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General elections in the post-devolution period: press accounts of the 2001 and 2005 campaigns in Scotland and England

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Abstract

This thesis examines and compares newspaper coverage of the first two general elections after Scottish devolution, looking at both the Scottish and English/UK press. By considering the coverage of a major political event which affects both countries, it contributes to debates regarding the performance of the Scottish press within an arguably distinct Scottish public sphere as well as that of the press in England within a post-devolution context. The research is based on a content analysis of all the coverage of the 2001 and 2005 elections in seven Scottish and five English and UK daily morning newspapers, a critical discourse analysis of a sample of the coverage of the most mentioned issues in each campaign and a small set of interviews with Scottish political editors. As a framework for its analysis, this thesis focuses on theories of national identity and deliberative democracy in the media.

It finds that the coverage of elections in the two countries has a similar issue agenda, however Scottish newspapers appear less interested in the UK aspect of the elections and include debates on Scottish affairs which are discussed in isolation, within an exclusively Scottish mediated space. These issues are constructed as particularly relevant to a Scottish readership through references to the nation, inclusive modes of address to the reader and the inclusion of exclusively Scottish sources, which contrast with the Scottish coverage of “UK” issues. This distinction between “Scottish” and “UK” topics emerges as the key differentiating factor in the discursive construction of election issues in the Scottish press, rather than that between devolved and reserved issues. Newspapers in England on the other hand, report on the two campaigns without taking into consideration the post-devolution political reality. These core questions are contextualized within the thesis by reference to relevant dimensions of Scottish culture and politics, and interpreted in the light of events since 2005.

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Author's declaration

This thesis represents the original work of Marina Dekavalla unless explicitly stated otherwise in the text. The research upon which it is based was carried out at the University of Stirling, under the supervision of Professor Neil Blain, Dr. Myra Macdonald and Dr. Stephanie Marriott, during the period September 2006 to December 2009. Parts of this work have been published in a different form in:

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1. Introduction

“As the nation-state loses its raison-d’être in a world economy, polity and culture, so Scotland seems to provide a glimpse into the future rather than the past.”

McCrone, D. (2001:132)

“The challenge we face now [...] is to preserve the many strengths of Scottish culture, and especially our news media, in an environment where all bets are off, all certainties evaporated.”

McNair, B. (2009, February 23)

This study examines the form of the debate on early post-devolution general elections in Scottish newspapers in comparison to the debate in newspapers bought in England, and relates this to the ideas of national identity and the public sphere. The two statements quoted above bring into focus some of the ideas discussed in this thesis, in its effort to provide an account of the coverage of the 2001 and 2005 general elections.

The first was published in 2001, the year of the first election I studied, when the newly established Scottish Parliament was looked upon as a new beginning for political life in Scotland. It expresses the optimism that accompanied devolution and refers to the decline of traditional nation-states, such as the United Kingdom, as the main definers of political and cultural life. The role of the nation-state in defining identities in political news coverage is one of the main issues discussed in this thesis.

The second excerpt, perhaps appropriately taken from an online rather than a print medium, was published in 2009, ten years after the establishment of the first Scottish Parliament and four years after the second general election I studied. It was written in a different political and media context, but academic debate on Scottish identity and culture was still current, especially as the Scottish parliament would debate the possibility of a referendum on independence in the following year. In 2009, Scottish newspapers are facing an escalating loss of readership and profits due to competition from online media and from Scottish editions of English titles. Within this challenging environment, which is discussed in detail in the final section of chapter 2, the future of the Scottish press seems uncertain. The second statement therefore discusses the traditionally established relationship between the news media and Scottish identity and expresses concerns about its future.

This thesis studies the performance of the Scottish press in its coverage of Westminster elections after devolution. The performance of the English and “UK” press¹ is also examined and compared with that of Scottish titles in order to establish how each of these groups of newspapers responds to covering UK elections in a post-devolution context. By including English/UK titles I also wish to compare the output newspapers offer in England and in Scotland with respect to general elections and the implications any similarities or differences may have for the mediated public sphere in the two countries. This project focuses on the 2001 and 2005 campaigns, which have been the two general elections since devolution, until this research was carried out (2006-2009).

¹ These newspapers are referred to as the “English/UK” press throughout the thesis, for the reasons detailed in chapter 2.

Although the main focus of this thesis is not on the media and political situation in 2009, it does offer insights into the relationship between national identity and the form of democratic debate in newspaper coverage within a post-devolution context, both in Scotland and in England. The insights of this study remain relevant at the time of writing because, as discussed in the conclusions of this thesis, they illustrate the role, identity and direction adopted by newspapers in Scotland and in England.

In other words, the insights of this study demonstrate what the newspapers studied (indigenous Scottish, Scottish editions of English titles, and English/UK newspapers) contribute to public debate, how they engage with their readerships within the context of UK election coverage, and how similar or different their output is in this context. The concluding chapter of the thesis discusses these insights in the light of current debates regarding the future of the Scottish press.

The establishment of the Scottish parliament in 1999 was a significant historical development for Scottish political life. For some it was the much-anticipated conclusion of many decades of claims and debates, for others the beginning of a road toward a new constitutional future. In either case, devolution appears as a reminder of the currency of nationhood in a globalised world and its enduring significance as a form of identity.

The importance of the Scottish press as a product and a (re)producer of this Scottish national identity is often stressed by researchers (Meech and Kilborn, 1992, Smith, 1994, Schlesinger, 1998, Connell, 2003, among others). As I will discuss in chapter 2, the Scottish press has often been seen as part of an exclusively Scottish public

sphere, both before and after devolution, where affairs that are specific to Scotland are deliberated. Drawing on theories of national identity and democratic debate, my research hopes to contribute to an understanding of the role of the Scottish and the English/UK press within common or separate public spheres after devolution.

Previous studies of post-devolution election coverage in the Scottish media have either focussed on Scottish elections (Higgins, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, Institute of Governance, 2003) or offered a brief overview of issues discussed in Scottish coverage of Westminster elections lacking either a specific focus on Scottish newspapers or a systematically presented analysis and theorizing of their coverage (Schlesinger, 2001, Kellas, 2002, Scammel and Harrop, 2002, Deacon et al., 2006).

My research is distinctive in exploring what happens when political debate concerns an event which is common to Scotland and the rest of the UK, and in which the Scottish electorate actively participate as voters, not just as readers. Is the output of Scottish papers similar to that of the English/UK ones? Are they contributing to the same debate? My research additionally theorises its findings by discussing their implications for national identity and the public sphere in the two countries.

The project adopts a mixed method approach² (Creswell and Piano-Clark, 2007), combining quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the performance of different newspapers. The public sphere is understood as an arena of debate on public affairs (Habermas, 1989) where the mass media are important contributors, even though they do not constitute the public sphere by themselves. Of course, as

² This approach is discussed in detail in chapter 4.

discussed at several points in the thesis, and particularly in chapter 3, Habermas' and other theorists' prescriptive requirements for the function of the media in the public sphere are quite idealistic and do not seem to correspond with the operation of commercial media organisations. However, this project uses these theoretical perspectives to compare the relative degree to which newspapers in the two countries might contribute to an inclusive debate on public affairs.

In assessing newspaper coverage of the electoral debate I do not aim to evaluate the Scottish or English/UK public sphere itself, as this would require a much broader research project. My purpose is to examine how these newspapers make information and views about the election available to their readerships for discussion and evaluation. The object of the study is therefore the performance of the newspapers, not the way their input was processed by readers in their deliberations and decision-making. For this reason the focus is on newspaper output rather than on the way this was received. I return to discuss this point in more detail in chapters 3 and 4.

Three methods of enquiry were used, namely content analysis and critical discourse analysis of the coverage, as well as interviews with political editors, to examine seven Scottish and five English/UK titles. The majority of the research is based on textual analysis, while the role of the interviews is to provide the perspective of some of those who produced the Scottish electoral coverage, enhancing the analysis with their insights.

First I evaluate the performance of the two newspaper samples based on the amount of coverage they dedicate to the election and the way they distribute this coverage,

adapting a model for the evaluation of media performance in the public sphere proposed by Higgins (2006). I also look at the election issues mentioned in each sample to determine whether the agenda in the two samples is similar or whether the fact that certain issues are devolved to the Scottish parliament plays a role in the amount of attention they receive. I also look at instances within each newspaper sample, where individual titles might exhibit features that differ from general patterns in the Scottish or English/UK press.

Having mapped out the general trends in the coverage in quantitative terms, I then carry out a close analysis of the coverage of the most mentioned reserved and devolved issues revealed by the content analysis. I select four one-day samples of this coverage and use a critical discourse analytic approach to compare the output of newspapers based on two main criteria: the way they construct national identity and the way they treat different groups of actors.

One of the requirements for the existence of a public sphere is that participants share some degree of collective identification allowing them to see themselves as having issues in common to debate (Peters, 2008b). Although a public sphere need not necessarily take place at the national level (Granham, 1992), in the case of elections the nation is the most relevant context where a public sphere would be expected to be located. Nation though does not necessarily mean nation-state, especially in an era when this social structure is challenged by identities both above and below the level of the state (Schlesinger, 2000, Walby, 2003).

In the case of Scotland, there is extensive scholarly literature regarding the role of Scottish identity in politics, which I examine in chapter 2 of this thesis. The question that arises is whether Scottish (or British) identity plays a role in the electoral debate during Westminster elections. The first part of my critical discourse analysis therefore seeks to identify similarities and differences in the way the newspapers in my two samples articulate national identity when covering reserved and devolved issues. My analysis draws on the influential concept of Billig's (1995) banal nationalism and looks at how the presence or absence of markers of location place the newspaper and its discussion in a national context, as well as at how modes of address are used to identify the readership as a public which shares a common identity.

The second part of my critical analysis, which also includes an initial quantitative segment, looks at how the main actors and sources are treated in the coverage. I evaluate and compare the output of the two newspaper samples based on four criteria: access, namely who is allowed to express their views in the debate on different issues; agency, namely who is presented as influencing others and the electoral debate; discursiveness, whether there is dialogue between participants in the debate; and favourability, namely whose position newspapers themselves seem to favour. This part of the research draws on previous work on the evaluation of the mediated public sphere based on models of deliberative democracy (Feree et al., 2002, Bennett et al., 2004, Lewis et al., 2005) and further expands their criteria of analysis. Its purpose is to evaluate the mediated debate in different titles with reference to normative accounts of the role of the media in democratic debate.

My analysis therefore makes comparisons at several levels: between English/UK and Scottish newspapers, between individual titles in these groups, between the coverage of reserved and devolved issues and between the coverage of different sub-topics under reserved and devolved issues. Within an electoral context, the study compares coverage of policy issues on reserved and devolved matters after devolution.

All the stages of textual analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, are complemented by the comments of the Scottish political editors interviewed. Their insights sometimes support and at other times contrast with the textual evidence and this dialogue between different sources of data offers a better understanding of the issues discussed than textual analysis alone would. The role of the interviews is therefore complementary to the study of the coverage.

Before moving to the presentation of the findings, chapters 2 and 3 provide the theoretical background of my study. Chapter 2 focuses on debates around national identity. It starts with a brief historical overview of the British Union, with respect to the relationship between Scotland and England (hereafter referred to as “the Union”), and continues to explore theoretical debates on national identity, including perspectives on what Scottishness and Englishness or Britishness mean today. The final section of this chapter examines the Scottish daily morning press and the individual titles that comprise it. It looks at issues of content, market positioning and ownership and also discusses the challenges the press has faced in recent years. Chapter 3 discusses Habermas’ (1989) model of the public sphere and different normative accounts of the role of the mass media within it. It also looks at the

debate on whether modern media may fulfil their prescribed role in the public sphere and examines claims of “dumbing down” of media content.

Chapter 4 explains the methodological approach adopted in this project. It discusses the strengths of a mixed methods research design and describes the process followed in each of the three methods used in the analysis, drawing on theoretical writings on each of them.

Chapters 5 to 7 present and discuss the findings of my research. Chapter 5 compares English/UK and Scottish newspapers’ quantitative performance in the public sphere and their issue agendas. Chapter 6 examines the articulation of national identity in the coverage of health, taxation and the Iraq war, the most mentioned reserved and devolved issues of the two campaigns. Chapter 7 evaluates the extent to which the coverage of these four issues in the two countries may follow the criteria set out by deliberative democratic theory, offering access and encouraging dialogue between a diversity of agents.

Finally chapter 8 draws on the whole research and attempts to provide an answer to the main research question: is the performance of Scottish newspapers in the public sphere similar or different to that of English/UK titles, when reporting on general elections after devolution? As will be explained in that chapter the answer is not straightforward and requires consideration of several aspects. The chapter also includes concluding remarks on the role of the Scottish press in political debate, reflects on the implications of the findings for current debates around the Scottish press and makes recommendations for further research.

2. Scotland in the UK: history and identity

“Politics is about the production of identities.”

Sarup, M. (1996:47)

1. Introduction

This and the next chapter discuss the two theoretical areas identified in the previous chapter as central to this thesis: national identity, with specific reference to Scotland, and the public sphere.

This chapter begins by looking at the historical events that led to devolution and at the relationship between Scotland and England, especially during the 20th century. This brief historical background provides the context within which the early years of devolution, studied in this thesis, can be located and understood. The chapter then examines the concept of national identity, which is often said to be a differentiating factor in Scotland’s relationship to the rest of the UK.

As discussed in chapter 1, national identity is a significant form of collective identification which binds together an electoral public sphere. For this reason, after a brief overview of theories of identity, I discuss what constitutes a Scottish sense of national identity and how it interacts with other identities and with political behaviour. The final sections look at the press in Scotland, as a product and a (re)producer of Scottish distinctiveness in the Union and introduce the Scottish and English/UK newspapers included in my research. These sections also discuss the challenges faced by the press today.

2. Scotland in the United Kingdom and devolution

Scotland's relationship with England has been shaped through a history of many centuries. The wars with England before the Union, the growth and decline of the British Empire, the relevant civic autonomy of Scotland within the Union, the rise of Scottish nationalism in the twentieth century, the political developments in the second half of the twentieth century all played an important role in this relationship and eventually led to devolution in 1997. This section provides a brief overview of these events and focuses especially on the last decades of the 20th century, explaining how devolution came about.

In the 11th century, a small centralized Scottish state was created within the undefined Scottish territory and managed to control the local clans, which ruled the area until then. Wars against English invaders were common and helped shape a Scottish sense of distinctiveness in contrast to the English "enemy". From 1603, the Stuart dynasty ruled both the separate Scottish and English Kingdoms. In the seventeenth century there were many unsuccessful efforts to unite the two countries.

The Act of Union was England's proposal to merge England and Scotland under a common political authority. The Church of Scotland and some Scottish regions were initially opposed and there were other demographic differences in response. Anti-union demonstrations took place in Glasgow and Edinburgh, but after some negotiations, the Scottish Parliament agreed and the Act was passed on 16 January 1707.

What connected the two countries was their geographical closeness, their protestant identity as opposed to Catholic mainland Europe and a common front in war against other countries. Other important aspects supporting the Union were the financial benefits Scotland would acquire through the British Empire, British industrialization and commerce, and the British Crown, which bound the two peoples together under a common state (Colley, 1992, Devine, 1999, Guibernau and Goldblatt, 2000, McCrone, 2000).

As Brown et al. (1998) and McCrone (2000, 2001) assert, Scotland retained a considerable degree of civil autonomy within the British state and had a “semi-detached” status within the Union, while conflict with Westminster was managed and negotiated. This was possible because Scotland maintained three important independent institutions: the Scottish Law and judicial system, the Church of Scotland and the Scottish education system (Devine, 1999, Guibernau and Goldblatt, 2000, McCrone, 2000). Moreover, the Scottish Office, established in 1885, provided a means for bureaucratic self-government (Schlesinger et al., 2001, McCrone, 2000). According to Kumar (2003:8), there was “a distinctive Scottish civil society, [...] that could make many Scots feel that the union with England was provisional.”

For a long time, the Union had financial benefits for Scotland, providing access to new markets and opportunities for economic growth (Kidd, 1997). Guibernau and Goldblatt (2000) point out that by the end of the nineteenth century Scotland had turned into one of the most industrialized and advanced economies. They claim that

the prosperity, industrialization and civil independence that Scotland enjoyed at the time overshadowed the differences with England and kept Scotland largely content within the Union. Besides, Scotland was over-represented in the British Parliament, while British public expenditure was favourable for the region.

Still, most authors agree that the British state was more a political union than a proper nation with substantial historical and identity bonds (Brockliss and Eastwood, 1997, Taylor, 2000). One of the early signs of Scottish nationalism was the establishment of the National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights in 1853, a movement that lasted only three years. The Association never contested the Union but expressed its disdain concerning the position of Scotland within it (Kidd, 1997).

Nairn (1977) argues that in that period, when nationalism emerged in many European countries, Scotland failed to develop its own nationalism due to the prosperity it enjoyed. The middle classes and the intelligentsia did not have the need to generate a nationalist ideology and this essential step in the progress of a country toward modernity was delayed. When Scottish nationalism did emerge in the 20th century, it was because the financial benefits of the Union ceased and a political rather than a cultural type of nationalism emerged (Nairn, 1977).

In the 20th century, Scottish nationalism was promulgated by the Scottish National Party (SNP), established in 1934. Initially, the party attracted a small right-wing, rural electorate, and its positions were strongly nationalistic, supporting complete

separation from the Union. Devine (1999) argues that in the 1940s and 1950s the SNP was seen more as a sect than as a party.

In the following decades though, things changed: Britain gradually lost its colonies; the manufacturing sector, which was a major source of prosperity for Scotland, started to decline internationally and was replaced by a growing services sector; poverty and unemployment rose in Scotland; a long period of peace after the Second World War meant that the Union no longer had to fight wars; a growing secularization weakened the Protestant bond with England; the oil discovered in the North Sea between 1969 and 1971 renewed confidence in Scottish financial independence. Many historians see these changes as eventually enabling the expansion of Scottish nationalism.

These developments also gave the SNP the opportunity to “reinvent itself and its notion of Scottish nationalism” in the second half of the 20th century, and expand to more progressive, middle class voters (Guibernau and Goldblatt, 2000:144). In fact, after the 1940s - following an unsuccessful attempt by the Covenant movement in 1949 to secure civil independence for Scotland - the issue of Scottish autonomy never moved from the political agenda (Devine, 1999). McCrone agrees that “the SNP was in the right place at the right time, providing a political alternative [...] when the British settlement began to fail” (2001: 25).

After a significant by-election win in 1967, the SNP gradually acquired a small but important share of parliamentary seats. Devine (1999) claims that, at that time, the SNP did not have clear policies on any other issue apart from the constitutional one.

Its voters did not necessarily support independence but wanted to draw attention to the problems faced by Scotland. Jones (1992) points out that the SNP, in contrast to all other parties, was never interested in gaining a majority in Westminster. Its purpose has been to attract attention to and within Scotland.

The success of the SNP worried its political opponents. As Schlesinger et al. (2001) observe, the Labour Party embraced the idea of devolution because it saw it as a way to stop nationalism and keep the Union together. “Playing the national card” also helped Labour gain ground against the Conservatives, who until 1966 had campaigned as Unionists in Scotland (McCrone, 2001). The Conservatives’ support on the other hand gradually declined. According to Devine (1999), the Tories stood for Protestantism, Unionism and imperial identity, but these ideas had lost their appeal in Scotland. Jones claims that the party’s pre-1966 Unionist ideology was more effective because it managed to respect Scottish sensitivities by “keeping the constitutional question under constant review” (1992: 377).

In the mid-1970s, Labour proposed the Scotland Act, which would establish a Scottish Assembly, responsible for most issues affecting life in Scotland, but without tax-raising authority. After its election, the Labour Government held a referendum on 1st March 1979. This time however, the Labour Party was weak and divided on the constitutional issue. Labour MP George Cunningham proposed and passed a condition that 40 percent of the Scottish electorate would need to vote “yes” at the referendum for constitutional change to happen. Although almost a third of the electorate voted “yes” (51.6% of the people who voted), the percentage (32.9% of the electorate) did not reach the required 40 percent.

At the time of the referendum, the Scots were preoccupied with rising unemployment, industrial relations and the government's pay norms. There were major strikes against the government and trust in Labour had declined. The proposed powers for the new Assembly in the Scotland Act had also been compromised since its initial draft. The pro-devolution campaign, supported by Labour and the SNP (even though there were members in both parties who were against) was not as well resourced as the anti-devolution campaign. In addition, Scottish business and industry communities were not convinced of the merits of devolution and were concerned that it would "raise taxes, endanger industry, produce yet more bureaucracy and increase the danger of conflict with London, at a time of mounting economic difficulty" (Devine, 1999:590). Following the failure to establish a devolved Assembly, the SNP experienced a dramatic decline of support in the succeeding election.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Conservative Government policies meant a shift of state support from the public sector to private industries. Unemployment rates rose throughout the UK and especially in Northern England and Scotland. Scottish manufacturing continued to decline. The Thatcher era made the Conservative party increasingly unpopular in Scotland, until in 1997 there was no Tory MP elected there. As McCrone notes, the Scottish Office, which was such an important part of Scottish political life "was on the front line of the new Right onslaught, [and] the attack on the state seemed to many to be an attack on the country itself" (2001:106).

In 1989, the Conservative government introduced the unpopular Community Charge (generally known as the poll tax) in Scotland before England. This was an attempt to reinforce local councils, through a tax paid by all adults in their respective areas. In Scotland it was seen as an unfair measure which disregarded differences in citizens' ability to pay. Although Scottish MPs protested, their arguments were ignored in Westminster, until English MPs turned against the measure as well (Devine, 1999, Guibernau and Goldblatt, 2000).

In the last quarter of the 20th century, Labour dominated parliamentary seats in Scotland, the SNP was growing stronger, while the Conservatives, who ruled in England, were becoming increasingly unpopular (Schlesinger et al., 2001). The indigenous Scottish press gradually turned against them, accusing them of closing down traditional Scottish industries without considering the human cost (Devine, 1999). The political agenda in England and in Scotland was growing further apart.

During the 1980s, the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly (CSA) aimed to unite Labour, Liberal Democrats and the SNP, in an effort to achieve devolution in Scotland. In 1988, the CSA published "A Claim of Right for Scotland" arguing for a Scottish Parliament and against the Conservative government. The initiative gained the support of regional councils, representatives of the Churches and women's associations in Scotland as well as members of political parties. These supporters of devolution met in a convention in 1990, to create a blueprint for a Scottish Parliament. Labour was at the centre of this initiative, which made it "politically unacceptable for any future Labour government to deny the Scots a parliament" (Devine, 1999:612). The Tories did not participate because they were anti-

devolution and neither did the SNP, as they were afraid that the initiative would be dominated by Labour and that devolution would hinder rather than open the road to independence. However, there was collaboration among pro-devolution politicians from among different parties, in the approach to the later referendum.

Following Labour's 1997 election victory, Tony Blair's government fulfilled the party's promise to carry out a referendum. The constitutional issue had been decisive for the Scottish vote in this election (Brown et al., 1999). The referendum held on 11 September 1997 concluded that there should be a Scottish Parliament, with the power to vary taxation. The new Scottish Parliament has powers over issues such as healthcare, education, transportation, the environment, while foreign policy, defence, taxation, macro-economics, social security, abortion and broadcasting remain reserved to Westminster (Schlesinger, 1998).

The concept of a nation without a state has often been used to describe Scotland before devolution. The importance of this major constitutional change according to McCrone (2001:1) is that "Scotland is no longer stateless." However this is not entirely true. Although Scotland has some state apparatus, it remains part of the United Kingdom. The Scottish electorate still participates in elections for the Westminster government, which is responsible for foreign affairs, and perhaps more importantly, for raising taxation and allocating the Scottish Parliament its share of the state budget, based on the Barnett Formula. Discussion on the future of devolution and of the constituent nations of the Union is still continuing.

Following devolution, the first two Parliamentary Elections in Scotland (May 1999, May 2003) were won by Labour, which formed a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats. The third Scottish election in May 2007 was won by the SNP which, even though it does not command an overall majority of seats¹, has replaced Labour in many of its previously secure Scottish seats during the first decade of devolution. There have also been two UK General Elections since 1997 (May 2001, May 2005), both won by Labour, even though the party lost a lot of its support to the political right, after the 2005 election and until the time of writing. These two general elections are the focus of my research, although the broader historical and political context presented in this section is essential in highlighting the complexity of the environment in which they took place.

3. Identity and politics

As discussed, the emergence of Scottish nationalism in the twentieth century was enabled by the political and economic environment as well as by cultural factors. Nationalist arguments have been based on common perceptions among the Scottish people of their collective similarities and differences from the rest of the United Kingdom. As research discussed later in this chapter indicates though, a sense of national identity does not correlate simply with the adoption of nationalist positions. It plays a significant role within a distinctively Scottish public sphere, and is also an essential part of the way the Scottish media present and market themselves.

¹ The SNP won 47 seats, Scottish Labour 46, Scottish Conservatives 17, Scottish Liberal Democrats 16 and the Green Party 2 (The Scottish Parliament, 2008).

For this reason, this section examines the concept of national identity, its role in politics, and what it may mean to be Scottish, as opposed to English or British. It introduces some of the theories on identity and its role in politics, focusing on national identity. It then discusses historical and current perceptions of Scottish, English and British identities. It also examines how other identities, such as region, social class, gender, ethnicity and religion, intersect with national identity in a Scottish context.

3.1 National identity

Jenkins (1996:4) defines identity as “the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities, [...through] relationships of similarity and difference.” He sees identity as essential for people to relate to each other within a society and at the same time as constructed through social interaction.

Jenkins (1996) and Woodward (2000) provide an account of the literature on identity as developed by 20th century scholars such as George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman, Louis Althusser and others, stressing the interdependency between individual and social identities. Balibar agrees that identity is simultaneously an individual and a collective phenomenon: “All identity is individual, but there is no identity that is not historical or, in other words, constituted within a field of social values, norms of behaviour and collective symbols” (1991:94).

Stuart Hall (1992) traces the notion of identity from the Enlightenment until today: the Enlightenment saw it as something individuals are born with and maintain throughout their lives; 20th century sociology claimed that identity is formed through social interaction; while in postmodernist theory the human subject has no fixed identity, adopting multiple identities in different situations. Some contemporary sociologists see all traditional concepts of stable identity (class, gender, racial, ethnic, national) as declining, dislocating and de-centering the subject or replaced by the values of a consumer society.

National identity is also seen by many scholars as socially constructed. Guibernau and Goldblatt provide a set of useful definitions, distinguishing between the state, namely the institutions with political authority over a territory; the nation, a people sharing culture and history without necessarily currently having a fixed territory; and a nation-state, with fixed borders and “internal uniformity of rule” (2000:124). Nation-states are the units in which the world is organized today, but they are also relatively recent constructs. As Simmel (1997:143) argues, the boundaries between nations are not objective spatial borders, but sociological constructs which are defined with reference to space. Many scholars (Anderson, 1983, Wallerstein, 1991, Balibar, 1991 among others) believe that capitalism was one of the factors that gave rise to the nation-state form as we experience it today.

Nationalism is the political movement arguing that a nation cannot be complete unless it becomes a nation-state (Gellner, 1983, Breuilly, 1985). When a nation is already a nation-state, the role of nationalism is to express and promote national identity (Wallerstein, 1991), though this is not necessarily done in explicit and

noticeable ways. In fact Billig (1995, 2009) has distinguished between the “hot”, openly expressed and easily identifiable nationalism, and its “banal”, unnoticed version which permeates everyday life:

The flags hanging in the street, or attached to the lapels of politicians, carry no propositional message for the ordinary citizen to receive passively or consciously argue against. Yet, such symbols help to maintain the everyday world as belonging to the world of nation-states. (Billig, 2009:349)

National identity is a perceived link between people who believe that they have a common past and a common future. This link is socially constituted and reproduced (Bourdieu, 1991, Balibar, 1991, Tomlinson, 1991). National identities are therefore “discourses”, constructed meanings, and include symbols and narratives about national histories, literatures and cultures (Hall, 1992:292-293). At the same time though, a sense of national identity produces a psychological experience of belonging, even though in reality there is little homogeneity and agreement within nations about what the nation’s identity is, and its definition is itself a field of struggle between different groups (Bourdieu, 1991, Tomlinson, 1991, Billig, 2009). This is especially true in the different parts of the UK, where national identity does not have a homogeneous meaning but British and Scottish, English, Welsh or Northern Irish identities interact, sometimes contrasting and sometimes coexisting with each other, as will be seen later in this chapter.

The maintenance of a certain degree of uniformity, though, is important for the survival of nation-states (Wallerstein, 1991) and also for that of the Union as a state. Moreover, a degree of collective identification is essential for the existence of a national public sphere: participants need to think that they share enough to have issues in common to resolve (Peters, 2008b). I return to this issue at several points in this thesis because, as indicated in chapter 1, it informs one of the main questions I investigate: whether Scottish national identity correlates with separate mediated debates or whether the mediated debate on UK general elections takes the same form on both sides of the Scottish border.

The concept of national identity may be defined as grounded in ethnic or civic criteria of belonging. Ethnic national identities are based on the idea of a common ethnicity, of shared ancestors and history, of a shared culture and way of life (Billig et al., 2005). It is what DeCilia et al. (1999) describe as “Kulturnation”. Civic identities by contrast accept ethnic diversity within a nation and are based on citizenship and shared values, rather than on ancestry (Billig et al., 2005). They correspond to DeCilia et al.’s “Staatsnation”. A finding shared by both these groups of researchers, studying national identity in different countries (the UK and Austria), is that modern politicians tend to adopt a civic definition of national identity and reject traditional ethnic definitions, in order to reflect modern multicultural societies. As I will discuss later in this chapter a civic conception of national identity has been common to political definitions of both Scottish and British identities.

With regard to the way national identities are constructed and reproduced, many scholars highlight the significance of communication in its various forms: through standardized languages, within the family, at school and in the media. Schlesinger (2000) discusses this approach as the theory of “social communications” and traces its evolution from Deutsch in the 1950s through to Billig and Castells in the 1990s.

Deutsch (1953) and Gellner’s (1983) works are often referred to when discussing national identity. Both adopt culturally based understandings of national identity, grounded on common memories and habits, which do not seem applicable to contemporary multicultural societies. They both stress the role of communication in creating national homogeneity, a view they share with Benedict Anderson. In his influential “Imagined Communities” (1983) Anderson argues that the complexity of industrial societies makes it impossible for people to have a personal experience of the entire community in which they live. The media are essential in reproducing a sense of national belonging by encouraging people over large geographical areas to imagine fellow readers, viewers or listeners simultaneously consuming the same media products.

It could be argued that Anderson’s perspective is also outdated in nations which include multiple identities; that people today would no longer “imagine” a singular community because homogeneity does not exist. This however does not change the fact that communication and specifically mediated communication does address audiences as communities. Such addresses may be rejected or interpreted in many ways, but Dahlgren (1991:17) seems to make a valid point when arguing that:

Whether such “communities” are “authentic” or not is another matter, but media-based interpretive communities are a precondition for sense-making in a modern public sphere. [...] Media audiences are a step in the process of being a member of the public.

Many have discussed how the media address their audiences as communities, whether nationally or otherwise defined. For example, Tolson (1996) uses Althusser’s (1971) concept of “interpellation” to explain how the media invite audiences to identify themselves as members of a community with common values and beliefs. Similarly Brunt (1990) refers to the ways television programmes address their viewers as sharing a common national identity. Such addresses may be accepted, rejected or reinterpreted, however their operation as interpellators is recognized as such.

Perhaps the most influential account of the reproduction of national identity in mediated communication, though, is Billig’s (1995) “banal nationalism”, which is also central in my own analysis. He focuses on the way national identity is maintained through everyday discourse that may not be noticed as contributing to a collective notion of an identity. He shows how the media participate in this process through the way they report on news, and especially through details such as the way they use deixis or distinguish between home and international news, assuming a shared national background. I will discuss Billig’s approach as well as Tolson’s and Brunt’s arguments in more detail in chapter 4 of this thesis, when discussing my analysis of the construction of national identity in the electoral coverage.

Schlesinger (2000:107) argues however that social communication theories are limited in their assumption of “a functional fit between communication and the nation”. They do not adequately theorize the fact that nation-states exist and survive in a complex global communicative space. Walby (2003) notes that nation-states are actually very rare. There are nations that are not states (such as Scotland), states which comprise many nations (such as the UK) and polities which transcend national boundaries and which often overlap. As Walby puts it, “nation-states exist for short moments of history, before being reconstructed yet again” (2003:531-533). Some might view the UK as undergoing such a process. Law agrees that we need “a more subtly dialectal analysis than viewing the banal nation as a single genetic cell” (2001:300).

So are we witnessing the end of the nation state? Many believe that globalization, a process which has made the world “more interconnected” (Hall, 1992:299), has weakened national identities and strengthened identities above (global) or below (regional, ethnic minority) the level of the nation-state. Others (Cohen, 1994, Rahn and Rudolph, 2001) argue that it has mobilized reactionary forces which express themselves through a rise in nationalist movements. Giddens (1991) claims that globalization has made identities more uncertain and diverse, but at the same time has offered new opportunities for self-definition. Hall (1992:304) believes that, although globalization does contest and dislocate traditional national identities, it is not likely to eliminate national identity. Billig (2009) agrees and points out that we are presently witnessing a resurgence of strong states, at a time when countries such as the US spend massive amounts on military equipment. Such phenomena he sees

as rooted in nationalism and as signs that the nation-state is still current in a globalized world.

Perhaps more supporting evidence for the currency of national identity in a globalized world can be found in the significance of national identity in Scotland, which will be the focus of the following section. The current section has drawn attention to central issues in my research project: it has argued that national identity is at the same time a psychological phenomenon and a social construct, communicated through language, symbols and social institutions including the media; that it is both unifying and yet contested and diverse; that it is essential in the formation of a national public sphere; and that it remains current in a complex communicative environment.

My research looks at how national identity is constituted in the coverage of the elections in Scottish and English/UK newspapers (chapter 6). In the following sections I examine how Scottishness may be defined in relation to cultural and political criteria, and how it may be distinguished from Englishness and Britishness.

3.2 Scottish identity: myths, symbols and language

As discussed in the previous section, national identity may be defined in terms of historical aspects of cultural identity, ways of life and ancestry, or in civic terms. Surveys have shown that for Scottish citizens civic and cultural aspects are significant in defining Scottishness. As derived from one ongoing survey, “a sense of equality, Scottish landscape, music and the arts, and the national flag” are the

components Scots believe make up Scottish identity (Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009:14).

Although it is generally agreed that Scotland has maintained a sense of cultural distinctiveness and England did not purposefully impose on it an English way of life (Brockliss and Eastwood, 1997, Devine, 1999), there is considerable debate around what Scottish culture is. Scottish cultural identity is often associated with the tradition and myths of the Highlands and tartanry. Myth is extremely significant in the process of nation-building, during which it becomes intermixed with history, to the extent that national histories can be seen as a mixture of facts and myth (Berger, 2009).

However, Highlandism is not an uncontested myth of Scottishness. In the early years of the Union, the Highlands and their inhabitants were seen as inferior, backward and dangerous by the people of the Lowlands (Pittock, 1999, Devine, 1999). It was only at the end of the 18th century that symbols of Highland tradition were used by the Scottish elite as symbols of Scottish identity. At the time, Scotland enjoyed great financial growth, but also felt threatened by cultural integration with England. Highland myths, heroes and symbols provided a much needed identity for the rest of Scotland (Devine, 1999). In addition, myths constructed through the nineteenth century Kailyard novels presented Scotland as romantic, rural and free of conflict.

In the 20th century, Highland symbols and myths were perceived as sentimental and kitsch. Tartanry was seen by scholars as preventing Scots from defining their

identity (Paterson, 1981), as limiting popular consciousness (McArthur, 1981), as sustaining a sense of passivity in Scottish society (Craig, 1982), and as a lower form of culture (Nairn, 1977). Beveridge and Turnbull (1989) argue that this stance of Scottish academics toward tartanry is a manifestation of “inferiorisation”, namely the success of the English in persuading “colonized” Scots that their native cultural production is inferior. Whether or not this might be true, it seems that tartanry is also controversial outside academia. Schlesinger (1998) describes the negative reactions when tartan was used in the official promotion “logo” of the country in 1997, while Labour banned thistles, tartan and bagpipes during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in the same year, despite criticism by the SNP. Pittock makes a valid point when arguing that although Highlands symbolism served as “a most unproblematic image of Scottishness outside Scotland itself”, Scots changed their views about it over time (1999:88).

Apart from traditions and myths, there are two distinctive Scottish languages, Scots and Gaelic, which declined significantly over the last centuries. Gaelic used to be widespread but gradually became limited geographically to the Highlands where it still has more speakers. Scots, originally the language of the Lowlands, functions as an overarching term for several varieties, which can be intelligible to speakers of English because they share many features with it (McClure, 1979, Corbett, 2008). Therefore it is not as easily accepted as a distinctive language as Gaelic is and there is politically-driven debate on whether it is a language or a dialect. Today, Scots dialects are still spoken and function as markers of regional and social (working class) as well as national identity (Corbett, 2008).

There have been efforts to revive these languages in the twentieth century, especially through the media. In the late 1980s, for example, a successful campaign for the representation of Gaelic in the media led to the establishment of the Gaelic Television Fund to increase Gaelic programming (Cormack, 2008). The recent establishment of a Gaelic digital television channel (BBC Alba) is a further effort to support and sustain the language. So far, Scots has not enjoyed equal support and its media presence is more limited (Corbett, 2008).

Bond (2006) points out that the capacity to speak Welsh is integral to national identity in Wales, however the same is not true in Scotland. McCrone argues that although language is a marker of “nation-ness”, linguistic distinctiveness in itself does not necessarily “objectify national cultural capital” (2005:73). He suggests that Scottish culture does not have a single carrier, such as a uniform language, religion or ethnicity, nor are there specifically Scottish values. What he believes distinguishes the Scots as a nation is a different “cultural prism for translating social change into political meaning and action” and this is the difference in cultural capital between Scotland and England (2005:79). The following section turns to examine this relationship between Scottishness, citizenship and political change.

3.3 Scottish identity and politics

The British National Election Survey has been carried out since 1963, before major elections, to record changes in political attitudes. The survey includes an investigation of national identity, which asks respondents to position themselves on a scale (the Moreno scale) which rates which nationality has priority in the way they

define themselves: the regional (English, Scottish, Welsh) or the national (British). Additionally, the survey asks respondents to identify the significance their different identities (national, social class, gender, age, etc) have for them.

A significant finding of these surveys is that being Scottish is the primary way in which Scots define themselves, more so than age, gender, or social class (McCrone, 2001, Bond, 2006, Bechhoffer and McCrone, 2009). Bechhoffer and McCrone, who have long been involved in the survey, note that “however we define national identity [...] we find that people in Scotland describe themselves in national identity terms” (2009:19). This constitutes further evidence that national identity remains a strong form of identity in a postmodern era of globalization and multiple identities.

Scottish identity also supersedes British identity, with two thirds of Scots saying either that they are “Scottish, not British” or “more Scottish than British”. When asked to choose just one national identity, seven out of ten respondents choose Scottish. According to Bechhofer and McCrone (2009:9), these trends were shaped during the 1980s and have not changed significantly since, which means that devolution has not affected them.

Regarding the criteria for someone to qualify as Scottish, being born in Scotland is consistently found to be the most significant one in these surveys, although having Scottish parents or a Scottish accent also counts for those who were not born in the country (Kiely et al., 2005, Bond 2006, Bechhoffer and McCrone, 2009).

There seems however to be no evidence in these surveys to support a claim that seeing oneself as Scottish or British influences voting decisions in elections, or attitudes about devolution and independence. A number of researchers have tried to correlate national identity with support for Scottish independence, or for individual parties, such as the SNP, but have found no straightforward relationship (Bond, 2000, Paterson et al., 2001, Bond and Rosie, 2002, 2006). Bond (2000) believes that this is because feeling Scottish does not entail a need for separation from the United Kingdom, and sees the fact that Scots of different political convictions assert their national identity as a healthy sign. In terms of policy preferences, Brown et al (1998) suggest that the factors influencing voting decisions in Scotland and the rest of the UK are equally connected to daily life issues, such as healthcare and education, and policy preferences are similar on both sides of the border.

The survey findings presented in this section seem to suggest that Scottish identity has high significance for the Scots but does not correlate with particular beliefs or political attitudes. It is therefore not clear in this research evidence how Scottishness “translates into political meaning and action” (McCrone, 2005:79). The specific ingredients of a commitment to Scottish national identity remain somewhat vague.

Still, this does not preclude rhetorical appeals made by politicians to a Scottish civic identity, based on “Scottish values”. For example in his announcement of the release of the Lockerbie bomber in August 2009, Scottish Justice Secretary, Kenny MacAskill, made references to the humanity and compassion which define and characterize Scots (Times Online, 2009, August 20). Similar claims are made about British identity, as discussed subsequently, however this kind of civic definitions of

national identity, which are based on moral values, fail to distinguish peoples from each other, because these values cannot be seen as exclusive to a specific nation, as argued in the following section.

3.4 English and British Identities

It can easily be argued that the content of English and British identities is even more vague than that of Scottish identity. Kumar (2003) suggests that England has not developed a national identity in a similar way to the other UK regions, because it has defined its identity within the context of Britain and the British Empire. In fact it is often suggested (Cohen, 1994, Pittock, 1999, Taylor, 2001) that the English have traditionally conflated Englishness and Britishness. It is indeed a fact that in British National Election Surveys of the previous decades, the English identified themselves as British more often than any of the other peoples of the UK, perhaps because they saw little difference between the two identities; although it appears that in the 2000s this trend is gradually shifting and they are slowly beginning to identify themselves as English (Bechhoffer and McCrone, 2009).

In the 20th century, the collapse of the British Empire, the increasing distancing of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland from the Union, the multiculturalism resulting from immigration and the rise of the European Union brought England to a confusing position, unsure of its core identity and its future (Nairn, 1977, Kumar, 2003). Pittock (1999) suggests that there has been renewed interest in defining English identity after Scottish and Welsh devolution. He argues that a re-

examination of English national identity would require England to challenge “its historic rights to control Britishness” (1999:115).

The question that arises is how Britishness may be defined. In ethnic terms, the British are the “island race”, with a history and a way of life that goes back for many centuries (Billig et al., 2005). Yet, as discussed earlier, such ethnic accounts of national identity do not cater for modern multi-ethnic and multicultural societies. A more inclusive, civic understanding of Britishness refers to common values shared by the British. New Labour’s definition of these values includes such ideas as liberty and civic duty (Billig et al., 2005). It has been suggested though that such definitions, based on values of citizenship, are vague and contentless (Cohen, 1994:5) because they lack the well-developed mythology of ethnic nationalism and because, like civic perceptions of Scottishness discussed in the previous section, they are not particular to one nation, therefore they do not effectively differentiate the British from other peoples (Billig et al., 2005).

Cohen suggests that British identity has “fuzzy frontiers”, blurred boundaries. It needs to define its position in relation to Scotland, Wales and Ireland, the countries of its former Empire and the Commonwealth, the United States, to which it is strategically attached, the European Union, which it sees as threatening its sovereignty, and to the rest of the world (1994:7).

British and English identities are therefore particularly difficult to define. Politicians are not the only ones who engage in (re)defining them. The media are also involved in this process. Bennet (2007), for example, discusses how the press constructed

Britishness in its coverage of the introduction of the British citizenship test, while Blain et al. (1993), Blain and O'Donnell (1998) and Bishop and Jaworski (2003), among others, look at the construction of English national character in sports coverage.

Chapter 6 deals with the construction of British and Scottish/English identities in the coverage of the general elections studied in this project. As discussed in the introduction of the thesis, even though there is a focus in my project on Scottish newspapers and Scottishness, significant insights are also offered on English/UK newspapers and the way they represent national identity within a post-devolution UK election context.

Although national identity remains significant, in a post-modern understanding of the world, as discussed earlier, multiple identities coexist and predominate in different situations. The following section discusses regional, social class, gender, ethnic and religious identities in a British/English and a Scottish context.

3.5 Nations of multiple identities

Differing formations of identity interact in complex ways and national identity cannot be viewed in singular terms. A more comprehensive account of national identity should consider its interrelation with regional, social class, gender, ethnic, religious or other identities that co-exist within the nation. Of course the press in Britain is more responsive to distinctions of social class and regionality than to other

identities, with different daily newspapers addressing different socioeconomic or regional groups, but not explicitly different genders for instance.

This section offers a more plural approach by considering some of these identities in relation to Scotland and England/Britain, however it does not provide a sufficient account of the processes of interaction between them or an exhaustive discussion of their historical role in these countries. Such an attempt would require separate research projects. A brief overview is offered here to highlight that national identity cannot be examined in isolation.

Some of the aspects discussed in this section are common to Scotland and other parts of Britain and I discuss these similarities first, before moving to aspects that differentiate Scotland in particular. Both Scotland and England are characterized by internal regional diversity, inequalities of growth between regions, and local identities which often compete with national ones. In fact there has even been some debate about the possibility of devolution within the North-East regions of England, although this debate never took the dimensions of the one on Scottish and Welsh devolution.

To reflect regional diversity within Scotland, I have included in the sample of newspapers studied in my thesis titles from both the central belt and non-central belt regions of Scotland. The same was not done for England, because the Scottish press is the primary focus of the research and because limitations of time and resources placed a more detailed investigation of the English regional press outside the bounds of this thesis.

In both Scotland and England, social class has been a significant form of collective identification. In the second half of the 20th century though, sociologists argue that the traditional structure of social classes has come under pressure, due to the social and economic changes brought about by the decline of industrial production, the rise in living standards, increased access to education and social mobility, as well as the rise of other types of identity (Mackintosh & Mooney, 2000, Roberts, 2001). Some even believe that social class has ceased to be important in shaping identity (Pakulski & Waters, 1996), although such a claim would be difficult to support in the UK.

However both England and Scotland have seen the rise of a larger and better organized middle class. The previously strong working class is gradually declining, losing members and important sources of power such as the Trade Unions. Moreover, the Labour Party, formerly the main political representative of the working class, has gradually followed a more general trend of dissociation of political parties from individual classes (Mackintosh & Mooney, 2000, Roberts, 2001). Roberts (2001) asserts that despite all this, social class remains a strong predictor of political behaviour in the UK. It is rather that the way it comes into the equation is changing and will become clearer in the years to come. To reflect social class diversity, this study includes newspapers which are traditionally seen as addressing different social strata, as discussed in chapter 3.

The role of gender, and of women in particular, in public life in Scotland and in England also has common features. Women acquired voting rights in the first half

of the 20th century but did not receive equal treatment in the workplace. The 1975 Sex Discrimination Act is considered to have improved the position of women, but change in attitudes and progress toward equality has been slow (Brown et al., 1994). Breitenbach (1997) argues that their contribution in the construction of Scottishness has been ignored because women in Scotland have been historically denied access to political power as well as to representation in historical accounts, though this is also true for most of the UK. Women in the UK are still fighting for equality of pay, while few manage to reach top management (Mackay and Bilton, 2000).

Finally, both Scotland and England have a history of immigration, although England to a greater degree than Scotland. Modood et al. (1997) suggest that minorities in Britain have experienced significant discrimination. Ethnicity to them means belonging to a particular group, which does not necessarily conflict with British identity; however not receiving equal treatment often leads to ethnic assertiveness.

I will now turn to some distinctive features of Scottish society with regard to the identities discussed so far. In terms of regionalism, the Highlands have previously been a more deprived area than the centre of Scotland, characterized by rural communities and ruled by the Crofting landlords (Crichton, 1992). Yet large cities, such as Glasgow, have also faced problems of deprivation. Orkney and Shetland, which before becoming part of Scotland belonged to Norway, experienced movements for autonomy in the 1980s and 1990s, although these did not gain significant support. In the 1987 election, the autonomy movements in the two areas ran with a common candidate, but came fourth in their region. There is also rivalry

between the two largest cities, Edinburgh and Glasgow, with Glasgow being the city of industry and Edinburgh that of political administration (Young, 1992).

Social class divisions in Scotland are marked and the country has traditionally had a large industrial working class (McNair, 2008a:228). Law and Mooney (2006) argue that following devolution there has been a communicative effort by all Scottish governments to recast Scotland as a prosperous society, where only a small minority live in poverty. The authors argue that such a view of Scotland underplays the role of class divisions and conceals the degree to which social policy is based on them.

Although the position of women in Scottish society is similar to that in the rest of the UK, they seem to be better represented in the Scottish Parliament than in the UK Parliament. In the 1999-2003 session, out of 129 MSPs, there were 48 women, 50 in the 2003-2007 session and 43 in the 2007-2011 one. Yet, they still account for a relatively low proportion of all MSPs (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2007).

In Scotland there are relatively small minority ethnic groups (compared to the rest of the UK), mainly consisting of those who arrived from Asia in the post-war era (Devine, 1999). It is often thought that Scots are more tolerant towards minority groups than the English, however survey evidence does not confirm this (Bond, 2006, Bechhoffer and McCrone, 2009). Saeed et al.'s (1999) work on ethnic identification among Glasgow Pakistani teenagers found that they saw themselves as both Scottish and Pakistani/Muslim and that they identified more with the national majority than with other British Pakistani/Muslims. Representation of minorities in Scottish politics is still low however.

Finally, a significant difference between Scotland and the rest of the UK (with the exception of Northern Ireland), is the position of religion in public life. The Church of Scotland was one of the institutions that helped maintain Scottish distinctiveness during the years of the Union, despite the existence of a Catholic tradition in the Highlands. The Church and Nation Committee, established in 1919, has taken position on various issues affecting Scottish civic society. Since 1948, it has supported self-government for Scotland (Rosie, 1992, Forrester, 1993) and was among the participants of the 1990 Scottish Constitutional Convention.

From the 1800s a large wave of Irish Catholics moved to Scotland, attracted by the jobs created through industrialization, and concentrated mainly in Glasgow, Dundee and the Lothians. The Catholic Church provided education for Irish Catholic children after 1918 through its own schools, which remain an important means for preserving Catholic identity until today (Devine, 1999). Until the 1960s, Protestant and Catholic identities were the source of deep social divisions. However Abbotts et al. (2004) argue that this has diminished significantly among the current generation, even though the Catholic-Protestant division in Scotland has not disappeared. Traces of sectarianism can still be found in the rivalry between Celtic and Rangers football clubs in Glasgow (Boyle, 1994) and the Orange Order marches.

Bruce (2001) argues that secularization in the UK has taken the form of indifference to religious matters and that Scottish and Welsh claims for devolution were based on political and cultural factors, while religion played little role in the way they defined their national identities. Religion, however, remains an important factor for

minority groups. Apart from the two main Christian denominations, Scotland currently has smaller Jewish, Islamic, Sikh, Hindu and Buddhist religious groups.

This section has looked at different identities which intersect with feelings of national belonging. National identity is contested and complicated and the contribution of region, social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, but also of other identities such as age or parenthood, needs to be considered. Considerations of regionalism and social class have influenced the choice of my research sample, however the other identities discussed here are not as clearly represented in the daily morning press and therefore had less influence in my project.

4. Scottish and “UK” newspapers and identity

This section examines the relationship between newspapers and national identity in Scotland and in England. The Scottish media have been accorded a central role in the reproduction of Scottishness in many accounts of Scottish society (Schlesinger, 1998, Brown et al., 1998, Connell, 2003). Their relationship with a Scottish sense of national identity is seen as one of mutual influence: in general terms, the media are viewed as partly shaped by national identity and as contributing to shaping this identity. In addition, a relationship between media consumption and the public’s perceptions of national identity has also been found (Kiely et al. 2006).

Billig’s concept of banal nationalism (1995) is an influential account of how such a construction might be realized in the news. His approach was referred to in section 3.1 of this chapter and is detailed in chapter 4 together with that of scholars who

applied his framework to the Scottish press. Briefly stated, it examines how the language and classification of news may refer to the homeland shared by the newspaper and its readers, without naming it. Yet, one of the criticisms his approach has received is that he assumes the existence of a “national” press in the UK.

Such an assumption would be inaccurate both because the constituent parts of the UK are served by different newspapers², which may be indigenous regional titles or separate editions of London titles (Law, 2001), but also because even within England it is very difficult to speak of a national press. As MacInnes et al. (2007) argue, a lot of the material published in “national” newspapers such as *The Times* or *The Guardian* only represents London or the English South-East, while at the same time some “English” titles are also sold in other countries³. Their objection to Billig is not only that there is no national press in the UK, but also that he takes for granted that readers understand news language as pointing to a national community, while the communities they imagine when reading the news might have a different spatial or even non-spatial character.

Although this later criticism is valid, as argued in section 3.1 of this chapter when discussing Anderson’s (1983) concept of imagined communities, it does not change the fact that newspapers do address their readers as communities, which sometimes (though clearly not always) have national or regional features and this is possible to identify in news language. Although a full account of how such addresses work should take into consideration audience reception, a study of how texts themselves

² This is a criticism Billig himself has accepted (Billig, 2009).

³ This is also true of some Scottish titles, such as *The Sunday Post*, which has sales outside Scotland

construct national and non-national communities is also essential in understanding the processes of the production of meaning.

Returning however to the question of what may constitute a “national” UK press, it is indeed a fact that its definition is problematic. Seymour-Ure (1996) also makes the same point: “national” papers today are generally London-based and can have a number of different “local” editions for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland but also for different parts of England. Seymour-Ure concludes that what makes a newspaper national is “a mixture of national reputation, geographical reach and breadth of content” (1996:27). Regional newspapers on the other hand distinguish themselves by addressing a geographically defined public, with a mixture of national and local news.

Seymour-Ure’s (1996) criteria, though, can be contested. As MacInnes et al. (2007) suggest “breadth of content” is indeed a problematic criterion given that much of the material in the “UK” press is not representative of the whole country. Geographical reach could be a criterion to define a “national” press, if understood as the areas where a newspaper is available for sale, yet less so if the actual numbers of readership it attracts are taken into consideration. In Scotland for example, until recently, indigenous Scottish titles enjoyed considerably more popularity than “UK” titles, but they are currently losing readers (McNair, 2008a, Hutchison, 2008). The most popular “UK” titles in Scotland at the time of writing are editions which are specifically produced for the Scottish market, not London editions. The same was the case for a large part of the 20th century when *The Scottish Daily Express* was the

most popular paper, before being overtaken by *The Daily Record* (Connell, 2003, Hutchison, 2008).

The same problems which exist in defining a national UK press also hold when defining a national Scottish press. Meech and Kilborn note that newspapers such as *The Scotsman* and *The Herald* try to combine serving their region with local news while at the same time aspiring to a national status, by expressing “a sense of nationhood, as opposed to mere regionality” (1992:258). This is obvious both in their content and their marketing approach. Despite this, the majority of the readership of both these titles is located in the cities where they are produced (Edinburgh and Glasgow respectively) and they sell few copies outside these cities (Luckhurst, 2002).

The Audit Bureau of Circulations (abc.org.uk) classifies *The Scotsman*, *The Herald* and *The Daily Record* under national newspapers, while *The Aberdeen Press and Journal* and *The Dundee Courier* are classified among regional newspapers. However, none of these titles is bought evenly throughout Scotland and especially the readership of the four quality papers⁴ is very much based in their respective cities. Moreover their circulation numbers are comparable and in some cases the regional titles outsell considerably the “national” Scottish press, therefore the national aspirations of the latter are not always accompanied by equivalent sales.

It appears therefore that what makes a newspaper “national” is primarily the way it is positioned in the market. This has to do with coverage to a certain extent (for

⁴ The *Aberdeen Press and Journal* and *The Dundee Courier* are classified here under quality papers, even though they are not national titles because they offer a similar mixture of public affairs news, even if a large part of their coverage concerns their regional communities.

example *The Courier* and *The Press and Journal* focus more obviously on local community news) but perhaps primarily with the way a title is marketed and presents its content.

Indeed, as Connell succinctly argues, it is difficult to define national newspapers in Scotland or in the UK based on circulation, distribution or even the comprehensiveness of their coverage. National status is “more about the manner in which content is presented.” (2003:203). Asserting a national distinctiveness at the level of content presentation, both linguistic and visual⁵, seems to contribute to a paper’s perception as “national”.

This study however aims to be as representative as possible of the Scottish daily morning press and includes titles which present themselves as national, regional titles with circulations that are comparable to the “national” titles, as well as Scottish editions of English newspapers. I discuss the profile of the newspapers included in this study in the following section.

My study does not include regional titles which are not published on a daily basis, evening or Sunday newspapers. The reason is primarily one of feasibility of the project in terms of time and resources. Besides, the campaign coverage studied extends over a month for each of the two election periods and offers a good sense of the diversity of coverage during the election campaigns.

⁵ Meech and Kilborn (1992) discuss how Scottish titles’ mastheads communicate Scottishness visually.

5. Scottish newspapers: profile and ownership

The establishment of the first newspaper in Scotland, the *Mercurius Caledonius* in 1661 (Hutchison, 2008) was the beginning of the long history of the Scottish press. Some of the papers which are prominent in the Scottish market today, and which are studied in this thesis, have a tradition of over a century: *The Aberdeen Press and Journal* was established in 1748, *The Glasgow Advertiser/Herald* in 1783, *The Dundee Courier* in 1816, *The Scotsman* in 1817, *The Daily Record* in 1895, while the Scottish editions of *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail* were established much more recently in the late 20th century (Hutchison, 2008).

