	2	4	1	2	6	5	4	5	2	31
%	6	13	3	6	19	16	13	16	6	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	0	2	1	6	0	6	3	1	3	22
%	0	9	5	27	0	27	14	5	14	100
Overall	8	8	5	14	9	13	10	11	8	86
%	9	9	6	16	11	15	12	13	9	100

Note

All weeks are seven days and begin on a Sunday, apart from week 9 which is five days

Table 2a

2002

Prominence of search terms in article

	Headline	Intro	Two or more mentions	Single mention	Total
BBC News	10	8	26	37	81
%	12	10	32	46	100
<i>Guardian</i>	18	16	26	54	114
%	16	14	23	47	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	9	8	14	32	63
%	14	13	23	51	100
TOTAL	37	32	66	123	258
%	14	12	26	48	100

Note

If more than one search term appeared in the article, the most prominent was recorded in this table

Table 2b

2007

Prominence of search terms in article

	Headline	Intro	2+ mentions	Single mention	Total
BBC News	0	6	6	21	33
%	0	18	18	64	100
<i>Guardian</i>	3	3	1	24	31
%	10	10	3	77	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	2	1	3	16	22
%	9	5	14	72	100
TOTAL	5	10	10	61	86
%	6	12	12	70	100

Note

If more than one search term appeared in the article, the most prominent was recorded in this table

Table 3a

2002

Topic

	BBC News articles	%	Guardian articles	%	Telegraph articles	%
Politics	36	44	0	0	13	21
Business/City	13	16	38	33	29	46
England	7	9	0	0	0	0
Wales	7	9	0	0	0	0
Private Profit, Public Gain?	5	6	0	0	0	0
Scotland	4	5	0	0	0	0
Health	3	4	0	0	0	0
Education	3	4	3	<3	3	<5
UK/home	2	<2	36	32	1	<2
Northern Ireland	1	<1	0	0	0	0
General news	0	0	12	11	4	6
Leaders, letters and opinion	0	0	14	12	9	14
Other (features section, etc.)	0	0	7	6	1	<2
International	0	0	2	<2	0	0
Society	0	0	1	<1	0	0
Culture and Lifestyle	0	0	1	<1	0	0
Sport	0	0	0	0	2	<4
People (interviews and profiles)	0	0	0	0	1	<2
Total	81	100	114	100	63	100

Table 3b

2007

Topic

	BBC News articles	%	Guardian articles	%	Telegraph articles	%
Scotland	13	39	0	0	0	0
England	11	33	0	0	0	0
Science and Technology	3	9	0	0	0	0
Politics	2	6	1	3	0	0
Education	2	6	0	0	0	0
Business/City	1	3	11	35	13	59
Health	1	3	0	0	0	0
Leaders, letters and opinion	0	0	10	32	1	5
UK/home	0	0	3	10	0	0
Society	0	0	2	6	0	0
People (interviews and profiles)	0	0	1	3	2	9
Other (features section, etc.)	0	0	1	3	2	9
General news	0	0	0	0	4	18
Culture and Lifestyle	0	0	2	6	0	0
Total	33	100	31	100	22	100

Table 4a

2002

Item type

	BBC News articles	BBC News %	Guardian articles	Guardian %	Telegraph articles	Telegraph %
News story	38	47	51	45	30	48
Column/Opinion/Debate/Analysis	17	21	22	19	14	22
Interview/Profile	9	11	2	<2	4	6
Review (book, City gossip, speech, etc.)	5	6	5	4	1	<2
News in brief	3	4	3	<3	3	<5
Preview (of speech, etc.)	3	4	4	<4	0	0
Feature	2	<2	12	11	2	<4
Speech (transcript or extracts)	2	<2	2	<2	1	<2
Fact file (Q and A, bullet points, etc.)	1	<1	0	0	1	<2
<i>Vox populi</i>	1	<1	3	<3	0	0
Editorial	0	0	3	<3	3	<5
Index/table of contents/diary	0	0	3	<3	0	0
Letter to the editor	0	0	4	<4	4	6
Total	81	100	114	100	63	100
Average article length (words)		625		723		635

Table 4b

2007

Item type

	BBC News articles	BBC News %	Guardian articles	Guardian %	Telegraph articles	Telegraph %
News story	20	61	12	36	15	68
News in brief	8	24	2	6	1	5
Column/Opinion/Debate/Analysis	3	9	3	9	1	5
<i>Vox populi</i>	2	6	0	0	0	0
Feature	0	0	2	6	1	5
Interview/Profile	0	0	3	9	3	14
Review (book, City gossip, speech, etc.)	0	0	2	6	0	0
Letter to the editor	0	0	7	21	1	5
Total	33	100	31	100	22	100

Average article length (words)	473	548	697
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Table 5a

2002
Salience of articles to search terms

	Primary	Strong	Weak	Incidental	Total
BBC News	17	21	31	12	81
%	21	26	38	15	100
<i>Guardian</i>	25	23	28	38	114
%	22	20	25	33	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	13	8	13	29	63
%	21	13	21	46	100
TOTAL	55	52	72	79	258
%	21	20	28	31	100

Table 5b

2007
Salience of articles to search terms

	Primary	Strong	Weak	Incidental	Total
BBC News	3	8	19	3	33
%	9	24	58	9	100
<i>Guardian</i>	5	8	7	11	31
%	16	26	23	35	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	4	5	6	7	22
%	18	23	27	32	100
TOTAL	12	21	32	21	86
%	14	24	37	24	100

Table 6a

2002
Primary themes

	BBC News articles	BBC News %	<i>Guardian</i> articles	<i>Guardian</i> %	<i>Telegraph</i> articles	<i>Telegraph</i> %
Political or policy discussion	32	46	33	43	17	50
Health	9	13	4	5	0	0
Employment issues	6	9	6	8	3	9
Law and order	4	6	0	0	0	0
Macro-economy	4	6	1	<2	1	<3
Business	3	4	15	20	12	35
Education	3	4	7	9	0	0
Transport	3	4	2	<3	1	<3
Other government services	2	3	1	<2	0	0
Defence	1	<2	3	4	0	0
Housing	1	<2	3	4	0	0
Local government	1	<2	0	0	0	0
Energy	0	0	1	<2	0	0
Total	69	100	76	100	34	100

Table 6b

2007
Primary themes

	BBC News articles	BBC News %	<i>Guardian</i> articles	<i>Guardian</i> %	<i>Telegraph</i> articles	<i>Telegraph</i> %
Education	9	30	0	0	2	13
Political or policy discussion	6	20	9	45	2	13
Health	3	10	1	5	2	13
Employment issues	2	7	0	0	0	0
Environment	2	7	0	0	1	7
Housing	2	7	0	0	0	0
Science and technology	2	7	1	5	0	0
Defence	1	3	0	0	1	7
Local government	1	3	0	0	1	7
Other government services	1	3	0	0	0	0
Transport	1	3	6	30	1	7
Business	0	0	1	5	4	27
Energy	0	0	0	0	1	7
Law and order	0	0	2	10	0	0
Total	30	100	20	100	15	100

Table 7a

2002
Secondary themes

	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>			
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Announcement (statement, etc.)	33	48	39	51	14	41
Analysis (synopsis, review, etc.)	25	36	22	29	9	26
Fight (dispute, battle, protest, etc.)	6	9	9	12	8	24
Dominance (victory, defeat, etc.)	2	3	3	4	0	0
Talk (debate, discuss, negotiate, etc)	2	3	2	3	3	9
Consensus (agree, deal, etc.)	1	<2	1	<2	0	0
Crisis (chaos, emergency, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Impasse (breakdown, stalled, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	69	100	76	100	34	100

Table 7b

2007
Secondary themes

	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>			
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Announcement (statement, etc.)	17	57	16	80	11	73
Talk (debate, discuss, negotiate, etc)	11	37	2	10	1	7
Analysis (synopsis, review, etc.)	2	<7	2	10	2	13
Fight (dispute, battle, protest, etc.)	0	0	0	0	1	7
Consensus (agree, deal, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crisis (chaos, emergency, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dominance (victory, defeat, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Impasse (breakdown, stalled, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	30	100	20	100	15	100

Table 8a

2002
Episodic - thematic

	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>			
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Mostly/entirely episodic	18	26	25	33	19	56
Mainly episodic	13	19	20	26	6	18
Roughly equal	8	12	4	5	1	<2
Mainly thematic	3	4	6	8	2	6
Mostly/entirely thematic	27	39	21	28	6	18
Total	69	100	76	100	34	100

Table 8b

2007
Episodic - thematic

	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>			
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Mostly/entirely episodic	19	63	3	15	6	40
Mainly episodic	1	3	3	15	1	7
Roughly equal	2	7	0	0	1	7
Mainly thematic	5	17	7	35	3	20
Mostly/entirely thematic	3	10	7	35	4	27
Total	30	100	20	100	15	100

Table 9a

2002

Named sources per article

Named sources	BBC News N = 69		<i>Guardian</i> N = 76		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 34	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
None	4	6	8	11	3	9
One	25	36	31	41	11	32
Two	13	19	14	18	10	29
Three	14	20	9	12	5	15
Four	6	9	9	12	5	15
Five +	7	10	5	7	0	0
Total	65	94%	68	89%	31	91%

Table 9b

2007

Named sources per article

Named sources	BBC News N = 30		<i>Guardian</i> N = 20		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 15	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
None	6	20	2	10	1	7
One	10	33	6	30	7	47
Two	5	17	7	35	3	20
Three	2	7	2	10	2	13
Four	4	13	2	10	1	7
Five +	3	10	1	5	1	7
Total	24	80%	18	90%	14	93%

Table 10a

2002

Un-named sources per article

Un-named sources	BBC News N = 69		<i>Guardian</i> N = 76		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 34	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
None	58	84	43	57	25	74
One	8	12	19	25	6	18
Two	3	4	7	9	2	6
Three	0	0	4	5	1	2
Four	0	0	3	4	0	0
Total	11	16	33	43	9	26

Table 10b

2007

Un-named sources per article

Un-named sources	BBC News N = 30		<i>Guardian</i> N = 20		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 15	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
None	16	53	16	80	8	53
One	8	27	3	15	3	20
Two	3	10	0	0	2	13
Three	2	7	1	5	1	7
Four	1	3	0	0	1	7
Total	14	47	4	20	7	47

Table 11a

2002

First named source – rankings

	BBC News N = 69		Guardian N = 76		Telegraph N = 34	
	rank	articles	rank	articles	rank	articles
Prime minister	1	10	1	9	2	5
Labour MP (peer, AM, etc)	2	8	-	0	-	0
Cabinet minister	3	7	5	6	3	3
Journalist	3	7	4	7	3	3
CEO or chairman – PFI	5	5	1	9	1	7
Chancellor of the exchequer	6	4	6	4	5	2
Minority party MP	6	4	7	2	-	0
National trade union leader	6	4	1	9	7	1
Conservative MP (peer, etc)	-	0	-	0	5	2

Table 11b

2002

First named source – composite rankings

	BBC News N = 69		Guardian N = 76		Telegraph N = 34		Overall N = 179	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Labour Party troika*	21	30	19	25	10	29	50	28
Business*	6	9	15	20	12	35	33	18
Trade union representatives*	6	9	12	16	1	3	19	11
Journalist/respondent	7	10	7	9	3	9	17	9
Labour MP, peer, AM, etc	8	12	0	0	0	0	8	4
Civil servant, etc	3	4	3	4	0	0	6	3
Minority party MP, peer, etc	4	6	2	3	0	0	6	3
Conservative politician*	1	<2	0	0	2	6	3	<2
Other categories			14 (20%)		18 (24%)		6 (18%)	
							38 (21%)	

* ‘Labour Party troika’ = numbers 1, 2 and 3 in the extended source codes; ‘business’ = 21 to 29; ‘trade union representatives’ = 41, 42 and 44; and ‘Conservative politician’ = 6 and 7. See appendix 2.1, page X

Table 11c

2007

First named source – rankings

Named sources	BBC News N = 30		<i>Guardian</i> N = 20		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 15	
	rank	articles	rank	articles	rank	articles
Cabinet minister	1	3	4	1	1	4
Civil servant, govt dept, etc	1	3	*	*	*	*
CEO or chairman – PFI	3	2	2	3	2	3
Local government - appointed	3	2	*	*	*	*
Local government - elected	3	2	3	2	*	*
Senior manager – public sector	3	2	*	*	*	*
Chancellor of the exchequer	*	*	3	2	*	*
Member of the public	*	*	1	4	*	*

* negligible occurrences (see tables 14a – 14c for complete lists)

Table 11d

2002

Grassroots and research sources as proportion of all named sources

named sources categorised as...	BBC n = 154		<i>Guardian</i> n = 150		<i>Telegraph</i> n = 66	
	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%
Grassroots	9	6	12	8	2	3
Research	4	<3	7	5	1	<2

‘Grassroots’ sources = numbers 9, 43, 46 to 49, 66 and 67 in the extended source codes. ‘Research’ sources = 68, 69 and 70. See appendix 2.1, page X

Table 12a

2002

Un-named sources

		BBC News	Guardian	Telegraph	Total			
		N = 14 frequency	%	N = 57 frequency	%	N = 13 frequency	%	
A – Political								
3 Cabinet minister	1			1		2		4
5 Labour spokesperson	3			3		3		9
9 Party member	1			0		0		1
10 Civil servant, govt department, etc	4			12		1		17
11 Local government - elected	0			2		0		2
12 Local government - appointed	0			1		0		1
	Total	9	64	19	33	6	46	34
B – Business								
21- 23 PFI company	2			9		0		11
25 Non-PFI company	0			3		0		3
27 Shareholding institution, etc	0			9		0		9
28 Industry association	0			0		2		2
	Total	2	14	21	37	2	14	25
C – Trade Unions and workers								
41 National trade union	1			8		5		14
42 Other trade union rep	0			1		0		1
44 Professional association	1			0		0		1
45 Senior manager – public sector	0			1		0		1
47 Education worker	0			1		0		1
49 Other worker	0			1		0		1
	Total	2	14	12	21	5	38	19
D – Others								
67 User group	0			1		0		1
69 Think-thank or research	1			3		0		4
73 NGO or charity	0			1		0		1
	Total	1	7	5	9	0	0	6
	Grand total	14	100	57	100	13	100	84

Table 12b

2007

Un-named sources

		BBC News	Guardian	Telegraph	Total			
		N = 24 frequency	%	N = 6 frequency	%	N = 14 frequency	%	
A – Political								
8	Minority party MP (peer, AM, etc)	2		0		1		3
10	Civil servant, govt department, etc	7		0		3		10
11	Local government - elected	1		0		1		2
12	Local government - appointed	3		0		1		4
	Total	13	54	0	0	6	43	19
B – Business								
21	PFI company	3		4		2		9
25	Non-PFI company	3		0		1		4
27	Shareholding institution, etc	0		0		3		3
28	Industry association	0		1		0		1
	Total	6	25	5	83	6	43	17
C – Trade Unions and workers								
41	National trade union	1		0		0		1
43	Trade union member	1		0		0		1
44	Professional association	1		0		0		1
45	Senior manager – public sector	0		1		1		2
46	Health worker	0		0		1		1
	Total	3	13	1	17	2	14	6
D – Others								
66	Member of the public	1		0		0		1
67	User group	1		0		0		1
	Total	2	8	0	0	0	0	2
	Grand total	24	100	6	100	14	100	44

Table 13a

2002
BBC News website – named sources

A – Political		First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth	Total
1	Prime minister	10	5	0	1	16
2	Chancellor of the exchequer	4	3	0	1	8
3	Cabinet minister	7	10	4	5	26
4	Labour MP (peer, AM, etc)	8	1	0	0	9
6	Senior Conservative politician	1	4	1	0	6
8	Minority party MP (peer, AM, etc)	4	1	4	1	10
10	Civil servant, govt department, etc	3	1	2	0	6
11	Local government - elected	1	1	0	0	2
12	Local government - appointed	1	0	0	0	1
Number of articles		39	26	11	8	84
B – Business						
21	CEO or chairman – PFI	5	0	0	0	5
23	Other representative – PFI	0	1	0	0	1
24	CEO or chairman – non PFI	0	0	1	0	1
27	Shareholding institution, etc	1	0	1	0	2
28	Industry association (CBI, etc.)	0	0	1	0	1
Number of articles		6	1	3	0	10
C - Trade unions and workers						
41	National trade union leader	4	6	5	5	20
42	Other trade union representative	1	1	2	1	5
44	Professional association	1	0	0	3	4
45	Senior manager – public sector	2	1	1	1	5
Number of articles		8	8	8	10	34
D – Others						
9	Rank and file party member	1	1	3	4	9
64	Legal (police, judiciary, etc.)	1	1	0	0	2
69	Think-thank or research	2	1	0	0	3
70	Academic or scientist	0	1	0	0	1
71	Journalist/correspondent	7	1	1	0	9
73	NGO or charity	1	0	1	0	2
Number of articles		12	5	5	4	26

