Death, Disruption and the Moral Order: the narrative impulse in mass-media 'hard news' reporting.

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1. Introduction

1.1 News reporting: genre and rhetorical objectives

This chapter explores the genres of arguably one of the most influential textual domains in contemporary society, that of mass-media news reporting. In particular, it focuses on English-language print-media reports, since media texts display considerable generic variation across the different media and across languages and cultures. It examines both the generic organisation of these mass-media reports and the social and ideological objectives which this organisation acts to realise.

Texts will be explored from the domain known as 'hard news' — reports typically associated with eruptive violence, reversals of fortune and socially significant breaches of the moral order. This 'hard news' category includes both those reports which are primarily grounded in a material event such as an accident, natural disaster, riot or terrorist attack, and those grounded in a communicative event such as a speech, interview, report or press release. The chapter will demonstrate that a significant number of reports of both types share the same generic structure, a mode of textual organisation unique to the mass media which gives 'hard news' its textual distinctiveness. Both types of 'hard news' report will be shown to achieve their informational and rhetorical objectives through a non-linear, 'orbital' structure in which dependent 'satellites' elaborate, explain, contextualise and appraise a textually dominant 'nucleus'.

The view that the news story is a mode of 'narrative' is a commonplace in the media and cultural studies literature and the chapter will endorse this position. It will explore in detail the way the 'hard news' report inflects the events it describes with cultural and ideological meanings, arguing that the 'hard news' report acts to construct and to naturalise a model of social stability, morality and normalcy. But it will also address the apparently contradictory position typically taken by journalists themselves — the claim that the news report is an 'objective', 'neutral' and 'impersonal' mode of meaning making. While not supporting this position, the chapter will show how it is based on two key distinguishing features of the 'hard news' report:

- the generic structure mentioned above which acts to naturalise and to obscure the operation of underlying ideological positions,
- the construction of a journalistic register in which certain interpersonally charged register variables are severely circumscribed.

1.2 The ideational grounding of 'hard news': 'Event' versus 'Issue'

The chapter describes the structure and rhetorical purposes of two sub-types of 'hard news' report. The first, to be labelled 'Event Story', describes what happened in the event of some misadventure, act of political violence, crime, economic setback and so on. The second type is grounded in a communicative event and acts typically to describe the criticisms, accusations, demands, warnings, discoveries or announcements of some authorised source such as a politician, community leader, lobbyist, professional expert or scientific researcher. These communicatively-based items have been labelled 'Issues Reports' to reflect their role

in describing the semiotic activity, the public controversies and debates which are triggered when some newsworthy event or state of affairs acquires the status of 'issue'.[1]

The two types of report are exemplified below. The first, an 'Event Story', describes a newsworthy happening — the associated set of violent actions and events which followed the testing of a nuclear weapon by the French Government in August 1995. The second, an 'Issues Report', is grounded, in contrast, not in any single event but in the statements to a parliamentary inquiry by a children's magistrate in Sydney, Australia. The report describes his claims that there has been a serious increase in violent juvenile crime and his call for increased police powers to address the problem.

[Event Story]

BOMB RAGE
Riots sweep Tahiti

RIOTERS carved a blazing trail of destruction through the paradise island of Tahiti yesterday in a wave of fury sparked by French nuclear bomb tests.

Tahiti airport was left a smouldering wreck after more than 1000 protesters attacked riot police, drove a mechanical digger through the terminal and set the building alight.

France sent in tough Foreign Legion troops as riots spread to the nearby capital, Papeete.

Protesters looted shops, set a perfume store on fire and stoned an office building and the Territorial Assembly building.

Opposition to nuclear testing swept around the globe just a day after France exploded the first of up to eight bombs at Mururoa atoll, also in French controlled Polynesia.

Demonstrations included one by more than 10,000 people in Chile.

The riots in Tahiti are believed to have involved independence activists and trade unions.

Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans said yesterday: 'France has really reaped what it has sown.'

(Telegraph Mirror [Sydney], 8/9/95)

[Issues Report]

Ban Teens' Knives
Juvenile violence 'rising sharply'

POLICE should have the power to confiscate knives from teenagers after an increase in violent offences, the State's most senior children's magistrate told a parliamentary inquiry yesterday.

Rod Blackmore, senior children's magistrate for 17 years, said violent offences had risen while others, such as car stealing and general theft, had fallen.

Mr Blackmore said violent matters accounted for 41 per cent of offences listed before him at Bidura Children's Court, Glebe, for the next two months. They included malicious wounding, armed robbery, assault with bodily harm, assault on police, personal violence and assault with intent to rob.

Offences involving knives made up 30 per cent of all violent matters before him.

Mr Blackmore said knives had become the most popular weapon used by young criminals.

He said police should be given the power to confiscate pocket knives, butterfly and flick knives.

Mr Blackmore told the all party Standing Committee on Social Issues inquiry into youth violence that five years ago car theft was the big problem.

It made up more than half of his workload but a clampdown on car theft had reduced the number, Mr Blackmore said, to less than 20 per cent.

He said there were about 17 youths charged with murder going through the court system.

'The real worry is the carrying of knives by juveniles which is very frequent in the community and schools,' he said.

Outside the inquiry, Mr Blackmore said he felt the proportion of violent offences involving knives had increased six-fold over the past five years.

'The use of knives, certainly in robberies, is a fairly frequent feature.'

Mr Blackmore said the law says a person is not entitled to carry a weapon for personal protection.

Allowing police to confiscate a knife would mean teenagers could be cautioned, rather than charged for the offence.

It may be possible children could get their knife back from police if they proved they had a proper use for the weapon or their parents knew of it, Mr Blackmore said.

Mr Blackmore also raised the possibility the anti-car stealing push may have led to the increase in violent crime.

'If people are doing things for kicks, do they now go out and wander round streets at night looking for someone to mug rather than taking someone's car?' he said.

(Telegraph Mirror [Sydney] 27/7/94)

It must be noted in passing that the grounding of the 'Event Story' in a material happening does not preclude the inclusion of statements, opinions etc of authorised sources. In fact, such communicatively-based elements are standard in the 'Event Story'. Here, however, they play only a subsidiary role, typically confined to just a few sentences and acting only to elaborate the central description of the newsworthy material happening.

In addition, there are some reports which combine description of material and communicative events in roughly equal measure and which accordingly must be seen as combining 'Event' with 'Issue'. These 'Event/Issues' hybrids are found frequently in the domain of political reporting. It must also be noted that, while the type of news story examined here occurs with high frequency in the media, the generic structure to be set out in detail below represents only one of the choices available for constructing 'Event' and 'Issues' reports and other patterns of textual development are to be found within 'hard news' reporting.

2. The Lead-dominated 'Hard News' Story: Genre Analysis

2.1 Ideational orientation: newsworthiness and the subject matter of 'hard news'

The subject matter of these 'hard news' 'Event' and 'Issues' reports encompasses events or situations which are construed as threatening to damage, disrupt or rearrange the social order in either its material, political or normative guise. The sources of this social order disruption

can be grouped under the following three headings: aberrant damage, adversative rearrangements of power relations and normative breach.[2]

2.1.1 Aberrant damage

Aberrant damage can result from the action of natural forces such as storms, earthquakes and bushfires, from accidents, incompetence or carelessness associated with human enterprise, from outbreaks of disease, from the harmful action of the global or local economy or from acts of intentional violence such as riots, terrorist attacks or warfare. The damage, therefore, can be either of a physical or an economic nature. The notion of 'aberrant' damage is necessary to account for the fact that certain types of damage — four local Thais dying in a bus crash in Bangkok, the fact that around 100 people die each day in Australia of heart disease — are not construed as warranting news coverage by, for example, the Australian media. Such damage is seen by the mass-media's system of subject-matter assessment as a part of the natural order of things and hence 'normal'. It is only that damage which threatens the status quo which is hence seen as socio-culturally 'disruptive' or 'damaging' and which is viewed as warranting coverage.

2.1.2 Power relations

The domain of politics, both domestic and international, is the most obvious source of reports which turn on rearrangements of power relationships. 'Hard news' reporting provides a fine-grained coverage of the minute shifts in power associated with rises and falls in political popularity, leadership challenges, changes in alliances, factional in-fighting and parliamentary performance as well as the more substantive shifts associated with elections, rebellions, military coups, trade agreements and wars. But there are other sources, including the worlds of business and the bureaucracy where, for example, take-overs, senior appointments and management power struggles are all classified as providing subject matter worthy of coverage. Also associated with shifts in power relations are those items dealing with perceived changes in social roles where those changes ultimately have an impact upon power relations. Perhaps the most obvious of these changes is that associated with the role of women in society. Even today in Australia the news that a woman has been appointed to a senior management position in a major company represents newsworthy subject matter, as is the news that a group of women has decided to form an all-women surf-lifesaving lifeboat crew. The notion of a rearrangement that is 'adversative' accounts for the fact that, to be worthy of coverage, the shift in the power relationship must be seen as at odds with the interests or at least the expectations of some socially significant individual or grouping, and can accordingly be seen as socially 'disruptive' or 'damaging' in some way.