These newspapers changed ownership a number of times during their history and sometimes they were owned by companies outside Scotland. *The Scotsman* for example was part of the Canadian Thomson Group from the 1950s until the mid-1990s, was subsequently owned by the Barclay brothers and then by its current Scottish publisher, Johnston Press. *The Herald*, is currently owned by Newsquest Plc, a subsidiary of American Gannet Corporation, to which it was sold by the Scottish Media Group in 2002. *The Daily Record* was established by Alfred Harmsworth, who later became the historical press baron Lord Northcliffe and who also founded *The Daily Mirror* - still in the same group as *The Record* - although the company itself was sold and is currently based in England (the Trinity Mirror Group). D.C. Thomson, one of the two most successful Scottish newspaper publishers, together with Johnston Press, owns *The Dundee Courier* and *The Aberdeen Press and Journal*. *The Scottish Sun* and *The Scottish Daily Mail* are owned by the same companies as their English editions, namely Rupert Murdoch's

News International and Associated Newspapers respectively (Hutchison, 2008, McNair, 2008a).

Intensifying concentration of media ownership in large conglomerates has been an international phenomenon in the late twentieth century, facilitated by advanced technologies and globalization. As a result, in the UK, the newspaper market is dominated by just seven companies (Doyle, 2002). In Scotland it has been common in the second half of the 20th century for non-Scottish media companies to own Scottish newspapers and the effects have been much debated. The main argument against this pattern is that it compromises the “Scottishness” of the coverage and promotes “foreign” interests and agendas. On the other hand, the entry of international players in the Scottish market has also meant investment in technological resources (Hutchison, 2002).

The political orientation of these Scottish titles has also changed through time, depending on their owners, their editors but also on commercial considerations. *The Daily Record*, a traditionally Labour supporting title, has occasionally opposed proposals of the Labour-Liberal Democrat Scottish Executive in the first years of devolution (Hutchison, 2008). *The Scottish Sun*, which usually follows the political alliance of its London edition, from supporting the Conservatives in the 1980s and early 1990s to Blair’s New Labour in 1997, briefly supported the SNP in the 1992 general election. *The Herald*, once a Conservative newspaper, changed its support at the end of the 20th century toward a more liberal position. *The Scotsman* and *The Dundee Courier* remain more right-of-centre, though neither of them support the Conservatives in the explicit way of *The Scottish Daily Mail*. Yet, despite their

differences in political views, a consensus seems to emerge among these titles, which is skeptical about Scottish independence and critical about the early performance of the Scottish Parliament (McNair, 2008a).

As I explain in chapter 4, my project focuses on the coverage of seven Scottish titles, which, as discussed above, represent a variety of political positions. Two of them are central-belt quality titles with a claim to Scottish national status (*The Herald* and *The Scotsman*), two are regional quality titles with very high circulations in their areas (*The Dundee Courier* and *The Aberdeen Press and Journal*), one is a central belt indigenous Scottish tabloid (*The Daily Record*), which at the time studied had the highest circulation in Scotland, and the other two are the most popular Scottish editions of English titles (*The Scottish Sun* and *The Scottish Daily Mail*). Together they provide a representative picture of the Scottish daily morning press with respect to circulation figures, political views and positioning in the market. They also address readers of different social classes and from different regions within Scotland.

These papers are compared to a sample of five English and UK papers. As discussed above, the term “national” is problematic in a UK context, yet *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* are both available in the same edition throughout the UK. The former is the highest selling left-of-centre morning quality title and the latter the highest selling right-of-centre morning quality title. The other three papers are English and have separate editions in Scotland. *The Sun* and *The Mirror* are the two most popular tabloids (popular newspapers), both supporting New Labour in the two elections studied, the former from right and the latter from left-of-centre.

Finally, *The Daily Mail* is the best-selling middle market title and traditionally a Conservative supporter. As discussed in chapter 4, this sample was chosen to represent a variety of political positions as well as a large and diverse readership. Because it includes London editions of English newspapers and papers which claim to be UK national, it is referred to in this study as the English/UK sample.

6. Scottish newspapers: present and future

Scotland has a tradition of very high rates of newspaper readership (Smith, 1994, Law, 2001) and a very competitive daily press market including 17 titles (McGurk, 2008, May 15). Traditionally, the Scottish public has preferred Scottish to British newspapers (Macdonald, 1978, Hutchison 2008), however all this has changed in recent years, especially between 2006 and 2009.

As indicated in chapter 1, at the time of writing newspapers in Scotland are facing a bleak situation: sales are falling at fast rates, with an estimated 50% drop in the last 20 years which is accelerating further (McNair, 2008b); readerships are moving toward online news, which is not a profitable format even for the most successful websites (McNair, 2008b); advertising revenue and especially classified and public sector job advertisements are also moving to the internet. Although the crisis in the press industry is longer standing, it was aggravated by the economic recession of 2008-9 (House of Commons, 2009).

The crisis seems to affect indigenous Scottish titles primarily, as the English/UK press is gaining readership in Scotland. *The Scottish Sun* overtook *The Daily Record*

as the best selling title in 2006 (Hutchison, 2008; Neil, 2008, February 11). In August 2009, *The Times* and *The Telegraph* sold half the number of copies sold by *The Scotsman* and *The Herald* without producing special Scottish editions (www.abc.org.uk). Even *The Scottish Daily Mail*, whose traditional support for the Conservatives has made it unpopular in Scotland in the past, now sells about 115,000 copies (Neil, 2008, February 11), which is higher than the combined sales of *The Scotsman* and *The Herald*.

The Scottish “national papers” face reduced sales and as a result have been making cuts in production costs and staff numbers. These have caused concerns regarding the resulting effects on the quality of their coverage (House of Commons, 2009). On the other hand though, it has been suggested that drastic measures are required to ensure the survival of Scottish news and that the only way these titles may survive would be mergers either between them and their Sunday sister titles, or even between the two central belt qualities, to produce one Scottish central belt broadsheet (Luckhurst, 2002, Hutchison, 2008).

Reduced readerships are not a unique feature of the Scottish press. The print newspaper is generally seen as a format in decline (Meyer, 2004). This process, though, appears quicker in Scotland due to the large number of titles competing for a small readership (McNair, 2008b). Others have suggested that the limited resources available to the indigenous Scottish titles compromise their content, which means less coverage of UK and international news and more dependence on material provided by news agencies and press releases (Neil, 2008, February 11;

House of Commons, 2009). This is argued to impact on the readership's preference for newspapers based in England which offer more comprehensive coverage.

All this has caused concern about democratic debate in Scotland. MacWhirter (2006, September 25) argues that the rising popularity of English titles is influencing the Scottish public sphere towards an English agenda. As he puts it, "the Scottish conversation is being hijacked by the [...] obsessives of another country". John Curtice believes that the Scottish public receives less exposure to Scottish affairs as a result of the decline of Scottish titles (quoted in Kemp, 2009, May 25). This is even more so as, following devolution, London-based newspapers include almost no news regarding Scotland (Rosie et al., 2004, McNair, 2008a).

In Spring 2009, the Scottish Affairs Committee at the House of Commons investigated the problems faced by Scottish newspapers by taking evidence from newspaper owners and editors, representatives of the unions and academics. It concluded that the industry should find sustainable business models, through mergers, to ensure its survival and the quality of its products (House of Commons, 2009).

The Scottish press is currently facing difficult times. Although readerships were already declining at the beginning of the 2000s, the effects were not yet as widely debated during the period studied in this project (2001-2005). However the insights of the study, regarding the performance of English/UK and Scottish newspapers in the public sphere, will be considered in the light of recent developments, in the conclusions of this thesis.

3. Democracy and the public sphere

“The issue of democratic participation [is where] Habermas’ public sphere argument remains central. [...] it insists that we continually evaluate the media for what they contribute to our lives as citizens, as active participants in the public sphere”

Goldsmiths Media Group (2000:12)

1. Introduction

The previous chapter looked at national identity as a theoretical concept, but also at the currency of debates around it in Scotland and in England. The way national identity is constructed in English/UK and Scottish newspapers is examined in my project, to reveal how these papers constitute their and their readers’ identity in a post-devolution context. As discussed in chapter one, collective identity and national identity in particular, is significant for the function of a public sphere (Peters, 2008b). This chapter therefore examines the second central theoretical concept of this thesis, namely that of the public sphere and the role of the media in democratic deliberation.

Jürgen Habermas’s (1989) theory of the public sphere is at the centre of many accounts of democratic deliberation and has been influential in the study of mediated political communication. Although his model has been widely debated and cast by many as an idealization which cannot be materialized in real world

societies (Bennett and Entman, 2001), it provides a fruitful construct through which to understand and evaluate democratic debate and opinion formation.

The concept is also central to this project, in terms of its evaluation of the performance of newspapers. In this chapter I discuss Habermas' original theory and the way it was expanded and amended by his critics and by Habermas' own later writings. I then examine different theories of deliberative democracy and their normative considerations regarding the role of the media in the public sphere. I explain why traditional media may not adequately fulfill such a role and whether the internet provides more potential for democratic debate. I also discuss the relationship between the public sphere as a space of deliberation and the boundaries of the nation-state, a question of particular relevance in my thesis. Finally, I look at previous research on post-devolution coverage of elections and the extent to which it addresses issues of national identity and the public sphere.

2. The public sphere

The public sphere (Habermas, 1989) is a communicative space, a forum within society where citizens form their opinions about issues of common concern, by participating in a process of public deliberation and rational argumentation. Public opinion, which is consensus arrived at through deliberation, legitimates government decisions. The role of the public sphere is that of a sensor: it identifies issues of common concern among citizens, debates them, provides possible solutions and then informs the decisions which are made by the governing bodies. Public opinion is ideally transformed into administrative power through legislation (Habermas,

1996:299). The public sphere is therefore located “between the political system, on the one hand, and the private sectors of the lifeworld on the other” (Habermas, 1996:373).

Habermas’ account (1989) of the ideal public sphere is located in eighteenth century Europe and the rise of the bourgeoisie. The conditions of the free market enabled the emergence of a social class of literate, propertied men with a growing interest in public affairs, which affected the areas of trade and industry where they had financial interests. In order to defend these interests against state authority, they gathered at salons and coffee houses and debated issues of common concern. The newspapers and journals which circulated in these locations also contributed to the deliberative process. The debate took place face to face and the participants’ status was ‘bracketed’: only the persuasiveness of their arguments mattered, as they all, according to this argument, shared an interest in truth and the common good.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries however, saw the emergence of large organizations which gradually took over the public sphere to promote their own interests against the state, excluding the public from this debate. The state became increasingly involved in citizens’ lives and citizens were treated as “clients” by politicians. Quality argumentation lost its place within the public sphere. Politicians and collective organizations sought to gain the support of the public by using “publicity” techniques to manipulate public opinion, rather than rational argumentation. The term publicity itself changed meaning: it lost the associations of open debate and acquired its current sense of promotion through the media. All this, according to Habermas, has led to a “weakening” of the public sphere.

The mass media played a vital role in this process, as they became the means through which deliberation is realized in a mass democracy. Media content is based on attracting mass audiences, rather than promoting debate. Journalism has been increasingly influenced by commercial organisations and commercial criteria, resulting in a compromise of news content.

Many authors have written about Habermas' ideas, to criticize or expand on them. Crossley and Roberts (2004) point out that Habermas' theory has been criticized for ignoring the power relations involved in modern communication, for overstating the decadence of the media and their power over citizens, as well as for ignoring the existence of alternative public spheres. According to Haas (2004), Habermas has also been criticized for overemphasizing the value of a face-to-face deliberation, which is no longer the primary means of political communication and for drawing dividing lines between rationality and irrationality, information and entertainment.

An important area of criticism of the Habermasian concept relates to access, diversity and power relations. Habermas has been accused of ignoring the existence of power relations within the public sphere or between the bourgeois and the plebeian public sphere, which existed at the same time (Dahlgren, 1991, Keane 1991, Calhoun, 1992, Eley, 1992, Verstraeten, 1996), as well as of assuming the existence of a "common good" and a common worldview among citizens with different interests (Fraser, 1992, Boyte, 1992).

In an argument that has particular significance for the links between national identities and the operation of the public sphere, he has also been accused of

ignoring the role of identity in opinion formation (Calhoun, 1992, Fraser, 1992) and of excluding marginalized publics, who may form alternative and competing public spheres (Keane, 1991, Fraser, 1992, Eley, 1992). In fact, Fraser (1992) argues that diversity is integral in society and should be positively thematized, rather than “bracketed” and hidden.

Special emphasis has been given to the exclusion of women from the public sphere (Fraser, 1992, Ryan, 1992), to the exclusion of private issues from public discussion, and to the imposed dichotomy between rationality and emotion. Verstraeten (1996) and Dahlgren (2006) argue that political thought and action have an emotive aspect that co-exists with the rational one.

A further area of criticism concerns Habermas’ idealization of the bourgeois public sphere and his pessimism about its decline. Habermas sets the 18th century public sphere as an ideal, despite its many problems (Dahlgren, 1991, Keane, 1991, Eley, 1992) and overstates its disintegration, by ignoring the complex relationship between the public, the media and the process of opinion formation (Dahlgren, 1991, Granham, 1992, Verstraeten, 1996). Moreover, it has been argued that public deliberation cannot lead to consensus in a real-world situation: its role is to enhance the repertoire of views which become acceptable in society, without necessarily everyone agreeing about them (Peters, 2008c).

Finally, Habermas’ model has been deemed insufficient to account for a modern public sphere which is characterized by globalization, new technologies, new political and social movements and the crisis of the nation-state (Dahlgren, 1991,

Granham, 1992, Verstraeten, 1996). I will return to the potential of new technologies for realizing a participatory public sphere later in this chapter. The crisis of the nation-state is particularly relevant with regard to the Scottish case, as discussed in the previous chapter, and will be further examined in section 5 below.

This overview of criticisms is only a part of a large volume of debate about Habermas' theory; however it outlines the bases of most of the arguments that have been put forward. Responding to some of these criticisms, Habermas (1992) altered certain aspects of his initial position. He acknowledged the existence of a plebeian public sphere alongside the bourgeois one, the exclusion of marginalized publics, such as women, from the public sphere and the potential of citizen movements to constitute autonomous public spheres which initiate change, provided that they gain access to mediation of their views.

Especially in *Between Facts and Norms* (1996), Habermas argues that the private sphere of the lifeworld, the area where citizens experience issues and problems personally, should be the source of the issues debated in the public sphere. Private matters that require legislative regulation should emerge from the private sphere, with the help of citizens' associations which promote them to the public arena. The public arena itself is a field of struggle, where issues promoted by different groups fight for recognition as issues of public concern, and actors representing different interests fight for access to the debate. He sees the role of citizen movements as vital not only in promoting issues that affect the private sphere, but also in maintaining and reproducing the public sphere itself by sustaining dialogue. However he recognizes that not every group has equal access to the debate and

there are “unavoidable asymmetries” in the structure of the public sphere (1996:325).

The central concept of the Habermasian public sphere however remains that of rational deliberation. Participants in public debate should use clear, rational arguments with detailed justification, entertain and refute the arguments of their opponents in their effort to persuade. Dialogue between different views should follow these requirements in order to be adequately discursive (Ferec et al., 2002, Peters et al., 2008).

As for the role of the media in the public sphere, Habermas (1992) has subsequently acknowledged the public’s ability to critically process media messages, and is less pessimistic about the effects of the mediation of rational debate. In fact he sees the media as essential in bringing together the “abstract public sphere of isolated readers, listeners, and viewers scattered across large geographic areas” and in making the public sphere more inclusive (ibid, 1996:374). He talks of journalists’ role as gatekeepers who offer access to the debate to different social actors, yet he remains skeptical about their market-led news selection criteria which “depoliticize” public communication (ibid, 1996:377).

He proposes a number of normative criteria which the media should satisfy in order to serve the public sphere: they should presuppose and encourage an inquisitive, critical public, they should be independent from political interests, allow access to actors who present convincing arguments, and promote debate on issues which were put in the agenda by the public (ibid, 1996:378-9).

Taking into consideration these developments in Habermas' view of the role of the media in the public sphere, my study focuses on the issue of access provided to different social actors in the election coverage (chapter 7) and uses this concept to compare the performance of English/UK and Scottish titles. Moreover, the thesis also examines the degree to which newspapers in England and in Scotland promote dialogue among different agents and favour certain agents over others.

More approaches to deliberative democracy will be presented in the following section and more normative criteria for the role of the press will be outlined, based on each of them. Many of these criteria however, as is the case with the ones proposed by Habermas above, might sound somewhat idealistic in a real life media environment. Critics, like Blumler and Gurevitch, suggest that media products are shaped by professional practices which are "embedded in the fabric of the system in which they are placed, to communicate in ways that do not necessarily promote democratic goals" (1995:96). I will discuss the extent to which the media might serve democracy in a real context in section 4 of this chapter.

Nevertheless, Habermas' theory of the public sphere and the contributions made to it by its critics constitute an influential and useful framework in accounting for opinion formation and the relationship between politics, publics and the media in modern democracies. Habermas' concept of a communicative space where different views are expressed and political opinions are formed is central in this thesis, which focuses on the performance of the press within such a communicative space. My project examines the input provided by newspapers in England and in Scotland to

their respective readerships for further processing and deliberation. Criticisms of Habermas' theory discussed above, regarding the existence of multiple public spheres and the significance of identity in the public sphere, are useful when examining the mediated debate on general elections in Scotland and in England, given that it is often argued that there is a separate public sphere operating in Scotland, influenced by the country's separate national identity, as will be discussed later in this chapter. First, however, I discuss some alternative models of democratic debate and of the role of the media within it.

3. Deliberative democracy, the public sphere and the role of the media

Habermas' model of the public sphere is an account of deliberative democracy. This can be defined as opinion formation and decision making by citizens through public discussion and argumentation (Elster, 1998). This section looks at different theories of deliberative democracy and the role they ascribe for the media in the public sphere. There have been efforts by different scholars to categorise these approaches (Curran, 1991, Ferec et al., 2002, Hackett, 2005, Nordenstreng, 2006) though the main distinguishing feature between theories in all classifications is the level of citizen involvement in the political debate.

In the representative liberal group of theories, citizens have a passive role in democracy. They express their opinion by electing their representatives and thus legitimizing government rule. The elected policy-makers are ultimately accountable to the electorate, but citizens have no involvement in debate on policy issues (Curran, 1991, Crespi, 1997 Hackett, 2005). This approach is based on an

assumption best expressed by Walter Lippmann (1922), who believed that ordinary people do not have the ability or the interest to understand complex political issues and their role should be limited to electing the specialists-politicians who shape public policy. In liberal theory the public sphere is dominated by the representatives of the electorate and experts who offer their “objective” and scientific advice.

According to Hackett (2005), there are two forms of liberalism: market liberalism, which sees the laws of the free market as determining all aspects of political communication, and public sphere liberalism, which gives priority to the expression of different interests in the public sphere. Public sphere liberalism is influenced by Habermas’ model of rational deliberation. Ferec et al. (2002) on the other hand distinguish between representative liberal theories which exclude citizens from public debate and Habermas’ “discursive” approach which encourages citizen participation as a means to increase the amount of deliberation in the public sphere.

Habermas’ (1989,1996) approach shares with liberal theory a concern with rational argumentation and civility, namely respect for opponents in the debate, as well as a view of the public sphere as a free market of ideas, where different interests compete for recognition. Yet Habermas does not exclude citizens from the debate because their presence generates more dialogue. Dialogue and argumentation are more important in his approach than in representative liberal theory: as discussed in the previous section, participants in the debate should develop detailed, clear and persuasive arguments, taking into consideration the position of opponents.

In representative liberal theory, the role of the media is to provide objective information that will help citizens make informed choices during election time, to encourage people to vote, to represent the views of the governed to the government, and to affect public policy (Curran, 1991, 2000, Ferec et al., 2002). As discussed in section 2, Habermas requires the media to promote discussion based on deliberative values, to independently inform the electorate and encourage critical thinking. Therefore Habermas' approach differs from representative liberal theory in seeing the media as promoters of dialogue.

Criticism of representative liberal views has led to the development of an alternative, radical democratic approach. The radical approach is more inclusive, supporting maximum participation of the general public, as well as marginalized social groups in democracy (Crespi, 1997). The public sphere is seen as an arena of power struggle (Curran, 2000, Hackett, 2005).

Ferec et al. (2002) distinguish between two types of theory that are based on popular inclusion. Participatory liberal and constructionist theories both require citizen participation in politics. They both believe that the agenda of the debate should be continuously formed by the public. Their difference is that constructionist approaches privilege the accounts of marginalized groups and encourage the integration of personal narratives in the debate on public policy. This approach also supports the idea of multiple public spheres which allow identity formation and an infiltration of the political in both the private and the public spheres. They also suggest that Habermas' normative rules for argumentative deliberation exclude several publics from access to the debate (Fraser, 1992). As discussed earlier,

Habermas also agrees with citizen inclusion in democratic debate, however he thinks that this is not possible constantly but only at critical times, when “the actors in civil society [...] assume a surprisingly active and momentous role” (1996:380).

Theories which require citizen participation in the public sphere argue that the media should provide access to a diversity of actors, elite and non-elite, and promote citizen engagement with politics. They believe that the more citizens participate in public debate the more competent they become in public matters (Feree et al., 2002). Encouraging active forms of citizenry involves reporting diverse viewpoints and encouraging dialogue between them (Bennett et al., 2004), raising awareness of injustices, presenting ordinary citizens as potential agents actively involved in solving their problems, giving prominence to actors from civil society and integrating the language of the lifeworld in media accounts (Gamson, 2001), presenting citizens as contributing actively and substantially to debate and giving more coverage to opinion polls and protests (Lewis et al., 2005).

Moreover, the media in radical/participatory approaches should guard against abuse of power not only by the state but also by the free market. The media should not only represent a diversity of interests but also “redress the imbalance of power in society [...] compensating for the inferior resources and skills of subordinate groups in advocating and rationalizing their interests” (Curran, 1991:30). As Schudson (1995) notes, a “catalogue of available information” is not adequate for informed citizenry. Keane (1991) and Curran (2000) provide good examples of this approach in their proposals for media models based on the values of participatory democracy.

This section has presented alternative approaches to deliberative democracy and compared them with Habermas' theory. Representative liberal theories and participatory approaches differ in where they locate power in democratic debate: the former believe in a public sphere where deliberation is dominated by the representatives of the people, namely politicians and other elites, while the latter see citizen involvement as crucial in democratic debate. Habermas' own approach promotes citizen inclusion at critical times but he believes that under normal circumstances the public remains "in the gallery", not "in the arena" (1996:382).

The criteria I use to evaluate the performance of newspapers in the electoral debate in chapter 7 draw on these ideas and examine the extent to which different actors have access and influence on the reported debate, to which extent there is dialogue between different perspectives in the coverage and how impartially these agents are presented by the newspapers.

Yet, returning to a point made in the previous section, traditional media are shaped by routine practices and often commercial considerations and do not necessarily follow the role ascribed to them by theorists (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995). The following section elaborates further on this remark by looking at the performance of traditional media and especially the press in political debate. It also examines the extent to which the internet fulfils normative requirements more effectively.

4. The decline of mediated deliberation?

Several critics in the last decades identify a decline in democracy. They see trends such as distrust toward politicians, voter apathy and indifference to politics as due to a changing role of the media in democratic systems. The tabloidization and commercialization of news, the proliferation of entertainment material over “serious” news, the cynicism of journalists and the populist coverage of politics, the journalistic focus on corruption, spin and scandal are seen as responsible for creating poorly informed voters with no interest in politics and a distrust for the political system (Sparks, 1991, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995, 2000, Franklin, 1997, Barnett, 1998, Dahlgren, 2000, Lloyd, 2004, Seaton, 2006, Kronig, 2006).

Although both quality and popular newspapers are seen as affected by these problems, McNair (2000) sees the popular press in particular as creating an imbalance in the access different classes have to information on politics. Higher socioeconomic groups prefer quality newspapers (often referred to as “broadsheets”, irrespectively of their paper size) which have a stronger focus on politics, and lower socioeconomic groups prefer the popular press (or “tabloids”) which includes more entertainment content and less political analysis. The challenge for the press, according to McNair, is “to prevent disinterested citizens, who do not read elite papers from falling further behind” and to attract them to politics by offering them useful information in their own language (2000:39-40).

Schlesinger (2006) however argues that the “crisis” in citizens’ interest in politics is not only the responsibility of the media but also that of politicians who increasingly

prioritize spin and impression management over transparency, and thus contribute to the public's disillusionment. He also notes that the credibility crisis does not solely affect politicians but also traditional media which are losing their audience as a result. He suggests that the solution would be "a renaissance of deliberative, parliamentary politics and its successful promotion in a system of continually growing executive dominance" (2006:305), though he recognizes that this would be a challenging task.

Sparks (1998) offers a similar argument and traces the differences between social classes in the amount of political information they receive to the deficiency of the political system. He argues that modern democracies operate based on a representative liberal model, as this was described in the previous section. The political system expects citizens to participate in politics only when they vote for their representatives – the rest of the time they have no control over developments. Lower socioeconomic groups, according to Sparks, are aware of this and they choose news that they find more relevant to their daily lives: sensationalist, personal interest stories, celebrity news and sports. Higher socioeconomic groups seek the material offered by the quality press, either because they need this information as part of their professional pursuits, or because they believe that they need to be well informed on these issues, even if they cannot affect them. He suggests that a change in social realities will bring about a need for more political news.

Even if indifference or aversion to politics is due to a combination of media performance and the deficiencies of the political system, research often finds that the media do not fulfil the role prescribed for them in democratic theory. For

instance, Peters et al. (2008) find that most of the political coverage of the German press does not fit Habermas' criteria for rational dialogue by failing to offer adequate argumentation or by failing to juxtapose opposing arguments in opinion pieces. Lewis et al. (2005) find that UK media fail to empower citizens to participate in public debate by representing them as passive or lacking political opinion. Bennett et al. (2004) find that US media fail to promote dialogue between the views of political officials and activist groups in their coverage of the globalization debate.

Although the research cited above is based on both broadcast and print media, it can be argued that broadcast media are in a position to offer more opportunities for public participation, due to the types of interaction they allow. Radio and television can and do promote citizen participation in political debates through discussion programmes where members of the public are invited to question politicians for instance (McNair et al., 2003). Often, though, broadcast media promote an image of the public which does not contribute in policy debate but offers emotional reactions to decisions and agendas shaped by political elites (Lewis et al., 2005).

If traditional media are failing to empower participation in public affairs, to promote argumentative deliberation, or to make people interested in politics, it has often been argued that the internet is going to achieve these goals by enabling a more genuine, participatory public sphere. As a deliberative space which is open to anyone with computer and internet access, the web has the potential to create new, alternative public spheres of global reach. It can bring together like-minded individuals, function as a space of identity formation and facilitate extra-

parliamentary politics (Dahlgren, 2001). It can strengthen civil society, enrich the public sphere and encourage citizen participation in politics (McNair et al., 2003). The potential of the internet as a “new agora” (Sparks, 2001) is widely recognized.

On the other hand though, the web is not inclusive: socio-economic inequalities in society mean that not everyone has access to a computer and the internet or is competent in their use (Sparks, 2001, McNair et al., 2003). Even if inequalities of access to technology are overcome, a more central problem is that the existence of technological infrastructure that has the potential to generate a new public sphere is not sufficient for its actual generation. As Dahlgren (2001:36) argues very successfully, the crucial factor is to secure “the social conditions of citizenship”, namely to motivate people to participate in public debate. As he and others (Sparks, 2001, McNair et al., 2003, Dahlgren, 2005) suggest, at least at the time period studied in this thesis (2001-2005), the use of the internet for political deliberation in parliamentary elections was rather limited compared to its use for inter-personal communication or entertainment.

Even if the majority of people may not participate in online political debate, the internet is used as a source of political news. This is even more so today than at the time studied in this thesis (2001-2005). Although in its early stages in the 1990s online journalism was not as trusted as print news (Allan, 2006), the internet offered new potential for the delivery of an improved news product: immediacy in news reporting, the capacity to provide unlimited material about an event and the possibility to receive a personalised selection of news based on one’s interests.

Most newspapers started their on-line versions in the late 1990s - early 2000s, initially offering the same material as their print editions. Gradually some titles, like *The Guardian* or *The Times* developed very comprehensive news portals, while others continued to offer the same or less coverage than their print version. Sparks (2003) proposes a categorization of on-line newspapers according to the amount of content they have in common with their print edition. He stresses that the most successful on-line newspapers exploit the potential of the medium by providing much enhanced material compared to their print editions: links to background material, statistics, videos, discussion boards, etc. These websites tend to belong to quality newspapers or to public service broadcasters, because the mixture of content they offer (political, financial news and commentary) can benefit more from the technological capacities provided by the internet. On the other hand, the content mainly associated with the print popular press (celebrity gossip, sports, entertainment) is already available on the internet through specialist websites.

The digital divide, namely inequalities in access and use of the internet, operates at an economic level (who can afford the technology) but also at an education or age level (an older audience may not use it as much as younger people). Moreover it has been found that work routines associated with different types of jobs mean that on-line news is more popular among white-collar professionals who access it at work (Sparks, 2003). Generally research shows that online news users tend to be better educated, have a higher income and be more interested in news and politics (Lin et. 2005). The content of the successful “quality” news websites also addresses the higher rather than the lower socioeconomic groups: their content, their language and their perception of leisure and culture are “tailored to the interests of the better

educated and more affluent citizens” (Sparks, 2003:125). Research on the citizens who contribute content to such websites shows that they share a similar social profile (Wardle and Williams, 2008).

Therefore online newspapers are arguably more exclusive than printed papers. At least the popular print press offers some political information to those who choose not to read the quality papers. Hence the print press, despite the weaknesses in its coverage which were outlined earlier in this section, caters for a more diverse audience. Another problem Sparks (2003) identifies is that on-line news is continuously edited and it is difficult to collect and analyze material over time for a retrospective study.

This section has argued that neither traditional (print and broadcast), nor online newspapers fully satisfy the normative demands for the performance of the media in the public sphere set out in the previous section. The internet does provide the potential of a more egalitarian, participatory public sphere, though it does not yet satisfy the criterion of inclusiveness which is central in most theories of deliberative democracy. Although this could change in the future, at the time of the two elections studied in this project, political debate on the internet was relatively limited and few online newspapers offered different material to that of their print versions. In her study of the 2004 US presidential election, which is between the two election years I examine, Scammell (2005) notes that only the BBC and *The Guardian* websites offered added value in comparison with their broadcast/print versions. For these reasons, as well as for practical reasons of access to online

material retrospectively, my study focuses only on the performance of print newspapers in the public sphere.

5. The public sphere and the nation-state

The relationship between national identity, the nation-state and the public sphere is of particular interest in this project. As discussed earlier, multiple public spheres may operate simultaneously within a nation-state, but the role of identity within them remains vital. If participants in any debate do not feel they have enough in common, they may not think that they share any issues to discuss. Therefore a “degree of collective identification” (Peters, 2008b) plays a unifying role in the public sphere, even if the identification is not absolute, or if there are other differences in the identities of the participants. When such an identification is absent, there is no public debate:

Fragmentation by contrast denotes fracture of the processes through which ideas, arguments, and interpretation circulate [...] publics may lack interest or competence in the issues of other groups, or there may be a lack of higher level issues on which they can find common ground. (ibid: 187)

Peters (2008c:223) therefore suggests that there is a close interdependence between democracy, the public sphere, legitimacy and collective identity. National identity is often seen as a primary form of collective identity and Schlesinger argues that the public sphere is often described as co-extensive with the nation-state (1998:56). Especially within the context of a national election, national identity would appear

to be the most relevant form of collective identity shared by the electorate, the candidates and the media, even though alternative identities may additionally become relevant. This of course is not always that straightforward: as discussed in chapter 2, the nation-state is said to be undergoing a crisis and this crisis might challenge the notion of unitary national public spheres (Dahlgren, 1991). As also discussed in the previous chapter, the UK can be seen as a nation-state in crisis, due to the semi-autonomous status of three of its constituent nations. In fact, many have argued that there is a separate public sphere in Scotland, dealing with Scottish politics, especially after devolution (Schlesinger 2001, Higgins, 2006).

The central question that arises therefore for my project is whether political coverage of Westminster elections in Scottish newspapers exhibits discernible characteristics of difference from English/UK coverage. At the same time, the project considers how devolution in Scotland impacts on the supposedly national UK press coverage of the same elections. Chapter 4 explains how and based on what criteria this evaluation is carried out, using previous research on media performance in political debate and on the theoretical frameworks discussed in sections 2 and 3 of the current chapter.

On the other hand, it might correctly be argued that the media, and newspapers in particular, do not constitute the public sphere. The public sphere is people deliberating on public issues. An evaluation of the public sphere itself should look at more than the coverage of newspapers: it should look at the discourse used by politicians, the coverage of other media and the way all this input is used by the electorate in forming their opinion and making deliberations. Of course such a

project would require more resources and time than were available to the present researcher.

Yet the coverage studied here can and does tell us something meaningful about political debate in the UK after devolution. Mediated communication is important in the public sphere. It offers citizens information and opinions on social issues, it gives them input for deliberation in their everyday meetings with each other, it provides them with views to think about, to accept, to reject or to appropriate to their own convictions. Although readership research is valuable in exploring how messages in the public sphere are interpreted, focusing on audience responses to media content and neglecting the study of the content itself “misses many other important and measurable characteristics of political communication on which the quality of democracy depends” (Bennett and Entman, 2001:9). Therefore the study of media coverage is essential and should be taken into account in any study of democracy (McNair, 2000). Section 4 of this chapter has explained why I focus on newspaper coverage in particular for the present study.

6. The electoral public sphere and the media

Given that the subject of this project is how newspapers in Scotland and in England cover general elections, this final section focuses specifically on research around the electoral public sphere. It initially discusses the idea of agenda-setting within the context of an election because, although this theory does not refer directly to the concept of the public sphere, it suggests that there is a relationship between the topics given prominence in the media and those deliberated by citizens. It proposes

that the media contribute to democratic debate by promoting the topics which the public deliberates on. Although this theory has been extensively challenged, even its critics acknowledge that it has raised useful debate about the interaction between public opinion, the media and policy formation. The second part looks at previous studies of Scottish and UK election coverage after devolution and evaluates their contribution to a theorization of the Scottish and/or UK public sphere.

6.1 Election agendas

Although the idea that the media might directly influence voting decisions sounds generally outdated and reminiscent of “hypodermic needle” effects theories, the media do offer input for the electorate to process and use in decision making and deliberative debate. A concept deriving from the extensive literature on media effects, which has been popularized and is often heard in the context of general elections is that of the “agenda”, namely the set of issues promoted by politicians (political agenda), debated in the media (media agenda), or recognized by the public as relevant in the election (public agenda).

The “agenda-setting” theory was developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972) and argues that the media agenda influences people’s perceptions of what the issues currently are on which they should be informed and have an opinion (public agenda), even if their actual opinions vary from each other and from those projected in the media. According to this argument, the more salient an issue is in the media, the more important it is seen to be by the public (Dearing & Rogers, 1996, Weaver, 1987). As Kosicki (1993) notes, the major contribution of agenda-setting theory in

the media effects debate is that it shifted attention away from persuasion of the public to identification of salient issues. At the same time it reconceptualised media impact as a cognitive rather than an affective phenomenon (Crespi, 1997).

Further research on agenda setting, however, questioned the assumption that it is the media agenda that shapes the public agenda. Kleinnijenhuis and Rietberg (1995) distinguish three approaches to the relationship between the political, media and public agendas: the political and media agendas are formed by the public agenda; the political agenda defines the media agenda, which in turn influences the public agenda; and the media agenda influences both the political and the public agenda. Others suggest that agenda-setting theory has potential outside the field of media studies and requires an interdisciplinary approach (Kosicki, 1993) and a higher level of cognitive analysis (Edelstein, 1993) to take it beyond basic audience awareness of media messages.

Yet weaknesses in the agenda-setting approach have also been identified. It has been argued that the theory does not define clearly what an issue is and how broad or specific it may be. It also does not provide a detailed account of the process of influence between agendas, namely why, how and how fast it happens (Williams, 2003:182). Moreover, the original version of the theory does not fully explain who sets the agenda of the media. Further research has found that media agendas are influenced by an interplay between different social actors: governments, interest groups, citizens and politicians (Williams, 2003:183).

Within the specific context of a UK general election, Blumer and Gurevitch (1995) argue that the media agenda is shaped by an interactive process between journalists, political communicators and politicians. In the UK media, they claim, politics is considered a “worthy” activity, politicians are not seen with as much suspicion as in the US, and therefore they are given more opportunities to set the agenda (ibid.: 94). However, they continue, the “UK” media do not completely reflect politicians’ agendas, but rather “amplify” it. The authors conceptualise a continuum between “agenda reflecting” and “agenda setting”, where “agenda amplifying” is closer to the “reflecting” end, but allows the media some degree of influence (ibid.:95).

As discussed earlier in this chapter though, it is no longer the case that British politicians enjoy the respect of the media. I mentioned in section 4 of this chapter that the media are often seen as attacking politicians and representing the political process as infested by spin and concealment. This raises the question of whether this has an impact on the way “UK” or Scottish newspapers allow themselves to be influenced by political agendas – whether they are more willing to challenge them and set their own conditions regarding the issues they report perhaps based on their perception of the agenda of their readers. Another question raised by the discussion presented so far is whether other social actors, like citizens and interest groups seem to play any role in forming newspaper agendas. I deal further with agenda-setting in chapters 5 and 7 of this thesis, because it is closely related to who has the power to define the topics of public debate in the press.

Another question that arises from viewing election coverage as collaboratively produced by political communicators and journalists is how their discourses

interact. Garton et al. (1991:100-103) argue that the public sphere of a general election is like a “relay race” where discourses circulate between politicians and the mass media like batons and statements are “re-presented in different discursive domains”. In the final section of chapter 7, I discuss examples in the coverage of how politicians’ discourses are taken up by newspapers and re-articulated.

6.2 Post-devolution elections in the Scottish and UK media

Given their importance in a country’s political life, elections commonly attract the attention of researchers and media researchers in particular. In the following paragraphs I outline research conducted on election coverage in the Scottish and “UK” media, following devolution, and I examine the extent to which it contributes to a theorization of the public sphere in Scotland and in England.

The first Scottish Parliamentary election was held in 1999 and, according to Ritchie (2000), the campaign was the toughest in Scottish history until then, with political parties placing great pressure on newspapers. Ritchie describes the background of the campaign and cites extracts from newspaper articles. A more systematic study of this election however is offered by Higgins (2004a, 2004b, 2006), who uses quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the performance of English/UK and Scottish papers in the coverage of the election. He finds that Scottish titles demonstrated a distinct performance in every respect: they offered more coverage of the election, gave it more prominence within the paper, offered their readers more advice and evaluation of the events, were characterized by an explicit articulation of Scottishness, addressing their readers within an inclusive rhetoric of

“homeland making” and requiring of them background knowledge of Scottish politics and culture. He also finds a relationship between the discourse of different Scottish titles and their attitudes on devolution and independence. His approach, which is detailed in chapter 4 of this thesis, discusses issues of democratic debate in the Scottish press during these elections and makes useful comparisons with the English papers.

The report on the 2003 Scottish election, produced for the Electoral Commission by the Institute of Governance at the University of Edinburgh, is a quantitative study of a wide range of English/UK and Scottish coverage of that campaign. It finds that in the second Scottish election, as in the first (Higgins, 2006), Scottish broadsheets continued to devote more coverage, while “UK” broadsheets gave sparse attention, mainly through omnibus reports. Overall though, the report finds that the 2003 campaign was overshadowed by other issues. The study is very comprehensive and insightful in its quantitative analysis, however it provides little discussion of the implications of its results for mediated democratic debate. Moreover, it lacks the potential insights that could be delivered by a qualitative approach to the coverage.

Although research such as the above has offered systematic accounts of Scottish parliamentary election coverage in Scotland and in England, research on the coverage of general elections in the Scottish press after devolution has so far been limited in its scope. Butler and Kavanagh (2002) give a descriptive account of the 2001 UK General Election and the coverage it received in the “UK” press. They suggest that the election was generally seen as boring and journalists were only interested in embarrassing confrontations. In the same volume, Kellas (2002)

describes how Scottish newspapers covered the election, with support from quotes cited from different Scottish titles. He provides a narration of the issues that attracted the attention of Scottish papers, without offering a quantitative account of the amount of attention they received nor a qualitative account of the discourse used in the coverage. The overall impression in Scottish papers, he argues, was that the “real” issues, such as healthcare, education, safety, would be decided in the 2003 Scottish Election. Schlesinger (2001) gives a similarly brief description of the political position each national Scottish newspaper took and some of the issues they covered, again without presenting a systematic analysis of the coverage.

Scammel and Harrop (2002) provide a systematic, quantitative account of newspaper coverage in front-page stories and editorials for the various issues and political parties in the 2001 election and make a comparison with the 1997 election. In their report they mention “UK” titles only and, although they state that they also included data from Scotland, no comment is made regarding similarities and differences in the Scottish coverage. The authors conclude that compared to previous elections, the coverage in 2001 was a lot more subdued.

The most comprehensive and systematic accounts of media coverage of the two general elections after devolution are offered by the research team at Loughborough University (Deacon et al., 2001, 2006). These are purely quantitative studies which include not only a general account of the amount of coverage and the most covered issues, but also the amount of coverage of political actors and, specifically in 2005, an explicit comparison between the coverage in England, Scotland and Wales.

However, although they include a range of different media (radio, television, newspapers), the only Scottish newspapers in their samples are *The Scotsman*, *The Daily Record* and their Sunday sister papers. This does not allow a very comprehensive picture of the Scottish press to be drawn. Although their report on the 2005 campaign makes specific references to the coverage in Scotland, in both years the central focus of their research is on “UK” media. Moreover, the lack of qualitative analysis of the coverage or consultation with political editors limits the analysis to a quantitative account, albeit a very meticulous and insightful one, and does not allow the interaction of insights from different methods offered by a mixed method approach. Finally, neither these nor the studies of general elections cited earlier, consider the implications of their findings regarding the central concerns of this thesis: the construction of national identity and the performance of newspapers in the democratic debate in Scotland and in England.

This thesis addresses these issues and focuses instead on a mixed method account of Scottish press coverage of general elections after devolution, in comparison to English/UK papers. My project additionally draws theoretical inferences from its findings regarding the performance of these papers within a national public sphere and the quality of the mediated debate in the two parts of the UK.

4. Methodology

1. Introduction

As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the Scottish press is considered an essential component of a distinctively Scottish public sphere (Schlesinger 1998, Higgins, 2006), however research on how it operates within the context of UK-wide political events following devolution is limited. This thesis studies Scottish press coverage of general elections after devolution, focusing specifically on the 2001 and 2005 campaigns. Although the main focus of the project is on the Scottish press, it also looks at English/UK newspapers and the way their coverage responds to a devolved context. The research thus aims to contribute to the existing debate on the role of the Scottish press in political deliberation, and develop an understanding of the input offered by newspapers to electorates on the two sides of the Scottish border.

My comparison of the performance of newspapers is based on three criteria: the overall amount and distribution of coverage dedicated to the elections and to individual issues; the discursive construction of national identity within the coverage of the most mentioned issues; the access offered to different sources in the debate on the most mentioned issues and the treatment of the main actors. The first criterion involves a quantitative analysis of the coverage, while the other two are based on a critical analysis of a smaller sample. Additionally, a small number of interviews with Scottish political editors who covered the two elections complements the interpretation of the other findings.

A mixed methods design is thus adopted (Greene and Caracelli, 1997, Cresswell, 1999, Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, Cresswell and Piano Clark, 2007) combining different methods to approach the topic from different perspectives. This is because the performance of the press in the public sphere is a complex issue and quantitative or qualitative analysis alone would not deliver an adequate account. In the following sections I discuss the research design chosen, the selection of samples and the individual methods used.

2. Mixed methods research design

Mixed methods design is a framework developed by American scholars working in social sciences and health research, which describes in a very comprehensive and structured manner what is involved in conducting research that uses more than one method. The ideas they discuss overlap with discussions of “triangulation” in the UK methodological perspective (for example Deacon et al, 1999:135). The reason I have found the American framework more helpful to my purposes is that it is very comprehensive and detailed, covering both philosophical and methodological aspects, as well as issues of triangulation. Triangulation on the other hand, whether of data sources or methods, is often proposed in the European social sciences literature as a technique to ensure the accuracy and comprehensiveness of findings and the quality of the research, however in most accounts it does not comprise in itself a complete framework with which to approach a research project.

According to Creswell and Piano-Clark (2007:5), mixed methods research:

focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.

In terms of its philosophical assumptions, mixed method research is non-doctrinaire: it benefits from a combination of methods to address the needs of the research project, without being limited by ideological stances on method. Although it uses methods which are associated with positivist and constructivist paradigms, it adopts neither of these assumptions.

A positivist philosophical paradigm, commonly linked with quantitative methods, is associated with traditional concepts of objectivity, according to which social reality exists independently of the human subject, is ruled by laws allowing predictions and generalisations to be made and is objectively measurable. The task of the researcher is to record this reality and its laws (Kvale, 1996:11, 61, Arksey and Knight, 1999:10).

Constructivism on the other hand, mostly associated with qualitative methods, views social events as experienced and understood differently by different people and groups. In this tradition there is not one universal social reality, meanings are diverse, multiple and negotiated through social interaction and dialogue, and it is difficult to make law-like, reliable generalizations about human behaviour (Kvale, 1996, Arksey and Knight, 1999). The role of the researcher in this paradigm is to

explore how reality is constructed by different individuals and groups, to start from individual perspectives and build up to patterns and theories (Creswell and Piano-Clark, 2007:22-24).

Mixed methods research follows a pragmatic paradigm (Maxcy, 2003, Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003a, Creswell and Piano-Clark, 2007). This holds that in order to answer a question one can use diverse approaches, drawing on both objective and subjective knowledge, testing hypotheses and/or exploring participants' experiences of events. Therefore a pragmatist approach favors research which is designed so that it can effectively answer a research question, so that it "works" practically (Maxcy, 2003).

In this thesis, three methods are combined to provide an account of the performance of newspapers in the electoral debate. Such an account requires both objective (how much coverage was given to the elections) and subjective explorations (how the issues discussed are constructed discursively and how political editors perceive the performance of their papers). Their combination serves the practical purposes of the research and therefore the approach of this thesis is pragmatist. However, as discussed in chapter 3 and further later in this chapter, this project does not trace the discursive production of the papers into the domain of readership reception or public debate and focuses only on newspaper output.

The combination of methods in my thesis additionally offsets the weaknesses of individual methods, enabling a "triangulation" of findings. Triangulation, a term originating in trigonometry, is used in social science research to refer to the use of

different methods or data from different sources to improve the validity of research results (Erzberger and Kelle, 2003:459, Deacon et al., 1999).

A number of typologies of mixed methods research designs have been proposed based on a variety of criteria such as the order in which quantitative and qualitative methods are employed, the priority given to each method, how dominant each method is for the purpose of the study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003a:27-32). For example, Creswell and Piano-Clark (2007) propose a four-part distinction between the “triangulation”, the “embedded”, the “explanatory” and the “exploratory” design. In the first two cases, the quantitative and qualitative components of the research take place simultaneously: in the triangulation design both components have equal weight and their findings are merged and compared in the discussion of the findings, while in the embedded design one component of the research has a secondary, supportive role. In the last two cases, the qualitative and quantitative components are sequential: in the explanatory design quantitative analysis reveals general patterns and the researcher then selects some of the data sources to include in the qualitative component in order to reveal in-depth insights; in the exploratory design qualitative insights are used to design the quantitative stage.

In this study, content analysis reveals insights into the quantitative performance of Scottish and English/UK papers and therefore partly addresses the main research question. At the same time, this component serves to identify the most mentioned election issues to be analyzed in the qualitative component. The critical discourse analysis component follows and answers the same question from another perspective: the performance of the two sets of newspapers is evaluated based on

how they discuss major election issues. The quantitative component is at the same time a means of identifying a sample for the qualitative analysis and a contribution to the main research question. The interviews on the other hand have a supportive role throughout the discussion of the other findings, because they offer the alternative perspective of the producers of the coverage which may support or contrast with the other findings.

Therefore this project fits several categories in Creswell and Piano-Clark's (2007) taxonomy: it fits the triangulation design because the findings of the main components are combined to answer the research question, the embedded design because the interviews have a supportive role, and the explanatory design because the quantitative component helps to select the sample for the critical discourse analysis. However, mixed method research is pragmatic and non-doctrinaire and produces projects which are tailored to the needs of their research questions. As this chapter argues, the design selected here was chosen because it approaches the research problem from different perspectives and works practically.

Validity and reliability are two criteria widely applied to evaluate research quality. Validity has to do with whether research results are credible and whether an accurate account has been given for what the research intended to study; while reliability looks at whether research results remain consistent if the research is repeated (Creswell and Piano-Clark, 2007:133). Even though procedures vary in the quantitative and qualitative traditions, researchers tend to ensure compliance with these criteria by comparing their measuring instruments and results with external standards, asking others to test their measurements and being explicit about the

process followed. Creswell and Piano-Clark (2007) suggest that in mixed methods designs researchers should use the quality procedures appropriate for each method while the combination of methods also adds “triangulation validity” to the results.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003a) suggest that mixed methods research should have its own quality criteria, which can be applied to both the quantitative and qualitative components. They propose ensuring that the research design and the application of methods are rigorous and consistent with the research questions and that inferences are consistent with the data; examining if findings are consistent with each other and with findings of previous research and explaining any inconsistencies; examining whether alternative inferences are plausible based on the same findings. In contrast with traditional validity/reliability criteria which focus on the detail of method application, these criteria focus on the stage of research design, ensuring that the design chosen addresses the research questions, as well as on interpretation and argumentation, ensuring that the inferences derived from the findings are valid.

In this project I follow quality criteria appropriate for each of the methods used, which ensure that each method is applied rigorously and delivers accurate findings. In the interpretation of my findings I also use the criteria suggested by Tashakkori and Teddlie regarding the existence of logical links between findings and inferences, the comparison of inferences to each other and to previous research and the discussion of alternative plausible interpretations. In this chapter I discuss the rationale for my research design by explaining the contribution of each of the methods used, while in the discussion of findings I triangulate insights delivered from different methods.

3. Research questions and sample

3.1 Research questions

As mentioned, my research compares the performance of the Scottish press in covering the 2001 and 2005 general elections to that of English/UK newspapers. This involves comparing how newspapers make political information and views about the election available to their respective publics, for further discussion and evaluation. As discussed in more detail in chapter 3, section 5, this study does not look into how newspaper material is used by the public in their deliberation and opinion formation because such a focus would require additional time and resources. Moreover, as the study was carried out a few years after the elections studied, readers would have to rely on their memories of the press coverage, which could lead to inaccurate data. In fact, despite their greater professional involvement with the elections, the journalists I interviewed reported that even they had difficulties in recalling information about those campaigns. Moreover, as argued in chapter 3, although a study of readership reception is worthy, focussing on media coverage also reveals aspects of political communication which are essential in an understanding of democratic deliberation.

At the same time, the study contextualises the textual evidence by considering the perspective of journalists who covered these elections in Scotland, through the interviews. Although the project does not survey readerships, the interviewees were asked, among other questions, how they perceive their audience and how they cover the elections for this “imagined” audience.

A theoretical background on national identity and the public sphere, presented in chapters 2 and 3, informs the research questions, the analysis and interpretation of results, however no initial hypotheses are made, to allow findings to emerge from the data. Of course in a sense the project “tests” whether there are differences between Scottish and English/UK newspapers, or between the coverage of reserved and devolved issues. Yet these are neither formed nor treated as hypotheses, but as open ended questions where the answer could be more complex than a yes or a no.

The primary research question stated above can be further broken down into sub-questions addressed by the different stages/methods of the project:

Questions for the content analysis:

- How much coverage was devoted to the elections by Scottish and English/UK newspapers, what form did this coverage take and how was it distributed across time and within the papers?
- Which reserved and devolved issues were mentioned in different papers and how often were they mentioned? How do issue agendas compare between and within Scottish and English/UK titles?

Questions for the critical discourse analysis:

- How are the most mentioned devolved and the most mentioned reserved issues talked about in different newspapers?
- Is the coverage positioned in a national context? How is this context defined?
- How do the newspapers address their readership in the context of these issues?

- How diverse is the coverage of these issues in different newspapers regarding the sources who are granted access to the debate? Is there dialogue between sources holding different views?

- How are different news actors constructed? How do the papers position themselves with regard to these actors?

- To which extent do different papers fulfill normative criteria regarding citizen empowerment, representation of different views and dialogue in the public sphere?

Questions for the interviews¹:

- Did the way Scottish newspapers cover general elections change after devolution?

- Who do journalists have in mind as their readership and how do they tailor general election coverage for them?

- How did journalists receive information on the two campaigns?

- How did journalists deal with the coverage of reserved and devolved issues?

3.2 Sample

As explained in chapter 2, section 5, the study uses a sample of five indigenous Scottish newspapers (*The Scotsman*, *The Herald*, *The Daily Record*, *The Aberdeen Press and Journal* and *The Dundee Courier*), five English/UK titles (*The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Sun* and *The Daily Mirror*) and two Scottish editions of English papers (*The Scottish Sun* and *The Scottish Daily Mail*). All the papers studied are daily morning titles and the sample is balanced with regards to the categories (quality, middle market and popular) and the political

¹ A full list of the questions used in the interviews can be found in appendix 2.1.

viewpoints (right or left of the centre) of the newspapers included². Sunday newspapers are excluded to make the study more manageable, but also because the material from the daily press is extensive enough (over a month of daily coverage for each election) to provide a detailed account of the electoral coverage.

As discussed in chapter 3, section 4, the representativeness of online political debate as a public sphere has been contested although its potential to generate a new forum of deliberation is widely accepted. However, as also argued in that chapter, at the time studied here, online newspapers in the UK, with few exceptions, provided little additional material compared to their print editions and therefore a study of these is not included in this project. This study also does not look at the debate on political websites that do not focus on news, such as blogs, nor at the debate on other media such television or the radio. Such studies would require separate research projects if they were to be carried out in depth.

The majority of textual data was retrieved from Lexis-Nexis© and includes all the election coverage in these papers, starting from the day after the official announcement of the election date, and ending on the day of the election (09.05.2001 - 07.06.2001 and 07.04.2005 - 05.05.2005)³. It has often been argued that this database is problematic as a resource for research. Deacon's (2007) evaluation concludes that there are several issues to take into consideration when planning a project based on material from Lexis-Nexis©, such as random omissions

² More details on the profiles of individual titles can be found in the discussion in chapter 2, section 5

³ All the material was included in the content analysis, but the critical discourse analysis used a smaller sample. More details on the samples for individual methods can be found in the relevant sections of this chapter.

in the database, the problem of identifying keywords which deliver relevant coverage and the possibility of getting irrelevant articles.

I have accounted for Deacon's (2007) critique when planning my sampling. I tested different keywords to retrieve relevant coverage (such as "poll", "candidate", "manifesto", "campaign") and the ones that I found most effective were "election" and "vote" – therefore all the articles that contain either of these or their derivatives (for example "elections" or "voter") were retrieved from the database. All the material was read and any double-entries or irrelevant articles were deleted. As explained below, part of the data was double-checked against hard copies and this did not seem to alter the quantitative trends that were initially found in the electronic data (even though more articles were added). This confirms Deacon's suggestion that any omissions in the database are random and not systematic.

During the analysis, I discovered that although Lexis-Nexis© includes the Scottish editions of English newspapers, their records are weak compared to other titles and items that appear in both editions are not annotated as such. I have therefore cross-checked the coverage of *The Scottish Sun* and *The Scottish Daily Mail* against hard copies. The data from *The Dundee Courier* consisted entirely of hard copy, as the paper is not available on the database. I also discovered weaknesses in the database's recording of readers' letters (detailed in section 4), which I took into consideration in the analysis of my results.

The amount of the data to be considered was such that a study of hard copies would not have been feasible. Reducing the sample on the other hand, would not have

allowed representative conclusions about the electoral debate in the press to be drawn. I therefore decided that using Lexis-Nexis© would be the best means to conduct the analysis, cross-checking against hard copies when necessary, as stated above. I have discussed so far the overall research design this project follows, its aim, research questions and sample. I have also outlined the methods used, which are further discussed individually below.

4. Content analysis

Content analysis provides one of the ways used in this thesis for evaluating the performance of the press in the public sphere. More specifically, I use content analysis to compare the quantity of coverage dedicated to the election by different newspapers, the amount of news and opinion input provided to their respective readerships for further processing and the issues that each title views as significant in the election, as demonstrated in the amount of mentions they receive.

It has been suggested (Higgins, 2006) that the press contributes to the public sphere at elections by dedicating a large quantity of coverage (both informative and evaluative), especially at the time preceding the election date, when it can be used by the electorate directly to inform political action; by providing a high proportion of opinion coverage; and by placing election coverage in the first pages of the newspaper. I therefore look at how newspapers performed based on these criteria and I additionally compare the agendas of different titles and their balance between devolved and reserved issues. This approach allows for comparisons with previous

quantitative studies of the performance of the press at elections (Higgins, 2006, Deacon et al., 2006).

