

Past attempts to explain riots have foundered on problems that are as much conceptual as empirical. Failures to understand what should constitute a 'cause' of a riot and the nature of social mobilisation implicated in the process of rioting have led to the easy misappropriation of rioting in academic discourse as the historical event becomes a rhetorical symbol.

Attempting to provide the best possible description to serve as the raw materials for explanation, Home Office data is here combined with local source material to demonstrate that the disorders involved a wide range of behavioural repertoires that were not distributed evenly between old and young, black and white, 'locals' and travellers to the disturbance. Dominating the most serious riots and at the heart of most other disorders was a clash between black people and the police which was just one manifestation of a deeply rooted historical conflict. Notions of the 'average rioter' and the mistaken assumption that rioting is a generic form of behaviour confused understanding of events and contributed to a 'moral panic' which further clouded common perception of the 1981 riots in London.

Three case studies examine the detailed context and local history behind these clashes. The collective violence of 1981 is best understood in terms of the reproduction and transformation of the police/policed power relation; in particular the challenges to this relation that were tied to specific 'front lines' of conflict. This link between the rejection of the policing prerogative and the symbolic reading of particular 'senses of place', between actions and locales, can be stated theoretically in a reconciliation of dramaturgical analysis with spatial semiology.

It is thus possible to see the rioting as unsurprising in its historical and geographical context but at the same time spontaneous, the riots constituted a collective rejection of a particular social order but the rioters were not part of a deindividuated mob, scotching suggestions of conspiratorial planning, revolutionary strategy and crowd irrationality. The purposive nature of human behaviour is retained whilst allowing scope for the unacknowledged conditions of action and a strong notion of the determination of social action.

Analysis of the newly introduced consultative machinery in London confirms that this conflict is not susceptible to resolution by discussion. The salient characteristics of the groups themselves assure that even the most astute individuals must operate within a bureaucratic structure that can offer only occasional palliatives to a tragic social schism.

THE 1981 RIOTS IN LONDON

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INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of civil disturbance in Bristol in April 1980 marked the beginning of a new era of race relations in Britain. Bristol was a shock to the national consciousness but it was not immediately clear whether this was a single aberration or a harbinger of change. The burning and looting in Brixton in April 1981 and the explosion of civil disturbances in July, August and September 1981 (see Maps 0.1-0.6), when it seemed that every British city was expecting a riot, showed that Bristol was not an isolated event.

Yet even at this distance, the significance of the disorders and the causes of the outbreaks are not clear. To some they were race riots, to others they were youth riots or anti-police affrays. To some they were the revolt of the underclass and a precursor of the revolution. To some observers they were universal events, to others they were highly differentiated outbursts. To some they were a continuation of the American black ghetto revolts of the 1960s; to others they were a response to a uniquely British situation. To some they were the mindless hooliganism of the unemployables, to others they were a protest against unemployment. Some saw working class insurrection, others criminal vandals enjoying themselves.

This thesis examines the disorders that occurred in London that summer. Riots are emotive events and social conflict an emotional subject. If the text of this thesis ever appears detached or dispassionate it was for precisely this reason; because in the circumstances that prevail it was considered worthwhile trying to provide a realist analysis of events, if only to bare academic witness to a living tragedy.



Map O.1

'Riots' in London in July 1981

(by location and Metropolitan Police District)

Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin October 1982

Map 0.2 Key

A+S Avon and Somerset
B Bedfordshire
C Cheshire
C Cumbria
D Derbyshire
D Durham
G Gloucestershire
G.M. Greater Manchester
H Hampshire
H Hertfordshire
H Humberside
K Kent
L Lancashire
L Leicestershire
L Lincolnshire
M Merseyside
Met Metropolitan Police
N Northamptonshire
N Nottinghamshire
S.Y. South Yorkshire
S Staffordshire
S Surrey
W.M. West Midlands
W.Y. West Yorkshire



Map O.4

Metropolitan Police Public Order Operations, July 1981

(by location and Metropolitan Police District)

- 8/9 July (Wood Green, Lewisham, Woolwich, Hounslow, Tooting)
- 10/11 July (Brixton, Paddington, Fulham, Chingford, Stoke Newington, West Ham (Newham), Peckham (Southwark), Wembley (Brent), Hampstead, Southall, Croydon)

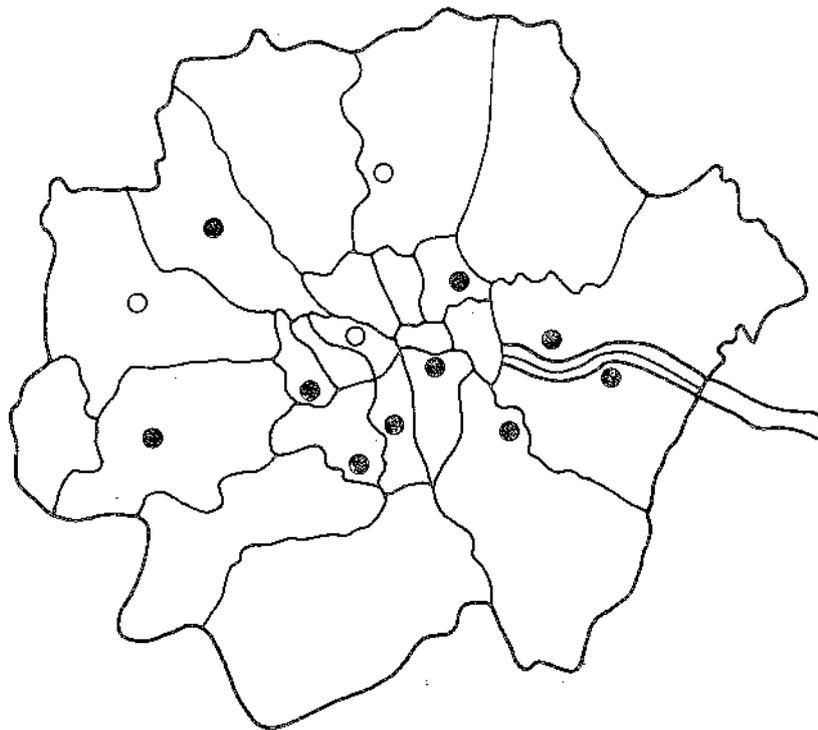
Source: Annual Report of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police
for the year 1981



Map 0.5

Nine 'riots' in London with highest arrest totals
(by location and Metropolitan Police District)

Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin October 1982



Map 0.6

London 'riots' 1981 (by date, location and Metropolitan Police District)

- 3-5 July (Southall, Wood Green, Paddington)
- 6-9 July (Southall, Wood Green, Paddington, Fulham, Hackney, Newham, Brixton, Southwark, Lewisham, Brent, Woolwich, Hounslow, Tooting)

Source: Home Office Statistical Bulletin October 1982

CHAPTER ONE

EXPLAINING RIOTS : PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

- 1 SUMMARY

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1 SUMMARY

This chapter attempts

- a) To review relevant literature from several different disciplines that have in the past attempted to explain riots. It is suggested that this material is useful more for its cautionary value than for any derivative theory of 'crowd psychology'. Among other conclusions the following assertions are made:
 - i) That there can not be a 'theory of collective behaviour' based on logical abstraction.
 - ii) That comparisons between the US riots of the 1960s and the British rioting in 1981 is of only superficial value.
 - iii) Study of American literature on 'rioting' is invaluable in revealing conceptual flaws in academic discourse that were repeated in the aftermath of the 1981 disorders in Britain.
- b) To demonstrate that certain conceptual flaws recur in analysis of rioting because of the failure to recognise that 'knowledge' depends on a sound reconciliation of theoretical and empirical material; one cannot suffice without the other.
- c) To suggest that 'rioting' is easily misappropriated in academic discourse because not only is it a form of behaviour which is so value-loaded but also it is a form of behaviour which is difficult to record. Explanations are often devoid of an explicandum. The empirical succumbs

to the theoretical, allowing 'the riot' to be used as a polemical symbol in preferred explanations.

d) To outline two research fields for this thesis which can, in part, preempt this pattern of misappropriation, viz:

i) To provide an empirical base which can serve as a description of the events of 1981 in London.

ii) To provide a theoretical framework which combines a theory of the determination of social action with a strong sense of the finite autonomy of actors involved in that action; incorporating unacknowledged conditions of action and unintended effects of action within the context of the purposive nature of human behaviour.

a) Early theorists

The principal problem with producing a theory of collective behaviour is that it presupposes the existence of an identifiable social dynamic which underlies all crowd activity. Effectively, one is investigating similarities in disturbances rather than differences between them, which precludes any possibility that emphasis should be placed on unique aspects of individual events.

In the nineteenth century, LeBon (1898,1913) produced a Law of Mental Unity, suggesting a process by which the character of the individual is subsumed in that of the crowd. The crowd assumes an identity of its own with a distorted perception of traditional values. In his essay 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego', Freud (1966-74) reiterated this idea of the homogenized group, suggesting that the crowd displays characteristics of the family, united by identification with a leader, introjection of the leader's perceived characteristics and the shared subconscious desire to experience an emotional return to the omnipotent solipsism of infancy. The assumption that collective behaviour was so closely related to irrationality, clearly seen in both Freud and LeBon was typical of early studies in this field (see Moscovici,1985). The growth and spread of riots was seen in terms of a pathological contagion or 'circular reaction' akin to herd behaviour(Blumer 1933/1969). De Tocqueville(1955) was a major exception, suggesting that popular discontent at the time of the French Revolution was most prevalent where there had been greatest increases in prosperity and political involvement after a 140-year tradition in which the "French people had played no part on the political stage".

The historians Hobsbawm and Rudé have done much to debunk this manic image of collective behaviour. In his book 'The Crowd in History', Rudé identified the emergence of rioting as a new guise for social protest:

"In our transitional period the typical form of social protest is the food riot and not the strike of the future or the millenaral movement of the peasant jacquerie of the past."(Rudé).

Whilst maintaining that the crowd are generally united, Rudé suggests that this is because of a common purpose and often rational objectives. In food riots grain was often siezed from the farmer or grain factor and sold at a reduced price with the receipts being returned in an orderly fashion. Hobsbawm (1959) too has suggested that there was a tacit mutual understanding between the rioters and the gentry which was almost a primitive form of collective bargaining with the former often managing to gain notable short-term successes.

The Tillys (1975,1978) have been more ambitious, trying to produce theorisations at the national and even the international level about violent conflict, a historical project of enormous dimensions. Such a perspective is shared by Canetti (1962), Moore (1978) and at times Gurr(1970), although the value of the sort of generalisations or 'historical laws' that can be deduced at this level of abstraction is questionable; the pitfalls of historicism always loom large(Popper 1957).

b) Behaviourism as Theory

Whilst in the 1950s and early 1960s European work concentrated on empirical evidence from specific incidents, two Americans, William Kornhauser and Neil Smelser, working independently, tried to identify a theoretical base for the study of collective behaviour. Kornhauser(1959) characterised social systems in terms of the sensitivity of the ruling classes and the size of the potential riot class, producing a four fold

typology of communal, totalitarian, pluralistic and mass societies (Diagram 1.1).

Availability of non élites

Accessibility of élites

	<u>LOW</u>	<u>HIGH</u>
LOW	Communal	Totalitarian
HIGH	Pluralist	Mass

(Kornhauser, 1959)

Diagram 1.1 : The mass society

In the mass society, where there is little response by the ruling elites to the demands of the majority and a large pool of alienated dissidents with few mediating structures between the two groups, the probability of mass participation in unrestrained, irrational, violent activity, ranging from riots to revolution, is greatly increased. Rigid classification based on poorly defined divisions and the attempt to explain such a wide variety of different kinds of phenomena are just two of the faults which render Kornhauser's model useful only at high levels of abstraction.