2.1.3 Normative breach

The category of 'normative breach' involves events or states-of-affairs construed as departing from either established morality or custom. News items which involve a sense of moral breach include the obvious crime and corruption reports, where clear-cut illegality is involved[3], but also include coverage of those acts of incompetence, negligence, arrogance, indifference, etc which are seen to threaten society's sense of duty or propriety. Thus a sense of 'moral breach' will underlie the newsworthiness of reports of poor performance by government agencies, of reports that the schools are failing to equip students for the work-force and of reports of the abandonment of new-born babies. Developments such as the growth of new religions, changes in a nation's dietary habits and shifts in the populace's sporting interests are examples of departures from established custom which are newsworthy in the English language media. Frequently such shifts in custom will acquire overtones of

moral transgression as, for example, the burgeoning interest in American basketball among the young in Australia is construed as a betrayal of core national values and a threat to the Australian identity.

Under all three headings, therefore, the subject matter deemed newsworthy by the media always entails some perceived threat to the social order — natural disasters, outbreaks of disease, price rises and stockmarket plunges disrupt the material order; elections, leadership challenges and warfare disrupt the status-quo of power relations; . crimes and bureaucratic bungles destabilise the moral order. In terms of informational content, therefore, 'hard news' reporting texts are directed towards the identification of potential or actual sources of social-order disequilibrium.

'Event Stories' and 'Issues Reports', however, offer different representations of this social order disruption by dint of their respective groundings in material and communicative events.

The 'Event Story' purports to describe socially disruptive events at first hand, to present a largely unqualified, unmodulated account of what happened, as if the reporter had been present at the time. The event is thus, in terms of Halliday's grammar, presented as 'phenomenon', as a happening in external reality to which the reader is given direct access by the text. Some aspects of the account may be qualified by modal values of uncertainty or by attribution to external sources but, as demonstrated by the 'Tahiti Riot' report cited above, 'Event Stories' act primarily to present unmediated descriptions of 'real world' happenings.

In contrast, the 'Issues Report' acts, in the terms of Halliday's grammar, to 'project' (see Halliday 1994: 250-273) the social order disruption with which it is concerned. That is to say, the actions and states-of-affairs with which it is concerned are not described directly by the author but are 'projected' via the process of reporting the statements of some authorised source. Thus the ontological status of the status-quo disequilibrium of the 'Issues Story' is fundamentally qualified or equivocal since the 'Issues Report' acts to present 'claims', not 'facts'. We can say, therefore, that the 'Issues Report' presents statements about a supposed 'reality' rather than that 'reality' in its own right and hence represents the social order disruption not as a 'phenomenon' but as 'metaphenomenon' (see Halliday 1994: 252).

2.2 The interpersonal orientation: the voice of the 'hard news' reporter

Media training texts, practising journalists and media commentators frequently claim that the language or the 'voice' of the 'hard news' report should be 'factual', 'neutral' and free of 'subjectivity'. In a training text for French journalism students, for example, Husson and Robert condemn much of the French print media for mixing 'fact with opinion' in its reporting. They insist the French media should follow more closely the model of the high-quality English-language media where, they contend, the language of 'hard news' reporting is 'precise and 'neutral', where the reporter eliminates all subjectivity and where 'the only things on show are the raw facts' (1991: 63, my translation). Similarly, the guidelines of Australia's Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) [4] explicitly state that all SBS news reporting must be 'impartial' and 'objective'.

Although this notion of a 'neutral' and 'objective' voice is a problematic one requiring more extended treatment than is possible here (see Iedema et al, 1994: 200-236), it does, nevertheless, reflect certain systematic trends in the semantics and lexicogrammar of 'hard news' reporting, at least in the mainstream English-language press. In a significant proportion of 'hard news' texts, the author avoids or at least minimises interpersonal meanings which may act to reveal or to foreground his/her subjective involvement in the meanings being made by the text.[5] The meanings typically avoided include explicit value judgements by the

reporter about the morality, competence, normality etc of participants, explicit evaluations of events and entities in terms of their aesthetics or emotional impact, inferences about the motivations and intentions of participants and contentious claims about causes and effects.[6] All such meanings rely upon the action of the author's individual subjecthood in applying value judgements, in responding emotionally to events, in extrapolating mental states from the material actions of others and in applying theories of cause and effect. For the author to proffer these is thus to foreground their interpersonal role in the text's construction. Consequently such meanings are either avoided or confined to the quoted comments of external sources in those canonical 'hard news' texts which seek to represent themselves as 'neutral' and 'impersonal'.

In avoiding such 'personalising' or 'subjective' meanings on the part of the journalist-author, 'hard news' reporting stands in contradistinction to the other primary mode of media textuality, the commentary or opinion piece. In the media commentary, the role of the author is precisely to offer up 'subjective' interpretations in which a central role is played by explicit value judgements, aesthetic evaluations, theories of cause-and-effect and so on. The distinction between the language of 'hard news' and 'commentary' is illustrated by the following two extracts from the domain of politics, the first from a 'hard news' report from the newsroom of Australia's Special Broadcasting Service and the second from a commentary from the opinion pages of the <u>Sydney Morning Herald</u>. [Subjectivising meanings in the commentary piece have been underlined.]

> ['Hard News' Report]
> A White House aide has paid the American Navy 562 dollars for towels and bathrobes that disappeared from an aircraft carrier on which President Clinton stayed during his trip to Normandy, earlier this month.
> Communications Director Mark Gearan said White House scheduling director Ricki Seidman paid the money from her pocket 'to dispel any notion of impropriety.'
> The Navy had asked the White House for reimbursement for towels and robes missing from the USS George Washington, which accommodated Mr Clinton, 40 aides and 23 reporters during ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of D-Day.
> The money was paid after a memo was issued to White House staffers asking for payment for 16 bathrobes and 68 towels from the aircraft carrier, some with the ships insignia.

> [Commentary/Opinion Piece]
> His speech two nights ago was that <u>dreadful</u>. It was <u>facile</u>, <u>contrived</u>, <u>pedestrian</u> and <u>disingenuous</u>. It had <u>no commitment</u>, <u>no passion</u> and <u>no clarity</u>. It revived all the <u>flaws</u> that brought him undone that first time six years ago. It <u>marked him, perhaps fatally, as truly yesterday's man</u>. It exposed him <u>more brutally than ever</u> as <u>a leader locked into the past</u>, as a politician of <u>indecision</u>, of <u>no courage</u>, <u>no guile</u>, <u>no ideas</u>, <u>no true understanding</u> of his own country in the 1990s, and <u>no feel for the future</u>. If it wasn't <u>complete humbug</u>, it was <u>an absolute political disaster</u>.
> [Commentary by Alan Ramsey on a speech by the then Australian Federal Opposition leader, John Howard, <u>Sydney Morning Herald</u>, 10/6/95]

The distinction between the interpersonally neutral register of the 'hard news' reporter and the interpersonally charged register of the commentator is not, however, a simple dichotomy. There are, in practice, many 'hard news' texts which lie somewhere between these two texts. The cited texts, in fact, stand at the opposite extremes of a cline on which texts can be located according to the number and intensity of the explicit 'subjectivising' meanings they present

and hence the degree to which they are felt to position the reader interpersonally. In the Australian media, the texts of correspondents and specialist 'rounds' reporters, for example, typically contain significantly more of these interpersonal meanings than those of general reporters or the international wire services. Nevertheless, it still remains valid to characterise 'hard news' texts by reference to the way in which they restrict or turn off, so to speak, interpersonal meanings and to see them, at least in relative terms, as texts where a range of interpersonal values are either avoided or underplayed.

In one crucial respect, however, even the most 'canonical' of 'hard news' reports depart from this general interpersonal neutrality. A recurring feature of the 'hard news' report is the presence of lexis which encodes a sense of intensity or heightened involvement by the author and which positions the reader to view the events or statements described as significant, momentous or emotionally charged. This semantics of intensification is illustrated by the 'Event Story' already cited above. There the actions by the Tahitians in response to the French nuclear test were described as a 'bomb rage' which 'carved a blazing trail of destruction' through a 'paradise' island in 'a wave of fury' which left Tahiti airport 'a smouldering wreck'.

This intensification is, in fact, so common a feature of the register of 'hard news' journalism that it now acts to mark news reporting as a distinctive functional variety of language. Thus it is primarily the intensifying lexis which marks the language in the following extracts from three 'Event Stories' as journalistic. (intensifications underlined)

> One third of the 100 senior civil servants at the Treasury have been <u>axed</u> by Mr Kenneth Clarke, in <u>one of the greatest shake-ups</u> of a Government department. (<u>Weekly Telegraph</u> [<u>Daily Telegraph</u>, London], 24/10/94)

> Nine people died in and around the Greek capital as <u>torrential</u> rains <u>lashed</u> the region at the weekend, causing <u>damage of 'biblical' proportions</u> and bringing a nation-wide halt to rail traffic. (Agence France Press, 24/10/94)

> A man who once praised Hitler's labour policies has emerged from Austria's general election with the strongest far-right parliamentary bloc in Western Europe in <u>a shock result</u> that has <u>sent the ruling coalition parties reeling</u> to their <u>worst losses since 1945</u>. (Reuters, 11/10/94)

As illustrated by these examples, this intensification in 'Event Stories' most typically takes two forms:

- Lexis which combines an informational meaning with a sense of interpersonal engagement and heightened impact — thus 'axed' for 'dismissed', 'shake-up' for 'reorganisation' and 'torrential rains lashed' for 'heavy rain fell'.[7]
- Comparisons which assert the great size, force, severity, significance etc of the action under consideration — thus, 'one of the greatest shake-ups', 'damage of biblical proportions' and 'the worst losses since 1945'.