Table 13b

2002

Guardian – named sources

A – Political		First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth	Total
1	Prime minister	9	1	1	0	11
2	Chancellor of the exchequer	4	2	1	1	8
3	Cabinet minister	6	4	2	1	13
4	Labour MP (peer, AM, etc)	0	1	2	5	8
6	Senior Conservative politician	0	0	1	0	1
8	Minority party MP (peer, AM, etc)	2	0	1	0	3
10	Civil servant, govt department, etc	3	3	0	1	7
13	Non-UK politician	0	1	0	0	1
Number of articles		24	12	8	8	52
B – Business						
21	CEO or chairman – PFI	9	2	0	2	13
22	Senior manager - PFI	0	1	0	1	2
24	CEO or chairman – non PFI	2	0	0	0	2
27	Shareholding institution, etc	3	4	2	0	9
28	Industry association (CBI, etc.)	1	1	1	1	4
Number of articles		15	8	3	4	30
C - Trade unions and workers						
41	National trade union leader	9	9	6	6	30
42	Other trade union representative	2	1	2	1	6
44	Professional association	1	0	0	1	2
45	Senior manager – public sector	1	1	1	0	3
Number of articles		13	11	9	8	41
D – Others						
9	Rank and file party member	2	2	2	2	8
66	Member of the public	2	0	0	0	2
67	User group	2	0	0	0	2
68	Economist	0	1	0	0	1
69	Think-thank or research	1	0	1	0	2
70	Academic or scientist	2	2	0	0	4
71	Journalist/ correspondent	7	1	0	0	8
Number of articles		16	6	3	2	27

Table 13c

2002

Telegraph – named sources

A – Political		First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth	Total
1	Prime minister	5	6	0	1	12
2	Chancellor of the exchequer	2	1	1	0	4
3	Cabinet minister	3	2	0	0	5
7	Conservative MP (peer, AM, etc)	2	1	0	0	3
11	Local government – elected	0	0	1	1	2
Number of articles		12	10	2	2	26
B – Business						
21	CEO or chairman – PFI	7	0	0	0	7
23	Other representative – PFI	1	0	0	0	1
24	CEO or chairman – non PFI	2	0	0	0	2
25	Senior manager – non PFI	1	0	0	0	1
27	Shareholding institution, etc	1	2	3	1	7
Number of articles		12	2	3	1	18
C - Trade unions and workers						
41	National trade union leader	1	5	4	2	12
42	Other trade union representative	0	1	0	0	1
43	Trade union member	1	0	0	0	1
Number of articles		2	6	4	2	14
D – Others						
66	Member of the public	1	0	0	0	1
69	Think-thank or research	1	0	0	0	1
71	Journalist/correspondent	3	1	0	0	4
72	Celebrity (artist, musician, etc.)	0	1	1	0	2
Number of articles		5	2	1	0	8

Table 14a

2007
BBC News website – named sources

A – Political	First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth	Total
1 Prime minister	1	0	0	0	1
3 Cabinet minister	3	1	0	0	4
4 Labour MP (peer, AM, etc)	1	0	0	0	1
6 Senior Conservative politician	1	1	1	1	4
7 Conservative MP (peer, AM, etc)	1	0	1	0	2
8 Minority party MP (peer, AM, etc)	1	2	2	1	6
10 Civil servant, govt department, etc	3	2	0	0	5
11 Local government - elected	2	0	0	1	3
12 Local government – appointed	2	0	1	1	4
Number of articles	15	6	5	4	30
B – Business					
21 CEO or chairman – PFI	2	1	0	1	4
25 Senior manager – non-PFI	0	1	0	1	2
28 Industry association (CBI, etc.)	0	1	0	0	1
Number of articles	2	3	0	2	7
C - Trade unions and workers					
41 National trade union leader	1	1	0	0	2
44 Professional association	1	0	0	0	1
45 Senior manager – public sector	2	0	1	0	3
46 Health worker	0	0	1	1	2
47 Education worker	0	0	0	1	1
Number of articles	4	1	2	2	9
D – Others					
65 Military	1	0	0	0	1
66 User group	1	1	0	0	2
67 Member of the public	0	0	1	1	2
69 Think-thank or research	0	0	1	0	1
71 Journalist/correspondent	1	1	0	0	2
73 NGO or charity	0	2	0	0	2
Number of articles	3	4	2	1	10

Table 14b

2007

Guardian – named sources

A – Political		First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth	Total
2	Chancellor of the exchequer	2	2	0	0	4
3	Cabinet minister	1	1	0	0	2
4	Labour MP (peer, AM, etc)	0	1	1	1	3
8	Minority party MP (peer, AM, etc)	1	0	0	0	1
10	Civil servant, govt department, etc	1	1	1	0	3
11	Local government - elected	2	0	1	0	3
12	Local government – appointed	0	1	0	0	1
Number of articles		7	6	3	1	17
B – Business						
21	CEO or chairman – PFI company	3	1	0	1	5
23	Other – PFI company	0	0	0	1	1
27	Shareholding institution, etc	0	1	0	0	1
28	Industry association (CBI, etc.)	1	1	0	0	2
Number of articles		4	3	0	2	9
C - Trade unions and workers						
41	National trade union leader	1	1	0	0	2
45	Senior manager – public sector	1	1	0	0	2
Number of articles		2	2	0	0	4
D – Others						
66	Member of the public	4	0	0	0	4
71	Journalist/correspondent	1	1	1	0	3
73	NGO or charity	0	0	1	1	2
Number of articles		5	1	2	1	9

Table 14c

2007

Telegraph – named sources

A – Political elite		First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth	Total
2	Chancellor of the exchequer	0	0	1	0	1
3	Cabinet minister	4	1	0	0	5
6	Senior Conservative politician	0	0	1	0	1
10	Civil servant, govt department, etc	1	1	0	0	2
11	Local government - elected	0	1	0	0	1
12	Local government – appointed	0	1	0	0	1
Number of articles		5	4	2	0	11
B – Business						
21	CEO or chairman – PFI company	3	1	1	2	7
22	Senior manager – PFI company	1	0	0	0	1
27	Shareholding institution, etc	0	0	0	1	1
28	Industry association (CBI, etc.)	1	1	0	0	2
Number of articles		5	2	1	3	11
C - Trade unions and workers						
42	Other trade union representative	1	0	0	0	1
45	Senior manager – public sector	0	0	0	1	1
46	Health worker	1	0	0	0	1
Number of articles		2	0	0	1	3
D – Others						
67	User group	0	0	1	0	1
69	Think-thank or research	0	1	0	0	1
70	Academic or scientist	1	0	0	0	1
73	NGO or charity	1	0	0	0	1
Number of articles		2	1	1	0	4

Table 15a
2002 - BBC News website – weighted coverage of political positions

Articles N = 69	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted Total	%
Privatisation	0	0%	1	<2%	12	17%	3	4%	53	77%	11	6
PFI advocacy	10	14%	20	29%	19	28%	9	13%	11	16%	80	45
PFI scepticism	7	10%	19	28%	25	36%	5	7%	13	19%	79	44
Social alternatives	0	0%	0	0%	9	13%	1	<2%	59	86%	8	5
											TOTAL	178
												100

Table 15b
2002 - Guardian/Observer – weighted coverage of political positions

Articles N = 76	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted Total	%
Privatisation	0	0%	0	0%	3	4%	11	14%	62	82%	(-8)	0
PFI advocacy	7	9%	13	17%	30	39%	26	34%	0	0%	51	39
PFI scepticism	7	9%	18	24%	25	33%	8	11%	18	24%	74	56
Social alternatives	0	0%	2	<3%	8	11%	5	7%	61	80%	7	5
											TOTAL	132
												100

Table 15c
2002 - Telegraph – weighted coverage of political positions

Articles N = 34	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted Total	%
Privatisation	0	0%	1	3%	4	12%	1	3%	28	82%	5	7
PFI advocacy	7	21%	9	26%	12	35%	4	12%	2	6%	47	64
PFI scepticism	4	12%	4	12%	9	26%	8	24%	9	26%	21	29
Social alternatives	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	5	15%	28	82%	(-4)	0
											TOTAL	73
												100

Note – weighted total was calculated by multiplying the incidence of articles giving a political position ‘strong coverage’ by 3; ‘moderate coverage’ by 2; ‘acknowledged’ by 1, ‘critical’ by minus 1, and ‘no mention’ by zero.

Table 16a
2007 - BBC News website – weighted coverage of political positions

Articles N = 30	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted Total	%
Privatisation	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	29	97%	1	2
PFI advocacy	0	0%	4	13%	20	67%	5	17%	1	3%	23	41
PFI scepticism	2	7%	4	13%	3	10%	0	0%	21	70%	17	30
Social alternatives	2	7%	2	7%	5	17%	0	0%	21	70%	15	27
											TOTAL	56
												100

Table 16b
2007 - Guardian/Observer – weighted coverage of political positions

Articles N = 20	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted Total	%
Privatisation	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	5%	19	95%	(-1)	0
PFI advocacy	0	0%	1	5%	4	20%	15	75%	0	0%	(-9)	0
PFI scepticism	0	0%	2	10%	11	55%	1	5%	6	30%	14	88
Social alternatives	0	0%	1	5%	1	5%	1	5%	17	85%	2	12
											TOTAL	16
												100

Table 16c
2007 - Telegraph – weighted coverage of political positions

Articles N = 15	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted Total	%
Privatisation	0	0%	1	7%	2	14%	0	0%	12	79%	4	12
PFI advocacy	1	7%	6	40%	4	27%	3	20%	1	7%	16	50
PFI scepticism	1	7%	2	13%	6	40%	1	7%	5	33%	12	38
Social alternatives	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	21	100%	0	0
											TOTAL	32
												100

Note – weighted total was calculated by multiplying the incidence of articles giving a political position ‘extensive coverage’ by 3; ‘brief coverage’ by 2; ‘acknowledged’ by 1, ‘critical’ by minus 1, and ‘no mention’ by zero.

Table 17
Combinations of sources (2002)

		BBC News N = 69		Guardian N = 76		Telegraph N = 34		
Monopolies*		Source codes**	Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
Political PFI advocates	1, 2, 3, 5-7		17	25	11	14	10	29
Business	21 - 29		4	6	17	22	6	18
PFI sceptics	8, 41, 42, 44		7	10	13	17	0	0
		Total	28	41	41	53	16	47
Debates			Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
Political PFI advocates	followed by	Business	2	<3	2	<3	0	0
Political PFI advocates	followed by	PFI sceptics	11	16	10	13	6	18
Business	followed by	Political PFI advocates	2	<3	0	0	2	6
Business	followed By	PFI sceptics	1	<2	2	<3	3	9
PFI sceptics	followed by	Political PFI advocates	3	<5	0	0	0	0
PFI sceptics	followed by	Business	0	0	2	<3	1	3
All three groups (any permutation)			3	<5	3	4	1	3
		Total	22	32	19	25	13	38
Other			Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
‘Other sources’ only			15	22	12	16	2	6
No sources			4	6	4	5	3	9
		Total	19	28	16	21	5	15

* Monopolies may also include ‘other sources’, ** See Appendix 2.1 for source code categories

Table 18a
Coverage of advocacy versus scepticism
BBC (2002)

Articles	ADV extensive	ADV brief	ADV critical	ADV acknowledged	ADV ignored	Total
SCE extensive	5	1	1	0	0	7
SCE brief	4	9	3	3	0	19
SCE critical	1	1	0	3	0	5
SCE acknowledged	0	5	2	9	9	25
SCE ignored	0	4	3	4	2	13
Total	10	20	9	19	11	69

Table 18b
Coverage of advocacy versus scepticism
Guardian/Observer (2002)

Articles	ADV extensive	ADV brief	ADV critical	ADV acknowledged	ADV ignored	Total
SCE extensive	1	1	5	0	0	7
SCE brief	2	5	7	4	0	18
SCE critical	2	3	0	3	0	8
SCE acknowledged	1	4	8	12	0	25
SCE ignored	1	0	6	11	0	18
Total	7	13	26	30	0	76

Table 18c
Coverage of advocacy versus scepticism
Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph (2002)

Articles	ADV extensive	ADV brief	ADV critical	ADV acknowledged	ADV ignored	Total
SCE extensive	1	0	1	2	0	4
SCE brief	3	1	0	0	0	4
SCE critical	2	4	0	1	1	8
SCE acknowledged	1	1	1	6	0	9
SCE ignored	0	3	2	3	1	9

Total	7	9	4	12	2	34
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Table 19a
Coverage of advocacy versus scepticism
BBC News (2007)

Articles	ADV extensive	ADV brief	ADV critical	ADV acknowledged	ADV ignored	Total
SCE extensive	0	1	1	0	0	2
SCE brief	0	1	2	1	0	4
SCE critical	0	0	0	0	0	0
SCE acknowledged	0	0	1	1	1	3
SCE ignored	0	2	1	18	0	21
Total	0	4	5	20	1	30

Table 19b
Coverage of advocacy versus scepticism
Guardian/Observer (2007)

Articles	ADV extensive	ADV brief	ADV critical	ADV acknowledged	ADV ignored	Total
SCE extensive	0	0	0	0	0	0
SCE brief	0	0	2	0	0	2
SCE critical	0	1	0	0	0	1
SCE acknowledged	0	0	10	1	0	11
SCE ignored	0	0	3	3	0	6
Total	0	1	15	4	0	20

Table 19c
Coverage of advocacy versus scepticism
Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph (2007)

Articles	ADV extensive	ADV brief	ADV critical	ADV acknowledged	ADV ignored	Total
SCE extensive	0	0	1	0	0	1
SCE brief	0	1	1	0	0	2
SCE critical	0	1	0	0	0	1
SCE acknowledged	1	2	1	1	1	6
SCE ignored	0	2	0	3	0	5

Total	1	6	3	4	1	15
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Appendix 2:3

Private finance and public services

BBC News website images

A

Friday, 6 September, 2002, 15:24 GMT 16:24 UK

Union leaders' demands



B

Sunday, 8 September, 2002, 10:00 GMT 11:00 UK

Morris: Payback time for the unions



C

Thursday, 19 September, 2002, 07:04 GMT 08:04 UK

Unions to tackle Blair on privatisation



D

Thursday, 26 September, 2002, 10:47 GMT 11:47 UK

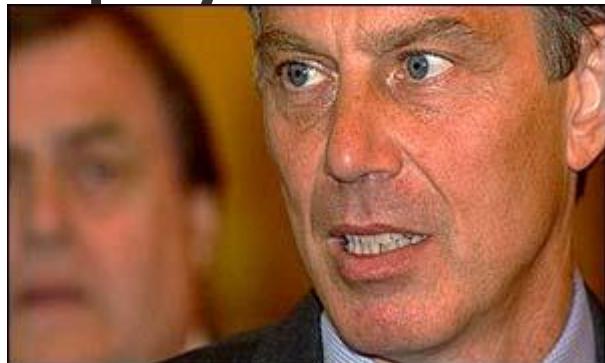
Brown and Prescott maul the unions



E

Sunday, 29 September, 2002, 21:32 GMT 22:32 UK

Unions press Labour for PFI inquiry



F

Monday, 30 September, 2002, 05:34 GMT 06:34 UK

Labour's public row over privatisation



G

Monday, 30 September, 2002, 13:16 GMT 14:16 UK

Brown takes up private cash battle



H

Tuesday, 1 October, 2002, 09:55 GMT 10:55 UK

Blair: Time to speed up reform



AFP

I

Tuesday, 1 October, 2002, 15:50 GMT 16:50 UK

Blair leaves doubters behind



J

Tuesday, 1 October, 2002, 14:37 GMT 15:37 UK

Blair: No compromise on PFI



Appendix 2:4

Private finance and public services

BBC News web pages

Monday, 30 September, 2002, 14:55 GMT 15:55 UK

Q&A: What is PFI?

The creeping privatisation of public services under New Labour is one of the main gripes of the trade unions, and is certain to sour the air at the party's conference this week.



But does anyone really understand what a "public-private partnership", or a "private finance initiative" is?

Never fear: BBC News Online has the answers.

What is the private finance initiative?

In theory, it's about relieving the government of a tiresome bureaucratic burden.

Designing, constructing and maintaining the thousands of state-owned roads, schools, hospitals and so on doesn't just cost a fortune, it distracts the government from what it should really be doing - formulating and implementing policy.