Smelser's work(1963) has been more influential. Using the 'value added' concept he has outlined the development of collective behaviour through six stages: structural conduciveness, structural strain, generalised belief, precipitating factors, mobilisation and social control. Again, there are obvious weaknesses in the model. Reality is rarely co-operative and it is often difficult to identify the nature of a generalised belief, in anything but the broadest terms, whilst Smelser's evaluation of the relative importance of different stages in the value added funnelling process is not explicit. Although he did not advocate crude ecological determinism, perhaps the most important contribution of Smelser is the perception, shared with Kornhauser, that it is possible to identify certain societies which are particularly

susceptible to large scale social disorders. The concept of structural strain as a necessary prerequisite for rioting was widely accepted and effectively defined an area of investigation; subsequent research in the 1960s was focussed on identifying varying degrees of 'riot proneness'.

Liebertson and Silverman's (1965) investigation of 72 negro-white race riots in America between 1913 and 1963 is typical of this trend, pairing cities in an attempt to establish riot factors and non riot factors and concluding that the likelihood of rioting was increased in cities where political and social institutions were inaccessible or not working. However, all correlations they identified were low.

Though perhaps not as influential as Smelser, Turner and Killian (1958, 1962) also emphasised the unique attributes of the crowd and the transformation of the individual in the crowd situation. They stress the manner in which conformity to situationally specific 'emergent norms' becomes the central mechanism that endows the collectivity with apparent unity. Crowd members are less able to examine critically their own cognitive facilities than people in other circumstances. Such theory inherits a very specific moral disapprobation of collective behaviour, the crowd is seen again as a natural unit, an irrational unit. The search for processes that operate in collective situations is commendable but the particular formulations Turner and Killian produce are highly dubious. Moreover, the processes are divorced from their social context. Arguably, the one major advance in collective behaviour theory which writers such as Smelser and Kornhauser had achieved was to make the importance of this connection explicit.

The search for preconditioning factors, stemming from the concepts of structural strain and riot proneness, needed an underlying mechanism to account for the transformation of discontent and deprivation into violent

action. The mechanism that answered this need, and provided the centrepiece for the vast majority of studies of collective behaviour throughout the 1960s was drawn from the cluster of psychological and social-psychological ideas that can be loosely described as relative deprivation theory. At its most succinct (Runciman 1966), deprivation was reformulated in terms of perceived rather than absolute measures of well being, comparative rather than absolute measures of economic status. In this manner, extending de Tocqueville's ideas, J.C. Davies (1971, 1978) has claimed that revolution and rebellion are most likely to occur when

"a period of rising expectations and rising gratification is followed by a short period of sharp reversal during which the gap between expectations and gratifications quickly widens and becomes intolerable".

In the United States the improvements won by the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and early 1960s are said to have led to expectations which were not fulfilled by society. Opportunities for social mobility continued to be blocked by racist structures and the concomitant frustration inevitably developed into the aggression of street violence.

This emphasis on the importance of frustration as the cause of aggression is based on the work of the psychologists Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer and Sears (1939). Gurr (1968) has gone so far as to say that,

"the basic relationship appears to be as fundamental to understanding civil strife as the law of gravity is to atmospheric physics: relative deprivation, the phrase I have used, is a necessary precondition for civil strife of any kind and the more severe the relative deprivation the more likely and severe is the strife. Underlying this relative deprivation approach to civil strife is a frustration-aggression mechanism, apparently a fundamental part of our psycho-biological make-up."

c) The dehumanising influence of behaviourism

The value of the frustration-aggression theory can be questioned both conceptually and epistemologically. Conceptually both central terms are ill-defined, easily manipulated to fit any context. As Gurr himself

repeatedly, if accidentally, reveals, the validity of the theory is based on the tautology that those who are frustrated display behavioural patterns that are defined as aggressive whilst those who display aggression must be in some way frustrated. The two terms are dependent; frustration is redefined as anything that causes violence. In the extremes of absurdity imminent assassination is classed as vexatious: "a threat to life is an anticipated frustration".(Gurr,1970,p36)

The epistemological flaws are similarly marked. This particular vision of violent behaviour was historically closely linked to the ethological work of Lorenz(see Berkowitz,1970), with violence seen as a natural outlet for pent-up aggression, related to the equally nebulous notion of catharsis. Consequently, violent action is portrayed (explicitly or implicitly) as an uncontrollable reaction to circumstances. Yet as frustration/aggression has become insinuated in collective behaviour theory there has been a simultaneous movement away from the stimulus/response epistemology of behaviourism in psychology. As Miller(1983) has suggested,

" ... it soon became apparent that behaviour was not simply a question of observable movements, and that what a creature did had to be considered as an act as opposed to a mere event; and that an act could only be intelligibly described in terms of some intention which it was designed to realise."

Even in those circumstances where the central terms are more strictly tied to specific conditions there has been a modification of the claims for frustration/aggression theory by some of its foremost proponents. Berkowitz(1982), a major figure in the relative deprivation writings of the 1960s, is keen to stress the difference between instrumental and hostile or 'angry' aggression. He acknowledges the power of the critique of those who suggest that 'violent people' are not more aggressive than 'non-violent people' but are rather following different sets of learned rules of behaviour (eg Marsh et al,1978). Using evidence derived from

work with violent criminals he suggests that such a critique is most relevant in group actions (forms of collective behaviour?); the instinctive, uncontrollable drives that are implied by frustration/aggression and are exemplified in 'angry' aggression remain important, but principally in those instances of fighting where the protocols of the peer group are absent. Crucially, the behaviourist model is exiled from the situation in which it was once so readily applied: the social, interactive context of the crowd. So, in the realm of collective behaviour, frustration/aggression theory is at best a truism, an analytically impoverished device. At its worst it is a potentially powerful mode of definition by which the rationality of a collective can be kidnapped by social science, the personal project reclassified as natural response.

d) Cognitivism and alternative explanations of violent behaviour

Belatedly realising the flaws of the frustration/aggression model, much sociological and psychological discussion in the 1970s attempted to derive alternative mechanisms to account for the genesis of violent behaviour. Most of this work can not really be described as collective behaviour theory, looking instead at such notions as the role of labelling in the creation of delinquent groups (eg Becker,1971; Cohen,1972; Parker, 1974; Young,1974; Robins and Cohen,1978), the creation of violent sub-cultures (Lewis,1961; Miller,1976; Cashmore and Troyna,1982) or the role of class in youth violence (Clarke,1976; Corrigan,1979; Hebdige,1979).

Those that did try and sustain a discipline of 'crowd psychology' or the social psychology of social movements tended to fall instead into the almost equally misbegotten realm of cognitivism. Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance has been used by Eckstein(1965);Geschwender(1968);and Schwartz (1971) to explain rioting as a response to situations in which

components of individual cognitive systems are out of synchronisation, normative expectations and actual experience do not match. Such formulations are clearly not dissimilar to, and incorporate most of the problems of, relative deprivation explanations, but tend to go even further in implying that the rioting crowd is in some sense pathological.

The principal failing of cognitive psychology, derived from the source metaphor of the computer, is that the rational choice model which lies at its heart specifically excludes many of the elements that make social action social (see Harré, 1983). Actors are seen in a social vacuum, weighing up the costs and benefits of individual decisions. Typically for Hardin (1982) collective action succeeds where individuals see major gains accruing from relatively little personal input. Discussing the mobilisation of black people in the USA in the fifties and sixties he claims that

"Civil Rights organisations spent minuscule amounts per year per black American during the sixties, yet most observers would think the value of their effort was vastly greater than the expenditure." (1982, p110)

At best this is a very crude model which once again can re-define the central cost/benefit concepts in infinite ways to fit any situation post hoc but reveals relatively little about specific historical contexts. Berk's (1974) use of game theory and attempts to explain riots in terms of economic rationality (eg Ireland, 1967; Tullock, 1971) suffer from similar problems of oversimplification.

e) Conclusions

Conceptually, two problems of definition recur in all attempts to study collective behaviour. One concerns the status of the collectivity. What properties does this unit have? Should it be seen as an aggregation or a supra-individual? Is it valid to talk of a mood or an intention of a

crowd? These are profound ontological problems that are rarely addressed.

Secondly, collective behaviour theory assumes that there is such a thing as 'collective behaviour', that 'crowd psychology' is in some way different from 'individual psychology'. Possibly this creates a false dichotomy, the individual and society are mutually dependent, the one supposes the other. Certainly, work in this tradition has tended to be speculative in the extreme; 'theory' based on broad generalisations constrained by presupposition rather than stemming from logical abstraction (cf Sayer, 1984). Although there are those who would claim otherwise (eg Taylor, 1984), it is hard to see how such 'theory' can be of positive use in a study of the British disturbances of 1981. Nevertheless, the cautionary value should not be underestimated, not least because the flaws of behaviourism, the confusion of the moral and the psychological and the precedence of assumption in the guise of putative empirical investigation were to manifest themselves regularly in the attempts to attach an explanation to rioting in British cities.

3 THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN THE 1960s

Throughout the 1960s the USA witnessed what were to become known as the 'long hot summers' of ghetto rioting.¹ As Horowitz(1983) has suggested,

"one significant impact of the riots was not on those who experienced them but on social science scholarship, which has never been quite the same since."

For some, notably Field(1982), this massive literature is self-evidently relevant to studies of the British riots, both for the similarities between the events in America and in Britain in 1981 and because of the 'advances' that were apparently made in collective behaviour theory. It

is the contention here that this assumption can not so readily be made. Most of the American work has not aged well, displaying all the paradigmatic flaws of behaviourism and cognitivism. Much is poor even within the inevitable constrictions produced by these flaws, regularly falling prey to tautological or circular argument. In order to support such a contention it is possible to highlight both the inadequacies of the US literature and the limited, superficial appeal of the social and historical comparison.

a) The historical context

There is neither need nor intention to outline an extensive history of inter-racial violence in the United States [for such studies see Brown,1979; Janowitz,1979;Kerner,1968;Fogelson,1969,1971], only to point out that before the clashes of the 1960s America already possessed a twentieth century history, if not a tradition, of rioting. The most serious incidents had occurred in East St Louis in 1917 when the employment of negro immigrants to the city as strike breakers precipitated attacks by white workers in which 39 black people were murdered, in Chicago and Washington in 1919, in Harlem in 1935 and 1943 and Detroit in 1943. However, these were only the more lurid entries in a massive catalogue of communal violence which was set against the background of the extensive violent repression of black Americans in earlier centuries, seen at its most gruesome in the activities of the first Ku Klux Klan and the lynch mobs of the late nineteenth century [Brown(1979) has estimated that 1,985 black people were killed by Southern lynch mobs between 1882-1903]. Janowitz(1979) has suggested that the Harlem riot of 1943 was the first to display the changing form of this violence from straightforward communal clashes or 'contested area riots' between ethnic groups to a confrontation between repressed, almost invariably black, groups and the institutions of the dominant whites; notably property and retail establishments. His

designation of the latter as 'commodity riots' has been widely accepted, although the term can not be regarded as in any way a neutral description, implicitly classifying as it does the objects of the rioters' violence as vicarious targets.

A second important contextual influence which bears on the American rioting is the black Civil Rights movement of the fifties and early sixties (see Piven and Cloward 1971,1977; Muse,1970; Chafe,1981). In acknowledging that the driving force and centre of the Civil Rights movement lay in the Southern states and the majority of the riots took place in the North it is often assumed that the sixties rioting was equivalent to a Civil Rights movement of the North (eg Horowitz,1983). Such a contention will be examined in greater detail later but it is essential to note that no equivalent, explicitly political, explicitly peaceful popular mobilisation preceded disorders in British cities.

b) Explaining the American riots

Given the impossible task of summarising the welter of material on the American riots, three overlapping central strains have been highlighted in the literature to demonstrate the ideological basis of specific descriptions, the methodological flaws of accounts and the intractable problems of explanation per se which arise from attempts to understand rioting in American cities.

i) Riot Commissions

It would be naive or disingenuous to expect a commission of inquiry into riots to produce a definitive or balanced explanation of events. The commissions themselves exist in a political environment and are implicated in political strategy from the moment at which they are appointed and

their personnel selected to the moment in which they report, right on to the manner in which they are remembered. There were times in America when the weighting of a committee was quite blatant; the McCone Commission investigating the Watts riot of 1965 was chaired by a former head of the CIA and the emphasis on security issues prompted a major rift between the commission itself and its social science advisors(Fogelson,1971). It was this political role that led to Kenneth Clark's public cynicism about the Kerner inquiry and his renowned remark to the Commission that he found that the succession of twentieth century official investigations into riots had about them an Alice in Wonderland quality,

"with the same moving pictures reshown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations and the same inaction."