Tellingly, the mode of intensification is never cited by the journalistic training texts or by practising journalists as damaging the interpersonal neutrality or 'hard news' reports. It may be seen as 'formulaic', 'cliched' or even 'sensationalist' and hence criticised, but it is never viewed as acting to personalise or subjectivise the text. (See, for example, Bagnall 1993: 90-92.)

The same lexical resources are used within the 'Issues Report' for the purpose of intensification. Perhaps predictably, given the central role of 'projection' within the 'Issues Report', the intensifying impulse often informs the way the process of verbal communication

is reported. Thus politicians 'slam' their opponents rather than criticising or disagreeing with them, political parties find themselves 'plunged into a heated row' rather than engaging in debate and adverse findings are formulaically described as 'damning indictments'.

As a result, however, of their grounding in the words of external sources rather than those of the reporter him/herself, 'Issues Reports' are less limited than 'Event Stories' in their choice of meanings with which to heighten impact and to engage the reader emotionally in the text. Accordingly they do not need to rely so heavily on the mode of intensification outlined above. Thus, in the following extract from an 'Issues Report', China's orphanages can be labelled 'death camps' — an explicit moral judgement obviously capable of engaging the reader emotionally in the text — without damaging the author's mask of interpersonal neutrality, since the description is an attributed one.

> Thousands of Chinese orphans are being killed each year at institutions which are little more than death camps, according to a report by the New York-based group, Human Rights Watch Asia.
> (The Australian, 8/1/96)

 'Issues Reports' also routinely exploit the vagueness inherent in the semantics of indirect speech in order to heighten the sense of both writer's and reader's engagement in the text. Under this vagueness, it is possible to strengthen and intensify the statements of the quoted source while at the same time appearing to remain within the bounds of attribution and hence to maintain the author's neutrality. Thus, in the 'Issues Report' cited above, the call by the Sydney magistrate for police to be given the power to 'confiscate' knives is restated as a call for a 'ban' on knives for teenagers. The same process is at work in the following 'Issues Report' extract.

> **CHILD CARE ON TRIAL**
>
> **Child-care standards a scandal, say experts**
>
> By ADELE HORIN
>
> Many child-care centres are flagrantly breaching regulations and are operating with impunity because it is almost impossible to close them, say child-care specialists. And new national child-care standards to be introduced next year are unlikely to improve the worsening situation.
>
> In a damning indictment, child-care experts say some centres ignore State Government regulations on staff numbers, health and safety issues, knowing they will not even be fined...
>
> (Sydney Morning Herald, 11/2/95)

Although the full report describes various strong criticisms of the child care centres by child care experts, there is no evidence that the experts actually described the situation as 'a scandal' or accused centres of 'flagrantly' breaching regulations. Here the choice of words acts to intensify the strength of the attributed command or moral judgement.

2.3 The textual organisation of the 'hard news' report: generic structure

Textual structure acts to implement the informational and interpersonal meanings carried by a text so as to achieve certain rhetorical or communicative objectives. Thus we are interested in how a given textual structure arranges and presents both informational and interpersonal meanings, in where given meanings are located in the movement from textual opening to closure, in how informational and interpersonal meanings interact and in whether sets of distinct meanings operate to establish stages of textual unfolding. In the context of the 'hard

news' report, we are concerned, therefore, with how textual structure acts to implement informational meanings relating to perceived social-order disequilibrium and interpersonal meanings which act to intensify both the author's and reader's engagement in this informational content.

The 'hard news' report can be divided into two primary phases: an opening nucleus containing the text's core informational and interpersonal meanings; a subsequent development stage which acts not to introduce new meanings but to qualify, elaborate, explain and appraise the meanings already presented in the opening 'nucleus'. The nature of these two phases and the manner in which they interact will be examined in detail in the following sections.

2.3.1 The textual nucleus: headline plus lead

The 'nucleus' of the English-language print media 'hard news' report is most typically constituted by the combination of its headline and its opening sentence (known to journalists as either the 'lead' or 'intro'[8]). These two elements can be seen as representing a single unit or phase because, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the headline exactly repeats a sub-set of the informational content of the lead, serving simply to sign-post key meanings which will be presented more fully in the following sentence. The interdependence between headline and lead is illustrated by the following examples, the first from an 'Event Story' report of a hurricane which struck the United States in 1992 and the second from the 'Issues Report' already cited above. (Points of interdependence have been underlined and indexed.)

Million[1] flee[2] as hurricane[3] pounds[4] Florida[5]
MIAMI[5], Monday: Hurricane[3] Andrew smashed[4] ashore south of Miami[5] early today with walls of water and the howling terror of 257 km/h winds, forcing a million[1] people to flee[2] and leaving 13 dead in the wake of what could be the biggest storm[3] to hit the United States this century. (Sydney Morning Herald 25/8/92)

Ban[1] teens'[2] knives[3]
Juvenile[2] violence[4] 'rising sharply'[5]
POLICE should have the power to confiscate[1] knives[3] from teenagers[2] after an increase[5] in violent[4] offences, the State's most senior children's magistrate told a parliamentary inquiry yesterday. (Telegraph Mirror [Sydney], 27/7/94)

This interdependence can be seen as an artefact of the news production process, since headlines are written not by the reporter but, at a later stage, by a subeditor who typically seeks a headline which sums up the lead.[9]

This opening nucleus of headline plus lead acts to launch the reader immediately into the heart of the social-order disruption about which the report is organised. Unlike many other genres which offer introductory backgrounding and context setting, the 'hard news' report provides nothing by way of textual preliminaries, no gearing up of the textual process. The opening headline/lead 'nucleus' casts the reader abruptly into the core subject matter of the report, the threat to the social order. And perhaps most tellingly, the opening 'nucleus' goes directly to those aspects of the event or state-of-affairs which are assessed as constituting the peak or climax of social-order disruption. That is, it singles out those aspects of the event or issue at hand which pose the greatest threat to the material, power-relational or normative status-quo, extracting them from their original chronological or logical context and thus compelling the reader to engage immediately with some crisis point of social order disequilibrium.

This process can be exemplified by reference to the news items already cited. In the 'Hurricane Andrew' report, for example, the headline/lead nucleus does not set the scene by means of a general overview, not by an account of first storm warnings or the first signs of the storm's arrival. Rather, it moves directly to a carefully selected subset of incidents, the 13 deaths and the million evacuations, elements which represent what was maximally damaging and catastrophic for human material order. Similarly, the opening 'nucleus' of the 'Tahiti Riot' report does not describe the geographical setting nor the political background of the French nuclear tests, nor does it set out the first step in a chronologically organised account of the events following the nuclear test. Rather, it takes the reader immediately to a description of those incidents which constitute maximal material and moral order disruption — a 'bomb rage' in which 'rioters carve a blazing trail of destruction' through the island of Tahiti.

The headline/lead nucleus of the 'Issue Report' acts in a similar way although the climax of social-order disruption is, as discussed above, 'metaphenomenal' rather than 'phenomenal'. That is, rather than describing some actual catastrophic action or actions, the headline/lead nucleus of the 'Issues Report' presents statements which claim to identify points of social-order disruption. And just as the headline/lead of the 'Event Story' singles out the incidents representing maximal societal disequilibrium from their original position in an unfolding sequence of events, so too the headline/lead of the 'Issues Report' extracts the most 'newsworthy' statements from their position in the original sequence of the speech, interview, press release etc upon which the report is based.

This process of selection can be illustrated briefly by analysing the connection between a press release from the international aid organisation, World Vision, and the news report based on that press release by the radio news department of Australia's SBS.[10] Figure 1 places the press release beside the news report in order to show how the SBS reporter ignored the press release's original ordering of information and the informational emphases which followed from it — the two boxes illustrate where similar information is presented within the two texts. The structure of the press release — displayed in the left column — begins with, and thereby foregrounds comments about the 'inspiring' resolve of the people of Bosnia and the role of World Vision in supporting them. The SBS reporter, however, selects what was essentially a footnote in the original release for maximum emphasis in the lead — descriptions relating to the adversative rearrangements of power represented by NATO's aggressive intervention in the war in Bosnia. Thus, just as the 'Event Story' extracts from its temporal context those aspects of the material activity sequence (see Martin 1992: 321-325) which are construed as most disruptive of the social order, the 'Issues Report' extracts that aspect of the verbal sequence which the reporter construes as having the greatest impact on social order and stability. In so doing, it may well ignore, or at least de-emphasise, the primary message of the original source material.