So the Conservative government in the 1990s decided to contract out this mundane work to private firms.

Instead of producing cash upfront for a new £10m hospital, the government agrees to pay a private firm an annual fee - maybe £1m a year over 25 years - to take on the entire construction and management.

The private firm makes a profit on the fee; the government avoids the administrative hassle and - its economic boffins say - saves a little money in the long run.

If this is a Tory idea, why is Labour so keen on it?

It's all part of the mysterious "Third Way", of course.

Chancellor Gordon Brown thinks the PFI is the quickest way of building new schools, hospitals, transport schemes and what have you.

Mr Brown also believes that, in the long run, he can make the government's money stretch further, by spreading necessary spending over many years.

But more broadly, some of the party's philosophers see the combination of private profit and the public good as inherently wholesome - a distinctly unsocialist approach they call "PPP", or public-private partnership.

And the unions don't go along with this?

Not at all.

Unions fear that the PFI is the thin end of the wedge.

Letting private firms finance and run buildings is one thing; the next step could be to transfer actual services - teaching, healthcare and so on - into private hands.

The vast army of public-sector workers trembles at losing employment rights, and the general public trembles at the idea that standards may fall.

Some commentators, too, argue that the scheme will not save money in the long run, and is motivated more by New Labour's centre-right policies than by hard economics.

Who is winning the argument?

In the short term, things are swinging the unions' way.

Although the government says the public doesn't care who runs schools or hospitals as long as new ones are built, opinion polls beg to differ.

In recent weeks, unions have stepped up their campaign against New Labour's lurch to the right, and the PFI is at the top of their hitlist.

Conference delegates may well back a motion by the public sector workers' union, Unison, for a moratorium on PFI projects and an independent review.

But conference motions count for little in the long run, and it is hard to bet against the New Labour steamroller - especially when it is driven by Mr Brown's prudence and Mr Blair's politics.

I'm not a nurse, or a teacher - I'm not even in a union. Why should I care?

Behind all this is a bigger debate.

New Labour wants to reshape the boundaries of the public and private sector, but it isn't sure how.

Gordon Brown, seen as slightly to the left of some of his colleagues, is fiercely opposed to allowing bits of the public sector to "opt out" of state control.

The Department of Health wants to give some hospitals much more budgetary freedom - a proposal that Mr Brown recently said was "reckless".

PFI could spark a serious rift.

While there may not be much entertainment in a clash between Labour and the unions, a scrap at the heart of the New Labour establishment would provide fireworks.

'Private Profit, Public Gain?' - Index Page



Wednesday, 12 February, 2003, 18:59 GMT

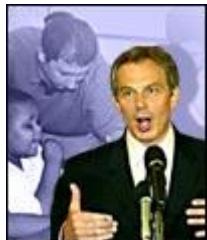


Amey 'to sell its PFI stake'

A major private contractor may be forced to sell its PFI contracts to its bankers as it gets in financial trouble due to Tube privatisation delays.

- [**Blair denies rift with Brown**](#)
- [**Blair: No compromise on PFI**](#)
- [**Blair backs foundation hospitals**](#)
- [**Brown takes up private cash battle**](#)
- [**Labour's public row over privatisation**](#)
- [**Blair woos unions over PFI**](#)
- [**Brown and Prescott maul the unions**](#)
- [**Taxpayers cash 'wasted' on PFI**](#)

Union malaise



Unions to tackle Blair on privatisation

The trade unions and the government are heading for a major confrontation over the private finance of public services.

- [**Unions flex their muscles**](#)
- [**Unions warned over 'self-indulgence'**](#)
- [**Public sector fears**](#)
- [**Why unions are militant**](#)
- [**Number 10 denies 'wreckers' apology**](#)
- [**Union fury at Blair warning**](#)
- [**Blair takes on public service 'wreckers'**](#)
- [**Blair speech: Key quotes**](#)
- [**Ringside view of union fightback**](#)
- [**Unions erupt in public services row**](#)
- [**Don't blame it all on us - Blunkett**](#)



Analysis

Q&A: What is PFI?

BBC News Online explains the controversy over the Private Finance Initiative, which is driving a wedge between Labour and the unions.

[**Is PFI a good deal?**](#)

[**Private company bonanza**](#)

[**Private finance on an international scale**](#)

[**The grip of the state**](#)

[**What are Public Private Partnerships?**](#)

[**How private bids work**](#)

[**PPP 'takes hold' in Scotland**](#)

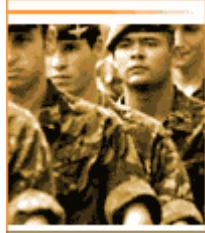
[**Schemes around Britain**](#)

[**PPP - a glossary of terms**](#)

Defence

Private sector's military bid

Top military brass and corporate officials from Europe and the US meet in Paris to discuss how to partially privatise military services.



[**Europe shuns defence shake-up show**](#)

[**Privately financing war**](#)

[**Business targets defence contracts**](#)

[**Security concerns halted behind the frontline**](#)

Health

NHS's private plans

The government is urging the NHS to work more closely with the private sector against fierce union opposition.



[**Hospital on the sick list?**](#)

Education

Private 'partners' not 'take-overs'

Private management and finance are now part of state education - but their impact has been less than once forecast.



[**US struggles with education options**](#)



Transport

Transport's public private history

With insufficient money to maintain the country's transport infrastructure, private money is the recurring suggestion to solving the problem.

Underground proposals 'down the tube'?

Railtrack's risky business

Tube test for PFI



Housing

Long road to better housing

BBC News Online Scotland's Murray Cox examines the progress made being in the biggest housing stock transfer in the UK.

Passionate housing debate

Acid test for council housing

Campaign aims to halt stock transfer

'Drumchapel's a really lovely place'



Prisons

Liverpool's profitable prison

Liverpool's Altcourse prison has been accused of making excessive profits for its owners, Group 4.

Private prison drive

Criminal justice reshaped

Prison officer's view

Appendix 3

Tesco

section	page
3.1 Coding scheme Sources – extended codes	381
3.2 Data tables	389

Appendix 3:1

Tesco

Coding scheme

V1 Item ID

Every item has a unique four digit number, starting at 6001

V2 Date

V3 Month

V4 Year

V5 News Organisation

- 1 – The Guardian
- 2 – The Observer
- 3 – The Times
- 4 – Sunday Times
- 5 – Daily Telegraph
- 6 – Sunday Telegraph
- 11 – BBC News website

V6 Topic

- 0 – Not applicable
- 1 – General
- 2 – UK/Home
- 3 – International/Europe/world
- 4 – Politics
- 5 – Economics
- 6 – Business/City
- 7 – Personal Finance/Money/Cash
- 8 – Society/Public
- 9 – Media
- 10 – Science/Technology/Online
- 11 – Environment
- 12 – Health
- 13 – Education
- 14 – People (interviews, profiles and obituaries)
- 15 – Leaders, comment, letters and opinion
- 16 – Culture and lifestyle (art, books, film, food, wine, music, property, TV, etc)
- 17 – Sport
- 18 – Travel
- 19 – Supplement (G2, features, Saturday magazine, Weekend, BBC Magazine, etc.)
- 20 – Work/employment/appointments
- 21 – England (or region of England)
- 22 – Scotland (or region of Scotland)
- 23 – Wales (or region of Wales)
- 24 – Northern Ireland
- 25 – Women/family
- 26 – Motoring

V7 Length

Number of words

V8 Item Type

- 1 – Headline: page one
- 2 – Other item on page one
- 3 – News story
- 4 – Editorial
- 5 – Feature/Analysis
- 6 – Column/Opinion/Debate/Comment/Sketch
- 7 – News in brief (100 words or fewer)
- 8 – Interview/Profile
- 9 – Index/table of contents/hyperlink/diary
- 10 – Review (book, film, wine, speech, ‘City gossip’, shares roundup, product, etc.)
- 11 – Fact file (Q and A, bullet points, list, ‘problem page’, ‘how to’, recipe, etc.)
- 12 – Letter to the editor
- 13 – Preview (of speech, etc.)
- 14 – Speech (transcript or extracts with no journalistic narrative)
- 15 – *Vox populi*
- 16 – Audio clip
- 17 – Video clip
- 18 – Corrections and clarifications

Frequency of search word

V9 – Tesco

- 1 – In headline, subhead or standfirst
- 2 – Mentioned in introduction
- 3 – Five or more mentions
- 4 – Two to four mentions
- 5 – One mention

Code 3, 4 or 5 only if 1 or 2 do not apply

Salience and themes

V10 – Salience

- 1 – search word is the primary focus of the story
- 2 – search word features strongly in the story
- 3 – search word is weakly connected to the story
- 4 – search word is incidental to the story

If 4, stop coding and move on to next news item

Note

Only code 1 if Tesco is the primary focus of the article. Code 2 if the article strongly features the search term in the context of another, related issue. For example, if the article concentrates on the Competition Commission inquiry, a competitor, supermarkets in general or the retail sector. Code 3 if Tesco is only weakly connected to the thrust of the article. For example, as a customer of a haulage firm, one of several suppliers of a product, or in a listing of share prices. Code 4 if only a passing or inconsequential reference is made to the search term, or if a Tesco

product is mentioned in a listing or recipe. Similarly, all appearances of search words in table of contents and indexes are coded 4.

V11 – Thematic/episodic

- 1 – mostly/entirely focuses on episodes
- 2 – mainly focuses on episodes
- 3 – roughly equal
- 4 – mainly focuses on themes
- 5 – mostly/entirely focuses on themes
- 6 – N/A

Note

Code 1 if 100 to 80 percent of the story describes concrete instances and/or events in the short-term (what happened yesterday, what might happen tomorrow, etc.)
Code 2 if 80 – 60 percent of the story is episodic. Code 4 if 60 to 80 percent of the article gives historical context, looks at macro-issues, covers ongoing debate, etc.
Code 5 if 80 to 100 percent of the article is thematic. Code 3 if the balance between episodic and thematic is about equal. Code 6 if it is impossible to say.

V12 – Primary theme

1 – Competition Commission (general)	2 – Competition and consumers (prices, choice, market share, etc.)	3 – Supply chain (farmers, food producers, overseas suppliers, etc.)	4 – Local communities and environment (planning, pollution, etc.)
5 – Employment (job creation/loss, wages, pensions, working conditions, etc.)	6 – Politics (including lobbying, dialog between executives and government)	7 – Investor themes (share price, profit, new products, expansion, etc. – Tesco)	8 – Investor themes - other companies
9 – CSR themes - Tesco	10 – CSR themes – other companies	11 – Personal (profile, interview, etc.)	12 – Law and order
13 – Food	14 – Fashion	15 – Education	16 – Other

V13 – Secondary theme

1 – Talk (consult, negotiate, discuss, debate, confer, argue, criticise, etc.)	2 – Conflict (row, demonstrate, dispute, protest, battle, war, fight, struggle, accuse, etc)	3 – Consensus (agreement, deal, unity, etc)	4 – Impasse (breakdown, stalemate, stalled, need to accelerate or resolve, etc)
5 – Crisis (chaos, emergency, etc)	6 – Uncontested announcement (unilateral statement, press release, speech, etc.)	7 – Contested announcement (statement, etc. with at least one dissenting view)	8 – Analysis (review of events, synthesis, summary, investigation, etc.)

(victory, defeat,
order, fine,
judgement, etc.)

Narratives and arguments

Note

For V14 – V20, judge the extent to which the two corporate narratives and the five reformist arguments are expressed in the article. This assessment is based on the number of words, the tone and language used to describe ideas, the prominence of the different viewpoints, etc.

Code 1 if the argument is described in detail and/or promoted explicitly. Code 2 if the article does this more subtly and, hence, the argument is portrayed as valid. Code 3 if the article's coverage of the position is generally critical or dismissive. Code 4 if the existence of the argument is noted in brief but not described in any detail. Code 5 if the argument does not feature in the article.

- 1 – extensive coverage
- 2 – brief coverage
- 3 – criticised or dismissed
- 4 – argument acknowledged, or implied, but not explicitly linked to the larger debate
- 5 – argument not acknowledged

Narrative/argument	Essential characteristics
V14 Investor	Increasing profits, market share and stock price are the inevitable - and desirable - outcomes of successfully satisfying the needs of sovereign consumers
V15 Competition	Supermarkets, particularly Tesco, dominate the grocery market and their anti-competitive power restricts retail diversity and product choice and causes higher prices
V16 Supply chain	The concentration of buying power allows the imposition of onerous contracts on suppliers. Hence, incomes, livelihoods and diversity of supply are threatened
V17 Local communities and environment	The insatiable growth of supermarkets in the UK and overseas displaces local vendors and sucks profits from the local economy. Supermarket activities also add to pollution, congestion, food miles and landfill
V18 Employment	Supermarkets have destroyed countless jobs among small retailers and suppliers. In-store jobs in the UK are low paid and working conditions in overseas operations are poor
V19 Political influence	Supermarkets have a degree of privileged access to politicians and policy makers that is not granted to other groups. This process is opaque and anti-democratic
V20 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	Companies are responsible corporate citizens that have a positive impact on stakeholders: consumers; suppliers; the local community and environment; and workers

Sources

V21 – Number of named sources cited

For V22 – V32, refer to ‘sources - extended codes.’ Include people named, and quoted, cited or paraphrased only. If no one is quoted, code 0 and go to V28. If it is an opinion piece, include the author as a named source.

Sources should be listed according to their importance (i.e. the space dedicated to their views); if roughly equal, they should be listed in the order they appear in the article.

V22 – First source type

V23 – Second source type

V24 – Third source type

V25 – Fourth source type

V26 – Fifth source type

V27 – Sixth source type

V28 – Number of unnamed sources cited

Include people or organisations quoted, cited or paraphrased only but unnamed. Otherwise code 0.

V29 – First source type

V30 – Second source type

V31 – Third source type

V32 – Fourth source type

Sources - Extended Codes

A Political

- 1 Prime Minister
- 2 Chancellor of the exchequer
- 3 Government minister (including Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly)
- 4 Labour Party MP (or member of House of Lords, MEP, MSP, AM, etc.)
- 5 Spokesperson for Labour politician or Labour Party
- 6 Conservative Party – leader or shadow minister (or spokesperson)
- 7 Conservative Party – MP (or member of House of Lords, etc.)
- 8 Liberal Democrat, SNP, Plaid Cymru, etc. politician
- 9 Civil servant, government department, quango or agency
- 10 Local government elected representative (Mayor of London, councillor, etc)
- 11 Council chief executive, or other senior appointee
- 12 Non-UK politician

B Corporate

- 21 Tesco chief executive
- 22 Other Tesco executive, senior manager or spokesperson
- 23 Other supermarket executive, senior manager or spokesperson
- 24 Other corporate executive or senior manager or spokesperson
- 25 Other Tesco employee
- 26 Employee of other company
- 27 Shareholding institution, investors, financial research, industry analyst
- 28 Industry association – spokesperson, lobbying or research (BRC, CBI, IoD, etc.)
- 29 Other business actor

C Stakeholder groups

- 31 Consumer group (Consumers' Association, etc)
- 32 Suppliers' organisation (NFU, growers' association, etc.) or supplier company
- 33 Environmental (Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, etc.)
- 34 Development or anti-poverty (Oxfam, Cafod, War on Want, etc.)
- 35 Labour organisation (trade unions, ILO, etc.)
- 36 Food campaigners (Soil Association, etc.)
- 36 Animal rights (PETA, Compassion in World Farming, etc.)
- 37 Local and heritage groups (National Trust, Women's Institute, CPRE, etc.)
- 38 Independent trader associations (Federation of Small Businesses, etc.)
- 39 Other NGO or social movement (faith groups, human rights, 'campaigners,' etc.)
- 40 New Economics Foundation (NEF)

D Individuals

- 41 Consumer
- 42 Farmer, food producer or agricultural worker - UK
- 43 Farmer, food producer or agricultural worker - overseas
- 44 Other worker - UK or overseas (factory, mill, etc.)
- 45 Independent shop owner (or employee)
- 46 Other local business
- 47 Private shareholder
- 50 Other member of the public (*vox pop*, author of letter to editor, etc.)