It is because of this dimension that Lipsky and Olsen(1969) conclude that

"the formation of riot commissions give rise to public expectations which cannot be fulfilled"

and that

"riot commissions are charged with incompatible goals which cannot meaningfully be reconciled".

There are hidden tasks behind the ostensibly straightforward historical exploration, involving the purchase of political time in the lengthy process of investigation, the exoneration of public officials as they are seen to be 'doing something' about riots and the provision of a comprehensible account to mediate between rioters and authorities that will not be totally alien to the vision of society held by those who commission the report in the first instance (see Silver,1969;Feagin and Hahn,1973).

So it is with a considerable element of caution that the most well-known of riot inquiries, the National Commission on Civil Disorders, better known as the Kerner Commission, should be considered. When Kerner's report was published, Johnson's presidency was coming to a close and although Field(1982) has claimed that,

"as a political document, it is a public and unambiguous commitment to the plight of American blacks, with the full weight of the American presidency behind it",

the reality was somewhat different. Johnson himself, after initial placatory statements and stirring calls for national unity, had become worried about the possible nature of the final report and had played an instrumental role in limiting the budget, scope and social science personnel of the Commission (Feagin and Hahn, 1973). Lipsky and Olsen (1969) go so far as to suggest that "President Johnson himself tried to undermine his own Kerner Commission" in his charge to the (Milton) Eisenhower Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence to provide an alternative explanation of rioting. At the same time, on the public stage, the increasingly vocal George Wallace and, to a lesser extent, Richard Nixon contributed to an incipient 'white backlash'. Forced to manoeuvre in the world of realpolitik, the Commission must be seen, at least in part, as just one pressure group in the ongoing struggle of American race relations, compelled to trade idealism for pragmatism in the art of what is possible.

Given these national political exigencies, it was perhaps inevitable that more radical criticisms of 'the establishment' would be phased out of the final report, that moral statements on the evils of racism would not explicitly criticise the institutions in part responsible for the perpetuation of that racism. This was most probably the cause of the splits that developed between some social science researchers working for Kerner and the Commission itself, a split that surfaced in public debate when a draft document entitled 'The Harvest of American Racism' produced by this research group was rejected by the Commission. Similarly, tensions within the Committee itself surfaced in the final report. One of the more liberal members of the Committee, the Republican mayor of New York, John Lindsay, worried about the political tone of leaks concerning the forthcoming report, drafted a short document that was much more

strongly worded than the body of the report itself, presented it to the rest of the committee as a 'summary' of the Commission's work and demanded that this be included in the final publication. Threatening to release the document independently if his demands were not met, Lindsay effectively presented other committee members with a fait accompli. It was this summary that included most of the well known 'Kerner quotes' including the statement that the main conclusion of the commission's work was that

"Our nation is moving towards two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal".(Kerner,1968,p1)

The resultant slightly schizophrenic nature of the final draft was complicated yet further when the report was published in a paperback edition that sold over two million copies, with an editorial introduction that was even more strongly in line with a liberal social science perspective than Lindsay's own document.(Rossi,1970) One consequence of this confusion was that public debate was often structured more by Lindsay's summary than by the report itself. White racism is a term that is hardly ever used in the main report, appears more often in the summary, yet Nixon in his public reaction to Kerner complained that the problem with the report was that it spent too much time blaming the racism of white people, too little time blaming the rioters.(Button,1978)

At its most strongly worded and most explicitly causal the main report exemplifies a mode of explanation that I shall refer to as the recipe analysis, a recurrent phenomenon in all accounts of rioting, easily identified by the regular recourse to the metaphors of combustion and cookery. The report states that,

"we have attempted to identify the prime components of this explosive mixture."(Kerner,1968,p93)

Thus

"the causes of recent racial disorders are imbedded in a massive tangle of issues and circumstances - social, economic, political and psychological",

a 'list of factors' that

"vary significantly in their effect from city to city and from year to year; and the consequences of one disorder generating new grievances and new demands, becomes the causes of the next."(Kerner,1968, p92)

The report then goes on to distinguish the different causal elements in this mixture, attributing to each an implicit proportion of the 'blame' for disorder. At the primary level is white racism

"essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II"

creating the secondary forms of segregation, migration and 'the ghetto'.

At the tertiary level frustration, powerlessness and the legitimization of violence act as "powerful ingredients to catalyze the mixture". The final constituents are identified as 'incitement' and 'police behaviour'.

Police behaviour is seen as "not merely the spark" as "police have come to symbolise white power, white racism and white repression"(my emphasis).

It is this mode of analysis that constituted the second major theme of explanation of the American disorders, as rival cooks proposed the superiority of their own particular recipe.

ii) Behaviourism as knowledge

It is possible to distinguish a major difference in emphasis evident in the American literature between those who stress the unacknowledged conditions of action that precede a riot, searching for some consistent set of phenomena that underlies all riots, and those that consider rioting as a form of social movement and so consequently emphasise the strategic nature and political significance of 'a type of collective behaviour that is called rioting'. The principal problem of the former approach is that process is relegated and pattern elevated in the formulation of the ideal type riot recipe.

Two principal sources of information have been used in such analysis, both of them deeply flawed. In order to discern the salient characteristics of rioters, several studies used questionnaires in riot areas (eg Cohen's project in Los Angeles which led to the work of Tomlinson and Sears, 1970; Sears and McConahay, 1970; Raine, 1970; Murphy and Watson, 1970; see also Fogelson and Hill, 1968; Caplan and Paige, 1968; Rossi, Berk and Eidson, 1974, Feagin and Hahn, 1973). Such investigation generally tried to paint a portrait of the 'average rioter on the streets', distinguishing between rioters and non-rioters in terms of personality traits and attitudinal measures. One major problem with such an approach is that it assumes that those willing or even keen to identify themselves as rioters in post-riot questionnaire surveys will represent a typical sample of those people who actually rioted. In reality there are a priori grounds for expecting those who have potentially more to lose from such identification, older people with family responsibilities and those in employment, to be under-represented. Conversely, those who have little to lose and the social kudos of the rebel to gain, particularly the unemployed and the young, are likely to be more willing to admit or even boast of their involvement in collective violence. So although there are broad patterns that emerge from the American work these should be treated with caution. Self-identified rioters did not come from the most deprived sections of the ghetto and were less likely to be first generation migrants to Northern cities and were younger than those who denied involvement in disorder. (See Field, 1982 for summary.) This was generally taken as rejecting the notion that the 'riff-raff' or 'marginal men' in ghetto society rebelled. However, the methodological difficulties are further compounded in such rioter/non-rioter comparisons by the stress on what are sometimes minor differences in relation to the distinct position of the ghetto itself. Unemployment among rioters is sometimes reported as higher than among non-rioters (as in the Watts study of Cohen et al, 1970) but unemployment rates for both are substantially higher than for other

parts of the city and the nation; similarly educational differences between rioters and non-rioters (see Kerner, 1968) pale into near insignificance when compared with the relative state of educational deprivation in the ghetto as a whole. Other socio-economic indices, such as family demographic characteristics (Bloombaum, 1968), do not reveal any recurrent pattern. Indeed McPhail (1970) has suggested that although the majority of social, demographic and economic associations with riot participation are statistically significant, they are repeatedly of a low magnitude, and in an analysis of tests found that only 2% were highly significant ($r > 0.6$) and 5% of moderate significance ($r = 0.3 - 0.59$).

The second principal investigative formulation of recipe analysis attempted to distinguish between those areas which suffered rioting and other, ostensibly similar, locations that did not. Adams (1972) found that using regression analysis four variables correlated well with riot activity in a comparison of different US cities:

"riot experience varied positively with Metropolitan size, the presence of a black population and Metropolitan density and varied inversely with Southernness".

Even this extremely simple hypothesis worked well only at the extremes of the equation. Adams had more success examining the experience inside seven mid-Western cities, and suggested that those areas where dysfunctional housing and population change had occurred (ie faster expansion of population than housing stock) were most likely to experience rioting. This tended to be not in the ghetto core or periphery but in the middle zone where there was a high expectation of improvement. Thus it is suggested that this accounts for the rioting in Detroit, Milwaukee, Kansas City, Cleveland and Cincinnati and the absence of rioting in St Louis. Friedland (1982) prefers to emphasise both the localised effect of policy on the severity of the violence and the national context of the disorders. For Friedland the Civil Rights Movement of the fifties and early sixties was essentially a failure:

"they could not win enough, even as their victories told them that they were right to struggle in the first place" because "the urban system, its genetic codes could not be touched And so the cities burned."

However, the statistical data that he adduces to support a causal link between Urban Renewal and War on Poverty funding and riots accounts for only small proportions of total variance in riot seriousness, in spite of the fact that he fails to take into account autocorrelations which would favourably influence his hypothesis testing (eg city size).

At times the passage of history pre-empted such ecological work. Rossi, Berk and Eidson(1974), in a study commissioned by Kerner, attempted a threefold comparison of cities that experienced serious disorder in 1967, those that had previously experienced disorder but did not do so in 1967 and those with no history of collective ghetto violence in 1967 or before. Their research was overtaken by events with rioting in several of the 'control', 'no riot' cities occurring during fieldwork. The authors comment,

"in short the study as originally designed was a failure almost before the data had been completely collected."

Almost belatedly, Rossi, Berk and Eidson suggest that this failure was inevitable because

"the civil disorders of the 1960s were generalised political responses to conditions that were common to blacks in general rather than to blacks in some particular locale."

The rejection of local determinism echoed the conclusions of Spilerman (1970), who suggested that the national stimuli of television and federal government and the experiences of all black Americans combine to overwhelm any variation in local conditions. Explanations for rioting, he claimed, should be understood in terms of individual psychology:

"as for the community propensity, it is an aggregate of the individual values - the larger the Negro population the greater the likelihood of a disorder. Little else appears to matter."

Similarly, Silver(1969) dismissed attempts to differentiate between

ghettos:

"in such a formulation diagnostic sociology has scant function: it is a matter of natural laws, of elemental and self-evident justice. Diagnostic sociology is not required because collective violence as a response to injustice is rooted in the innate order of things"(my emphasis).

Crucially, both those who stressed spatial variation and those who suggested that such variations were inconsequential worked quite explicitly within the frustration/aggression paradigm of collective behaviour theory, assuming that this natural causal link was given; the analytical task at hand rested in a definition of the distinctive features that contribute to a riot, distinguishing those elements which were causally salient from those which were merely coincidental.

There is an intuitive logic in the pursuit of behaviourism. It is logical when confronted with a series of apparently similar events to seek out what they have in common, which factors recur in instances of riot. Such a search is not an end in itself, yet it is a search which has regularly proved endless in the analysis of disorder. Preconditions are so closely interlinked that it becomes virtually impossible to distinguish between them, given the relatively small set of the phenomenon 'riot' that appear at any one time, a phenomenon that is so self-evident yet so vague and ill-defined on closer inspection. Consequently, methodological difficulties lead to a debate revolving around rival recipes, the patterns of social conditions that serve as the material causes of the disorder. Inevitably, process is lost, or at best remains elusive or assumed, and as a result analysis falls back by default on tacit stimulus-response psychology, riots are relegated from social actions to social outcomes.

iii) Riots as mobilisation

For those who preferred to emphasise the active role of the protagonists more than the passively experienced preconditions the riots

were seen as a social movement, an integral part of black resistance to white racism in American society. Yet such a designation covered subtle but significant variations in the understanding of this movement, ranging from a conception of the riots as extemporised revolts, the flashpoint reaction to particular situations, to a notion that has the riots as a form of intentional political strategy, the successor to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and early 1960s. This subtle difference has major ramifications both in the interpretation of the long hot summers and in the nature of explanation of riots generally.