[Word Vision Press Release]	[SBS news report]
AUSTRALIAN AID WORKER RETURNS FROM BOSNIA	An AUSTRALIAN aid worker just returned from BOSNIA says the latest NATO bombing campaign has brought new hope for SARAJEVO residents hoping the action may finally free their embattled city.
World Vision Australian worker Margaret Jephson has returned from Bosnia where she spent the last five weeks as part of World Vision's Bosnia Relief Team.	
Margaret travelled through central Bosnia, visiting World Vision relief projects and speaking with dozens of refugees including many from the former UN Safe Havens of Srebrenica and Zepa.	MARGARET JEPHSON, from WORLD-VISION says spirits have been very low especially since the bloody mortar attack on the city's market place.
She witnessed the extreme condition which people have had to endure over the last three years and the resolve of Bosnia's people to go on living despite incredible hardship.	She says that in the first hours after the attacks there were fears the Serbs might strike back in retaliation.
'The total destruction of life and property throughout Bosnia is quite staggering. The way the people have gotten used to living under the shadow of the gun and can still go on planning for the future is quite inspiring.'	But when this did not occur, there was great relief and a genuine hope that peace for the war-torn nation could finally be achieved.
World Vision's relief efforts are coordinated from the central Bosnian town of Zenica. From here, fresh fruit and vegetables are distributed to refugees and locals affected by war.	Ms. JEPHSON says the most important challenge for any aid organisation at the moment is to try and help the younger generation overcome their grief and trauma with the aim of preventing a continuation of the violence.
'The people have been living on canned and dried food for so long and they were overjoyed to have fresh vegetables suppled to them by World Vision.	
'Apart from the obvious improvement to their diet, the positive psychological effect of having fresh fruit was great.'	GRAB M#392 MARGARET JEPHSON [taped material from interview with Jephson]
However, the long term needs of Bosnia's refugees are looked after from Zenica also, with the provision of trauma counselling and the promotion of reconciliation between the different ethnic groups.	If these young people especially carry these great hurts and traumas with them as they grow then the ground for further conflict is more fertile but if at this stage we can intervene when there's time for them to get over the events and to process them properly, to move on with their lives, I think that's a really important intervention that an aid organisation can make in a situation like that.
'World Vision has started training local teachers to take children through trauma and grief session. Some of these teachers have children who have seen family members hacked to pieces before them. They don't know how to deal with children in this situation and are extremely grateful for any help they can get.'	
At the end of August when NATO began retaliatory attacks against the Bosnia Serb Army, Margaret experienced the relief of Bosnia's war-weary refugees: 'When the news came through the first strikes had started, everybody was very happy. They were a little apprehensive that the Serbs may try to take some retaliatory activity, but that didn't eventuate.	
'They are happy that there is action being taken at last and that the prospect of peace is finally starting to become a reality.'	

Figure 1: Informational organisation of World Vision press release and SBS 'Issues Report' compared

2.3.2 Headline/lead: interpersonal role

The headline/lead nucleus is most typically the primary site within the text for the intensifying interpersonal meanings discussed above. That is, while such meanings may be found at any point in the text, they typically occur in the highest concentration and with the greatest rhetorical affect in the headline and lead. This concentration can be illustrated by reference to the 'Tahiti Riot' report. In the analysis set out in Figure 2, the points of intensification have been underlined and then their number totalled, in the leftmost column, as a rough guide to rhetorical impact. There are nine points in the headline/lead, no more than two points in any of the subsequent sentences and no points in the final three sentences.

9	BOMB RAGE Riots sweep Tahiti RIOTERS carved a blazing trail of destruction through the paradise island of Tahiti yesterday in a wave of fury sparked by French nuclear bomb tests.
1	Tahiti airport was left a smouldering wreck after more than 1000 protesters attacked riot police, drove a mechanical digger through the terminal and set the building alight.
1	France sent in tough Foreign Legion troops as riots spread to the nearby capital, Papeete.
2	Protesters looted shops, set a perfume store on fire and stoned an office building and the Territorial Assembly building.
1	Opposition to nuclear testing swept around the globe just a day after France exploded the first of up to eight bombs at Mururoa atoll, also in French controlled Polynesia.
0	Demonstrations included one by more than 10,000 people in Chile.
0	The riots in Tahiti are believed to have involved independence activists and trade unions.
0	Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans said yesterday: 'France has really reaped what it has sown.'

Figure 2: Intensification analysis — distribution of points of intensification in 'Tahiti Riot' report (points totalled in left column).

From this perspective, therefore, the headline/lead can be seen as representing an interpersonal peak, as providing a burst of interpersonal meanings at the beginning of the text which then subsides as the remainder of the text unfolds. Accordingly, the headline/lead acts to single out some point of maximal social order disruption while simultaneously employing interpersonal values to characterise that point as dramatic, highly significant and/or emotionally charged.

2.3.3 The body of the news story: satellite structure

The second phase of the 'hard news' story — the body which follows the headline/lead nucleus — acts to specify the meanings presented in the opening headline/lead nucleus through elaboration, contextualisation, explanation, appraisal and, in the case of the 'Issues Report', justification. That is to say, the primary role of the second phase is not to develop new meanings nor to introduce entirely new information but, rather, to refer back to the headline/lead through a series of specifications.

The second phase can be further broken down into sub-components according to the nature of the relationship or relationships of specification which the sub-component enters into with the headline/lead nucleus.

Analysis of a large number of news stories has revealed the following five broad modes or relationships of specification[11]:

- Elaboration: One sentence or a group of sentences provides more detailed description or exemplification of information presented in the headline/lead, or acts to restate it or describe the material in the headline/lead in different terms.
- Cause-and-Effect: One or more sentences describe the causes, the reasons for, the consequences or the purpose of the 'crisis point' presented in the headline/lead.

- Justification ('Issues Reports'): One or more sentences provide the evidence or reasoning which supports the newsworthy claim presented in the headline/lead nucleus. This 'justification' could be seen as a text internal 'cause-and-effect' in that it explains why a particular claim has been made and hence could be included within a single broader 'Cause-and-Effect' category.[12]
- Contextualisation: One or more sentences place the events or statements of the headline/lead in a temporal, spatial or social context. The geographical setting will be described in some detail or the 'crisis point' will be located in the context of preceding, simultaneous or subsequent events. Prior events of a similar nature may be described for the purpose of comparison.
- Appraisal: Elements of the headline/lead nucleus are appraised, typically by some expert external source, in terms of their significance, their emotional impact, or by reference to some system of value judgement.

The operation of the second-phase sub-components in specifying the headline/lead nucleus via these relationships is illustrated in the analyses set out in Figure 3 and Figure 4, the first of the 'Tahiti Riot' 'Event Story' (Figure 3) and the second of the 'Knives Ban' 'Issues Report' (Figure 4).

[Nucleus - headline/lead]

BOMB RAGE
Riots sweep Tahiti
RIOTERS carved a blazing trail of destruction through the paradise island of Tahiti yesterday in a wave of fury sparked by French nuclear bomb tests.

[Specification 1: <u>Cause-and-effect</u> + <u>Elaboration</u> - *consequences of the riot* + *details of 'trail of destruction'*]

Tahiti airport was left a smouldering wreck after more than 1000 protesters attacked riot police, drove a mechanical digger through the terminal and set the building alight.

[Specification 2: <u>Cause-and-effect</u> - *consequence of riot*]

 France sent in tough Foreign Legion troops as riots spread to the nearby capital, Papeete

[Specification 3: <u>Elaboration</u> - *details of 'trail of destruction'*]

Protesters looted shops, set a perfume store on fire and stoned an office building and the Territorial Assembly building.

[Specification 4: <u>Contextualisation</u> - *protests simultaneous with riot*]

Opposition to nuclear testing swept around the globe just a day after France exploded the first of up to eight bombs at Mururoa atoll, also in French controlled Polynesia. Demonstrations included one by more than 10,000 people in Chile.

[Specification 5: <u>Elaboration</u> - *specifies 'rioters'*]

The riots in Tahiti are believed to have involved independence activists and trade unions.

[Specification 6: <u>Appraisal</u> - *riots appraised by Evans as France's 'just deserts', thereby implying some moral breach on the part of France*]

 Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans said yesterday: 'France has really reaped what it has sown.'

Figure 3: Tahiti Riot (Event Story): specification of headline/lead analysis

[**Nucleus:** *proposition that knives should be confiscated because violent juvenile crime is increasing*]

Ban teens' knives
Juvenile violence 'rising sharply'
POLICE should have the power to confiscate knives from teenagers after an increase in violent offences, the State's most senior children's magistrate told a parliamentary inquiry yesterday.

[**Specification 1:** <u>Elaboration</u> **-** *restates, exemplifies 'an increase in violent offences' among teenagers*]

Rod Blackmore, senior children's magistrate for 17 years said violent offences had risen while others, such as car stealing and general theft, had fallen.
Mr Blackmore said violent matters accounted for 41 per cent of offences listed before him at Bidura Children's Court Glebe, for the next two months. They included malicious wounding, armed robbery, assault with bodily harm, assault on police, personal violence and assault with intent to rob.

[**Specification 2:** <u>Justification (Cause-and-Effect)</u> **-** *reason why confiscation of knives is proposed*]

Offences involving knives made up 30 per cent of all violent matters before him.
Mr Blackmore said knives had become the most popular weapon used by young criminals.

[**Specification 3:** <u>Elaboration</u> **-** *restatement of primary thesis as presented in headline/lead, restates 'police should have the power to confiscate knives...'*]

He said police should be given the power to confiscate pocket knives, butterfly and flick knives.

[**Specification 4:** <u>Contextualisation</u> **-** *the prior situation*]

Mr Blackmore told the all party Standing Committee on Social Issues inquiry into youth violence that five years ago car theft was the big problem.
It made up more than half of his workload but a clampdown on car theft had reduced the number, Mr Blackmore said, to less than 20 per cent.

[**Specification 5:** <u>Elaboration</u> **-** *specifies, exemplifies 'an increase in violent offences' among teenagers*

He said there were about 17 youths charged with murder going through the court system.