E Other sources

- 61 Competition Commission
- 62 Office of Fair Trading
- 63 Economist
- 64 Think-thank or research organisation (including opinion polls) and 'experts'
- 65 Academic or scientist
- 66 Journalist/correspondent/editorial
- 67 Celebrity (artist, musician, sports person, actor, etc.)
- 68 Monarchs, aristocracy, etc.
- 69 Religious (bishops, imams, priests, etc.)
- 70 Other political bodies (EU, IMF, United Nations, World Bank, etc.)
- 71 Legal (police, judiciary, lawyers, etc.)
- 72 Military

Appendix 3:2

Tesco

Data tables

Table 1a

Incidence of articles containing the search term (2006)

Week	1	2	3	4	5	Total
BBC News	13	5	5	4	3	30
%	43	17	17	13	10	100
<i>Guardian</i>	25	20	17	28	23	113
%	22	18	15	25	20	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	24	12	21	18	10	85
%	28	14	25	21	12	100
Overall	62	37	43	50	36	228
%	27	15	19	22	16	100

Table 1b

Incidence of articles containing the search term (2007)

Week	1	2	3	4	5	Total
BBC News	5	14	8	8	10	45
%	11	31	18	18	22	100
<i>Guardian</i>	15	29	34	20	23	121
%	12	24	28	17	19	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	26	26	24	18	22	116
%	22	22	21	16	19	100
Overall	46	69	66	46	55	282
%	16	24	23	16	20	100

Table 1c

Incidence of articles containing the search term (2008)

Week	1	2	3	4	5	Total
BBC News	8	12	16	6	8	50
%	16	24	32	12	16	100
<i>Guardian</i>	16	28	20	16	23	103
%	16	27	19	16	22	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	25	28	34	20	19	126
%	20	22	27	16	15	100
Overall	49	68	70	42	50	279
%	18	24	25	15	18	100

Table 2a

Salience of articles to search term (2006)

	Primary	Strong	Weak	Incidental	Total
BBC News	14	2	1	13	30
%	47	7	3	43	100
<i>Guardian</i>	22	12	25	54	113
%	19	11	22	48	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	23	13	20	29	85
%	27	15	24	34	100
TOTAL	59	27	46	96	228
%	26	12	20	42	100
Post-first filter sample	132 articles (58%)				
Post-second filter sample	86 articles (38%)				

Table 2b

Salience of articles to search term (2007)

	Primary	Strong	Weak	Incidental	Total
BBC News	16	6	11	12	45
%	36	13	24	27	100
<i>Guardian</i>	16	19	29	57	121
%	13	16	24	47	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	20	20	30	46	116
%	17	17	26	40	100
TOTAL	52	45	70	115	282
%	18	16	25	41	100
Post-first filter sample	167 articles (59%)				
Post-second filter sample	97 articles (34%)				

Table 2c

Salience of articles to search term (2008)

	Primary	Strong	Weak	Incidental	Total
BBC News	15	15	9	11	50
%	30	30	18	22	100
<i>Guardian</i>	20	19	24	40	103
%	19	18	23	39	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	19	23	28	56	126
%	15	18	22	44	100
TOTAL	54	57	61	107	279
%	19	20	22	38	100

Post-first filter sample	172 articles (62%)
Post-second filter sample	111 articles (40%)

Note

Tables 2d to 6c relate to the post-first salience filter samples only

Table 2d

Annual distribution of articles (post-first salience filter)

	2006	2007	2008	Total	%
BBC	17	33	39	89	19
<i>Guardian</i>	59	64	63	186	39
<i>Telegraph</i>	56	70	70	196	42
Total	132	167	172	471	
%	28	35	37		100

Table 3a

Incidence of articles containing the search term (2006)

Week	1	2	3	4	5	Total
BBC News	8	1	3	3	2	17
%	47	6	18	18	12	100
<i>Guardian</i>	14	9	8	19	9	59
%	24	15	14	32	15	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	19	7	14	9	7	56
%	34	13	25	16	13	100
Overall	41	17	25	31	18	132
%	31	13	19	24	14	100

Table 3b

Incidence of articles containing the search term (2007)

Week	1	2	3	4	5	Total
BBC News	4	9	7	7	6	33
%	12	27	21	21	18	100
<i>Guardian</i>	10	16	19	9	10	64
%	16	25	30	14	16	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	20	15	16	12	7	70
%	29	21	23	17	10	100
Overall	34	40	42	28	23	167
%	20	24	25	17	14	100

Table 3c

Incidence of articles containing the search term (2008)

Week	1	2	3	4	5	Total
BBC News	8	10	10	3	8	39
%	20	26	26	8	20	100
<i>Guardian</i>	9	14	15	6	19	63
%	14	22	24	7	30	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	14	18	22	6	10	70
%	20	26	31	9	14	100
Overall	31	42	47	15	37	172
%	18	24	27	9	22	100

Table 4a

Prominence of search term in article (2006)

	Headline	Intro	Two or more mentions	Single mention	Total
BBC News	10	4	3	0	17
%	58	24	18	0	100
<i>Guardian</i>	17	7	13	22	59
%	29	12	22	37	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	17	6	15	18	56
%	30	11	27	32	100
TOTAL	44	17	31	40	132
%	33	13	23	30	100

Table 4b

Prominence of search term in article (2007)

	Headline	Intro	Two or more mentions	Single mention	Total
BBC News	16	3	6	8	33
%	48	9	18	24	100
<i>Guardian</i>	12	9	22	21	64
%	19	14	35	33	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	14	12	24	20	70
%	20	17	34	29	100
TOTAL	42	24	52	49	167
%	25	14	31	29	100

Table 4c

Prominence of search term in article (2008)

	Headline	Intro	Two or more mentions	Single mention	Total
BBC News	19	7	8	5	39
%	49	18	21	12	100
<i>Guardian</i>	17	7	20	19	63
%	27	11	32	30	100
<i>Telegraph</i>	19	4	20	27	70
%	27	6	28	39	100
TOTAL	55	18	48	51	172
%	32	10	28	30	100

Table 5a

Topic (2006)

	BBC News articles	BBC News %	Guardian articles	Guardian %	Telegraph articles	Telegraph %
England (or region of England)	2	12	0	0	0	0
Business	6	35	28	47	35	63
Scotland (or region of Scotland)	4	23	0	0	0	0
Wales (or region of Wales)	2	12	0	0	0	0
UK/home	1	6	13	22	0	0
General news	0	0	0	0	6	11
Other (features, weekend supplements, etc.)	1	6	6	10	5	9
Health	1	6	0	0	0	0
Culture and lifestyle	0	0	2	3	0	0
Personal finance	0	0	3	5	7	13
Leaders, comment, letters and opinion	0	0	2	3	2	4
Society	0	0	4	7	0	0
Work/employment/appointments	0	0	1	<2	1	<2
Total	17	100	59	100	56	100

Table 5b

Topic (2007)

	BBC News articles	BBC News %	Guardian articles	Guardian %	Telegraph articles	Telegraph %
England (or region of England)	7	21	0	0	0	0
Business	17	52	32	50	40	57
Scotland (or region of Scotland)	4	12	0	0	0	0
Wales (or region of Wales)	2	6	0	0	0	0
UK/home	1	3	13	20	1	<2
General news	0	0	0	0	16	23
Other (features, weekend supplements, etc.)	0	0	5	8	4	6
Health	1	3	0	0	0	0
Education	1	3	0	0	1	<2
Culture and lifestyle	0	0	1	<2	0	0
Personal finance	0	0	2	3	7	10
Leaders, letters and opinion	0	0	9	14	1	<2
Work/employment/appointments	0	0	1	<2	0	0
Travel	0	0	1	<2	0	0
Total	33	100	64	100	70	100

Table 5c

Topic (2008)

	BBC News articles	BBC News %	Guardian articles	Guardian %	Telegraph articles	Telegraph %
England (or region of England)	15	38	0	0	0	0
Business	11	28	29	46	43	61
Scotland (or region of Scotland)	4	10	0	0	0	0
Wales (or region of Wales)	4	10	0	0	0	0
UK/home	0	0	18	29	0	0
General news	0	0	0	0	16	23
Other (features, weekend supplements, etc.)	0	0	3	5	7	10
Education	1	<3	0	0	0	0
Culture and lifestyle	0	0	2	3	0	0
Personal finance	0	0	7	11	3	4
Leaders, letters and opinion	0	0	2	3	0	0
Work/employment/appointments	0	0	0	0	1	<2
Science, Technology, Online	3	8	0	0	0	0
Sport	0	0	2	3	0	0
International	1	<3	0	0	0	0
Total	39	100	63	100	70	100

Table 6a

Item type (2006)

	BBC News articles	BBC News %	Guardian articles	Guardian %	Telegraph articles	Telegraph %
News story	13	76	25	42	28	50
News in brief	1	6	2	3	3	5
Column/Opinion/Debate/Sketch	0	0	11	19	13	23
Fact file/Q and A/bullet points	0	0	3	5	0	0
Feature	2	12	7	12	5	9
Interview/Profile	1	6	1	<2	2	<4
Review (book, City gossip, speech, etc.)	0	0	8	14	0	0
Letter to the editor	0	0	0	0	5	9
Vox populi	0	0	1	<2	0	0
Corrections and clarifications	0	0	1	<2	0	0
Total	17	100	59	100	56	100
Average article length (mean/median)			399/318		495/334	
					449/358	

Table 6b

Item type (2007)

	BBC News articles	%	<i>Guardian</i> articles	%	<i>Telegraph</i> articles	%
News story	26	79	17	27	36	51
News in brief	2	6	2	3	4	6
Column/Opinion/Debate/Sketch	0	0	9	14	12	17
Fact file/Q and A/bullet points	0	0	4	6	0	0
Feature	5	15	20	31	11	16
Interview/Profile	0	0	3	5	2	3
Review (book, City gossip, speech, etc.)	0	0	2	3	2	3
Letter to the editor	0	0	3	5	3	4
Editorial	0	0	3	5	0	0
Corrections and clarifications	0	0	1	<2	0	0
Total	33	100	64	100	70	100
Average article length (mean/median)	321/253		540/453		481/380	

Table 6c

Item type (2008)

	BBC News articles	%	<i>Guardian</i> articles	%	<i>Telegraph</i> articles	%
News story	34	87	35	56	31	44
News in brief	1	<3	3	5	2	<3
Column/Opinion/Debate/Sketch	2	5	1	<2	10	14
Feature	0	0	14	22	12	17
Interview/Profile	0	0	3	5	7	10
Editorial	0	0	2	3	1	<2
Review (book, City gossip, speech, etc.)	0	0	4	6	3	4
Letter to the editor	0	0	1	<2	2	<3
Index, table of contents, diary, etc.	0	0	0	0	1	<2
Fact file/Q and A/bullet points	0	0	0	0	1	<2
Audio clip	1	<3	0	0	0	0
Video clip	1	<3	0	0	0	0
Total	39	100	63	100	70	100
Average article length (mean/median)	311/227		595/553		544/415	

Note

All subsequent data relate to the post-second salience filter samples only

Table 7a

Item type (2006)

	BBC News articles	BBC News %	Guardian articles	Guardian %	Telegraph articles	Telegraph %
News story	13	81	14	41	17	47
News in brief	1	6	1	<3	2	6
Column/Opinion/Debate/Sketch	0	0	8	24	9	25
Fact file/Q and A/bullet points	0	0	2	6	0	0
Feature	2	13	5	15	3	8
Interview/Profile	0	0	0	0	0	0
Review (book, City gossip, speech, etc.)	0	0	2	6	0	0
Letter to the editor	0	0	0	0	5	14
<i>Vox populi</i>	0	0	1	<3	0	0
Corrections and clarifications	0	0	1	<3	0	0
Total	16	100	34	100	36	100
Average article length (mean/median)	405/305		479/326		442/397	

Table 7b

Item type (2007)

	BBC News articles	BBC News %	Guardian articles	Guardian %	Telegraph articles	Telegraph %
News story	15	68	5	14	21	53
News in brief	2	9	1	<3	4	10
Column/Opinion/Debate/Sketch	0	0	6	17	6	15
Fact file/Q and A/bullet points	0	0	2	<6	0	0
Feature	5	23	15	43	5	13
Interview/Profile	0	0	0	0	2	5
Review (book, City gossip, speech, etc.)	0	0	2	<6	0	0
Letter to the editor	0	0	1	<3	2	5
Editorial	0	0	2	<6	0	0
Corrections and clarifications	0	0	1	<3	0	0
Total	22	100	35	100	40	100
Average article length (mean/median)	362/283		523/446		435/385	

Table 7c

Item type (2008)

	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>		<i>Telegraph</i>		
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
News story	25	83	23	59	25	60
News in brief	1	3	2	5	1	<3
Column/Opinion/Debate/Sketch	2	7	1	<3	4	10
Feature	0	0	7	18	7	17
Interview/Profile	0	0	2	5	4	10
Editorial	0	0	2	5	0	0
Review (book, City gossip, speech, etc.)	0	0	1	<3	0	0
Letter to the editor	0	0	1	<3	1	<3
Audio clip	1	3	0	0	0	0
Video clip	1	3	0	0	0	0
Total	30	100	39	100	42	100
Average article length (mean/median)	296/248		623/553		458/359	

Table 8a

Primary themes (2006)

	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>		<i>Telegraph</i>		Total		
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%		
Investor themes - Tesco	4	25	10	29	10	29	24	28
Local communities and environment	6	38	9	26	3	9	18	21
Competition Commission (general)	2	13	2	6	4	11	8	9
Investor themes - other companies	0	0	4	12	4	11	8	9
CSR themes - Tesco	0	0	3	9	3	9	6	7
Food	1	6	3	9	1	3	5	6
Competition and consumers	0	0	1	6	3	9	4	5
Politics	0	0	1	3	3	9	4	5
Employment	1	6	1	3	0	0	2	2
Personal	0	0	0	0	2	5	2	2
Law and order	1	6	0	0	1	3	2	2
CSR themes - other companies	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	1
Fashion	1	6	0	0	0	0	1	1
Education	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	1
Supply chain	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	16	100	34	100	36	100	86	100

Table 8b

Primary themes (2007)	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>	Total					
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%	
Local communities and environment	4	18	13	37	7	18	24	25	
Investor themes - Tesco	7	32	5	14	11	28	23	24	
Competition Commission (general)	2	9	7	20	4	10	13	13	
Competition and consumers	0	0	3	9	5	13	8	8	
CSR themes - Tesco	2	9	1	3	3	8	6	6	
Supply chain	1	5	2	6	2	5	5	5	
Investor themes - other companies	1	5	1	3	2	5	4	4	
Employment	1	5	1	3	1	3	3	3	
Food	1	5	1	3	1	3	3	3	
CSR themes - other companies	0	0	1	3	1	3	2	2	
Law and order	2	9	0	0	0	0	2	2	
Other	0	0	0	0	2	5	2	2	
Personal	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	
Education	1	5	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Politics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Total	22	100	35	100	40	100	97	100

Table 8c

Primary themes (2008)	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>	Total					
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%	
Competition and consumers	3	10	10	26	11	26	24	22	
Law and order	4	13	15	38	4	10	23	21	
Investor themes - Tesco	6	20	2	5	12	29	20	18	
Local communities and environment	10	33	4	10	2	5	16	14	
Investor themes - other companies	1	<4	0	0	5	12	6	5	
CSR themes - Tesco	1	<4	2	5	3	7	6	5	
Competition Commission (general)	1	<4	2	5	2	5	5	5	
Supply chain	0	0	0	0	3	7	3	3	
Employment	2	7	1	<3	0	0	3	3	
Food	1	<4	1	<3	0	0	2	2	
Fashion	1	<4	1	<3	0	0	2	2	
Personal	0	0	1	<3	0	0	1	1	
CSR themes - other companies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Politics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Total	30	100	39	100	42	100	111	100

Table 9a

Secondary themes (2006)	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>	Total				
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Analysis (synopsis, review, etc.)	4	25	17	50	13	36	34	40
Uncontested announcement	1	6	11	32	14	39	26	30
Contested announcement	6	38	6	18	5	14	17	20
Conflict (dispute, battle, protest, etc.)	1	6	0	0	2	6	3	3
Talk (debate, discuss, negotiate, etc)	1	6	0	0	2	6	3	3
Dominance (victory, defeat, etc.)	2	13	0	0	0	0	2	3
Consensus (agree, deal, etc.)	1	6	0	0	0	0	1	<2
Crisis (chaos, emergency, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Impasse (breakdown, stalled, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	16	100	34	100	36	100	86	100

Table 9b

Secondary themes (2007)	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>	Total				
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Contested announcement	5	23	10	29	11	28	26	27
Uncontested announcement	8	36	4	11	16	40	28	29
Analysis (synopsis, review, etc.)	5	23	14	40	2	5	21	22
Conflict (dispute, battle, protest, etc.)	2	9	3	9	7	18	12	12
Dominance (victory, defeat, etc.)	2	9	3	9	0	0	5	5
Talk (debate, discuss, negotiate, etc)	0	0	0	0	4	10	4	4
Consensus (agree, deal, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crisis (chaos, emergency, etc.)	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	1
Impasse (breakdown, stalled, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	22	100	35	100	40	100	97	100