Content analysis has been defined as a “research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952:18), “a technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1969:14), “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (Krippendorff, 1980:21). These definitions point to a number of issues that have been the object of methodological debate and which I discuss below.

Content analysis provides measurable evidence and outlines trends about a large corpus of texts (Berger, 1998). It is meant to be objective and therefore focuses only on the manifest content of texts (Riffe et al., 1998:19). As a quantitative method, it derives from a positivist philosophical paradigm (discussed in section 2 above) and has often been criticized for its “positivist notion of objectivity” (Hansen et. al., 1998:91), namely for assuming that it is possible to give an objective account of reality, as well as for interpreting textual evidence out of its context.

Many authors stress that the method actually involves a degree of subjectivity due to the role of the researcher. Krippendorff argues that a way to deal with researcher subjectivity, is to allow the structure of the text to guide the analysis and that the researcher “should not impose his purpose on how a source is delineated and how messages are analyzed” (1969:11). In order to ensure reliability and validity, theorists in content analysis propose that the categories coded and the procedures

followed are defined clearly so that another researcher may be able to follow them (Holsti, 1969, Krippendorff, 1980, Riffe et al., 1998). The next few paragraphs aim to do this by detailing the process I followed in my analysis.

The corpus analyzed consists of the entire sample retrieved for the study, as this was identified in section 3.2 of this chapter. The coverage of each newspaper was coded separately and results were added up initially for each title and then for each group of titles (Scottish and English/UK). The sampling unit, which has been defined as an “independent part of observed reality” with clear boundaries that can be included or excluded from a sample (Krippendorff, 1980:57), was the article. For each unit, I coded the type of article (editorial, signed opinion, news or readers’ letters), the number of words in it, the date of publication, the page number (if it was in the first three pages) and the election issues mentioned.

In my analysis, I have tried to avoid using pre-set categories in coding my data, because as discussed earlier, this would impose pre-defined frameworks on the corpus. The election issues I identified and measured emerged from a pilot study of the texts themselves, which is discussed later in this section, and were not predefined or imposed on the corpus. The only pre-set categories used were the formal distinction between news and opinion coverage and the length of the articles. Although in practice it is questionable if any news can be opinion-free, because news content is usually informed by the ideological position of the newspaper, its editor or other staff (Bell, 1991, Conboy, 2007) and value judgements are involved in the entire process of news making (Richardson, 2008:156), there is a formal distinction between news, opinion articles, editorials and reader letters, which is

reflected in the distribution of this material in special columns or pages within the newspaper (Conboy, 2007:9). These categories are also used by Lexis-Nexis© to categorise the material in the database, depending on whether it appeared on a news or opinion page, as an editorial or a letter by a reader.

These four categories, which are already imposed by the newspapers in the organization of their material, were coded in the analysis to provide a conventional mapping of the balance between informative and evaluative coverage in the different papers. Hence the terms “opinion” and “editorial” conventionally identify more explicitly evaluative content than that found in “hard” news. The former includes opinions of regular or guest contributors and the latter expresses the official view of the newspaper.

Readers’ letters are perhaps one of the few means available for audiences to contribute to newspaper content and could hence be seen as essential in a study of the mediated public sphere. However the degree to which the letters published make a substantial contribution to democratic debate has been contested (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002), especially in the context of an election (Richardson and Franklin, 2004). Moreover, Lexis Nexis’© inclusion of this material is irregular and my cross-checking of electronic material against hard copies revealed that letters tend to be omitted in the database more often than other types of coverage. Although I only cross checked a relatively limited proportion of my overall sample as mentioned earlier, and did not measure the exact proportion of omitted letters, I took this insight into consideration when presenting the results in chapter 5 and qualified the tendencies measured with regard to readers’ letters.

In order to identify the amount of coverage each title gave to the elections, a word count of the articles was used, instead of measuring the size of columns in centimetres. Using LexisNexis© material meant that an analysis of the visual design of the articles was not possible, because any differences in the typeset and column size in different papers cannot be seen. Therefore the word count offers a more accurate indication of the relative prominence of election coverage in different titles. The page number was also coded when an article appeared in one of the first three pages of the newspaper, as the positioning of items at the beginning rather than later in the paper indicates the prominence accorded to them (Higgins, 2006).

As mentioned, the election issues coded were identified through a pilot study. This included two newspapers for each election year, one Scottish and one English/UK title. All the material from these papers was read to identify the themes which were subsequently coded for each election period in the whole sample, and the keywords which appeared in relation to each theme. If during the coding of the rest of the sample more themes emerged, these were added to the list of themes and the material that had already been coded was coded again for the additional themes.

The list of themes was complete only when no new themes emerged from the data. Issues which were referred to as separate themes in the coverage, such as fuel prices, were coded as a separate category, rather than considered under transport or the economy for example. This is because in cases such as the example given here, some themes could be seen as fitting under more than one broader category. It is also because fuel prices were discussed by the papers as a distinct issue

independently of both the economy and transport, and I allowed my categories to emerge from the discussion in the corpus itself. For the same reason, although previous research of media coverage of these elections (Deacon et al., 2001, 2006) provided a pre-set categorization of issues, I did not use their constructs.

A set of keywords were identified for each election issue. At least one of these needed to appear in the text in order to count the article as mentioning the issue in question. These keywords emerged from the pilot study of the data and aimed to make the coding of election issues as objective and replicable as possible. For example, the keywords “health”, “hospital(s)”, “MRSA”, “NHS”, “doctor(s)”, “nurse(s)” were used for healthcare in 2005. Similarly keywords such as “education”, “teacher(s)”, “school(s)”, “tuition fees” were associated with the issue of education. A list of keywords for the issues in the 2001 coverage can be found in appendix 1.3. The sentences where the keywords appeared were read to ensure that the keywords actually referred to election issues⁴. Each issue was only recorded once per article, but there was no limit to the number of different issues that could be recorded in an article. Essentially therefore, I counted mentions of election issues rather than articles which were “about” an issue.

In their study of media coverage of the same elections, Deacon et al. (2001, 2006) recorded up to three issues per article, one of which they considered the primary theme of the article, and they did not record passing references to election issues, unless they were discussed in more detail. In my analysis, I counted all the issues

⁴ For example, an article that mentioned that “Tony Blair went to school in Scotland” would not be counted as referring to the election issue of education.

mentioned within the articles (each issue was counted once per article), including passing references, because I considered it significant when a newspaper identified an “election issue”, even if that article did not further expand on it. Moreover, the articles which were specifically about only one election issue were relatively limited, as my pilot study revealed, and often several issues were mentioned in the same article. A similar approach is adopted in Bennett et al.’s (2004) quantitative study of the construction of the globalization debate.

Mentions of issues were tallied per newspaper and per sample (Scottish and English/UK). Then the mentions for each issue were estimated as a percentage of the mentions of all issues in that newspaper/in that sample⁵. In this way, different issues were weighted in relation to each other, within the same newspaper or the same sample, and a balanced account of the agenda of different titles was drawn.

This thesis does not attempt a full statistical analysis of content analysis data, especially as the quantitative analysis included all the election coverage found in the database during the specified time periods in the specified newspaper titles. Yet those tests appropriate to determine the significance of comparative findings were deployed. A paired t-test was used to establish the statistical significance of differences between the amount of coverage dedicated to the election by the different Scottish and English/UK newspapers in the two years. This test is appropriate for this purpose because the values compared are numbers of words in the coverage of different titles and because the same newspapers are compared in the two years. A Wilcoxon signed ranks matched pairs test was used to test the

⁵ Examples of this procedure are provided in appendix 1.2

statistical significance of differences in the prominence of different issues between the Scottish and the English/UK sample in each year. This test is appropriate because it's a non-parametric test used to compare ordinal data. Finally, a Chi-Square test examined the statistical significance of differences in the amount of mentions of individual issues between individual titles within the Scottish and English/UK samples.⁶

Locating the findings of content analysis within the social context of the production of the texts and within the insights provided by existing theory is essential (Holsti, 1969, Hays, 1969, Krippendorff, 1980, Hansen et al., 1998, Riffe et al., 1998) and is done throughout the discussion in chapter 5 of this thesis. Despite this, content analysis cannot achieve the deeper-level insights of qualitative textual analysis (van Dijk, 1983, Deacon et al., 1999).

The combination of the two methods undertaken in this project, benefits from the ability of the quantitative method to identify trends in large amounts of data and the insights the qualitative method offers in smaller samples (Hansen et. al, 1998). In fact, apart from serving as a criterion for the evaluation of the performance of newspapers in the public sphere, content analysis also serves to identify the most mentioned election issues, which are then analysed in the qualitative component of the textual analysis. Moreover, a smaller content analysis component is additionally used before the part of the critical discourse analysis where the role of actors and sources is examined in the debate (chapter 7), in order to identify trends in the

⁶ All the tests mentioned in this paragraph were carried out following the advice and guidance of Ms Kate Howie, statistics advisor for postgraduate researchers at Stirling Graduate Research School. Further discussion of these tests can be found in Kirk (2007).

access offered to different news sources, and inform in-depth analysis of their discursive contributions. This is discussed in more detail in section 5.4 below. First though, I turn to the role of CDA in the project.

5. Critical discourse analysis

5.1 The method

According to Garrett and Bell (1998), traditionally the distinction between discourse and text was seen as one between spoken and written language. However today, the term discourse is used in two ways which both depart from this definition. It means language used in social practice, in real-life situations, but also the different systems of representation used to talk about social life, the different ways of using language, which have been developed socially to embody different perspectives on the world (van Dijk, 1985, Fiske, 1987, Fairclough, 1995a, 2003). The critical approach, which is discussed in this section, sees discourse as strongly connected with ideology and power, constructing, being constructed by, reproducing or challenging social structures and relations (van Dijk, 1985, Kress, 1985, Fowler, 1985, Fairclough, 1995a, Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999).

A text, on the other hand, is no longer linked solely to written language but denotes the spoken or written realization of discourse (Kress, 1985) or other expressive modes. As such, texts constitute and construct social identities, social relations and processes (Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b). Apart from discourses, genres also play an important role in shaping the form of texts. A genre is “a type of language used in the performance of a particular social practice” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough,

1999:56), for example language use that is associated with a lecture or a news article (Fairclough, 1995b: 56, 76).

Discourse analysis emerged as a method of studying spoken and written texts in the 1970s and draws on several different disciplines (van Dijk, 1988). It has been defined as “the study of language in use” (van Dijk, 1985:2), an “analysis of how texts work in sociocultural practice” (Fairclough, 1995a:7) and is therefore distinct from linguistic studies of grammatical and syntactical structures independently of their use. There are two approaches to discourse analysis: a structural and a critical one. The structural approach looks at discourse in a pragmatic way, as a naturally occurring, context-bound social phenomenon, and seeks to understand how it works (Bell, 1998, Scannel, 1998). This approach describes the structure of texts but does not unpack underlying ideologies. When it examines news stories, it draws attention to the complexity of the conceptual organization of news (Bell, 1998).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), the approach used in this thesis, is concerned with the effect of power, ideology and social structures on the form of a text, making “visible” elements which have become “naturalized” and are therefore not usually noticed as ideological (Fairclough, 1995a), namely as linked to a particular “system of values and beliefs” (Scannel, 1998:256). Like discourse analysis, CDA is concerned with language in use but its focus is on how political and social ideologies are constructed and reproduced in texts (Wodak, 2001:2-3, van Dijk, 2001:96). Unlike content analysis, discussed in the previous section, CDA is a qualitative method, with a constructivist approach to textual analysis (Scannel, 1998).

CDA is consistent with a theoretical tradition which believes that language has the power to construct our understanding of the social world; that, like knowledge, language is not an “objective” representation of the world (Blain, 2006). Within the CDA tradition there are different approaches, all sharing a critical concern with language, power and ideology and sometimes using similar analytical tools in different combinations. Each approach, though, has its own focus and examines different aspects of texts. As Meyer (2001:25) and van Dijk (2001:98) point out, it is not possible to give a complete list of all the devices used in CDA, nor is it possible to conduct a complete analysis of a text, because the number of aspects that can be considered is vast. The choice of analytical tools depends on the research questions addressed each time.

The critical linguistics approach (represented by scholars such as Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew – see Fowler et.al, 1979) explores the way texts construct social identities and relationships by examining lexical, grammatical and syntactical structures. It is based on Halliday’s⁷ functional linguistics, which views language structures as corresponding to the social needs they serve, rather than as neutral (Fowler et.al, 1979:3, Wodak, 2001:8, Fairclough, 2001:126). Teun van Dijk’s “socio-cognitive” discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1988, 2001) views ideology at the same time as a social and a cognitive phenomenon. He is concerned with the way events, as described by language, are registered in the minds of speakers and receivers through *models* (subjective representations of individual events, including

⁷ Halliday belongs to a tradition of linguists who shifted the focus of linguistic analysis to the context of language use, such as J.R. Firth. For a discussion of the approaches of these scholars and Halliday’s approach in particular, see Eggins, 1994.

elements such as language codes, frames, attitudes) and *scripts* (stereotypical versions of generic events, as experienced and learned through culture). Norman Fairclough's approach (1995a, 1995b, 2003) focuses on the way texts represent social discourses, voices and genres. He studies the external relationships of texts to other texts as well as internal relations within the text, such as semantic, grammatical and vocabulary relations. He also looks at how events, people and situations are represented through a variety of structures (transitivity, nominalisation, modality, speech acts). Finally, the Vienna School adopts a discourse-historical approach, focusing on the influence of "historical sources where discursive events are embedded" (Wodak et al., 1999:7). They have applied their approach to the study of national identity in Austria, where they distinguish between different strategies used by politicians, the media and citizens when discussing Austrian identity (Wodak et al., 1999).

CDA has been criticized for not considering the relation between texts and their production and consumption (Philo, 2007, Richardson, 2008). It has also been suggested that CDA does not focus adequately on the origins of discourses outside the media text and their historical development (Philo, 2007, Carvalho, 2008). Fairclough (1995a) suggests that such issues may be addressed by the study of how texts relate intertextually to social discourses and genres, yet Carvalho argues that a more historical approach is required to track the discourse on the issues studied each time (2008:172).

My project applies CDA to a number of election issues (health, the Iraq war, taxation, fiscal autonomy, hospital waiting lists) and therefore the scope for such

detailed background examination on each one is limited. My discussion of the representation of sources and their statements explores to a certain extent the access offered to different discourses from outside the texts studied in my analysis. Yet, the main focus of my study is on the way newspapers select the discourses to discuss issues. While I recognise that their output does not stand in isolation within the public sphere, a study of other texts (television and radio news, politician interviews and speeches) would be outside the scope of this project.

Additionally, CDA has been accused of lacking objectivity and imposing the researcher's interpretations on texts, as there is no objective connection between specific linguistic forms or structures and ideological viewpoints (Schegloff, 1997, Stubbs, 1997). Fairclough suggests that it is not possible to interpret any text objectively because the researcher's "ability to know what is 'there' in the text is inevitably limited and partial" (2003:15). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argue that all analysis is based on the researcher's theoretical and ideological preoccupations. The researcher's task is hence to build an explanation of the text based on theoretical and practical arguments (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999).

Therefore these authors suggest that, as with other qualitative methods, part of the validity of the study derives from how convincing is the account offered (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). At the same time, the validity of CDA depends on the systematic application of the analytical tools chosen and the reporting of any evidence that contradicts the findings. Finally, most authors recommend combining CDA with other methods, to provide insights into the perspectives of the participants of the event being studied (Meyer, 2001). In this project, apart from textual analysis, I am

using interviews with some of the political editors who produced the coverage studied.

Following this brief introduction to the method, the following section discusses how CDA was applied in this project and how the corpus included in the analysis was chosen.

5.2 Application of the method in the project

The approach adopted in this study combines tools used by several of the scholars mentioned in the previous section. For example transitivity and nominalisation are used by Fowler, Fairclough and van Dijk in their various studies, while the use of personal pronouns to address the reader is studied by the Vienna School. In addition, in line with its specific focus on national identity and democratic debate, my analysis is also informed by studies outside the main CDA traditions outlined earlier: Michael Billig's (1995) study of banal nationalism in the press and analyses of the contribution of the media in public deliberation (Feree et al., 2002, Bennett et al., 2004, among others). The CDA procedure followed in this research is detailed in sections 5.3 and 5.4 below.

CDA is used to analyse the coverage of the reserved and the devolved issues which received the most mentions in each election period, according to the findings of my content analysis. In 2001, these issues were taxation and health which, as will be discussed in chapter 5, was the most mentioned issue of the 2001 campaign. In 2005 the most mentioned issues were the Iraq war and health.

For each of the four issues, I analysed the coverage of one day in the respective election campaigns, using purposeful sampling. Creswell and Piano-Clark (2007:112) distinguish three types of purposeful sampling: maximal variation, where the sample represents diverse perspectives on the issue; extreme case sampling, where unusual or troublesome cases are chosen; and homogeneous sampling, where all cases share similar characteristics. In order to capture both similarities and differences between the two groups of newspapers and develop an understanding of the discourse used in both Scottish and English/UK titles, I chose cases (dates) where the two groups converged but also where the Scottish titles diverged. I hence used a combination of maximal variation and homogenous sampling criteria. I chose to sample coverage on the same dates across the different newspapers in order to compare their discourse more consistently, based on the coverage of the same events. Limitations of time and resources also meant that it was not possible to analyse a larger sample.

I initially read all the articles discussing the four issues and noted what topic they each dealt with. I then selected dates where the two groups of papers discussed the same topics (where possible), but also where there seemed to be a distinct debate in the Scottish titles. I also sought dates with more editorials, which signal the significance of that day's events for the newspapers. For example, I chose the 22nd May 2001 for my sample on taxation, because on that day both Scottish and English/UK titles were preoccupied with the debate between Westminster parties on possible increases in national insurance as a form of taxation. At the same time, the Scottish titles featured a debate on whether the Scottish parliament should acquire

full fiscal powers. I was therefore able to compare the discourses in the two newspaper groups on the same topic (Westminster taxation) and also look for similarities and differences with the coverage of fiscal autonomy in the Scottish titles. The specific date was also chosen due to the high number of editorials which appeared on taxation: there were editorials in *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Scottish Daily Mail*, *The Scotsman* and *The Dundee Courier*. The same rationale was used in choosing the samples on the other issues.

In each case I analyzed all the coverage of the issue in all the titles on that day. However not all coverage occurs in articles where the main topic is the issue in question. If an article made only a passing reference to the issue, without elaborating further (for example “Labour has focused on health, education and crime”), I did not include it in the CDA analysis (although it was counted in the content analysis, as mentioned earlier). The excerpts used for detailed analysis are marked with “full article” if they come from an item which is exclusively about the issue and with “part”, if the issue is discussed among other issues, though its discussion needs to be at least a paragraph long to be included in the analysis. The excerpts are also marked with the type of article they appear in (news, opinion, editorial or letter) and its page number.

The material analyzed in this part of the research is, of course, a relatively small proportion of the total coverage of these issues in each election period. This is because CDA is a qualitative method which examines texts in depth and therefore it does not allow the study of a large corpus. The sampling dates were chosen carefully, as explained above, to reflect the features found in the overall coverage of

each issue. Although all the relevant material was read to ensure this, only one day's coverage was analyzed in detail in each case.

5.3 Procedure followed: marking the nation

As discussed in the previous three chapters, national identity is a significant factor in the functioning of a national public sphere, especially during a general election, because it is perhaps the most prominent form of “collective identification” (Peters, 2008b:187) shared by participants in the debate. My second criterion for comparing the performance of Scottish and English/UK newspapers in the public sphere (the first was their quantitative contribution to the debate examined through content analysis) is their construction of national identity in their coverage of the four most mentioned election issues, examined through critical discourse analysis.

As discussed in chapter 2, Anderson (1983) drew attention to the role of the media in preserving national identity by maintaining a sense of belonging to an “imagined community”. This idea was taken further by Billig (1995) who suggested that the text of print news may contribute to the construction and reproduction of national identity in ways that often go unnoticed. This process he calls “banal nationalism”, the routine “flagging” or “mindless reminder” of national identity in daily life. As discussed in that chapter, many today would doubt the extent to which audiences imagine any type of harmonious communities when they watch or read the media, yet the fact that media texts do invite people to identify themselves with such communities remains significant in a study of a mediated public sphere (Dahlgren, 1991:17).

Billig (1995) suggests that national identity in the press does not necessarily need to be marked with words such as “Britain” or “British”. It can also be unmarked when linguistic deixis locates readers within a national context, assuming that the writer and the reader of the text belong to the same nation. Deixis, which means pointing in ancient Greek, includes the ways a text points to its context, and is realized through personal pronouns (“I”, “you”, “we”), demonstratives (“this”, “those”) and markers of time and place (“here”, “now”, “today”) (Fowler, 1991:63). Billig argues that even the use of the definite article can function deictically in noun phrases such as “the nation” or “the Prime Minister”, pointing to the country where the utterance takes place. The reader is expected to identify which nation is referred to because s/he belongs to the same national community.

DeCillia et al. (1999:163) underline the “utmost importance” of personal pronouns, such as “you” and “we” to address media audiences within the discourse of nationhood. Wodak et al. distinguish between addressee-inclusive/exclusive “we” (depending on whether the addressee of the utterance is among the referents of “we” or not) and the speaker-inclusive/exclusive “we” (depending on whether the speaker is one of the referents of “we” or not), as well as synecdochal and metonymic uses of “we” where the personal pronoun might stand for a country, a country’s government or economy (1999:45-47). Tolson (1996) and Brunt (1990) discuss the use of “we” as a way of addressing a community which may be national, international or local. This, Tolson argues, assumes an “imaginary consensus” about who is included in the community and what values they hold (1996:62) even though, as I discuss below, modes of address can be ambiguous and open to

different interpretations. Fowler (1991:49) discusses the unifying function of “we” which assumes agreement in interests and values among the addressees.

Billig suggests that deixis flags the nation in a discreet way, helping to maintain and reproduce nationhood through a process of “homeland-making” (1995:108-109). Anderson’s and Billig’s work has been influential and other researchers have used the concepts of imagined communities and banal nationalism to study the construction of British national identity in the English/UK press coverage of topics such as the BSE crisis (Brookes, 1999), the introduction of the British citizenship test (Bennet, 2007) and the England versus Germany football game in Euro 2000 (Bishop and Jaworski, 2003).

However, researchers studying the Scottish press (Law, 2001, Rosie et al, 2004 and 2006, Higgins, 2004a and 2004b) suggest that Billig’s approach needs to be qualified in the case of nations such as Scotland. These researchers argue that there is no such thing as a homogeneous British press which banally points to Britain as its national point of reference. Scotland has its own indigenous papers as well as specially-made editions of English titles, produced for a Scottish audience, as discussed in chapter 2.

Indigenous Scottish newspapers were found to flag the Scottish nation explicitly by naming it, especially when reporting on news relevant to Scotland and its post-devolution political situation (Law, 2001) or when reporting on the election to the Scottish Parliament (Higgins, 2004a). Therefore, the Scottish press emphasizes an explicit articulation of nationhood as the country moves away from its previous

status as a “stateless nation”. This raises the question of whether Scottish papers demonstrate similar patterns when reporting on UK elections after devolution.

Law (2001) examined the use of deictic markers, such as the ones mentioned above, and distinguished three possible “deictic centres” that a newspaper sold in Scotland may adopt, three possible location perspectives from which the texts are assumed to be written and read. He found that indigenous Scottish papers (such as *The Scotsman*) adopt a Scottish deictic centre (the paper is assumed to be written and read in Scotland and the rest of the UK is positioned outside this location), Scottish editions of English newspapers (such as *The Scottish Sun*) usually adopt a British deictic centre (the newspaper is assumed to be written and read in Britain) but occasionally move to a Scottish one, while English papers are written from a “British” and often “British-English” perspective, whereby the UK is often treated as synonymous with England.

Higgins’ (2004a) study of the 1999 Scottish election coverage found a use of deixis in the Scottish press within an inclusive rhetoric of “homeland-making”. He also found that Scottish titles develop a distinct political vocabulary, which requires familiarity on the part of the readership with Scottish political life and culture. Additionally, he identified differences between Scottish titles regarding the degree to which they stress the Scottish character of the election, which he sees as related to different titles’ attitudes on devolution (Higgins, 2004b).

Rosie et al. (2004) argue that newspapers sold in the different regions of the UK “wave” different flags to their readers, while they tend to focus on covering events

in their own region. Scottish editions of English newspapers customize stories to suit Scottish readers by providing a Scottish angle to the story, by mitigating any negative representations of Scottish people (Rosie et al., 2004) and by explicitly marking the Scottish identity of any Scottish actors in the story (ibid, 2006). They also suggest that the use of deixis in Scottish papers is ambiguous: deictic terms do not always point to Scotland but also to Britain. In fact deictic centres may shift even within the same article:

Deictic language may indeed point toward the national but that national may be multiple (British and Scottish) and newspaper articles may be pointing, sequentially or simultaneously, at different nations. (ibid, 2006:340)

Such “creative” uses of deixis in Scottish papers - where the referent shifts between a Scottish and a British context - they see as demonstrating that Scottish newspapers accept the co-existence of British and Scottish imagined communities (Rosie et al., 2004:456). Besides, as Connell argues, references to the nation in the Scottish press have been ambiguous throughout the 20th century (2003:189).

Therefore the authors who studied Scottish national identity in the press found that Scottish newspapers flag their identity more openly than UK papers (Law, 2001, Higgins, 2004a) and produce material to suit the demands of a Scottish audience (Rosie et.al, 2004). During Scottish elections they address readers as members of a Scottish community, emphasize the Scottish character of the election and assume a common background shared by their readers (Higgins, 2004a), but at other times

they use multiple deictic centres, shifting between a Scottish and a British context (Rosie et.al, 2004, 2006).

The question this raises for my research is how Scottish papers deal with nationhood when they report on UK general elections: in this case they still need to address a Scottish readership but they need to provide it with information on a British political event in which this readership participates. I explore whether marked Scottishness remains a characteristic of Scottish coverage and how Scottish papers deal with national identity when covering reserved and devolved issues. Another question which arises for my project regards English/UK papers and the extent to which they construct a British identity in their coverage of general elections after devolution.

My analysis of the four issues explores the way national markers and deixis are used in the coverage of different titles. I focus particularly on the use of markers such as “Britain”, “England” and “Scotland”, as well as their derivative adjectives “British”, “Scottish” and “English”, and toponyms (names of places, derived from Greek) “Westminster” and “Holyrood”, used to refer to the UK and the Scottish parliament respectively (Higgins 2004a). In addition I examine instances where markers are missing but nationhood is implied banally. I also look at the use of personal pronouns such as “you” and “we” to address the reader as a member of a community (Brunt, 1990:64, Fowler, 1991:49, Billig, 1995, Tolson, 1996:61, Wodak et al., 1999:45, Law, 2001), deictic markers of place (eg. “here”), demonstratives (eg. “this”) and deictic uses of definite article “the” (Billig, 1995:115-117).

The excerpts from the texts which are presented in my discussion of the findings illustrate trends that emerged from careful analysis of all the articles in the sample. When the discourse in a specific article appears to contrast with these patterns I present it and discuss it, in order to reflect the diversity of the discursive output in the sample.

My focus on the discursive performance of the Scottish titles addresses Connell's (2003:188) call for an examination of how Scottish papers "engender a sense of Scottishness" through the way they address readers. At the same time though, the analysis also considers the performance of the English/UK press in a devolved British context and delivers insights into the construction of national identity in the press on both sides of the border.

5.4 Procedure followed: access, transitivity, dialogue and favorability

After examining the role of national identity, I evaluate the same sample of coverage on the four issues, based on four criteria deriving from the normative accounts of the role of the media in democratic deliberation outlined in chapter 3. Ferec et al. (2002) and Bennett et al. (2004) propose useful empirical frameworks which examine the extent to which actual media production fits the normative criteria of public sphere theories. Although both studies are quantitative, their approach can be fruitfully applied in a discursive analysis of media texts and combined with CDA tools such as transitivity and actor analysis, which are discussed in detail in this section.

Both these studies focus on the representation of sources. A source is someone quoted in an article, someone other than the writer who is presented as responsible for utterances in it (Lauerbach, 2006:199). The sources newspapers select give voice to different discourses (Fairclough, 1998) and illustrate the paper's view on who can make a significant contribution to the debate (Conboy, 2007:20). Newspapers offer "symbolic access" to the sources they select, or the opportunity to have their views "embedded" in the account of news events (van Dijk, 1991:152).

Hall et al. (1978) claim that the routine procedure of news production gives privileged access to powerful elites because journalists primarily seek credible and established sources. Alternative views may enter the news, however the powerful have the opportunity to voice their perspective first and thus frame the way an issue is talked about subsequently. However Hall et al.'s thesis (1978) that elites are by default the "primary definers" has been contested by a view that the news is a field where "competition for access" takes place between different social groups and where there are opportunities for the views of the less privileged to define public debate (Schlesinger, 1990). Schlesinger argues that becoming a primary definer is a result of "successful strategic action" (1990:77) in putting messages across, which is often, though not necessarily or exclusively, achieved by powerful sources.

In their empirical study, Bennett et al. (2004) compare the access offered to different sources in the mediated debate during World Economic Forum meetings. They also examine the extent to which these sources are formally identified and whether there is dialogue between sources representing different views. Feree et al.

(2002) look at the access offered to different sources in the debate on abortion, focusing on the inclusion of political sources or experts and members of the public. They look at the extent to which personal narratives are presented in the coverage of the issue, whether there is dialogue between those holding different views and whether the debate satisfies criteria of detachment and civility (rational argumentation and respect for the opponent). They also examine the extent to which consensus is reached between opponents before the issue is abandoned by the media (closure). Similarly, Maia (2007) proposes that media performance may be evaluated by looking at who has access, how much space they are given and if there is dialogue between different sources.

Another quantitative study which considers the representation of sources is Lewis et al.'s (2005) examination of the construction of ordinary citizens in the news. They measure primarily the access offered to citizen voices and the forms that this access takes: representations of demonstrations, opinion surveys, individuals giving their views on current affairs (vox pops), but also less well-founded impressions of what people think, such as inferences about public opinion or sections of it, which are not based on any real evidence.

These frameworks are useful in comparing media performance to the normative requirements of representative and participatory models of democracy discussed in chapter 3. Therefore, if for example media coverage provides access to a variety of sources from the general public, it fits a participatory model of democracy. The inclusion of personal narratives to direct the agenda and propose solutions to problems by those who experience them brings it closer to what Ferec et al. (2002)

name the “constructionist” approach (discussed in chapter 3), while dialogue based on rationality and civility brings it closer to Habermas’ deliberative ideal.

In fact the inclusion of the public in the debate has been posited as essential in the media’s effort to encourage citizen participation in politics. Gamson (2001) argues that the media can promote political engagement among audiences by presenting ordinary citizens talking about political issues but also as powerful actors who take control of their own situation by acting politically. An “actor” is a character in news coverage, someone who is presented as doing something, having something done to them or someone who is talked about in an article (Carvalho, 2008:168).

The study of actors is very common in CDA. It is especially found in Fairclough’s (1995b) work as well as in critical linguistics (Fowler, 1991). Transitivity, which can be simply explained as the study of “who does what to whom” (Mills, 1995 cited in Richardson, 2007:112, Conboy, 2007: 56), is according to Fowler a powerful tool in analysing how news actors are represented (1991:70). A study of transitivity involves looking at the types of verbs different actors are associated with and at whether these actors are subjects or recipients of these verbs. Actors who systematically appear in subject position are constructed as powerful, even though the type of verbs they are associated with is also important: whether they control transitive processes affecting others or intransitive states which only influence themselves (Fowler, 1991:73).

Apart from transitivity, a study of actors also looks at their prominence in the syntactical structure of the text (use of nominalisations and passive/active voice)

and how much authority their statements and actions are given (modality). Nominalisation, the transformation of a verb into a noun, and passive transformation, the use of passive instead of active voice, which may be accompanied by an omission of the agent, are both shifts in the syntactic structure of the clause which can have significant consequences. They may obscure the participants in the process, shift the focus to the object of the action (passivization) or transform a process into an object (nominalisation) which appears to occur naturally, which can act and be acted upon (Fowler, 1991:77-80, Fairclough, 1992:181, Billig, 2008: 785-786). Finally, modality expresses the attitude of the speaker or writer with regard to the truth or the desirability of statements (Fowler, 1991:85, Richardson, 2007:116). It is expressed through modal verbs such as ‘may’, ‘can’, ‘should’, adverbs such as ‘surely’, ‘fortunately’, but the absence of such modal markers can also be meaningful.

.
Drawing on this background, I evaluate and compare the performance of English/UK and Scottish papers in the public sphere based on four criteria. Initially I look at which sources are given access to the mediated debate. This involves a quantitative count of different groups of sources quoted, namely politicians, experts and citizens, as well as individual sources within them (e.g. politicians from different parties). This reveals how diverse the range of sources is, whether the debate is dominated by politicians and experts, as a representative view of democracy requires (Ferec et al., 2002), or whether agents from the “lifeworld” (Habermas, 1989) also have a role in shaping the debate as demanded in more participatory models. The results of this content analysis inform critical discussion of individual excerpts of discourse.

Secondly, I examine the discursive construction of the main actors in the debate. I look specifically at transitivity, nominalisations, passive constructions and modality to establish which of these actors are represented as powerful over others and over the debate and how prominent they are in the articles. This reveals the degree to which the coverage empowers citizen involvement by constructing elite (politicians, experts) or non-elite actors as powerful.

Thirdly, I examine whether dialogue is established between different sources. Discursiveness, the degree to which different agents engage in dialogue supporting their views with clear arguments, is a central concept in Habermas' (1989) view of public deliberation. Although Habermas' normative standards of argumentation are often seen as idealistic and not reflected in empirical evidence (Peters et al., 2008, Feree et al., 2002), the role of dialogue in a mediated public sphere remains significant. I therefore examine whether sources engage in dialogue or are quoted in isolation without their contributions being taken up by other sources. Although this analysis focuses on direct dialogue between opposing views within the same article, it recognises that a more indirect dialogue may be built between articles within the same newspaper edition and offers such examples. This less direct dialogue may still provide a context for readers to consider alternative positions in the debate.

Finally, my fourth criterion of comparison regards the attitude of newspapers toward these sources, especially in news and editorial articles, which articulate more clearly the institutional position of the paper (Conboy, 2007). I focus specifically on instances where the discourse of a source is endorsed or rejected by

the newspaper implicitly or explicitly. This reflects the degree to which newspapers engage with the contributions of their sources or present them impartially.

Adopting a CDA approach for most of this part, rather than a quantitative method alone, goes beyond the number of times a source is quoted or the number of times there is dialogue between sources, to look at how a source is treated and how an actor is constructed in the coverage. Therefore the combination of the initial count of quotations with an in-depth analysis of actors and sources provides better insights. The four criteria outlined above and used in this analysis, namely access, agency, dialogue and favourability, allow me to compare the discursive output of newspapers based on how open their coverage is to different sources in the public sphere, how they construct these sources and the degree to which they promote dialogue between different perspectives. As discussed, such criteria derive from normative accounts of the role of the media in the public sphere and the extent to which they promote active citizenry and dialogue.

6. In-depth interviews with political editors

6.1 The method and its application in the project

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative method which allows researchers to explore the meanings participants assign to the events studied, based on their experiences, attitudes, and what they consider as important (McCracken, 1988, Seidman, 1998, Arksey & Knight, 1999). It also reveals similarities among individuals “who live and work in a shared context” (Seidman, 1998:112) and helps understand “what is reflected rather more abstractly in other kinds of data” (Gillham, 2000:10).

Qualitative interviews are appropriate when small numbers of respondents are involved and the purpose of the research is to deliver “insight and understanding” (Gillham, 2000:11). Moreover interviews are flexible because they allow the interviewer to adapt to each respondent and follow up points raised.

In this project interviews with political editors are complementary and provide insights into the other findings. Their purpose is to understand the way Scottish titles, the primary focus of this thesis, reported on the two elections, from the viewpoint of some of the journalists responsible for this coverage: what their views are on the importance of the election issues for Scotland, how they view the coverage of their newspapers in relation to English/UK papers and to their perceived readership.

6.2 Sample

Of the seven Scottish titles included in the sample I chose three for this part of the analysis. These were *The Scotsman* (one of the three central belt titles in the sample), *The Scottish Sun* (one of the two Scottish editions of English papers) and *The Dundee Courier* (one of the two non-Central belt titles). The reason I did not include all seven papers was that this part of the research is complementary to the textual analysis and aims to deliver insights rather than be exhaustive or “saturating”⁸ (Morse, 2003:195). I chose titles from both the central belt and the

⁸ Saturation is a sampling criterion often used in qualitative interviews. It means that the researcher stops adding new respondents when no new insights come up and the same statements are continuously repeated by different interviewees (Arksey & Knight, 1999:57). In my research, despite the small number of interviewees, there was a tendency for several statements to reoccur.

more northern regions of Scotland, addressing different socioeconomic groups, and where the same political editor covered both elections. My main sampling criterion was therefore “maximum variation” (Patton, 1989:100-107) or “sufficiency” (Seidman, 1998:47), namely ensuring that different categories in the population are represented in the sample.

I decided to interview Scottish political editors, rather than the correspondents some Scottish titles have at Westminster for a number of reasons. First, Scottish political editors bylined a large part of the election coverage I studied. I decided to speak to the specific people only after I had studied all the coverage and noted who wrote the articles. Second, the only papers that have a correspondent at Westminster are *The Scotsman*, *The Herald* and *The Press and Journal*. Especially in the case of Scottish editions of English titles, it would not be helpful to speak to their political editors in London about the coverage in their Scottish editions, because they cover politics for all different editions including the London ones, and would be expected not to have the Scottish edition in mind when covering elections. Finally, I was particularly interested in the insights of my interviewees on the “Scottish” debates, which as I discuss in chapters 6 and 7 are of particular significance in the Scottish coverage. These debates were covered specifically by the Scottish editors. In my discussion of interview findings however, I have accommodated the possibility that their perspectives are shaped by the Scottish context in which they work.

6.3 Procedure followed

Before the interviews I prepared a set of questions addressing the main issues based on the project's research questions and on insights from the textual analysis, which had been completed before the interviews were carried out. All questions were open-ended to allow the respondents to reply as they considered appropriate, following a semi-structured model of interviewing (Kvale, 1996, Arksey & Knight, 1999, Gillham, 2000). Semi-structured interviews offer the advantage of allowing interviewees to offer an account of their experiences in their own terms, often revealing aspects that the interviewer had not considered in advance. The interview guide used in this research, including key questions and prompts to examine particular details of the topics discussed (Kvale, 1996:133-135, Arksey & Knight, 1999:97-98, Gillham, 2000:42), can be found in appendix 2.1.

The interviews were conducted in person at the Scottish Parliament and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes each. They were tape-recorded after gaining permission from the interviewees. Before the interview, interviewees signed a written consent form for the use of the data in my research (appendix 2.3). I transcribed the data fully immediately after the interviews⁹. I then read the transcripts and noted statements which appeared relevant in relation to my other findings and the general research questions; which were repeated by more than one respondent or where respondents' accounts diverged (Seidman, 1998:100-110). This process is called "indexing" (Arksey & Knight, 1999:162). The statements were then grouped together to form categories, a process known as "thematization" (Kvale, 1996:192,

⁹ One of the interview transcriptions is provided as a sample in appendix 2.2.

Seidman, 1998:100-110, Gillham, 2000:70). I subsequently sought areas in my textual analysis where these categorized statements could offer complementary insights by confirming or contrasting with the textual data. In line with their complementary status in the research, the interview findings are discussed together with my other findings in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

6.4 Research quality and ethics

In qualitative interviewing, the researcher is the instrument of data collection (McCracken, 1988, Seidman, 1998, Gillham, 2000) and the data analyzed are the views and experiences of a small number of individuals. For these reasons, the method has accused of subjectivity in its data collection and analysis (McCracken, 1988, Kvale, 1996, Arksey & Knight, 1999). However, such a criticism is based on a positivist approach to research which, as described earlier in this chapter, holds that reality can be observed independently of the human subject. Interviewing is based on a constructivist paradigm, where reality is to be understood through the diverse accounts of those who experience it.

Reliability and validity can be established in this method by explaining thoroughly the process followed (Arksey and Knight, 1999), providing the reader with adequate evidence to judge the researcher's arguments (McCracken, 1988, Gillham, 2000), and offering a "defensible knowledge claim" (Kvale, 1996:240) by using theory and context to shape logical arguments when drawing inferences (ibid, 1996).

I have explained in detail the procedure I followed while the interview questions and the full transcript of one of the interviews are provided in appendix 2. In my discussion of findings, statements supporting different viewpoints are used. As discussed in section 2 of this chapter, if data are not consistent between interviews or with the findings of the textual analysis, this is reported and discussed in order to triangulate evidence from different methods and make better informed inferences. I have therefore endeavored to make the process open, from question formation to data interpretation, so that the reader can judge the quality of evidence provided.

Another important aspect of conducting research involving human subjects is the ethical obligation of the researcher to protect the rights of participants (Kvale, 1996, Arksey & Knight, 1999). It is important to inform interview participants in writing about the purpose of the research, its general structure, the identity of the researcher and their institution, the kinds of questions to be asked, the degree of confidentiality, the right of the participant to review material or to withdraw from the research, how data will be used and how the results will be disseminated (Kvale, 1996:112-120, Seidman, 1998:51, Arksey & Knight, 1999:129-132). The consent form my interviewees signed (appendix 2.3) covered these issues and also offered the option to request anonymity; however none of them made such a request.

7. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the mixed methods research design followed in this thesis, outlined the purpose and the questions addressed by the project and described the individual methods used and the rationale for selecting them. I gave

an overview of each method drawing on the main authors in the relevant literature and explained how the method was applied in my study, with separate discussion of issues of quality and ethics, where appropriate. I also discussed the sample used in each stage. The following chapters will discuss the findings of this research.

5. The mediated debate in numbers: overall coverage and election agenda¹

1. Introduction

This chapter evaluates the performance of English/UK and Scottish newspapers in the electoral debate, based on quantitative features of their coverage of each campaign. As discussed in chapter 4, Higgins (2006) proposed that the performance of the press in an electoral public sphere may be judged on the amount of coverage it dedicates to the election; the proportion of evaluative coverage it provides to help readers make judgements; the concentration of opinion and news coverage in the period before the election day, when it is more likely to contribute to voters' choice; and the positioning of election stories in the front part of the newspapers, which usually features the most significant events of the day, according to the paper.

I therefore start my analysis by looking at the output of the two newspaper samples based on these criteria. I then compare the issue agenda in each sample by looking at the prominence of different reserved and devolved issues in relation to each other. As discussed in chapter 4, I provide an overview of issues mentioned in the coverage rather than seek articles which were exclusively about an issue. Finally, I examine trends in the performance of individual titles.

¹ Some of the findings presented in this chapter were published in a different form in Dekavalla, M. (2009), "Scottish Press Coverage of General Elections After Devolution: the 2001 and 2005 Campaigns", *Networking Knowledge: Journal of the MECCSA Postgraduate Network*, 2 (1).

Within the discussion of the content analysis findings, I also present findings from my interviews with Scottish political editors, when these become relevant to the points discussed in the textual analysis. This approach is followed in this and the following two chapters because the combination of the interviewees' insights with the analysis of textual evidence offers a means of triangulating both sets of results.

2. Decreasing attention to the general election in Scotland

In both election periods Scottish titles dedicated less coverage to the election than the English/UK sample. In 2001 the seven Scottish papers provided 49.1% of the overall coverage the election received in all papers, which was reduced to 42.3% in 2005 (table 1). Because there are more newspapers in my Scottish sample, I also estimated the average number of words per newspaper title (table 2).

Table 1. Overall coverage

	Total	Scottish (7 papers)	En/UK (5 papers)
Overall coverage 2001			
Number of articles	6,232	3,178	3,054
Number of words	2,717,865 (100%)	1,333,089 (49.1%)	1,384,776 (50.9%)
Overall coverage 2005			
Number of articles	5,516	2,575	2,941
Number of words	2,367,191 (100%)	1,001,576 (42.3%)	1,365,615 (57.7%)

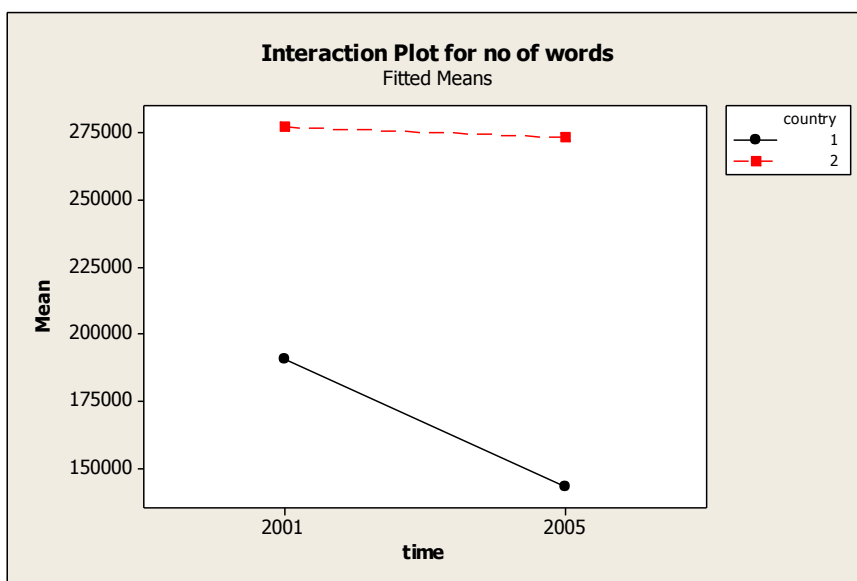
Table 2. Average coverage per title

Average coverage 2001		
	Scottish average	En/UK average
Number of articles	454	611
Number of words	190,441	276,955
Average coverage 2005		
Number of articles	368	588
Number of words	143,082	273,123

In both years the average Scottish title had less coverage than the average English/UK title (table 2), while in 2005, the average Scottish paper had almost half the length of the coverage of the average English/UK paper (143,082 versus 273,123 words). Tables 1 and 2 above present both the number of articles and the number of words in each sample because the word count captures differences in the length of articles more accurately.

Both the above tables illustrate a drop in the Scottish coverage of the election in 2005, while the English/UK coverage is almost at the same level in both years. Although the difference between the Scottish and the English/UK sample in the two years is statistically significant, the drop in the coverage of the Scottish sample between 2001 and 2005 is not. As explained in chapter 4, I used a paired t-test to establish this, because the values compared are numbers of words in different titles and because the same papers were compared in both years.

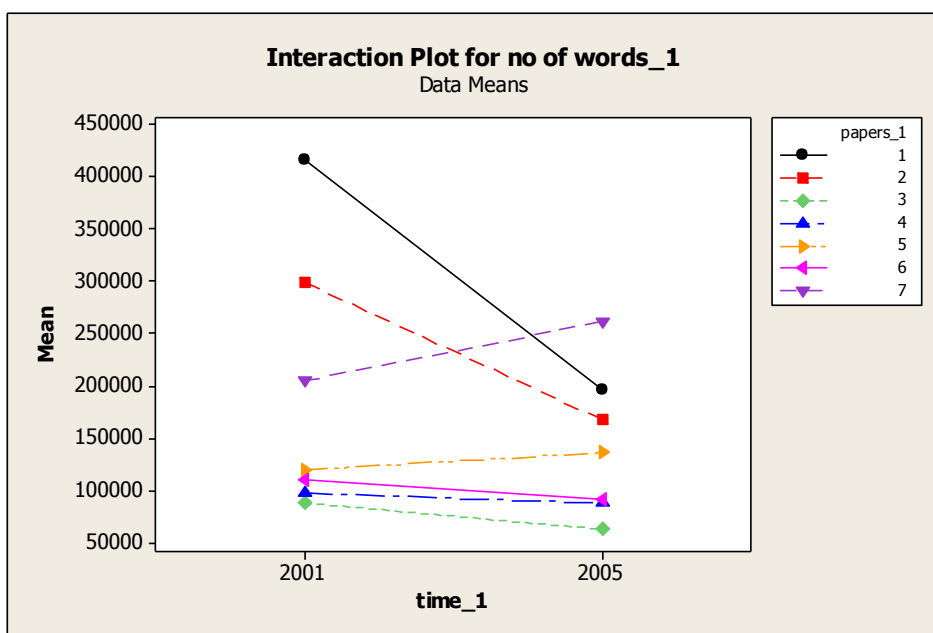
Table 3. Comparison of UK and Scottish coverage 2001-2005



Note: country 1: Scottish coverage, country 2: national UK coverage

The reason for the drop in the Scottish coverage is a drop in the amount of coverage in two newspapers, namely *The Scotsman* and *The Herald*. While the other Scottish newspapers kept their coverage at the same levels in both years, and in some cases (*The Scottish Daily Mail*, *The Dundee Courier*) increased it, the two central belt quality titles dedicated significantly less space to the 2005 election (table 4).

Table 4. Scottish sample: length of coverage in 2001 and 2005



Note: paper 1: The Scotsman

paper 2: The Herald

paper 3: The Daily Record

paper 4: The Aberdeen Press and Journal

paper 5: The Dundee Courier

paper 6: The Scottish Sun

paper 7: The Scottish Daily Mail

So far I have discussed two main findings: that Scottish papers gave less attention to the two elections compared to English/UK titles and that especially in 2005, *The Scotsman* and *The Herald* dropped the amount of their coverage significantly. The political editors I interviewed reflected these findings when speaking of the challenges they faced in covering the general elections after devolution.

All the interviewees stressed that devolution had a major impact on the way their newspapers cover general elections. Steve Bargeton of *The Dundee Courier* suggested that before devolution “Westminster elections were the big thing. That’s when the government was elected. And that’s the government that governed the whole of the UK for every subject, every area of responsibility.” However the establishment of the Scottish Parliament changed the dynamics. Hamish Macdonell of *The Scotsman* argued that the 2001 election was particularly challenging for Scottish papers to cover, because for the first time a general election was no longer “universal”, affecting all matters in the whole of the UK.

Macdonell and Bargeton agreed that general elections remain important in Scotland after devolution. According to Macdonell, “the colour of the government in London affects the general direction the country is going in a huge sense.” A change of government in London can “change the dynamic that operates between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament as well.” Bargeton also said that general elections are still important, but he argued that their importance for Scottish readers has diminished greatly since the establishment of the Scottish parliament. Andrew Nicoll, of *The Scottish Sun* claimed that after devolution “general elections are

practically irrelevant to Scottish politics” because his readers are interested mainly in “bread and butter issues”, like health and education, which are both devolved.

The three journalists therefore have different views on the significance of general elections in Scotland, which seem concurrent with the amount of coverage their papers devoted to the two elections. As shown in table 4 above, of the three papers *The Scotsman* has the most coverage in both years, followed by *The Courier* (Bargeton’s views above could be seen as a in-between position compared to those of Macdonell and Nicoll), and *The Scottish Sun* has the least coverage.

Apart from these differences though, all three interviewees share the belief that the 2001 and 2005 elections in particular were not very interesting because Labour’s victory was anticipated and there was little possibility that any other party would win. Without being prompted on the reduction of his paper’s coverage in 2005, Hamish Macdonell said that *The Scotsman* gave less coverage to the 2005 campaign, confirming the finding of my content analysis mentioned earlier. He explained that this was first because the 2005 election was not particularly “groundbreaking” and little change was expected in the results; and second because, as far as he can remember, the Scottish parliament was still sitting during that election and covering its proceedings became a priority for the newspaper:

We covered what was going on here and the election at the same time. [...] I think it was a recognition that in Scottish terms, in terms of domestic policy, what was more important in that sense was the Scottish elections. And

perhaps it was that by 2005 the feeling had shifted away from Westminster enough for it not to be quite as all-important as it had been before.

It seems therefore that practical considerations had an influence on the newspaper's coverage of the election: the space dedicated to home political news had to be shared between the general election and the coverage of the Scottish parliament and the decision taken favoured the latter. This seems related to the traditional claim of *The Scotsman* to be a "national" Scottish newspaper discussed in chapter 2, which was also mentioned by Macdonell in his interview:

Even though we are east coast based, our coverage still attempts to be Scottish national. I think there is little difference between us and *The Herald*. They are Glasgow based but they have the same overall approach.

The role of *The Scotsman* and *The Herald* as national Scottish titles seems to justify the priority given to the coverage of Holyrood, while Westminster gradually lost its dominance in the news as Macdonell argues. It could be argued that the political editors interviewed would perceive Holyrood to be more important than Westminster because they are based in that parliament and cover its proceedings daily, however it appears here that Macdonell's perception of the declining significance of Westminster elections agrees with his newspaper's reduced coverage of the 2005 election found in my content analysis.

Although no other title in my sample demonstrates a similar reduction of coverage in 2005, *The Scotsman* and *The Herald* were not the only media which gave less

attention to the 2005 election. This trend was also observed by Deacon et al (2006:250-251) who argue that many news media gave limited coverage to this election. They see this as the emergence of a news value system in UK media where elections need to compete for coverage rather than be granted it automatically. This trend was also identified by Franklin and Richardson (2002) in their study of election coverage in local newspapers.

If therefore, based on the above discussion, the 2005 election received less coverage in *The Scotsman*, and in other media, because there was not much suspense about who would win, a rise in coverage might be expected in the 2010 election, because a change of government is seen as possible by opinion polls at the time of writing.

3. Similar distribution of election coverage in the two samples

Despite the difference in the overall amount of coverage, the Scottish and English/UK samples appear quite similar with regard to the other criteria set by Higgins (2006) and outlined in the introduction of this chapter.

In both samples, the majority of the coverage consisted of news items. As discussed in chapter 4, I use the term “news” to refer to predominantly informative content and “opinion” to refer to evaluative content, even though news items are not necessarily opinion-free. Table 5 shows the distribution of informative (news) and evaluative (signed opinion items, editorials, readers’ letters) articles in each sample.

Table 5. Distribution of coverage in the Scottish and English/UK sample
(percentages refer to the proportion of the overall coverage in each sample)

	Informative coverage	Evaluative Coverage		
	2001			
	News	Signed opinion	Editorial	Letters
Scottish titles	2081 (65.5%)	333 (10.5%)	190 (6%)	574 (18%)
Eng/UK titles	2057 (67.3%)	441 (14.4%)	189 (6.2%)	367 (12.0%)
	2005			
Scottish titles	1644 (63.9%)	243 (9.4%)	191 (7.4%)	497 (19.3%)
Eng/UK titles	1852 (63%)	515 (17.5%)	154 (5.2%)	420 (14.3%)

Overall, the distribution of informative and evaluative coverage is very similar in Scottish and English/UK papers in both election years. Within the evaluative coverage there seem to be more letters and fewer signed opinion articles in the Scottish sample, however, as mentioned in chapter 4, the recording of readers' letters by Lexis-Nexis is not reliable and it is difficult to draw conclusions on this specific issue. What appears certain though is that newspapers on both sides of the border offer their readers very similar proportions of information and advice regarding the election. The proportion of advice offered to readers through opinion coverage has been linked with a greater contribution to public debate (Higgins, 2006), however here the performance of the two samples appears equal.

Similarly, there are few differences in the distribution of the coverage across the campaign. In 2001, the greatest number of news items is found in the final week of the campaign in both samples (tables 6 and 7). The three types of opinion coverage reach their peak in the final week in the English/UK sample (although the number of editorials is equally high in week 2) and in the second week in the Scottish sample. By increasing both news and opinion coverage before the time of the vote,

the English/UK titles can be seen as offering information and advice that will help readers make an informed choice just before the election, as discussed earlier.

The same data may also be interpreted in terms of the perceived newsworthiness of the election in each sample over time. It would be expected that as the day of the election - which can be seen as the “dramatic climax” of the campaign - approaches it would become more prominent in the coverage of the media (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). This seems to be the case in both samples, as they both increase their informative coverage. However, in addition to that, the English/UK sample also increases its evaluative coverage, demonstrating an additional interest in debating issues but perhaps also in influencing the way readers will vote.