[**Specification 6:** <u>Justification (Cause-and-Effect)</u> **-** *reason why knives must be confiscated*]

'The real worry is the carrying of knives by juveniles which is very frequent in the community and schools,' he said.
Outside the inquiry, Mr Blackmore said he felt the proportion of violent offences involving knives had increased six-fold over the past five years.
'The use of knives, certainly in robberies, is a fairly frequent feature.'

[**Specification 7:** <u>Contextualisation</u> **-** *legal context in which the call for confiscation is made*]

Mr Blackmore said the law says a person is not entitled to carry a weapon for personal protection.

[**Specification 8:** <u>Cause-and-Effect</u> **-** *states purpose/consequence of primary proposal*]

Allowing police to confiscate a knife would mean teenagers could be cautioned, rather than charged for the offence.
It may be possible children could get their knife back from police if they proved they had a proper use for the weapon or their parents knew of it, Mr Blackmore said.

[**Specification 8:** <u>Cause-and-Effect</u> **-** *reasons for increase in violent crime*]

Mr Blackmore also raised the possibility the anti-car stealing push may have led to the increase in violent crime. 'If people are doing things for kicks, do they now go out and wander round streets at night looking for someone to mug rather than taking someone's car?' he said.

Figure 4: Knives Ban (Issues Report): specification of headline/lead analysis

The key feature of this specification of the headline/lead by the second-phase sub-components is that it is organised 'orbitally' rather than linearly. That is to say, the sub-components do not link together to build a linear semantic pathway by which meaning is accumulated sequentially. Rather than building on what comes immediately before or

preparing the way for what is to follow immediately after, each sub-component reaches back to specify the headline/lead nucleus, which acts as the text's anchor point or textual centre of gravity.

This pattern of orbital textual development — in which the headline/lead acts as nucleus and the second-phase sub-components act as its satellites — can be strikingly demonstrated by exploring what I term the 'radical editability' of the second phase: the freedom with which the order of second-phase sub-components can be changed without damaging the functionality of the text. In the first column of Figure 5, the 'Tahiti Riot' report is presented in its original, published form, with 'radically' edited versions in subsequent columns. In column 2, the sequence of adjacent sub-components has been reversed with what was originally element (2) becoming element (1) and element (5) becoming element (4). Column 3 represents an even more radical rearrangement. After the addition of a short phrase (in square brackets) to smooth the transition, element (4), previously the penultimate sentence, has been moved into position immediately after the headline/lead. What was the final element — element (5) — has been moved into second position and then the order of the remaining elements has been reversed with (3) remaining in place, (2) becoming (4) and (1) becoming (5). (The original position of elements is shown in curved brackets.)

[Original, unedited version] BOMB RAGE Riots sweep Tahiti RIOTERS carved a blazing trail of destruction through the paradise island of Tahiti yesterday in a wave of fury sparked by French nuclear bomb tests.	[Edited version 1] BOMB RAGE Riots sweep Tahiti RIOTERS carved a blazing trail of destruction through the paradise island of Tahiti yesterday in a wave of fury sparked by French nuclear bomb tests.	[Edited version 2] BOMB RAGE Riots sweep Tahiti RIOTERS carved a blazing trail of destruction through the paradise island of Tahiti yesterday in a wave of fury sparked by French nuclear bomb tests.
(1) Tahiti airport was left a smouldering wreck after more than 1000 protesters attacked riot police, drove a mechanical digger through the terminal and set the building alight.	France sent in tough Foreign Legion troops as riots spread to the capital, Papeete (2)	[But the outrage was not confined to Tahiti as] Opposition to nuclear testing swept around the globe just a day after France exploded the first of up to eight bombs at Mururoa atoll, also in French controlled Polynesia. Demonstrations included one by more than 10,000 people in Chile (4)
(2) France sent in tough Foreign Legion troops as riots spread to the nearby capital, Papeete	Tahiti airport was left a smouldering wreck after more than 1000 protesters attacked riot police, drove a mechanical digger through the terminal and set the building alight. (1)	Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans said: 'France has really reaped what it has sown.' (5)
(3) Protesters looted shops, set a perfume store on fire and stoned an office building and the Territorial Assembly building.	Protesters looted shops, set a perfume store on fire and stoned an office building and the Territorial Assembly building (3)	Protesters looted shops, set a perfume store on fire and stoned an office building and the Territorial Assembly building. (3)
(4) Opposition to nuclear testing swept around the globe just a day after France exploded the first of up to eight bombs at	Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans said yesterday: 'France has really reaped what it has sown.' (5)	France sent in tough Foreign Legion troops as riots spread to the capital, Papeete (2)

Mururoa atoll, also in French controlled Polynesia. Demonstrations included one by more than 10,000 people in Chile.		
(5) Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans said yesterday: 'France has really reaped what it has sown.'	Opposition to nuclear testing swept around the globe just a day after France exploded the first of up to eight bombs at Mururoa atoll, also in French controlled Polynesia. Demonstrations included one by more than 10,000 people in Chile (4)	Tahiti airport was left a smouldering wreck after more than 1000 protesters attacked riot police, drove a mechanical digger through the terminal and set the building alight. (1)

Figure 5: Three versions of the 'Tahiti Riot' report demonstrating 'radical editability'.

The point at stake here is that, despite the radical editing, both new versions function effectively as news reports. The rearrangement of the report's internal structure has not rendered the text communicatively dysfunctional or aberrant, nor has it produced some new sub-genre of news report.

This feature is demonstrated further when the Telegraph Mirror 'Tahiti Riot' story is compared with reports of the same event from other newspapers. The variable ordering of information, achieved above by editing, is apparent when the internal structures of the alternative reports are examined. This is demonstrated by the comparison (set out in Figure 6 following) of the Telegraph Mirror report and one from The Age of Melbourne. The same information is found in both reports but in a significantly different order.

This is not, of course, to suggest that the relative ordering of information within the body of news stories is without meaning, that it is possible to freely reorder this information without changing the text's overall meaning or that there are no constraints at all on the reordering of the sub-components of the second phase. Van Dijk (1988), for example, has demonstrated how the promoting or demoting of information within news reports is one mechanism by which the author actively construes certain information, that presented at the earlier position, as having greater significance. But the point here is not that order is unimportant but that radical editing of the sort demonstrated in Figure 5 is possible without rendering the text incoherent or generically aberrant.

[*Telegraph Mirror* 8/9/95]	[*The Age* 8/9/95]
BOMB RAGE Riots sweep Tahiti RIOTERS carved a blazing trail of destruction through the paradise island of Tahiti yesterday in a wave of fury sparked by French nuclear bomb tests.	Fallout - Tahiti burns. French fly in the Legion Billowing clouds of thick black smoke clung in the humid air over Papeete last night, after a day in which Tahitian anger over the French nuclear blast at Mururoa Atoll erupted into violent protests, arson and clashes with security forces.
[*Airport ablaze after attack*] (1) Tahiti airport was left a smouldering wreck after more than 1000 protesters attacked riot police, drove a mechanical digger through the terminal and set the building alight.	[*France sends in reinforcements*] France sent Foreign legion reinforcements to Tahiti to quell the worst civil violence ever seen there..
[*France sends in reinforcements*] (2) France sent in tough Foreign Legion troops as riots spread to the nearby capital, Papeete	[*Protests staged around the world*] But it was not isolated violence, as opposition to the nuclear test continued to sweep the globe A massive anti-nuclear demonstration was staged by more than 10,000 people in Santiago, Chile, today. Protests were also held in other capitals, while Japanese newspapers took up calls for a boycott of French goods in response to Tuesday's nuclear blast at Mururoa Atoll.
[*Details of Rioting in Papeete*] (3) Protesters looted shops, set a perfume store on fire and stoned an office building and the Territorial Assembly building.	[*Airport ablaze after attack*] At Tahiti-Faaa airport outside Papeete, capital of French Polynesia, riot police fought a daylong battle with more than 1000 demonstrators who invaded the runway and blocked three jets, including one just about to take off for Los Angeles and Paris. ... [sentences elaborating on the destruction at the airport omitted]
[*Protests staged around the world*] (4) Opposition to nuclear testing swept around the globe just a day after France exploded the first of up to eight bombs at Mururoa atoll, also in French controlled Polynesia. Demonstrations included one by more than 10,000 people in Chile.	[*Australian government reaction*] The Australian Government yesterday appealed for calm in the Tahitian capital, but blamed France and its nuclear testing for the riots. The Foreign Minister, Senator Evans, said the violence was a measure of the depth of feeling aroused by the French test and reflected 'the frustration felt by many people--not just in Papeete but throughout the world--at the French Government's disdain for the views of the peoples of the South Pacific'.
[*Australian government reaction*] (5) Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans said yesterday: 'France has really reaped what it has sown.'	But France rebuffed the tide of global protests against the first of its tests... [sentences omitted covering French reaction]
	[*Details of Rioting in Papeete*] As darkness fell on Tahiti, the rioters abandoned the airport and turned their attention to Papeete. A burning garbage bin was hurled through the window of the High Commissioner's residence, and burning bottles were directed at the French-controlled Territorial Assembly building. The protesters also set fire to nearby shops and cars before being forced out of the central Tarahoi square by security forces... [story continues]

Figure 6: Two Tahiti riot reports compared.