Table 9c

Secondary themes (2008)	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>	Total				
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Uncontested announcement	12	40	10	26	16	38	38	34
Conflict (dispute, battle, protest, etc.)	7	23	17	44	8	19	32	29
Analysis (synopsis, review, etc.)	2	7	5	13	7	17	14	13
Contested announcement	4	13	3	8	5	12	12	11
Talk (debate, discuss, negotiate, etc)	3	10	3	8	4	10	10	9
Dominance (victory, defeat, etc.)	2	7	1	<3	2	5	5	<5
Consensus (agree, deal, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crisis (chaos, emergency, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Impasse (breakdown, stalled, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	30	100	39	100	42	100	111	100

Table 10a

Episodic – thematic (2006)	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>			
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Mostly/entirely episodic	0	0	2	6	8	22
Mainly episodic	9	56	13	38	8	22
Roughly equal	3	19	3	9	5	14
Mainly thematic	1	6	8	24	6	17
Mostly/entirely thematic	3	19	8	24	9	25
Total	16	100	34	100	36	100

Table 10b

Episodic – thematic (2007)	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>			
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Mostly/entirely episodic	9	41	6	17	10	25
Mainly episodic	7	32	4	11	15	38
Roughly equal	2	9	3	9	3	5
Mainly thematic	2	9	1	3	5	13
Mostly/entirely thematic	2	9	21	60	7	18
Total	22	100	35	100	40	100

Table 10c

Episodic – thematic (2008)	BBC News	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Telegraph</i>			
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Mostly/entirely episodic	18	60	8	21	16	38
Mainly episodic	10	33	13	33	18	43
Roughly equal	2	7	3	8	3	7
Mainly thematic	0	0	2	5	2	5
Mostly/entirely thematic	0	0	13	33	3	7
Total	30	100	39	100	42	100

Table 11a
Named sources per article (2006)

	BBC News N = 16		Guardian N = 34		Telegraph N = 36	
None	articles 2	% 13	articles 9	% 26	articles 4	% 11
One	articles 8	% 50	articles 11	% 32	articles 12	% 33
Two	articles 4	% 25	articles 6	% 18	articles 7	% 19
Three	articles 1	% 6	articles 5	% 15	articles 9	% 25
Four	articles 0	% 0	articles 0	% 0	articles 2	% 5
Five +	articles 1	% 6	articles 3	% 9	articles 2	% 5
Total	16	100	34	100	36	100

Table 11b
Named sources per article (2007)

	BBC News N = 22		Guardian N = 35		Telegraph N = 40	
None	articles 7	% 32	articles 9	% 26	articles 6	% 15
One	articles 7	% 32	articles 10	% 29	articles 19	% 48
Two	articles 1	% 5	articles 9	% 26	articles 10	% 25
Three	articles 4	% 18	articles 1	% <3	articles 4	% 10
Four	articles 2	% 9	articles 1	% <3	articles 1	% 3
Five +	articles 1	% 5	articles 5	% 14	articles 0	% 0
Total	22	100	35	100	40	100

Table 11c
Named sources per article (2008)

	BBC News N = 30		Guardian N = 39		Telegraph N = 42	
None	articles 5	% 17	articles 10	% 26	articles 13	% 31
One	articles 15	% 50	articles 9	% 23	articles 15	% 36
Two	articles 5	% 17	articles 4	% 10	articles 9	% 21
Three	articles 4	% 13	articles 7	% 18	articles 4	% 10
Four	articles 0	% 0	articles 4	% 10	articles 0	% 0
Five +	articles 1	% <4	articles 5	% 13	articles 1	% <3
Total	30	100	39	100	42	100

Table 12a
Un-named sources per article (2006)

	BBC News N = 16		<i>Guardian</i> N = 34		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 36	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
None	7	44	26	76	19	53
One	9	56	1	3	11	31
Two	0	0	7	21	3	8
Three	0	0	0	0	2	6
Four	0	0	0	0	1	3
Total	16	100	34	100	36	100

Table 12b
Un-named sources per article (2007)

	BBC News N = 22		<i>Guardian</i> N = 35		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 40	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
None	6	27	12	34	16	40
One	7	32	10	29	13	33
Two	6	27	6	17	2	5
Three	2	9	2	6	5	13
Four	1	5	5	14	4	10
Total	22	100	35	100	40	100

Table 12c
Un-named sources per article (2008)

	BBC News N = 30		<i>Guardian</i> N = 39		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 42	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
None	11	37	6	15	8	19
One	10	33	12	31	14	33
Two	7	23	15	38	9	21
Three	1	3	4	10	6	14
Four	1	3	2	5	5	12
Total	30	100	39	100	42	100

Note

For tables 13a to 16c, the composite source categories are derived from the extended source codes in Appendix 3.1, and the data is taken from tables 17a to 17i.

Hence, ‘Tesco’ = 21, 22 and 25; ‘other corporate’ = 23, 24 and 26 to 29; ‘stakeholder groups’ = 31 to 40, ‘individuals’ = 41 to 50, and ‘other categories’ = 63 to 72, except 66 (journalists.)

Table 13a

First named source (2006)	BBC News N = 14		<i>Guardian</i> N = 25		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 32		Total N = 71	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Tesco	4	29	4	16	8	25	16	23
Other corporate actor	3	21	6	24	6	19	15	21
Journalist/editorial, etc	0	0	8	32	6	19	14	20
Individuals	0	0	1	4	7	22	8	11
Stakeholder groups	1	7	3	12	1	3	5	7
OFT/Competition Comm.	0	0	1	4	3	9	4	6
Lib Dem MP	2	14	0	0	0	0	2	3
Other categories	4	29	2	8	1	3	7	10
Total	14	100	25	100	32	100	71	100

Table 13b

First named source (2007)	BBC News N = 15		<i>Guardian</i> N = 26		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 34		Total N = 75	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Tesco	5	33	7	27	6	18	18	24
Other corporate actor	2	13	3	11	9	26	14	19
Individuals	3	20	4	15	5	15	12	16
Journalist/editorial, etc	1	6	5	19	3	9	9	12
Stakeholder groups	2	13	2	8	4	12	8	11
Other categories	1	6	3	11	4	12	8	11
OFT/Competition Comm.	1	6	2	8	3	9	6	8
Total	15	100	26	100	34	100	75	100

Table 13c

First named source (2008)	BBC News N = 25		<i>Guardian</i> N = 29		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 29		Total N = 83	
	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%	articles	%
Tesco	7	28	5	17	7	24	19	23
Other corporate actor	8	32	7	24	3	10	18	22
Journalist/editorial, etc	1	4	6	21	4	14	11	13
Individuals	3	12	3	10	4	14	10	12
OFT/Competition Comm.	0	0	4	14	6	21	10	12
Other categories	3	12	2	7	4	14	9	11
Stakeholder groups	1	4	2	7	1	3	4	5
Academic or scientist	2	8	0	0	0	0	2	<3
Total	25	100	29	100	29	100	83	100

Table 14a

Un-named sources (2006)	BBC News N = 9		<i>Guardian</i> N = 15		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 27		Total N = 51	
	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%
Other corporate	1	11	6	40	10	37	17	33
Tesco	5	56	3	20	7	26	15	29
Stakeholder groups	2	22	4	27	4	15	10	20
OFT/Competition Com.	1	11	0	0	2	7	3	6
Other categories	0	0	1	7	2	7	3	6
Journalist/editorial	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	2
Individuals	0	0	1	7	0	0	1	2
Political	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	2
Total	9	100	15	100	27	100	51	100

Table 14b

Un-named sources (2007)	BBC News N = 28		<i>Guardian</i> N = 48		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 48		Total N = 124	
	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%
Other corporate	8	29	13	27	17	35	38	31
Tesco	10	36	10	21	13	27	33	27
Stakeholder groups	2	7	11	23	9	19	22	18
OFT/Competition Com.	1	4	6	13	4	8	11	9
Individuals	4	14	2	4	1	2	7	6
Political	2	7	2	4	3	6	7	6
Journalist/editorial	0	0	4	8	0	0	4	3
Other categories	1	4	0	0	1	2	2	<2
Total	28	100	48	100	48	100	124	100

Table 14c

Un-named sources (2008)	BBC News N = 31		<i>Guardian</i> N = 61		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 70		Total N = 162	
	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%
Other corporate	7	23	18	30	31	44	56	35
Tesco	15	48	21	34	13	19	49	30
OFT/Competition Com.	1	3	1	<2	12	17	14	9
Journalist/editorial	0	0	7	11	5	7	12	7
Political	4	13	7	11	1	<2	12	7
Stakeholder groups	0	0	5	8	6	9	11	7
Other categories	3	10	2	3	1	<1	6	4
Individuals	1	3	0	0	1	<2	2	1
Total	31	100	61	100	70	100	162	100

Table 15a

Named sources (2006)	BBC News N = 24		<i>Guardian</i> N = 55		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 72		Total N = 151	
	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%
Other corporate	6	25	15	27	16	22	37	25
Tesco	7	29	8	15	19	26	34	23
Stakeholder groups	4	17	8	15	11	15	23	15
Journalist/editorial	0	0	9	16	7	10	16	11
Individuals	0	0	6	11	8	11	14	9
Political	4	17	3	5	5	7	12	8
OFT/Competition Com.	1	4	2	3	4	6	7	5
Other categories	2	8	3	5	2	3	7	5
Total	24	100	55	100	72	100	151	100

Table 15b

Named sources (2007)	BBC News N = 34		<i>Guardian</i> N = 63		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 54		Total N = 151	
	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%
Other corporate	7	21	12	19	17	31	36	24
Tesco	6	18	13	21	11	20	30	20
Stakeholder groups	6	18	10	16	5	9	21	14
Individuals	6	18	7	11	7	13	20	13
Journalist/editorial	2	6	5	8	4	7	11	7
Political	1	3	7	11	3	5	11	7
OFT/Competition Com.	1	3	3	5	6	11	10	7
Academic/scientist	4	12	5	8	1	<2	10	7
Other categories	1	3	1	<2	0	0	2	1
Total	34	100	63	100	54	100	151	100

Table 15c

Named sources (2008)	BBC News N = 44		<i>Guardian</i> N = 95		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 51		Total N = 190	
	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%
Other corporate	11	25	19	20	15	29	45	24
Tesco	7	16	14	15	13	25	34	18
Other categories	9	20	15	16	4	8	28	15
Individuals	5	11	11	12	5	10	21	11
Journalist/editorial	2	5	15	16	4	8	21	11
Stakeholder groups	4	9	13	14	1	2	18	9
OFT/Competition Com.	1	2	5	5	7	14	13	7
Political	5	11	3	3	2	4	10	5
Total	44	100	95	100	51	100	190	100

Table 16a

All sources (2006)	BBC News N = 33		<i>Guardian</i> N = 70		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 99		Total N = 202	
	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%
Other corporate	7	21	21	30	26	26	54	27
Tesco	12	36	11	16	26	26	49	24
Stakeholder groups	6	18	12	17	15	15	33	16
Journalist/editorial	0	0	9	13	8	8	17	8
Individuals	0	0	7	10	8	8	15	7
Political	4	12	3	4	6	6	13	6
OFT/Competition Com.	2	6	2	3	6	6	10	5
Other categories	2	6	5	7	4	4	11	5
Total	33	100	70	100	99	100	202	100

Table 16b

All sources (2007)	BBC News N = 62		<i>Guardian</i> N = 111		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 102		Total N = 275	
	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%
Other corporate	15	24	25	23	34	33	74	27
Tesco	16	26	23	21	24	24	63	23
Stakeholder groups	8	13	21	19	14	14	43	16
Individuals	10	16	9	8	8	7	27	10
OFT/Competition Com.	2	3	9	8	10	10	21	8
Political	3	5	9	8	6	6	18	7
Journalist/editorial	2	3	9	8	4	3	15	5
Academic/scientist	5	8	5	4	1	<1	11	4
Other categories	1	2	1	<1	1	<1	3	1
Total	62	100	111	100	102	100	275	100

Table 16c

All sources (2008)	BBC News N = 75		<i>Guardian</i> N = 156		<i>Telegraph</i> N = 121		Total N = 352	
	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%	appearances	%
Other corporate	18	24	37	24	46	38	101	29
Tesco	22	29	35	23	26	21	83	24
Other categories	12	16	17	11	5	4	34	10
Journalist/editorial	2	<3	22	14	9	7	33	9
Stakeholder groups	4	5	18	12	7	6	29	8
OFT/Competition Com.	2	<3	6	4	19	16	27	8
Individuals	6	8	11	7	6	5	23	7
Political	9	12	10	6	3	2	22	6
Total	75	100	156	100	121	100	352	100

Table 17a
BBC News – all sources (2006)

	A – Political	First	NAMED SOURCE			UN-NAMED SOURCE	TOTAL
			Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth		
8	Minor party politician	2	0	0	0	0	2
9	Civil servant, government dept	1	0	0	0	0	1
12	Non-UK politician	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Total	3	0	0	1	0	4
	B – Corporate						
21	Tesco chief executive	4	2	0	0	0	6
22	Other Tesco exec/spokesperson	0	1	0	0	5	6
23	Other supermarket exec/manager	0	0	1	0	0	1
27	Investors, financial research, etc	3	1	1	0	0	5
28	Industry association	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	7	4	2	0	6	19
	C – Stakeholder groups						
33	Environmental	0	1	0	0	1	2
37	Local and heritage groups	0	1	0	0	1	2
39	Other NGO/social movement	1	0	0	0	0	1
40	New Economics Foundation	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Total	1	2	0	1	2	6
	D – Individuals						
	Total	0	0	0	0	0	0
	E – Other sources						
61	Competition Commission	1	0	0	0	0	1
62	Office of Fair Trading	0	0	0	0	1	1
65	Think-tank/research	1	0	0	0	0	1
67	Celebrity, musician, actor, etc	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Total	3	0	0	0	1	4
						Total	33

Table 17b
Guardian/Observer – all sources (2006)

		NAMED SOURCE				UN-NAMED SOURCE	TOTAL
		First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth		
A – Political							
5	Labour Party spokesperson	0	1	0	0	0	1
6	Conservative Party politician	0	1	0	0	0	1
8	Minor party politician	0	0	0	1	0	1
12	Non-UK politician	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Total	0	2	0	1	0	3
B – Corporate							
21	Tesco chief executive	3	2	1	0	0	6
22	Other Tesco exec/spokesperson	1	1	0	0	3	5
23	Other supermarket exec/manager	3	1	1	0	2	7
24	Other corporate executive	2	0	0	1	2	5
26	Employee of other company	0	0	0	0	1	1
27	Investors, financial research, etc	1	2	1	1	1	6
28	Industry association	0	0	0	1	0	1
29	Other business	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Total	10	6	4	3	9	32
C – Stakeholder groups							
32	Suppliers' organisation	1	0	0	0	0	1
33	Environmental	1	0	0	0	1	2
35	Labour organisation	0	1	0	0	1	2
37	Local and heritage groups	1	0	0	0	1	2
38	Independent traders' groups	0	0	1	0	1	2
39	Other NGO/social movement	0	1	0	0	0	1
40	New Economics Foundation	0	1	1	0	0	2
	Total	3	3	2	0	4	12
D – Individuals							
41	Consumer	1	0	1	0	1	3
42	Agricultural - UK	0	0	0	1	0	1
45	Independent shop owner	0	1	0	1	0	2
50	Other member of the public	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Total	1	1	1	3	1	7
E – Other sources							
61	Competition Commission	0	1	0	0	0	1
62	Office of Fair Trading	1	0	0	0	0	1
65	Academic/scientist	1	0	0	1	1	3
66	Journalist/correspondent	8	1	0	0	0	9
67	Celebrity, artist, musician, etc	0	0	1	0	0	1
71	Legal	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Total	11	2	1	1	1	16
						Total	70

Table 17c
Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph – all sources (2006)