Table 6. 2001: Distribution of articles over the campaign – Scottish titles

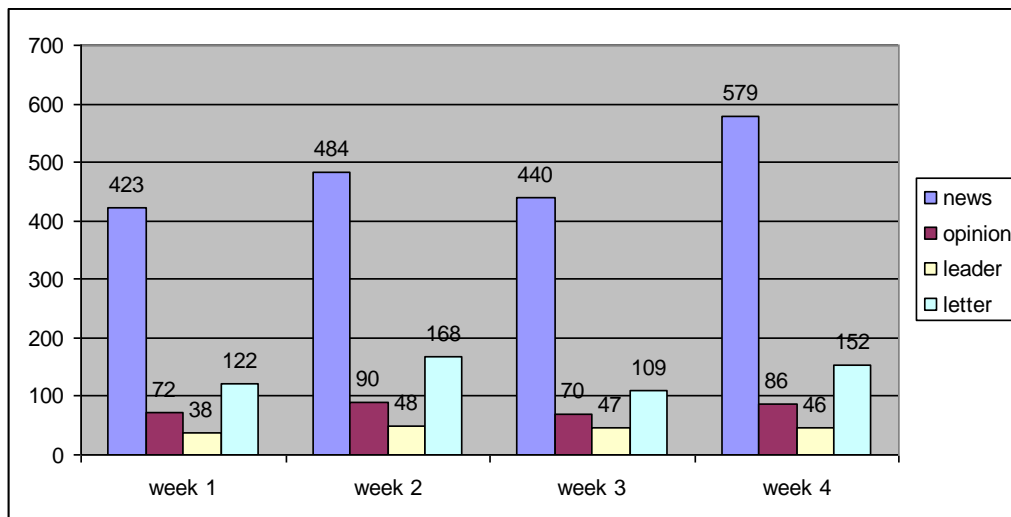
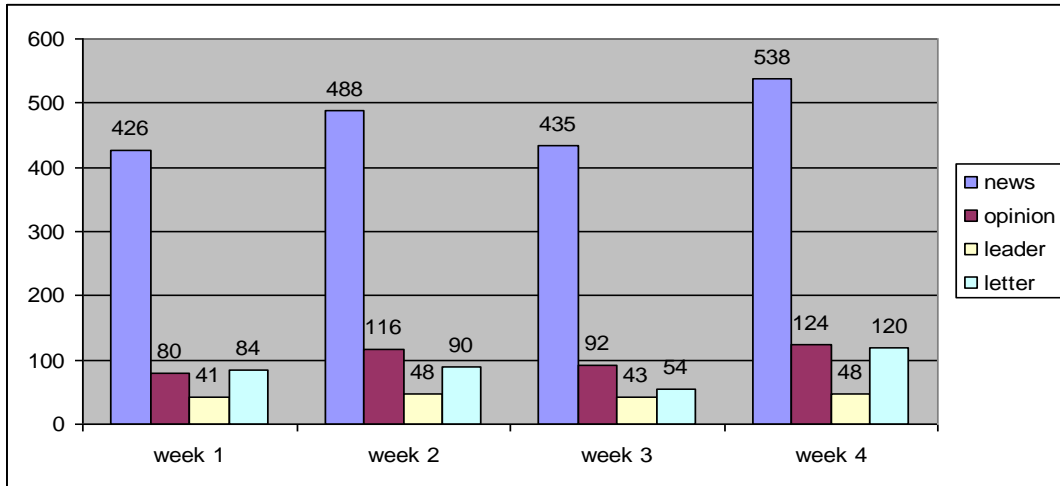


Table 7. 2001: Distribution of articles over time – English/UK titles



In 2005, the peaks in the different types of coverage are more consistent between the English/UK and the Scottish samples as can be seen in tables 8 and 9. In both newspaper groups, news items reach their peak in the third week, editorials in the second, and letters in the final week of the campaign. Only opinion articles reach their peak at different points in the two samples. Yet this pattern is less easy to interpret in relation to the samples' performance in the election.

Table 8. 2005: Distribution of articles over time – Scottish titles

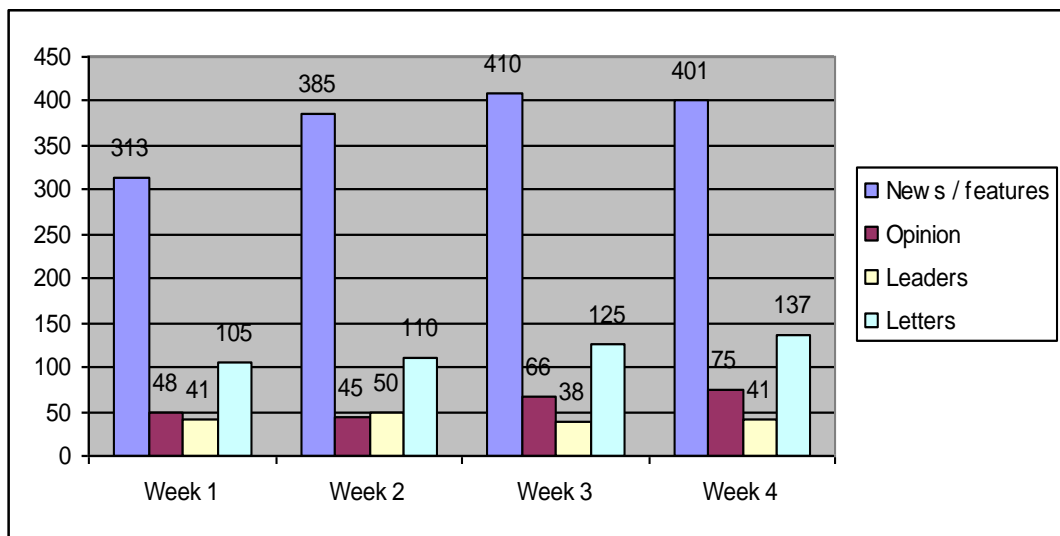
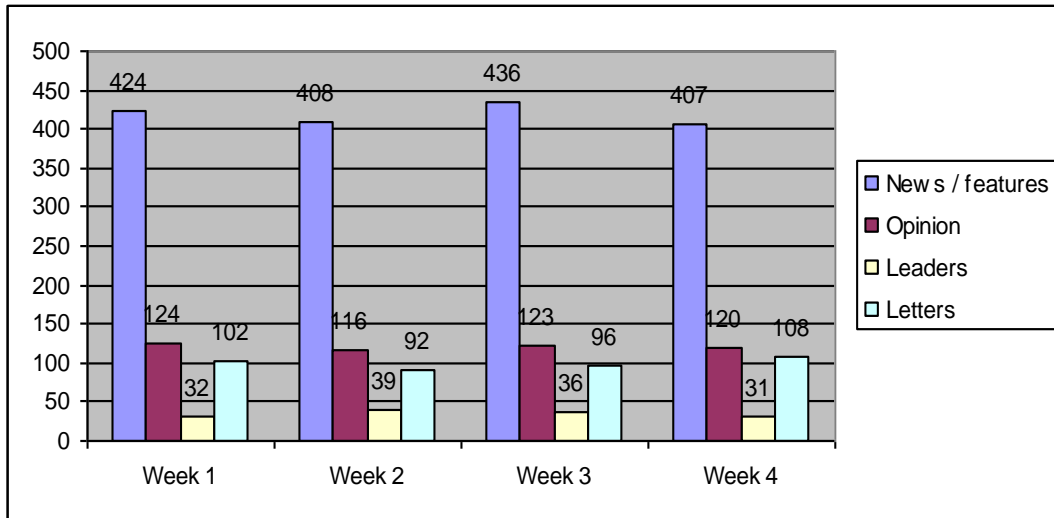
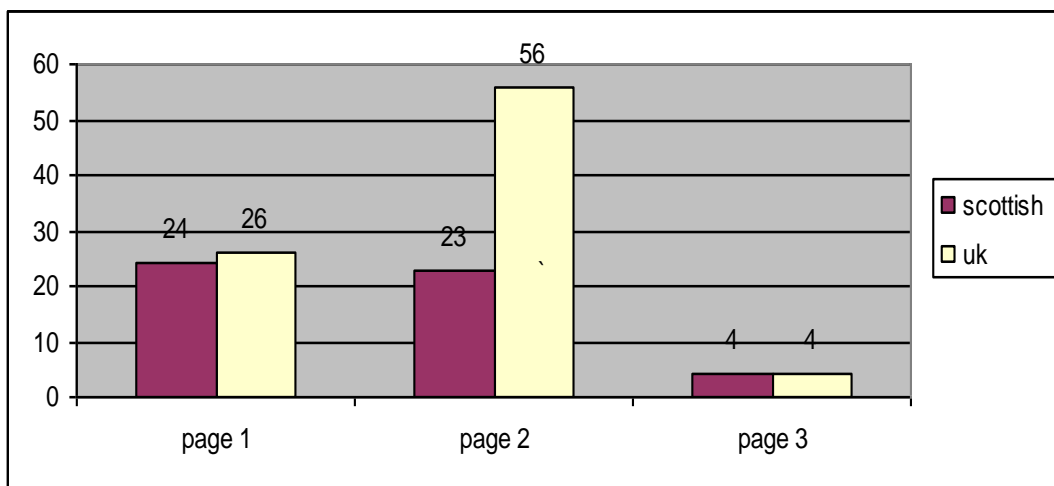


Table 9. 2005: Distribution of articles over time – English/UK titles



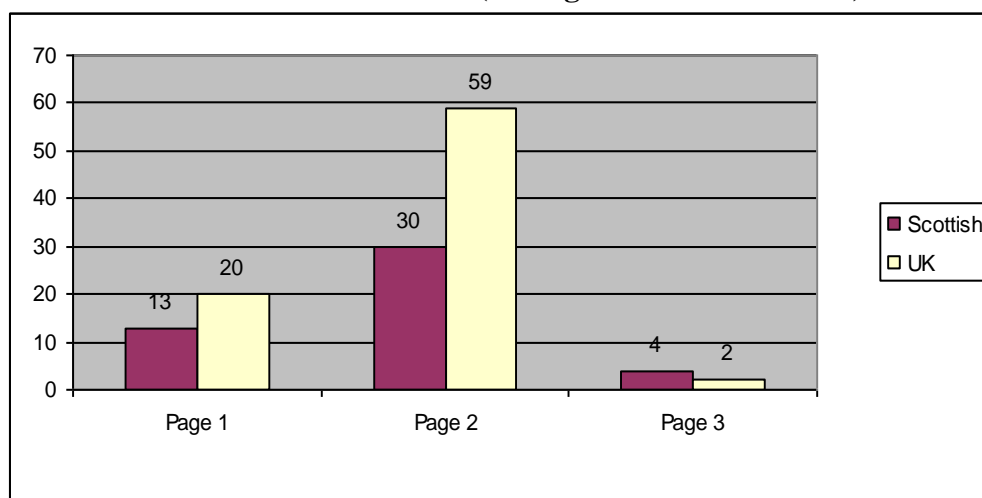
In terms of the position of election coverage within the paper, situating articles nearer the front of the paper, and especially on the front page, has been suggested as one way in which newspapers might signal the prominence they give to an issue (Higgins, 2006). The average² number of articles that appeared in the first three pages in the Scottish and English/UK sample is shown in tables 10 and 11.

Table 10. 2001: Position of articles (average number of articles)



² Because the Scottish sample has more titles than the English/UK sample, tables 10 and 11 show the average number of articles appearing on the first three pages per newspaper in each sample.

Table 11. 2005: Position of articles (average number of articles)



Although the distribution of articles across all the pages was not examined due to the large amount of data in the corpus, tables 10 and 11 show a similar amount of coverage on the front page in English/UK and Scottish newspapers, especially in 2001. Given that the front page is conventionally seen as a particularly prominent page in a newspaper (Hutt and James, 1989:78), it appears that the two newspaper samples gave equally this prominent position to articles related to the election. In 2005, the English/UK titles have on average a third more articles on the front page than the Scottish sample which might reflect the gradual decline of interest in Westminster elections, discussed by Macdonell in the previous section.

The coverage on page 3 also appears similar in the two samples, however the Scottish sample has consistently less election coverage on page 2. This might have to do with the various titles' policies in placing election material on a specific page within the paper. Higgins' study (2006) mapped out the distribution of the coverage across all pages and found systematic differences between his two samples in the number of articles placed in the front part of the newspaper. Although my study

looked only at the first three pages, its findings do not seem to suggest a similarly systematic difference.

This section has discussed that although Scottish titles dedicate less coverage to the two elections, they offer a similar proportion of information and advice to the English/UK sample. In 2001 they concentrate their evaluative material earlier in the campaign, while English/UK papers offer more evaluation and advice closer to the day of the election, when it might have more immediate influence on voters' decisions. In 2005 however, English/UK and Scottish papers are more similar in the distribution of coverage across the duration of the campaign. The amount of front-page coverage seems to be slightly higher in the English/UK titles, however the findings do not appear to suggest a marked divergence. Apart from the difference in the overall amount of coverage, the other differences between the samples do not seem to evidence a more distinctive contribution to debate in the public sphere.

4. A similar election agenda

Following the examination of the overall coverage dedicated to the elections in the previous sections, this section compares the prominence of the different election issues mentioned within the coverage of each sample, focussing specifically on the distinction between devolved and reserved issues. Issues which have been devolved to the Scottish parliament (like health, education, law and order) are not decided during Westminster elections in Scotland, while reserved issues (like defence and

taxation) are³. However issues which are devolved in Scotland remain in the remit of Westminster in England and remain relevant for English voters during general elections. This section compares the election issue agendas in the two newspaper samples and identifies similarities and differences.

As discussed in chapter 4, I have counted how many articles mention an issue rather than how many articles are in their entirety about an issue. In this way I aim to capture the prominence given to issues even when they are not extensively debated in the coverage. For example, this method of counting has helped to capture instances where a newspaper mentions that health, education and transport are important for voters, even if the article does not discuss any of these in depth. A more detailed discussion of how these thematic categories were determined can be found in chapter 4.

4.1 Reserved issues

Tables 12 and 13 show the number of mentions reserved issues received in 2001. A table with the election issues I counted in 2001, the operationalisation of the categories, and the exact number of mentions they received in each newspaper can be found in appendix 1.2. Despite differences in the actual number of mentions which are also related to the difference in the overall amount of election coverage between the two samples mentioned before, there is a similar pattern in the order of prominence of these issues (in relation to each other) in the two samples. In fact a

³ A full list of devolved and reserved issues can be found in appendix 1.1.

Wilcoxon signed ranks matched pairs test showed that the difference in the order of reserved issues between the two samples is not a statistically significant one.

Table 12. Reserved issues in the Scottish sample: 2001

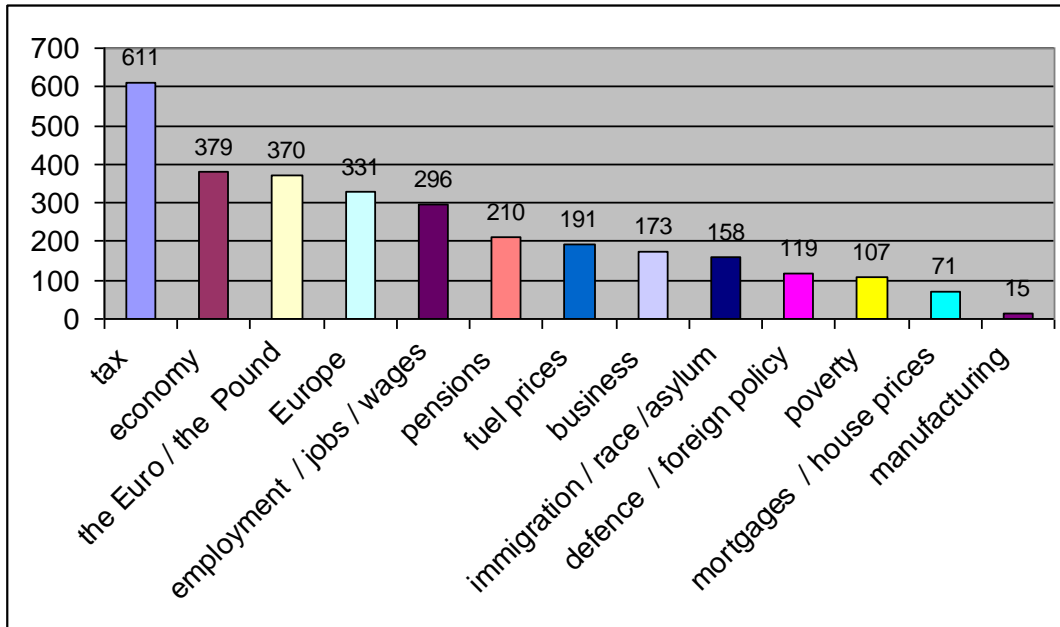
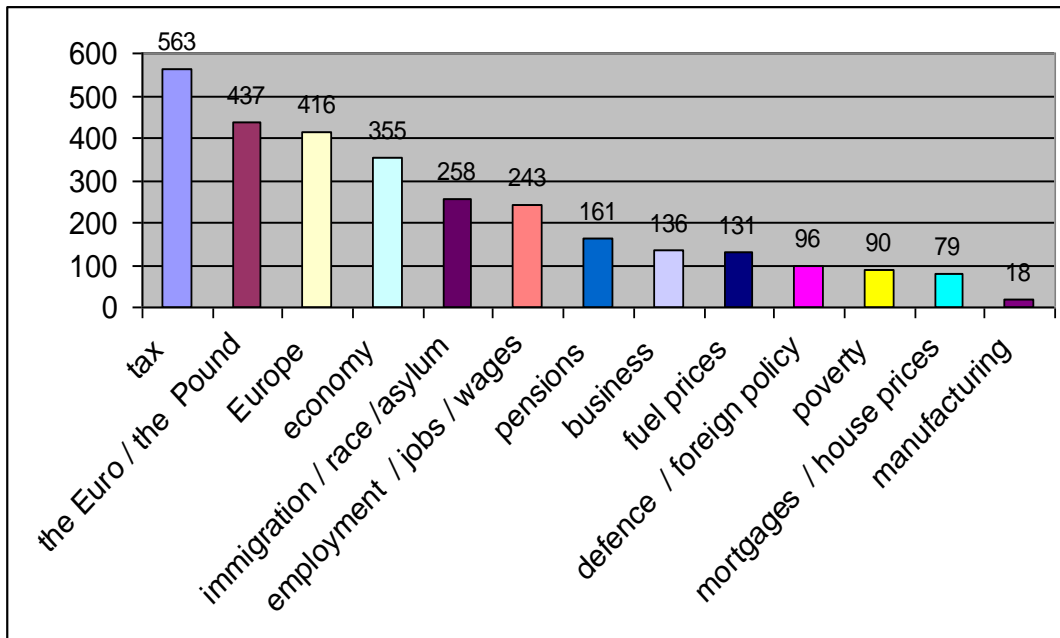


Table 13. Reserved issues in the English/UK sample: 2001



Despite this similarity, the order of the issues is not identical in the two samples: the adoption of the European currency and Britain's relationship with the European Union were less prominent than the British economy in the Scottish sample and are therefore in the third and fourth position respectively. In the UK coverage, the economy is in the fourth position, following the two "European" issues. Immigration and asylum were more prominent in the UK titles and were the fifth most mentioned reserved issue in that sample, while in the Scottish papers they were in the ninth position among reserved issues. It is worth noting that both the "European" issues and immigration/asylum were promoted by the Conservative party which is considerably less popular in Scotland, as noted in chapter 2.

Fuel prices were more popular in the Scottish titles and appear in the seventh position (between pensions and business), while they are in the ninth position in the national UK titles (after pensions and business). As I will discuss in the following section, fuel prices were more popular among the non-central belt titles in Scotland.

In all other respects, the prominence of different reserved issues in relation to each other is the same in both samples. The coverage of taxation, the most mentioned reserved issue in 2001 is further analysed and compared between the samples in chapters 6 and 7.

In 2005, there seem to be more variations in the reserved issues agenda of the two samples, however the Wilcoxon signed ranks matched pairs test again found no statistically significant difference in the order of prominence of different issues. As in 2001, immigration and Europe are a little less prominent in the Scottish titles,

while fuel prices are more prominent, but with a few variations, the overall order of prominence is quite similar in the two newspaper samples (tables 14 and 15). The most mentioned reserved issue in 2005 is the Iraq war, and its coverage is further analysed and compared in chapters 6 and 7.

Table 14. Reserved issues in the Scottish sample: 2005

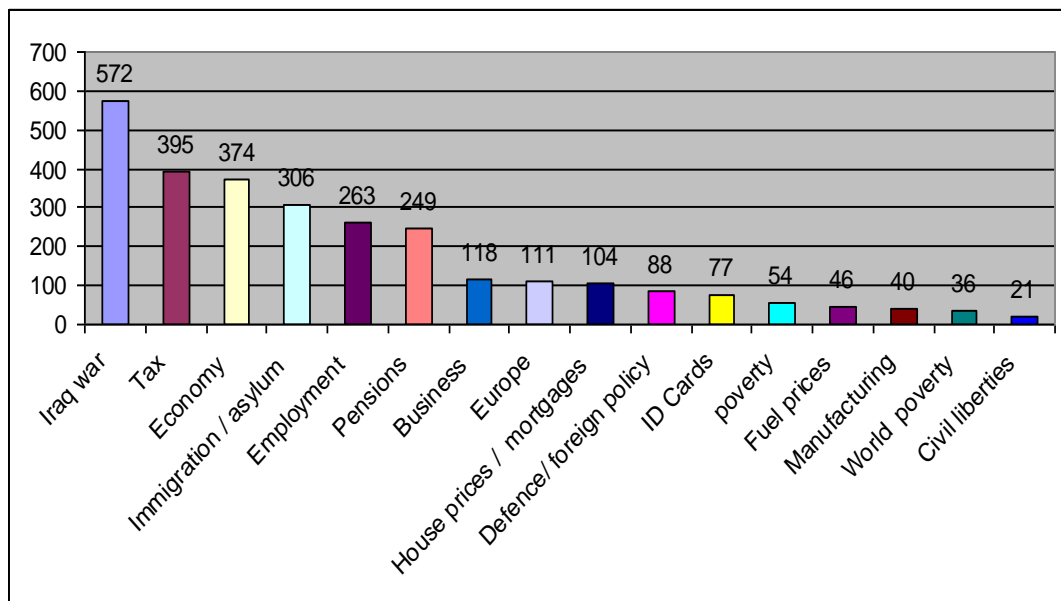
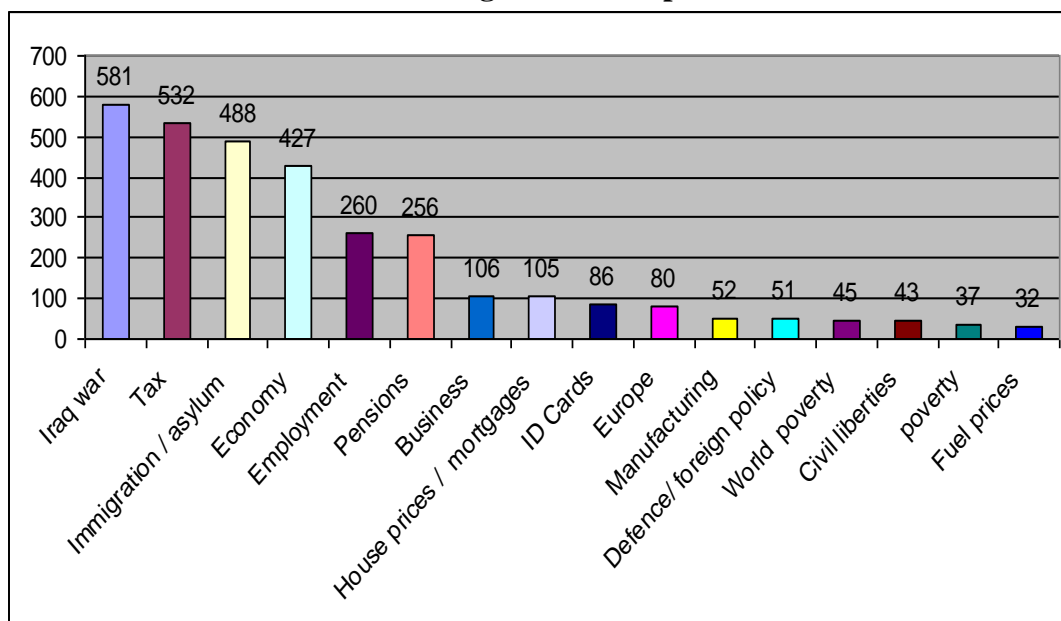


Table 15. Reserved issues in the English/UK sample: 2005



4.2 Devolved issues

A similar overall pattern is found in the mentions of devolved issues. In both 2001 and 2005 the Wilcoxon signed ranks matched pairs test showed no statistically significant difference in the order of the issues in the two samples. In fact, in 2001 the four most mentioned devolved issues are exactly the same, while in 2005 the order of prominence of all the issues is almost identical in the two samples (tables 16-19). In both years, the most mentioned devolved issue is healthcare, which will be further examined in chapters 6 and 7.

Table 16. Devolved issues in the Scottish sample: 2001

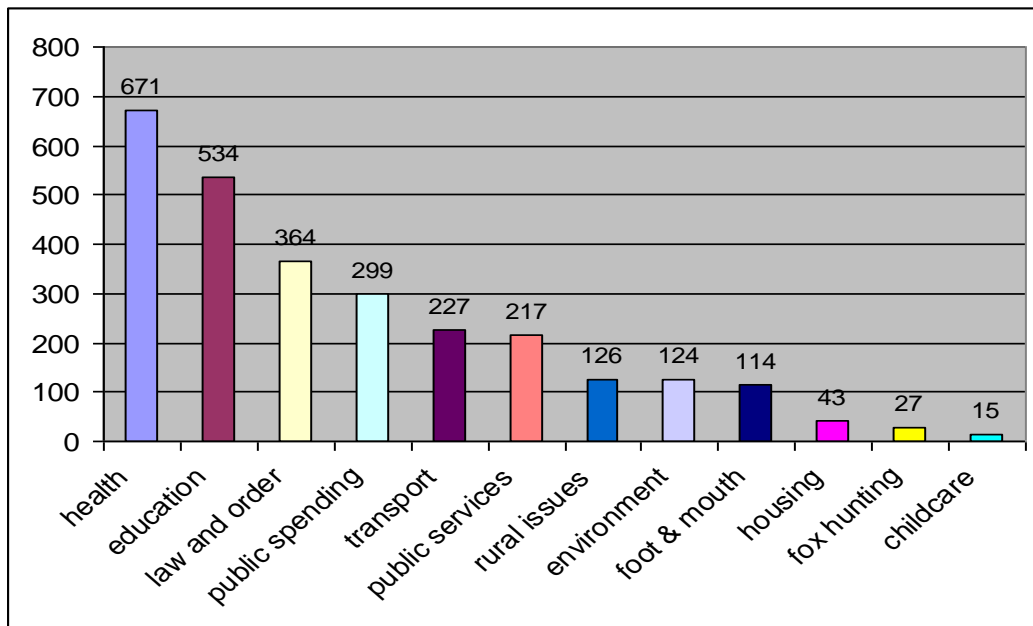


Table 17. Devolved issues in the English/UK sample: 2001

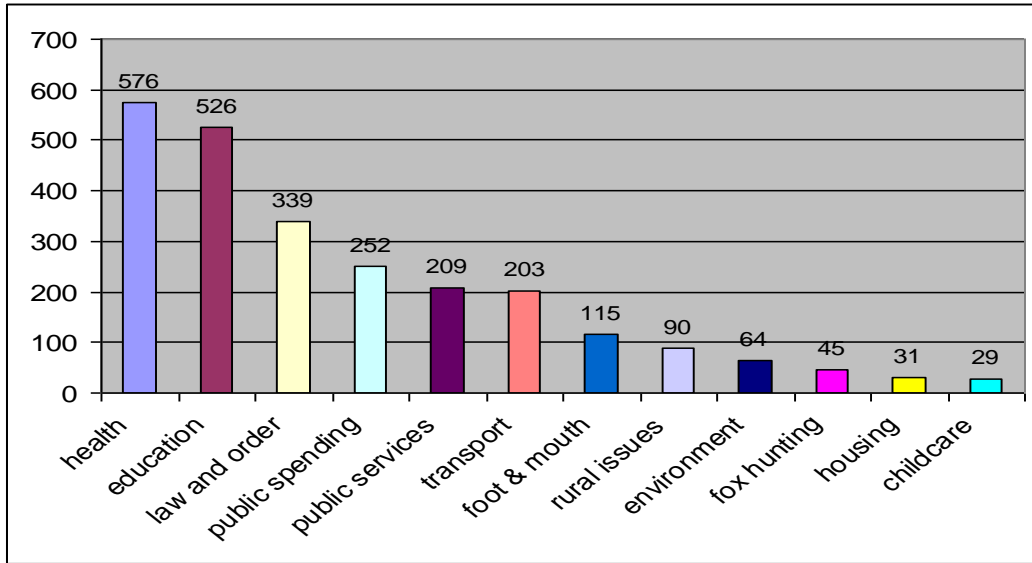


Table 18. Devolved issues in the Scottish sample: 2005

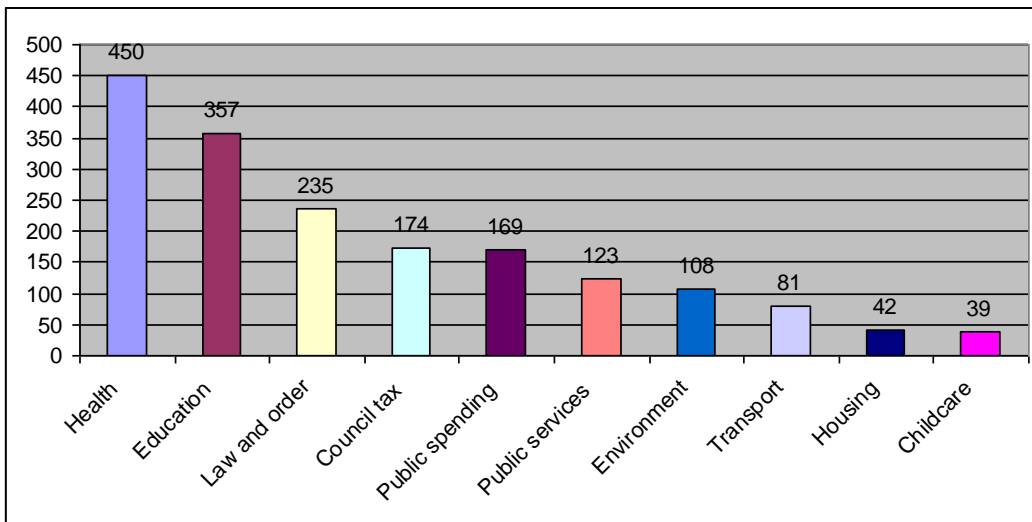
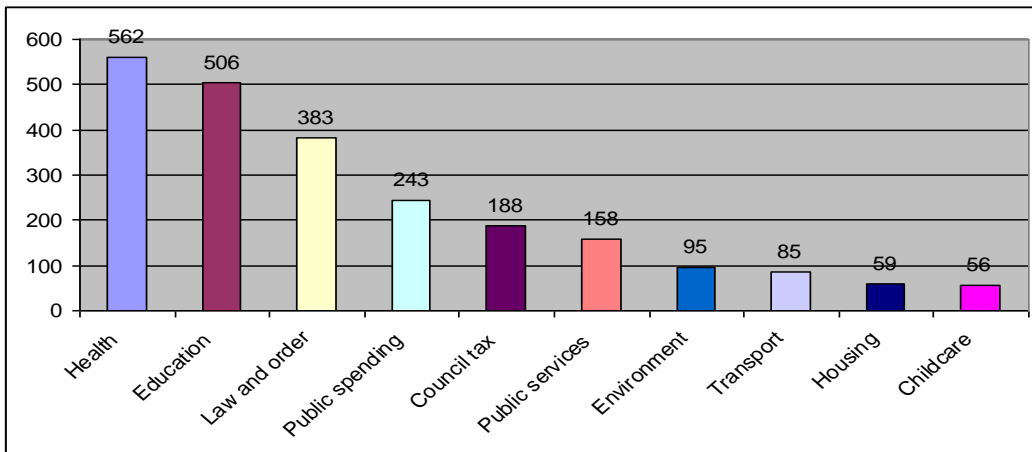


Table 19. Devolved issues in the English/UK sample: 2005



As discussed in chapter 3, Deacon et al. (2001, 2006) undertook an extensive quantitative analysis of electoral media coverage in both 2001 and 2005. One aspect they explored was the thematic agendas in print and broadcast media, however as discussed in chapter 4, the present analysis did not adopt their categories but allowed election issues to emerge from the coverage during the pilot study.

As a result, Deacon et al.'s categories and resulting measurements are different: in both elections, for example, they found that the most dominant theme in all the media was the electoral process itself, namely "party campaigning strategies and activities, opinion polls, etc" (2006:252). I did not measure reports of campaigning strategies because such a category would require subjective interpretation of individual instances and could not be captured by a set of keywords. Such interpretations would be difficult for one researcher to make reliably given the size of the corpus. However, I did measure five separate related categories, namely references to poll results, concerns about voter turnout, tactical voting, explicit predictions of the outcome and explicit advice on how to vote. None of these categories by itself was found to be among the top two issues mentioned (only if they were to be added together would their prominence in the newspapers' coverage match Deacon et al.'s findings).

Another example of divergence with my findings is Deacon et al.'s category of "political improprieties", which in 2005 was among the three most covered issues. In this category they included discussions about "the personal integrity of the Prime Minister" (2006:252) which often accompanied the coverage of Labour's policy on Iraq. Deacon et al. included Iraq as a separate category to "political improprieties",

however in my study of the data it emerged that the debate about Blair's integrity was inextricably connected to the coverage of Iraq and it did not seem useful to measure it separately. As discussed in chapter 4, a certain degree of subjectivity is inevitable in content analysis because, as is the case with the data here, different researchers might "see" different categories in the same data.

Apart from the differences in the categories they identified, Deacon et al. also found a different order of prominence for the issues measured in my analysis. For example, they found health and education to be lower in the agenda. The reasons for such divergences may relate to differences in the sample (they examined a variety of different media including TV, radio and Sunday newspapers, and they only looked at seven pages within each newspaper issue) and in the types of instances measured (they only measured a reference to an issue if it was at least two sentences long, leaving out passing references, and counted only three issues per article). As discussed in chapter 4, the sample of my study included a different sample (especially in the Scottish case I included a much wider variety of newspapers) and I counted all mentions of different issues. Another reason for the differences with their results may be that they do not distinguish between print and broadcast media when discussing their Scottish coverage findings.

Especially in 2005, when they make an explicit comparison of English and Scottish coverage of the election, Deacon et al (2006) find some differences in the Scottish agenda compared to my findings, such as a higher prominence of asylum and immigration than in my findings, a lower prominence of health, while education does not feature among the top ten issues of the Scottish media agenda. Again

differences in the sample and the way of measurement referred to above account for these differing results.

As discussed in chapter 4 however, the sample and the method of measuring variables were adopted to provide an inclusive and representative account of the coverage of both Scottish and English/UK newspapers, to make the procedure of the analysis as replicable as possible and to avoid imposing pre-set categories on the data. Moreover, as mentioned in chapter 4, counting mentions of issues accommodated the fact that a large number of articles pointed at several issues as significant in the debate without analysing them in detail.

Taking all this into consideration, this section has revealed a similar election agenda in English/UK and Scottish newspaper coverage of the two elections. This is significant especially in the case of devolved issues which are not relevant to Scotland during general elections, but which seem to be offered high prominence in the Scottish press.

In my interviews with political editors, all three interviewees commented on their newspapers' electoral agenda and talked of the challenges their papers encountered when dealing with reserved and devolved issues in these two elections. They all stressed that Scottish political parties played an active role in the election campaign, communicating with Scottish political editors about the election, organizing press briefings in Scotland and offering them information and stories, separately to the communication work done in London which addressed English journalists and Scottish correspondents at Westminster.

Holyrood party officials had built relationships with Scottish political editors in the context of the Scottish Parliament and, according to Steve Bargeton of *The Dundee Courier*, they also communicated on behalf of their parties in these elections:

What tends to happen during elections is the same press officers, the same advisers and so on tend to take ‘holidays’ as they say from their jobs here and go to work for the parties on those elections. So they were the same people. And they were people you knew and they knew you [...] and they can ring you up and tell you something and you’d be quite happy to write a story based on that because you trust them. Cause you know they wouldn’t mislead you.

All the interviewees discussed the prominence of devolved issues in the agenda before any reference to the results of the content analysis was made, which seems to validate the findings discussed earlier in this section. The interviewees argued that part of the reason why devolved issues were covered in the Scottish press during these elections, even though they were not relevant for Scotland, had to do with the communication tactics of Scottish parties. According to Hamish Macdonell of *The Scotsman*, the agenda of elections “is partly set by the political strategists in the parties and partly by circumstances of the events and stories which come through.” And the parties in Scotland campaigned consistently on devolved issues, as Andrew Nicoll argues:

They come along campaigning about things that people care about like health, crime [...] hospitals or schools. Basic bread and butter issues which

the people who are about to become elected will have no influence on whatsoever because all these things are devolved.

Steve Bargeton thinks that this is because “there was an understanding from early on that there wasn’t enough of interest to voters just on reserved matters”. However the parties’ alleged emphasis on daily life issues only seems to partly explain the issues covered. Taxation, which is reserved, could also be seen as a “bread and butter” issue, yet in neither of the elections was it mentioned more than healthcare.

Scottish papers also had to take into consideration other factors when covering devolved and reserved issues. According to Macdonell, sometimes circumstances would bring forward a devolved issue, for example the Prime Minister would be involved in a row about health, and in those cases the profile of the politician would make it newsworthy in Scotland. Moreover, sometimes a proposal about a devolved issue in England would be covered in Scotland because it was possible, as Bargeton suggests, that the then Labour-led government in Holyrood would eventually adopt the same policy. As he puts it: “There’s no doubt that the Prime Minister has huge influence on the Labour leader up here. Tony Blair did and it was quite clear.”

Besides, the interviewees agreed that devolved matters also influence the way their readers vote in general elections. Hamish Macdonell and Steve Bargeton believe this is because voters judge the performance of the Scottish government and reward or punish the same party in Westminster elections or because they do not distinguish between the areas of responsibility of each parliament when they vote. Andrew

Nicoll believes that readers vote for political leaders rather than for policies and that their loyalties tend to be emotionally based and consistent in different elections.

Finally, although when asked about their sources for covering the elections, all interviewees mentioned primarily press briefings and personal contacts with politicians, it seems that the debate in other media also had its influence on Scottish newspaper coverage. According to Macdonell: “It’s very difficult... if the weight of opinion on a day and all the UK media are pursuing a subject [sic], it’s very difficult for the Scottish press to go a different way.” Although Macdonell writes for a Scottish “national” paper, his comment here might suggest that he sees the public sphere in general elections as UK-based.

It seems therefore that there were many factors influencing the Scottish coverage of the election toward a more English/UK agenda: the issues promoted by politicians, the agenda of the UK media, as well as Scottish papers’ own judgements about the significance of individual election events or policies. Blumler and Gurevitch (1995:42) view the news as a joint product created by political advocates and media professionals rather than by just one of these groups. Although the evidence here seems to support such a view, it also appears that Scottish newspapers did not consciously develop a strategic approach in response to the complex political context. Steve Bargeton said that *The Courier* covered both devolved and reserved issues within the “blurred lines” set by politicians and Macdonell explained that *The Scotsman* would often take individual decisions on covering events which only affected England, depending on whether they had “the resonance to carry through.”

Both journalists said that they personally tried to point out to readers that devolved issues were not relevant at Westminster elections in Scotland. Readers though were not the only ones who had to be educated on the distinction between devolved and reserved issues. According to Bargeton and Nicoll, many sub-editors in Scottish papers in the first years of devolution were unsure about which issues were devolved. The interviewees suggested that they needed to educate sub-editors on these matters.

It appears therefore that Scottish papers faced challenges, which they dealt with by making judgements on the relevance of individual election events, but often covering most of the topics that became prominent in the campaign. Newspapers found themselves in a new context after devolution and had to struggle with both internal and external factors to find a new balance in their coverage.

5. The coverage of individual newspaper titles

The previous sections discussed features of the coverage of English/UK and Scottish titles as a group. This section deals with features of individual newspapers, focussing primarily on the Scottish sample because this is the primary focus of my study. Comparisons are also made with individual titles in the English/UK sample especially when illustrating trends within different sections of the press (between quality or popular titles in both countries for instance). I start by looking at the performance of papers regarding their overall amount of coverage and then consider similarities and differences in the prominence they give to different election issues.

5.1. Overall amount of coverage

The three Scottish papers that provided the most coverage in both election years were the *Scotsman*, the *Herald* and the *Scottish Daily Mail* – two quality titles and a middle market one (tables 20 and 21).

Table 20. Coverage of the 2001 election in the Scottish sample – number of words

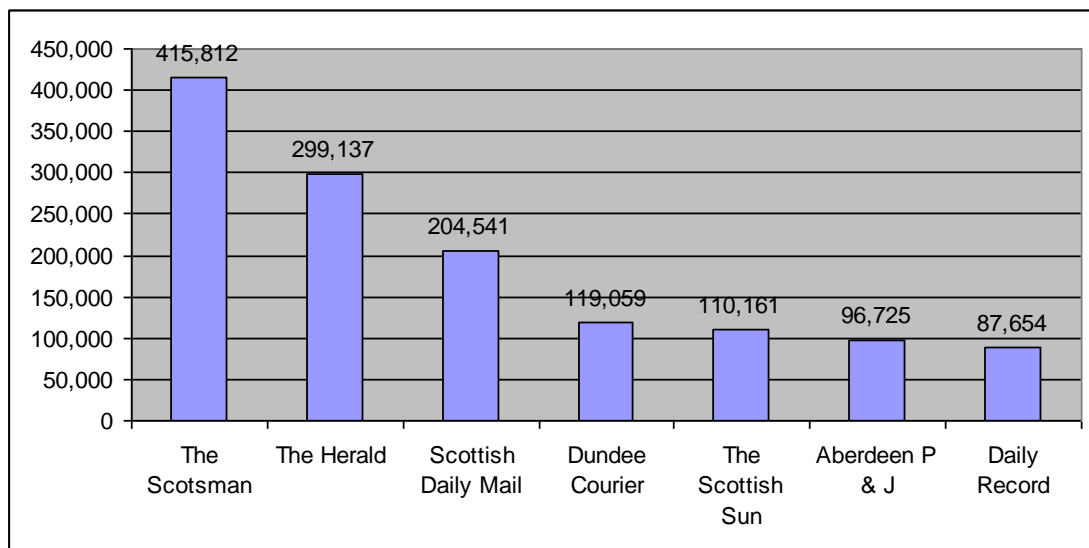
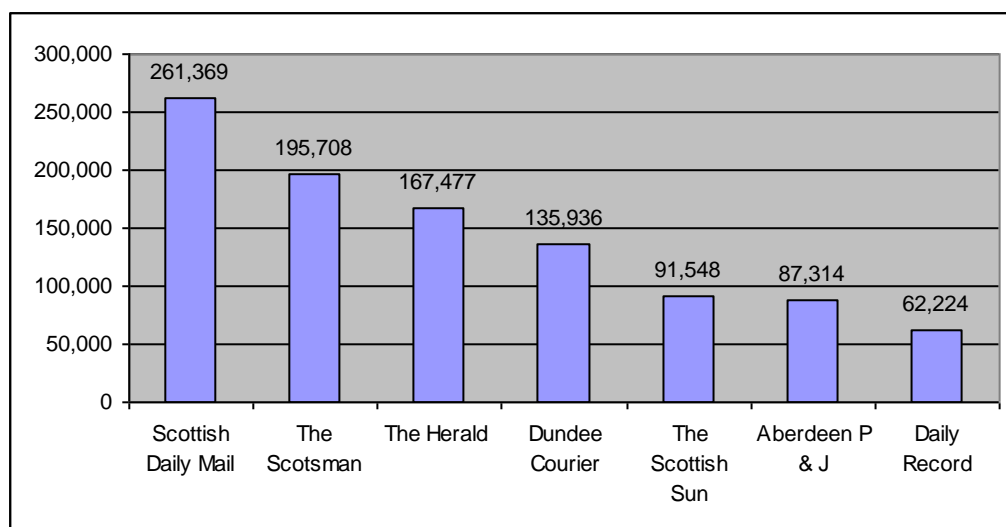


Table 21. Coverage of the 2005 election in the Scottish sample – number of words



However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, in 2005 the two central belt quality titles both reduced their coverage, and in that year the Scottish title with the most election coverage was *The Scottish Daily Mail*, which additionally increased its own coverage. All the other Scottish titles gave an identical ranking of attention in both election years. It is perhaps surprising that a middle-market title has the most coverage of the 2005 election in the Scottish sample, given that quality newspapers are the ones normally expected to carry the greatest amount of political coverage, as discussed in chapter 3. Despite the increase in the coverage of *The Scottish Daily Mail* though, if the two central-belt titles had not decreased their coverage (the reasons for this decrease were explained earlier), this middle market title would not have had the first position in the Scottish coverage (the coverage of *The Scottish Daily Mail* in 2005 is still lower than that of *The Scotsman* and *The Herald* in 2001).

In the English/UK sample the pattern is more predictable, with two quality papers providing the most election coverage, followed by a middle market one. *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* provided most of the coverage in this sample in both years, followed by *The Daily Mail* (tables 22 and 23).

Table 22. Coverage of the 2001 election in the UK sample – number of words

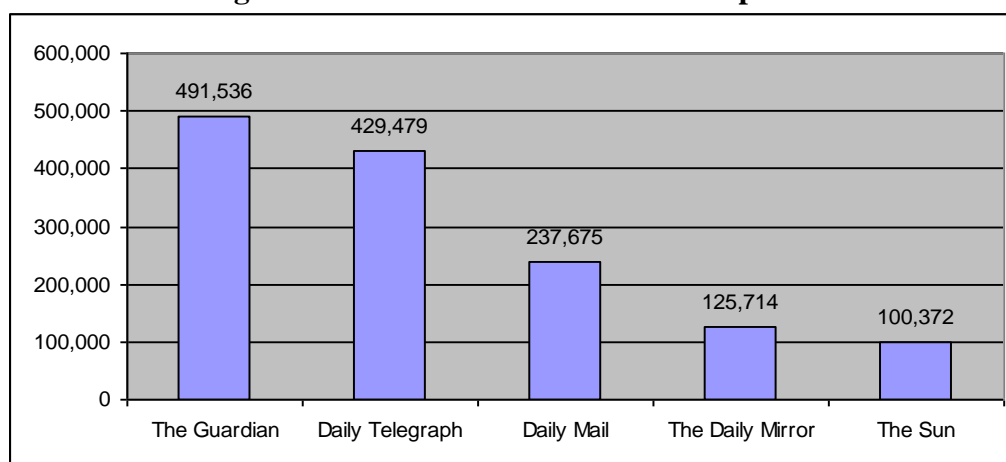
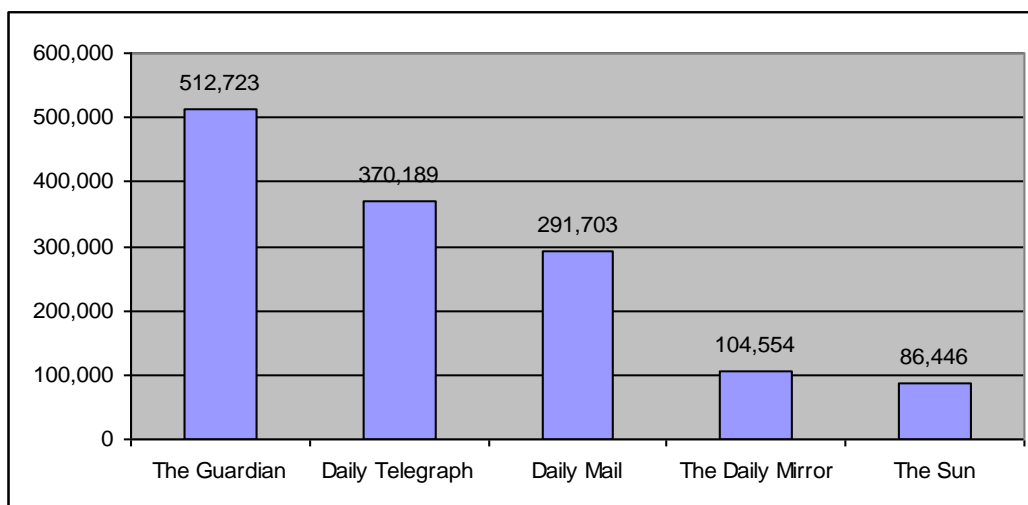


Table 23. Coverage of the 2005 election in the English/UK sample – number of words



5.2 Coverage of individual issues

In order to make comparisons on individual election issues between different titles, which would allow for the overall differences in the amount of coverage, I estimated for each newspaper the proportion devoted to each issue of the total number of mentions of all issues in that title. For example, in the coverage of *The Guardian*, 8.9% of the mentions of all election issues were mentions of health.

A table with the mentions different issues received in different papers in 2001 can be found in appendix 1.2. Here I will discuss the four most mentioned issues overall as well as those where interesting differences were found between titles.

5.2.1 Most prominent issues

Differences between individual Scottish titles in their amount of coverage of the most popular devolved and reserved issues were found not to be statistically significant, using a chi-square test. When the same test was applied further down the list of prominent issues (for example in the amount of coverage different Scottish titles gave to fuel prices), more statistically significant differences are found among individual Scottish papers. This trend is evident in both election years.

Despite this, not all newspapers are similar in the most mentioned issues of each campaign. Table 24 shows the two most mentioned issues overall in each Scottish newspaper in 2001. Health and taxation are the most prominent issues in most titles, although education also appears among the top two issues (in *The Herald* and *The Press and Journal*) as does the euro (in *The Scottish Sun*).

Table 24. Comparison of the two most mentioned issues in the Scottish titles in 2001

(the numbers refer to the number of mentions; the percentages refer to the corresponding proportion of the total number of all issue mentions in each title)

	1st	2nd
<i>The Scotsman</i>	Taxation: 194 (9.8%)	Health: 162 (8.2%)
<i>The Herald</i>	Health: 143 (9.8%)	Education: 124 (8.5%)
<i>Daily Record</i>	Health: 54 (9.0%)	Taxation: 50 (8.3%)
<i>Aberdeen P & J</i>	Health: 56 (8.9%)	Taxation: 44 (7.0%) Education: 44 (7.0%)
<i>Dundee Courier</i>	Health: 59 (9.3%)	Taxation: 57 (9.0%)
<i>The Scottish Sun</i>	Health: 81 (10.6%)	The Euro: 64 (8.4%)
<i>Scottish Daily Mail</i>	Health: 116(11.1%)	Taxation: 90 (8.6%)

Perhaps more significantly though, table 24 shows that in almost all the Scottish titles, an issue which is devolved to the Scottish parliament (health) was mentioned

more often as a general election theme than all the other issues. This is significant because, as previously discussed, health is not decided in UK general elections in Scotland. The same is true for education, which also features highly in the Scottish coverage. The internal and external challenges faced by Scottish papers which were described in section 4.2 were presented by the political editors I interviewed as an explanation for this prominence of healthcare in the Scottish coverage.

In the coverage of taxation, the most mentioned reserved issue in 2001, there is a debate in the Scottish press on whether the Scottish parliament should acquire full fiscal powers (fiscal autonomy). In table 25, I have estimated the proportion of the taxation mentions in each title which is dedicated to fiscal autonomy. *The Scotsman* is the paper which mentioned the issue most, as would be expected given that the issue broke when a group of academics wrote a letter to this paper supporting the cause.

The Scotsman is followed by *The Daily Record* and *The Herald*, however the Scottish editions of English newspapers have less than 5% of their mentions of taxation dedicated to fiscal autonomy. This is consistent with the overall adherence of these titles to their London editions which is found in most parts of this study: English/UK titles did not mention fiscal autonomy at all and their Scottish editions follow by having the least amount of references to this issue. The way the two newspaper samples talk about taxation, including the topic of fiscal autonomy is further analysed in chapters 6 and 7.

Table 25. Proportion of 2001 tax mentions dedicated to fiscal autonomy in the Scottish sample

The Scotsman	24.7%
Daily Record	20%
The Herald	16.9%
Aberdeen Press and Journal	11.4%
Dundee Courier	7%
Scottish Daily Mail	4.4%
The Scottish Sun	3.4%

Table 26 below shows the two most prominent issues for each of the titles in the English/UK sample in 2001. Although health, the most mentioned issue in almost all the Scottish titles, features very prominently among the top two issues in these papers, here it is the most mentioned issue only in *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Mirror*. This points to the conclusion that the influence of the UK press alone can not adequately explain the prominence of health in the Scottish coverage. A number of other factors, explained in section 4.2, interacted to push health to the top of the Scottish agenda.

A second significant observation is that the most mentioned issues in the two editions of *The Mail* and *The Sun* are the same. Although the euro is a little lower in salience in *The Scottish Sun*, overall the two Scottish editions follow the priorities of their London editions.

Table 26. Comparison of the two most mentioned issues in the English/UK titles in 2001

(the numbers refer to the number of mentions; the percentages refer to the corresponding proportion of the total number of all issue mentions in each title)

	1st	2nd
The Guardian	Education: 185 (8.9%)	Health: 176 (8.5%)
Daily Telegraph	Taxation: 187 (9.5%)	Health: 158 (8.1%)
Daily Mail	Health: 103 (9.7%)	Taxation: 98 (9.2%)
The Sun	The Euro: 67 (9.3%)	Health: 65 (9.1%)
The Daily Mirror	Health: 74 (9.3%)	Education: 71 (9.0%)

In 2005, the pattern in the Scottish titles of mentioning a devolved issue more often than reserved areas appears to change. Iraq, a reserved topic, is the most mentioned theme in all the Scottish papers, apart from *The Scottish Sun* and *The Aberdeen Press and Journal*, where devolved issues are more prominent (table 27). Yet even in 2005, devolved issues are still high in the Scottish agenda, with health and/or education appearing among the top two issues in six out of the seven newspapers.

Table 27. Comparison of the two most mentioned issues in the Scottish titles in 2005

(the numbers refer to the number of mentions; the percentages refer to the corresponding proportion of the total number of all issue mentions in each title)

	1st	2nd
The Scotsman	Iraq: 117 (12.3%)	Health: 69 (7.2%) The economy: 69 (7.2%)
The Herald	Iraq: 123 (12.2%)	Health: 81 (8.1%)
Daily Record	Iraq: 45 (10.0%)	Health: 43 (9.6%)
Aberdeen P & J	Health: 43 (7.8%) Education: 43 (7.8%)	Iraq: 39 (7.1%)
Dundee Courier	Iraq: 77 (8.4%)	Education: 64 (7.0%)
The Scottish Sun	Health: 59 (9.1%)	Iraq: 53 (8.2%)
Scottish Daily Mail	Iraq: 118 (10.2%)	Taxation: 112 (9.7%)

In the 2005 English/UK sample, Iraq features among the top issues in many titles, but not in all of them. It is not included at all among the top two issues in *The Sun* or *The Mirror*. There appears to be a trend among Conservative-supporting

newspapers in both samples (*The Daily Telegraph* and the two editions of *The Daily Mail*) of mentioning taxation more often than the other titles. Although *The Scottish Daily Mail* again follows the pattern of its mother edition, *The Scottish Sun* appears a little different and has Iraq in the second position instead of crime. It is worth noting here that *The Sun* and its Scottish edition were the only papers that openly supported Blair's decisions and tactics on this issue in their editorial of 29 May, 2005 and did not criticise him for any aspect of his policy.

Table 28. Comparison of the two most mentioned issues in the English/UK titles in 2005

(the numbers refer to the number of mentions; the percentages refer to the corresponding proportion of the total number of all issue mentions in each title)

	1st	2nd
The Guardian	Iraq: 210 (9.4%)	Health: 191 (8.6%)
Daily Telegraph	Taxation: 150 (8.8%)	Iraq: 135 (7.9%)
Daily Mail	Iraq: 119 (9.8%)	Taxation: 117 (9.6%)
The Sun	Health: 68 (9.4%)	Crime: 60 (8.3%)
The Daily Mirror	Health: 115 (11.6%)	Education: 82 (8.4%)

In this section I have looked at the two most mentioned issues in the Scottish and English/UK sample from a quantitative perspective. Although the proportion of mentions dedicated to these issues in different newspapers reveals interesting insights regarding the amount of attention these issues received, it cannot elucidate the form of the debate on these issues in each sample. The next two chapters will examine this in detail by critically analysing four one-day samples of the coverage of health, taxation and the Iraq war in the different Scottish and English/UK papers.

5.2.2 Overall patterns between newspapers

It was generally difficult to identify trends that linked the titles with common features, such as popular titles versus qualities or right and left-of-centre papers based on the issues they mentioned. In this section I discuss a few tendencies, though most of them are not consistent either across both samples or across both election years.

In 2001 the debates on Britain's relationship with Europe and the possibility of adopting the Euro seemed to be "right-of-centre" issues in the English/UK sample, because they received most of their mentions in *The Telegraph* (7% and 7.5% of the paper's mentions of all issues respectively), *The Mail* (8% and 6.3%) and *The Sun* (5.7% and 9.3%). In the Scottish sample these issues received less attention from all titles and even though the Euro had 8.4% of the total issue mentions of *The Scottish Sun* and Europe had 7.3% of the issue mentions in *The Scottish Daily Mail*, the other papers had lower proportions and the trend of the right-of-centre English/UK titles is not so obviously reflected in the Scottish sample.

In both election periods, crime received the most attention in the two editions of *The Sun* (between 6.8% and 8.3%). Among the indigenous Scottish titles, *The Daily Record* had the highest proportion in 2001 (7.3% of all its issue mentions), which could lead to the interpretation that crime was a "popular press" issue, but in 2005 this trend was not repeated in *The Record*.

In 2005 immigration appears to be a “popular press” issue in the Scottish sample. Its highest proportion in that sample is found in *The Daily Record* (6.7% of all issue mentions), followed by *The Scottish Sun* (6.3%) and *The Scottish Daily Mail* (6.1%). Yet the same is not the case in the English/UK sample, where the issue has most of its mentions in *The Guardian* (8%). Similar distinctions are not found in the mentions of immigration in 2001. Once again though, these trends highlight the inadequacy of content analysis in explaining how issues are constructed. One might expect a different representation of the immigration issue in a left-of-centre title, like *The Guardian*, compared to the right-of-centre *Scottish Daily Mail*. Yet for such distinctions to be made a more qualitative approach would be required.