This freedom of movement is possible because, as an orbitally organised text, the key logical and lexical interactions in the 'hard news' report are not between adjacent sub-components in

the body of the text but between each individual sub-component and the headline/lead nucleus. Accordingly, relationships of elaboration, causality, contextuality etc — which are more generally seen as linking adjacent clauses or clause complexes — operate between the headline/lead nucleus and its satellites in the second phase regardless of the intervening textual distances. It is possible to move a satellite within the second phase because its action in specifying the nucleus is unaffected by its relative position in the unfolding text. This pattern of orbital relationships is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 7.
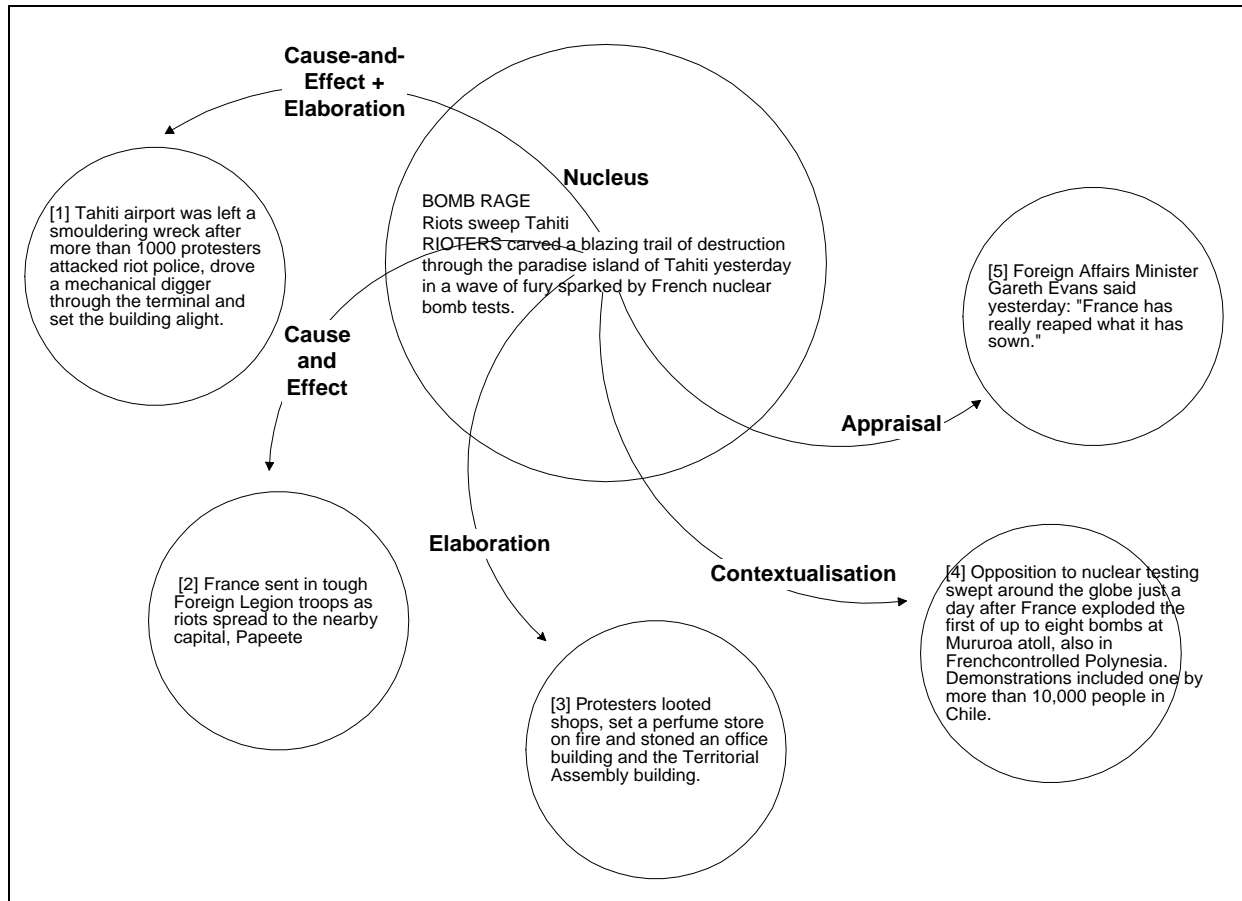

Figure 7: Orbital structure of <u>Telegraph Mirror</u> 'Tahiti Riot' report

The discussion to this point has demonstrated 'radical editability' with reference to 'Event Reports' but it is similarly a feature of 'Issues Reports' of the type exemplified by the 'Knives Ban' story cited above. As demonstrated above, 'Issues Reports' have the same orbital structure of dependent satellites specifying an opening nucleus, and the radical editability of these satellites follows logically from this orbital mode of textual development.

2.4 An informational pulse: repeating the 'point of impact'

The 'hard news' item, therefore divides into two phases. The first phase or nucleus provides the core informational meanings relating to social-order disruption and, simultaneously, a burst or peak of interpersonal meanings which inscribe the informational content with a sense of drama, significance and heightened intensity. The second phase — where typically the concentration of intensifying interpersonal meanings falls away — is made up of individual sub-components which depend on the opening nucleus and which act to elaborate, elucidate and to appraise its informational content. Thus, interpersonally, the 'hard news' story is organised as a wave with a crest in the 'headline/lead' falling away to a trough as the story comes to a conclusion. Informationally the news story is organised according to a pattern of

logical dependency with the primary or major component in the headline/lead nucleus, and a set of dependent, qualifying elements provided by the sub-components of the second phase.

There is, however, one further feature of textual organisation within the 'hard news' story which operates in parallel with, or as a counterpoint to these two patterns. Although not found in all 'Event' and 'Issues' reports, it occurs, nevertheless, with sufficient frequency to indicate it is a systematic feature serving some functional objective.

Both 'Event Stories' and 'Issues Reports' are marked by repetitions of the original point of newsworthy impact as set out in the headline/lead. These repetitions occur in a pulse like rhythm as the text unfolds. For example, in the 'Knives Ban' report, the newsworthy focus or 'angle' set up by the headline/lead nucleus is the claim that, 'POLICE should have the power to confiscate knives from teenagers after an increase in violent offences'. These two related points are repeated a number of times as the text unfolds, as demonstrated in the following analysis. (The two points have been underlined and labelled as they are re-occur.)

> **Ban Teens' Knives** [*confiscate knives*]
> **Juvenile violence 'rising sharply'** [*knife related violence rising*]
>
> POLICE should have the power to confiscate knives [*confiscate knives*] from teenagers after an increase in violent offences, [*knife related violence rising*] the State's most senior children's magistrate told a parliamentary inquiry yesterday.
>
> Rod Blackmore, senior children's magistrate for 17 years said violent offences had risen [*knife related violence rising*] while others, such as car stealing and general theft, had fallen.
>
> Mr Blackmore said violent matters accounted for 41 per cent of offences listed before him at Bidura Children's Court, Glebe, for the next two months They included malicious wounding, armed robbery, assault with bodily harm, assault on police, personal violence and assault with intent to rob.
>
> Offences involving knives made up 30 per cent of all violent matters before him.
>
> Mr Blackmore said knives had become the most popular weapon used by young criminals. [*knife related violence rising*]
>
> He said police should be given the power to confiscate pocket knives, butterfly and flick knives. [*confiscate knives*]
>
> Mr Blackmore told the all party Standing Committee on Social Issues inquiry into youth violence that five years ago car theft was the big problem.
>
> It made up more than half of his workload but a clampdown on car theft had reduced the number, Mr Blackmore said, to less than 20 per cent.
>
> He said there were about 17 youths charged with murder going through the court system.
>
> 'The real worry is the carrying of knives by juveniles which is very frequent in the community and schools,' he said. [*knife related violence rising*]
>
> Outside the inquiry, Mr Blackmore said he felt the proportion of violent offences involving knives had increased six-fold over the past five years.
>
> 'The use of knives, certainly in robberies, is a fairly frequent feature.' [*knife related violence rising*]
>
> Mr Blackmore said the law says a person is not entitled to carry a weapon for personal protection.
>
> Allowing police to confiscate a knife [*confiscate knives*] would mean teenagers could be cautioned, rather than charged for the offence.

It may be possible children could get their knife back from police if they proved they had a proper use for the weapon or their parents knew of it, Mr Blackmore said. Mr Blackmore also raised the possibility the anti-car stealing push may have led to the increase in violent crime. 'If people are doing things for kicks, do they now go out and wander round streets at night looking for someone to mug rather than taking someone's car?' he said.

The following analysis illustrates this pattern within an 'Event Story' report of a fatal car crash. Here, most notably the description of the car crashing into a tree is repeated at roughly equal intervals as the text unfolds.

SCHOOL JAUNT ENDS IN DEATH CRASH [*boy killed*]

A 1 7-year-old boy was killed [*boy killed*] instantly when a car carrying eight school friends - two in the boot - skidded on a bend and slammed into a tree yesterday. [*car crashes into tree*]

A 16-year-old girl passenger was in a critical condition last night — police said she might need to have her leg amputated — and a 17-year-old boy was in a serious but stable condition after the tree embedded itself in the car. [*car crashes into tree*]

Incredibly, the two girls in the boot of the V8 Holden Statesman and another girl escaped with only cuts and bruises.

The eight friends, two boys and six girls from years 11 and 12, had left Trinity Senior High School in Wagga yesterday at lunchtime, cramming into one car to go to an interschool sports carnival.