		NAMED SOURCE				UN-NAMED SOURCE	TOTAL
	A – Political	First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth		
4	Labour Party politician	0	0	0	1	0	1
6	Conservative Party politician	0	2	0	0	0	2
8	Minor party politician	0	0	1	0	0	1
9	Civil servant, govt dept, etc	0	0	0	1	1	2
	Total	0	2	1	2	1	6
B – Corporate							
21	Tesco chief executive	6	3	2	1	0	12
22	Other Tesco exec/spokesperson	0	1	3	0	7	11
23	Other supermarket exec/manager	0	2	1	1	2	6
24	Other corporate executive	2	1	0	2	3	8
25	Other Tesco employee	2	1	0	0	0	3
26	Employee of other company	1	0	0	0	0	1
27	Investors, financial research, etc	2	1	1	1	4	9
28	Industry association	1	0	0	0	1	2
	Total	14	9	7	5	17	52
C – Stakeholder groups							
31	Consumer group	0	2	0	0	0	2
32	Suppliers' organisation	1	1	1	0	1	4
33	Environmental	0	1	0	0	1	2
34	Development/anti-poverty	0	0	0	0	1	1
37	Local and heritage groups	0	1	0	0	0	1
38	Independent traders' groups	0	2	2	0	0	4
39	Other NGO/social movement	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	1	7	3	0	4	15
D – Individuals							
50	Other member of the public	7	0	1	0	0	8
	Total	7	0	1	0	0	8
E – Other sources							
61	Competition Commission	0	0	0	0	1	1
62	Office of Fair Trading	3	0	1	0	1	5
64	Think tank or research	1	0	0	0	1	2
65	Academic/scientist	0	1	0	0	0	1
66	Journalist/correspondent	6	1	0	0	1	8
71	Legal	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	10	2	1	0	5	18
						Total	99

Table 17d
BBC News – all sources (2007)

	A – Political	First	NAMED SOURCE			UN-NAMED SOURCE	TOTAL
			Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth		
6	Conservative Party politician	0	1	0	0	0	1
10	Local government - elected	0	0	0	0	1	1
12	Non-UK politician	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	0	1	0	0	2	3
	B – Corporate						
21	Tesco chief executive	2	0	0	1	0	3
22	Other Tesco exec/spokesperson	2	0	0	0	10	12
23	Other supermarket exec/manager	0	0	0	0	4	4
25	Other Tesco employee	1	0	0	0	0	1
26	Employee of other company	0	0	1	0	0	1
27	Investors, financial research, etc	2	1	1	1	4	9
28	Industry association	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Total	7	1	3	2	18	31
	C – Stakeholder groups						
32	Suppliers' organisation	0	0	0	1	1	2
34	Development or anti-poverty	0	0	0	1	0	1
35	Labour organisation	1	0	0	0	0	1
38	Independent traders' groups	1	0	1	0	0	2
39	Other NGO/social movement	0	1	0	0	1	2
	Total	2	1	1	2	2	8
	D – Individuals						
41	Consumer	0	0	0	0	3	3
42	Agricultural - UK	1	0	0	0	0	1
45	Independent shop owner	1	1	1	0	0	3
46	Other local business	0	1	0	0	0	1
50	Other member of the public	1	0	0	0	1	2
	Total	3	2	1	0	4	10
	E – Other sources						
61	Competition Commission	1	0	0	0	1	2
65	Academic/scientist	1	1	1	1	1	5
66	Journalist/ correspondent	1	1	0	0	0	2
70	Other political bodies	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	3	3	1	1	2	10
						Total	62

Table 17e
Guardian/Observer – all sources (2007)

	A – Political	NAMED SOURCE				UN-NAMED SOURCE	TOTAL
		First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth		
3	Government minister	0	0	1	0	0	1
9	Civil servant, govt dept, etc	0	2	0	1	2	5
10	Local government - elected	0	1	0	0	0	1
11	Local government - appointed	0	0	0	1	0	1
12	Non-UK politician	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	0	4	1	2	2	9
B – Corporate							
21	Tesco chief executive	1	3	0	1	0	5
22	Other Tesco exec/spokesperson	2	0	0	0	10	12
23	Other supermarket exec/manager	2	2	0	0	7	11
25	Other Tesco employee	4	0	1	1	0	6
27	Investors, financial research, etc	0	2	2	2	1	7
29	Other business	1	1	0	0	5	7
	Total	10	8	3	4	23	48
C – Stakeholder groups							
31	Consumer groups	0	0	0	0	1	1
32	Suppliers' organisation	1	0	1	0	1	3
33	Environmental	0	0	0	2	0	2
37	Local and heritage groups	1	0	0	0	2	3
38	Independent traders' groups	0	0	0	0	3	3
39	Other NGO/social movement	0	0	0	3	2	5
40	New Economics Foundation	0	1	0	1	2	4
	Total	2	1	1	6	11	21
D – Individuals							
43	Agricultural - overseas	1	0	0	0	0	1
45	Independent shop owner	1	0	0	0	1	2
50	Other member of the public	2	1	1	1	1	6
	Total	4	1	1	1	2	9
E – Other sources							
61	Competition Commission	2	0	0	0	5	7
62	Office of Fair Trading	0	1	0	0	1	2
64	Think tank or research	0	1	0	0	0	1
65	Academic/scientist	3	0	1	1	0	5
66	Journalist/editorial	5	0	0	0	4	9
	Total	10	2	1	1	10	24
						Total	111

Table 17f
Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph – all sources (2007)

		NAMED SOURCE				UN-NAMED SOURCE	TOTAL
	A – Political	First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth		
3	Government minister	0	0	0	0	1	1
7	Conservative Party politician	1	0	0	0	0	1
10	Local government - elected	0	0	0	0	1	1
12	Non-UK politician	2	0	0	0	1	3
	Total	3	0	0	0	3	6
B – Corporate							
21	Tesco chief executive	2	2	0	0	0	4
22	Other Tesco exec/spokesperson	3	2	1	0	13	19
23	Other supermarket exec/manager	1	0	1	0	11	13
24	Other corporate executive	2	3	0	0	0	5
25	Other Tesco employee	1	0	0	0	0	1
27	Investors, financial research, etc	4	1	1	0	3	9
28	Industry association	1	1	1	0	1	4
29	Other business actor	1	0	0	0	2	3
	Total	15	9	4	0	30	58
C – Stakeholder groups							
31	Consumer group	0	0	0	0	2	2
32	Suppliers' organisation	0	0	0	0	1	1
33	Environmental	0	0	0	1	1	2
35	Labour organisation/union	1	0	0	0	0	1
38	Independent traders' groups	1	0	0	0	0	1
39	Other NGO/social movement	2	0	0	0	4	6
40	New Economics Foundation	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	4	0	0	1	9	14
D – Individuals							
41	Consumer	1	0	0	0	0	1
42	Farmer, etc. UK	1	1	0	0	1	3
45	Independent shop owner	1	0	1	0	0	2
50	Other member of the public	2	0	0	0	0	2
	Total	5	1	1	0	1	8
E – Other sources							
61	Competition Commission	3	2	0	0	4	9
62	Office of Fair Trading	0	1	0	0	0	1
65	Academic/scientist	1	0	0	0	0	1
66	Journalist/correspondent	3	1	0	0	0	4
71	Legal	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	7	4	0	0	5	16
						Total	102

Table 17g
BBC News – all sources (2008)

	A – Political	NAMED SOURCE				UN-NAMED SOURCE	TOTAL
		First	Second	Third	Fourth to seventh		
4	Labour Party politician	1	0	0	0	0	1
8	Minor party politician	0	1	0	0	0	1
9	Civil servant, govt. dept, etc	0	1	0	0	1	2
10	Local government - elected	1	0	0	0	1	2
11	Local government - appointed	0	1	0	0	2	3
	Total	2	3	0	0	4	9
B – Corporate							
21	Tesco chief executive	3	0	0	0	0	3
22	Other Tesco exec/spokesperson	3	0	0	0	15	18
23	Other supermarket exec/manager	0	0	1	0	3	4
24	Other corporate exec/manager	4	0	0	0	3	7
25	Other Tesco employee	1	0	0	0	0	1
26	Employee of other company	1	0	0	0	0	1
27	Investors, financial research, etc	1	1	0	0	1	3
28	Industry association	1	0	0	1	0	2
29	Other business actor	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Total	15	1	1	1	22	40
C – Stakeholder groups							
33	Environmental	0	1	0	1	0	2
38	Independent traders' groups	0	1	0	0	0	1
39	Other NGO/social movement	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Total	1	2	0	1	0	4
D – Individuals							
42	Agricultural - UK	0	0	0	1	0	1
45	Independent shop owner	0	0	0	1	0	1
50	Other member of the public	3	0	0	0	1	4
	Total	3	0	0	2	1	6
E – Other sources							
62	Office of Fair Trading	0	0	1	0	1	2
64	Think-tank/research	0	0	1	0	1	2
65	Academic/scientist	2	0	0	0	1	3
66	Journalist/correspondent	1	1	0	0	0	2
71	Legal	1	3	2	0	1	7
	Total	4	4	4	0	4	16
						Total	75

Table 17h
Guardian/Observer – all sources (2008)

		NAMED SOURCE				UN-NAMED SOURCE	TOTAL
		First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh		
A – Political							
3	Government minister	0	1	0	0	2	3
9	Civil servant, govt. dept, etc	0	0	0	0	4	4
10	Local government - elected	0	1	0	0	1	2
12	Non-UK politician	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Total	0	2	0	1	7	10
B – Corporate							
21	Tesco chief executive	3	1	2	1	0	7
22	Other Tesco exec/spokesperson	1	1	0	2	21	25
23	Other supermarket exec/manager	4	2	2	2	10	20
24	Other corporate exec/manager	2	0	0	1	3	6
25	Other Tesco employee	1	0	1	1	0	3
27	Investors, financial research, etc	1	2	1	1	3	8
28	Industry association, etc	0	1	0	0	0	1
29	Other business	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Total	12	7	6	8	39	72
C – Stakeholder groups							
33	Environmental	0	1	0	1	0	2
34	Development NGO	0	0	0	1	0	1
35	Labour organisation	0	1	1	0	1	3
36	Food campaigners	0	0	1	0	1	2
37	Local and heritage groups	1	0	0	0	0	1
38	Independent traders' groups	0	0	2	0	0	2
39	Other NGO/social movement	1	0	0	2	3	6
40	New Economics Foundation	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Total	2	2	4	5	5	18
D – Individuals							
41	Consumer	1	1	0	1	0	3
45	Independent shop owner	1	1	0	1	0	3
46	Other local businessperson	0	1	1	1	0	3
50	Other member of the public	1	0	1	0	0	2
	Total	3	3	2	3	0	11
E – Other sources							
61	Competition Commission	1	1	0	0	0	2
62	Office of Fair Trading	3	0	0	0	1	4
64	Think tank or research	1	0	0	0	0	1
65	Academic or scientist	0	0	0	1	0	1
66	Journalist/editorial	6	3	4	2	7	22
67	Celebrity (artist, author, etc.)	1	2	1	4	0	8
71	Legal (judge, lawyer, etc.)	0	2	1	2	2	7
	Total	12	8	6	9	10	45
						Total	156

Table 17i
Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph – all sources (2008)

	A – Political	NAMED SOURCE				UN-NAMED SOURCE	TOTAL
		First	Second	Third	Fourth, fifth and sixth		
9	Civil servant, govt. dept, etc	2	0	0	0	0	2
11	Local government - appointed	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	2	0	0	0	1	3
B – Corporate							
21	Tesco chief executive	5	4	0	0	0	9
22	Other Tesco exec/spokesperson	2	0	0	0	12	14
23	Other supermarket exec/manager	0	3	2	1	15	21
24	Other corporate executive	0	0	1	2	10	13
25	Other Tesco employee	0	2	0	0	1	3
27	Investors, financial research, etc	3	2	1	0	4	10
28	Industry association	0	0	0	0	1	1
29	Other business actor	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	10	11	4	3	44	72
C – Stakeholder groups							
31	Consumer group	0	0	0	0	1	1
32	Suppliers' organisation	1	0	0	0	2	3
35	Labour organisation/union	0	0	0	0	1	1
39	Other NGO/social movement	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Total	1	0	0	0	6	7
D – Individuals							
42	Farmer, etc. UK	1	0	0	0	0	1
50	Other member of the public	3	1	0	0	1	5
	Total	4	1	0	0	1	6
E – Other sources							
61	Competition Commission	3	0	0	0	6	9
62	Office of Fair Trading	3	1	0	0	6	10
64	Think-tank/research	0	0	0	0	1	1
66	Journalist/ correspondent	4	0	0	0	5	9
71	Legal	2	1	1	0	0	4
	Total	12	2	1	0	18	33
						Total	121

Table 18a
Combinations of sources (2006)

Monopolies*	Source codes**	BBC News N = 16		Guardian N = 34		Telegraph N = 36	
		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
Corporate							
Tesco only	21, 22, 25	5		2		2	
Other corporate only	23, 24, 26 - 29	2		6		3	
Mixed corporate	21 - 29	1		1		9	
	Total	8	50	9	26	14	39
Reformist							
Stakeholder groups	31 - 40	0		3		1	
Individuals	41 - 50	0		0		5	
Mixed reformist	31 - 50	0		0		0	
	Total	0	0	3	9	6	17
	Total source monopolies	8	50	12	35	20	56
Debates		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
Corporate	followed by Reformist	4		5		7	
Reformist	followed by Corporate	1		3		4	
	Total debates	5	30	8	24	11	31
Other		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
‘Other sources’ and ‘political’ only		1		7		3	
No sources		2		7		2	
	Total	3	20	14	41	5	14

* monopolies may also include ‘other sources’ and ‘political’

** See Appendix 3.1 for source code categories

Table 18b
Combinations of sources (2007)

Monopolies*	Source codes**	BBC News N = 22		Guardian N = 35		Telegraph N = 40	
		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
Corporate							
Tesco only	21, 22, 25	5		7		3	
Other corporate only	23, 24, 26 - 29	3		4		6	
Mixed corporate	21 - 29	3		2		7	
	Total	11	50	13	37	16	40
Reformist							
Stakeholder groups	31 - 40	1		4		3	
Individuals	41 - 50	0		1		4	
Mixed reformist	31 - 50	0		0		0	
	Total	1	5	5	14	7	18
	Total source monopolies	12	55	18	51	23	58
Debates		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
Corporate	followed by Reformist	2		6		4	
Reformist	followed by Corporate	7		5		6	
	Total debates	9	41	11	31	10	25
Other		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
‘Other sources’ and ‘political’ only		1		5		6	
No sources		0		1		1	
	Total	1	5	6	17	7	17

* monopolies may also include ‘other sources’ and ‘political’,

** See Appendix 3.1 for source code categories

Table 18c
Combinations of sources (2008)

Monopolies*	Source codes**	BBC News N = 30		Guardian N = 39		Telegraph N = 42	
		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
Corporate							
Tesco only	21, 22, 25	9		8		7	
Other corporate only	23, 24, 26 - 29	6		4		10	
Mixed corporate	21 - 29	6		13		7	
	Total	21	70	25	64	24	57
Reformist							
Stakeholder groups	31 - 40	1		2		0	
Individuals	41 - 50	1		1		1	
Mixed reformist	31 - 50	0		1		0	
	Total	2	7	4	10	1	2
	Total source monopolies	23	77	29	74	25	59
Debates		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
Corporate	followed by Reformist	1		3		3	
Reformist	followed by Corporate	4		5		6	
	Total debates	5	17	8	21	9	22
Other		Articles	%	Articles	%	Articles	%
‘Other sources’ only		1		2		8	
No sources		1		0		0	
	Total	2	7	2	5	8	19

* monopolies may also include ‘other sources’ and ‘political’

** See Appendix 3.1 for source code categories

Table 19a
2006 - BBC News website – weighted coverage of narratives

Articles N = 16	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted	
	weighting = freq. x 3		weighting = freq. x 2		weighting = freq. x 1		weighting = freq. x -1		weighting = freq. x zero		Total	%
	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w		
Investor	6	18	0	0	1	1	0	0	9	0	19	31
CSR	1	3	2	4	6	6	1	-1	6	0	12	19
Competition	1	3	4	8	2	2	0	0	9	0	13	21
Supply chain	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	15	0	1	<2
LCE	0	0	6	12	5	5	0	0	5	0	17	27
Employment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0
Pol. influence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0
											Total	62
												100

Table 19b
2006 - Guardian/Observer – weighted coverage of narratives

Articles N = 34	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted	
	weighting = freq. x 3		weighting = freq. x 2		weighting = freq. x 1		weighting = freq. x -1		weighting = freq. x zero		Total	%
	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w		
Investor	11	33	3	6	1	1	0	0	19	0	40	31
CSR	3	9	2	4	3	3	2	-2	24	0	14	11
Competition	4	12	5	10	7	7	0	0	24	0	29	22
Supply chain	0	0	1	2	6	6	0	0	27	0	8	6
LCE	6	18	4	8	7	7	0	0	17	0	33	25
Employment	0	0	1	2	2	2	1	-1	30	0	3	2
Pol. influence	0	0	1	2	2	1	0	0	31	0	3	2
											Total	130
												100