More consistent quantitative distinctions appear in the non-central belt titles in comparison to the rest of the Scottish sample. In both election years *The Aberdeen Press and Journal* is the Scottish title with the highest proportion of mentions of transport and the environment, while rural issues and employment are also more prominent in this title in 2001. In 2005 *The Press and Journal* and *The Dundee Courier* have the highest proportion of mentions of employment, council tax, the possibility of abolition of the Scottish regiments and fuel prices. These two papers also have the highest proportion of mentions of fuel prices in 2001 (appendix 1.2).

There seems therefore to be an issue agenda which is particular to non-central belt titles and includes geographically significant issues, which receive less attention in the rest of the Scottish coverage. In all these issues, the differences in the mentions between Scottish titles were found to be statistically significant, which confirms that the non-central belt titles follow different trends.

Scottish editions of English newspapers are also consistent in following the agenda of their mother editions with few variations. For example, in 2001 the euro is a major issue for the English edition of *The Sun* (9.3% of all issue mentions) and the Scottish edition has the highest proportion on this issue in the Scottish sample (8.4%). The same happens with immigration in the two editions of *The Sun* and with Europe in the two editions of *The Mail* in 2001; with law and order in the two editions of *The Sun* in both election years; and with postal voting fraud in the two editions of *The Mail* in 2005.

No major differences were found between the agendas of the two central belt quality papers, *The Scotsman* and *The Herald*. The only exception is a stronger emphasis on fiscal autonomy (table 25) and devolution (appendix 1.2) in *The Scotsman* compared to *The Herald* in 2001. Hamish Macdonell, the political editor of *The Scotsman*, stressed that his paper is very similar to *The Herald*, both in terms of the election coverage offered and the type of audience addressed. Indeed it seems that the two papers gave prominence to a similar agenda in the two general elections.

Macdonell also mentioned that in 2001 there was an editorial decision in his paper to focus on “new politics” issues such as the environment and globalization. The reason for deciding to focus on these was that:

We perhaps looked at these issues like the environment and globalisation because we were able to cut across the division of reserved and devolved

issues that was there; so it was our way of dealing with things in a slightly different way I think.

The paper decided to promote these issues and ask politicians to comment on them, yet Macdonell recognises that sometimes the developments in the campaign meant that the paper's agenda "got swept along by what was happening". Although when reading my data to form the categories I measured, globalization did not emerge as an issue, not even from the coverage of *The Scotsman*, the environment did and it appears that indeed this paper had the highest number of mentions of this issue in the Scottish sample (57 mentions in *The Scotsman* versus 26 in *The Herald* and 19 in *The Press and Journal*). Proportionally the issue got 2.9% of all the issue mentions in *The Scotsman* and 3% in *The Press and Journal* (appendix 1.2).

Apart from these issues, Macdonell and the other interviewees said that their papers did not consciously promote any specific election issue. As discussed in this section though, both *The Scottish Sun* and *The Dundee Courier* did mention certain issues more than other Scottish newspapers (for example crime in *The Scottish Sun*, "non-central belt" issues in *The Courier*).

It might be that these emphases characterize the coverage of these titles in general, outside general elections, therefore there was no conscious decision to focus on them specifically during the elections. Besides, Steve Bargeton said that *The Courier* has a loyal readership in its region and generally caters for their need for news that concerns their area. Or perhaps the time that passed between the two elections and the interviews meant that the journalists could not recall any specific

concerns in their papers during those elections. It is notable though that, at least in their interviews, the Scottish political editors claimed that the agenda was led by politicians. I return to this point in chapter 7, where I examine whether news actors or newspapers themselves promote issues and construct their representation.

This section has tried to identify patterns in the agendas of Scottish papers, relating them to each other and/or to the English/UK titles. I have found that the most consistent differentiations within the Scottish sample are between central and non-central belt titles and between Scottish editions of English papers and the rest of the Scottish press. Other differences concern individual titles and issues and do not form a very distinguishable pattern.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has compared the quantitative performance of the Scottish press in the public sphere around the two general elections to that of English/UK titles and has found both similarities and differences. Based on Higgins' (2006) criteria for the quantitative evaluation of election coverage, the English/UK sample has a stronger contribution to the electoral public sphere only in terms of the amount of coverage it dedicates to the election. The criteria which look at the balance of evaluative and informative content, the distribution of coverage in time and the positioning of election items in the front part of the paper did not reveal consistent differences between Scottish and English/UK papers.

More similarities were found in the prominence of issues mentioned by the Scottish and English/UK newspapers. The small differences identified might reflect different considerations in the Scottish coverage – for example the relatively reduced emphasis on issues such as immigration and Britain’s relation with the EU might reflect a more tolerant approach in Scottish papers on these issues, though qualitative analysis would be needed to validate such a speculation.

However this pattern of similarity, which might suggest that English/UK papers set the Scottish papers’ agenda, seems certainly more complicated than this and is likely to be the result of a variety of factors. According to the Scottish political editors interviewed, devolution introduced a number of challenges in the coverage of general elections regarding both the significance of these elections and the balance between covering reserved and devolved issues. Scottish political parties had a significant role in the process, pushing issues on to the agenda and organising the communication with Scottish journalists on behalf of their Westminster counterparts. Scottish newspapers had to learn to balance their coverage in a new political environment, trying to change their working practices and perspectives to respond fully to the devolved context, and perhaps these external and internal factors partly influenced their coverage of these two elections. Whether the time that passed since the early years of devolution might affect the trends identified here during the next general election remains to be seen.

Moreover, even though in quantitative terms the English/UK and Scottish agenda appear similar, the qualitative analysis undertaken in the following chapters reveals differences. For example, despite the high prominence of the Iraq issue in Scottish

titles, it is constructed differently compared to English/UK newspapers with regard to its relevance for a Scottish readership, as will be argued in chapter 6.

Within the Scottish sample, the two central belt quality papers appear very similar to each other. Even though *The Scotsman* shows more interest than *The Herald* in issues which have to do with the devolution settlement, overall the two titles follow a similar agenda and they both drop their coverage significantly in 2005, perhaps in response to the increasing significance of Scottish affairs, as would be expected from titles that are marketed as Scottish national newspapers.

This decline however seems to affect the pattern of coverage in the Scottish press: the title with the most election coverage in 2005 is not a quality paper as might be expected but a middle-market title. Although it might seem surprising that the *Scottish Daily Mail* emerges as the newspaper with the highest degree of attention to the election in the Scottish sample in 2005, this results not from a radical change in the quantity of its coverage from 2001 but from the substantially decreased coverage in the Scottish quality titles.

Although *The Daily Record* occasionally shows interest in issues which are prominent in other popular titles and especially *The Scottish Sun*, its major competitor in its market section, it is hard to identify consistent trends in the agenda of popular or quality titles, which hold for both newspaper samples or for both election years.

The most systematic distinctions can be found between newspapers produced in the central belt and more northern regions as well as between indigenous Scottish titles and Scottish editions of English newspapers. This finding is significant because it shows that there is an opportunity for individual Scottish titles to promote the issue agenda that they consider important. Non-central belt titles mentioned more often issues which appear to have a geographical significance, while Scottish editions of English papers remained close to the agenda of their mother editions. However, with few exceptions, these differences are not in the most mentioned election issues. Even though fuel prices are prominent in *The Press and Journal*, they do not appear among this paper's top two issues. In most Scottish titles, reserved issues like the Iraq war and taxation feature very prominently in the election debate.

On the other hand of course, the two editions of *The Sun* are the only papers in 2001 which have the Euro among their top two mentioned issues and if one is to look at the top five instead of the top two issues, more such "exceptions" will be found in individual titles. The conclusion here is that although generally consistent, neither the English/UK nor the Scottish coverage is internally homogeneous.

The evidence in this chapter seems to suggest that after devolution attention has not completely shifted away from Westminster elections in the Scottish press, neither is the election agenda in Scotland completely different to that in England. On the contrary, overall the coverage appears very similar on both sides of the border. However there are signs of divergence in the Scottish coverage: a decline in the coverage of the "national" Scottish quality titles in 2005, the emergence of issues that have to do specifically with Scotland (fiscal autonomy, devolution and the

abolition of Scottish regiments appear in the Scottish coverage even though they are not among the top issues) as well as more attention to issues of regional relevance within Scotland. These might be seen as differentiating the mediated debate and setting the performance of Scottish newspapers apart from that of the English/UK press.

6. The construction of national identity in the coverage of reserved and devolved issues

(in two parts)

Introduction to 6.1 and 6.2

Chapters 6 and 7, which comprise two parts each, examine and compare the discourse used by Scottish and English/UK titles, when discussing the most mentioned reserved and devolved issue in each election period, as these were revealed in chapter 5. The issues examined are taxation and health for 2001 and the Iraq war and health for 2005. As discussed in chapter 4, I analyse the coverage of one day for each issue and adopt a critical perspective to assess how language use reveals links between texts and their context. In these chapters I present excerpts of discourse which represent trends identified by applying the analytical tools identified in chapter 4. When individual excerpts contrast with these patterns, I present them in order to reflect the diversity of the discourse in different titles.

The two parts of chapter 6 focus specifically on the role of national identity in the coverage. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, a shared identity or “a degree of collective identification” (Peters, 2008b:187) is vital for the function of a public sphere, and there is a strong interdependence between democracy, legitimacy, the public sphere and collective identity (Peters, 2008c:214). A comparison of the construction of national identity by newspapers in Scotland and in England is significant in my discussion as national identity is arguably one of the most obvious forms of identity linking participants in the public sphere of a general election.

As Bourdieu notes, national identity is socially constructed, established through communication and hence discourse (1991:221). Public discourse is therefore a significant mechanism “for the production, change and integrational transmission of collective identities” (Peters, 2008c:242). Following a comparison of the output of Scottish and English/UK titles in quantitative terms (chapter 5), this chapter examines how these newspapers construct nationhood as an identity shared by themselves and their readers and how they locate the electoral debate in a national context. I am looking at whether the election issues are constructed as relevant to England, Scotland or the UK as a whole as well as at how readers are addressed in this complex context. As in the previous chapter, I present excerpts from my interviews with Scottish political editors alongside the textual data, whenever there is a comment which is relevant to the topic discussed in the analysis.

6.1 Reserved issues: taxation and the Iraq war

The first part of this chapter examines the coverage of the most mentioned reserved issue in each campaign, namely taxation for 2001 and the Iraq war for 2005. It starts by looking at similarities in Scottish and English/UK papers’ coverage of each issue regarding the way they locate these debates in a British or Scottish context, as well as certain particularities found in individual titles.

I then look at differences between the two samples in the way they address their respective readerships and how they use these forms of address to indicate the relevance of the events reported for their readers’ lives. Fiscal autonomy is

discussed separately, at the end this first part of the chapter, because, as I will argue, its treatment differs to that of Westminster taxation.

1.1 Taxation 2001: a banal British field of electoral debate

On 22nd May 2001, the day of my sample, the main event concerning tax at Westminster level was the Conservative party's promise not to raise national insurance levels above inflation, a commitment which the Labour party did not make. This provoked criticism from the Conservatives. At the same time, William Hague said that his party's plans were to cut public spending by £8 million and not £20 million as had been allegedly declared by Oliver Letwin, the shadow Treasury secretary. However, Alistair Darling said that the Conservatives would still make major tax and spending reductions.

In their coverage of this debate, Scottish and English / UK papers both demonstrate a similar banal reference to Britain as the national context of the news stories. The two excerpts below exemplify this similarity:

1. *“Gordon Brown last night was under pressure to reveal Labour's policy on national insurance contributions after William Hague promised not to raise payments by more than inflation if the Tories won the general election. However, Mr Hague's effective attack on Labour continued to be undermined by the Tories' inability to distance themselves from the £20bn of tax cuts allegedly forecast by Oliver Letwin, the shadow Treasury spokesman.”*

(The Herald, news, full article, p.1)

2. “Imagine that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had just hinted that he might raise the higher rate of income tax by 10 per cent to 50 per cent.”

(*The Telegraph*, editorial, full article, p.27)

The national context where the story is taking place in both excerpts is the UK. However, neither *The Herald* nor *The Telegraph* marks this explicitly by using national identifiers. The readers of the two newspapers, although located in different regions of the UK, are expected to understand that “the shadow Treasury spokesman” in *The Herald* and “the Chancellor of the Exchequer” in *The Telegraph* refer to British politicians because they are members of the same national community. In both cases the definite article “the” functions deictically (Billig, 1995:115) and points to the UK as the relevant national context.

It may be argued that the interpretation of these referential expressions is made easier by the fact that Scotland does not have a Treasury or a Chancellor. However, this information is not stated or implied anywhere in the article. The reader is expected to already know this because s/he is a member of the British community and knows these terms as part of the British political lexicon. If this sentence was written in a newspaper outside the UK the marker “British” would become necessary to identify the referent, because “the” is deictic and therefore context-bound.

In the indigenous Scottish coverage of Westminster taxation, this banal identification of Britain as the national context for the debate is a dominant

characteristic. Although explicit references to Britain are occasionally found, especially in the UK/English sample, there is no evidence that either of the samples stresses the national character of the debate by explicitly marking Britain (or any of its constituent regions) merely for emphatic purposes, as Scottish papers did with Scotland in the coverage of the 1999 election (Higgins, 2004a). This may be because the debate on reserved issues in General Elections is not invested with the same national significance that the first election to the Scottish Parliament had for Scottish newspapers. For example:

3. *“William Hague promised to axe five 'damaging' taxes on business yesterday to restore Britain's ability to compete against foreign rivals.”*

(The Daily Mail/Scottish Daily Mail, news, full article, p.1,4)

In excerpt 3, the use of location identifier “Britain’s” appears to be necessary for the meaning of the sentence. If it was not used, a banal reference would be required such as “the country’s” or “our country’s”. The location of the debate is here marked openly without any obvious intention to emphasise it.

1.2. Taxation 2001: marking the Scottish aspect of the Westminster debate

On the other hand, there are very few instances where Scotland is identified as the relevant national context of the Westminster tax debate. In these cases, Scotland is explicitly marked, rather than banally implied:

4. *“Jim Wallace, the Scottish Lib Dem leader, outlined where extra cash - raised by his party's policy of raising income tax by 1p in the pound - would be spent on public services in Scotland if the party wins the General Election.”*

(The Scotsman, news, full article, p.9)

Here Scotland is flagged twice as the relevant national context, with the use of markers “Scottish” and “Scotland”. However, there appears to be an ambiguity in the interpretation of the referent of “his party’s policy”: Jim Wallace, who is the referent of “his”, was the leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, therefore if taken literally this sentence claims that the Scottish Liberal Democrats had a policy to raise tax by 1p in the pound. This is not true, given that this was the policy of the British Liberal Democratic party on an issue reserved to Westminster. However this literal interpretation of the sentence is not the one intended here. The reader is expected to understand that “his party” refers to the British Liberal Democrats. Such an interpretation is also supported in the conditional clause “if the party wins the General Election”. In this clause “the party” does not refer to the Scottish Lib Dems but to their UK colleagues who compete in the general election. The correct interpretation of this sentence requires knowledge on the part of the reader that taxation is a reserved issue – this information is not offered in the article but presupposed to exist in the minds of the Scottish readership.

On such rare occasions when the Westminster tax debate touches on Scotland, this is marked explicitly in the Scottish coverage and at the same time the reader is expected to recognise that taxation is an issue reserved to Westminster. In general though, Britain is the banal, unmarked and unnoticed location of the debate in both

Scottish and British/English newspapers. This seems to bear out Law's finding that in news stories that do not have a specifically Scottish angle, a British-centred deixis is adopted in the Scottish press but when "news content comes into contact with Scotland as a salient deictic centre [...] divisions [are] flagged" (2001:308).

1.3. Taxation 2001: addressing the Anglo-British middle classes

As discussed above, both samples tend to place the Westminster taxation debate within a British context which is generally unmarked. However, in contrast to indigenous Scottish titles, right-of-centre UK and English papers and their Scottish editions address the reader directly as someone affected by taxation and, apart from national identity, social class also becomes relevant in their reports.

5. *"Shadow Chancellor Michael Portillo plans to hound Mr Brown ruthlessly until he delivers a straight answer on the crunch tax issue for Middle Britain."*

(Daily Mail and Scottish Daily Mail, news, full article, pp.1,4)

6. "MIDDLE ENGLAND WOULD PAY PRICE

Removing the cap on employees' National Insurance contributions would have exactly the same effect on Middle England as raising higher rate income tax by 10 per cent, accountants said yesterday. Under Labour, the total amount of NICs we pay has increased sharply."

(Daily Telegraph, news, full article, part, p.7)

The Daily Mail and its Scottish edition discuss the effect of tax on “Middle Britain” (excerpt 5). This term is an adaptation of the fixed expression “Middle England”, which denotes the English middle class¹, and does not itself constitute an established expression to the same extent. The use of “Middle Britain” here serves to position the debate within a social class and a UK context simultaneously. Taxation is a reserved issue affecting the middle classes in all the regions of the UK, therefore the newspaper uses “Britain” instead of “England” to accommodate this.

If “Middle England” had been used instead, the inclusion of the excerpt in the Scottish edition of the newspaper would have seemed awkward as it would exclude Scottish taxpayers. The use of “Middle Britain” appears to fit in both editions, yet the association with the more established “Middle England” may still be made by the Scottish reader and this may limit the inclusiveness of the term. Besides, Reeves (2007) argues that even when some politicians use the term “Middle Britain”, Scotland and Wales “do not feature in any of the social, spatial or psephological categories” they have in mind.

Excerpt 6 on the other hand appears to be an instance of what Law describes as a “forgetful slip” between a British and an English spatial centre (2001:305), in other words an instance of forgetfully using “England” when a topic concerns Britain. As mentioned before, taxation affects all the regions of the UK and is not just an

¹ The term can also be understood to have a geographical meaning, referring to those living in the English Midlands. However, it is more commonly used to denote the upper working class and lower middle class of England, who might be living in the Midlands or the South-East of England, and is stereotypically linked to mainstream (and often conservative) political positions (Reeves, 2007). Historian David Cannadine mentions that the term was coined by Margaret Thatcher, as an analogy to “Middle America” (quoted in Reeves, 2007). Lewis et al. (2005:39) argue that *The Daily Mail* has played an important role in casting Middle England “in its own conservative image”, associated with patriotism, parochialism, traditional values and conservatism.

English issue. By using the fixed expression “Middle England”, *The Telegraph*, like *The Mail* above, positions the debate in a national and social class framework, but unlike *The Mail*, explicitly limits its relevance to the English middle classes.

It may be argued that this is not a forgetful lapse and that the reason England is used instead of Britain in the lead sentence of the article is that this is the way the accountants quoted phrased their statement. However, *The Telegraph* here does more than just quote or even paraphrase the source of this statement. It adopts the discourse used by the accountants outside this quotation and uses their “voice” in the title of the article (Fairclough, 1995b) where “Middle England” is repeated, this time without being attributed to the accountants.

Moreover, *The Telegraph* uses an addressee-inclusive “we” (Wodak et al., 1999:45) to interpellate the reader (Althusser, 1971, Tolson, 1996:57) as a member of this “Middle England”, inviting him/her to identify him/herself with the group. The sentence “*under Labour, the total amount of NICs we pay has increased sharply*” follows directly the reference to “Middle England” and “we” can be interpreted as referring to the newspaper’s readers as members of this social and national group. Readers are identified here with the newspaper and an imaginary homogeneity is additionally constructed among the readership, which excludes readers from other UK regions and from other social classes (Fowler, 1991:49).

7. “*Thanks to taxpayers like you and me, big-spending Gordon Brown has plenty of our money to pay his bills for the next three years. He needs it, because we are committed to a state spending boom due to hit £440 billion a year by 2004.*”

(*The Sun* and *The Scottish Sun*, opinion, full article, p.6)

The Sun and *The Scottish Sun* also address their readership directly through the use of deictic pronouns “you”, “me”, “we” and “our”. This inclusive rhetoric constructs a common identity for the reader and the writer (Tolson, 1996:57, Brunt, 1990:64), and identifies the reader as one of the people whose money is used to “pay” Gordon Brown’s “bills”. At the same time there is a metonymic use of “we” where the people addressed are identified with the British state in “*we are committed to a state spending boom*” (Wodak et al., 1999: 45-47) – it is not literally *Sun* readers who made a commitment to increased spending but the UK government. The use of inclusive personal pronouns and the metonymy which identifies “us” with the state have the effect of addressing the reader both as a taxpayer who is personally affected by tax policies and as a member of an official British national community. Therefore, the importance of these direct addresses in *The Telegraph* and *The Sun/Scottish Sun* lies in that Westminster taxation is presented as relevant to readers personally and as having an effect on their own finances.

Excerpts 5 and 7 above appeared in the same form in the Scottish editions of *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail* respectively. *The Scottish Daily Mail* differentiates itself therefore from the indigenous Scottish coverage on that day by explicitly positioning the Westminster tax debate in a middle class context. *The Scottish Sun* differentiates itself from the indigenous Scottish coverage by addressing the reader directly as a taxpayer. The coverage of both is closer to that of their English editions than that of the indigenous Scottish papers.

I have demonstrated above that Scottish editions of English newspapers follow trends which are not found in the indigenous Scottish coverage. I have also shown

that in addition to their banal marking of a British deictic point of reference, right-of-centre English and UK papers (*The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sun*) address readers directly as taxpayers. Moreover, *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Telegraph* link taxation to social class as well as to national identity. The excerpts presented above seem to address a readership which is both a national community (British or English) and a social class community (middle class). These addresses are not found in left-of-centre English/UK titles, such as *The Guardian* or *The Mirror*. None of the features described above appear in the indigenous Scottish coverage of Westminster taxation.

2.1. Iraq 2005: a British field of electoral debate

On 29 April 2005, the day of my Iraq sample, the main event reported was the publication by Labour of Lord Goldsmith's initial legal advice, given to Tony Blair on 7 March 2003, two weeks before the invasion of Iraq. The Attorney General's advice concerned the extent to which the war would be legal based on international law. The advice expressed concerns and reservations but did not explicitly state that the war would be illegal. The debate in the newspapers was on whether Blair had concealed this advice from Parliament, his cabinet and the British people and whether the Attorney changed his advice later, when it became clear that the UN would not support the war. All the titles in the sample had editorials on the issue on that day.

As with Westminster taxation in 2001, the Iraq war debate in 2005 is located within a British context in both Scottish and English/UK newspapers. This is

communicated both explicitly and banally in the two samples. As in the coverage of Westminster tax, the nation which banal deixis points to is Britain in both samples. On the few occasions where Scotland becomes relevant, this is explicitly flagged.

8. *“Yesterday's revelations merely add to the charge that Mr Blair took this country to war on a false prospectus.”*

(The Herald, editorial, full article, p.21)

9. *“He has proved that he did not lie to the Cabinet, to Parliament or to the country over the decision to go to war on Saddam Hussein.”*

(The Sun and the Scottish Sun, editorial, full article, p.8)

10. *“The idea is that voters send a message to Mr Blair by voting Tory. The problem is that British voters have more options than Australians. Unlike in Australia, where voting is compulsory, Britons can simply abstain. And unlike Australia, Britain has a third party, the Lib Dems.”*

(The Scotsman, news/feature, full article, p.4)

In excerpts 8 and 9, “this” and “the” function as deictic markers banally pointing to the UK as “the country” being talked about. The editorials of *The Herald* and *The Sun/Scottish Sun* point to Britain not only as the location of the debate they report on, but also as the country where the newspaper is written and read. The country Tony Blair took to war and did not lie to is “this/the country”, where the newspaper is produced. Readers are expected to understand which is the relevant national context because they belong to the same national community (Billig, 1995).

Excerpt 10 on the other hand explicitly marks Britain as the location of the debate, but not necessarily as that of the newspaper itself. Instead of repeating the reference to British people three times (“British”, “Britons” and “Britain”), the writer could have used the personal pronoun “we” instead (a discussion of personal pronouns as a mode of address follows in section 2.3). Although the excerpt from *The Scotsman* clearly positions the Iraq debate in a British context, it does not identify Britain as its own location like excerpts 8 and 9 did.

Despite these differences in their degree of self-identification with the British point of reference, excerpts 8-10 are consistent and unambiguous in locating the Iraq debate in a UK context.

2.2. Iraq 2005: marking the Scottish aspect of the debate

In most of the coverage, Scotland does not appear at all as a relevant national point of reference. There are few exceptions where Scotland becomes relevant and, as was also the case in the taxation issue, this is openly marked rather than implied:

11. “*Voters in Scotland, like voters across Britain, may not follow the detail of elections and manifestos, but they have an instinctive sense of fair play and a gut feeling for what is right and wrong.*”

(*The Scotsman*, opinion, full article, p.25)

12. “Not satisfied with all of this, he [Tony Blair] then rubs salt further into the wounds of the soldiers of Scotland’s world-famous Black Watch regiment by bringing to an end more than 200 years of tradition and sacrifice by merging them into a sprawling and amorphous single Scottish fighting force.”

(*Scottish Daily Mail*, 29.04.2005, editorial, full article, p.14)

Excerpt 11 refers to “voters in Scotland” in the third person and the writer does not interpellate the reader as a voter. As in excerpt 10 earlier, *The Scotsman* again refers to voters as a group which is held at a distance from its own readers, though this time the voters referred to are located in Scotland rather than in Britain. Excerpt 12 appeared only in the Scottish edition of *The Mail*, even though the same editorial in all other respects appeared in the English edition as well. The reference to the Scottish regiments was added to the Scottish version and is the only time the Iraq issue is linked with the abolition of the Scottish regiments² on the day of my sample.

Interestingly the headline of the editorial which this excerpt is from remains the same in both editions of *The Mail* (excerpt 16 in section 2.4) and instantiates a much more inclusive rhetoric than the one presented here: the headline of the article refers to “our fighting forces” in both editions, while the only reference to the Scottish regiments in the Scottish edition avoids a similarly inclusive address to the reader. The Scottish regiments are “the soldiers of Scotland’s world-famous Black Watch regiment” but not necessarily the referent of “our fighting forces” because the editorial discusses the effects of the war on British soldiers in general for most of

² During the 2005 campaign there was debate in the Scottish press regarding the possibility that Labour would abolish the Scottish regiments of the UK army and merge them with the rest of the UK armed forces.

the article before the Scottish regiments are introduced in one of the last paragraphs. Therefore British soldiers in general are more likely the ones referred to as “our fighting forces”, even though of course this is open to the interpretation of individual readers. As previously shown in the discussion of taxation, *The Scottish Daily Mail*, like its mother edition, tends to address its readership as British and not specifically as Scottish citizens. A different strategy is adopted by some of the indigenous Scottish titles as will be discussed in the following section.

2.3. Iraq 2005: addressing the reader as a British voter

I have argued so far that, as was the case with Westminster taxation, Scottish and UK/English papers both discuss the Iraq war within a British context. Although in their Westminster tax coverage Scottish newspapers do not directly address their readers, in their Iraq coverage some of them do. However the readers of the indigenous Scottish titles are addressed as voters who will make a decision in the election, while Scottish editions of English papers and UK/English titles address their readers mainly as members of a national community implicated in the war and less often as voters.

13. “*And if you punish Blair for Iraq, you'll end up with Michael Howard as Prime Minister.*” (*Daily Record*, editorial, full article, p.8)

14. “*It seems as though Mr Blair and those who supported the invasion of Iraq want us to concentrate on how the end justified the means, despite the continuing slaughter and instability.*”

(*Aberdeen Press and Journal*, editorial, full article, p.19)

In excerpt 13, the reader is directly addressed with a deictic “you”. In the same sentence there is a banal reference to Britain as the deictic point of reference in the unmarked use of “Prime Minister”. In this context the reader is addressed as a Briton, but the verbs which this “you” accompanies represent the reader as an actor who “punishes” or “ends up with” a politician, therefore as a voter.

The role of the reader as a voter is also highlighted in excerpt 14 from *The Press and Journal*. This time the reader is addressed with an addressee-inclusive “us” which is the subject of mental process verb “concentrate” (Fowler, 1991:73). The reader here is addressed as an actor engaging in intellectual activity, as a voter thinking about the war and judging it as an issue, rather than as someone directly affected by it. “Us” can again be interpreted as a banal reference to a national British community whom Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, and other supporters of the war wish to influence.

I have therefore demonstrated so far that, when the reader is addressed in some of the indigenous Scottish coverage of Iraq, s/he is directly interpellated as a British voter but not as someone who had any role in the war. In the following section I will discuss how Scottish editions of English papers and UK/English titles address their readerships as members of a British community, directly implicated in the war.

2.4. Iraq 2005: addressing a reader who “went” to war

The following excerpts, taken from a range of newspapers which include popular and quality, left and right-of-centre titles, all use the personal pronoun “we” to interpellate the reader as a member of a British imagined community:

15. *“This was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, talking about the way we went to war.”*

(The Daily Mail and Scottish Daily Mail, opinion, full article, p.7)

16. *“BETRAYAL OF OUR FIGHTING FORCES”*

(The Daily Mail and Scottish Daily Mail, editorial, full article, p.14)

17. *“I don't see how anyone can trust Tony Blair after he sent us to war.”*

(The Daily Mirror, letter, full article, p.46)

18. *“Behind the leaded glass of number 13, one of the oldest homes in the road, even solid Labour supporter Dennis Owen was outraged by the war and felt the latest revelations only confirmed his view that we should never have invaded Iraq.”*

(The Guardian, news, full article, p.3)

19. *“Mr Blair, likewise, took us to war in Iraq because it seemed to him, rightly or wrongly, to be in the national interests to support our American overlords, and he was and is ready to tell as many lies in the process as seems necessary.”*

(The Telegraph, opinion, full article, p.31)

All the excerpts use “we” metonymically, where the people stand for the country (Wodak et al., 1999:47) and specifically the country’s armed forces. It is not literally the readers of the newspapers who invaded Iraq (excerpt 18), who went or were sent to fight in Iraq (excerpts 15, 17, 19). The readers are invited to identify themselves with Britain and Britain’s soldiers. An invitation to sympathise with the armed forces is also made in excerpt 16, where Britain’s army is described as “our fighting forces” – a rhetoric reminiscent of wartime references to the army (Bishop and Jaworski, 2003:251).

In the English/UK sample as well as in Scottish editions of English titles, the readers are represented as participants in the war, either voluntarily, as subjects who “went” to war³ (excerpts 15, 18) or involuntarily, as affected patients who were “sent” to war (excerpts 17, 19). In both cases they are addressed as being personally implicated in it. Once again Scottish editions of English papers follow the trends of their London editions, differentiating themselves from the indigenous Scottish coverage.

I therefore suggest that although both samples place the Iraq debate in a UK context, indigenous Scottish titles keep a distance between their readers and the war: the Scottish reader is addressed as a voter, an outside observer who will judge Labour based on their decisions about the war. This distance is surprising, in the light of the participation of Scottish regiments in Iraq. The Scottish editions of English titles

³ In these cases, the active construction “we went” creates the impression that the subjects are agents of their actions, as opposed to the passive construction “we were sent”. van Dijk (1997:34) notes that such an impression is contrary to background knowledge but although the real agent is understood, causality and agency are not openly expressed.

and the English/UK sample on the other hand identify their readers with the British troops and stress their personal implication in the war, as members of a British community. It should be emphasised here that this is not only a difference between the English/UK and Scottish samples, but also one between indigenous Scottish titles and Scottish editions of English papers: the latter follow the patterns of their mother editions rather than those of the other Scottish titles. Moreover, as noted before, only *The Scottish Daily Mail* links Iraq with the Scottish regiments. The participation of Scottish troops in the war is not commented on in the indigenous Scottish coverage of that day.

There are a few rare instances in the English/UK sample, where readers are addressed as voters. For example:

20. *“Mr Blair is not only asking us voters to trust him to carry his policies through. He is also asking us to trust him to decide at some point in the future what those policies should be.”* (*The Daily Telegraph*, opinion, full article, p.28)

The author of the opinion article here argues that Tony Blair cannot be trusted because of the way he handled the Iraq issue. “Us” clearly refers to the reader as a voter, as indicated the first time it is used in the excerpt (“us voters”). Even though such instances occasionally appear in the English/UK coverage, there are no instances in the Scottish coverage of Iraq where the reader is addressed as a participant in the war. Moreover such occasions where the reader is addressed as a voter in the English/UK sample are even more scarce in news and editorial articles, therefore newspapers themselves tend to address their readers only as participants in

the war, even if alternative interpellations are additionally found in the texts of opinion writers.

Having looked at the similarities and differences between the two samples in their coverage of Westminster taxation and the Iraq war, the two reserved issues that are not constructed as “Scottish”, I will now turn to examine the case of fiscal autonomy, the tax-related debate which is overtly linked in the papers with Scottish affairs. I will argue in the following sections that the coverage of fiscal autonomy manifests several differences compared to that of Westminster taxation and the Iraq war in the Scottish press.

3.1 Fiscal autonomy 2001: marking Scotland as the national context of taxation

As mentioned previously, fiscal autonomy was a topic under taxation in 2001 which was reported only in Scottish newspapers. On 22nd May 2001, the day of my sample, the papers discussed the reaction of the representatives of the main Scottish parties to a letter sent to *The Scotsman* the day before. This letter was signed by 12 Scottish academics and economists and supported the case for fiscal autonomy, namely the case for the Scottish Parliament to acquire full tax-raising powers. All the main parties except for the SNP positioned themselves against fiscal autonomy, while Helen Liddell, then Scottish Secretary at Westminster, directly attacked the SNP on its economic plans. Of the Scottish press, only *The Scotsman* appeared favourable toward the cause in its editorials both on the 22nd May and later in the campaign (for example in its editorial of 6th June 2001).

Different views on the implications of fiscal autonomy were expressed by the sources quoted in the news and by opinion articles in the papers. For the proponents of the cause it meant that the Scottish Parliament would become more accountable in its spending policies because it would have to raise the money it spent on already devolved functions. For some it meant that the Scottish Parliament would have the freedom to offer more competitive taxation policies to businesses and therefore attract foreign investment to the country. For others it meant that the Scottish economy would be better off because under the reserved taxation arrangement Scottish taxes subsidise the English economy. The opponents of the cause saw it as the beginning of a course toward further devolution and eventually independence for Scotland and toward the breakup of the Union.

As I will discuss in what follows, the construction of national identity in the coverage of fiscal autonomy in the Scottish press differs to that of Westminster taxation. The debate is hereby located in a Scottish context, though shifts to a UK context are also found, and the reader is addressed as someone implicated in the issue rather than simply as a voter. First, in the following examples, Scottish newspapers position the fiscal autonomy debate within a clearly Scottish rather than British framework.

21. *“The election in Scotland was yesterday stirred into a mild hum of interest by a letter to a newspaper signed by 12 economists calling for Scotland to have more tax-raising powers or fiscal autonomy”*

(Dundee Courier, editorial, full article, p.10)

22. *“Even if Holyrood raised every penny it spent, it would still have to make hard choices about who gets what in a land that demonstrates the same variations in prosperity and poverty, opportunity, and need as occur across the UK as a whole.”*

(The Herald, opinion, full article, p.7)

23. *“But yesterday the other parties united against any move to change the arrangement which determines how Scotland's money is controlled. They claimed severing financial ties with Westminster could have a devastating impact on Scotland's wealth and warned that Scots could be forced to pay crippling new taxes to maintain public services.”**(The Scottish Daily Mail, news, full article, p.6)*

In excerpt 21 this is achieved by naming Scotland twice, while the second time it is mentioned, the country functions as a metonym for the Scottish Parliament (Wodak et al., 1999: 45), thus identifying the country with its government. The paper could have replaced the second reference to Scotland with “the country” or “the Parliament”, but instead it emphasises the Scottish relevance of the issue by repeating the location marker. In excerpt 22, the toponym “Holyrood” is used as a metonym for the Scottish Parliament (Higgins, 2004:641). This use of Holyrood seems to be established in the coverage of devolved issues as will be discussed in the second part of this chapter; however in the reserved issues coverage it only appears within the discussion of fiscal autonomy.

Finally excerpt 23, which comes from the only taxation article in the Scottish edition of *The Daily Mail* that did not appear in its London edition (and the only coverage of fiscal autonomy in the paper on that day), explicitly flags Scotland as

the relevant context of the debate three times (and several more times later in the same article). In fact, some of these explicit references to Scotland could have been replaced with banal ones to avoid repetition: “Scotland’s wealth” could have been replaced with “the country’s” or “the nation’s” and “Scots” could have been replaced with “taxpayers”. It seems though that *The Mail*, like *The Dundee Courier* in excerpt 21, explicitly stresses the Scottish context of this debate, even when this is not required for the article to make sense. While *The Scottish Daily Mail* generally follows the trends of its mother edition when covering reserved issues, when it covers fiscal autonomy it follows trends found in other Scottish titles.

3.2. Fiscal autonomy 2001: shifting between a British and a Scottish deictic centre

In the following excerpts the national context of the debate is communicated in a more implicit way compared to the preceding excerpts. However, the referent of banal deixis is not consistent in all the cases:

24. “Taking part in a Labour election roadshow with Henry McLeish, the first minister, she [Scottish Secretary Helen Liddell] attacked the letter commending Scottish fiscal autonomy as an ‘annual con trick, so blatant that most Scots must see through it’”. (*The Herald*, news, full article, p.7)

25. “The unpalatable truth is that beneath the Chancellor's statistical achievements, Scotland is being pushed further out on the margin of economic irrelevance [...]”

The biggest single problem at present is that the conditions that would make such performance possible are not within the parliament's gift to deliver."

(The Scotsman, opinion, full article, p.12)

In excerpt 24, "the first minister" refers to the Scottish first minister. The reader is expected to understand this because s/he is presumed to be a member of a Scottish community and "the" has a deictic function, pointing to the Scottish homeland (Billig, 1995, Law, 2001). As discussed earlier in this chapter, although there is not a British First Minister, the use of "the" here is still deictic, pointing to a Scottish context.

Excerpt 25 also makes two implicit references to a national context, but each refers to a different nation: "the Chancellor" is the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, while "the parliament" is the Scottish parliament. In both cases "the" functions deictically, its interpretation depending on readers' familiarity with the roles of the UK and the Scottish parliaments and of their officials. The reader should know that the UK Chancellor is responsible for the growth of the British economy, while there is no official in the Scottish parliament with such a role, because the economy is reserved. Hence "the parliament" which does not have the power to "deliver" economic "performance" is the Scottish one. This knowledge is required of Scottish readers, if they are to correctly identify the referent of deixis each time, while this referent here shifts within the same article.

This evidence therefore agrees with Rosie et al.'s (2006) argument that a "multiplicity" of deictic centres is used in Scottish papers, often within the same

article or sentence. However the identification of which nation is meant each time requires familiarity with the devolution settlement which is expected of Scottish readers. If the same article was written to address English readers, it is likely that the implicit references to the two nations would need to be more clearly spelt out.

As I will show in the second part of this chapter, further such instances can be found in the discussion of waiting lists, the other election issue which is constructed as relevant to Scotland. Fiscal autonomy is the only topic under reserved issues where I have found a Scottish paper implicitly pointing to different nations and the only reserved topic where Scotland is the main national context of the debate. As argued above, in Westminster taxation and the Iraq war a Scottish location centre hardly arises, and when it does it is unambiguously marked as Scottish. The banal deixis pointing to Scotland and the occasionally shifting deictic centre are not to be found in the coverage of issues that are not constructed as “Scottish”.

3.3. Fiscal autonomy 2001: addressing the reader as a Scottish citizen affected by taxation

Finally, the fiscal autonomy debate in the Scottish sample is distinct for another reason. It is the only topic under reserved issues, where indigenous Scottish papers address their readership not only as voters (as was the case with the Iraq war) but also as citizens who are liable to be personally affected by the issue. Such addresses are found only in opinion articles though, while news and editorial items, which represent the newspapers’ own views on the issue, do not share this inclusive rhetoric.

26. *“That we are at the bottom of the league and struggling to achieve any growth at all must rank as the cardinal policy failure of our time. The unpalatable truth is that beneath the Chancellor's statistical achievements, Scotland is being pushed further out on the margin of economic irrelevance and that the current configuration of policies is turning us into a poor performing, low growth, low aspiration backwater.”* (*The Scotsman*, opinion, full article, p.12)

27. *“(a) It is clear to everyone that, excluding oil, we spend more than we raise in Scotland [...] (b) under the SNP's proposals for full fiscal powers, every year we would have to go to the Treasury to ask for a top-up [...] (c) What level of spending would the SNP ask the Treasury to top us up to? [...] (d) why haven't we seen an SNP motion calling on the executive to raise income tax with the powers we do have?”* (*The Scotsman*, opinion, full article, p.8)

28. *“Our 12 economists say fiscal autonomy is "crucial". But here in the UK it is inextricably linked to alternative constitutional futures. And here in the UK, despite the best efforts of the SNP, there is absolutely no evidence of widespread popular support for further constitutional change.”* (*The Herald*, opinion, full article, p.7)

In excerpt 26 “we” and “us” are used to construct a Scottish national community and address the reader as its member (Wodak et al. 1999). Moreover the personal pronoun is used here as a metonym and stands for the Scottish economy, therefore the reader is invited to identify not only with the nation, but also with its economy. “We” appears initially as the subject of a state verb (“are at the bottom of the

league”) and then as the object of an action verb (“turning us into a poor performing...”). In this way the Scottish national community addressed by “we” is represented as being personally affected by taxation; what happens to Scotland’s economy happens to the members of this community. At the same time though, the excerpt includes a banal reference to the UK Chancellor, which as explained above, is an instance of multiple deictic centres operating within the same text.

Similarly excerpt 27 also interpellates the reader as a member of a Scottish national community through the use of “we”, though this time the personal pronoun is a metonym for the Scottish parliament. It is the Scottish parliament rather than the readers of the newspaper that spends tax revenue, that has limited tax-raising powers and that would request more investment from “the Treasury”. Once again “we” represents the reader as personally involved in the process discussed.

In the same excerpt there is also a banal reference to “the Treasury” which points to the UK Treasury. There are two deictic points of reference within the same article, however the one that readers are invited to identify with is the Scottish one: “we”, the Scottish readers and “our” Scottish parliament, would ask “them”, the UK Treasury, to “top us up” with more investment. The SNP is not a member of “our” community either, although it is a Scottish party; the SNP is a second “them”, as there is no point in the article where it appears to be part of the inclusive rhetoric.

In fact, in excerpt 27, the community addressed by the inclusive rhetoric is constructed as a potential victim of the SNP’s proposed policies: in sentence (b) the SNP’s proposals are presented as the reason why “we” would have to ask for

financial support from “them”, the UK Treasury. This contrasts with excerpt 26 from a different opinion article in *The Scotsman*, where it is “the current configuration of [UK Treasury] policies” that victimise “us” (“turning us into a poor performing, low growth, low aspiration backwater”). Within the same newspaper two opposing views are represented by different opinion writers on fiscal autonomy, an issue I will return to in chapter 7.

However, the “us” versus “them” rhetoric is not present in excerpt 28 from *The Herald*. Although “our” constructs a common national identity for the reader and the Scottish authors of the fiscal autonomy letter, the writer of the article very emphatically identifies the UK as the location of himself and his readership. “Here in the UK” is repeated for emphatic purposes and very openly points at the UK as the location of the “we”. “Alternative constitutional futures” and “further constitutional change” are left unspecified. They could refer to either enhanced devolution or independence: this is left to the interpretation of the reader, who is expected to be familiar with the debate around the devolution settlement and the possible options for its future.

In the excerpts above therefore, opinion writers address their readers as members of a national community, which is personally affected by the issue, and identify this community with the interests of a specific nation. However they locate this national community differently: both *Scotsman* writers build an “us” versus “them” rhetoric, where the UK parliament is an outsider to “our” group, while *The Herald* writer positions himself and his readers inside the UK. By adopting a unionist stance, the author of *The Herald*’s article justifies his position against fiscal autonomy, while

the author of excerpt 27 justifies his opposition to fiscal autonomy within a Scottish national rhetoric, where both the UK government and the SNP are the “others”.

Such examples of national rhetoric are not found in the coverage of fiscal autonomy in the other Scottish newspapers while, as mentioned before, even in *The Scotsman* and *The Herald* this is limited within the discourse of opinion articles. Despite this, there does appear to be a consistency in the discourse of these titles in excerpts 26-28 and in the coverage of Iraq, discussed previously. As seen in excerpt 10, *The Scotsman* avoids placing itself and its readers in a specifically British location, although it does place the Iraq debate in a UK framework. By contrast, *The Herald* in excerpt 8 locates itself and its readers in a British context. Again, in excerpt 28, *The Herald* identifies the UK as its own location and adopts a unionist perspective, while *The Scotsman* in excerpt 26 and 27 looks at the UK from a more distant point of view.

Despite these differences between individual titles, the fiscal autonomy debate in the Scottish press differs in five ways to the rest of the Scottish coverage on reserved issues: a) fiscal autonomy is discussed only in the Scottish papers and not in the UK/English sample; b) the Scottish editions of English papers dedicate some coverage to the issue and this is the only part of their taxation coverage which does not appear in their London editions; c) Scottish papers locate the fiscal autonomy debate in a Scottish context; d) there are instances where the referent of banal deixis shifts between Britain and Scotland; e) some opinion articles in indigenous Scottish papers address their readers as being personally involved in the issue: they identify their readers with the Scottish (or, in one case, the British) nation and its institutions

and represent them as affecting and being affected by fiscal autonomy. It can be argued that these differences are due to the fact that fiscal autonomy, as opposed to Iraq and Westminster taxation, is an integral theme in the debate around Scottish independence. Yet, as I will discuss in the following section on the coverage of health, some of these features, which are particular to the fiscal autonomy coverage, are also found in the coverage of Scottish waiting lists.

What seems to be clearly indicated by the evidence presented above is that Scottish titles (both indigenous ones and the Scottish edition of *The Daily Mail*) articulate a more complex discourse when discussing fiscal autonomy than when discussing Westminster taxation or the Iraq war. In this discourse, Scotland is the main deictic point of reference, although banal references to Britain also appear and the reader is required to be familiar with the devolution settlement in order to perceive when the deictic centre shifts to Britain. The reader is also told - through the mode of address used in some opinion articles - that fiscal autonomy is something which affects him/her personally. The reader is invited to identify with the Scottish nation, the Scottish parliament and the Scottish economy, whose future will affect his/her future. Even though the opinion article of *The Herald* positions its location “here in the UK”, it still discusses the implications of fiscal autonomy for its readers.

Given the direct addresses to a Scottish community here and in the coverage of Scottish waiting lists, which will be discussed in the second part of this chapter, it is perhaps surprising that when asked to describe their readership none of the Scottish political editors I interviewed mentioned Scottishness initially. They all described their readers in socioeconomic and political terms and only when explicitly

prompted did they consider the role of nation/region in defining their readers. It appears however that the Scottish coverage demonstrates a quite complex repertoire of interpellations based on national identity.

The differences in the way fiscal autonomy is presented as more relevant to Scotland, compared to the debate on Westminster taxation on this day, were not mirrored in the comments of my interviewees. Although they all recognised that fiscal autonomy was an interesting topic, because according to Hamish Macdonell of *The Scotsman*, “it managed to link in taxation powers, macroeconomics with the Scottish Parliament”, they all said that it was less important than taxation at a Westminster level which had more currency for their readers. As Steve Bargeton of *The Dundee Courier* put it, “there’s nothing more important to people who buy our newspaper than how much money the government is going to take out of their wage package.” The significance that interviewees give to Westminster taxation though is not reflected in the coverage of the issue on that day because, as discussed in section 1.3, indigenous Scottish papers do not discuss the effects Westminster taxation has for their readers.

4. Reserved issues: a brief overview

Under the category of reserved issues I have examined two themes which are constructed as relevant to the whole of the UK (Westminster taxation and the Iraq war) and one which is constructed as particularly relevant to Scottish affairs, namely fiscal autonomy. It appears that the coverage of the latter in Scottish titles has distinguishing features not found in the coverage of the other themes in these

papers. The location of the debate in a Scottish context, the shifting location centre and the interpellation of the reader as someone implicated in the issue are missing from the indigenous Scottish coverage of Iraq and Westminster taxation.

On the other hand, the English/UK coverage of themes constructed as “UK” issues is different to that of the Scottish titles in that it addresses a reader whose life has or will be affected by these issues: it invites readers to identify with the British troops in Iraq and emphasises the role of its readers as taxpayers whose finances will be altered by potential changes in policies. Although indigenous Scottish titles, like their English/UK counterparts, also locate these debates and often themselves and their readers in a UK context, they keep a greater distance from these issues. The second part of this chapter examines the most mentioned devolved issues in each campaign, and looks at similarities and differences with the findings of the first part.

6.2 The construction of national identity in the coverage

Devolved issues: health in 2001 and in 2005

Following the examination of the two most mentioned reserved issues, this second part of the chapter focuses on the theme of health which was the most mentioned devolved issue in both election years. It aims to establish whether national identity is similarly or differently constructed in the coverage of health compared to that of reserved issues, given that health is devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

On the sample dates in both 2001 and 2005, the health debate focuses on different topics in Scottish and English/UK titles. In both election years the Scottish debate on health is about Scottish hospital waiting lists, namely the number of patients waiting to be treated at a hospital after having been referred by their GP. In 2001, English/UK titles focus on Labour's shift of attention to health and education in the final week of the campaign. This topic is also covered by the Scottish sample at the same time, but not in the same articles as the waiting lists debate. In 2005, the English/UK sample reports on a conference organised by a patients' association which proposed ways of combating MRSA, the hospital bug that had spread in UK hospitals. The topic is not mentioned in the indigenous Scottish election coverage of that day, though it is discussed in the Scottish editions of English newspapers.

In fact, in the 2005 election period I did not find any day when the indigenous Scottish sample discussed both English and Scottish health topics, as was the case in 2001. Even in 2001 the Westminster health debate had less coverage on my sampling date than the one on Scottish waiting lists, but in 2005 there appears to be

a further separation of topics covered under health in the two samples. Indigenous Scottish papers seem to have moved completely away from the health debate at Westminster, possibly because of its limited relevance for Scottish healthcare, and focused instead on topics which are located in Scotland. Like the fiscal autonomy debate, Scottish waiting lists are not discussed at all in the English/UK sample in either of the sample dates chosen in the two election years.

In this part of the chapter, I begin my analysis by looking at the coverage of Scottish waiting lists. As I did with taxation, fiscal autonomy and the Iraq war, I look at the use of location markers, deixis and modes of address to place the health debate in a national context and link it with the interests of the readership. I identify similarities and differences to the discussion of fiscal autonomy presented in the previous sections, but also to that of Westminster taxation and the Iraq war. I argue that the Scottish waiting lists coverage presents more similarities with the coverage of fiscal autonomy than with that of the two “UK” issues. Following this, I examine the Scottish coverage of the English health debate in 2001 and identify similarities and differences with the “Scottish” debate on health.

1.1 Waiting lists 2001: a Scottish debate in a British background

The main health topic discussed by the Scottish sample on 1st June 2001 was the announcement of Scottish waiting list figures the day before. In 1997 Labour had promised to reduce waiting times for hospital treatment in Scotland, however the figures announced showed that they did not achieve their targets. The Scottish First Minister tried to defend Labour’s record on health but was attacked by his political

opponents. Of the Scottish papers, *The Herald*, *The Daily Record*, *The Scottish Daily Mail* and *The Dundee Courier* had editorials on the issue, thus indicating the significance of the debate on this topic for them. Scottish newspapers also covered the English health debate on the same day, though only *The Scottish Sun* had an editorial on that topic, which was the same in both its Scottish and English editions.

In contrast to Iraq and Westminster taxation, where both samples placed the debate in a UK context, here the location of the debate is primarily, though not exclusively, in Scotland.

1. *“First Minister Henry McLeish and his Health Minister Susan Deacon can pick and choose their statistics.”*

(The Daily Record, editorial, full article, p.8)

The readership of the above excerpt from *The Daily Record* is expected to understand that the “First Minister” and the “Health Minister” referred to are the Scottish ones because they are members of the same Scottish community. Despite the lack of a national identifier in the sentence, the definite article in combination with the labelling of the actors point to Scotland as the relevant location.

2. *“The governments at Westminster and Holyrood, acutely embarrassed by the early failure to do anything about waiting lists other than extend them, have been pulling out the stops to reduce them.”*

(The Herald, editorial, full article, p.23)

3. *“With less than a week before Scotland goes to the polls, Labour’s promise to reduce waiting lists is in tatters”*

(Dundee Courier, news, full article, p.1)

4. *“The government was given a mandate in 1997 partly on the back of promises to boost the NHS. Health is still at the heart of its campaign. It has to start delivering now. That will be the only way honestly to bring down waiting lists.”*

(The Herald, editorial, full article, p.23)

Excerpt 2 explicitly states that both the British and the Scottish governments are responsible for waiting lists in Scotland. The excerpt uses the term “Holyrood” to refer to the Scottish parliament in the same way that it uses “Westminster” to refer to the British parliament, even though the latter is a longer established term than the former (Higgins, 2004a).

Excerpt 3 though is less clear in identifying the location(s) of the debate. In fact, if taken out of context the excerpt could be interpreted as referring to a Scottish election: “Scotland” is a metonym (Wodak et al, 1999) for Scottish voters and places the discussion in a Scottish context. Based on this and on the background knowledge that health is devolved to the Scottish parliament, one would understand “Labour” to refer to the Scottish division of the party, which is not the case here. The newspaper refers to Tony Blair’s promise in the 1997 election that his party would reduce waiting lists in Scotland in four years if it was elected. The division of the Labour party that made a “promise to reduce waiting lists” is therefore the

Westminster one. Yet this cannot be deduced from the lead sentence of the article quoted above. The reader needs to continue reading the article to clarify it.

Similarly, in excerpt 4 “the government” elected in 1997 is the British government and the “promises” mentioned were again made by Tony Blair. However “waiting lists” refers to Scottish hospital waiting lists which is the topic of the entire article. Again within the same excerpt the paper shifts between a Scottish and a British context. In this case, the use of temporal markers “still” and “now” even seems to imply that the new Westminster government has to deliver on Scottish waiting lists.

Both instances seem to agree with Rosie et al.’s finding that, in Scottish papers, the nation that banal deixis points to “may be Scotland and/or Britain” (2006:335). As discussed previously, I also found instances of a shifting deictic centre in the coverage of fiscal autonomy in 2001, which is also constructed as “Scottish” and concerns a potential future shift of remit from Westminster to Holyrood. Health itself was devolved from Westminster to Holyrood two years before the election studied here. The shifts of location in the above excerpts though are arguably more confusing than the ones in the coverage of fiscal autonomy, given that excerpts 3 and 4 imply that Westminster Labour is responsible for health in Scotland.

Even though deixis here appears to point to the wrong nation, it arguably still makes sense for three reasons. First, because at the time when Tony Blair made his promise to reduce waiting lists in Scotland, and for the first two years of his administration, the Scottish parliament did not exist. Second, because the first government that was elected in Holyrood was a Labour – Liberal Democrats

coalition. Therefore, the Labour party was present in both the Westminster and the Holyrood administrations and could perhaps be seen as taking over the realisation of the promise made by Tony Blair on health. Besides, Steve Bargeton, the political editor of *The Dundee Courier*, noted that Westminster Labour had great influence on Scottish Labour and here it seems to be treated as one entity in the coverage.

Third, although the management of healthcare in Scotland is the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament, the financial investment in Scottish health services comes from the British Parliament. This is because the Scottish parliament does not have tax raising powers and receives the budget to spend on public services from Westminster, based on the Barnett formula. Given that Labour was in Government in both parliaments at the time, there could be a strong perceived link between the two divisions of the Labour party, with Westminster Labour providing the investment spent by Scottish Labour.

1.2. Waiting lists 2001: addressing a Scottish/British reader

There are only two instances in the 2001 sample where a Scottish newspaper addresses the reader as a member of a Scottish national community. The first of these is in an indigenous Scottish popular paper:

5. *“Bringing down waiting lists was a central plank in Labour's "Save The NHS" platform at the last general election.*

We didn't expect a complete cure for the ills of the NHS in four years, but we were led to believe things would get better.

The Scottish Health Department's response is pathetic and complacent. [...]
Chancellor Gordon Brown has given them an extra pounds 1.2billion to invest in the Scottish NHS in the next two years and they should start showing better results.
The future of our health service depends on Labour - and only on Labour.”
(*Daily Record*, editorial, full article, p.8)

The “waiting lists” discussed in this excerpt are waiting lists in Scotland and this is made clear in the first few paragraphs of the editorial. However, the excerpt shifts this debate between a Scottish and a British context. There is a reference to Labour’s 1997 General Election message on health (“Save the NHS”), an allusion to the music theme of Labour’s 1997 campaign “Things can only get better” (“things would get better”) and a reference to the “four years” that passed since the 1997 General Election. The first instance of “we” seems to interpellate the reader as someone who voted in the 1997 election and can recognise these references. It seems that the reader is addressed as a member of a British community. The Scottish Health Department is not included in this “we”. Instead it is repeatedly referred to as “them”, even though it is part of the Scottish political administration. The reason for this appears to be that the article takes a critical stance toward the Scottish Health Department and constructs it as a separate entity to the voters, the “us” of the narrative.