Kerchhoff's(1970) attempt to explain the passage of riots in terms of hysterical contagion is in effect little different from the worst excesses of recipe analysis, but the nature of such work is significant because the stress is shifted away from preconditioning pattern and on to the processes operating during the riot, albeit in the explanatory tradition of Turner and Killian(1958). Siegel(1979) goes one step further in rationalising violence as the product of defensive cultural adaptation, a response to a perceived threat of subjugation, restoring in part the rationality of those on the streets. Lang and Lang(1971) too are keen to emphasise the meaning of behaviour, stating that

"however spontaneous the elements that underlie any incident and its particular pattern of expansion, the rioting reflects at the same time the stirrings of a major political-social movement"

but then qualify the status of this movement by describing it as "primitive and anomic" and talking of a social pathology of potential rioters. Similarly Fogelson(1969,1971) classifies rioting as a form of inarticulate protest. Rossi(1970) in criticising Kerner, or at least much discussion of Kerner, claims that

"as a causal factor white racism is at best a truism, at worst a theory that can lead down many fruitless paths"

and like many others (eg Gans,1969;Moore 1969;Button,1978) is keen to see rioting as a form of brief revolt. Crucially, spontaneity is emphasised,

the conditions of action may not have been explicitly realised but behaviour was considered and set in a particular historical context.

Others go much further. In what is possibly the most impressive work on the American riots Feagin and Hahn(1973) go so far as to suggest the development of a revolutionary ideology in the ghettos. They claim that riots followed logically from the increasing militance of the Civil Rights Movement which had shifted from the legal action and freedom rides of the 1950s to the mass(peaceful) political mobilisation of the early 1960s and increasing willingness to take defensive violent action against the many attacks on public demonstrations. Smith(1969) talks of a new style of protest politics with violence as a central strategy, whilst Gurr(1978) in his later writing appears to concede that violence can serve in a political gambit. Horowitz(1983) goes so far as to claim that the Civil Rights Movement could not be transplanted to the northern cities of the United States because of the vital role of the church in organisation and so the disorders should clearly be seen as the Civil Rights Movement of the North, although Feagin and Hahn(1973) caution against overemphasising the absence of the Civil Rights Movement from the North or the riots from the South. In such work (see also Michiarola,1969; Piven and Cloward,1969; Libman-Rubinstein,1972,1979) not only is the rationality of the rioters preserved but also the rioting is elevated to a form of mobilisation equivalent to other social movements (eg Piven and Cloward(1977) make a comparison with the organised labour movement).

One major problem that stems from such elevation concerns the effects of rioting on the lives of ghetto residents. In broad and slightly simplistic terms it is generally accepted that the relative and absolute position of black people in the American economy improved throughout the 1950s and 1960s but there is little or no agreement on the relative contributions of the Civil Rights movement and rioting to these

improvements. The two most extreme positions on this point can be seen in the work of Piven and Cloward (1969, 1971, 1977, 1978) and Albritton (1978). For the former, poor people's movements have tended to achieve very little in American history without violence, violence is no guarantee of success but without it little or nothing is gained. They cite the response to the 1965 Watts riot at a local level and the increased AFDC (Aid for Families with Dependent Children) roles as evidence for this thesis; a thesis that has to varying degrees been supported by Betz(1974); Button(1978); Friedland(1982) and Isaac and Kelly(1981), writers who have focussed also on the War on Poverty programme (the Community Action Programmes and the work of the Office of Economic Opportunity), the work of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (eg the Model City Programme) and the Department of Health Education and Welfare. However, the timing in such arguments is crucial and Albritton(1978) has suggested that the principal advances in this period were produced by the Civil Rights Movement, formulated by the Kennedy administration and only enacted by the Johnson presidency, by which time the cities were burning. The bureaucratic time lag caused these measures to come into effect after the onset of rioting even though they were the product of peaceful, popular mobilisation. Feagin and Hahn(1973) are similarly cautious, suggesting that the main results of the rioting included the 'white backlash' which was partly responsible for the election of Richard Nixon in 1968, the increase in repression via the extensive training and arming of police forces and the decline of liberal aid programmes throughout the 1970s. Quite possibly, as the time between cause and effect is so indeterminate and the two causes (the Civil Rights Movement and the riots) are so chronologically close, it is just not possible to differentiate between them, even though such a distinction is vital, particularly in the context of Britain in the 1980s. As Button(1978) suggests, a myth of peaceful progress may be unsatisfactory but there are obviously major pitfalls in replacing it with a myth of

violent progress, pitfalls that are political and moral in their evaluation of behaviour and historical in the implication that violent disorder can be turned on and off like a tap in response to prevailing conditions. The point stretches back into the heart of so-called collective behaviour theory; if large numbers of people behave similarly at a certain time is this behaviour susceptible to generalisation? Do these social movements possess an internal logic? This is an issue that will recur in the following chapter in relation to the work of Parkin and Castells.

Certainly there is justification for accepting the equivalence between such historical movements from certain specific points of view. Riots gather unity with hindsight and rationalisation but this is a property bestowed after the event not during it. Hence Silver's suggestion (1969) that

"men who engage in desperate and in dangerous behaviour - indeed any behaviour - have a certain claim to have taken seriously that which they see in their own acts, and wish others to see in them"

is a noble comment but one that fails to recognise the impossibility of accepting either accounts of actions at face value or everyday appearances as the principal units of analytical social science. Similarly, Field's (1982) statement that

"the meaning of a riot becomes the meaning which is granted to that riot by that rioting community after the event"

is at best misleading. Undoubtedly a meaning is imposed upon incidents of disorder post hoc that reflects personal notions of society as much as empirical evidence, the politics of riot commission interpretations is just one instance of this process, but this does not devalue contemporary meanings generated at the time of disorder.

Those who stress the strategic and controlled nature of the American riots may have in part neglected the significance of this hindsight

unity. In a sense such analysis, particularly that of Feagin and Hahn can be best seen as a reaction to the behaviourist paradigm, so clearly ascendant in American social science at the time of the ghetto revolts. Clearly, recognising the manner in which stimulus/response explanations deprived rioters of agency they were anxious to stress the rationality of those involved in disorder. Yet the analysis is flawed because in an attempt to rescue the meaning of revolt they accept the ontology of the crowd as supra-individual, replacing the de-individuated, primitive mob of behaviourism with a coldly calculating, politically conscious unit to be regarded as a lucid social actor on the stage of historical struggle. In saving the agent from structure they lose the individual to the collectivity, unaware that both dichotomies are equally false.

c) Conclusions : the US/UK comparison

An insuperable problem underlying any comparison of British and American riots is that, unlike two material objects, the two phenomena to be compared are indeterminate. As Killian(1981) points out, is it possible to say how alike the two experiences of rioting were when even the Americans themselves are still not sure of the causes or form of their own ghetto revolts, let alone how similar they were to someone else's? Furthermore, the level of generalisation at which such comparison is made is inevitably on an unsatisfactory, grand, journalistic scale.

Whilst accepting that any two social contexts must always be historically unique, there are several facets to the situation of black people in the two countries that particularly question the utility of jerry-built comparison. The whole heritage of an explicitly colonial past compared to a rhetorical tradition of ethnic equality arguably leads to significantly different ideologies of race and racism. In purely empirical terms the massive mobilisation of the Black Civil

Rights Movement, involving many millions of people, had no equivalent in the run-up to the British riots, nor was the national political climate of Democratic liberal reform mirrored in the British case.

The economic experiences of black people also differed on the two sides of the Atlantic. In America the riots followed a period of steadily improving economic status, in the United Kingdom the 1981 riots followed the onset of an economic depression in which black people suffered more than others on racial, economic structural and locational grounds.(Scarman, 1981;Cross,1986) Building on the truism of frustration/aggression theory the central terms of relative deprivation explanations can be twisted to fit any such distinction (see Field,1982), yet such casuistry says more about the value of this sort of 'theory' than about any comparison between the two sets of riots.

On the other hand, some similarities do present themselves. There is an obvious difference between what is expected of one as a new arrival and what one expects as a citizen, and this difference between the willingness of first and second generation migrant groups to tolerate discrimination and repression might find an analogy in the propensity to revolt among those who moved from the South of the USA and from the former colonies to major industrial cities. Consequently the Northern ghettos of the USA and the centres of British cities may have provided unemployed, discontented personnel and the locales in which such discontent could support itself; in a mundane, logistical sense providing the foci of black resistance.

It is also clear from simple historical research that the majority of American riots were also started by incidents involving police action, set against a background of poor relationships between police and ghetto residents, which meant that the police did not simply act as

a trigger to disorder (Kerner, 1967), that variations in the incidence and severity of rioting were related to variations in police behaviour (Wanderer, 1969; Rossi, Marsh and Eidson, 1974). However, there was near unanimity in American scholarship that the police role was principally one of the vicarious target. They stood as the visible symbols of white society, racist white society.

Making the police force more representative of the communities they police may or may not have had a substantial effect on the cooling of tension in American cities in the 1970s. What is certain is that it was possible to make major advances in this field through campaigns of ethnic recruitment. From 1967 to 1982 the number of minority police rose from 10-48% in Atlanta, from 5-10% in New York and from 5-30% in Detroit. Even in Chicago (17-19% in this period) and Philadelphia (19-17%) where the figures were less impressive, major campaigns in the late 1960s had succeeded in significantly boosting the proportion of black policemen from single, percentage figure lows in the late 1950s (Rossi, Marsh, Eidson, 1974; Sherman, 1983). Even the most optimistic members of the Metropolitan Police Force and British race relations groups doubt that comparable improvements could be achieved in London. If London is typical and there is much greater resistance in Britain to joining the police, then quite possibly this difference might suggest that poor police/black relations in the UK are not necessarily the same as poor police/black relations in the US.

In short, though comparisons may reveal occasionally useful insights, the differences between the two historical experiences prohibit any straightforward transportation of explanatory designs from one country to another, assuming that there are such valuable designs to transport. Yet there is major epistemological and methodological value in study of the historiography of the American disorders. There are

important similarities between how people on both sides of the Atlantic investigated disorder, even if we remain unsure about any replication of the actual processes of rioting itself.

4 1980 AND 1981 RIOTING IN BRITISH CITIES : EXPLANATION AS APPROPRIATION

In the immediate aftermath of the rioting most political accounts or explanations of the riots were openly and frankly ideological. For the Prime Minister and many of her colleagues the disturbances were classified as a law and order matter and the issues that were raised were tied to related notions of national self-discipline, parenthood, juvenile delinquency and personal evil (see Kettle and Hodges, 1982). For the Labour opposition the causal process was explicitly tied to the effects of government policy. Roy Hattersley, in particular, was keen to make the link between changes in levels of deprivation since 1979 and the incidence of public disorder. Such behaviour was predictable in the initial reactions to rioting, that 'THE RIOTS' were shaped in a manner that fitted into pre-existing psychological visions of the umwelt was just one instance of the social construction of reality (see Berger and Luckmann, 1965). The riot becomes a justification for a particular conception of society rather than a challenge to it; it is the symbolic reading of events that is malleable, not the cognitive set into which they are fitted. It is only one small step from such introspective reassurance to the polemical deployment of these reconstituted symbols to prove the validity of specific arguments about the nature of life in Britain in 1981. In civil society this phenomenon was regularly seen in the competition for scarce resources. Given a felicitous causal relationship, a wide variety of interest groups could claim legitimacy

for government or private funding on the grounds of public disorder. Police, educational, industrial, inner city, employment and many other lobbies could all point to their own pressing need and base demands for resource input on the implicit, or even explicit, suggestion that without more money there would be more riots. Again, this was an understandable facet of the political process. In contrast it was more disconcerting to see this practice of appropriation replicated in ostensibly academic explanations of British rioting.

a) Behaviourism resurgent

If social explanation can neither transcend nor expose nor acknowledge the ideological foundation of accounts it is worthless. Yet one characteristic common to much work in 1981 was to make the automatic step from coincidence to causality in using the rioting to justify otherwise powerful arguments. Gough(1982) was able to claim that the disorders represented "the chickens coming home to roost" for Thatcherite Policies toward the Welfare State, yet after making this assertion makes no further reference to rioting. Rex(1981,1984) and Hamnett(1983) used similarly vague formulations as did Profitt(1984) who went so far as to support a demand for recognising inner city needs with the claim that

"Failing this action the message is clear: the uprisings will continue"(1984,p201).