But a few kilometres later the car ploughed into a tree in Captain Cook Drive. [*car crashes into tree*]

Police believe the driver lost control on a bend, skidded on a gravel shoulder and slammed into a tree on a nearby reserve. [*car crashes into tree*]

Emergency crews said that when they arrived, the uprooted tree was embedded in the car.

It had been raining heavily and police believe the car might have been going too fast.

The driver, 17-year-old Nicholas Sampson, was killed instantly. [*boy killed*]

Deanne McCaig, 16, from Ganmain, had massive leg injuries and was trapped for more than 90 minutes. She was in a critical condition last night at Wagga Base hospital, where police say she is in danger of having her leg amputated. Peter Morris, 17, from Coolamon, suffered multiple injuries and was in a serious but stable condition. Among the other students Paulette Scamell and Anita McRae were also in a stable condition, while Shannon Dunn, Catherine Galvin and Rochelle Little, all 16, suffered minor injuries.

Police believe the friends from the Catholic high school were on their way to one of the student's homes before heading to the carnival.

(Sydney Morning Herald, 14/8/92)

Perhaps the most salient consequence of this pattern of repetition for the 'Event Story' is an orientation to temporal sequence in which the actual chronological ordering of events is afforded little importance. As is demonstrated with the 'Car Crash' report, the unfolding structure of the 'Event Story' does not map chronological sequence — in contrast to many of the text types seen traditionally as 'narrative' or story telling — but is organised around this repeated return to the original point of maximal social-order disruption. Consequently the

unfolding of the text in the 'Event Story' will typically take the reader backwards and forwards in time as it moves in a zigzag pattern around the time of the point of maximal disruption.

3. Rhetorical outcomes — the narrative impulse and the communicative function of the news story's generic structure

3.1 News and Narrative

At its very broadest level of operation, the notion of 'narrative' has been applied to account for the way human discourses act to construct social reality. The 'narrative' impulse is said to be at work when some text is organised so as to transmit key social values, cultural assumptions and culturally or ideologically determined themes and patterns of thought. It is through the operation of this 'narrative' impulse that the text is inflected in such a way that its categories, relationships and orderings reflect culturally meaningful, rather than 'natural', entities and arrangements. (See, for example, Barthes 1966; Bremond 1964, 1966, 1973; Todorov 1966, Propp 1968; Greimas 1971; Bakhtin 1973; Adam 1985, 1992; Bird et al 1988; Mumby 1993)

In its strongest formulation, this notion of 'narrative' is part of a theoretical framework which holds that all human discourse has a 'narrative' element in that texts necessarily act to construct and maintain social realities. Accordingly, the human species has been relabelled, 'homo narrans' (Mumby, 1993: 1). From this perspective, the notion of 'narrative' is part of a theoretical challenge to the rationalist or realist epistemology which holds that at least part of human experience is made up of a fixed, external and 'objective' reality which can be accurately and 'truthfully' mirrored or mapped by at least certain types of texts.

In what might be thought of as a weaker or less extreme theoretical framework, the notion of 'narrative' operates in a context where a distinction is made between 'objective' texts which are held to directly reflect some external, non-socially determined reality and those texts in which the 'narrative' impulse is at work constructing the contingent categories of culture and society. That is, this 'weaker' position sees the 'narrative impulse' at work in some, but not all texts. (See, for example, Bird et al 1988)

The identification of such a distinction is part of a long tradition, underlying, as it does, Aristotle's celebrated views on the differences between history and literature outlined in the Poetics: 'The difference between the historian and the poet is not in their utterance being in verse or prose... the difference lies in the fact that the historian speaks what has happened, the poet the kind of thing that *can* happen. Hence also poetry is a more philosophical and serious business than history; poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars.' (Aristotle, 1977: 33) The distinction is found today in textual categorisations which distinguish between what is sometimes termed the 'chronicle' — a supposedly 'objective' genre which simply recounts a sequences of events as it happened — and the 'narrativising' genres where the sorts of shaping and construing of events outlined above can be observed. Thus, in 'Myth, Chronicle and Story', Bird and Dardenne set up an opposition between 'objective' news reports and those that involve genuine 'story telling'. They state, '[Journalists] face a paradox; the more 'objective' they are, the more unreadable they become; while the better storytellers they are, the more readers will respond, and the more they fear they are betraying their ideals [of objective reporting]. So journalists do some chronicling, some story-tellings and a lot that is something of both.' (Bird et al, 1988: 78)

In the current context, it is not necessary to evaluate the relative merits of the two positions, nor to rule on whether it is, in fact, possible for those texts described as 'chronicles' to

transparently and 'objectively' represent some external reality. 'Event Stories' and 'Issues Reports' are clearly not 'chronicles' in that they do not set out simple chronological sequences of happenings. And the discussion to this point has provided compelling evidence that 'hard news' reports are thoroughly informed by the 'narrative impulse', evidence which applies regardless of whether we hold a 'strong' or 'weak' view of 'narrative'. The precise mode of expression that this narrativising impulse finds in 'hard news' reporting will be examined in detail below.[13]

3.2 News and the 'narrative' of a social order at risk

It was demonstrated above that the key purpose of news reporting as a social practice was the identification of points of maximal disruption of the status quo. Of key relevance here is the ideologically-informed nature of these processes of identification and selection. Clearly these selections will be conditioned by the cultural experiences, the social identity and the political and economic objectives of those in a position to dictate their terms. In particular, they will rely on value-laden assumptions about which behaviours, actions, relationships and roles are normal parts of the social order, and which are disruptive or deviant. They will depend on assumptions about which parts of the social order are crucial and hence must be monitored for signs of change, damage or instability, and on assumptions about which forces have the potential to disrupt or reorganise these core social entities. This point can be demonstrated briefly by an examination of the following two news stories.

In the report of the Athens flood cited above, the reporter/subeditor chose for his/her 'point of maximum impact' details of the deaths, the damage and, interestingly, the disruption to traffic which resulted from the flooding. The report began, 'Nine people died in and around the Greek capital as torrential rains lashed the region at the weekend, causing damage of 'biblical' proportions and bringing a nation-wide halt to rail traffic.' But contained in international wire copy available at the time was information that large scale and poorly regulated new land developments in and around Athens were believed responsible for much of the damage and possibly even some of the deaths. The new construction had been allowed to proceed without adequate drainage or floodwater controls. Thus, rather than giving primary focus to the 'nine dead' and the 'nation-wide halt to rail traffic', the report might just as easily have begun with, 'Rapid and unregulated land development in the Athens region is believed responsible for large scale flooding and millions of dollars of damage following torrential rains in the area.' Such an opening would have construed the greatest threat to the social order in this case as having a human rather than a natural origin and thereby would have construed the events according to a different ideological perspective.

At first glance, the following report of a proposed increase in water rates in New South Wales in 1993 seems as neutral as is possible for a news story.

> Households in NSW will pay more for water under plans announced by the Water Board. The Board has proposed a flat rate of 65-cents-a-kilolitre for all water.
> Under the proposal the average household would pay an extra 39 cents a week - about 20 dollars a year.
> The board has also proposed the abolition of the 80-dollar a year environment levy as well as cuts in charges to business and safety measures for pensioners and low income families (SBS Central Newsroom)

But the action of a set of ideologically-informed value judgements is revealed by a closer examination of the text's structure and in particular of the way the lead gives priority to certain information. We can provide a rather different ideological spin on the events

described if, for example, a new 'point of impact' for the lead is developed by taking information from what was the final sentence and by adopting a more 'active' grammatical structure. Thus we would begin,

> The Water Board wants to increase the amount ordinary households pay for water while cutting water rate charges to business.
> Proposals currently before the government would see the average household pay $20 more a year. (etc)

An even more marked shift can be achieved by a reworking which sees the abolishing of the environmental levy (a charge to fund an urgently required up-grading of the New South Wales water system) as representing a significant threat to the social and moral order and hence worthy of being made part of the lead's 'point of maximum impact'.

> The Water Board wants to scrap the environmental levy, a charge introduced to help the government tackle the continued degradation of the State's waterways, while at the same time lowering the cost of water to big business. (etc)

Clearly ideological perspective is reflected in these alternative judgements about which aspects of the event represent the greatest disruption of the status quo. The original version construes the proposed changes as representing just a minor inconvenience — as a largely uncontroversial, routine part of the bureaucratic process and hence as providing only a minor disruption of the status quo. In contrast, both alternative versions suggest that the proposed increase is not entirely routine, not so obviously a normal part of the administrative process and hence construe it as representing more of a threat to the status quo. They both indicate that the changes may represent at least a minor threat to the moral order in that they raise questions of fairness and/or the government's concern for the environment.

A similar process was at work in the selection of the 'point of impact' for the 'Issues Report' about Bosnia discussed above. Clearly a complex system of values underlay the reporter's decision to ignore the angle provided by World Vision — a claim about the inspiring resolve of the people of Bosnia and the role of World Vision in supporting them — and to chose, instead, an angle which turned on the shift in power relations represented by NATO's violent intervention in the war.

From this perspective, then, we see that the generic structure of the 'hard news' requires that the reporter construes events and statements in terms of the purported risk they pose for the social order and that this construal is an act of ideologically and culturally determined interpretation. In this sense, then, both 'Event Stories' and 'Issues Reports' are conditioned by the 'narrative impulse' in that they inflect events and statements with a highly significant social value. They act to categorise events and issues as more or less disruptive, transformative, transgressive or destructive of the social order.