The second inclusive personal pronoun though (“our”) more clearly addresses the reader as a member of a Scottish community: “our health service” refers to the “Scottish NHS” mentioned in the previous sentence. The acronym NHS stands for National Health Service and the editorial here replaces “Scottish” and “national”

with “our”. This excerpt addresses the reader as member of both a British and a Scottish national community.

The evidence in excerpts 1-5 seems to suggest that the coverage is more tentative in articulating a Scottish location than might be expected in relation to a Scottish issue (excerpts 2-5). In the second instance where readers are addressed though, the address is made in an unambiguously Scottish context. Interestingly this instance comes from a Scottish edition of an English title, rather than from the indigenous Scottish press:

6. *“Are Scots meant to be grateful that they have to wait only a year for treatment? Another indicator of the worrying state of our country is the latest figure for abortions performed on girls under the age of 16, which shows a 10 per cent increase over the past year.”* (*The Scottish Daily Mail*, editorial, full article, p.12)

This is the only occasion where the reader is clearly addressed as a Scot. As in the coverage of fiscal autonomy discussed earlier (in excerpt 23 in part 1 of this chapter, the newspaper emphasises the Scottish character of that debate by repeating the marker “Scotland”), the coverage in *The Scottish Daily Mail* (which only appears in the Scottish edition) adopts a very “Scottish” approach in contrast to the coverage it shares with the English edition on “UK” issues such as taxation or the Iraq war. Although in the first sentence the newspaper’s editorial refers to Scottish people in the third person (“are Scots meant”, “they have to wait”) in the second sentence there is a clear deictic reference to Scotland as “our country” which functions as an interpellation of the reader as a Scot. It is clear in the context of the rest of the

editorial that the abortion figures discussed here refer to Scotland only, therefore the address can only be to a Scottish reader. Such modes of address become more common across the Scottish sample in 2005.

Hall (1978:60) suggests that newspapers develop a mode of address which is particular to each title, based on the spectrum of readership the title sees itself as addressing. In the relatively limited instances where Scottish titles address their readers under the issue of Scottish waiting lists, the mode of address they use does not consistently have a strong Scottish identity, as excerpts 5 and 6 demonstrate. This seems to change in 2005.

2.1 Waiting lists 2005: an exclusively Scottish debate

On 15th April 2005, the day of my sample, the main issue in the Scottish papers was the debate that arose when the Labour party presented its Scottish manifesto. The party's targets to reduce waiting lists in Scotland were longer term than its targets on waiting lists in England, which would mean that patients in Scotland would need to wait for longer before they could be treated at an NHS hospital.

Both indigenous papers and Scottish editions of English titles consistently place the health debate within a Scottish context, using banal deixis which points to Scotland as the relevant nation. This deictic centre is additionally made explicit when comparisons are made between the NHS in Scotland and in England.

7. *“The Executive have had more money to put into the NHS than any other part of the United Kingdom but the waiting times and lists have lengthened.”*

(Daily Record, editorial, full article, p.8)

8. *“Crikey, it almost makes me wish I could vote for that Tony Blair bloke to come and run the country.”*

(The Scottish Sun, opinion, full article, p.6)

9. *“But neither politician was able to explain why English voters were being offered a range of services and improvements at this election which were being denied to Scots.”*

(The Scotsman, news, full article, p.9)

In excerpts 7 and 8, banal deixis (“the Executive” and “the country” respectively) implicitly points to Scotland. In excerpt 8 the author, as a Scottish voter, can of course vote for Tony Blair in the General Election, but he cannot vote for him “to come and run the country” on the issue of health, because “the country” in question is Scotland and health is devolved to the Scottish parliament.

Example 9 illustrates the use of national markers such as “English” and “Scots” to make comparisons between healthcare in the two regions. Such explicit comparisons are regular in the 2005 coverage of waiting lists and are potentially influenced by the nature of the topic debated on that day, namely the possibility that Scottish waiting lists are longer than English ones. To a certain extent this topic may affect the discourse of the papers toward a more intense articulation of Scottishness,

however, in 2001, there is also a contrast in the topic of the day examined, between Westminster Labour's promises and Scottish Labour's delivery, which could theoretically lead to comparisons between Labour's policies on the two sides of the border. However, as discussed in section 1.1, in 2001, there are confusing instances in the Scottish press regarding who is responsible for health in Scotland which, with very few exceptions (example 12 below), are not found in 2005.

2.2 Waiting lists 2005: addressing an unambiguously Scottish reader

In addition to the clearer articulation of a Scottish location in 2005 compared to 2001, which was discussed in the previous section, Scottish newspapers also address their readers directly as members of a Scottish national community, whose interests are affected by the topic discussed:

10. *“WHY ARE WE WAITING? SCOTLAND'S PATIENTS ARE TIRED OF UNDER-PERFORMING NHS”* (*The Herald*, editorial, full article, p.23)

11. *“And poor Jack had to sit there, with that bunch for his cheerleaders and explain why, after six years of devolution and twice the money we used to spend on it, the NHS is on its knees.[...]”*

Move to England and you can be guaranteed treatment in 18 weeks. In Scotland, we're offered 18 weeks to see a consultant and then we might have to wait another 18 weeks before anything happens.”

(The Scottish Sun, opinion, full article, p.6)

12. *“If that’s the case, how has it come to this? Labour, bold as brass, are expecting us to settle for HALF the deal they promise closer to home.*

So for Scots, it’s double the pain for half the gain. They must think we’re thick as well as sick.”(The Scottish Sun, editorial, full article, p.6)

In excerpt 10 the reader is addressed with an inclusive “we” as a member of a community identified in the same headline as “Scotland’s patients”. The reader is therefore interpellated both as a user of health services and as a Scot.

In excerpt 11 from an opinion article of *The Scottish Sun*, the reader is addressed four times. In the first instance again an inclusive “we” constructs a national community which is metonymically identified with the Scottish parliament (Wodak et al., 1999:45), in a similar discourse to the one used in the fiscal autonomy coverage. “We” are not only users of health services in Scotland but also members of a community responsible for managing its own health services, the agent who “spends” resources on health. However such a powerful representation of the readership is rather rare, as I will discuss in the next two paragraphs.

In the other instances where the readership is addressed in this excerpt, they are addressed as Scottish patients who receive health services. The verb “move” presupposes that the subject currently lives somewhere else. “You” here addresses a reader who would need to change his/her location in order to go to England. “We” on the other hand is bound by the prepositional phrase “in Scotland”. In both cases the personal pronouns unambiguously address a Scottish reader.

However in contrast to the previous address in this excerpt, readers here are not identified with a source of power (the Scottish parliament) but are represented as passive recipients who are “offered” health services and “have to wait”. There seems to be a consistency here with the way Andrew Nicoll, Scottish political editor of *The Scottish Sun* and author of the opinion article where excerpt 11 appeared, described the role of his paper as representing the interests of its readers to the political elite, as “saying what our readers say”. Although politicians are not directly addressed here, the excerpt seems to mimic the complaints of patients facing an inadequate health system and “ventriloquize” the voice of its readers (Fairclough, 1998:160, Lauerbach, 2006).

Finally the editorial excerpt from *The Scottish Sun* (12) adopts an “us” versus “them” rhetoric. “We” is explicitly identified in the third sentence as “Scots”. “They” are “Labour” which appears to refer to the Westminster rather than the Scottish division of the party. This is indicated in the second sentence, where Labour are said to be making different promises “closer to home”, which is not “our” home, because “we”, the Scots, are expected to settle for a lesser deal. Location marker “closer to home” here refers to England and the Labour party referred to is the Westminster one.

Although in 2005 there are fewer confusing uses of national deixis compared to 2001, and Scottish parties are seen as responsible for Scottish health, here it seems that Westminster Labour is responsible for health in both England and Scotland. Again this has to do with the fact that Labour was in government in both parliaments at the time and is understood as one entity in the excerpt. The Labour

party is consistently referred to as “them” in the excerpt and the final sentence (“*They must think we’re thick as well as sick*”) implies a tension between “us”, the Scottish patients, and “them”, Labour at Westminster and Holyrood. The interpellation of the reader here has partly a national dimension, but seems more prominently as a tension between powerless (“sick”) patients and powerful politicians. As in the previous example, the paper again “ventriloquizes” the complaints of powerless citizens.

In the following chapter I will discuss that although the reader is addressed here as a patient, patients’ own voices do not have access to the debate. In excerpts 11 and 12, the newspaper appears as the spokesperson of the public, based on its own perception of what patients think, and this is the only kind of representation patients’ viewpoints get in the debate. Generally patients are constructed as passive and are not given the chance to participate in the debate on Scottish waiting lists.

Moreover, in contrast to 2001 where readers are represented as British, or Scottish within a British context, in 2005 the address refers to a clearly Scottish community, which is distinct from England. In this way the newspapers distinguish between the concerns of their readers as patients and those of patients in England. As discussed earlier, this may partly have to do with the specific topic discussed that day, but the interpellation of the reader as a Scottish patient in 2005 is still clearer than in 2001. Shifting deictic centres are more rare in the 2005 coverage of waiting lists than in 2001. However, occasional instances can still be found:

13. *“Now we have the best cardiac care in the UK. But for almost every other illness, the waiting times in Scotland are twice as long as in England.*

That is not good enough. What the country needs is action to improve the NHS.

What we don't need is the First Minister trying to tell us things are different from how they really are, just because an election is three weeks away.

Labour can be proud of many of their achievements in the last eight years.

The majority of the country agrees that the good far outweighs the bad.”

(The Daily Record, editorial, full article, p.8)

In excerpt 13 “we” again addresses the reader as a member of a Scottish community and deictic terms such as the first occurrence of “the country” and “the First Minister” point to Scotland. A shift however appears to take place in the last two sentences. Although the entire excerpt until now referred to Scotland as its location, the Labour party referred to in the end is not Scottish Labour, which had only been in power for six years in 2005. The referent of “Labour” is the Westminster party which was first elected in 1997. This poses a question of which country “the country” in the last sentence points to. This appears to be left open to the interpretation of the reader as “the country” could be Scotland, which has been the relevant location centre throughout the article, but it could also be Britain which is to judge Labour on its “achievements in the last eight years”.

Despite such exceptions, overall, compared to the coverage of health in 2001, the Scottish sample demonstrates a clearer articulation of the Scottish aspect of the issue, both in the way it uses deixis and in the way it addresses its readership as Scots. Despite the individual characteristics of the three issues constructed as

relevant to Scotland (fiscal autonomy and Scottish waiting lists in 2001 and in 2005), the discourses used in their coverage, in terms of deixis and modes of address, present similarities which are not found in the treatment of Westminster taxation, the Iraq war and Westminster health issues.

3. Westminster health 2001 and 2005: banal references to an Anglo-British location centre

As discussed previously, the English/UK sample did not mention the Scottish debate on waiting lists at all, in either 2001 or 2005. On 1st June 2001, the main issue reported in the UK/English papers in relation to health was Labour's announcement that for the last week of the campaign it would focus on health and education and the revelation of its new slogan "Schools and hospitals first". This was contrasted with complaints expressed by teachers and doctors regarding the state of healthcare and education. The Scottish papers also gave some limited coverage to this news, although the indigenous titles did not have any editorials on the topic.

On 15th April 2005, the English/UK papers reported on a conference organized by a patients' association regarding MRSA, the virus which develops and spreads within hospital units. During the conference doctors said that Labour had failed to address the problem and that the solution would be to reduce the number of patients treated in hospitals. Leslie Ash, an actress who contracted the virus while she was being treated in hospital, also spoke against the UK government's efficiency in dealing

with the issue. This debate was covered in all the English/UK sample but was mentioned only by Scottish editions of English papers in the Scottish sample.

The coverage of these two topics across different papers is quite similar. The location centre of the debate is Anglo-British: although location is very rarely explicitly marked, banal deixis points to the most salient parliament and politicians, who are located at Westminster.

14. *“This Government has pumped even more money into the NHS, although it waited until late in the Parliament to get going.”*

(The Daily Mail and the Scottish Daily Mail, opinion, full article, p.6)

15. *“At whom is this Blair crusade really aimed? Who is intent on subverting the popular will and stopping a rich country investing more of its wealth more effectively in the education of its children and the well-being of the population at large? All the main parties in this election have slapped protection orders on more money for schools and hospitals.[...]”*

(The Herald, opinion, part, p.22)

Both the above excerpts are from the 2001 coverage of Westminster health and they instantiate a similar use of banal deixis to point to an Anglo-British location centre. In neither the Scottish nor the English paper is the identity of “this Government”, “the Parliament” or “a rich country” explicitly marked. In excerpt 14, the capitalisation of the first letter in Government and Parliament, as well as the use of definite article “the”, guide the reader toward interpreting “the Government” and

“the Parliament” as the UK ones. There is no discussion of the devolved status of health in the UK. Similarly in excerpt 15 “a rich country” refers to the UK because it has already been stated that the excerpt is about “this Blair crusade” and Tony Blair was the UK Prime Minister at the time. The two excerpts, from both English and Scottish papers, are pointing to Britain as the context of the health debate.

It is worth noting here of course that the emphasis in both excerpts is on investment in healthcare rather than on management decisions (“pumped more money”, “investing more of its wealth”). As discussed before, the UK government remains responsible for providing the financial resources to be spent by the Scottish Parliament, however it is the Scottish Parliament that decides how to distribute this budget to the various public services. This distinction is not mentioned by either excerpt and the debate is placed banally in a UK framework.

The Anglo-British context of the health debate is made more explicit in the following excerpts:

16. *“The NHS, of which Britons were so proud, is still a national scandal.”*

(The Daily Mail and the Scottish Daily Mail, opinion, full article, p.6)

17. *“The Chancellor's intervention represents an attempt to set a Scottish context for the final week of a campaign in which Labour's focus on "schools and hospitals first" is primarily aimed at England.”*

(The Scotsman, news, full article, p.7)

Excerpt 16, which appeared in the same form in both editions of *The Mail*, openly marks the Anglo-British character of the debate. The NHS is described as “a national scandal” and “national” is defined in the previous clause as British: the NHS is treated as one entity, even though it is managed differently and by different people in England and in Scotland. It is described as an institution “Britons were proud of”, which implies that the NHS is something that belongs to Britons or that Britons have created. This evidence agrees with Rosie et al.’s (2006) finding that the “territorial limitations” of Westminster Ministers on matters such as education (or health in this case) are not mentioned by “England-bought” newspapers. Excerpt 17, by contrast, is one of the few occasions in the Scottish sample where it is explicitly clarified that England, rather than Britain, is the location of this debate.

Turning now to the coverage of Westminster health in 2005, the English health debate is again discussed in an Anglo-British context. This time indigenous Scottish titles do not have any coverage of the issue:

18. *“The government cannot achieve its target of halving MRSA infections in hospitals by 2008 without breaking its promise to reduce NHS waiting times, a leading authority on hospital acquired infection said yesterday.”*

(The Guardian, news, full article, p.11)

In excerpt 18, “the government” implicitly points to the UK government which is responsible for health in England. There is no indication of whether dealing with MRSA is treated as a UK-wide or an English problem in the English/UK sample because national markers are very rare and the contextualisation of the issue is made

almost exclusively through banal pointing to “the government” or “the Department of Health”. These referential expressions refer to the most salient entities in the reader’s environment, namely the UK government and its Health Department, even though these entities are only responsible for health in England. In the other regions of the UK there are different political entities dealing with health, but these are not taken into consideration here. Although deixis points to UK institutions, the debate is essentially within an English context, even if this is left implicit. I have found only one instance in the English /UK coverage which openly mentions England:

19. *“Bed occupancy rates in English hospitals are now running at 85 per cent as hospitals run close to capacity in an attempt to get waiting times down.”*

(The Daily Telegraph, news, full article, p.12)

This is the only occasion where a UK paper flags England as the location of the health debate, in either year. The article here discusses high bed occupancy rates as a contributing factor to the spread of MRSA in English hospitals. The data offered concern England alone and do not include the other regions of the UK. However, this is a very rare instance and it appears that newspapers which address a primarily English audience do not openly adopt an English location centre for the debate. This was also found in Rosie et al.’s research (2004), where mentions of England in news stories were also rare.

The reader is addressed very rarely in the Westminster health debate in 2001 (excerpts 20, 21) and not at all in 2005, which contrasts with the coverage of Westminster taxation or the Iraq war. On the other hand though both Westminster

health debates also received less editorial coverage compared to the two reserved issues, which might reflect a smaller perceived significance of the events of the specific dates, rather than an attitude on the significance of healthcare in general. Besides, as seen in chapter 5, both English/UK and Scottish newspapers dedicated a large number of mentions to the issue of healthcare. The following are the only excerpts in my 2001 one-day sample where the reader is interpellated with the use of personal pronouns:

20. *“This crusade must be aimed at you and me. We are the Saracens in Blair’s Britain, too many of us living under the misplaced conviction that we can have quality schools and a better equipped and more responsive NHS, while someone else picks up the tab for these improvements.”*

(The Herald, opinion, part, p.22)

21. *“Earlier this week, a poll found that 40 per cent of us would consider using private health care to avoid long waiting lists.”*

(The Daily Mail and the Scottish Daily Mail, opinion, full article, p.6)

In both excerpts personal pronouns “you”, “me”, “we” and “us” include the writer and the reader of the articles who are presumed to be members of a common imagined community (Anderson, 1983). In excerpt 20, the writer ironically states that he and his readers are those opposing Blair’s plans for a better NHS. Despite this, he still addresses the reader within a British national context: he and his readers are located “in Blair’s Britain”, even though they are supposed to oppose Blair’s plans.

Excerpt 21 does not specify which nation the poll sampled for its conclusions. “Us” could refer to “us” the Britons for a British reader or “us” the Scots for a Scottish reader. However, it is not necessary that “us” refers to any national community. The absence of a national context in the excerpt and the representation of “us” as users of health care services (the pronoun appears as the subject of “using private care” and “avoiding long lists”) points to an interpretation of “us” as patients in general. Therefore here the reader seems to be addressed more as a generic patient than as a member of a national community.

I have argued in this section that the coverage of health at a Westminster level in 2001 and 2005 is different to that of waiting lists: both Scottish and English/UK papers locate the debate in an English/UK context; the reader is rarely addressed directly; there are no references in either sample to the devolved status of healthcare; and more importantly, the Scottish coverage of the issue, where there is any, is not substantially different to that of English/UK titles. Scotland does not appear as a relevant location anywhere in this discussion and banal deixis points to Britain.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the discursive construction of identity in the coverage of the most mentioned devolved and reserved issues in the two election campaigns. It focussed on national identity as one form of collective identification that is

necessary for a public sphere to function (Peters, 2008b) but has also found other forms of collective identity to be involved in the coverage of individual issues.

For example, in the coverage of Westminster taxation in 2001, socioeconomic class becomes relevant among right-of-centre UK titles as the identity their readers have in common, which defines the interests they share. This is connected to the nature of the issue: a rise in national insurance contributions would threaten the interests of the middle class and hence right-of-centre UK titles emphasise the class identity of their readership when addressing them. Their national identity is also emphasised, but it is class identity which appears primarily relevant to the specific problem discussed.

Similarly in the coverage of health in a Scottish context, the identity of readers as users of health services becomes relevant, because the focus of the coverage is on the perceived inadequacies of healthcare services and readers' status as potential patients is emphasised. Although in some excerpts, the identity of readers as patients may seem to supersede other identities, in most cases the Scottish coverage of waiting lists constructs readers simultaneously as Scottish and as patients. As such, they are presented in relationships of power with both politicians in general and with English politicians in particular. Both the coverage of Westminster taxation and that of Scottish waiting lists illustrate that national identity is not the only form of identity that comes into play during a general election, and other identities interact with it in complex ways, as discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Considering that the coverage studied here is from the first two general elections after devolution, it appears that English/UK newspapers have not adapted to a devolved UK context. Even though it would have been technically appropriate for them to make a shift from location in 'Britain' to location in 'England' when discussing devolved issues, they still report on these topics from a British point of view. Despite their assumption of a British rather than an English identity in their discourse, they omit topics which they perceive as of relevance only to readers in Scotland, hence strengthening the separateness of the debate in the two countries. The English papers that have Scottish editions adapt their coverage in relatively modest ways for these editions. They add articles on "Scottish" topics which adopt a clearly Scottish-oriented discourse (for example *The Scottish Mail* on fiscal autonomy or *The Scottish Sun* on waiting lists), but the rest of their coverage generally replicates the Anglo-British orientation of their English editions.

Indigenous Scottish papers on the other hand seem to report on "UK" issues with a certain degree of detachment, often avoiding using discourse which directly associates their readers with issues such as taxation and the Iraq war. Although they do offer information and opinion on these topics and occasionally position their readers as voters in the election, they do not emphasise a personal involvement of their readers in these themes of UK-wide concern, in the way that the English/UK press does. These topics are presented as election news but not necessarily as "our" problem. If collective identity is an important shared feature of participants in a public sphere (Peters, 2008b), it appears that Scottish readers are not constructed as sharing much with the rest of the UK on these issues, other than their role as voters.

Scottish papers' discourse on "Scottish" issues, such as fiscal autonomy and waiting lists, is more clearly written from a Scottish perspective, however it is also relatively modest in articulating a separate Scottish public debate. Shifting deictic centres, especially in 2001, make it unclear for the unaware reader which issues are the responsibility of the Scottish parliament and which are not. The presence of shifting location centres in these debates also suggests that they are not completely cut off from a British context. Links between Scottish and UK parties, financial links between Westminster and Holyrood and Scotland's pre-devolution past all play a role in the discussion. Although there are instances in the coverage of "Scottish" topics which address the reader as a Scot, there is perhaps not the degree of address to a national community that might be expected in a sustained mediated public sphere. This finding is also strengthened in the light of the overall similarities between the issue agendas in the English/UK and Scottish papers found through content analysis in chapter 5.

On the other hand though, the discourse on "Scottish" topics does present features that are not found in Scottish coverage of "UK" issues: a positioning of the debate in a Scottish context (though this is not consistent in all the coverage) and an inclusive rhetoric which addresses the reader as a member of a community that is affected by these issues. As I discussed in this chapter, I started my analysis by looking for similarities and differences in the discourse of English/UK and Scottish titles in their coverage of devolved and reserved issues. It appears though that the constitutional status of an issue is not itself a central factor. What makes a difference is whether an issue is constructed as relevant to the UK (the Iraq war,

health and taxation at Westminster level) or as concerning Scotland specifically (fiscal autonomy and Scottish hospital waiting lists).

It appears therefore that the topics constructed as “Scottish” make the performance of the Scottish papers distinctive because they use a different discourse compared to the “UK” topics and because they are not covered at all in the English/UK papers. There seems to be a Scottish mediated debate on these topics which takes place in isolation from the UK public sphere but which runs parallel to the debate on “UK” topics.

The question this raises is how these issues become constructed as relevant to different countries. It might be that newspapers themselves identify Scottish angles to the campaign and construct them as Scottish by using a more inclusive rhetoric than when debating “UK” issues. Alternatively, the construction of “Scottish” issues could be made by agents external to the press, such as the political sources who are involved in these debates. Chapter 7 of this thesis examines these possibilities, while evaluating newspapers’ performance based on criteria derived from theoretical frameworks of the media and democracy.

7. Shaping the electoral debate: access, agency, discursiveness and favourability

(in two parts)

Introduction to 7.1 and 7.2

Following the discussion of how newspapers articulate national identity in their coverage of the four issues previously addressed, this chapter, which is also divided in two parts, compares newspapers' performance based on the normative accounts of the role of the media in deliberative democracy discussed in chapters 3 and 4. More specifically, it explores similarities and differences in the performance of Scottish and English/UK newspapers based on four criteria: access, agency, discursiveness and favourability. The first part of the chapter focuses on the first of these criteria, while the other three are developed in the second part. As before, insights from the interviews conducted with Scottish political editors are also presented at the points where relevant comments were made by the interviewees.

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the extent to which the media may adhere to the role prescribed for them in theories of democracy has been significantly questioned (Bennett et al., 2004, Peters et al., 2008, Crawford, 2009) to the point that some of the theories discussed in chapter 3 may appear idealistic in practice. However, differences have been previously identified between different countries in the amount of access that the media allow to a diversity of social actors (Feree et al., 2002, Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004). In this chapter I therefore compare the degree to which newspapers in England and in Scotland may operate to encourage or

discourage a wide-ranging debate on election issues, recognising the relative limitations of applying public sphere theories in commercial media organisations.

Initially, as in previous studies of the mediated public sphere (Feree et al., 2002, Bennett et al., 2004), the first part of this chapter looks at which news sources are given “symbolic access” (vanDijk, 1991) to the debate, namely who is quoted in the coverage. I wish to establish which voices are represented in the English/UK and Scottish coverage of different issues, and how diverse the debate is; whether it is dominated by politicians and experts, as a representative view of democracy requires (Feree et al., 2002), or whether agents from the “lifeworld” (Habermas, 1989) also participate in the debate, as demanded by participatory models.

In order to evaluate the access offered to different sources, I have incorporated in my analysis a quantitative segment, which identifies the number of times different sources are quoted in the one-day coverage of each issue. The results of this content analysis take up a large proportion of the first part of the chapter, however they are not presented in isolation. They inform and are interwoven with a critical discussion of individual excerpts of discourse, which illustrate how these sources are portrayed in the debate. The quantitative segment therefore acts as a starting point for the analysis by identifying how much access different sources receive, while the qualitative segment explores how these sources are portrayed when they are quoted in the debate.

The second part of this chapter starts with an examination of the discursive construction of these sources as actors, namely as subjects and objects of processes

and states (Fowler, 1991). I look specifically at transitivity (who is presented as doing what to whom) to establish which actors have control over others and over the debate. This is significant because presenting certain actors as powerful and active and others as passive constructs roles in the public sphere which can be seen as empowering or discouraging participation (Gamson, 2001). As indicated in chapter 4, such a study of agency is common in several critical approaches to news texts (for example Fowler, 1991, Fairclough, 1995b).

I then turn to examine whether dialogue is established between different sources. Discursiveness, the degree to which different agents engage in dialogue supporting their views with clear arguments, is a central concept in Habermas' (1989) view of public deliberation. Although Habermas' normative requirements for argumentation are rather idealistic (Peters et al., 2008, Feree et al., 2002, Crawford, 2009), newspapers are here compared on the degree to which they may present elements of dialogue among different positions in their discussion of election issues.

Finally, my fourth criterion of comparison regards the attitude of newspapers toward these sources, especially in news and editorial articles. I focus specifically on instances where the discourse of a source is endorsed by the newspaper by being presented unattributed, as objective fact or as the opinion of the newspaper rather than as that of a source. I also look at more explicit instances of endorsement and rejection of sources. I additionally examine whose discourse is prioritised by the newspaper and who appears as a marginal commentator.

7.1 Access

This section establishes the degree to which different sources gain access to the mediated debate in Scottish and English/UK papers around the most mentioned devolved and reserved issues of each election campaign. As discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis, representative models of democracy see the role of the media as informing readers on the views and actions of their political representatives, so as to enable informed decision-making in elections. Participatory models, by contrast, require that the media provide access to a diversity of social actors. They suggest that the voices of citizens and citizens' organisations should be represented (and, according to some, even privileged) in mediated debate, to provide the perspective of those who experience personally the social problems debated. The inclusion of a diversity of voices additionally encourages participation in public affairs by providing examples of engaged citizenry (Gamson, 2001, Lewis et al., 2005).

In practice however, it is perhaps to be expected that politicians will have privileged access in the media, especially in the context of an election (Bell, 1991:191-192). This was initially proposed by Hall et al. (1978) in their "primary definers" thesis. According to this, the routine processes of news gathering privilege the perspectives of powerful elites, because journalists, in their quest for credible, reliable sources who carry recognised authority, turn to elite sources first. Of course news reports may also include other sources but, according to this thesis, the perspective of political elites has a primary position and gets to frame the entire debate. As discussed in chapter 4, Schlesinger (1990) questioned this thesis and drew attention

to the complexity of the power struggle for media access between (and within) elite and non-elite groups.

I begin my comparison of the access offered to different sources, by looking at who gets quoted in the coverage of each of the four issues (including direct quotes, indirect quotes such as “Tony Blair said he did not lie”, and authorship of opinion items). I additionally examine critically excerpts of discourse which illustrate the role of the sources identified in the content analysis, as discussed earlier.

1.1 Westminster taxation and the Iraq war

The two issues constructed as relevant to the UK, namely Westminster taxation and the Iraq war, are both dominated by Westminster political sources in the English/UK and in the Scottish sample. As shown in table 1, the Conservatives have the majority of quotations on Westminster taxation, possibly because it was they who initiated the issue on the day of my sample.

1. Sources quoted in the coverage of Westminster taxation

	Labour	Conservatives	Liberal Democrats	Experts	Citizens
Guardian	6	7	2	1	
Telegraph	2	11		2	
Mirror	2	4			
Daily Mail	3	12			
Sun	10	9		1	
Total UK	23	43	2	4	0
Scotsman	3	5	5		
Herald	2	5	1		
D. Record	1	4			
Press & Journal	3	9			
D. Courier	4	5			
S. Sun	11	4			
S. Daily Mail	3	12			
Total Scottish	27	44	6	0	0

In both samples the debate on that day takes place primarily between Westminster Labour and Conservative sources, while Scottish voices are absent. A Scottish source appears only once, in an article in *The Scotsman*:

1. “*Jim Wallace, the Scottish Lib Dem leader, outlined where extra cash - raised by his party's policy of raising income tax by 1p in the pound - would be spent on public services in Scotland if the party wins the General Election.*”

(*The Scotsman*, 22 May 2001, news, full article, p.9)

Excerpt 1 (discussed also in part 1 of chapter 6, as excerpt 4) is a rare occasion when a Scottish politician is present in the Westminster taxation coverage. However, as argued previously, the party he represents (the referent of “his party”) is not the Scottish Liberal Democrats but their Westminster colleagues. Jim Wallace acts here as a spokesman for the Westminster party: neither he nor the Scottish Liberal Democrats control the active verbs in the sentence “raise” and “spend” (Fowler, 1991). His role is simply to report the policy of the Westminster party. Although taxation is in the remit of Scottish MP candidates, these potential sources are completely excluded from the Scottish coverage on that day.

The discussion of Iraq in 2005 is also constructed as a debate primarily between Westminster politicians although, in this case, Scottish newspapers introduce some additional sources who do not appear in the English/UK coverage. As demonstrated in table 2, Labour is dominant in both samples probably because they initiated the debate by publishing Lord Goldsmith’s advice on the legality of the war.

2. Sources quoted in the coverage of Iraq

	Labour	Conservatives	Lib. Dems	SNP	Citizens
Guardian	26 (of which 8 T. Blair)	1	1		6
Telegraph	29 (of which 12 T. Blair)	6 (of which 5 M. Howard)	1		
Mirror	22 (of which 15 T. Blair)	1			
Daily Mail	21 (of which 11 T. Blair)	1	1		18 (of which 15 soldiers' families)
Sun	10 (of which 7 T. Blair)	2	1		
Total UK	108 (of which 53 T. Blair)	11	4	0	24
Scotsman	21 (of which 8 T. Blair)	3	1		
Herald	14 (of which 6 T. Blair)	1		1	
D. Record	18 (of which 4 T. Blair, 7 R. Cook, 2 Scot. candidates)	2	2		3
Press & Journal	20 (of which 5 T. Blair, 2 T. Dalyell)	2	2	1	
D. Courier	18 (of which 5 T. Blair, 1 J. McConnell, 9 R. Cook, 3 T. Dalyell)	4	6	5	
S. Sun	10 (of which 7 T. Blair)	2	1		
S. Daily Mail	23 (of which 11 T. Blair, 1 J. McConnell)	1	1	1	20 (of which 16 soldiers' families)
Total Scottish	124 (of which 46 T. Blair, 16 R. Cook, 5 T. Dalyell, 2 J. McConnell)	15	13	8	23

Among Labour sources, Tony Blair stands out as the main source in all newspapers, while opposition parties and their leaders have significantly fewer statements. Lord Goldsmith, the author of the advice that Blair published, is another prominent

Labour source, however he is constructed differently in comparison to Tony Blair. All of the occasions where he is quoted consist of excerpts from his 2003 document and he never makes a statement directly about the political debate which took place on that day. Moreover, I will show in the section on agency that, apart from these quotations, he also appears within nominalisations which mitigate his agency.

Like the coverage of Westminster taxation in 2001, the debate on Iraq in 2005 in much of the Scottish and English/UK coverage seems to confirm Hall et al.'s (1978) primary definers thesis, at least at first sight: senior Westminster politicians are offered the most access, and the most dominant politicians are the ones who appear to have taken action to initiate discussion of the issue. Yet, there are two aspects in the coverage of the Iraq debate which add some complexity to this interpretation: the dominance of citizens' voices in the two editions of *The Daily Mail*, and the inclusion of a small number of Scottish sources in the Scottish coverage.

Although in most of the Iraq coverage politicians are the most quoted sources, the two editions of *The Daily Mail* give equally high prominence to the views of the families of soldiers who died in the war. This extensive coverage (table 2) gives access to the debate to the private sphere of the lifeworld (Habermas, 1989, 1996) by providing the personal narratives of those directly affected (Fraser, 1992):

2. "*Samantha Roberts, whose tank commander husband Sergeant Steven Roberts was killed by friendly fire, said: 'For those of us who lost our loved ones and for tens of thousands who died in Iraq this all comes two years too late.*

'If the war was illegal, Blair could have saved a lot of lives by refusing to go along with it. The whole thing is a mess. Those responsible should just step down.'

'Alastair Campbell should be hanged, drawn and quartered for all his spinning.'

Peter Brierley, whose 28-year-old son, Lance Corporal Shaun Brierley, died in a crash in Kuwait, said: 'It seems Tony Blair misled the whole country. He should resign.'

(The Daily Mail, English edition, 29 April 2005, feature, full article, p.7)

The two ordinary citizen sources in excerpt 2 appear quite emotional and aggressive toward politicians. Peter Brierley, for instance, uses hyperbole (Swartz, 1976) to express his anger (“Campbell should be hanged, drawn and quartered”). In simple terms, hyperbole may be defined as “excessive exaggeration made for rhetorical effect” (Richardson, 2007:128). However, citizens here do not simply talk of their experience as relatives of soldiers who died in the war. The modality (Fowler, 1991:85, Richardson, 2007:116) of their statements (“should step down”, “should resign”) suggests solutions to the political problem in question. Lewis et al., (2005) argue that instances where members of the public make suggestions on how political problems should be addressed are rare in media coverage, yet the Iraq coverage of the two editions of *The Daily Mail* features several such instances.

The Daily Mail is a Conservative newspaper and all their coverage of Iraq on that day is critical of Labour’s performance. Citizens here are voicing the suggestions that journalists themselves would perhaps be reluctant to express so forcefully in a news article. As Lewis et al. (2005:85) put it “using the ‘ordinary person’ with

whom the audience can identify is a way of mobilizing moral outrage, without compromising the objectivity of the reporter”.

As will be discussed in the second part of this chapter, the complaints expressed by members of the public are not challenged or addressed by other sources. Ordinary citizens voice their views but this does not contribute to greater discursiveness. Despite this though, their presence in the debate is significant in making the coverage more diverse and potentially empowering citizens as participants in democratic debate (Gamson, 2001, Ferec et al., 2002). At the same time, of course, they offer the story a human interest aspect. The families of dead soldiers in *The Daily Mail* challenge politicians and are constructed as the primary definers of the issue; this is clear in the headline of the article where excerpt 2 is taken from:

3. “*HE MUST QUIT SAY ANGRY FAMILIES*” (*The Daily Mail/Scottish Daily Mail*, 29 April 2005, feature, full article, p.7)

The view of the citizens is placed in thematic position in this headline (“he must quit”). The headline is significant in identifying and framing the topic that the article discusses (Conboy, 2007:57) and in this case, the topic is presented from the viewpoint of the families who become the primary definers. This role is emphasised by the assertiveness given to their statement through the use of modal verb “must” (Fowler, 1991:85).

The second point where the primacy of Westminster politicians is challenged is the inclusion of Scottish politicians in some of the coverage in Scottish titles. As was

the case with Westminster taxation, Scottish sources are generally rare in the Iraq debate. The Scottish edition of *The Daily Mail* quotes Scottish families where the English edition quotes English ones, confirming Rosie et al.'s finding (2006) that Scottish editions adapt their content by emphasising the involvement of Scottish agents in the events. Apart from these instances, there are also a few occasions where SNP and Scottish Labour sources make comments (in *The Scottish Daily Mail*, *The Herald*, and *The Courier*), yet these contributions are marginal in the main coverage of the issue in these papers. However, other Scottish sources appear in more central roles in some Scottish titles:

4. *“In a ferocious attack, the father of the House of Commons in the previous parliament [Tam Dalyell], who is standing down at this election after serving as MP for Linlithgow, said Mr. Blair should step down as Prime Minister in the “first week in May” because of his conduct over Iraq”*

(Dundee Courier, 29 April 2005, news, full article, p.1)

5. *“Former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook has warned Tony Blair that he won't let him off the hook over the legal advice he got on the war in Iraq.”*

(Daily Record, 29 April 2005, news, full article, p. 8)

Excerpt 4 features a statement by Tam Dalyell, a Scottish politician quoted only in the coverage of *The Dundee Courier* and *The Aberdeen Press and Journal*, while excerpt 5 quotes Robin Cook, Scottish MP and former Foreign Secretary at Westminster, who is not directly involved in the Iraq debate on that day in most newspapers. Cook appears in *The Dundee Courier*, *The Aberdeen Press and Journal*

and *The Daily Record* because on the day before he had made statements during a visit to Aberdeen and Dundee. His visit therefore gives him particular relevance in these areas and, especially in *The Dundee Courier*, he is the main source quoted in the news and editorial coverage of that day.

Tam Dalyell and Robin Cook share a number of features. They are Scottish MPs who have previously had elite status at Westminster and they are constructed in these excerpts as Westminster veterans, through referential expressions such as “the father of the House of Commons in the previous parliament” and “Former Foreign Secretary”, rather than simply “Scottish MP”. Therefore the texts’ “referential strategies” (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001) imply that these sources are not cited only for their Scottishness.

Moreover, they appear only in certain newspaper titles and they have local relevance for specific parts of Scotland. They both appear as the main sources in the respective articles and are offered the primary position in the discussion. They are constructed as powerful in the debate through the modality of Dalyell’s statement, which suggests what Westminster politicians need to do (“Mr. Blair should step down”), and through the implied threat of Cook’s speech act of warning (“he won’t let him off the hook”). Despite the prominence of these Scottish sources though, Tony Blair, the main protagonist of the Iraq issue, appears within the same sentences: Tam Dalyell and Robin Cook make comments about his performance. Although the two politicians make the coverage relevant to readers in their region, they do not direct the debate away from Tony Blair.

As mentioned above, the two Scottish MPs are offered access in the Scottish titles not simply because they are Scottish MPs but because they have held high status positions at Westminster. Local Scottish MP candidates generally seem to be excluded from the debate on both Westminster taxation and the Iraq war. The only exception to this pattern is one feature article in *The Daily Record* about the implications of Iraq for the campaign in East Dunbartonshire, where local candidates are quoted.

This general absence appears strange because adding Scottish MP sources would make the debate more relevant to Scotland. In addition, reserved issues are the area of their influence and should play an important role in their election. Their absence could be explained by the perceived reduced importance of Scottish MPs among Scottish political editors. Andrew Nicoll from *The Scottish Sun* mentioned in the interview that MPs in Scotland are much less relevant after devolution because the issues they control are not daily “bread and butter” issues:

They don't bother to phone us and they are surprised when we don't bother to phone them. We don't know what their job is, they don't know what their job is and they are, as far as we are concerned, not so relevant.

Hamish Macdonell from *The Scotsman*, and Steve Bargeton of *The Dundee Courier* mentioned that after devolution, the importance of the UK Parliament has diminished in Scotland and more priority is given to Scottish affairs (as also noted by Schlesinger et al, 2001). According to Steve Bargeton:

The areas that MPs cover are not necessarily our daily bread and butter. For example, I mean the very fact that I have an office here and not in Westminster tells you. I am the political editor, I am based in Edinburgh and not in London.

Of course, being based in Holyrood, the political editors interviewed would be expected to perceive the Scottish Parliament and its members as more important. It appears though that Scottish MP candidates are absent from all the coverage of “UK” issues in my sampling dates, even in papers such as *The Scotsman* and *The Herald* which have correspondents in both parliaments.

Having discussed patterns in the access given to news sources in the coverage of the two “UK” issues, I now turn to examine who is offered access as authors of opinion articles. The opinion and letters pages of newspapers are significant fields of deliberation because they are signposted by the papers themselves as “sites of overt debate” (Crawford, 2009:456). Therefore their authors are expected to overtly contribute to the debate and attempt to persuade readers on specific points of view.

Tables 3 and 4 show that on both Westminster taxation and the Iraq war, journalists are the main contributors of overt opinion. This finding is in keeping with previous research (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004, Crawford, 2009) which has found a prominence of elite authors in opinion columns. Yet although both these studies found a range of elite authors in British and Scottish opinion pages, here it seems that contributions on the selected dates are limited mainly to professional journalists and non-professional authors are underrepresented. There are additionally some readers’

letters in both newspaper samples yet, as discussed earlier, the recording of letters in Lexis-Nexis has limited representativeness.

3. Opinion article writers and readers' letters on Westminster taxation

	Journalists	Politicians	Readers' letters
Guardian			
Telegraph	2		1
Mirror			
Daily Mail	1		1
Sun	2		
Total UK	5	0	2
Scotsman			
Herald		1 (Conservative)	
D. Record			
P & J			
D. Courier			
S. Sun	2		
S. Daily Mail	1		
Total Scottish	3	1	0

4. Opinion article writers and readers' letters on Iraq

	Journalists	Politicians	Lit. authors	Readers' letters
Guardian		1 (Labour)		
Telegraph	4			
Mirror				2
Daily Mail	2		1	
Sun	2			1
Total UK	8	1	1	3
Scotsman	3			
Herald	2			2
D. Record				
P & J				
D. Courier				2
S. Sun	2			1
S. Daily Mail	2		1	
Total Scottish	9	0	1	5

This section has studied the access given to different sources in the coverage of issues constructed as relevant to the UK. It has found that Westminster politicians are generally dominant in both newspaper samples, and other participants are generally excluded from the mediated debate, which reflects a representative rather than a participatory democratic model (Feree et al., 2002) where the media inform the electorate on the views of politicians rather than empower citizen participation.

However, the coverage of Iraq presents individual instances where other groups, such as families of soldiers who have been deployed in Iraq and Scottish politicians, contribute to a wider diversity of voices. Opinion pages by contrast are dominated by professional journalists. The following sections compare these findings to the coverage of the issue of health.

1.2 Westminster health in 2001 and 2005

In contrast to Westminster taxation and the Iraq war, discussed above, the coverage of Westminster health has a stronger presence of non-political groups, at least in the English/UK sample. In 2001, the debate was about Blair's announcement of Labour's shift of focus toward health and education in the final week of the campaign, but all the English/UK papers and their Scottish editions also feature extensive contributions by doctors and/or patients who complain about the state of healthcare. In these papers Labour sources receive similar levels of access as these members of the public (table 5). The indigenous Scottish coverage of the same issue does not include these voices though. This may be partly due to a lower attention given to the issue in these titles.

5. Sources quoted in the coverage of Westminster health in 2001

	Lab.	Conserv.	Lib. Dems	Experts	Patients /families	Citizens' associations	Doctors
Guardian	13						11
Telegraph	3	4	1		4	2	2
Mirror							2
Sun	4				7		4
Daily Mail	8	1		2	11	3	8
Total UK	28	5	1	2	22	5	27
Scotsman	1						1
Herald	3	1					
Daily Record							
Press & Journal	2						
D. Courier	2	1					
S. Sun	4				7		4
S. Daily Mail	8	1		2	6	1	7
Total Scot.	20	3	0	2	13	1	12

When they appear in this coverage, doctors and patients generally complain about their experiences of the healthcare system, therefore they both represent the voice of citizens bearing the effects of problematic policies:

6. *"Stephen Howard, whose five-year-old daughter Kirsty is dying from a rare heart disorder, met Mr Blair and his wife Cherie nearly four months ago in Downing Street. [...] "I was impressed by Mr Blair when we met him," said Mr Howard, a fork lift truck driver. "But none of us could understand a word of the letter that we eventually received from him. We were hoping to get something positive from him, but all we got was a load of facts and figures. It was complete gobbledegook. Now we just live day by day. I get up in the morning to check that Kirsty is still breathing. If she is, that's a bonus. So we just get on with it."*

(The Daily Telegraph, 1st June 2001, feature, full article, p.9)

In excerpt 6, *The Telegraph* presents the personal narrative of a family who are critical of the government's indifference to their case. According to Habermas (1996: 365-366), as members of the society, citizens experience the "requirements and failures" of service systems. These experiences are initially "assimilated privately" but eventually gain access to the public sphere because "the communication channels of the public sphere are linked to private spheres" and "every affair in need of political regulation should be publicly discussed" (1996:313).

The father of the ill child represents the voice of ordinary citizens in the debate, however he is constructed as powerless and dependant on the powerful politician. He is introduced as "a fork lift truck driver", hence emphasising his generic status as an ordinary working class man (van Leeuwen, 1996:47). Many of his statements present a contrast between his status, as a powerless ordinary man who faces the reality of his daughter's illness ("I was impressed by Mr. Blair", "we were hoping to get something positive from him", "we just live day by day"), and that of the powerful politician who talks an incomprehensible language ("none of us could understand a word", "it was complete gobbledegook"). His statements reinforce a distance between himself and Tony Blair, which is due partly to their different social status and partly to Blair's implied inability to relate to the ordinary citizen.

Mr. Howard's role is simply to narrate his personal experience, without making any links to its political implications or possible solutions. He criticises politicians based on his own problems but does not promote political solutions; he only provides

“emotional content” (Lewis et al., 2005:88-89). Despite this, his presence makes the coverage more diverse even if it does not present an exemplar of active citizenry.

Although doctors also appear in this coverage as affected citizens of governmental policies, rather than as expert sources (Boyce, 2006), they are quoted in the context of the British Medical Association, a professional body, arguing against the policies implemented in medical practice.

7. *“Neil Hamilton, a Stirling GP, said: ‘I don't regard myself as a stroppy or bolshie GP but it gets to the stage when you have to say enough is enough. Talking to my colleagues, there is an air of disillusionment around, and that is sad because I should not feel like that at this relatively early stage in my career.’”*

(The Guardian, 1st June 2001, news, full article, p.15)

The GP in excerpt 7, like the father of the ill child in excerpt 6, complains about the condition of healthcare, drawing on his personal experience of it. However, he appears more assertive in comparison. He makes judgements about the situation (“there is an air of disillusionment”, “that is sad”), which are presented categorically, by the absence of modals (Richardson, 2007:89). By contrast to the discourse of patients’ families as instantiated in excerpt 6, the doctor here generalises his experience beyond the individual to the collective (“talking to my colleagues”, “there is an air of disillusionment around”). His voice as a member of the public is more powerful because he makes links between private emotion and public concerns, therefore challenging the separateness of public and private spheres (Fraser, 1992). Fowler (1991) argues that the discourse established in media

accounts of healthcare portrays patients as powerless and doctors and politicians as powerful. Although here patients and doctors both complain against politicians, it appears that the representation of patients as less powerful persists.

Indigenous Scottish papers do not offer any access to patients in the discussion of Westminster health in 2001. The coverage of the issue is generally more limited in those titles and doctors are the only affected agents who gain some access to complain about the pressures they face in their work.

In 2005, ordinary citizens have a limited role in the coverage of Westminster health. The source with the most access to the debate (table 6, below) is Leslie Ash, an actress who contacted MRSA in hospital and spoke of her experience at a conference organised by a patients' association. Ash is offered access to the debate because she is a celebrity and because she acts as one of the spokespeople of the association, together with the doctors who spoke at the conference. Ash does not speak in her role as a celebrity, but as an affected MRSA patient, therefore, despite her elite status, she represents the voice of ordinary citizens. Doctors, on the other hand, speak not as affected agents this time, but as "contributory" expert-sources (Collins and Evans, 2002, Boyce, 2006).

8. *"SUPERBUG CRISIS IS OUT OF CONTROL, WARNS LESLIE ASH*

[...] The actress who nearly died after contracting a hospital superbug said the epidemic was spiralling out of control and called for more back-to-basics cleaning of wards. [...] Infections expert Dr Mark Enright told the conference that waiting times for operations would have to rise to curb MRSA."

(The Daily Mail/Scottish Daily Mail, 15 April 2005, news, full article, p.21)

In excerpt 8, Leslie Ash is the primary definer (Hall et al., 1978) of the article, whose statement appears in thematic position in the headline and hence defines its topic (Conboy, 2007:57). For several paragraphs into the article she is the only source quoted. In the excerpt above she proposes a solution for this political problem, in a similar way to Mark Enright, the doctor who spoke at the conference. Both sources are categorical in their statements (“the epidemic was spiralling out of control”, “waiting times would have to rise”). According to Richardson (2007:89), categorical modal truth claims make sources appear more authoritative.

Although the formal representatives of the patients’ association have limited access to the coverage, it can be argued that they are also important definers in this debate because both the doctors and Leslie Ash act as spokespeople for their conference, bringing the issue of MRSA forward and suggesting possible solutions. The voices of politicians on the other hand are marginal. They only make comments in response to the issues raised by the patients’ association and its representatives.

6. Sources quoted in the coverage of Westminster health in 2005

	Labour	Conservatives	Lib. Dems	Doctors	L. Ash	Patients association	Citizens
Guardian	2	1	1	3	1	2	
Telegraph	1		2	5	3		
Mirror					3		3
Sun					5		
Daily Mail	1	1		4	6		
Total UK	4	2	3	12	18	2	3
S. Daily Mail	1	1		4	6		
Total Scot.	1	1	0	4	6	0	0

The coverage of Westminster health is dominated by affected patients and doctors in 2001 and doctors-experts and citizens' organisations in 2005. Politicians are marginal participants in both the days studied. The debate on these issues appears closer to the participatory model, as it allows access to the voices of the affected. However, as discussed earlier, the presence of citizens' voices does not mean that they are constructed as engaged members of the public deliberating on an equal basis with politicians. Instead, the role of patients is often simply to illustrate the problems through their personal stories, as was the case in the 2001 coverage.

Despite this diversity of news sources, opinion articles on Westminster health in both election years are once again dominated by professional columnists. Of the six articles in 2001, five were written by journalists and one by a politician. Similarly, in 2005 there was one journalist and one politician. Although newspapers allow access to the discourses of citizens, experts and citizens' associations in their news coverage, the debate on opinion pages remains reserved to the newspapers' own writers. Readers' letters are also limited, with just one letter appearing in 2001. Both these findings set limitations for participation of a diversity of authors in overt argumentation.

1.3 “Scottish” debates

The debates constructed as “Scottish” have two distinguishing features: the absence of Westminster sources and the marginal presence of citizens' voices. Both features contrast with what has been discussed about the coverage of UK/English issues.

1.3.1 Fiscal autonomy

The most frequently quoted sources in the fiscal autonomy debate (table 7) are the twelve academics who started the debate with their letter to *The Scotsman*. The issue is constructed as a debate between them and the representatives of the four main Scottish parties (Scottish Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and the SNP), and the Scottish Secretary who also represents Scottish Labour. Apart from her, no other Westminster politician is directly involved in this debate.

7. Sources quoted in the coverage of fiscal autonomy

	Scottish Labour	Scottish Conserv.	SNP	Scottish Lib Dems	Scottish Secretary	English Labour	12 academics
Scotsman	3	3	2	8	1		3
Herald	3	1	1	1	3		8
D. Record		1	1	1	1		2
Press & Journal	1	1	3		2		2
D. Courier	1	3	5	2	2		3
S. Daily Mail	1	2	1			1	3
S. Sun							
Total Scot.	9	11	13	12	9	1	21

The only occasion where a Westminster politician other than the Scottish Secretary appears is in *The Scottish Daily Mail*:

9. “Although Prime Minister Tony Blair has pledged not to raise the basic level of income tax if he wins a second term, First Minister Henry McLeish has refused to rule out using the Scottish parliament's powers to raise income tax after the next Scottish elections in 2002.”

(*Scottish Daily Mail*, 22 May 2001, news, full article, p.7)

In excerpt 9, Tony Blair's promise about Westminster taxation is mentioned in relation to the tax varying powers of the Scottish Parliament. Yet his statement does not directly concern whether the parliament should have fiscal autonomy. Although Tony Blair is quoted, he does not make a contribution to the Scottish discussion.

Westminster party leaders are not the only absent politicians in this debate. Scottish MP candidates or backbench MSPs are also marginal, appearing only in the coverage of *The Scotsman*:

10. *"Mr Fraser has demonstrated how people on the Right can easily support some form of fiscal freedom for the Scottish parliament to strengthen the Union. Mr McAllion is a socialist who wants more power for Holyrood and Mr Bruce is a federalist who wants to see the various parts of Britain eventually take more control over decisions which affect them.*

The leaders of both the Conservative and Labour parties will no doubt be quick to dismiss the contributions of Mr Fraser and Mr McAllion as "unrepresentative" and "minority opinions."

(The Scotsman, 22 May 2001, editorial, full article, p.13)

John McAllion, Labour MSP for Dundee East, Murdo Fraser, Tory election candidate for North Tayside, and Malcolm Bruce, Liberal Democrat MP for Gordon are all central sources in this article. All three are in favour of fiscal autonomy in contrast to the official position of their parties and are quoted here because, as will be argued in the second part of this chapter, the newspaper aims to show that a

variety of politicians are favourable to this idea. The newspaper therefore highlights sources who are not members of the 'elite' in their respective parties when it suits the case they are making for fiscal autonomy. In other words, a specific reason is required to cite sources other than leadership sources.

In excerpt 10 above, the views of the local politicians are presented in detail and in categorical terms through the lack of modal qualifiers ("wants"). The sources who dominate the fiscal autonomy debate in the other Scottish newspapers, namely the Scottish Secretary, the Scottish Conservatives leader and the Scottish Liberal Democrats leader, all opponents of fiscal autonomy, are referred to here as "leaders of the Conservative and Labour parties", without being personally identified. Their views are marked with quotations ("unrepresentative", "minority opinions") as a perspective the paper does not necessarily share. In fact this use of inverted commas has been described as a form of "typographic modality" (Conboy, 2007:64) because it indirectly privileges a specific reading of what is said without commenting on it overtly. Although local politicians here appear to make the fiscal autonomy debate more diverse, they have a similar role to the soldiers' families in *The Mail's* coverage of Iraq: they contribute to an argument made by the newspaper itself.

Another significant absence in the coverage of fiscal autonomy is that of the perspective of Scottish citizens. The entire debate is dominated by politicians and academics and the Scottish public is excluded from the discussion. Moreover, as in all the issues discussed previously, opinion articles are written primarily by journalists and only one is by-lined by a politician.

1.3.2. Scottish waiting lists

The Scottish waiting lists coverage in 2001 and in 2005 includes only politicians. Experts and citizens appear very rarely, once in each case (tables 8 and 9), and do not have an influential role in the coverage. There is a contrast here between the English/UK coverage of Westminster health in 2001, which allows access to ordinary citizens' voices in the debate, and that of Scottish health issues, where citizens are generally absent. Even the popular press, which might be expected to emphasise human interest stories, does not include citizen sources.

A feature that the coverage of Scottish waiting lists in both years shares with that of fiscal autonomy, is that the mediated debate takes place between four Scottish parties: Labour, Conservatives, SNP and Liberal Democrats (tables 7, 8 and 9). This contrasts with the coverage of "UK" issues, which are debated primarily between Westminster Labour and Conservatives.

In the waiting lists coverage, the Scottish Liberal Democrats are clearly more marginal (tables 8 and 9 below). This relative absence of the Liberal Democrats is surprising because they were at the time part of the coalition in government at Holyrood, the parliament responsible for healthcare in Scotland. It would therefore be expected that they be more prominent in this debate. Their marginal role in these debates seems to replicate their marginality in the "UK" debates. Deacon et al., (2006:230) have also noted this marginality of the party in their UK-wide analysis of the 2005 election coverage, which they attribute to a "noticeable two party

‘squeeze’” in the election coverage. In the case of Scottish waiting lists, it appears that there is a three party ‘squeeze’ in the debate.