Such claims may not only be factually erroneous but also morally dangerous. For in this context the riot is employed as a cautionary symbol, even though there may be only a political, not a logical, need for so doing. Such a strategy may be dangerously two edged as the call for 'welfare provision or else riots' is in danger of backfiring if violence dies down. Levels of deprivation may remain as high as ever and the original case may be seen as discredited. Hence it was left to

Prashar(1984) to suggest that the stark facts of racial disadvantage and inner city deprivation stood on their own feet, there was no need to try and place them into a simplistic causal link with rioting in order to utilise this symbolic power. Even in heavy disguise the ecological fallacy is at best a clumsy vehicle for explanation.

More detailed reportage of the events of 1981 (eg Waller,1981;Kettle and Hodges,1983;Clare,1984) suggested a complexity to the incidence of disorder that was belied by the simplistic notions of cause and effect manifested in the more clumsy sociological analyses. One study by the Home Office Research Unit exemplifies this problem, particularly in its replication of the flaws of much American work. There is an obvious value in attempting to discern the attitudes at the time of the disturbances of those living in the areas which suffered rioting. That the questionnaire survey is perhaps not the best method to gather such material has already been suggested in relation to the American disorders. Southgate's(1982) study in the Handsworth area of Birmingham provides a further illustration of this point. As part of my own research I conducted a similar survey in October and November 1981 and January 1982 in Wood Green and Dalstone, the scenes of two of the more serious riots in London. Through personal experience and reflection on Southgate's work I would suggest that such studies have only minimal value. The first and most serious difficulty with the Southgate project is that the choice of survey area seems to have been based on personal familiarity rather than on the incidence of violence. It was frequently suggested (eg Economist 7/81; Guardian passim 7/81) that the most striking feature about the events in Birmingham in 1981 was the absence of any large scale disorder, in spite of a local history of numerous past incidents of near riot.

Harré has highlighted the strongly conventional nature of account

giving and makes the point (1979, pp114-115) that the twentieth century questionnaire is the source of one of these sets of conventions. There is a protocol to the survey technique, self-evident to anyone who has been involved in such work, which structures an interview and influences responses. The interviewees are very often keen to please the interviewers; the quasi-test format of the interview prompts many to try and provide the 'correct' answers to questions as much as assess personal preference. Time and again the distinctive status of accounts as rationalisations of the past came through in my own work and comes through in Southgate's. He seriously reports that almost half of his respondents, "knew in advance there was going to be trouble"(1982,p68), never considering the possible influence of hindsight wisdom. Quite simply there is no way that reasons given as causes of the riot can be taken at face value, they must be considered as part of the meaning that is bestowed upon disorder after the event, for which Southgate's study is useful, but this is not the same thing at all.

The number of respondents admitting involvement in disturbances in the Home Office study is notably small (11 'rioters' and 9 'witnesses' who were chased, attacked or injured out of a sample of 532 young males, yet an attempt is made to compare this group with other residents of the area. In my own Dalstone survey, out of a sample of 200 young males taken on four successive Saturdays in the area of trouble, 35 claimed to have witnessed 'the riot' and another 29 to have been actually involved, yet these figures are in this case quite possibly extremely inaccurate. On several occasions some of the younger respondents boasted so much about their involvement that their answers strained credulity, whilst in other instances the understandable suspicion with which the interviewer is greeted triumphed as individuals at first admitted full involvement in rioting but then moments later denied having been anywhere near the scene of the disorder.

On top of all these faults the normative weight of the analysis is also clear. Southgate notes in a significant tone that unemployment appears to be higher among rioters than non-rioters (1982,p61), ignoring that such a difference disappears from his own data if the effects of age are standardised, whilst regular reference to unemployment as a 'cause' of rioting in general is taken as self-evident (eg p69).

In short, it is not that the feelings of the residents of Handsworth in July 1981 are irrelevant (particularly in the light of subsequent events), it is not that the influence of factors such as unemployment is insignificant, it is that Southgate's work tells us little or nothing about such feelings and such influences, though it pretends to do so, in a place where arguably the most important questions relate to why there was so little trouble in 1981, why for many people there was no riot in Handsworth.

The methodological failings of the post-riot questionnaire in the American work of the 1960s were frequently compounded by analytical use of the dubiously defined 'average rioter'. In the British literature this elusive character recurred, epitomising the use of 'explanation' as appropriation, as competing pathologies of rioters were used to support a particular interest. For Cashmore and Troyna(1982) the British rioting in 1980 and 1981 is the historical property of the social problem group black youth, is indeed the most lurid manifestation of crisis from which their study draws its legitimacy. They are keen to stress that alongside the well documented 'passive' influence of institutional racism young black people have consciously adopted "postures in relation to the rest of society". This active influence, it is suggested, takes the form of manifold rejection, viz "dissatisfaction with society generally ... which translates into a

desire to have nothing to do with it", "the idea of Babylon and all its implications", "a fissure which developed between first generation West Indians and their sons and daughters" and "a reluctance to take employment". It is not intended to analyse this 'cultural' model on its own terms (see Gutzmore 1983 for a critique), rather to examine the postulated connection between black youth and collective disorder (see Diagram 1.2 overleaf). Cashmore and Troyna suggest that because of the pervasive idea of Babylon which "cannot be conquered through conventional political measures", black political action will not gather mass political support except on specific one-off issues and so it is improbable that there can be political mobilisation of young blacks in the immediate future.

Two other responses to this situation are considered. Young black people can try and carry on in their stigmatised position or they can adopt "strategies for survival", one of which will coincide with Hall's conception of crime becoming politically viable. These are short-term solutions only and the reason for the eponymous 'crisis'. In the production of collective disorder two further notions are advanced. The first harks back to relative deprivation theory. Violence is seen as "a strategy for venting frustrations", a form of pressure release, aggression as an automatic response to continual frustration. This is paired with a second notion, the cultural context of this process, an alleged

"penchant for violence within the West Indian culture possibly stemming from the days of slavery when the only method of retaliation was doing physical damage to the overseer."

When put together with the crisis of black youth, one product is rioting, in which

"young blacks are responding not to specific targets but to the system generally, the system they call Babylon. In all the episodes of the early 1980s black youths chose to attack the institutions which symbolised their entrapment within the system: houses, shops, cars, the police."

Summary of Cashmore and Troyna's explanation of Rioting

(Based on "Black Youth in Crisis"(1982)
E.Cashmore and B.Toyna (eds), Allen and Unwin)

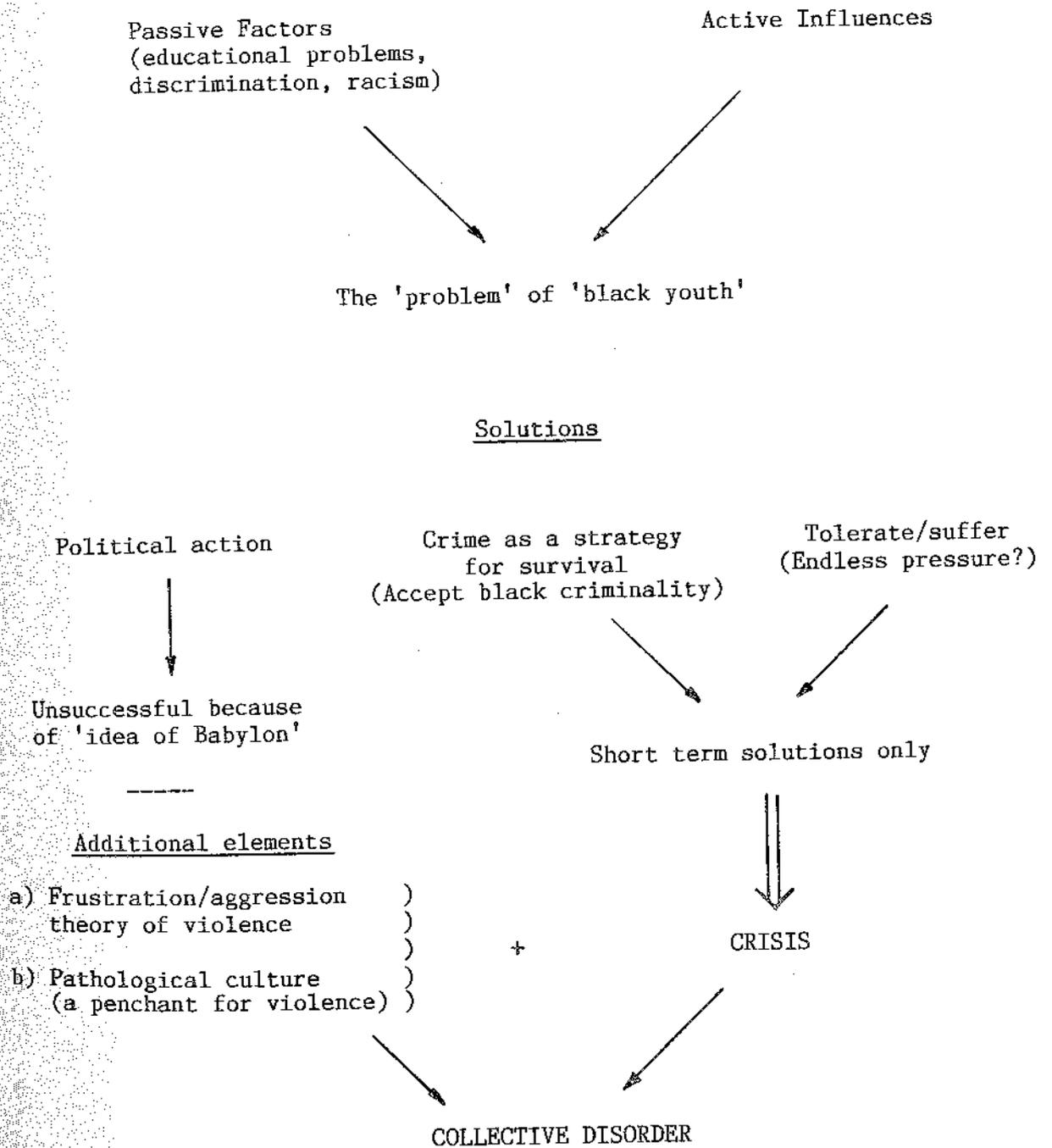


Diagram 1.2

The police are characterised as the victims of an explicitly vicarious violence (along with the other 'Aunt Sallys'), the conflict is not with the Force as such but with the society that force represents. Incidentally, the rationality of the people on the streets is thus discredited, the rioters do not 'really' know what they are doing, even if implicitly they are all doing the same thing. Placing what interests them most into a causal relationship with what interests them least, Cashmore and Troyna attempt to explain away rioting in terms of 'black culture'. Even if their generalisations about the latter were correct this would be a tendentious argument as there is no convincing causal mechanism to link the explicans (culture) with the explicandum (rioting), other than an outdated formulation of stimulus-response psychology. Escaping the authors' best intentions the result is the construction of a cultural pathology that is at best misleading, at worst invidious.