But there is more to the 'hard news' story than this 'narrative' of social-order disruption. The structure of news reports of this type provides a powerful rhetorical device for representing these ideologically determined choices about status-quo disruption as natural, necessary and value-free. The structure operates on multiple levels to achieve this outcome.

The organisation of the headline/lead provides the textual platform for some incident or statement — the one being construed as maximally disruptive of the status quo — to be plucked from its context in a temporal or verbal sequence. This act of extraction of itself constructs the incident or statement as notable, as possessed of informational features which warrant its removal from its original context. But the incident or claim is not just extracted. It is also presented at the very beginning of the story, as the story's inception point. In this way

the element chosen for this lead is cast into sharp textual relief. It is represented as not just informationally noteworthy but as so noteworthy that it requires that the introductory, orienting steps normally associated with so many other text types be abandoned. Thus the lead's abruptness, its offering of only the most limited and reduced textual gearing up or preamble turns out to be highly functional.

As discussed above, not all headline/leads contain the intensifying elements discussed previously. These do, however, occur with high frequency and when present obviously serve to reinforce the sense that there is something innately remarkable about the events or statements therein described. The evaluative intensification characterises the element selected for the lead as innately dramatic, heightened and full of impact and thus supports the journalist's act of extracting this element from its temporal or verbal context and giving it such textual prominence and informational priority.

Thus, individually and together, these features represent the incident or statement selected for the reader's attention as inherently newsworthy, as having compelled itself upon the reporter as obvious subject matter for a report and an unavoidably appropriate starting point. The features conspire to naturalise, to represent as necessary and as based in some external reality, the thoroughly ideological selection process by which that 'crisis point' of social order disruption was selected in the first place.

The orbital structure of the body of the 'hard news' story supports this representation of the reporter's selections as 'objective' and inevitable. The orientation set up by the pulse-like return to the headline/lead's 'crisis point' serves to keep that point in focus, to construct the 'crisis point' as pivotal and a natural point of informational prominence. Similarly, the way the satellites of the unfolding text reach back to interact lexically and logically with the lead serves to construct the lead as constantly in focus, as textually and informationally pre-eminent. Thus the text throughout its length remains <u>about</u> the lead, as each satellite, regardless of distance, elaborates, contextualises, explains, justifies or appraises some element of that opening burst of informational and interpersonal impact. The structure of the body acts to represent that initial judgement about a threat to the social order as commonsensical, consensual and unavoidable.

There is one claim sometimes made about the structure of the 'hard news' report which needs to be addressed briefly at this point, namely that it can be explained by reference to the news story's suitability for skim reading. While the concentration of information in the headline/lead nucleus does make such an abbreviated reading possible, to explain the structure entirely in these terms is to underestimate the rhetorical potential of these texts. As demonstrated above, there is nothing neutral or necessary about the choices which underline the 'angle' presented in the headline/lead. In fact, the headline/lead does not so much summarise the action or set of statements at issue as provide a particular interpretation of their significance for the social order. Similarly, the function of the headline/lead's supporting satellites can not be satisfactorily explained in terms of brevity or communicative efficiency. As demonstrated above, the need for each satellite to establish a direct link back to the headline/lead nucleus means there is significant redundancy or repetition in the body of the news story as the original 'point of impact' is elaborated or restated by individual satellites. A structure for news reporting better suited simply for skim reading might be devised in which a brief, but more thorough synopsis is provided upfront for readers who want only the 'essentials', with an extended recount coming afterwards for those who want all the details without the repetition typical of the nucleus/satellite mode of development.[14]

4. Conclusion

In both the 'Event Story' and 'Issues Report', therefore, the action of the 'narrative impulse' can be observed in the way the reporting of events or statements is organised so as to construct a model of the social order. Both types construct that model by identifying the points at which society is at risk, by constructing a 'narrative' in which the world is construed primarily as a site for disequilibrium, disorder, damage and transgression.

The model at issue here is not, of course, an explicit, consistent, and monolithic social construct. The term 'model' is, in fact, a metaphor for the assemblage of beliefs, assumptions, value judgements, social objectives and desires which mass media power brokers — and presumably some proportion of their audience — hold more or less in common. And the model is always subject to change as the various groups which exercise power in society contest and negotiate the parameters of what constitutes social normalcy and acceptability.

Most tellingly this modelling of a social order is carried out by means of a text type which is organised so as to naturalise and to portray as commonsensical the ideology which informs it. The naturalisation is achieved through the simultaneous operation of a distinctive pattern of textual development and a distinctive tone or mode of authorial address — by the interaction between the news story's lead-dominated, orbitally-organised generic structure and an impersonalised authorial voice in which a wide range of interpersonal meanings are severely circumscribed. In this way, the subjective presence of the journalist-author in the text is obscured, thereby representing the text as neutral and anonymous and thus as directly and mechanically determined by the events it portrays.

It is in this context that we can understand the claims of 'objectivity', 'impartiality' and 'neutrality' so often made by the media about 'hard news' reporting texts. The claims do have a genuine basis in the lexicogrammar and the textual organisation of the news story. The 'canonical' 'hard news' report circumscribes a key set of interpersonal values. When compared, therefore, with journalistic commentary and many other types of texts, it appears to put significantly fewer interpersonal values at risk and hence is not felt to position the reader emotionally or attitudinally. The lead-dominated orbital structure has similar consequences, enabling an ideologically-informed process of interpretation to be portrayed as a commonsensical presentation of the 'facts'.

In the final analysis, of course the claims cannot be sustained. To accept them is to take the rhetoric at face value, to fail to deconstruct that rhetoric in order to discover the social and ideological purposes by which it is motivated. It is to ignore the fact that the news story's circumscription of interpersonal values is a rhetorical stratagem, a ploy by which the role of the author's social subjecthood in the text's construction can be hidden but never, of course, actually reduced or eliminated. It is to overlook the fact that a complex, highly wrought textual structure is required to portray tendentious, value-laden judgements about maximal social-order disruption as the 'facts of the matter'. And coming from journalists themselves, the claim of 'objectivity' is, in fact, a polemical one, a crucial part of the media's perpetual campaign to acquire for its texts positions of high social standing and epistemological supremacy. 'Event Stories' and 'Issues Reports' are indubitably informed by the 'narrative impulse' and, as such, must be seen as complex rhetorical devices which, rather than mirroring social realities, construct them.

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[1] It is noteworthy that many journalistic training texts fail to note the difference between the two types, perhaps a reflection of their commonality of textual structure, although Harold Evans in his highly influential training journalistic training text, <u>Newsman's English</u> [sic], does make the distinction, applying the label, 'Statement/Opinion story' to the communicatively based report.

[2] Numerous attempts have been made in the media studies to provide a systematic account of the informational themes involved in the media's assessments of newsworthiness. Perhaps the most influential of these is that by Galtung and Ruge (1965) which is widely cited in the literature.

[3] For an extended analysis of news values and the social order in the context of crime reporting, see Ericson et al. (1991). For a discussion of journalists' understanding of the subject matter of 'hard news', see Tiffen (1989).

[4] Australia's Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) is a government funded, independent broadcaster with a commitment to reflecting Australia's multicultural diversity. It's radio arm, which broadcasts nationally, provides locally produced news, current affairs, community affairs and cultural programming in 68 languages and employs some 250 journalists..

[5] The British tabloids are an egregious exception to this rule.

[6] For various analyses of the interpersonal semantics at issue here see, for example, Biber (1988, 1989), Labov (1972, 1982, 1984) and Martin (1996).

[7] See Carter (1987) for an analysis of these meanings by reference to a notion of 'core' vocabulary.

[8] The term 'lead' is used by Australian and, I believe, north American journalists while, if Harold Evans' highly influential (but unfortunately titled) training text <u>Newsman's English</u> is a reliable guide, UK journalists use 'intro' to refer to this opening sentence.

[9] This style of headline is typical in British and Australian newspapers while more extended headlines which go beyond the content of the lead are found within the north American journalistic tradition.

[10] The example is taken from a broadcast rather than a print media organisation but the principles illustrated here apply across the media.

[11] Although not based on the mode of analysis developed by van Dijk in his extended analysis of news reporting texts in, <u>News as Discourse</u> (1988), this approach would appear to be entirely compatible with his and seems to lead to similar conclusions about the structure of this type of text.

[12] Thompson et al (1987) argue for a textual relation of 'Justification' in their theory of Rhetorical Structure, though it is not identical with that proposed here. The approach to analysing textual organisation set out in this chapter is strongly influenced by that of Rhetorical Structure Theory.

[13] Within the field known as 'Narratology' and elsewhere in this book, the term 'Narrative' is used in a more specific sense as a label for a particular sub-type of story-telling text, the one frequently associated with fairy stories and other fictional texts, and consisting typically of the stages of 'Orientation', 'Complication', 'Evaluation', 'Resolution' and 'Coda'. 'Hard news' reports are clearly not 'Narratives' in this sense.

[14] In the past, many English-language newspapers adopted an approach in which up to five or even six headlines and sub headlines provided a much more extended, less interpretive synopsis than is provided by the headline/lead of modern British and Australian newspapers. It could be argued that this older, now largely abandoned approach is more 'efficient' communicatively than that adopted today since the reader is provided more quickly with a clear synopsis of the socially disruptive action.