8. Sources quoted in the coverage of Scottish waiting lists, in 2001

	Scottish Labour	Scottish Conservatives	SNP	Scottish Lib. Dems	Experts	Patients association
Scotsman	2	7	3	2		
Herald	4	2	4		1	
D. Record	3					
Press & Journal	3	1	2	2		
D. Courier	4	1	1			
S. Daily Mail	5	1	2			1
S. Sun	2	2	2			
Total Scot.	23	14	14	4	1	1

9. Sources quoted in the coverage of Scottish waiting lists, in 2005

	Scot. Lab.	Scottish Secretary	UK Lab.	Scot. Cons.	SNP	Scottish Lib. Dems	Expe rts	Citize ns
Scotsman	6	2	2		1			
Herald	10	1	2	1	1		1	
D. Record	5	1		1	2			1
Press & Journal	6	2	1	2	3			
D. Courier	4	1	1		4			
S. Daily Mail	3		1	1	2	1		
S. Sun	5		2	2	5	1		
Total Scot.	39	7	9	7	18	2	1	1

This is because of the presence of SNP sources who, especially in 2005, claim the second share of voice in the Scottish health coverage (table 9). Deacon et al. (2006:253) also discuss the presence of the SNP in the election coverage and argue that UK-wide parties remain dominant. Although this is generally true, it appears that SNP sources have more presence in the “Scottish” debates than in the “UK”

ones and that, as will be discussed in the second part of the chapter, they are constructed as the main opposition to Labour on these issues.

My interviews with political editors seem to suggest that the SNP was particularly active in trying to manage the general election agenda. According to Steve Bargeton, the Nationalist party tended to promote issues which were not as important for other parties because:

The other aspect that we had up here that made it different was that we have the Scottish National Party which... it's within its interest to give a lot of emphasis on all policies because they want to be seen as a party that could govern an independent Scotland.

Although the issues I examine do not appear to have been explicitly “pushed” onto the agenda by the SNP¹, Bargeton’s comment suggests a particularly intense communication effort by the party during the elections, which may have resulted in more access for its representatives.

In addition to the SNP’s own communication efforts, another significant factor is the consistent decline of the Conservative party in Scotland since the Thatcher years. According to McNair, the SNP has replaced the Conservatives as the second largest party in Scotland electorally and hence Scottish newspapers have “lost interest in the Conservatives” (2008a:238). The position of the SNP as the second party in Scotland appears to be reflected both in its prominence in the coverage

¹ Even though many newspapers stressed the link between fiscal autonomy and the Nationalists’ agenda, I do not have any evidence proving that the party was behind the letter of the 12 academics. More research would be required into the background of the letter to establish such a link.

studied and in its construction as the main opposition to Scottish Labour, which will be discussed later.

Ordinary Scottish MPs and MSPs are absent from the waiting lists debate, which in both years takes place among leading figures of the Scottish parties. The only occasion where local politicians appear is in the coverage of *The Dundee Courier* in 2001, and I will discuss the contribution of these sources to the debate in the section on discursiveness. Westminster parties are also generally absent from these “Scottish” debates. They only appear occasionally in the 2005 coverage:

11. *“On Wednesday, Labour pledged to cut waiting times in England to just 18 weeks from seeing your GP to receiving treatment.”*

(The Daily Record, 15 April 2005, news, full article, p.2)

The Scottish coverage mentions nine times that the English manifesto/ Labour in England/ Tony Blair promises reduced waiting lists, as illustrated in excerpt 9. In line with the fiscal autonomy coverage however, such statements were not made by Westminster Labour as a contribution to the Scottish debate on waiting lists.

1.4 Isolated debates in England and in Scotland

The above discussion of different election topics demonstrates that Westminster sources dominate the coverage of issues constructed as relevant to the UK and Scottish sources that of “Scottish” issues. As was the case in the construction of national identity in chapter 6, whether an issue is constructed as “Scottish” or

“British” is a deciding factor as to the sources who gain access to the debate, irrespectively of whether the issue itself is reserved or devolved.

Scottish sources appear only occasionally in the coverage of “UK” issues, in individual titles and only in the coverage of Iraq, but even in these cases their role is to provide local relevance. As discussed earlier, the Scottish politicians who speak on the issue do not shift the attention of the coverage away from Tony Blair, its main protagonist in both newspaper samples. Similarly, Westminster sources appear rarely in the discussion of “Scottish” issues, and when they do their statements are not made specifically as part of these debates, but are brought forward in the news reports to compare the situation in England and in Scotland. The debates on “UK” and “Scottish” issues are generally kept separate and isolated: “Scottish” issues are constructed as being of no concern to Westminster sources, while “UK” issues allow only individual instances of intervention from Scottish sources, and these appear only in some of the indigenous Scottish titles.

The coverage of some of the “UK” issues (Westminster health in 2001 and 2005, and to a more limited extent the Iraq war) challenges the expectation that politicians will necessarily be the primary definers in the context of a general election (Hall et al., 1978). There are instances where members of the public or citizens’ associations emerge as prominent sources who compete with politicians in defining these issues. I will discuss further the influence of these groups as agenda-setters in the electoral debate in the second part of this chapter.

The “Scottish” debates appear more exclusive on the days I studied. Although, as seen in chapter 6, Scottish newspapers highlight the significance of these issues for their readers, the voice of citizens in these debates is missing. The reader is informed about what positions different political representatives take, but is not provided with examples of empowered citizens’ positions.

Yet there is one overall similarity in the coverage of all the issues studied here: although they differ in the diversity of sources quoted in their coverage, all newspapers limit the discussion in their opinion sections to their own columnists. Journalists are the dominant opinion writers across all issues, which makes the argumentative section of the mediated debate less diverse in all titles.

The second part of this chapter examines how the different sources discussed so far are constructed as actors, the extent to which newspapers in the two samples present a dialogue between perspectives and whether they express support or rejection of individual agents. These criteria are used to compare the extent to which the English/UK and Scottish coverage of these issues may fit prescriptive requirements for the media in a public sphere and encourage the representation of a diversity of perspectives in their coverage.

7.2 Shaping the electoral debate: agency, discursiveness and favourability

Although giving access to different voices may democratise the electoral coverage, the way these social actors are constructed, endorsed or rejected and juxtaposed with each other is also significant in understanding how newspapers in England and in Scotland encourage or discourage an inclusive debate on these issues.

The first part of this chapter has identified similarities and differences between the English/UK and the Scottish sample regarding the main sources who appear in the mediated debate on the four issues studied. This part further explores how these individuals and groups are constructed in different newspapers. The section on agency examines whether they are presented as powerful or passive actors, outside their quotations, when they appear as agents in sentences. The discursiveness section looks at whether there is dialogue between them and the section on favourability at whether their views are endorsed or rejected by the newspapers.

1. Agency

This section explores how the sources identified in the first part of this chapter are constructed as agents in the Scottish and English/UK coverage. In my analysis, I draw on the concepts of transitivity and nominalisation, which were explained in more detail in chapter 4.

1.1 Politicians and experts

Political actors are not only the most quoted sources in the coverage of English/UK and Scottish papers, but they are also constructed as powerful agents with control over the issues discussed and over the debate itself.

1. *“But what CAN be expected of a Chancellor who has twice raised the contributions ceiling by three times the rate of inflation is that he is likely to do it again.”*(*Daily Mail/Scottish Daily Mail*, 21 May 2001, editorial, full article, p. 10)

2. *“Labour has been accused of failing to honour a previous general election pledge to reduce hospital waiting lists in time for this election”* (*Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 1 June 2001, news, full article, p.16)

Excerpts 1 and 2 above are from the English and Scottish coverage of taxation and Scottish waiting lists respectively and they both instantiate the powerful role of political actors. The Chancellor is the agent who controls the transitive material process (Fowler, 1991) “raised” whose affected object is national insurance contributions (as a form of taxation) in excerpt 1; whereas in excerpt 2, Labour, as a collective political actor this time, is the subject of the material process “to reduce hospital waiting lists”. Senior politicians or prominent political parties as a collectivity are commonly constructed as powerful agents over all the issues discussed (Fowler, 1991:73). However, less senior politicians appear only as sources offering their views (examples 4, 5 and 10 in the first part of this chapter) but not as actors affecting the issues.

An interesting instance where a non-party leader becomes central in the coverage is found in the Iraq debate in 2005. As mentioned in part one of this chapter, Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General whose advice to Tony Blair was published during the 2005 campaign, appears often, with several quotes cited from his document. However, he does not seem to share Blair's responsibility for Iraq:

3. *“The case against Mr Blair - in the light of the publication of the Attorney General's advice of 7 March, 2003 - is that it is now unequivocally clear that he deliberately underplayed the known legal risks inherent in going to war against Saddam Hussein, when presenting these to Parliament.”*

(The Scotsman, 29 April 2005, editorial, full article, p.25)

Lord Goldsmith is regularly the subject of nominalisations (in this case “*advice*”). Although his agency is implicitly acknowledged, the nominalisation has the effect of turning his contribution into an object (Fowler, 1991:80, Conboy, 2007:65, van Dijk, 2008). His agency therefore becomes less prominent than that of Tony Blair. In excerpt 3, Tony Blair is the main actor who controls material processes such as “underplayed” and “presenting” and Lord Goldsmith, although he is the subject of the “advice of 7 March, 2003”, is more marginal. His advice appears as part of the “circumstances” (Fowler 1991:76) of what is being said, namely the time, space or other conditions where the main event took place, and is additionally made less visible by its appearance in a parenthesis in the sentence (“in the light of the Attorney General's advice”). The advice becomes part of the context of the event (Richardson, 2007:230) and this discourse is replicated in both the Scottish and the English/UK coverage of Iraq.

The Iraq issue as a whole is constructed as being about Tony Blair's actions and decisions. Blair is the main actor in every headline and lead paragraph in every news and editorial article in all the newspapers.

4. *"BLAIR'S DARK DAY AS IRAQ ROW ERUPTS: GOLDSMITH LEGAL ADVICE PUBLISHED*

Labour yesterday suffered its worst day in the 2005 election campaign after Tony Blair finally succumbed to pressure to publish crucial legal advice on the Iraq war, but failed to stem the Conservative-led assault on his battered integrity." (The Daily Telegraph, 29 April 2005, news, full article, p.1)

5. *"BLAIR WAS TOLD DEPOSING SADDAM'S REGIME WAS ILLEGAL.*

Tony Blair went to war in Iraq after being told that the objective of deposing Saddam Hussein was illegal under international law, according to secret advice from the Attorney General published yesterday." (The Scotsman, 29 April 2005, news, full article, p.2)

Excerpts 4 and 5 are just two examples of headlines and lead sentences in news articles, one from a UK and one from a Scottish paper. Tony Blair appears in both as the main protagonist. By placing him in thematic position (Bell, 1991) in their headlines and giving him prominence in their lead sentences, the papers signal that he and his actions will be the main topic in the articles. Lord Goldsmith is in both cases the subject of the nominalisation "advice" and holds a secondary role as explained above.

Research on the coverage of the beginning of the war in 2003 in *The Scotsman* and *The Herald* (Robertson, 2004:467) also found an overrepresentation of UK government voices and a focus on “the political consequences of the war for western politicians and their parties” and especially for Tony Blair. This focus on Tony Blair in the 2005 election therefore has a precedent in earlier coverage of the issue, although the context of a UK election might be expected to intensify this bias.

I have so far established that senior Westminster politicians are constructed as powerful actors in relation to the “UK” debates, however it appears that Scottish politicians are not always as powerful in the coverage of “Scottish” debates. They are constructed as influential in shaping the debate on fiscal autonomy, but they do not have influence on the issue itself. Although this might be explained by the speculative nature of this debate, the coverage nevertheless does not specify who is responsible for giving the Scottish Parliament fiscal autonomy: the use of agentless passives or intransitive constructions (van Dijk, 2008) leaves the agent undefined.

6. *“The Lib Dems want Scotland's funding arrangements to be reviewed within the next five years. Scottish leader Jim Wallace said: “On the best figures I have seen there would still be a fiscal deficit. We would still require some kind of formula to make up the difference.”*

Scots Tory president Sir Malcolm Rifkind said: “If Scotland receives more expenditure per capita than England, and one has to raise comparable sums from within Scotland, that will mean higher income tax in Scotland.”

(Daily Record, 22 May 2001, news, full article, p.2)

Excerpt 6 is typical of the form of the reported debate on fiscal autonomy. Scottish political parties, in this case the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives and their leaders control verbal processes (“said”) or mental states (“want”) but no transitive material processes with an effect on fiscal autonomy or taxation (Fowler, 1991).

In the 2001 coverage of Scottish waiting lists, the Labour party is presented as influential over waiting lists, yet as discussed in chapter 6, it is not always clear if the Labour branch referred to is the Scottish or Westminster one:

7. “Labour promised to cut waiting lists by 10,000 between the last General Election and the current one. Compare that grandiose ambition with the insulting boast of Susan Deacon yesterday: ‘No Scot is waiting longer than 12 months for treatment.’”

(Scottish Daily Mail, 01 June 2001, editorial, full article, p.12)

In excerpt 7 Labour is a collective agent who controls transitive material processes (“to cut waiting lists”) and is thus constructed as powerful over healthcare. As discussed in chapter 6, the branch of the Labour party which made the promise referred to here is the Westminster one. It seems that Westminster and Scottish Labour are treated as the same entity, because a Scottish Labour politician, Susan Deacon, is presented as responsible for carrying out a promise made by Westminster Labour. The paper here also undermines both parties’ agency through its implicit stance (which is ironic in the case of Westminster Labour’s “grandiose ambition” and deriding in the case of Deacon’s “insulting boast”).

Experts, the second group with access to the debate identified in the first part of this chapter, are constructed in two main ways, which are found in both the Scottish and English/UK coverage. In some cases, they have a complementary role, appearing only in individual articles to offer “balance” and “objectivity” to the story (Boyce, 2006:898) and they do not seem to affect the overall political debate. For example:

8. *“Professor George Davey Smith, from Bristol University, said deaths before the age of 65 and other indicators of social inequality had always been higher in traditional Labour areas because of the socio-economic characteristics.” (The Herald, 01 June 2001, news, full article, p.10)*

9. *“Opinion from senior lawyers was divided last night about the implications of the attorney general's advice. Sir Franklin Berman, a former Foreign Office legal adviser, praised Lord Goldsmith for a “very impressive piece of advice”. (The Guardian, 29 April 2005, news, full article, p.1)*

Excerpt 8, from the coverage of Scottish waiting lists in 2001, and excerpt 9, from the Iraq war coverage in 2005, both feature the views of experts. In both cases experts appear as additional sources, after the topic has been developed with quotes from political sources. Although in both cases the experts provide a viewpoint that was not presented before, in neither case do their statements direct the discussion of the issue. By contrast, in the following cases, experts are constructed as bringing forward the topics to be discussed in the mediated public sphere:

10. *“ECONOMISTS’ LETTER PROMPTS SNP VALIDATION OVER FUNDNG*

Scotland’s constitutional future yesterday moved to the fore of the election campaign, when economists and politicians clashed over whether the country should have more fiscal powers.

A group of 12 economists and academics called for Scotland to have control of all tax and revenue raising, arguing this was necessary for ‘accountability and responsibility’ ” (Aberdeen Press and Journal, 22 May 2001, news, full article, p.1)

11. *“WINNING BATTLE AGAINST SUPERBUGS ‘MEANS WAITING LISTS MUST RISE’*

Hospital waiting lists will have to rise if the NHS is to win the battle against the superbug MRSA, a specialist told a conference on clean hospitals yesterday.

Dr Mark Enwright, senior research fellow at the University of Bath, said that the best short-term weapon available was to isolate affected patients but that waiting list targets meant that hospitals were too full for isolation to be possible.” (The Daily Telegraph, 15 April 2005, news, full article, p.12)

Excerpts 10 and 11 are from the coverage of fiscal autonomy in 2001 and Westminster health in 2005 respectively. In both cases, experts play a central role. In excerpt 10, the economists’ intervention is the agent which causes the response of political actors (it is the subject of transitive verb “prompts”) in the headline, while in the lead sentence the economists are constructed as equal participants in the debate, being subjects, along with politicians, of the intransitive verb “clashed”. Their statement in the second paragraph is presented as categorical: “called for” as opposed to alternatives “suggested” or “proposed” has overtones of assertiveness.

In excerpt 11, the expert's proposal that battling MRSA would require increasing waiting lists frames the representation of the issue by appearing in the headline. Although the quote marks indicate that the statement comes from a source external to the newspaper, the expert is not mentioned until the end of the first sentence, indicating a level of adoption of his views by the newspaper itself. The assertive presentation of his statement through modal markers ("means waiting lists must rise" instead of possible alternative "may require waiting lists to rise"), as well as his construction as a knowledgeable authority through referential expressions such as "a specialist", "senior research fellow at the University of Bath", also contribute to justify his centrality in the debate.

In example 10 experts seem to shift the political debate to address the topic they promote, while in example 11 they define how the topic is presented in the article. In both cases it is political actors who respond to the suggestions of the experts later in the articles, as opposed to excerpts 8 and 9 where experts merely provided additional comments to the discussion between politicians.

Especially in the case of fiscal autonomy, where the topic was not part of the agenda before it was initiated by the letter of the economists to *The Scotsman*, the experts brought forward an issue in the electoral debate. As in example 10 above, the twelve academics are presented as the initiators of the issue in all the Scottish titles, appearing in subject positions which control verbal and material processes. Hamish Macdonell, the Scottish political editor of *The Scotsman* said that this issue was taken up by his paper because the editor at the time, Rebecca Hardy, was "keen at

least on the idea of a debate” on this topic. As I will discuss in the section on favourability, *The Scotsman* positions itself in favour of the experts’ position, however the issue was also taken up by Scottish newspapers which were not as favourable to the cause, in relation to the comments made on this topic by senior Scottish politicians. Therefore fiscal autonomy emerged in the agenda as a result of an interaction between the academics, Scottish newspapers and politicians.

This section has so far argued that Westminster party leaders and senior politicians are constructed as powerful actors in the coverage of “UK” issues. Although the examples presented illustrate the powerful role of Labour politicians, similar examples were found, especially in relation to taxation, where Conservative and Liberal Democrat actors hold similar roles. It has also argued that Scottish politicians are not equally powerful in the “Scottish” debates, even though they are the main sources quoted. The role of experts on the other hand varies and in some issues they provide supplementary comments to a debate controlled by politicians, while in others (such as Westminster health and fiscal autonomy) they stir the debate toward an issue, frame its discussion and propose solutions.

However, as discussed in chapter 3, participatory models of democracy require the media to empower citizens by presenting exemplars of engaged citizenry (Feree et al., 2002, Gamson, 2001, Lewis et al., 2005). More specifically, Gamson (2001:61-62) proposes that the media can promote political engagement by giving prominence to ordinary citizens in the news; by presenting them as taking action rather than as passive victims who need protection or consideration; and by allowing them to express their views in their own narratives. I now turn to the

representation of members of the public as actors and compare the two newspaper samples on the degree to which they may fit a participatory democratic model.

1.2 Citizens

As discussed in part one of this chapter, members of the public appear as news sources only in the coverage of “UK” topics and not in that of “Scottish” issues. The question that arises is whether they are additionally presented as powerful or passive actors in relation to these issues and what significance this has in the debate.

Lewis et al. (2005) found that ordinary citizens do not generally command substantial power in news coverage. This is also the overall case in the coverage studied here, with a few exceptions found in the “UK” and not in the “Scottish” issues. In the Westminster taxation and Scottish waiting lists coverage, ordinary citizens are represented as anonymous, passive groups affected by politicians:

12. *“Abolishing the current limit could see tax rates soaring to 50 per cent for four million middle earners, including teachers, nurses and policemen.”*

(The Sun/Scottish Sun, 22 May 2001, news, full article, p.2)

13. *“But the uncomfortable truth for Labour is that waiting lists and waiting times have stubbornly gone up.”*

(Daily Record, 01 June 2001, editorial, full article, p.8)

14. *“However, a key problem with health statistics is that they fail to reflect the discomfort or pain patients endure during their long wait, or their growing fears that something may be seriously wrong”*

(Dundee Courier, 01 June 2001, editorial, full article, p.12)

Excerpts 12-14 present citizens in passive roles. In excerpt 12 “middle earners”, “teachers”, “nurses” and “policemen” are referred to collectively in a prepositional phrase, as anonymous groups (van Leeuwen, 1996) affected by a potential decision of the Labour party. It is worth noting that in this instance the reader is not directly identified with the citizens referred to. As seen in chapter 6, this is done elsewhere in the same newspaper through direct addresses to the reader, but in excerpt 12, the issue is constructed as affecting groups not directly identified with the readership.

Excerpt 13 is an instance of the very common use of the nominalisation “waiting lists” to refer to patients waiting for treatment at Scottish hospitals in the Scottish health debate in 2001 and 2005. The nominalisation has the effect of deleting both participants and circumstances from these descriptions (Fowler, 1991:77-80, Fairclough, 1992:181, Billig, 2008:785-786). In excerpt 13, two nominalisations, (“waiting lists” and “waiting times”) occupy the position of the agent and accompany an intransitive verb (“gone up”). Placing these nominalisations in subject position prevents the cause of the action “gone up” from being identified. The focus here is on the numerical aspect of the issue (numbers have gone up) rather than the human aspect (patients are suffering) or the cause of the problem.

Excerpt 14 initially appears to emphasise this human aspect. Patients are the agent of the verb “endure” and the referent of “their fears”. Nominalisation “fears” derives from relational process (Fowler, 1991) “are afraid”, which does not affect anyone other than the subject. Although “endure” is transitive, its objects “discomfort” and “pain” are not affected by the process the verb describes. Both verbs present patients as being in a state rather than controlling a process. The excerpt reproduces the same passive construction of patients as examples 12 and 13. Patients are a collective anonymous group with no control over healthcare: they wait, endure and are afraid, but they do not control any material processes that influence anyone or anything else. This representation of patients as powerless has been found to be typical of newspaper discourse on health issues (Fowler, 1991:125).

Brookes et al. (2004) argue that in the 2001 general election campaign ordinary members of the public appeared in the media only to voice complaints and attack politicians, to express negativity and anger rather than to constructively contribute to the debate. In their study they focus particularly on the cases of Sharon Storrer, who confronted Tony Blair about the state of care her partner received as a cancer patient, and the fuel protester who threw an egg at John Prescott during a demonstration, both of which took place outside the dates of my sample.

In the one-day samples on the Iraq war and Westminster health in 2001, there are, however, instances of citizens taking action to influence the debate. Although these citizens also express negativity toward political actors, unlike Sharon Storrer and the fuel protester, their contributions do not take “the form of the hostile, the irrational, the exceptional or even [...] the violent” (Brookes et al., 2004:76).

15. *“Muslim leaders will deal a crushing blow to Labour when they issue their election guidelines at Scottish mosques today. [...] The Muslim Association of Britain are endorsing just two Labour candidates in Scotland.”*

(The Daily Record, 29 May 2005, news, full article, p.2)

16. *“The Keys family has complained to the Bar Council the professional body that supervises barristers about the Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith, whose doubts about the legality of the war later inexplicably evaporated. He now faces a formal inquiry. Relatives are also planning to launch a legal action against the Government, demanding a judicial review of the decision to go to war.”*

(The Daily Mail/Scottish Daily Mail, 29 May 2005, news, full article, p.1-2)

In excerpts 15 and 16 from the coverage of Iraq in 2005, a citizens' association and soldiers' families are constructed as powerful actors. They control transitive verbs with influence on the electoral debate (“deal a crushing blow”) and they are also the subjects of specific forms of civil action (“issue guidelines”, “complained to the Bar Council”, “launch a legal action”). In both cases, the Labour government is the affected object of their actions. Habermas (1996:368) stresses the important role of citizen associations in politicising issues which concern individuals, bringing them into the arena of public debate and making them issues of general interest. In excerpt 15, the actor is such an association, while in excerpt 16, soldiers' families¹ also act as an informal organisation.

¹ The Keys family, who lost their son in the war, technically may not qualify as “ordinary” citizens since the father of the family, Reg Keys, was a candidate in the 2005 election, but here they are constructed as ordinary citizens.

17. *“Britain's 36,000 family doctors will today throw a firecracker into Labour's pre-poll offensive on health by threatening a mass walkout from the NHS in protest at excessive workload.”*

(The Guardian, 01 June 2001, news, full article, p.15)

18. *“And a desperate mum who cornered Mr Blair on TV about her dying daughter declared: “Her life is in his hands.”*

(The Sun/Scottish Sun, 01 June 2001, news, full article, p.8)

Similarly, on the issue of Westminster health in excerpt 17, an association which represents the professional interests of doctors is presented as controlling action processes (“throw a firecracker”, “threatening”) whose affected object is Labour’s election chances. Interestingly, what the doctors are actually doing is only presented in nominalisations (“a mass walkout”, “in protest”) and hence emphasised less. The use of transitive rather than intransitive verbs in this excerpt (“throw a firecracker” and “threatening” instead of “walk out” or “protest”) emphasises the influence that a possible strike would have on Labour’s election campaign. Although the doctors are powerful, the narrative is constructed from the perspective of political actors because the focus is less on the problems faced by doctors and more on what their protest would mean for the governing party. Finally, in excerpt 18, an individual appears as controlling a material process that affects Tony Blair (“cornered”), although here, the referential expression “a desperate mum” undermines her power by constructing her as emotionally helpless (“desperate”) rather than as a powerful citizen.

Constructions of active citizenry are not found at all in the coverage of the issues presented as “Scottish”. As mentioned earlier (excerpts 13, 14), the waiting lists debates present patients as passively waiting for treatment, while fiscal autonomy hardly features any citizen viewpoint. As discussed in the first part of this chapter, ordinary citizens do not have a role in these debates as news sources either.

This appears to contrast with the inclusive rhetoric of Scottish papers on these issues, discussed in chapter 6. Although the Scottish titles address their readers as potentially affected by these issues, members of the Scottish citizenry are denied access to the debate, while any description of these citizens presents them as passive. Although there are some readers’ letters on health in the Scottish coverage in both years (3 in 2001 and 1 in 2005), none of them comment on the issue of Scottish waiting lists, although it has to be noted that the topic “broke” on the day studied and readers had not yet had the chance to respond. The absence of active citizen participants is therefore another distinguishing feature of the coverage of “Scottish” debates.

There are also some additional types of reference to the public and public opinion, which do not specify any individual or group. Lewis et al. (2005) have distinguished between journalistic references to opinion polls as a form of discussing what the public thinks, and the unsubstantiated inferences journalists make about public opinion or sections of public opinion. In the four one-day samples I found several instances of all these types of references to the electorate. For example:

19. *“A MORI poll said 67 per cent of voters think health care is the most important issue.”*

(The Mirror, 15 May 2005, feature, full article, p.2)

20. *“As the country becomes better off, people demand higher standards. They are no longer prepared, as they once might have been, to tolerate shoddy hospitals, queuing or rationing.”*

(The Daily Telegraph, 01 June 2001, opinion, full article, p.9)

21. *“There are many in this country who admired the way Mr Blair modernised first his party and then the country.”*

(The Scotsman, 29 May 2005, opinion, full article, p.25)

Excerpt 19 is an instance where opinion poll results are referenced to comment on the views of the electorate. Excerpts 20 and 21 also refer to the views of the public, though this time no proper evidence is offered. In excerpt 20 the author of the opinion article attributes attitudes to “people” without any actual evidence. The writer seems to reflect on his own impression of what people think. Excerpt 21 makes an inference about what a section of the population (“many in this country”) think, without identifying who these people are and how representative their views are. Such references to the public are common across different issues and newspaper samples and therefore are not a differentiating factor in the coverage.

To sum up, the examples presented in this section show a construction of members of the public in “Scottish” debates as passive recipients of politicians’ actions

(excerpts 12-14) or as completely absent as in the case of fiscal autonomy. Besides, as discussed in the first part of the chapter, citizen sources are also absent from these issues. It seems therefore that Scottish citizens have a minor role despite the inclusive addresses to the readership identified in chapter 6 in relation to “Scottish” issues. Moreover, although Scottish editions of English newspapers follow the patterns of their London editions, in the indigenous Scottish coverage of my four sampling dates there are overall few examples of citizens influencing the electoral debate (one exception is excerpt 15).

On the contrary the coverage of English/UK papers presents more such examples, and although it cannot be said that members of the public have continuously a protagonist role, the English/UK sample seems to be further toward the middle of a continuum between representative and participatory democratic standards.

2. Discursiveness

Having so far established the role of sources and actors, this section compares different issues and newspapers with regard to discursiveness, namely whether sources appear to engage in dialogue (Feree et al., 2002, Bennett et al., 2004, Peters et al., 2008). As discussed in chapters 3 and 4, dialogue is an important element in a well functioning public sphere. Although Habermas’s deliberation standards, which require clear and explicit arguments taking into consideration the position of opponents, have been found to be rare in mediated discourse (Peters et al., 2008:147) and hence rather idealistic, the coverage of different media may differ in the extent to which any dialogue appears between opposing views. This section

examines exchanges between political sources and between political and non-political agents, and identifies similarities and differences in the Scottish and the English/UK samples.

Although many statements by politicians remain uncommented upon by their political adversaries, there are several occasions across all issues and newspaper titles, where political sources respond to each other. For example:

22. *“Tory leader Michael Howard said the new questions the document raised were 'serious and profound'.*

He said: 'Mr Blair had said the legal advice had not changed. We now know beyond doubt that it had changed.

'The issue of Iraq boils down to one very simple question at the root of it all - if you can't trust Mr Blair on the decision to go to war, how can you trust Mr Blair on anything else ever again?'

But Cook believes he and his Labour colleagues will ensure such a fiasco will never happen again.”

(The Daily Record, 29 May 2005, news, full article, p.8-9)

23. *“Chancellor Gordon Brown accused William Hague of failing to catch the public mood by virtually ignoring the debate on public services.*

'This is not just a strategic mistake, but it goes to the heart of the failed ideology of the Conservatives,' he said. [...]

Shadow Chancellor Michael Portillo hit back hard at Labour's public services blitz, claiming they had 'lost the plot' and would be unable to honour pledges to recruit thousands more teachers and nurses. ”

(The Daily Mail, 01 June 2001, news, full article, p.1)

24. *“Ms Sturgeon said: “Can the first minister tell us why his target is 36 weeks – double what it is in England?”*

Mr McConnell told MSPs: “The target that Ms Sturgeon refers to is for 2008. Our targets here in Scotland are for 2007”

(Aberdeen Press and Journal, 15 May 2005, news, full article, p.15)

Excerpts 22-24 from the coverage of Iraq, Westminster health and Scottish waiting lists all demonstrate instances where politicians of different parties respond to each other. However, these exchanges do not amount to an in-depth deliberation of the issues in question: political sources from the two main parties merely accuse their opponents and respond to accusations, reproducing a sense of politics as a match between government and opposition. The juxtaposition of perspectives here fulfils the news value of conflict rather than attempts to present a diverse range of viewpoints on the issues discussed.

Excerpt 24 in particular is one of several occasions where the SNP appears to hold the main opposition role to Scottish Labour in the coverage of “Scottish” health. As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, SNP sources are quoted as often and in some cases more often than the Conservatives in the coverage of “Scottish” issues. This might create the impression that the SNP agenda of independence is

particularly prominent in the coverage of these issues. Yet there is no such evidence in my samples. What the SNP seems to contribute, as illustrated in excerpt 24, is a discursive challenge to Scottish Labour, similar to that of the Conservatives in excerpts 22-23 from the coverage of the “UK” issues.

The SNP therefore simply appears to replace the Conservatives as the main opposition party in the “Scottish” issues, without an accompanying focus on an independence-related agenda. The way that the SNP is constructed fits what Hallin (1986) describes as the “sphere of legitimate controversy” rather than the “sphere of deviance” in journalism: it represents an opposition voice in an electoral clash with another party rather than being presented as a party with its own, distinctive agenda which questions established perceptions of what may be discussed in the debate.

All the examples above demonstrate that there are opportunities for some level of exchange in the coverage of both English/UK and Scottish newspapers of different issues, and this takes place between senior members of the main UK and/or Scottish parties. Another participant in verbal exchanges with politicians are experts:

25. *“Taking part in a Labour election roadshow with Henry McLeish, the first minister, she [Helen Liddell] attacked the letter [of the 12 economists] commending Scottish fiscal autonomy as an "annual con trick, so blatant that most Scots must see through it".*

(The Herald, 22 May 2001, news, full article, p.7)

26. *“For Labour, the health secretary, John Reid, said a 20% fall in infection rates in London showed it was possible to tackle the MRSA problem.*

A Labour spokesman said Dr Enright [doctor who spoke at the patients’ association conference on battling the spread of MRSA] did not appear to recognise the importance of setting targets as a spur to action, as waiting time targets had shown.”

(The Guardian, 15 May 2005, news, full article, p.11)

In excerpt 25 from the fiscal autonomy coverage (also analysed in chapter 6, part 1, as excerpt 24), the Scottish Secretary responds to the letter of the academics and in excerpt 26 two Labour spokespeople comment on the doctor’s suggestion about stopping the spread of MRSA. In both cases, it is experts who lead the debate and politicians are in a defensive position. This further instantiates the powerful role of experts in the two issues, also discussed in the previous section.

It seems therefore that there are instances of some level of exchange between different viewpoints in both samples and on all topics, but this dialogue takes place only among elites (high status political leaders and experts). The same is not the case with local politicians (in the few cases where they appear) or members of the public. While these sources are occasionally offered access to the debate, their statements are not commented upon by other sources.

27. *“Mike Rumbles, Lib Dem MSP for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine, said it proved that the Arbuthnott Formula which determined health board spending was not working. The formula is supposed to take rurality onto account yet, although*

most people in Grampian live in the country, the health board receives the lowest per capita funding in Scotland. [...] Malcolm Savidge, Labour candidate for Aberdeen North, said: "Having fallen sharply by 1999, waiting lists increased as a result of increased referrals [...]"

(Aberdeen Press and Journal, 01 June 2001, news, full article, p.16)

The Press and Journal in excerpt 27, gives local relevance to its report by presenting the views of local politicians in Aberdeen. Yet, Mike Rumbles and Malcolm Savidge appear in the seventh paragraph of the article, after quotations from higher ranking Scottish politicians, and their comments are not further debated. The article continues with the clash of views between John Swinney (SNP leader in Scotland) and Henry McLeish (Scottish Labour leader). The points raised by the local candidates appear to be complementary and do not contribute to a dialogue. No other source, nor the newspaper itself, further elaborates on the effectiveness of the Arbuthnott Formula or on the effects of increased referrals.

The presence of politicians in regional titles such as *The Press and Journal* and *The Dundee Courier* appears to arise from the significant role of these papers in their local political communities. In my interview with *The Courier* political editor, Steve Bargeton, he mentioned that his paper offers readers news which is relevant to their community, while politicians in its region are concerned about their representation in the specific newspaper. However, at least in the context studied here, the limited access offered to these local politicians is not incorporated within a discursive debate. The views of members of the public also do not contribute to a dialogue, even in newspapers which focus heavily on the rhetoric of ordinary citizens:

28. *“For the third time in this election campaign, Mr Blair has been thrown on the defensive by deep-felt anger over failing public services.*

On the day of Labour's manifesto launch in Birmingham he was harangued by Sharron Storer, whose cancer-hit partner was receiving poor treatment.

And on Wednesday this week the Prime Minister was confronted on live TV by Carol Maddocks, whose eight-year old daughter Alice is in desperate need of a bone marrow transplant.

The Prime Minister told Labour's press conference yesterday: 'Our cause in a Labour second term and our crusade every day in the last week of this campaign will be to put schools and hospitals first.' ”

(The Daily Mail/ Scottish Daily Mail, 01 June 2001, news, full article, p.1)

Excerpt 28 appears after several quotations of citizens complaining about health services. However, the Prime Minister does not respond to these complaints. Blair's statement is taken from the launch of his party's new slogan and does not address the points raised previously. The evidence suggests that in both English/UK and Scottish papers verbal exchange takes place only among politicians and other elites, although as argued, this does not necessarily entail deliberative argumentation between them. When, in individual titles, members of the public or local politicians voice their views, they are not included in any kind of discussion.

Although richer in range of sources, news coverage is not the only place where discursiveness may be found. More opportunities for dialogue between different

views arise in opinion articles. In some cases within the same newspaper opinion writers may adopt different perspectives on the same issue. For example:

29. *“Fiscal autonomy presents a risk to Scotland: a continuing deficit, annual arguments over revenues and the undermining of Scotland's case for the current higher spending per head than the rest of the UK.”*

(The Scotsman, 22 May 2001, opinion, full article, p.8)

30. *“That is why the debate on fiscal autonomy goes to the heart of the matter. [...]Unless and until this connection is made, Scotland will not just struggle to get by. She will never attain the enhancement and prosperity of which her situation and her people are more than capable.”* *(The Scotsman, 22 May 2001, opinion, full article, p. 12)*

31. *“But, crucially, what the intervention of these three politicians demonstrates is, once and for all, that fiscal autonomy cannot be dismissed any more as purely an instrument of the Nationalist agenda. It has been taken up by politicians on the Left, Right and Centre.”* *(The Scotsman, 22 May 2001, editorial, full article, p. 13)*

The three excerpts above demonstrate how different articles in the same newspaper may take different positions on the same issue, thus allowing readers access to different arguments and encouraging further debate. Excerpt 29 is from an opinion article by Angus Mackay, Scottish Minister for Finance, excerpt 30 comes from an opinion article by Bill Jamieson, columnist of the newspaper, and excerpt 31 is from the editorial of the newspaper on the same day.

The two opinion articles take opposing positions on fiscal autonomy: the first describes it as “a risk for Scotland”, a source of “continuing deficit” and “annual arguments”. At other points in the article, the author links fiscal autonomy exclusively with the interests of the SNP. By contrast, the second excerpt sees fiscal autonomy as necessary for Scotland to attain “enhancement and prosperity”, while the editorial argues that fiscal autonomy is not an SNP issue but has support from across the political spectrum. Although none of the three articles directly engages with the other two, as Habermas’ (1996) view of deliberation would require, a form of potential dialogue is constructed here between different viewpoints.

As discussed in part one of this chapter though, politicians appear rarely as authors of opinion articles, which are dominated by newspaper columnists. In excerpt 30, for example, the pro-fiscal autonomy stance is taken by a journalist rather than by one of the academics or the politicians who supported the cause. Although the pro-fiscal autonomy perspective is included in the opinion section, its original sources are not. Of course, not all newspapers offer a diversity of perspectives in their opinion columns. In both the Scottish and English/UK sample, opinion coverage in middle market and popular titles tends to support just one aspect in the debate.

3. Favourability

Excerpts 29-31 above also show that even though different positions may be presented within the coverage of an issue, whether by sources in the coverage or by writers of opinion articles, not all viewpoints carry equal weight. Newspapers themselves adopt or reject positions primarily in editorial articles but also through the way they present different sources in news articles. This section compares Scottish and English/UK titles on the extent to which they position themselves in relation to the sources and actors in their coverage. It looks primarily at issues of modality and prioritisation of different sources in these texts.

3.1 English/UK newspapers

A feature shared by most of the English/UK press across different issues is its clear positioning in the debate, for or against the views of particular political sources:

32. *“Tony Blair does not make it easy for those who supported the war to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. The arguments in favour of the war were -- and still are -- compelling, and the difficulty of Iraq's journey towards democracy and stability should not obscure the real progress that is being made. But as Michael Howard has said, even when the Prime Minister is right, he uses the wrong arguments.”* (*The Daily Telegraph*, 29 April 2005, editorial, full article, p.29)

In excerpt 32, *The Daily Telegraph* takes a position on the Iraq war itself as well as toward the leaders of the two main parties involved in the debate, Tony Blair and

Michael Howard. Both were in favour of the war and the newspaper agrees by explicitly referring to pro-war arguments as being “compelling” and by expressing the desirability of the outcomes of the war through modality (“should not obscure the real progress being made”).

However the paper does not agree with both politicians’ pro-war arguments. In the last sentence of the excerpt, it adopts the opinion of the Conservative leader (“as Michael Howard has said”). Although there is no modal verb or adverb to show the paper’s approval of Howard’s statement, this propositional phrase has a similar function. This interpretation of the excerpt is further strengthened by the absence of modal qualifiers in the rest of that sentence “even when the Prime Minister is right, he uses the wrong arguments”, which makes the sentence more categorical (Richardson, 2007). On the other hand, Blair’s pro-war arguments are openly labelled as “wrong”, implying that someone else’s pro-war arguments are right, in this case the Conservatives’. Like the Conservative party, the newspaper here agrees with Tony Blair that the war was right, but disagrees with the procedure his Government followed in taking the decision to go to war.

In this case the adoption of Howard’s position and rejection of Blair’s position are explicitly stated in excerpt 32. Similarly explicit positioning in favour of specific political sources can be found in all the English/UK sample and their Scottish editions, with the exception of *The Guardian*, which appears less clearly partisan on the days studied here. Of course it should be noted that in the four days of my sample, *The Guardian* has only one editorial, on Iraq, and therefore there is perhaps not adequate evidence in my sample of this paper’s editorial stance.

The two editions of *The Sun*, on the other hand, although openly endorsing Labour sources in much of their coverage, adopt a more ambivalent approach in some cases:

33. “*TORIES WARN OF 50P IN THE POUND TAX* [headline]

BUT LABOUR SAY: WE'LL FIGHT TO MAKE CUTS... AND KEEP ECONOMY SAFE. [sub-heading]

Tax exploded back on to the election agenda last night as the Tories accused Labour of plotting to hammer middle earners with a 50p-in-the-pound tax grab. The Tories pounced after Chancellor Gordon Brown refused to renew his 1997 poll pledge to keep a lid on National insurance contributions. Abolishing the current limit could see tax rates soaring to 50 per cent for four million middle earners, including teachers, nurses and policemen.”

(The Sun/Scottish Sun, 22 May 2001, news, full article, p.6)

In excerpt 33, the two editions of *The Sun* seem to prioritise the discourse of the Conservative party, by giving them prominent thematic position (Fowler, 1991) in the headline and in the first sentences. The proposition that “abolishing the current limit could see tax rates soaring to 50 per cent for four million middle earners” which appears without attribution to any source, actually belongs to the Conservative party. In other newspapers, such as the news coverage of *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, these figures are openly attributed to the Conservatives but here there is no such indication; instead, they are presented as

objective facts. The newspaper implicitly adopts the discourse of the Conservatives by not naming them as a source.

Moreover, it appears to “exnominate” or naturalise Conservative ideology as common sense (Barthes, 1973, Fiske, 1987): the assumption that a rise in taxation is something negative (implicit in the connotative meaning of “soaring” and “keep a lid on”, as well as in Labour’s alleged reassurance that they will “fight to make cuts”) fits the Conservatives’ discourse but not of that of left-of-centre parties. These would be expected to emphasise the potential benefits of increased taxation for public services. There appears to be an endorsement of Conservative views here, but not an explicit endorsement of the party. *The Sun/Scottish Sun* officially supported Labour in both elections, however their ideological position, which is not explicitly stated but can be detected only by close analysis, is not consistently left-of-centre.

3.2 Scottish newspapers

One of the differences between English/UK and indigenous Scottish titles (the Scottish editions of English titles follow the line of their mother edition) is that Scottish papers did not openly advise their readers to vote for a specific party in these two elections. An exception to this pattern is *The Daily Record*, which is rather explicitly pro-Labour and has traditionally supported this party in its editorial line (McNair, 2008a).

This does not mean that Scottish titles do not endorse or reject the views of participants in the electoral debate. They just do this in more implicit ways compared to their English/UK counterparts. Of course there are instances of more “implicit” ideological positioning in the English/UK sample as well, as shown in the example from *The Sun* above. However, in English/UK titles it is easier to also find more explicit endorsement, which is not found in the indigenous Scottish papers during the days of my sample.

34. “*Mr. McConnell must be relieved that his administration does not face trial by ballot box on May 5. On health, he has failed both patients and hardworking staff. [...] It is questionable whether the SNP could have done better, especially given its reluctance to involve the private sector. However, unless the LibLab administration can dramatically improve performance on outpatient waiting times, it will continue to provide the opposition with a handy cudgel.*”

(*The Herald*, 15 April.2005, editorial, full article, p.23)

In excerpt 34, the claim that First Minister Jack McConnell had failed patients, cited in the second sentence, was initially made by Nicola Sturgeon, SNP deputy leader. She is directly quoted stating this in *The Daily Record*. *The Herald* here adopts her discourse without attributing it to the SNP and additionally presents it as a fact, without any modal qualifiers.

However the SNP is also criticised for “its reluctance to involve the private sector”, an argument that could be attributed to the Conservative party which advocated further private sector involvement in the public services. However, the

Conservatives are very marginal in the waiting lists debate on that day and are not quoted as saying something similar in any paper. Although this critique represents a right-of-centre viewpoint, it cannot be directly attributed to the Conservative party.

35. “As a result, a perfectly justifiable case for dealing with the rogue Saddam regime has been devalued by Mr Blair’s less than honest presentation of the facts.”

(*The Scotsman*, 29 April 2005, editorial, full article, p.25)

In *The Scotsman*’s editorial on Iraq, modality is expressed through the adverb “perfectly”, emphasising the newspaper’s agreement with the war. In fact the war here is not referred to as a conflict, but euphemistically as a way “for dealing with the rogue Saddam regime”. This framing of the war is in agreement with both Labour and Conservative pro-war arguments. However, the paper disagrees with the procedure followed in taking the decision to go to war. In this respect its argument is very similar to that of *The Daily Telegraph* in excerpt 32. This discourse concurs with that of the Conservative party which, as previously mentioned, was in favour of the war but disagreed with the way the decision was taken.

In excerpt 35 the newspaper adopts the Conservatives’ discourse, by rejecting the government’s approach as a “less than honest presentation of the facts” (Conservative leader Michael Howard had directly accused Tony Blair of lying). However in contrast to excerpt 32, the Conservatives are not mentioned at all in this editorial. Although the two excerpts present a similar argument, *The Telegraph* openly links it with the Conservative party, while *The Scotsman* presents it as its own criticism. In my interview with *The Scotsman* political editor Hamish

Macdonell, he mentioned that his newspaper could not openly support any party, especially not the Conservatives, because “you couldn’t go round supporting the Conservatives in Scotland with any degree of credibility at that time”.

On another occasion, in its discussion of fiscal autonomy in 2001, *The Scotsman* favours the position of the 12 economists rather than those of political parties:

36. “*In their letter, published yesterday, the academics called for Scotland to be given fiscal autonomy. [...] Their reasoned demands have now been taken up by a cross-section of senior politicians from all the main parties, and this has elevated the debate to a new level.*” (*The Scotsman*, 22 May 2001, editorial, full article, p. 9)

The twelve academics who started the fiscal autonomy debate are presented as assertive and dynamic, having “called” for fiscal autonomy. Their statements are presented without any modal qualifiers that would compromise their strength, and are referred to as “reasoned demands”, showing a positive stance toward their cause. The “cross-section of senior politicians” who support these demands is a hyperbole (Swartz, 1976), as its referent is just three local politicians who were in favour of the cause. The newspaper continues to discuss their views in detail, while opposition views are briefly summarised at the end of the editorial, which prioritises the pro-fiscal autonomy argument.

It appears in excerpts 35 and 36 that *The Scotsman* is reluctant to align its views openly with specific political sources. Although its argument in excerpt 35 agrees with that of the Conservatives it does not openly endorse Michael Howard’s views.

Although the fiscal autonomy argument in excerpt 36 was promoted by both the 12 academics and the SNP, it is the academics rather than the political party who are openly endorsed. Although the paper is also favourable to the three local politicians who spoke out for fiscal autonomy, as mentioned earlier, it aligns itself with three politicians of different convictions, therefore it does not explicitly endorse one political line. Interestingly, none of these local politicians come from the SNP.

Despite the lack of explicit support for the SNP, which is common to all the newspapers, there are instances in the coverage where SNP positions are implicitly adopted, as in the example below:

37. *“The gaffe allowed the SNP and Tories to make the health service the dominant issue of yesterday's campaign, as they highlighted what has become Labour's Achilles' heel in Scotland in spite of record investment.”*

(The Herald, 15 April 2005, news, full article, p.1)

In excerpt 37, the metaphor that the health service in Scotland is Labour's “Achilles' heel” belongs to Nicola Sturgeon of the SNP. She is quoted making this statement in the coverage of *The Aberdeen Press and Journal*. Her statement is not attributed to her in excerpt 37 and, more importantly, it is not put into question: “what has become Labour's Achilles heel” is a presupposition triggered by “what”, and thus remains true even if the rest of the sentence is put in negative form (Conboy, 2007:70). The newspaper adopts Sturgeon's statement as unquestioned fact, without naming her as the source.

The question that arises is whether English/UK titles, with their more explicitly stated position on political sources, fit the requirements of democratic theory less than indigenous Scottish titles, which endorse sources in a less visible manner. It could be argued that Scottish newspapers are more open to a diversity of opinions by not following predictable patterns in endorsing or rejecting individual sources.

My two interviewees who work for indigenous titles both stressed their papers' intention to evaluate political issues independently and support or reject views and policies based on their own judgement rather than on fixed party alliances. Besides both the Scottish political editors of *The Scotsman* and *The Dundee Courier* mentioned that their readers are not necessarily voters for one particular party.

However, the examples presented above show that even if indigenous Scottish titles do not explicitly endorse political sources, their coverage is not radically different to that of English/UK titles. As discussed, when juxtaposing excerpts 32 and 35, from *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Scotsman*, one can see the same argument being used, although in the first case it is clearly attributed to a political source. Although they may initially seem more open to different political positions, it is not necessarily the case that Scottish titles are more impartial. It has been argued indeed (Russell, 2008) that, in the absence of impartiality, it is more democratic for newspapers to explicitly state whose views they adopt, which is something indigenous Scottish titles do not always do.

4. Conclusion

A significant finding of this chapter is that issues which are constructed as Scottish and those constructed as relevant to the whole of the UK, have completely separate protagonists, both actors and sources. This means that the political debate on the two types of issues is exclusive to actors/sources in the respective countries and is presented as not being of concern to actors/sources in the other country.

“Scottish” debates take place in isolation within an exclusively Scottish space and among exclusively Scottish participants. At the same time, as seen in chapter 6, Scottish newspapers construct these issues as having particular relevance for their readership, through inclusive modes of address. “Scottish” issues are not covered at all in the English/UK press, which further emphasises the isolation of the electoral debate around these topics. Besides, a deficit in the coverage of Scottish affairs in the rest of the UK after devolution has been often noted (Schlesinger, 1998, Rosie et al., 2006 among others). “UK” issues are reported in the Scottish press but with minimal participation of Scottish sources and actors. This is accompanied, as seen in chapter 6, by a lack of address to Scottish readers as implicated in these issues.

Turning to the evaluation of the discursive performance of English/UK and Scottish newspapers, it appears that neither of the two fully fits the normative requirements of either Habermas’ (1996) impartial, dialogic, deliberative model, or participatory theorists’ demands for citizen inclusion and empowerment in mediated debate. Verbal exchanges in both newspaper samples take place primarily among senior members of two or three major parties. Less prominent politicians and members of

the public do not engage in discussion with these major figures, while opinion articles are written almost exclusively by professional journalists, even though, especially in quality newspapers, these do present a diversity of perspectives.

The English/UK sample offers more opportunities than the Scottish sample for less powerful groups to take the role of primary definers (Hall et al., 1978) in the electoral debate. Citizen organisations or individuals occasionally set the issue agenda by shifting attention to topics, proposing political solutions and being constructed as powerful in relation to the debate. Such instances can be found in the coverage of Westminster health in both election years, and also in the coverage of Iraq in the English and the Scottish edition of *The Daily Mail*. Moreover, English/UK newspapers are more open in their endorsement and rejection of individual sources, which makes them more clearly politically aligned.

Scottish papers on the other hand are more subtle and implicit in endorsing political sources. It has been argued that newspapers' loyalties to specific parties are becoming less clear, with different political viewpoints being represented in the same titles (Seymour-Ure, 1998) and that this is also happening with Scottish newspapers (Russell, 2008). As discussed in this chapter, this may have to do with the balance of power between the main parties in Scottish politics: the less central position of the Conservatives compared to England, the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition government in Scotland during the period studied, and the emergence of the SNP as a significant political player.

Moreover, in indigenous Scottish titles there are few instances where agents other than senior politicians become primary definers of the debate. Although these newspapers stress the significance of “Scottish” issues for their readers (chapter 6), the voice of the public is generally absent from the coverage of both “Scottish” and “UK” issues, with almost no examples of citizens engaging in politics or influencing the debate, at least on the days of my sample. In this respect, English/UK newspapers seem to be closer than Scottish ones to requirements of participatory models of mediated democracy, even if they are also far from fulfilling these.

Turning now to the range of political voices included in the coverage, the English/UK coverage limits the debate between the leaders and high-profile politicians of the Labour and Conservative parties: these are the main political sources and actors across different issues and these are the sources who engage in dialogue and whose views are adopted or rejected by newspapers. The Liberal Democrats though are significantly more marginal, a finding which agrees with previous research (Deacon et al., 2006).

Similarly, in Scottish newspapers the same political figures dominate the debate on Westminster issues, while “Scottish” issues are debated by Scottish party leaders and prominent politicians (and the 12 academics in the case of fiscal autonomy). Two aspects are noteworthy in this context: the general absence of Scottish MP candidates and the prominence of the SNP in the “Scottish” topics’ coverage.

As is the case in English/UK papers, in Scottish titles the Liberal Democrats have a marginal role in all the issues, despite their position as one of the governing parties

at the Scottish parliament. However the coverage of “Scottish” issues focuses on three rather than two political parties: Scottish Labour, the SNP and the Scottish Conservatives. The inclusion of the SNP seems to reflect its rise as an electoral force in Scotland and the simultaneous decline of the Conservative party (McNair, 2008a). It appears as the second party in the debate, and is primarily constructed as the main opposition challenging Labour, without however setting its own issue agenda, at least on the days studied here. Its regular appearance in the coverage offers its representatives the access to voice their views and challenge their opponents, therefore to become visible as a significant political force. A similar opportunity is not offered to the same extent to the Liberal Democrats.

Another group of political voices who are marginal in Scottish newspapers, even though they would arguably be relevant in the context of a general election, are Scottish MP candidates. Their relative absence is particularly significant, given the recognition by my interviewees that after devolution they have become marginalised in Scottish affairs coverage. It suggests that Scottish MPs have few opportunities for inclusion in the Scottish press as they are not considered relevant in either Scottish affairs or in Westminster affairs coverage. Their absence also seems to suggest that the Scottish dimension of the UK political scene is neglected, despite the attention given to “UK” issues in Scottish electoral coverage.

Finally, this chapter has touched on the way issues become part of the electoral agenda. It has discussed occasions where different groups, whether politicians, experts or citizens, bring issues forward. It has also considered occasions where newspapers take up these issues and expand on them. A good example here is that

of fiscal autonomy in the Scottish papers: the issue was initiated by experts, taken up and “amplified” (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995:95) by *The Scotsman*, with opinion articles and editorials (on the 21st May, the day before my sample, only *The Scotsman* had coverage of this issue). It was then further amplified by Scottish party leaders who responded to the proposals of the academics and then taken up by all newspapers in the Scottish sample with varying amounts of coverage.

This shows that issues become part of the media agenda as a result of collaboration between different parties: journalists, politicians, experts all have a role in making a topic an object of mediated discussion, while the direction of this process is not necessarily from politicians to the media. Chapter 6 argued that the coverage of “Scottish” issues is characterised by a Scottish-oriented discourse and national rhetoric and raised the question of how these issues came to be defined as relevant to Scotland (as well as how “UK” issues were defined as relevant to the UK as a whole). It could be argued that the actors and sources who initiated them defined their national relevance, however given that the agenda-setting process is not one-directional, it seems that newspapers, with their linguistic construction of the debate and their choice of sources also contributed in defining issues as “Scottish” or “UK-wide”.

8. Conclusions

In September 2006, in an article published in *The Guardian*, Iain MacWhirter, political commentator for *The Sunday Herald*, expressed his concerns about the then recently established dominance of English newspapers in the Scottish market. He argued that the public in Scotland was preoccupied with issues that do not concern the country because they read English newspapers and are influenced by an English news agenda (MacWhirter, 2006). Such concerns have increased after 2006, with the continuous decline of indigenous Scottish papers (House of Commons, 2009).

A divergence between the mediated public debate in Scotland and that in England, which is assumed in MacWhirter's argument, has been illustrated in previous research (Schlesinger, 2001, Connell, 2003, Higgins, 2006). At the same time, the adherence of the Scottish press to a unionist ideology has also been stressed (McNair, 2008a). The Scottish press can therefore be seen in different contexts both as a contributor to a distinctive national public sphere and as a preserver of Unionist discourse, which evidences its complex nature.

This thesis has sought to contribute to existing debates, by exploring the coverage of general elections, one of the most significant political events that bring together the electorate in Scotland and in the rest of the UK. By looking at the coverage of an event which is relevant to both England and Scotland, I have attempted to establish how much there is still in common for newspapers to debate in the two countries in a general election context, following devolution. The research has revealed both similarities and differences in the press coverage in the two countries.

The first difference between Scottish and English/UK papers is their differing attention to these elections overall. In both 2001 and 2005, Scottish newspapers seemed less interested in covering the election than their English/UK counterparts. The Scottish political editors interviewed suggested that covering the Scottish parliament has gradually become more important for their papers than covering Westminster and the same seems to be the case for the respective elections: Scottish elections get more newspaper attention in Scotland (Institute of Governance, 2003, Higgins, 2006) and Westminster elections get more coverage in England. Even though there is evidence in England as well that general elections are no longer granted guaranteed attention and have to compete with other newsworthy stories (Franklin and Richardson, 2002, Deacon et al., 2006), there is a consistent difference in both years between the coverage in the two countries.