Though the analysis of Lea and Young(1982) is more sophisticated than that of Cashmore and Troyna, it too dictates rather than explores the nature of rioting. The disorders are traced to the difficulties of policing an inner city in which soaring rays of unemployment have led directly to a rapid increase in crime rates (see Diagram 1.3 overleaf). The riots themselves are taken a priori as the expression of young people in general and young black people in particular. Once again there is an implicit image of the 'typical rioter' whose persona has only two salient characteristics: youth and alienation. In this context these are not innocent terms, they serve as dehumanising preconditions for explanation. Rather than explain riots the authors need only explain the production of the stereotypical rioter. In this particular format of such explanation 'race' is, in effect, incidental to the marginalisation of labour:

From "The Riots in Britain 1981" by J Lea and J Young (1982)
in "Policing the Riots"(1982)
D Cowell; T Jones; J Young(eds) : Junction Books

The Collapse of Consensus Policing

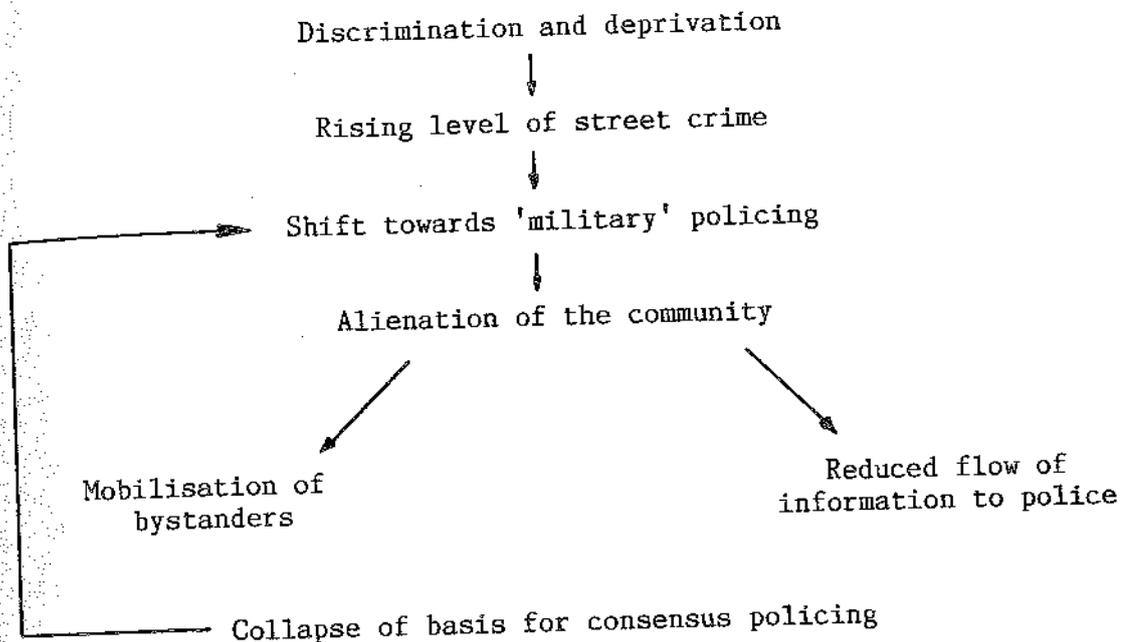


Diagram 1.3

"Race becomes an ingredient of this vicious circle. The economic alienation of young black people gives rise to a culture with a propensity to crime"(my emphasis).

In spite of the contentious evidence in this field(Stevens and Willis, 1979; Smith, 1982; Deutsch,1982), black criminality is taken as given and rationalised in terms of a liberal notion of the effects of economic disadvantage. Consequently, the conflict between black people and the police is described as the product of this criminal culture. "The police make the initial connection between race and crime." There is an elementary historical flaw in such a deterministically phrased causal connection. This conflict quite clearly predated any suggestion of black over-representation among offenders. As early as 1972 the House of Commons Select Committee on Police/Immigrant Relations stated categorically that:

"It was made clear by all witnesses ... that relations between police and younger West Indians are fragile, sometimes explosive"(my emphasis) and that "Of all the police forces from which we took evidence not one had found that crime committed by coloured people was proportionately greater than that by the rest of the population. Indeed in many places it was somewhat less"(my emphasis).

Poor 'police/ black relations' stretch back a long way; Lea and Young do not so much revise history as forget it.

An alternative can be seen in Thackrah's study of 'Reactions to Terrorism and Riots'(1985). Here the tension between theory and practice is particularly marked and the relationship between academic discourse and public policy of particular concern as the author is a lecturer at Bramshill Police College. Thackrah does not advance an explanation of the rioting as such, yet the assumptions he makes about the disorders throws light on a conception of the phenomenon that may structure policy oriented reactions to it. The policing problem is twofold. There is a question of public order:

"In the 1981 riots unprovoked attacks with firebombs resulted in the police needing to take a fresh look at their capability to cope with lawlessness on such a scale."

There is also a problem of public image:

"Police intelligence has to work against the Left trying to link the question of policing to what is seen as the underlying causes of recent rioting".

The rioters are seen as an irrational and cohesive 'crowd' that must be subdued, policing per se is removed from the agenda as the attacks on police are classified as unprovoked, and the focus is returned to British society as a whole.

The behaviourist mode of explanation reconstitutes 'the crowd' as an analytical unit, an analytical unit that is defined by the use of the 'average rioter' concept. Explanation, by focussing on the production of the average rioter can circumvent the production of the actual riot. This implicitly pathological conception of disorder again dismisses

collective behaviour processes and elevates the patterns of susceptibility to rioting. The academic task is consequently one of distinguishing between the causal significance of a list of preconditioning factors and the descent into 'recipe analysis', though not inevitable, the frequent product.

b) Official Explanations

i) The Scarman Report

As the principal attempt to lend an official meaning to disorder, as the main determinant of Government pronouncements and a major influence on Government policy, the report by Lord Scarman on the Brixton disorders is the most important work published concerning the 1981 British riots. In compiling the report Scarman faced many problems. The role of counsels, pressure on individuals and the difficulty of obtaining a full and fair spectrum of opinion are just three of the more obvious shortcomings of the judicial inquiry. Most significantly, the corporate voice will make more impression than the individual or aggregates of opinion and of these corporate institutions the most articulate will, in all probability, appear most favourably of all. So it is not unreasonable to suggest that as a body experienced in the conduct of the legal system the police force might have had an intrinsic advantage in the proceedings. Scarman's account of the disturbances themselves, significantly oriented towards a police history of events would seem to support such an assertion, so much so that John Clare of the BBC has said that

"what I saw in Brixton over five hours that Saturday night in April 1981 was not, in some crucial respects, what Lord Scarman sat down to describe at the end of his marathon inquiry"(1984,p48).

In his analysis of the prevailing social conditions in the Brixton area Lord Scarman concludes that whilst not amounting to causes of the riots, these do create "a predisposition toward violence"(2:38). He does not, however, discuss the differential experience of these conditions by the black and white communities. Concerning the nature of the rioting in Brixton, Scarman is ambivalent. On the one hand he describes the rioting as "essentially an outburst of anger and resentment by black people against the police"(3:110) which would imply rational and limited objectives whilst on the other hand he hints at anarchy in suggesting that the police stood "between society and a total collapse of law and order in the streets of an important part of our capital"(4:98). He also concludes that "the disorders were not, I am satisfied, premeditated"(3:101), yet adds that "though the evidence of leadership and outsider participation is slight, it is persuasive and has not been controverted"(3:101), which would suggest, at the very least, an element of collusion and organisation. Confusing matters even further he also states that "they [the rioters] were enjoying themselves" (3:77). These observations are not necessarily contradictory. Not only was the rioting crowd not a homogeneous group, but also individual motivation may well have been confused. Nevertheless, it would be fair to say that the overall impression that Scarman gives is of an almost 'regressive' mob (see Clare,1984).

Much of the report is taken up by an examination of public policy and institutions. Though it would be wrong to trespass on the territory of the expert, Scarman appears to contradict himself when early in the report (4.21,4.22) he questions the feasibility of saturation policing operations in terms of the number of people caught, the negligible long-term effects on crime rates and significant deleterious long-term effects on community relations, yet he concludes later in the report(4:75) that such operations are necessary. The fact remains that

in Brixton one such operation was instrumental in precipitating disorder and is described in the report as "a serious mistake"(4:76).

The administrative reforms recommended and the rejection of the possibility of a racist policing policy combine to imply a rejection of the Marxist dialectical interpretation of a police force with the function of disciplining the exploited black labour pool, which in turn implicitly rejects any revolutionary interpretation of the riots.

Essentially Lord Scarman formalises the orthodox liberal view of the inner city, a major achievement within the national social and administrative context. As with Kerner, the report is remarkable but should be seen as much as a political as a sociological document, although the Brixton report does benefit from the eschewal of simplistic notions of causality. As with Kerner, the report becomes an indictment of society in general: in the final conclusion Scarman mentions the police, national and local government, racial disadvantage, institutional racism (a term he quite possibly does not understand), and even America, but never once Brixton, despite terms of reference which specifically cited these disturbances as the main object of the inquiry. In striving for the universal Lord Scarman neglects the particular, and the causes of the Brixton riots remain, perhaps inevitably, uncertain.

ii) The Hytner Report (Report of the Moss Side Enquiry Panel to the Leader of the Greater Manchester Council. Chairman: Benet Hytner, QC)

The Hytner Commission was, in many ways, hamstrung in having no statutory powers to compel witnesses or grant immunity from prosecution. The report is more conclusive in its findings about the causes and nature of the rioting than its Brixton counterpart:

"The cause of the disturbances was that it was expected, by reason of beliefs based in the main on myth, that the trouble was inevitable on Moss Side and that there were sections of the Moss Side population who were ready and willing to fulfil those expectations"(44:1), "We do not believe that the course of events would have been significantly different if the initial outbreak had not occurred as it did"(44:5).

These conclusions hint at both sophistry and ex post facto rationalisation. The report searches in vain for logical localised social causes for the eruption but does not find them:

"Much could be done with more money and more imagination to improve the lives of Moss Side residents but we have found no evidence that either the deficiencies in the environment or the amenities are due to any neglect by the City Council or that they contributed in any significant way to the disturbances. To the contrary, other areas may complain at the proportion of the city's funds which have been lavished on Moss Side"(14:1).

In general, unemployment was much lower than in most areas of the North-West, crime rates were not particularly high and provision of leisure facilities and the other social amenities was reasonably good. One logical flaw recurs in these comparisons: there are no grounds for the suggestion that because certain hardships of city life were not as severe in Moss Side as in areas where there were no riots such hardships can not have been contributory factors in causing the disturbances.

In general Hytner shies away from investigating the police role both preceding and during the riots claiming that, although requested to do so, the Committee did not feel qualified to judge the actions of a professional, specialist body. In the issues that are examined, such as local consultation, a more flexible complaints procedure and the provocation of the police during the riots, the report echoes Scarman. However, the reference to arrest figures conclusively demonstrates that the disturbances involved predominantly white youths and a general hostility toward the police that transcended ethnic differences, although the antipathy between young blacks and the police may have been greater than for their white contemporaries. All this despite a reported assertion by Chief Constable James Anderton that the first

day's troubles occurred when

"about a hundred black youths aged between 15 and 20 years went on the rampage in Moss Side"

and that the second day's problems arose from a "crowd of approximately 200 youths, almost exclusively coloured"(1981). Again, there would seem in Moss Side, as in Brixton, to be some uncertainty about the nature of the rioting (see Wagstaffe,1983;Waddington,1985). Again an official account resorts to a discourse on the nature of general societal ills, not specific riot processes.

c) The 'riots' as a Social Movement : 'Disorders' or 'Uprisings'?

Those who have written from a self-professed 'radical' perspective have been keen to stress the intentional elements of mobilisation represented by rioting. The disorders were a national phenomenon of resistance; Joshua and Wallace(1983,p9) explicitly suggest that they were united by "a commonality of cause" and can be placed as a benchmark in the historical struggle of black people in Britain. Such claims are fine in principle but it is worth asking whether they mean very much. Miles has gone so far as to claim that among Marxist and 'radical' authors, in spite of other differences, there is an agreement

"on a series of lower-level descriptions about, for example, the institutionalisation of racism and the origin of the riots of 1981 in Britain"(1984,p217).

At any other than a superficial level such a statement is platitudinous. Tying the signification(signifié) 'resistance' to the signifier (signifiant) 'riot' is vague enough to mean anything to anyone, particularly when no reference is made to actual events. The problem arises when such interpretations are, on close inspection, found to be contradictory, even when written from similar and sympathetic political viewpoints. Once again it is the signifiant or explicandum that remains opaque.