Table 19c
2006 - Telegraph – weighted coverage of narratives

Articles N = 36	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted	
	weighting = freq. x 3		weighting = freq. x 2		weighting = freq. x 1		weighting = freq. x -1		weighting = freq. x zero		Total	%
	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w		
Investor	16	48	2	4	7	7	2	-2	9	0	57	47
CSR	3	9	7	14	3	3	1	-1	22	0	25	20
Competition	2	6	2	4	7	7	2	-2	23	0	15	12
Supply chain	0	0	1	2	3	3	0	0	32	0	5	4
LCE	1	3	4	8	6	7	4	-4	21	0	14	11
Employment	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	35	0	1	<1
Pol. influence	0	0	3	6	0	0	0	0	32	0	6	5
											Total	122
												100

Table 19d
2007 - BBC News website – weighted coverage of narratives

Articles N = 22	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted	
	weighting = freq. x 3		weighting = freq. x 2		weighting = freq. x 1		weighting = freq. x -1		weighting = freq. x zero		Total	%
	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w		
Investor	7	21	0	0	4	4	1	-1	10	0	24	33
CSR	5	15	2	4	1	1	0	0	14	0	20	27
Competition	2	6	2	4	3	3	0	0	15	0	13	18
Supply chain	1	3	0	0	2	2	0	0	19	0	5	7
LCE	0	0	0	0	8	8	0	0	14	0	8	11
Employment	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	19	0	3	4
Pol. influence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	0	0	0
											Total	73
												100

Table 19e
2007 – Guardian/Observer – weighted coverage of narratives

Articles N = 35	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted	
	weighting = freq. x 3		weighting = freq. x 2		weighting = freq. x 1		weighting = freq. x -1		weighting = freq. x zero		Total	%
	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w		
Investor	4	12	1	2	13	13	2	-2	15	0	25	16
CSR	1	3	4	8	5	5	3	-3	22	0	13	9
Competition	6	18	7	14	9	9	0	0	13	0	41	27
Supply chain	2	6	2	4	4	4	0	0	27	0	14	9
LCE	9	27	9	18	7	7	1	-1	9	0	51	34
Employment	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	31	0	4	3
Pol. influence	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	34	0	1	<1
											Total	149
												100

Table 19f
2007 – Telegraph – weighted coverage of narratives

Articles N = 40	Extensive		Brief		Acknowledged		Critical		No mention		Weighted	
	weighting = freq. x 3		weighting = freq. x 2		weighting = freq. x 1		weighting = freq. x -1		weighting = freq. x zero		Total	%
	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w		
Investor	14	42	1	2	8	8	0	0	17	0	52	33
CSR	3	9	4	8	4	4	1	-1	28	0	20	13
Competition	1	3	10	20	11	12	0	0	18	0	35	22
Supply chain	1	3	5	10	4	4	1	-1	29	0	16	10
LCE	4	12	7	14	8	8	1	-1	20	0	33	21
Employment	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	38	0	2	<2
Pol. influence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	0	0	0
											Total	158
												100

Table 19g
2008 - BBC News website – weighted coverage of narratives

Articles N = 30	Extensive weighting = freq. x 3		Brief weighting = freq. x 2		Acknowledged weighting = freq. x 1		Critical weighting = freq. x -1		No mention weighting = freq. x zero		Weighted	
	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	Total	%
Investor	7	21	4	8	6	6	0	0	13	0	35	41
CSR	2	6	6	12	8	8	0	0	14	0	26	31
Competition	2	6	0	0	2	2	0	0	26	0	8	9
Supply chain	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	29	0	2	2
LCE	1	3	3	6	5	5	1	-1	20	0	13	15
Employment	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	29	0	1	1
Pol. influence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	0	0	0
											Total	85
												100

Table 19h
2008 – Guardian/Observer – weighted coverage of narratives

Articles N = 39	Extensive weighting = freq. x 3		Brief weighting = freq. x 2		Acknowledged weighting = freq. x 1		Critical weighting = freq. x -1		No mention weighting = freq. x zero		Weighted	
	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	Total	%
Investor	5	15	10	20	12	12	0	0	12	0	47	47
CSR	2	6	1	2	6	6	10	-10	20	0	4	4
Competition	0	0	5	10	5	5	2	-2	27	0	13	13
Supply chain	1	3	1	2	1	1	0	0	36	0	6	6
LCE	7	21	2	4	3	3	2	-2	25	0	26	26
Employment	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	38	0	2	2
Pol. influence	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	38	0	1	1
											Total	99
												100

Table 19i
2008 – Telegraph – weighted coverage of narratives

Articles N = 42	Extensive weighting = freq. x 3		Brief weighting = freq. x 2		Acknowledged weighting = freq. x 1		Critical weighting = freq. x -1		No mention weighting = freq. x zero		Weighted	
	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w	Total	%
Investor	19	57	1	2	12	12	1	-1	9	0	70	57
CSR	2	6	1	1	9	9	0	0	30	0	16	13
Competition	3	9	4	8	4	4	5	-5	26	0	16	13
Supply chain	1	3	3	6	5	5	0	0	33	0	14	11
LCE	1	3	2	4	1	1	1	-1	37	0	7	6
Employment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	42	0	0	0
Pol. influence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	42	0	0	0
											Total	123
												100

Note

In tables 20a to 20i, the articles are listed in chronological order. The coverage of the various narratives and arguments is expressed according to the following colour code and weighting multiple:

	Coverage	Weighting multiple
Orange	Extensive	Three
Yellow	Brief	Two
Red	Negative	<i>Minus one</i>
White	Acknowledged	One
Grey	No mention	Zero

For each article, the points for the corporate and reformist positions are added and then compared. The position with the highest tally ‘wins’ the article. The summary table shows how many articles were won by each side and the number of draws, articles in which the coverage of the corporate and reformist arguments was approximately equal.

This mediated political contest is analogous to a general election with the articles akin to constituencies. Hence, under the first-past-the-post system, the winning ‘party’ is the one with the most articles and is listed first in the summary table.

The summary table also shows the total number of points gained. With points equating to votes, these data show how the parties fared under proportional representation and this data is taken into consideration if there is a tie in articles won.

The pivotal date is also marked on each dataset. For the BBC data, this is the day of the announcement. This reflects the immediacy of online news but for the print media, the pivotal

date is the day after the announcement.

Table 20a
BBC News – coverage of narratives and arguments (2006)

PIVOTAL DATE	ITEM ID	DATE	MTH	CORPORATE		RESULT	REFORMIST				
				INV	CSR		COM	SUP	LCE	EMP	POL
X	6102	24	4			0-3					
	6104	25	4			4-4					
	6105	25	4			1-2					
	6106	25	4			3-4					
	6108	26	4			0-1					
	6109	26	4			3-0					
	6113	30	4			1-2					
	6115	4	5			1-0					
	6119	9	5			1-4					
	6120	9	5			2-3					
	6121	10	5			3-2					
	6124	16	5			0-0					
	6125	17	5			3-1					
	6127	19	5			1-1					
	6128	25	5			4-1					
	6130	28	5			3-3					

BBC (2006) N = 16	Win		Draw		Points	%
	f	%	f	%		
Reformist	7	44	4	25	31	50
Corporate	5	31			31	50
Total votes				62		100

Table 20b
Guardian – coverage of narratives and arguments (2006)

PIVOTAL DATE	ITEM ID	DATE	MTH	CORPORATE		RESULT	REFORMIST				
				INV	CSR		COM	SUP	LCE	EMP	POL
X	7202	24	4			4-3					
	7203	25	4			0-0					
	7204	25	4			0-0					
	7207	26	4			3-0					
	7208	26	4			4-3					
	7210	26	4			0-5					
	7211	26	4			5-4					
	7214	29	4			0-3					
	7215	29	4			0-5					
	7218	29	4			0-3					
X	7246	10	5			0-5					
	7248	10	5			0-4					
	7249	10	5			1-7					
	7250	11	5			0-5					
	7251	11	5			3-3					
	7256	13	5			2-5					
	7257	14	5			3-4					
	7266	16	5			0-3					
	7267	16	5			0-1					
	7268	17	5			2-1					
	7269	17	5			0-4					
	7270	17	5			2-0					
	7271	17	5			3-0					
	7273	17	5			3-0					
	7274	17	5			3-0					
	7277	18	5			3-3					
	7278	18	5			3-1					
	7279	18	5			3-0					
	7285	20	5			1-0					
	7287	20	5			0-2					
	7290	21	5			3-0					
	7298	25	5			2-1					
	7301	26	5			0-1					
	7305	27	5			3-2					

Guardian (2006) N = 34	Win		Draw		Points	%	Average points per article
	f	%	f	%			
Reformist	15	44	4	12	76	58	2.23
Corporate	15	44			54	42	1.58
Total votes					130		1.41 to 1

Table 20c
Telegraph – coverage of narratives and arguments (2006)

PIVOTAL DATE	ITEM ID	DATE	MTH	CORPORATE		RESULT	REFORMIST				
				INV	CSR		COM	SUP	LCE	EMP	POL
	8201	24	4			0-3					
	8202	24	4			1-0					
	8203	24	4			5-1					
	8204	24	4			3-0					
	8206	25	4			1-3					
	8207	26	4			3-0					
	8209	26	4			3-2					
	8210	26	4			3-2					
	8212	26	4			0-3					
	8213	26	4			6-0					
	8214	26	4			4-3					
	8219	29	4			5-0					
	8220	30	4			2-5					
	8222	30	4			0-1					
	8226	2	5			4-0					
	8233	6	5			3-0					
	8234	6	5			3-0					
	8235	7	5			5-1					
	8239	9	5			1-1					
X	8241	10	5			2-1					
X	8242	10	5			3-4					
X	8243	10	5			3-0					
X	8244	10	5			4-0					
X	8245	10	5			1-3					
	8246	11	5			2-0					
	8247	11	5			2-4					
	8248	11	5			3-2					
	8256	14	5			1-6					
	8261	17	5			3-0					
	8264	18	5			3-0					
	8270	20	5			3-0					
	8274	20	5			0-0					
	8277	25	5			2-2					
	8282	27	5			0-0					
	8283	28	5			0-0					
	8285	28	5			3-0					

Telegraph (2006) N = 36	Win		Draw		Points	%	Average points per article
	f	%	f	%			
Corporate	22	61			82	67	2.27
Reformist	9	25	5	14	41	33	1.13
Total votes					123		2.00 to 1

Table 20d
BBC News – coverage of narratives and arguments (2007)

PIVOTAL DATE	ITEM ID	DATE	MTH	CORPORATE		RESULT	REFORMIST				
				INV	CSR		COM	SUP	LCE	EMP	POL
X	6202	11	1		Yellow	4-1					
	6203	11	1		Grey	1-1					
	6204	12	1	Pink	Grey	0-4					
	6209	15	1	Grey	Yellow	3-1					
	6210	15	1	Yellow	Grey	3-0					
	6211	16	1	Yellow	Grey	3-0					
	6212	16	1	Yellow	Grey	3-0					
	6218	18	1	Grey	Yellow	3-1					
	6219	20	1		Grey	0-0					
	6220	22	1			1-5	Yellow				
X	6221	23	1			0-7	Yellow	Yellow			
	6222	23	1			0-2		Grey			
	6224	25	1			0-2					
	6225	26	1	Yellow	Grey	3-0					
	6226	26	1	Yellow	Grey	3-0					
	6228	29	1	Grey	Yellow	2-0					
	6229	30	1	Yellow	Grey	3-3	Yellow				
	6235	3	2		Yellow	3-0					
	6239	6	2	Grey	Yellow	3-0					
	6241	8	2	Yellow	Grey	4-2	Yellow				
	6244	9	2	Grey	Yellow	3-0					
	6245	10	2			0-0					

BBC (2007) N = 22	Win		Draw		Points	%	Average points per article
	f	%	f	%			
Corporate	13	59			44	60	2.00
Reformist	5	23	4	18	29	40	1.32
Total votes					73		1.52 to 1

Table 20e
Guardian – coverage of narratives and arguments (2007)

PIVOTAL DATE	ITEM ID	DATE	MTH	CORPORATE		RESULT	REFORMIST				
				INV	CSR		COM	SUP	LCE	EMP	POL
X	7409	13	1			1-0					
	7411	14	1			1-0					
	7412	14	1			0-3					
	7413	14	1			1-4					
	7414	14	1			0-5					
	7423	17	1			3-1					
	7424	18	1			0-5					
	7427	19	1			0-1					
	7428	19	1			3-4					
	7429	19	1			2-2					
	7432	19	1			0-4					
	7436	20	1			1-6					
	7438	21	1			3-1					
	7450	22	1			0-3					
	7451	23	1			0-6					
	7452	23	1			0-7					
	7455	24	1			1-4					
	7456	24	1			2-7					
	7457	24	1			1-2					
	7458	24	1			0-5					
	7460	24	1			1-7					
	7461	25	1			1-1					
	7462	25	1			0-5					
	7465	26	1			0-3					
	7471	27	1			1-2					
	7472	27	1			1-4					
	7478	28	1			2-5					
	7488	2	2			0-2					
	7495	3	2			3-0					
	7499	5	2			0-1					
	7505	7	2			2-5					
	7506	7	2			0-5					
	7507	7	2			3-2					
	7510	8	2			3-0					
	7511	8	2			4-0					

Guardian (2007) N = 35	Win		Draw		Points	%	Average points per article
	f	%	f	%			
Reformist	25	71			111	74	3.17
Corporate	8	23	2	6	38	26	1.08
Total votes					149		2.94 to 1

Table 20f
Telegraph – coverage of narratives and arguments (2007)

PIVOTAL DATE	ITEM ID	DATE	MTH	CORPORATE		RESULT	REFORMIST				
				INV	CSR		COM	SUP	LCE	EMP	POL
X	8405	10	1	■		3-0					
	8406	11	1	■		2-1					
	8410	12	1		■	3-2					
	8414	13	1	■		3-0					
	8415	13	1	■		3-0					
	8422	14	1	■		3-0					
	8425	14	1	■		3-0					
	8426	14	1	■		3-0					
	8428	15	1		■	3-2					
	8429	16	1		■	3-3				■	
	8433	17	1	■		3-2	■				
	8434	17	1	■		3-0					
	8436	19	1		■	2-3				■	
	8437	19	1		■	3-1					
	8442	20	1			0-3				■	
	8443	20	1	■		3-0					
	8451	21	1	■		2-4	■				
	8452	21	1			0-2	■	■			
	8454	23	1			2-7	■	■	■		
	8456	24	1	■		3-3					
	8457	24	1			2-5	■	■			
	8460	24	1			1-3		■	■		
	8461	24	1			1-4			■	■	
	8462	24	1		■	2-6	■	■	■		
	8463	24	1			0-6	■	■	■		
	8464	25	1			0-5	■			■	
	8465	25	1	■		3-0					
	8471	27	1	■		3-1					
	8472	27	1			1-4				■	
	8475	28	1			0-0					
	8476	28	1			1-2			■		
	8477	29	1			1-1					
	8478	29	1			1-3	■				
	8481	1	2			0-1					
	8487	3	2			0-1					
	8492	4	2			0-1					
	8497	5	2			0-2					
	8498	5	2		■	2-2				■	
	8499	6	2	■		3-1					
	8511	8	2			1-2	■				

Telegraph (2007) N = 40	Win		Draw		Points	%	Average points per article
	f	%	f	%			
Reformist	19	48	5	13	86	54	2.15
Corporate	16	40			72	46	1.80
Total points					158		1.19 to 1

Table 20g
BBC News – coverage of narratives and arguments (2008)

PIVOTAL DATE	ITEM ID	DATE	MTH	CORPORATE		RESULT	REFORMIST				
				INV	CSR		COM	SUP	LCE	EMP	POL
	6007	14	4			1-2					
	6008	14	4			1-3					
	6009	14	4			3-0					
	6010	15	4			3-0					
	6011	15	4			4-0					
	6013	15	4			3-2					
	6016	23	4			1-0					
	6017	23	4			2-1					
	6018	23	4			3-0					
	6020	24	4			1-0					
	6021	24	4			1-0					
	6022	24	4			2-1					
	6023	25	4			2-3					
	6027	28	4			1-3					
	6029	28	4			0-0					
	6030	29	4			3-1					
	6033	29	4			2-0					
X	6035	30	4			3-0					
X	6036	30	4			4-5					
X	6038	30	4			2-1					
	6039	2	5			3-0					
	6040	2	5			2-0					
	6043	6	5			2-2					
	6047	10	5			2-0					
	6049	12	5			1-1					
	6050	12	5			1-0					
	6051	14	5			3-0					
	6052	15	5			1-0					
	6053	15	5			3-0					
	6054	15	5			1-0					

BBC News (2008) N = 30	Win		Draw		Points	% of total	Average points per article
	f	%	f	%			
Corporate	22	73			61	72	2.03
Reformist	5	17	3	10	24	28	0.80
Total points					85		2.54 to 1