Of course, readerships in Scotland have access to UK newspapers as well as to Scottish editions of English titles, where more coverage of general elections may be found. However, the comparatively limited attention given to general elections in the indigenous Scottish press, especially in 2005, suggests a relatively lower prioritisation of these central events in UK politics within the papers which are widely seen as significant contributors to a Scottish public sphere.

The second difference is the emergence of issues within the elections that are constructed as being particularly relevant to Scotland. The debates on Scottish hospital waiting lists in both years and on fiscal autonomy in 2001, for example, were not directly relevant to the general election. The former were within the remit

of the Scottish parliament and would have been more appropriate for a Scottish election. The latter, as noted by the journalists interviewed, was a theoretical debate because fiscal autonomy was unlikely to be granted by any party that could win the general election that year.

Although these “Scottish” debates were not initiated by Scottish newspapers themselves, but by Scottish academics and politicians, the indigenous press in Scotland contributed to their construction as particularly relevant to the country’s public affairs. As seen in chapters 6 and 7, the coverage of these debates constructs an inclusive rhetoric of nationhood (Billig, 1995, Higgins, 2004a) which is not found in Scottish coverage of “UK” issues, and additionally excludes non-Scottish sources and actors from these debates, thus presenting them as of limited relevance to a non-Scottish readership. Therefore Scottish newspapers contributed to the construction of these issues as “Scottish”, even though the external sources who initiated them also had a role in this construction.

The distinction between issues that are reserved to Westminster and those devolved to the Scottish parliament does not strictly determine the discourse that is adopted in their coverage within the samples examined here, as might initially be expected. Fiscal autonomy is linked with taxation, which is a reserved area, yet the discourse in its coverage presents more similarities with Scottish waiting lists, a devolved matter. The Scottish coverage of the health debate at Westminster on the other hand has little in common with that of waiting lists, even though they both concern reserved matters. Although I started my research looking for similarities and

differences in the coverage of reserved and devolved issues, the significant factor appears to be instead whether an issue is constructed as “Scottish” or as “UK-wide”.

Another characteristic of the coverage of the “Scottish” debates identified in my one-day samples is the seeming absence of the voices of ordinary citizens¹. Even though the newspapers use an inclusive rhetoric when talking about these issues and address their readers as being affected by them, members of the public do not have access to the debate which takes place exclusively among elites, at least in the days of my samples. Of course the difference with the “UK” topics here is just one of degree, because that coverage is also dominated by elite sources and actors. Yet in the coverage of “UK” topics there is some presence of ordinary citizens’ voices, which in some cases also have a powerful role in the electoral debate.

A reason for the stronger presence of members of the public in “UK” topics might be that citizens would be expected to intervene in the general election debate by positioning themselves in relation to Westminster party policies. Within the context of a general election, although “Scottish” issues are discussed in Scottish newspapers, they are represented as of no concern to Westminster parties. Therefore, although it is possible that Scottish citizens debate Scottish party issues, it would be more likely that Scottish citizen action is directed at Holyrood instead. Media attention during general elections would be more likely to focus on confrontations between citizens and Westminster parties competing for the vote.

¹ Readers letters could offer an opportunity for citizen participation in the debates on different issues, however, both in “Scottish” and in “UK” issues, letters are rare, published days after they are written and therefore do not comment on aspects of the debate which are discussed on the same day in other parts of the newspaper (in news and opinion coverage). As discussed at different points in the thesis, letters are therefore not very helpful in analysing citizen participation in the one-day samples of mediated debate.

In the sample I studied there are some instances of newspapers citing citizens' opinions on "UK" issues as a means of supporting or illustrating the newspaper's report (for instance the families of British soldiers who died in Iraq in the two editions of *The Daily Mail*, or doctors who gave their views in *The Guardian* on the condition of the NHS). It is possible that in these cases the papers themselves sought these perspectives of citizens affected by the issues. However, I found no similar examples in the coverage of "Scottish" issues, which shows less initiative on the part of newspapers to originate citizen perspectives and further marks the coverage of the "Scottish" issues as distinct from that of "UK" topics.

These "Scottish" debates seem to make the Scottish papers' performance in the electoral public sphere distinct. Even though there are links between these debates and Westminster which are due to constitutional links between the Scottish and UK parliaments as well as links between Scottish and UK parties, these debates take place in isolation from the English/UK mediated debate and are constructed as only relevant to Scotland.

Despite their differences however, there are also similarities in the coverage of these elections in Scottish and English/UK titles. They share a similar balance between informative and evaluative material and a similar issue agenda in quantitative terms. Although Scottish titles devote overall less space to the elections, they offer their readers similar proportions of news and opinion and mention the same issues as being significant in the campaign. Although in quantitative terms the agenda in the two newspaper samples seems similar, some issues, such as health,

are interpreted differently in the two samples, with the Scottish titles focussing on Scottish policies more than on English ones. This suggests a level of division between devolved and reserved issues, which however is not a straightforward one, as discussed earlier.

Both newspaper samples also discuss Westminster issues in a UK context. When a topic is constructed as relevant to the UK, “the country” talked about is Britain both in Scottish and in English newspapers. Despite this apparent uniformity, a closer analysis reveals that the indigenous Scottish coverage of “UK” issues lacks the involving discourse of English/UK titles and their Scottish editions, which interpellates readers as participants in the events. It additionally lacks the association of the readership with a middle class demographic, which is occasionally found in the right-of-centre English/UK press, perhaps due to an established perception of Scotland as a more working-class society than England (McNair, 2008a). Although the Scottish reader is expected to recognise references to Britain as his/her location, the relevance of the “UK” topics discussed to his/her life is not highlighted. This suggests that although Scottish newspapers position themselves in the UK, they also maintain a degree of distance from it in their coverage of “UK” issues, at least in the sample of my qualitative analysis. This finding qualifies the current perception of the indigenous Scottish press as unionist (McNair, 2008a).

Another question that the research has addressed is whether Scottish or English/UK newspapers may be seen as performing the role prescribed for the media by public sphere theories. Although theories of democratic deliberation, such as that of

Habermas (1989), are, as Habermas himself recognized, idealistic in the real-life context of commercial media, I have identified a number of criteria which may be used to compare the degree to which different newspapers can be seen to fit such theoretical requirements: their quantitative output and its distribution, their openness to a diversity of viewpoints coming from different social actors as well as from different political representatives, and their inclusion of multiple identities.

In terms of their quantitative performance, and based on the criteria set by Higgins (2006), English/UK newspapers provide more coverage of the election and therefore offer more input for their readers to deliberate than Scottish titles do. However the amount of information and evaluation they offer and the prominence they give to this material inside the newspaper (namely Higgins' other quantitative criteria) are similar in the two newspaper samples.

Turning to whether they present an inclusive debate on election issues, as mentioned earlier English/UK titles include more often the voices of ordinary citizens. Gamson (2001), Bennet et al. (2004) and Lewis et al. (2005), among others, argue that the media may encourage citizen engagement with politics by reporting a diversity of viewpoints and presenting a dialogue between them, by constructing ordinary citizens as active agents in the mediated debate, giving prominence to civil society actors who propose solutions to problems of common concern and integrating their discourses in media accounts.

These normative requirements of participatory models of democracy (Feree et al, 2002) are satisfied only to a certain degree by the coverage of English/UK papers

and to an even lesser degree by Scottish titles. Of course the citizens who do appear in the English/UK coverage do not necessarily represent a diversity of identities in terms, for example, of ethnicity, regionality or social class. Their role is often to illustrate the problems discussed rather than to open up mediated debate to a range of voices in society. This is one of the reasons why it may not be said that English/UK newspapers fit participatory normative requirements, even though they include members of the public in their coverage to a certain extent.

Moreover, both the English/UK and the Scottish sample primarily report on a debate which takes place among politicians and occasionally other sources. They can therefore both be said to fit the requirements of a “representative” theory of democracy (Feree et al, 2002:206-7) which suggests that the media should report the statements and views of political representatives, rather than encourage citizens to participate in the debate themselves.

In terms of its inclusiveness of political representatives from different backgrounds, the Scottish sample appears more inclusive than the English/UK one, especially in its coverage of “Scottish” issues. Although most of the debate on “UK” issues across different titles takes place between Labour and the Conservatives, the coverage of “Scottish” issues offers representation to four political parties (to different extents as discussed in chapter 7), namely Scottish Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats and the SNP. In these issues, the SNP has a very prominent role, acting like the primary political opposition to Scottish Labour. The Liberal Democrats on the other hand have a relatively smaller role across both newspaper

samples and different issues, even though in Scotland they were, at the time, part of the government at Holyrood.

Alongside the relative plurality of political voices, Scottish newspapers are less openly partisan than English/UK ones, which express more explicitly their endorsement of specific politicians and their views. This seems to be related to the difficulty in supporting the SNP or the Conservatives in Scotland. As discussed in chapter 2, the Conservatives gradually lost their support in Scotland in the second half of the 20th century, while despite differences in the positioning of individual titles, the Scottish press has traditionally been consistent in its lack of formal support for the SNP (with the exception of *The Scottish Sun*'s brief support in the 1992 election), at least until 2007 (McNair, 2008a). Therefore many indigenous Scottish newspapers often criticise Labour politicians, without openly endorsing the views of the Conservatives or the SNP.

This lack of support for the Nationalists appears to signify a reluctance of the Scottish press to move away from a UK political agenda in the early years of devolution. Of course, the visibility the SNP is offered in the coverage of "Scottish" issues might also help present the party as a significant political player, despite the aforementioned lack of support.

Democratic inclusion in the public sphere is also intrinsically connected with the notion of identity as discussed in chapters 1 and 3. Identity plays a vital role in opinion formation (Calhoun, 1992, Fraser, 1992), holds together the members of a public sphere (Peters, 2008b) and is a significant ingredient in the formation of

alternative, parallel public spheres (Keane, 1991, Fraser, 1992, Eley, 1992). In this light it is noteworthy that the discussion of both “UK” and “Scottish” issues in English/UK and Scottish newspapers excludes participants on a national identity basis: the coverage of “UK” issues in most cases excludes Scottish agents, whether these are politicians or members of the public as participants in the mediated debate, or even readers as addressees of the newspapers’ discourse. Conversely, the coverage of “Scottish” issues excludes the English perspective.

It appears that there are two levels of debate during these elections: the Westminster debate, which is generally covered similarly in the two newspaper samples, although with less involvement of the readership in the Scottish coverage; and the Scottish debates, discussed by sources and actors in Scotland and covered by Scottish political editors. The two kinds of debate are constructed as separate, with no links between them. Scottish readers are informed about Westminster debates but English readers are not informed about Scottish debates even when, as with fiscal autonomy, they relate to a reserved issue and have potentially significant consequences for the rest of the UK.

“Scottish” topics are therefore discussed in a separate Scottish mediated public sphere, and while Scottish newspapers remain generally open to “UK” issues, English/UK newspapers are not open to “Scottish” issues. Peters (2008b:188) discusses the possibility of the “fragmentation” of a public sphere, whereby there is a “mutual closure of communicative groupings” and a “fracture of the processes through which ideas, arguments and interpretations circulate”. Such a “closure”, in the case of the electoral coverage studied here, is not complete because the Scottish

press still discusses the debate that takes place at a Westminster level, although in terms that pay very little attention to Scottish sources, politicians, citizens or readerships. However English/UK titles do demonstrate a “closure” to issues that are constructed as only relevant to Scotland.

This exclusion of Scottish debates from English/UK titles is not particularly surprising in the light of some of the research presented in chapter 2. MacInnes et al. (2007) and Connell (2003) agree that a claim to “national” status for a newspaper does not equal comprehensiveness of content but is rather a matter of content presentation and marketing positioning. Therefore “national” UK titles do not necessarily include news from throughout the UK. Moreover, the evidence presented in my research demonstrates that English/UK titles do not make a clear distinction between issues which concern England and issues which concern Britain as a whole, but report on all of them from an Anglo-British perspective. This is in line with previous research on English/UK newspapers (Law, 2001, Rosie et al. 2004, 2006) but also with wider arguments about an overall confusion between the notions of Englishness and Britishness (Cohen, 1994, Pittock, 1999, Taylor, 2000).

On the part of the Scottish political editors interviewed it appears that after devolution Scottish titles struggled to find ways to cover general elections within a new political environment which brought a lot of changes compared to what they were used to before. Their reflections on the decisions made by their newspapers at the time reveal that Scottish newspapers had to adjust their ways of working to a new situation and this was not a straightforward nor a strategically planned process. A lot of decisions were taken as they went along and judgements were made on the

significance of individual election events based on various criteria. The interviews therefore show little evidence of a conscious effort by Scottish newspapers to distance themselves from the UK public sphere.

However it would be an oversimplification to treat the Scottish press as a homogeneous group as there are tendencies that differentiate between newspapers within Scotland. Scottish editions of English newspapers, for instance, generally follow the trends of their London editions. They tend to have a similar issue agenda and replicate much of the English coverage on “UK” issues. Yet the discourse they use when they discuss “Scottish” issues is more similar to that of indigenous Scottish papers. This is likely to be because the coverage of “Scottish” issues is written by these papers’ Scottish staff and is part of the papers’ efforts to adapt their content to suit a Scottish readership.

The rest of the election coverage is generally the same between London and Scottish editions, with limited editing. This editing usually involves adding a few sentences to an English article to give it a Scottish perspective (a tactic often found in *The Scottish Daily Mail*), or replacing English citizen sources with Scottish ones, whose statements nevertheless illustrate the same points.

These editing interventions in the coverage of “UK” issues are also efforts to make the coverage appear relevant to a Scottish readership, or to “put a kilt on” it (Rosie et al., 2004). Besides, previous research has also noted the use of language as a means of tailoring an English title to fit into the Scottish market (Rosie et al., 2004, 2006, Douglas, 2009). The added material does not construct a dialogue between the

English and Scottish perspectives – it just illustrates the same points. As Andrew Nicoll of *The Scottish Sun* said in the interview for this analysis, the people who read his paper in Scotland and in England are the same type of people. It seems that the implied readership addressed in these newspapers are presupposed to have similar values, whether they live in Scotland or in England. The articles on “Scottish” issues are not linked with those on “UK” issues either: like the “Scottish” debates they coexist with the “UK” debates in the same newspapers, without direct links or dialogue between them.

Non-central belt titles are also characterised by different features, such as a tendency to give more attention to issues of local relevance, like transportation or fuel prices, or to include actors with local relevance in their discussion of the main issues. Within the central belt, on the other hand, *The Scotsman* and *The Herald*, the two newspapers which claim Scottish “national” status, appear quite similar in their coverage, although they do adopt different positions in relation to issues such as the Iraq war or fiscal autonomy.

Although this project looked at two political events which are located in the first years after devolution, its findings in relation to issues of identity and the public sphere in Scotland and in England remain relevant in the light of current debates. As I discussed in the introduction of this thesis as well as at the end of chapter 2, indigenous Scottish newspapers are facing difficulty at the time of writing, losing their readership to online news and English-based newspapers. Concerns have been expressed that the decline of indigenous Scottish titles will mean a deficit in the

amount of information readers in Scotland receive about Scottish affairs (Kemp, 2009) and a proliferation of an English news agenda (MacWhirter, 2006).

The significance of indigenous Scottish newspapers in maintaining a debate about Scottish affairs has been demonstrated in this thesis. Without the contribution of indigenous Scottish titles, the electoral debate in the press would present a different picture and the issues that are constructed as relevant to Scotland might not have appeared at all in the coverage of the elections, unless of course attention was drawn to them in Scottish broadcast news reports. Without the contribution of indigenous Scottish titles the mediated debate on general elections would be more homogeneous in Scotland and in England than was the case in 2001 and 2005.

Therefore, even if a causal relationship between Scottish newspapers and Scottishness remains the object of academic debate (Schlesinger, 1998, Brown et al., 1998), the role of the press in maintaining dialogue in the public sphere on Scottish issues is indeed significant. Although Scottish titles did not themselves stimulate Scottish debates during the two elections, they did dedicate more attention to them compared to English/UK newspapers and their Scottish editions. The concerns expressed about the possible effects of the decline of the Scottish press on the exposure of readerships to Scottish issues (Kemp, 2009) seem justified.

On the other hand, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, concerns have been expressed regarding a potential threat to the Scottish public sphere posed by the increasing popularity of “national UK” titles or Scottish editions of English newspapers which, according to this argument, impose their English agendas in

Scotland (MacWhirter, 2006). On one hand there is evidence in this research to support such a claim. Although overall the election issue agendas were similar in Scottish and English/UK titles, when I looked at individual titles in chapter 5, I found a tendency of Scottish editions of English titles to adopt a more “English” agenda than the indigenous press (they had for example more mentions of immigration, crime and Europe). These titles also gave less attention to “Scottish” issues. Despite their efforts to tailor their coverage to suit a Scottish reader, Scottish editions of English titles remain close to their London editions and make a limited contribution to a distinctively Scottish public debate.

It is certain that the next general election in 2010 is going to take place in a different environment both politically and in relation to the media. Even between the 2001 and 2005 elections I identified a tendency in Scottish papers to stop covering issues, such as the Westminster debate on health, which do not concern Scotland, and to emphasize more explicitly the Scottish character of the “Scottish” debates. This tendency may be even stronger in 2010, given that the party in government at Holyrood no longer has an equivalent branch at Westminster. Perhaps the debate on the referendum bill on independence taking place in the same year could bring forward issues regarding the future of the Union during this election. Moreover, the more realistic possibility of a Conservative victory in the 2010 election may re-emphasize the importance of a Westminster election in the Scottish press, given the unpopularity of the party in Scotland for several decades.

General elections can provide an insightful case study into the way the public sphere operates in the context of events that concern the whole of the UK. This research

makes an original contribution to knowledge by providing an account of the form of the debate in the Scottish press, which offers insights into the nature of a Scottish conversation and its relationship to an Anglo-British equivalent. The combination of content analysis, critical discourse analysis and interviews has delivered insights that each of these methods alone could not have offered and has contributed to build a complex picture of the form of the debate in the press on the two sides of the Scottish border.

The results of my study add to the insights provided by previous research on the way the press in England and in Scotland operates in the context of a Scottish election: both the Institute of Governance (2003) and Higgins (2006) found that Scottish newspapers offer their readers more material on Scottish elections than English/UK titles, hence providing them with more input for their deliberation and decision-making. On the contrary Westminster elections, as shown in this thesis, receive less attention in indigenous Scottish newspapers, and their readers are offered less information and advice for debate.

Moreover, in Scotland, the coverage of Scottish elections is characterised by an explicit articulation of Scottishness and an inclusive rhetoric of “homeland making” (Higgins, 2004a) which in Westminster elections is only found in the coverage of “Scottish” issues. As argued earlier, Scottish newspapers do not adopt this rhetoric when discussing issues which they construct as relevant to the whole of the UK. Both the findings of previous research on Scottish elections and my findings on Westminster elections suggest a degree of separation of the public debate in England and in Scotland.

This research however has not attempted a comprehensive account of the Scottish public sphere in relation to that in England. Such an account would require a study of other media as well, such as television, radio and the internet, and of other cultural, religious and economic institutions. It would also require an analysis of how the public uses the input from different sources in their deliberations and decision-making. All these aspects are significant and can be addressed through future research.

Although the quantitative analysis presented in this research included all the election coverage of both elections in a diverse range of newspapers, the qualitative textual analysis necessarily focused on a more limited sample of four election issues (health in both years, the Iraq war and taxation), for just one day. It would therefore be worthwhile for future research to examine whether the similarities and differences found in the coverage of “Scottish” and “UK” issues are replicated across other similar issues and in varying forms of sampling.

Another area for further research might be how other UK-wide events are dealt with by the media in the constituent parts of the Union. As the political and socioeconomic context in Scotland is changing, a comparison of the findings of this study with Scottish news coverage of future general elections and other UK-wide events would also deliver a fuller understanding of the role of the media in the conversation of nations as they move toward a post-devolution reality.

Especially in a study of future general elections, the role of the internet in political deliberation will also be a significant area of focus. As discussed in chapter 3, although there are concerns regarding the inclusiveness of debate on the web as well as its potential to encourage politically disengaged citizens to join a discussion on public affairs (Sparks, 2001, McNair et al., 2003, Scammell, 2005, Dahlgren, 2001, 2005), the possibilities it offers for a new participatory public sphere are widely recognised. In addition, the internet has the potential to open up a public sphere and dissociate it from its physical location: online news is easily accessible to Scots, English and anyone interested in UK politics anywhere in the world, and hence has the potential to address a broader “imagined community”.

The use of online news has also been increasing in the period since 2005. In the first six months of 2009, *Scotsman.com* was the most visited regional newspaper website in the UK, with a record number of over 2 million unique users (Quilty-Harper, 2009). Singer (2009) examines this website as a forum of deliberation among members of the public during the 2007 Scottish election, and future research should investigate the role of online news and forums in the relationship between Scottish and UK politics.

The insights offered by the Scottish case are significant outside the context of the UK as well because they instantiate the processes of mediated deliberation within sub-state national structures. They also demonstrate the enduring power of identity, and national identity in particular, in shaping the mediated public sphere in a ‘globalised’ 21st century.

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APPENDIX 1:
CONTENT ANALYSIS

1.1 Reserved and devolved matters

According to the Scottish Parliament website (<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/vli/publicInfo/faq/category6.htm>, accessed 31.3.2008), the 1998 Scotland Act identifies the following issues as reserved to Westminster. The UK Parliament therefore legislates on these matters for the whole of the UK, and the Scottish Parliament can not affect them:

- “abortion, human fertilisation and embryology, genetics and vivisection
- common markets
- constitutional matters
- data protection
- employment legislation
- energy: electricity, coal, gas and nuclear energy
- equal opportunities
- fiscal, economic and monetary system
- gambling and the National Lottery
- immigration and nationality
- social security
- some aspects of transport, including marine and air transport, transport safety and regulation, and driver and vehicle licensing and testing
- trade and industry, including competition and customer protection
- UK defence and national security
- UK foreign policy”

The same source also outlines the areas devolved to the Scottish Parliament, namely:

- “agriculture, forestry and fishing
- education and training
- environment
- Gaelic
- health
- housing
- law and home affairs
- local government
- natural and built heritage
- planning
- police and fire services
- social work
- some aspects of transport, including the Scottish road network and bus policy
- sport and the arts
- statistics and public records
- tourism and economic development”

1.2 Content analysis: results for the 2001 coverage

For each of the election issues below, the number of mentions is recorded together with the percentage it represents of the total number of mentions of all issues in that paper.

	Words	Total articles	Features + News	Opinion	Leader	Letters
UK Press						
The Guardian	491,536	806	567	138	40	61
Daily Telegraph	429,479	843	566	150	39	88
Daily Mail	237,675	491	303	59	38	91
The Sun	100,372	390	242	34	41	73
The Daily Mirror	125,714	524	379	60	31	54
Scottish Press						
The Scotsman	415,812	776	451	122	28	175
The Herald	299,137	644	468	54	20	102
Daily Record	87,654	366	250	49	21	46
Aberdeen P & J	96,725	235	180	5	22	28
Dundee Courier	119,059	317	248	7	26	36
Scottish Editions						
The Scottish Sun	110,161	373	221	44	41	67
Scottish Daily Mail	204,541	467	263	52	32	120
Total coverage	2,717,865.00	6232	4138	774	379	941
Total Scottish	1,333,089.00	3178	2081	333	190	574
Total British	1,384,776.00	3054	2057	441	189	367

	Europe	the Euro	education	health	taxation
UK Press					
The Guardian	113 (5.5%)	117 (5.6%)	185 (8.9%)	176 (8.5%)	169 (8.2%)
Daily Telegraph	138 (7.0%)	147 (7.5%)	147 (7.5%)	158 (8.1%)	187 (9.5%)
Daily Mail	85 (8.0%)	67 (6.3%)	66 (6.2%)	103 (9.7%)	98 (9.2%)
The Sun	41 (5.7%)	67 (9.3%)	57 (8.0%)	65 (9.1%)	57 (8.0%)
The Daily Mirror	39 (4.9%)	39 (4.9%)	71 (9.0%)	74 (9.3%)	52 (6.6%)
Scottish Press					
The Scotsman	93 (4.7%)	108 (5.5%)	139 (7.0%)	162 (8.2%)	194 (9.8%)
The Herald	64 (4.4%)	64 (4.4%)	124 (8.5%)	143 (9.8%)	118 (8.1%)
Daily Record	22 (3.6%)	25 (4.1%)	46 (7.6%)	54 (9.0%)	50 (8.3%)
Aberdeen P & J	19 (3.0%)	21 (3.3%)	44 (7.0%)	56 (8.9%)	44 (7.0%)
Dundee Courier	27 (4.3%)	33 (5.2%)	53 (8.4%)	59 (9.3%)	57 (9.0%)
Scottish Editions					
The Scottish Sun	30 (3.9%)	64 (8.4%)	59 (7.7%)	81 (10.6%)	58 (7.6%)
Scottish Daily Mail	76 (7.3%)	55 (5.3%)	69 (6.6%)	116 (11.1%)	90 (8.6%)
Total coverage	747 (5.4%)	807 (5.9%)	1060 (7.7%)	1247 (9.1%)	1174 (8.6%)
Total Scottish	331 (4.6%)	370 (5.2%)	534 (7.5%)	671 (9.4%)	611 (8.6%)
Total British	416 (6.3%)	437 (6.6%)	526 (8.0%)	576 (8.7%)	563 (8.5%)

	defence / foreign policy	immigration	poverty	poll results	childcare	empl/ment
UK Press						
The Guardian	32 (1.5%)	93 (4.5%)	37 (1.8%)	117 (5.6%)	12 (0.6%)	85 (4.1%)
Daily Telegraph	32 (1.6%)	69 (3.5%)	20 (1.0%)	127 (6.5%)	8 (0.4%)	59 (3.0%)
Daily Mail	24 (2.3%)	38 (3.6%)	10 (0.9%)	53 (5.0%)	1 (0.1%)	38 (3.6%)
The Sun	4 (0.5%)	31 (4.3%)	3 (0.4%)	46 (6.4%)	3 (0.4%)	25 (3.5%)
The Daily Mirror	4 (0.5%)	27 (3.4%)	20 (2.5%)	51 (6.4%)	5 (0.6%)	36 (4.5%)
Scottish Press						
The Scotsman	41 (2.1%)	36 (1.8%)	32 (1.6%)	106 (5.4%)	5 (0.2%)	69 (3.5%)
The Herald	28 (1.9%)	35 (2.4%)	30 (2.0%)	92 (6.3%)	2 (0.1%)	59 (4.0%)
Daily Record	5 (0.8%)	15 (2.5%)	11 (1.8%)	40 (6.6%)	3 (0.5%)	37 (6.1%)
Aberdeen P & J	12 (1.9%)	1 (0.1%)	16 (2.5%)	13 (2.1%)	0	36 (5.7%)
Dundee Courier	7 (1.1%)	10 (1.6%)	7 (1.1%)	25 (3.9%)	1 (0.1%)	26 (4.1%)
Scottish Editions						
The Scottish Sun	6 (0.8%)	30 (3.9%)	6 (0.8%)	41 (5.4%)	3 (0.4%)	34 (4.5%)
Scottish Daily Mail	20 (1.9%)	31 (3.0%)	5 (0.5%)	48 (4.6%)	1 (0.1%)	35 (3.3%)
Total coverage	215 (1.6%)	416 (3.0%)	197 (1.4%)	759 (5.5%)	44 (0.3%)	539 (3.9%)
Total Scottish	119 (1.7%)	158 (2.2%)	107 (1.5%)	365 (5.1%)	15 (0.2%)	296 (4.2%)
Total British	96 (1.4%)	258 (3.9%)	90 (1.4%)	394 (6.0%)	29 (0.4%)	243 (3.7%)

	fuel prices	environment	housing	pensions	public spending
UK Press					
The Guardian	22 (1.1%)	36 (1.7%)	14 (0.7%)	47 (2.3%)	82 (4.0%)
Daily Telegraph	53 (2.7%)	18 (0.9%)	8 (0.4%)	42 (2.1%)	78 (4.0%)
Daily Mail	15 (1.4%)	6 (0.6%)	3 (0.3%)	26 (2.4%)	38 (3.6%)
The Sun	22 (3.1%)	1 (0.1%)	0	12 (1.7%)	24 (3.3%)
The Daily Mirror	19 (2.4%)	3 (0.4%)	6 (0.7%)	34 (4.3%)	30 (3.8%)
Scottish Press					
The Scotsman	47 (2.4%)	57 (2.9%)	13 (0.6%)	46 (2.3%)	83 (4.2%)
The Herald	28 (1.9%)	26 (1.8%)	15 (1.0%)	49 (3.3%)	66 (4.5%)
Daily Record	11 (1.8%)	4 (0.7%)	2 (0.3%)	20 (3.3%)	24 (4.0%)
Aberdeen P & J	36 (5.7%)	19 (3.0%)	7 (1.1%)	31 (4.9%)	29 (4.6%)
Dundee Courier	29 (4.6%)	10 (1.6%)	1 (0.1%)	22 (3.5%)	26 (4.1%)
Scottish Editions					
The Scottish Sun	20 (2.6%)	3 (0.4%)	1 (0.1%)	15 (2.0%)	28 (3.7%)
Scottish Daily Mail	20 (1.9%)	5 (0.5%)	4 (0.4%)	27 (2.6%)	43 (4.1%)
Total coverage	322 (2.3%)	188 (1.4%)	74 (0.5%)	371 (2.7%)	551 (4.0%)
Total Scottish	191 (2.7%)	124 (1.7%)	43 (0.6%)	210 (2.9%)	299 (4.2%)
Total British	131 (2.0%)	64 (1.0%)	31 (0.5%)	161 (2.4%)	252 (3.8%)

	crime	economy	transport	voter turnout / apathy	business
UK Press					
The Guardian	95 (4.6%)	106 (5.1%)	80 (3.9%)	92 (4.4%)	37 (1.8%)
Daily Telegraph	100 (5.1%)	99 (5.0%)	53 (2.7%)	75 (3.8%)	49 (2.5%)
Daily Mail	50 (4.7%)	69 (6.5%)	34 (3.2%)	29 (2.7%)	19 (1.8%)
The Sun	50 (7.0%)	40 (5.6%)	24 (3.3%)	22 (3.1%)	15 (2.1%)
The Daily Mirror	44 (5.5%)	41 (5.2%)	12 (1.5%)	41 (5.2%)	16 (2.0%)
Scottish Press					
The Scotsman	90 (4.6%)	119 (6.0%)	58 (2.9%)	64 (3.2%)	66 (3.3%)
The Herald	58 (4.0%)	66 (4.5%)	48 (3.3%)	50 (3.4%)	38 (2.6%)
Daily Record	44 (7.3%)	41 (6.8%)	9 (1.5%)	29 (4.8%)	6 (1.0%)
Aberdeen P & J	24 (3.8%)	27 (4.3%)	40 (6.3%)	15 (2.4%)	17 (2.7%)
Dundee Courier	36 (5.7%)	23 (3.6%)	19 (3.0%)	16 (2.5%)	9 (1.4%)
Scottish Editions					
The Scottish Sun	58 (7.6%)	39 (5.1%)	24 (3.1%)	29 (3.8%)	16 (2.1%)
Scottish Daily Mail	54 (5.2%)	64 (6.1%)	29 (2.7%)	32 (3.1%)	21 (2.0%)
Total coverage	703 (5.1%)	734 (5.3%)	430 (3.1%)	494 (3.6%)	309 (2.2%)
Total Scottish	364 (5.1%)	379 (5.3%)	227 (3.2%)	235 (3.3%)	173 (2.4%)
Total British	339 (5.1%)	355 (5.4%)	203 (3.1%)	259 (3.9%)	136 (2.1%)

	manufacturing	Scottish Independence	Scottish regiments	devolution	tactical voting
UK Press					
The Guardian	8 (0.4%)	3 (0.1%)	1 (0.05%)	10 (0.5%)	59 (2.8%)
Daily Telegraph	3 (0.1%)	3 (0.1%)	4 (0.2%)	9 (0.4%)	47 (2.4%)
Daily Mail	4 (0.4%)	1 (0.1%)	0	7 (0.7%)	9 (0.8%)
The Sun	0	0	0	1 (0.1%)	6 (0.8%)
The Daily Mirror	3 (0.4%)	0	0	1 (0.1%)	10 (1.3%)
Scottish Press					
The Scotsman	3 (0.1%)	20 (1.0%)	3 (0.1%)	79 (4.0%)	19 (1.0%)
The Herald	6 (0.4%)	23 (1.6%)	10 (0.7%)	37 (2.5%)	17 (1.2%)
Daily Record	1 (0.2%)	16 (2.6%)	0	12 (2.0%)	4 (0.7%)
Aberdeen P & J	2 (0.3%)	12 (1.9%)	1 (0.1%)	12 (1.9%)	5 (0.8%)
Dundee Courier	0	12 (1.9%)	10 (1.6%)	23 (3.6%)	3 (0.5%)
Scottish Editions					
The Scottish Sun	0	10 (1.3%)	1 (0.1%)	3 (0.4%)	6 (0.8%)
Scottish Daily Mail	3 (0.3%)	19 (1.8%)	3 (0.3%)	19 (1.8%)	11 (1.0%)
Total coverage	33 (0.2%)	119 (0.9%)	33 (0.2%)	213 (1.5%)	196 (1.4%)
Total Scottish	15 (0.2%)	112 (1.6%)	28 (0.4%)	185 (2.6%)	65 (0.9%)
Total British	18 (0.3%)	7 (0.1%)	5 (0.1%)	28 (0.4%)	131 (2.0%)

	rural issues	fox hunting	mortgages / house prices	foot & mouth	explicit predictions of the outcome	explicit advice on how to vote
UK Press						
The Guardian	25 (1.2%)	6 (0.3%)	16 (0.8%)	32 (1.5%)	67 (3.2%)	11 (0.5%)
Daily Telegraph	33 (1.7%)	22 (1.1%)	16 (0.8%)	34 (1.7%)	35 (1.8%)	4 (0.2%)
Daily Mail	20 (1.9%)	8 (0.7%)	20 (1.9%)	35 (3.3%)	30 (2.8%)	5 (0.5%)
The Sun	6 (0.8%)	4 (0.5%)	10 (1.4%)	10 (1.4%)	36 (5.0%)	8 (1.1%)
The Daily Mirror	6 (0.7%)	5 (0.6%)	17 (2.1%)	4 (0.5%)	41 (5.2%)	14 (1.8%)
Scottish Press						
The Scotsman	46 (2.3%)	8 (0.4%)	11 (0.5%)	27 (1.4%)	45 (2.3%)	4 (0.2%)
The Herald	18 (1.2%)	1 (0.1%)	13 (0.9%)	24 (1.6%)	51 (3.5%)	2 (0.1%)
Daily Record	1 (0.2%)	2 (0.3%)	13 (2.1%)	1 (0.2%)	21 (3.5%)	7 (1.2%)
Aberdeen P & J	28 (4.4%)	2 (0.3%)	7 (1.1%)	16 (2.5%)	13 (2.1%)	0
Dundee Courier	11 (1.7%)	4 (0.6%)	3 (0.5%)	11 (1.7%)	43 (6.8%)	0
Scottish Editions						
The Scottish Sun	8 (1.0%)	3 (0.4%)	10 (1.3%)	9 (1.2%)	33 (4.3%)	7 (0.9%)
Scottish Daily Mail	14 (1.3%)	7 (0.7%)	14 (1.3%)	26 (2.5%)	30 (2.9%)	7 (0.6%)
Total coverage	216 (1.6%)	72 (0.5%)	150 (1.1%)	229 (1.7%)	445 (3.2%)	69 (0.5%)
Total Scottish	126 (1.8%)	27 (0.4%)	71 (1.0%)	114 (1.6%)	236 (3.3%)	27 (0.4%)
Total British	90 (1.4%)	45 (0.7%)	79 (1.2%)	115 (1.7%)	209 (3.2%)	42 (0.6%)

1.3 Operationalisation of categories

This section lists the keywords linked with each of the thematic categories of the previous section, in the coverage of the 2001 election. Similar keywords were selected for the issues in 2005.

In order for an article to be counted as mentioning the category, at least one of these keywords needed to appear in the text. The sentence where the keyword appeared was read to ensure that the keyword referred to an election issue, as explained in chapter 4.

Europe: Europe

The Euro: Euro, Pound, currency

Education: education, school(s), teacher(s), tuition fee(s), university(-ies)

Health: health, hospital, NHS, doctor(s), nurse(s), GP(s) (general practitioner)

Taxation: tax(-es)

Defence/foreign policy: defence, army, foreign policy

Immigration: immigrant(s), immigration, race, asylum

Poverty: poverty, poor

Poll results: poll(s)

Childcare: childcare

Employment: employment, job(s), wage(s), unemployed

Fuel prices: fuel

Environment: environment(al)

Housing: house(s), housing

Pensions: pension(s)

Public spending: spend(ing)

Crime: crime, law(s), police, drugs

The economy: economy, economic

Transport: transport, train(s), bus(-es), road(s)

Voter turnout/apathy: turn out, turnout, apathy

Business: business(es), corporate(-ation)

Manufacturing: manufacturing, manufacture, factory

Scottish independence: independence, independent

Scottish regiments: regiment(s), Black Watch

Devolution: devolution, devolve(d)

Tactical voting: tactical, tactically

Rural issues: rural, farm(ing), agriculture

Fox hunting: hunt, hunting

Mortgages/house prices: mortgage(s), house price(s)

Foot and mouth: foot and mouth

Explicit predictions of the outcome: party/leader name + will win / is likely to win / wins (the election)

Explicit advice on how to vote: vote (verb in imperative form) / should vote + name of political party/ leader

APPENDIX 2:
INTERVIEWS

2.1 Interview guide¹

1. How long have you covered politics for your newspaper?
2. What was your position at the newspaper during the 2001 and 2005 general elections?
3. Was there an editorial line in your newspaper regarding the coverage of these elections and how was it decided?
 - Who wrote the leader articles and how consistent were the positions expressed in these across news and signed opinion articles? Were readers' letters also selected to fit this editorial line?
4. What impact do you think devolution had on the way your paper covered the general elections in 2001 and 2005?
 - Were there differences between your coverage of the 2001 and the 2005 campaigns? For example would you say one of the two elections received less coverage or that the coverage had a more Scottish orientation in one of the two election years?
5. How does your paper perceive its readership, compared both to that of English and other Scottish titles? How does this influence the way you covered the two general elections in particular?
 - Could you describe the reader your newspaper addresses?
 - Where does this reader live, what kind of news are they interested in?
 - How relevant are general elections for this reader?
 - Were there any changes in the newspaper's perception of its readership between 2001 and 2005?

¹ The numbered questions are the key questions asked, while the bullet points are additional prompts/detailed questions used to examine particular aspects of the topics discussed, as was explained in chapter 4 of the thesis.

- What would you say made the approach of your newspaper to general election coverage different to that of other Scottish titles – for example North of Scotland, central belt titles or Scottish editions of English newspapers.

6. How did you paper deal with the balance between covering devolved and reserved issues in these elections? Was there any policy on this issue?

- Do you think devolved issues still influence Scottish voters during Westminster elections?
- Did you give emphasis to any general election issues, whether devolved or reserved, because they were more important for your readers than for voters in other parts of Scotland or in England?
- Would you say your newspaper or newspapers in Scotland as a group focussed on different election issues compared to English newspapers?

7. One of my findings has been that the Scottish papers gave a great deal of coverage to health in these elections, even though health is a devolved issue. Can you comment on this?

- The coverage of both general elections featured debates on healthcare in Scotland with special emphasis on Scottish hospital waiting lists. At the same time however, especially in 2001, there was coverage of the health debate at a Westminster level, even though health in Scotland is not that parliament's responsibility.

8. On the other hand the 2001 coverage of taxation, which is a reserved issue, included a discussion on whether the Scottish Parliament should acquire tax-raising powers. What was the role of the fiscal autonomy debate in the coverage of taxation?

9. Do you think generally that Scottish newspapers had the opportunity to develop their own agenda, or were they influenced by the debate in the UK and English titles?

10. What was your main source of political stories during the two elections: press briefings/press releases, news agencies, other media, or personal initiative and how did you use each?

- Did Westminster or Scottish divisions of the parties take initiatives to inform Scottish journalists about the general election campaign?
- Did Scottish journalists receive different briefings/material compared to English journalists?
- When you took the initiative to contact people for comments in your election stories did you seek sources in Scotland or in England?

11. How would you describe your paper's influence in its coverage of these general elections?

- Do you think it influenced your readers' voting decisions, politicians' campaigns, the coverage of other media or the electoral debate in Scotland for example?

2.2 Sample interview transcription

Hamish Macdonell, *The Scotsman*, 9th February 2009

How long have you covered politics for the Scotsman?

Coming up for nine... No, coming up for eight years now. I started at the Scotsman... I started at the General Election campaign in 2001. So I covered elections in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007... Is that all? That's it 2007 was the last one, yes.

What was your position at the newspaper during the 2001 and 2005 general elections?

I was the Scottish political editor.

Was there an editorial line in your newspaper at the time regarding the coverage of these elections and how was this decided?

We took a slightly strange line on the 2001 election. The editor at the time was a woman called Rebecca Hardy and she decided that there were two things that were of interest in that election. One was what she described as "the new politics" which was the big rise of anti-globalisation campaigns, of the environment as a major issue, of non-traditional forms of party politics that was making its presence felt in that election. That was one side.

And on the other side, she felt that it would not do the Scotsman any particular good for us to come out and support one particular party. There were reasons for that; I think the publisher of the Scotsman at the time was fairly Conservative but you couldn't go round supporting the Conservatives in Scotland with any degree of credibility at that time. The Scotsman had been pro-devolution and fairly liberal but it never really came out for the Liberal Democrats. It was never going to come out for Labour or the SNP. So there was no real choice for us in terms of supporting a party. And then you take those two things together and you think... you couldn't really support one party. And then you had a big rise in new politics as we called it.

So the attitude that we took to the election, which I think was a valid one to take, was that we would try and reflect both of those. We took a rather unusual view... I can't remember whether we carried this all the way through... but we would support individuals from whatever party, who we felt deserved a vote in the election. So whether they were good Conservatives, or good Labour, or good SNP or whatever, we would come out in their favour. And I don't think we actually did name them but we took that as an attitude into the election, that we were prepared to support individuals but not parties. And then we also decided that we would take a look at the elections through the new politics and making sure that those kind of non-party issues got a decent play in the coverage. Now that was the intention. Looking back through... I can't remember whether that actually came to fruition on either side. That was the attitude that I remember we went to that election with. That was the decision that was taken at the time very much by the editor.

Do you think that this stance was consistent in editorials, news as well as signed opinion and readers letters? Was it a consistent policy across all...

That was the intention yes. There's always a difficulty in these situations of carrying that kind of attitude through everything. Because the news happens fast, the coverage on a day to day basis often gets overtaken by events. Particularly news stories which can take off and take the whole coverage in one direction. And it's then hard to make sure that you fit into that. You're more over policy decisions. And I think that there were times when we had big set-piece things to do, like manifesto launches when I think we did reflect that, we did look at new politics issues, the environment, anti-globalization, we tried to get people commenting on those. While at other times, like all papers we got swept along by what was happening.

Who wrote the leader items at the time?

I think almost exclusively they would have been written by Bill Jamieson and George Kerevan, who are our leader writers today. They were both on the paper at the time. I mean they were written under the direction and guidance of the editor.

What impact do you think devolution has had on the way your paper covered the elections in 2001 and 2005?

2001 was the most interesting I think from that perspective because it was the first UK general election after the establishment of the Scottish Parliament. Up until that

point general elections had been very easy to cover. They were universal, UK-wide. If there was a big row, say the row was Jennifer's ear which was the health row in 1997, it was universal because healthcare was universal in terms of policy and that was fine. 2001 was a difficult one for us, particularly for Scottish papers, because we were just finding our feet in that sense.

English papers didn't treat it any differently at all, or London national papers didn't treat it any differently at all, because for them health was still an issue in this election, but for us it wasn't. And I know that we had difficulty... What do you do and at what point does a health issue become a UK-wide issue? Do you report something of the extent of Jennifer's ear or when the Prime Minister was berated by Helen Storrer? Was that actually 2005? I can't remember. You know, that was a health issue but it got elevated to being a UK political issue, because it was the Prime Minister on the spot. Now all those editorial adjustments had to be taken and I think that our approach was not helped by the fact that a lot of politicians had difficulty in making the demarcations as well. So we made the judgements on the day, as best we could I think.

Would you say that one of the two elections received less or more coverage than the other or had a more Scottish orientation?

My recollection is that the 2005 election didn't seem to get nearly as much coverage. For a couple of reasons. One is it wasn't really very groundbreaking in terms of the election. My memory says... I think there was not much change really in terms of seat numbers in 2005. It happened during... I think the Parliament here

was still sitting when the election happened... I think - I'll have to check that. In which case by that point, us as journalists here had become much more involved in the routine of the Parliament in the day to day workings of the Parliament. This is what mattered in terms of domestic politics. So we covered what was going on here and the election at the same time. So it wasn't like everything stopped when we had an election; it was an aside to what was happening here. And I think it was a recognition that in Scottish terms, in terms of domestic policy, what was more important in that sense was the Scottish elections. And perhaps it was that by 2005 the feeling had shifted away from Westminster enough for it not to be quite as all-important as it had been before. Particularly as, if my memory serves me, it was always pretty much assumed that Labour was going to win anyway and they did.

How does your paper perceive its readership, compared with that of English titles or that of other Scottish titles?

I don't know whether I'm in a position to answer that in terms of a comparison. How do we view our readership... what politically?

Who is the reader, where does this reader live, what are they interested in terms of political news, how relevant general elections are for them?

I think going back to 2001 again, the reason that we took a look at these new politics as it were, was a feeling that our readers were interested in that and that if the public in general was trying to take more of an interest in the environment and anti-globalization and that kind of thing, then we as a paper should do so as well. So

that was a definite attempt to reflect what we felt were the views of our readers. I think generally our readers are... Most newspaper readers now tend to have an older profile than they used to. Newspaper reading is something which is going out of fashion among the young, so we have an older profile with that. A lot of them are Edinburgh based, a lot of them will be professional or come from professional backgrounds. I guess liberal with a small "l", maybe conservative with a small "c". That, I guess, is kind of our characteristic core readership. Now that's going to differ hugely from papers like *The Daily Record* or *The Sun*, but probably doesn't differ an awful lot from the readers of *The Times* in Scotland or *The Herald*... or even *The Daily Telegraph* to a certain extent... even *The Guardian* possibly.

So would you say that the primary characteristic of this readership is geographical or sociological?

Primarily geographical, yes. I mean *The Scotsman* has always been an east coast based paper. Yes, we've always said we're a Scottish national newspaper, but I don't think there's any hiding the fact that we are generally an east coast... a south-east coast newspaper.

How relevant are general elections for this readership?

Generally they are very relevant in a kind of global direction...not global... national direction sense of the UK. Because the colour of the government in London affects the general direction the country is going in a huge sense. The problem I think with 2001 and 2005 was that there was not just little change but there was little prospect

of change. And at the time of those elections, there was a lot of concern about falling turnout. I've never been worried about falling turnout because my view is that people turn out for elections when they feel they can make a difference and when the election is on knife edge you will get turnout which will go up. We saw it in 2007. So I think that the 2001 and 2005 elections were not going to be groundbreaking and weren't groundbreaking. So in terms of relevance for the people up here, well they didn't really change anything. Because the same government came in that was there before and was there afterwards. But in a national sense, yes they are very important or they can be very important. You know, if in 2010 we get a Conservative government that will change not just the direction of the country, but it will change the dynamic that operates between Westminster and the Scottish Parliament as well.

Were there any changes in the readership between 2001 and 2005? The way you perceived your readership?

We had fewer of them. All newspapers lose readers and we lost some. To be honest I don't get involved in that level, other people deal with that, not me.

Would you say that the approach of your newspaper to the general elections was different to that of other Scottish papers, compared for example with the north-of-Scotland titles (Aberdeen Press and Journal and Dundee Courier) or the more popular titles, like The Daily Record, or even with The Herald?

I think that there is difference between our coverage and the regional titles like *The Press and Journal* or *The Courier*. I think that they take a much more local view than we do. *The Press and Journal* represents the North-East. When they go to press conferences with politicians they will ask about a roundabout on the A96. You know, those kind of questions. We don't ask about that in an Edinburgh-centric sense, because our coverage still, even though we are east coast based, our coverage still attempts to be Scottish national. I think there is little difference between us and *The Herald*. They are Glasgow based but they have the same overall approach that we do. We have political correspondents in Westminster – so does *The Herald*. *The Press and Journal* doesn't. *The Dundee Courier* doesn't. I mean they have stringers down there working for them but they don't have a Westminster team. In the 2001 and 2005 elections we had a team of three in Westminster. So did the Herald. So we still cover those elections or did cover those elections as national Scottish papers. And I think there is also a difference between that and the mass market papers, the tabloid papers, whose coverage of politics is much more ... loose possibly? You know, when we come to cover a manifesto launch we would give it a whole broadsheet page or two tabloid pages, full analysis of policies, full breakdown of points in each one whatever. Maybe 1500 words or so in various parts? Maybe *The Daily Record* would give it 150 words? Maybe *The Sun* would give it 200 words? You'll know that in terms of your research. I think that we each perform a different role.

What about the Scottish editions of English papers? The Scottish Daily Mail, The Scottish Sun?

They are handicapped to a certain extent in that they have to fill in the gaps that are left by their London editors. And they don't have the staff to throw in things that we do or the space to throw in things that we do. Having said that, in many ways they've done some very good jobs on the Scottish end of politics. One of the problems they face is having to sometimes either ignore a story because it's an English story or to, as the phrase is, to "put a kilt" on a story and give it a Scottish tinge even though it may not have it, because it needs to go in all the editions. So they work under different pressures.

How did your paper balance between covering devolved and reserved issues in these elections? Was there a policy on this issue?

I think it's back to the question that I answered earlier which is about.. There were judgements that had to be taken and I know from the discussions we had in 2001 that, you know, I would say this is a reserved issue, it doesn't affect Scotland. And in the end we would then make a judgement on whether it was a big enough issue that it didn't matter that it didn't affect Scotland; it had the resonance to carry through. So those were individual decisions that were made at the time and judgements based on that time.

Do you think that issues devolved to the Scottish Parliament influence the way Scottish voters vote in General Elections ?

Yes I do. I think that in the next general election here, the SNP will be looking to do well. And the SNP will be looking to do well on the back of the performance of the

SNP government in Holyrood. Of that there is no doubt. And it may be subliminal in a way that it affects many voters, but many voters vote by a kind of gut instinct anyway in the way that they feel. If they feel that the SNP is doing well here they may vote them in the General Elections. I don't think that an awful lot of voters are going into the polling booths and think "my hospital is run down", you know, "I'm really upset by that"... "Well the SNP are in charge of that so I'm going to vote Labour because it doesn't matter". I don't think people make those individual judgements.

You talked about two issues that were particularly relevant for your paper, namely the environment and anti-globalisation. Can you think of any other issues that were of particular interest for the Scotsman but not for other papers?

No just those two I think.

Would you say that newspapers in Scotland as a group focussed on different election issues compared to English and UK papers?

Yes, I would, though it would be difficult to give you examples on that. It's just a feeling. We perhaps looked at these issues like the environment and globalisation because we were able to cut across the division of reserved and devolved issues that was there. So it was our way of dealing with things in a slightly different way I think.

You mentioned before that some issues about health at Westminster level were covered by Scottish papers perhaps because major political figures were involved. Was there an effort to make this coverage of “English health” more “Scottish” or do you think that your coverage was the same as that of The Guardian for example?

There was definitely an attempt to make it clear to the readers that health, that health policy was not up for grabs in this election. You know, I hope that we explained that. If there was a big UK health story, you know, that health was devolved, and the Scottish Parliament had a remit over that. So I think that that would have affected the coverage we did of those issues, but I can't be certain.

Health was actually in my findings the most mentioned devolved issue in both elections and, especially in 2001, it was one of the top issues mentioned in the Scottish press, even though it is devolved. How would you comment on that?

There are two things I think. One is I think I would put part of the blame on the politicians. Election campaigns have to have a momentum of their own and it is partly set by the political strategists in the parties and partly by the circumstances of the events and stories which come through. The parties themselves made health a big issue. What do we do on a day when health is dominating all the discussions between all the parties, including the ones up here. Because they can't spend the whole day talking about macroeconomics. We have to cover something and so health then becomes an issue. That's partly the responsibility of the party strategists and partly because of the events which conspired to push those issues up the agenda.

On the other hand, in 2001 under the coverage of taxation, which is a reserved issue, there was a discussion on whether the Scottish Parliament should acquire tax-raising powers – fiscal autonomy. The debate started with a letter to the Scotsman and then it was taken up by all the papers in Scotland and there was a debate on whether the Parliament should have fiscal autonomy. What was the role of this debate in the coverage of taxation?

I think it was very significant. I had completely forgotten about fiscal autonomy but I remember that being an issue of interest to my editor. She was very keen on the idea... at least on the idea of a debate. So it's kind of odd because fiscal autonomy was a relevant issue for the election, but only marginally so, in the sense that no party was standing on a manifesto commitment apart from perhaps the Liberal Democrats. That was not really an issue, it was the parties' driving, but it was something which managed to link in taxation powers, macroeconomics with the Scottish Parliament. So it was an interesting issue and a debate that continues to this day, but it wasn't exactly a really current one as far as the parties were concerned in that campaign.

Do you think that generally, the Scottish papers had the opportunity to develop their own issue agenda, or were they influenced by the debate in the UK and English titles?

They had a small ability to influence their own agenda. But - because there weren't any particularly Scottish issues, because of the devolution settlement - it was very

limited and so if the weight of opinion... It's very difficult... If the weight of opinion on a day and all the UK media are pursuing a subject, it's very difficult for the Scottish press to go a different way.

What was your main source of political stories during the two elections? Press briefings and press releases, news agencies, other media or personal initiative?

Generally press briefings and press events. I mean we started off each day in both those elections by going to a series of daily press conferences. They are not so popular now, but in those elections they were. We used to go from one to the other, the Lib Dems first, then the Conservatives, the SNP, Labour had theirs in Glasgow. And they were an opportunity for the parties to put forward what they wanted to say, which is fine, but that was only a small part of the story. What they were an opportunity for us to do was to really get in to the politicians who were there on issues that we wanted to pursue, which had become the issues of the day. That was their worth to us. So that kicked off the coverage of the day. So I'd be able to ring in to the desk at about.. whatever... half past ten and say that this is where, you know, things are going... x, y, z are the issues, this is where the parties are taking them and it then informed the rest of the coverage. And, you know, when there was a big figure coming up, when there was Tony Blair or whatever, they would be holding a press conference too, and that would kick things off. So those formal events were probably the best I think.

Were these events organised especially for Scottish journalists?

Yes

And were they different to the material offered to English journalists?

Yes.

And when you took yourself the initiative to contact people for comments on the election stories did you seek sources in Scotland or in England?

In Scotland.

How would you describe your newspaper's influence in its coverage of these elections? Would you say it influenced readers' voting decisions, politicians' campaigns, the coverage of other media, the electoral debate in Scotland?

Well you mentioned the fiscal autonomy one, so I think that obviously influenced the electoral debate. Whether we influenced the voting patterns of anybody... I don't know. I would hope that we'd informed them to make an informed choice on the election. That is what we set out to do. Because we did not say vote for this party, vote for that party or anything else, we didn't set out to tell them which way to vote.

What about the debate in the other media?

Did we influence the debate in the other media? With fiscal autonomy I presume that we did. We might have done on other occasions as well. I can't remember. But to limited extent probably yes.

Thank you very much, it was very useful...

2.3 Informed consent forms

The following forms were signed by the three interviewees before the interview started.

Marina Dekavalla
PhD Candidate
Department of Film, Media and Journalism
University of Stirling
Stirling FK9 4LA

**Interview for PhD project on the coverage of the 2001 and 2005 general elections
in the Scottish press**

The overall purpose of this project is to examine the contribution of the Scottish press to the debate around general elections after devolution, looking specifically at the 2001 and 2005 campaigns. The project consists of three phases: quantitative analysis of the coverage of the two elections in a selection of Scottish and English/UK papers, critical discourse analysis of a selection of the coverage of the most mentioned election issues in each campaign and interviews with selected political editors who wrote for Scottish newspapers at the time of the two campaigns.

The purpose of the interviews is to complement the textual data and help in the interpretation of the textual analysis findings. The data collected in each interview (tape(s) and accompanying transcript) will be used in the PhD thesis and may also be used in other academic publications based on this research project, such as articles in academic journals or papers presented at academic conferences.

The names of the interviewees and the newspapers they work for will be named in the analysis of the data, unless requested otherwise by the interviewee. The purpose of naming the newspapers that interviewees represent is to be able to make comparisons between Scottish papers with different characteristics.

Interviewees have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage before or after the interview. In such circumstances, the data from their interview will not be used in the project or in any publication of its results. They also have the right to request that specific parts of their contribution are not directly cited in the research findings.

Statement

I understand and accept the above information on the project and I agree to be interviewed for the purposes stated above.



Date: 11/02/09

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University of Stirling
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Date: 9/2/09

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Statement

I understand and accept the above information on the project and I agree to be interviewed for the purposes stated above.

Andrew Nicolle

Date: Feb 9, 2009