Howe(1981) was keen to emphasise the revolutionary nature of the disorders, Verner(1981) suggests that Howe saw the riots as "an organised guerilla uprising against the police"(1981,p355). Certainly, for Howe, the status of the rioting as a nascent social movement of rebellion was guaranteed by the shortcomings of the Scarman inquiry and

"those forms which appeared in embryo on the streets of Britain's cities must necessarily develop into full blown manifestations in the not too distant future."

Paradoxically, such description is not dissimilar to many conspiracy theories proposed at the time of the rioting by some senior police officers (eg Anderton,1981) and newspapers (Sun, Daily Mail 7/81 passim). The riots are cast as orchestrated protests, only approbation or opprobrium distinguishes Howe's from Anderton's conception of disorder. Yet for others (Rex,1981;Kettle and Hodges,1982) the spontaneity of the uprisings is stressed and the rioting is seen as essentially disorganised activity.

The one writer to acknowledge this apparent contradiction was Gilroy(1981), who did not consider it problematic:

"Understanding new political movements - new class struggles - requires analytic concepts historically appropriate to the new forms they take. These spontaneous struggles may sometimes become violent, but this does not render them irreconcilable with a strategic long-term war of position"(1981,p221;my emphasis).

As with Piven and Cloward in America, violence is legitimated in the cause of black resistance and rioting seen as contiguous with other forms of black mobilisation. Such a position has profound implications that are not only moral but also relate to the sort of explanation suitable to rioting. Specifically, 'the crowd' gains ontological status as a political actor.

The 'radical' historical provenance of the riots of 1981 is also at times inconsistent. For some (eg Bunyan,1981,p153)

"In the summer of 1981 the British state went on the attack against the people".

The street conflicts were the inevitable product of a shift away from consensus politics produced by the late 20th century crisis of British capitalism, the police are the iron fisted extremity of the authoritarian state and consequently the riots are not so much the property of any specific racial division, but belonged to the more general (and more abstract) unit "the people". Implicitly, black people were caught in the front line of this conflict, almost by an accident of history. Explicitly, the ostensibly multi-racial nature of rioting is stressed and "a class dimension was added"(Bunyan 1981,p153). Conversely, the historical context for Fryer(1984) is the long history of repression suffered by black people in Britain in general and the repression of black people in British cities by police over the last thirty years in particular. The difference in emphasis is crucial. The sense of ownership that underlies this contrast is an important and recurrent theme. Whether or not the proprietorial claims on the 1981 urban violence were age specific (the elusive notion of 'youth'), gender specific or class specific are similarly moot points. Riots may be the "language of the unheard"(Martin Luther King), but who speaks this tongue? Black people, young people, working people (who are not working), or is this merely the voice of the powerless? Many would fain bid for this powerful symbol and it is in the clamour of the historical auction that it is easy to concur with Rushdie's point that

"History is natural selection. Mutant versions of the past struggle for dominance, new species of fact arise, and old saurian truths go to the wall, blindfolded and smoking last cigarettes. Only the mutations of the strong survive" (1984).

In this sense the bid by the radical left to attach sympathetic meaning to riots, to define rioting as political action, may be pragmatically commendable but is no less tenuous an exercise than any other attempt to endow the disorders with meaning post hoc, particularly if it appears that there are contradictions within the meanings so

offered. The contrasts between spontaneity and organisation, multi-racial rioting and black rebellion, 'youth' and 'people', are generally contrasts of emphasis rather than oppositions but are nevertheless significant and undermine Miles' claim of unity. The processes behind the genesis of disorder are lost in the competition to divine the political significance of rioting.

d) Conclusions

Recognising that "objectivity is a direction not a terminus" (Harré, 1978), it is enough to be aware of the process of appropriation. A tacit principle of any analysis is that explanation is dependent on explicandum (that which is to be explained), yet in this case the opposite is frequently the case. The riot surfaces as a historical object, the product of its own explanation, explanation that is determined by proclivity, preference or profession, or at best is a priori, dependent on a set of assumptions that is brought to the analysis at its inception. In short, everybody seems able to say 'why there were riots' but few ever mention 'what the riots were'. In order to understand rioting it is essential either to fill this empirical void, provide the calibre of reportage which may serve as a basis for explanation, or else accede to a form of self-indulgent relativism which suggests that all interpretations of rioting are equally valid in their claims on reality, differentiated only by their moral or political claims on future action.

It is all very well, and not particularly difficult, to vilify everybody else's work but the purpose of this chapter is to tease out two sets of research problems.

i) Problems of explanation

How conceptually to frame the relationship between spontaneity (the instinctive) and rationality (organisation/premeditation) in an explanation of rioting. How is it possible to avoid BOTH

- a) the vision of the riot as a social outcome, an inevitable product of a recipe of preconditions;
- AND b) the vision of the riot as a conspiracy/revolutionary social movement (the rioters forming either the insurrectionary mob of 'extremists' or the scheming political actor)?

In other words, before explaining the specifics of one riot it is necessary answer the following questions:

What constitutes a cause of a riot?

What status does the crowd have (aggregation, collectivity or supra-individual)?

How is it possible to conceptualise the link between material relations (economic structure) and one particular form of social action, without resorting to an attempted falsification/verification of the ecological fallacy?

Is 'rioting' a form of social movement equivalent to other forms of popular mobilisation?

ii) The major empirical problem

It is imperative to define what happened before analysing why it happened. This is the task of defining an explicandum whilst avoiding any fall into the false dichotomy of induction/deduction (ie acknowledging the interdependence of the theoretical and the empirical).

Chapter two attempts to provide a conceptual structure that is incorporated in the explanation of violent conflict in chapters five, six and seven.

Chapters three and four, analysing the incidence of disorder in London, attempt to provide the necessary descriptive material.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL ACTION AND SPATIAL PATTERN : 'CAUSES' OF RIOTS AND SOCIAL THEORY

1 SUMMARY

2 THE STRUCTURAL COMPLEXITY OF REFLEXIVE METHOD; NOTIONS OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND:

- a) Pre-conscious thought and perception geography
- b) Psycho-analysis and Freudian notions of the subconscious
- c) Lévi-Strauss and anthropological structuralism
- d) Chomskyan linguistics and cognitive psychology
- e) Humanistic geography.

3 THE STRUCTURAL COMPLEXITY OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES; 'SOCIAL MOVEMENTS', COLLECTIVITIES AND ONTOLOGY:

- a) The social/economic interface; the 'needs' of economic systems/structures
- b) Class structure as action; Parkin's theory of social mobilisation
- c) Castells' grassroots volte-face; logical wholes and ontological vagaries.

4 STRUCTURAL POWERS:

- a) The problem of universals
- b) The need for a mechanistic theory of causality
- c) Structural ontology
- d) Conclusions.

5 HARRE'S RECONCILIATION OF STRUCTURE AND AGENCY.

6 CONCLUSIONS.

It is essential to analyse 'what the act of rioting means' as well as 'how rioting is caused'. These two tasks are not necessarily irreconcilable as long as major conceptual problems concerning the role of the actor in the crowd, the nature of causality and the ontological status of 'social movements' are clarified. In this chapter, in so doing:

Firstly, it is argued that reflexive methodology can not alone provide an explanation of the meaning of rioting or any other form of social behaviour. Not only does the individual tend to use accounts of action as justification (revision) of the past, but more significantly there is every reason to believe that individuals, even when acting in good faith, are not always in a position to give exhaustive accounts of their own behaviour.

Secondly, it is argued that whilst certain concepts that derive from the humanistic school of geography are indispensable to an understanding of the genesis of riots, there are two major confusions that arise from the misconceived opposition of humanistic and structuralist analysis in the geographical literature, viz

- a) The problematic relationship between theoretical and empirical domains in epistemology is logically distinct from questions that relate to the ontological structuring of the world. Explicitly, the provisional status of all knowledge is reconcilable with realist philosophy.

- b) The repetitious opposition of voluntarism and determinism in the geographical literature obscures the undisputed point that notions of voluntarism rest on the psychology of the individual. Yet, as already outlined, on closer inspection the tension between structure and action exists as much within as beyond the individual. Consequently, humanistic method is flawed if it excludes models of the subconscious mind.

Thirdly, it is argued that economic structures and the structures implicated in social mobilisation (collective action) are constituted by sets of internal relations. It is the variable nature of these relations that determines the ontological status of such structures. According ontological status to structure, which does not necessitate reification, implies that these structures both exist as analytical units and must impinge on the real world (ie they have causal powers). Terms such as 'race', 'class' and 'crowd' assert the existence of collective units consisting of groups of individuals. The groups (collectives) may have causal powers distinct from those individuals but there is no necessary equivalence between them. Race and class may both be valid analytical units but they are not equivalent units. Rioting and neighbourhood mobilisation may be both forms of 'grassroots movements' but there is no necessary equivalence between the ontological status of the rioting 'crowd' and the collective that is made up of participating members of the neighbourhood group. In each case the ontological status of the collective unit generated by structural influences is contingent. The tension between structure and action will differ according to this status.

Fourthly, it is argued that the Humean causal model so often used in social science can not accommodate the subtleties necessary if social theory is to be tied to social action. Only through the more

sophisticated formulations of mechanistic causality can this be achieved. In this reformulation of the concept of causality, the causal powers of structure and agent can be seen as not so much opposed as distinct. Man makes the world that makes man. The recursive nature of social life so stressed in structuration and similar social theory is retained alongside an explicit notion of the determination of social action. Only within this generative causal model does the notion of 'the cause of a riot' have any sense. The 'recipe analyses' outlined in chapter one are intrinsically flawed because of their failure to recognise the complexity of the concept of causality.

Finally, it is suggested that combining the ethogenic social psychology of Harré and Goffman with the semiology of structural linguistics can provide the analytical foundation for a provisional reconciliation of the structure/agency debate. It will be suggested in chapter six that the generation of violent conflict in space (the causes of rioting in London in 1981) can be most readily understood against this background. The rioting will be shown as both a spontaneous social movement (the crowd as a valid collective unit) united by the rationality of the members of those crowds, and as a social expression very much tied to the historical(material) conditions in specific 'places', in particular and the experiences of British black people generally.

Introduction

It will be suggested later in this thesis that the rioting in London in 1981 was restricted to very small areas of particular 'places' (chapter three), that those involved in violent activity in the most serious rioting generally lived very close to these 'locales' (chapter

four), and that conflict between black people and the police had become so historically imbedded in these locales that the transformation from occasional clashes to mass confrontation was unexceptional in this local context (chapters five and six). In this argument the relationship between place(circumstance) and action(behaviour) is crucial.

Within the geographical literature there has been a tendency in the structure/agency debate mistakenly to see the former term(structure) corresponding to society and the latter term(agency) as synonymous with the individual (eg Johnston 1983;Gregory 1978,1981). The central aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the flawed nature of this conception, in order to reconcile the set of concepts derived from humanistic geography that focus on 'a sense of place' (see Tuan 1975,1976,1974;Buttimer 1974,1980) with a theory of the determination of social action (the causes of rioting) in a way which neither devalues the rationality of rioters nor elevates the rioting to a political strategy (ie the problematic status of the rioting as a 'social movement'). Neither task implies approbation or opprobrium in relation to rioting as a form of behaviour.

2 THE STRUCTURAL COMPLEXITY OF REFLEXIVE METHOD : NOTIONS OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

Individuals can not always readily monitor their own behaviour. Psychological complexity, implied by assorted notions of the subconscious mind, may question both the epistemic value and reflexive base of humanistic geography.

a) Pre-conscious thought and perception geography

At one extreme of the subconscious mind there exist processes which transform the concatenation of sense data into meaningful perception. The eye blinks frequently, yet the world does not appear to disappear every few seconds; when the head moves the incoming data are exactly the same as if the world was moving but this is normally blocked out. This is the realm of the pre-conscious mind; form is conventionally discerned from content. Perception is an example of learned behaviour, constrained by what Bruner(1983) has described in information theory terms as 'limited channel capacity'.