Table 20h
Guardian – coverage of narratives and arguments (2008)

PIVOTAL DATE	ITEM ID	DATE	MTH	CORPORATE		RESULT	REFORMIST				
				INV	CSR		COM	SUP	LCE	EMP	POL
	7037	14	4			1-0					
	7038	14	4	■		3-0					
	7040	16	4	■	■	6-0					
	7043	18	4		■	1-4				■	
	7046	19	4	■		3-2					
	7052	20	4			1-4			■	■	
	7054	22	4		■	0-4				■	
	7055	22	4			1-3				■	
	7056	22	4			1-3			■	■	
	7062	24	4			1-0					
	7066	26	4	■		3-2	■				
	7077	27	4			0-3			■		
	7081	28	4		■	2-2	■				
	7083	29	4		■	3-0					
	7085	30	4		■	1-2				■	
	7086	30	4		■	1-3			■		
X	7087	1	5	■		2-10	■	■	■	■	
	7089	3	5		■	0-1					
	7090	3	5		■	1-1					
	7091	3	5		■	1-1					
	7092	3	5	■		1-0					
	7097	4	5			1-0					
	7099	4	5	■		4-1	■	■	■		
	7100	4	5	■		3-0			■		
	7101	5	5			0-0					
	7106	10	5			0-0					
	7108	10	5	■		2-0					
	7120	13	5	■		2-0					
	7121	14	5	■		2-1					
	7122	14	5	■	■	3-1					
	7123	15	5	■		3-2	■				
	7124	15	5	■		3-0					
	7128	16	5	■		2-0					
	7131	17	5			2-4		■	■	■	
	7132	17	5	■	■	0-1					
	7133	17	5			1-1					
	7134	17	5	■	■	2-1	■				
	7136	17	5	■		0-2	■				
	7139	18	5			1-1					

Guardian (2008) N = 39	Win		Draw		Points	% of total	Average points per article
	f	%	f	%			
Corporate	19	49			51	51	1.31
Reformist	13	33	7	18	48	49	1.23
Total points					99		1.07 to 1

Table 20i
Telegraph – coverage of narratives and arguments (2008)

PIVOTAL DATE	ITEM ID	DATE	MTH	CORPORATE		RESULT	REFORMIST				
				INV	CSR		COM	SUP	LCE	EMP	POL
X	8040	15	4			3-0					
	8041	15	4			3-0					
	8043	15	4			0-1					
	8044	15	4			3-0					
	8049	16	4			3-0					
	8050	16	4			3-0					
	8051	16	4			3-0					
	8052	17	4			4-0					
	8060	20	4			3-2					
	8064	21	4			3-0					
	8065	21	4			0-2					
	8071	24	4			0-0					
	8072	24	4			3-1					
	8081	26	4			3-1					
	8082	26	4			1-2					
	8087	27	4			1-2					
	8088	27	4			1-2					
	8089	27	4			3-2					
	8091	27	4			2-0					
	8092	28	4			3-2					
	8094	28	4			3-1					
	8095	29	4			1-3					
	8103	29	4			2-3					
	8105	30	4			0-5					
	8108	1	5			3-1					
	8109	1	5			2-3					
	8110	1	5			2-2					
	8113	2	5			4-0					
	8115	3	5			3-1					
	8117	4	5			2-3					
	8122	4	5			2-0					
	8124	4	5			3-0					
	8125	4	5			2-5					
	8139	10	5			3-0					
	8144	11	5			2-0					
	8146	12	5			3-0					
	8151	13	5			1-0					
	8152	15	5			3-0					
	8154	15	5			1-0					
	8155	15	5			3-0					
	8158	16	5			3-0					
	8163	17	5			1-0					

Summary table on next page

Telegraph (2008) N = 42	Win		Draw		Points	%	Average points per article
	f	%	f	%			
Corporate	29	69	2	5	86	70	2.05
Reformist	11	26			37	30	0.88
Total points					123		2.32 to 1

Table 21a
Coverage of narratives and arguments (2006)

	Percentage of articles showing net support			Share of total points scored			Overall		
	Corporate	Reform	Margin	Corporate	Reform	Ratio			
BBC News	43	57	14	REF	50	50	1.0	-	REF
Guardian	50	50	0	-	42	58	1.4	REF	REF
Telegraph	68	32	36	COR	67	33	2.0	COR	COR

Table 21b
Coverage of narratives and arguments (2007)

	Percentage of articles showing net support			Share of total points scored			Overall		
	Corporate	Reform	Margin	Corporate	Reform	Ratio			
BBC News	68	32	36	COR	60	40	1.5	COR	COR
Guardian	26	74	48	REF	26	74	2.8	REF	REF
Telegraph	46	54	8	REF	46	54	1.2	REF	REF

Table 21c
Coverage of narratives and arguments (2008)

	Percentage of articles showing net support			Share of total points scored			Overall		
	Corporate	Reform	Margin	Corporate	Reform	Ratio			
BBC News	78	22	56	COR	72	28	2.6	COR	COR
Guardian	49	33	16	COR	51	49	1.1	COR	COR
Telegraph	71	29	42	COR	70	30	2.3	COR	COR

Table 22
Proportion of articles exhibiting net support – rankings

		Year	Corporate	Reform	Winning Margin	Favouring
1	BBC News	2008	78	22	56	COR
2	Guardian	2007	26	74	48	REF
3	Telegraph	2008	71	29	42	COR
4	BBC News	2007	68	32	36	COR
	Telegraph	2006	68	32	36	COR
6	Guardian	2008	49	33	16	COR
7	BBC News	2006	43	57	14	REF
8	Telegraph	2007	46	54	8	REF
9	Guardian	2006	50	50	0	-

Table 23
Total points scored, winning ratio – rankings

		Year	Corporate	Reform	Winning Ratio	Favouring
1	Guardian	2007	26	74	2.8	REF
2	BBC News	2008	72	28	2.6	COR
3	Telegraph	2008	70	30	2.3	COR
4	Telegraph	2006	67	33	2.0	COR
5	BBC News	2007	60	40	1.5	COR
6	Guardian	2006	42	58	1.4	REF
7	Telegraph	2007	46	54	1.2	REF
8	Guardian	2008	51	49	1.1	COR
9	BBC News	2006	50	50	1.0	-

Table 24

BBC News website – headlines including ‘Tesco’ – all years

Positive headlines (22)	Neutral headlines (10)	Negative headlines (10)
Businesses call for Tesco to <i>stay</i>	All Tesco bags ‘to be degradable’	School’s pupils <i>banned</i> from Tesco
Contest to name <i>new</i> Tesco centre	Arizona gets first Tesco US store	Tesco alcohol licence <i>suspended</i>
Foreign <i>growth</i> key to Tesco goals	Buffett puts Tesco in his trolley	Tesco faces a <i>fine</i> for old food
Jobs <i>boost</i> at Tesco call centre	Tesco eyes property website sale	Tesco <i>fined</i> for out-of-date food
Major port <i>deal struck</i> with Tesco	Tesco festive performance awaited	Tesco <i>jobs transferred</i> to India
Shares <i>windfall</i> for Tesco staff	Tesco studies in geography GCSE	Tesco plans for Peterhead <i>shelved</i>
Tesco boss sees pay <i>rise</i> by 25%	Tesco submit store turbine plan	Tesco <i>row</i> over new centre’s name
Tesco boss unveils green <i>pledges</i>	‘Tesco town’ planned for Linwood	Tesco <i>told</i> to rethink new store
Tesco <i>enjoys record</i> festive sales	Tesco urged to rethink store plan	Thai Tesco ‘won’t <i>silence</i> me’
Tesco gets ready to <i>open</i> US shops	Town’s Tesco plans remain on hold	Woman <i>wins</i> Tesco tyre pump case
Tesco has <i>bumper</i> £2.25bn profit		
Tesco <i>launches</i> download service		
Tesco <i>opens</i> own-brand China store		
Tesco sees profit <i>rise</i> to £2.8bn		
Tesco set to <i>grow</i> in South Korea		
Tesco tipped to see <i>profit up</i> 10%		
Tesco to <i>build</i> homes for workers		
Tesco to offer ‘Clubcard’ degrees		
Tesco’s <i>empire</i> reaches Beijing		
The <i>continued rise</i> of Tesco non-food		
Town to have <i>new</i> ‘greenest’ store		
<i>Vote in favour</i> of new Tesco store		

Note – headlines are listed in alphabetical order. Emphases added

Appendix 4

Convergence and divergence

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Appendix 4:1

Sample

NOTE

In the following table, 'Telegraph' includes journalists for the daily and the Sunday newspapers, and 'Times' includes both *The Times* and the *Sunday Times*

Interviewees

Alternative	ASKED		ACCEPTED		DECLINED		IGNORED	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Gender	7	1	5	0	1	0	1	1
Total	8		5		1		2	
BBC	ASKED		ACCEPTED		DECLINED		IGNORED	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Gender	11	5	7	1	1	2	3	2
Total	16		8		3		5	
Guardian	ASKED		ACCEPTED		DECLINED		IGNORED	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Gender	5	3	3	2	0	0	2	1
Total	8		5		0		3	
Telegraph	ASKED		ACCEPTED		DECLINED		IGNORED	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Gender	5	5	3	1	0	0	2	4
Total	10		4		0		6	
Times	ASKED		ACCEPTED		DECLINED		IGNORED	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Gender	5	0	4	0	1	0	0	0
Total	5		4		1		0	
Total	ASKED		ACCEPTED		DECLINED		IGNORED	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	33	14	22	4	3	2	8	8
TOTAL	47		26		5		16	
%	100%		55%		11%		34%	

NOTES

It is debatable how representative this sample is of British economic and business journalism as a whole, but it was apparent that, of the journalists approached, men outnumbered women by a ratio of more than two-to-one, and all except one of the editorships was held by a man. Women were also proportionately far less likely to agree to be interviewed. Indeed, of the 14 women asked, over half ignored the emails compared with 25 percent of men. Although it is outside of the scope of this study, there is clear potential for more research into the apparent gender imbalance among economic and business journalists.

Appendix 4:2

Interviewees and publications

Ref	Position	Venue/Date
1	A1	Former editor of <i>New Statesman</i> and <i>Independent on Sunday</i> London August 15 2012
2	A2	Journalist, <i>Private Eye</i> Henley-on-Thames November 28 2012
3	B1	BBC Wales business correspondent Cardiff March 10 2013
4	B2	Former BBC Radio Wales producer and business journalist Phone March 12 2013
5	A3	Economics reporter, <i>New Statesman</i> London April 12 2013
6	L1	Economics editor, <i>Daily Telegraph</i> Phone April 17 2013
7	A4	Co-operative member and researcher, <i>CorporateWatch</i> Phone April 18 2013
8	B3	Chief economics correspondent, BBC News London April 29 2013
9	L2	Retail correspondent, <i>Daily Telegraph</i> London May 1 2013
10	L3	Online business and economics reporter, <i>Daily Telegraph</i> London May 1 2013
11	B4	Business reporter, BBC News Phone May 3 2013
12	L4	Business editor, <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> Phone May 8 2013
13	B5	Economics editor, <i>BBC Newsnight</i> Phone May 9 2013
14	B6	Presenter, <i>In Business</i> , BBC Radio 4 Phone May 14 2013
15	A5	Co-editor, <i>New Internationalist</i> Oxford May 15 2013

Continued on next page

Ref	Position	Venue/Date
16	B7	Former editor of Economics and Business Centre, BBC News Phone May 24 2012
17	G1	Economics editor, <i>The Guardian</i> London June 4 2013
18	G2	Former <i>Guardian</i> and <i>Observer</i> business correspondent Phone June 10 2013
19	S1	Business editor, <i>Sunday Times</i> London June 11 2013
20	B8	Business correspondent, BBC News Phone June 12 2013
21	M1	Economics editor, <i>The Times</i> Phone June 15 2013
22	S2	Business journalist, <i>Sunday Times</i> Phone June 17 2013
23	S3	Economics editor, <i>Sunday Times</i> Phone June 21 2013
24	G3	Economics leader writer, <i>The Guardian</i> Phone June 25 2013
25	G4	Economics reporter, <i>The Guardian</i> Phone July 1 2013
26	G5	City editor, <i>The Guardian</i> Phone July 5 2013

Appendix 4:3

Interviewees' ages and higher education

Ref	Publication	Age	University	Subject
A1	<i>New Statesman</i>	68	Sussex	History
A2	<i>Private Eye</i>	48	Bristol	Biochemistry
A3	<i>New Statesman</i>	24	Oxford	Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)
A4	<i>Corporate Watch</i>	35	Sussex	History
A5	<i>New Internationalist</i>	57	Nottingham	English
B1	BBC	42	Southampton	Philosophy
B2	BBC	38	Cardiff; Cardiff	English; Journalism (NCTJ)
B3	BBC	54	Oxford; Falmouth	PPE, Journalism (MA)
B4	BBC	55	NONE	Journalism (NCTJ)
B5	BBC	53	Sheffield	Music and Politics
B6	BBC	65	Oxford	English
B7	BBC	45	Bristol; Cardiff; Henley	Law; Journalism (NCTJ); MBA
B8	BBC	42	Keele	International Relations
G1	<i>Guardian</i>	52	Cambridge	History
G2	<i>Guardian/Observer</i>	40	Warwick	Politics and Philosophy
G3	<i>Guardian</i>	38	Oxford	History
G4	<i>Guardian</i>	32	Cambridge	Modern Languages
G5	<i>Guardian</i>	44	N/A	Economics
L1	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	35	N/A	History
L2	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	26	York; Goldsmiths	History, Journalism (MA)
L3	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	26	N/A	Politics
L4	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	44	Leeds; City	Politics, Journalism (MA)
M1	<i>Times</i>	35	Cambridge	History
S1	<i>Sunday Times</i>	45	Canterbury (NZ)	Art and Science
S2	<i>Sunday Times</i>	37	Leeds	Philosophy
S3	<i>Sunday Times</i>	59	Cardiff, Birkbeck	Economics, Economics (MSc)

Note

The italicised figures above are approximations based on the interviewees' descriptions of their career histories and the researcher's visual assessment of their age. The non-italicised, emboldened figures are more accurate and are based on interviewees' statements of the year they began higher education, and/or online biographies. Journalists with more than one institution and subject against their names took post-graduate degrees. All qualifications are bachelor degrees unless otherwise stated.

NCTJ = National Council for the Training of Journalists, Diploma in Journalism

N/A = information not available

Appendix 4:4

Interview questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Notes for interviewee

- 1 – Academic convention dictates that your comments will be anonymous
- 2 – The initial questions are relatively open-ended. Interpret them as you think fit.
- 3 – Apologies if I interrupt with a follow-on question or ask you another

1	<p>a - What determines which business/economics stories are covered? Please refer to day-to-day news schedules and longer-term coverage, for example special reports or campaigns.</p> <p>b – Do you try to achieve a certain proportion between diary events; press releases; tip-offs; journalist's own reading or intuition.</p>
2	<p>a - Can you give any examples of stories/issues that you personally thought should have been covered – in greater depth or at all by the news media in general - but weren't?</p> <p>b - Why do you think these stories were left out of the schedules?</p>
3	<p>a - What determines the angle – or the treatment - of a news item?</p> <p>b – To what extent is this the journalist's own decision? To what extent does the editor (or a senior executive) determine the angle/treatment?</p> <p>c – Does your organisation have an explicit editorial line on business or economics?</p>
4	Some issues have been promoted by NGOs and others for years, and seemingly ignored, and then they become debated in the news media. A good example is Make Poverty History which hit the headlines in 2005. What determines <i>when</i> an issue is considered to be contentious?
5	<p>a - When writing a story, what influences your choice of sources?</p> <p>b – Are some sources 'natural ports of call'? If so, why?</p>
6	Assuming that economics and business are inherently characterised by alternative interpretations and solutions, what criteria do you employ when deciding the limits of relevant opinion, on the left and on the right?
7	Who do you write for?
8	In their post-mortem of the Financial Crisis, Hugh Pym and Nick Kochan noted consensus among mainstream political parties that the free market brings prosperity to all. They noted: 'rocking the capitalist boat went out of fashion some time ago' (Pym and Kochan 2008:3.) To what extent do you believe it is your responsibility to challenge this consensus in economics, business and, indeed, politics?
9	To what extent do you think a journalist's background, education, his/her life outside journalism, and his/her journalistic experiences, contribute to how they approach their work (when writing about economics and business)?
10	<p>a - Some researchers and commentators have said that training is the best way to improve economics and business journalism. What are your thoughts on this?</p> <p>b - What else needs to change?</p>