It is at this level that most geographical studies of perception operate (eg Gould,1974; Boal,1969; Pocock,1976; Lee 1979; Downs and Stea,1977), and whilst this work has been interesting it has produced fairly limited conclusions, which are, in the main, almost self-evident, such as the tendency to assign good figure to uneven form(topological organisation). This is principally because whilst perception may condition behaviour, specific actions can not be taken as indicative of specific 'perceptual states' unless related to deeper structural variables which generate the process of perception development. Empirical accumulation of evidence without a theoretical base can produce only limited results.

b) Psycho-analysis and Freudian notions of the subconscious

Freudian psycho-analysis has suffered several major attacks from within the British academic establishment in the 1980s (eg Harré, 1983;Eysenck 1985;Gellner 1985) yet two relatively undisputed concepts remain of interest to this chapter.

The first is the concept of repression that Hampshire(1983) has suggested will remain Freud's outstanding contribution to psychology. It matters little whether or not the effects of repression are theorised in the competitive metaphor of Freudian ego, id and super-ego, only that at the level of self-consciousness, thoughts and intentions 'mask' the 'phantasies' of the subconscious. Individuals do not always know what they are doing and cannot always 'control' themselves, a phenomenon most dramatically demonstrated in pathological cases (eg Sacks 1983,1984, 1985;Rycroft 1985). Behaviour has a latent content revealed in analysis of action that is not manifestly evident. Psycho-analysis may, but will not invariably, facilitate access to this latent content; the agent may refuse (in good faith and good health) to acknowledge such an element of behaviour.

Secondly, if one acknowledges a principle assertion of all psycho-analysis that at a certain, ill defined, level we communicate internally in symbols which are not so much ambiguous as meaningfully rich, endowed with emotional and sentimental variety in the manner of any effective metaphor, then it is not unreasonable to assume that the same non-conscious faculty of 'iconic representation' will 'read' the waking world in the same mode, at the same time and alongside our discursive consciousness. Any sign in the umwelt may well be metaphorically invested with several meanings, again this is no true ambiguity as such. Reactions to any objectively defined sign which are inconsistent cannot be understood as irrational, but rather as a product of this tendency. The absurdity of behaviourist expectations of predictable responses to given stimuli is once more revealed, precisely because no stimulus is given as such but is instead not only contextually defined but also personally malleable.

Rycroft's(1974,p77) point about the flaws in post-war psycho-

analysis suggests the viability in such circumstances of the linguistic sociological project:

"symbolisation is a general capacity of the mind, which can be used by both the discursive, syntactical, rational form of thinking characteristic of waking, intellectual activity ('secondary process' thinking in psycho-analytical terminology) and the non-discursive, affective form of thinking characteristic of dreaming, imagining, joking and creating (primary process thinking in psycho-analytic terminology); and by recognising that these two types of thinking are not necessarily opposed to one another, as most formulations of psycho-analytical theory imply, but can work in harness".

Spatial and social divisions are similarly caught up in these processes of symbolisation; taken in at a possibly non-conscious level, potentially inaccessible to received reflexive methodology. Put slightly differently, again one cannot always trust individuals' explanations of their own behaviour, yet neither can one always attribute teleological causes to subconscious conditions. If racist stereotyping becomes part of the symbolic Umwelt, certain actions will follow on from stereotypical associations, yet does the blame for such invidious behaviour lie with the individual (the agent) or with the society (structure) that generates these racist caricatures? The implicit tension between a pathology of racist individuals and the institutionalisation of racist practice is one that has bedevilled much social analysis, not least, I shall argue, analysis of the relationship between police and black people in London.

c) Lévi Strauss and anthropological structuralism

Freud's formal identification of an unconscious mind gave license to the analyst to impose meaning on his subject. Picasso may not have realised it but the essence of the cubist 'Les Demoiselles d'Avignon' is the fear of castration, Camus was an accidental racist, and most embarrassingly of all those who gain kudos from their art and cash from

their criticism must concede that the meanings others find in their texts are equally or even more valid than the meanings they themselves put there in the first place. And, of course, in the social sciences the specialist not only can know something about his object that 'the object' does not realise, he must know something or else he is superfluous.

Lévi-Strauss' attempt to discern universal properties in 'l'esprit humain' is thematically a direct successor to the work of Freud, whose influence he readily acknowledges. The fundamental postulate of Lévi-Strauss' work is that the phenomena we interpret have characteristic divisions ascribed to them by divisions of the mind, in other words it is the ordering process of the mind that in cutting up a continuous time-space environment into segments gives the (false) impression of a vast number of separate things and sequences of separate events (eg the spectrum 'divided' into individual colours). This process occurs at the level of structure, never at the level of manifest fact. Because of such genesis of pattern, theory and theory formation assume a function as important as that of empirical evidence. As Leach(1970) has put it,

"The general object of analysis is conceived as a kind of algebraic matrix of possible permutations and combinations located in the unconscious 'human mind'; the empirical evidence is merely an example of what is possible" (my emphasis) and "Lévi-Strauss appears to regard cross-cultural variations of cultural phenomena - especially myth - as self-generated topological distortions of a common structure".

Observed differences in pattern are thus seen as neither the result of functional relevance nor adaptive evolution but more simply in terms of mathematical permutation. It is not possible here to analyse Lévi-Strauss' work in depth, but such assertions obviously impinge on any theory of agency. Lévi-Strauss goes further still in effectively rejecting all study of history. In an attitude reminiscent of Proust he suggests that history exists only in the present, it is never more than today's perception of past events and is thus deprived of even potential

objectivity. Hence myth is not seen in the anthropological tradition as 'fallacious history but rather as 'a sacred tale', 'a machine for the suppression of time'. This precludes diachronic analysis of social structure, one can only examine single instances of pattern in terms of the alternative combinations of what might have been possible (usually phrased in terms of binary oppositions such as Culture/Nature, Normal/Transformed in the culinary study). Explanation is hermeneutic, whilst the individual is inevitably insignificant, agency non-existent.

Lévi-Strauss also made extensive use of the linguistic philosophy of Saussure. The crucial division within Saussure's work is that between 'langue', a specific language (or code) and 'parole', an item of speech (or message) in that language. The meaning of language is seen in terms of each item of speech, or 'sign' being placed in relation to dissimilar items of exchange and similar items for comparison (see Culler 1976 for explanation). The 'valeur' (value) of the sign is then a product of the notion of difference, the manner in which it is unique within this matrix. Hence any one parole has an arbitrary or conventional character (Giddens 1978), in that an individual speaker has no choice other than to follow what is in the language; whilst the langue itself is radically arbitrary (there is no necessary reason why the implement I use for writing should be called 'a pen'), the internal composition of the langue is only relatively arbitrary (eg 'pen nib'). A more complicated pattern concerns the relationship between 'signifiant' (the signifier or sign in one sense of the word) and 'signifié' (that which is signified), since the relationship between the essence (or idea) of an object, the relevant referent and the object world is not made clear.

A more easily understood development of this model is used for social analysis by Barthes and the post-Lévi-Strauss structuralists (see

DIAGRAM 2.1 Social analysis and the structuralism of Roland Barthes

A

System

GARMENT SYSTEM

Sets of pieces, parts or details which cannot be worn at the same time on the same part of the body and whose variation corresponds to a change in the meaning of the clothing eg DJ, lounge suit, tweed jacket.

FURNITURE SYSTEM

Set of stylistic varieties of a single piece of furniture eg bed.

B

Syntagm

(Conventionally) correct juxtaposition of items eg DJ, dress shirt, bow tie

(Conventionally) correct juxtaposition of different pieces of furniture
eg bed-wardrobe-mirror
dining table-chairs-sideboard

Diagram 2.1).

The A and B dimensions are also referred to at different times as metaphoric and metonymic or as paradigmatic and syntagmatic. In a behavioural context the metaphoric(systematic,paradigmatic) is best understood as a mode of behaviour relying on similarity, where any single item may symbolise a whole system relative to alternative 'interchangeable' systems. The relation between the police and an individual is metaphorically linked to the relationships between the same individual and other authority figures, just as the dinner jacket symbolises one form of dress within the garment langue. The metonymic(syntagmatic) is best understood as relying on contiguity. For instance, the syntagm 'dinner jacket, bow tie, shirt' is understood metonymically as representing a series of conventional actions and forms of behaviour. The social syntagm 'policeman standing smiling with his hands behind his back' is a syntagm with normative metonymic implications concerning the nature of law and order, expected behaviour of the 'bobby', and so on.

Obviously langue is a variable of scale. In a culinary example the food system may represent 'langue' at one level, international cuisines different langues at another scale, regional cuisine at a lower scale, right down to family cuisines. There is always a nested hierarchy of langues within langues.

There are obvious parallels (see Gregory 1978) between the langues of structural linguistics and sub-cultural studies in sociology, related to conventional or 'local' meaning in the social geography umwelt. Distinctively, in linguistic analysis the mode of expression is usually fixed by the matrix of valeur. The French structuralist literary critic Derrida has gone further, suggesting that since meanings

"exist only in the continual process of their actualisation within forms of life" (Giddens, 1978),

and since the process of *valeur* operates through différance, which is independent of those using a language, then the text of a work is autonomous and once placed in context can be deconstructed to reveal the genesis of meaning. This is described as the de-centring of the subject and is manifestly de-humanising.

d) Chomskyan linguistics and cognitive psychology

Chomsky has suggested that the learning of language presents an insurmountable problem to those linguists who have traditionally seen the infant brain as some sort of tabula rasa. There must exist a finite set of syntactical rules that generate an infinite number of sentences. Initially put forward in the 1950s as a refutation of psychological behaviourism, Chomsky's argument claimed that any form of stimulus-response learning of language would necessitate a much longer period of tuition than the three or four years it takes the child to grasp the basic laws of sentence formation. There must, therefore, be some laws of universal grammar which transcend all languages and which are preprogrammed in the infant before birth. The language is thus not learnt as such but rather triggered by the effects of environment in a manner analogous to other physiological phenomena such as puberty:

"Under the appropriate stimulation at the right stage of life, the genetically programmed language facility will mature to full language competence" (Chomsky 1982).

The preferred reason for the late discovery of such a process is the persisting difficulties that prohibit valuable examinations of the neural base of advanced cognitive processes. Genetic endowment both conditions and facilitates human behaviour. Man is freed from simple environmental determinism by such 'programming' but the manner in which

he may speak is strictly limited by it. The ability to form theories far beyond available evidence, and the cycle of creation/confirmation or refutation/ modification/idealisation/creation of models of the world are highlighted in the theory, but by the very nature of language the 'computer programme' itself is inaccessible to introspection. In short, we are unable to understand mental states because we do not have, we can not have, the conceptual apparatus to handle them.

Similarly, cognitive psychology has failed to resolve the nature of 'the self'. Fodor(1983) has pointed out that most processes of the brain are, in fact, inaccessible and that consciousness represents an exceptional rather than a normal state of the mind. Instead, the metaphor of bundles of special purpose computational systems may be closer to a genuine picture of the brain. These bundles tend to be highly specialised and, in computer terms, they are self-regulating and do not necessarily talk to one another. This view of a modular system within a specific neural architecture obviously raises questions of power. Dennett(1983) has explicitly rejected notions of the one/self being in control of this system. If the 'self' exists at all he suggests it is more as some sort of consciousness responsible for public presentation and rationalisation. He describes a situation where we have 'impoverished' or 'underprivileged' access to what is going on in our mind:

"the notion which was overpoweringly obvious to someone like John Locke or Descartes, that the mind is transparent to itself, that each one of us is the ultimate authority on everything that is going on in our minds, that we are incorrigible, infallible observers of our own mental life, has been completely overthrown"(1983).

The work of Chomsky and others mentioned above is contentious. The aim here is not to refute the psychological unity of man (see Harré 1983 on 'personal being'). Nevertheless, investigation at the neural and

other levels of structuring within the individual in the determination of behaviour puts a question mark over simplistic reflexive methodology, adds a complexity to the determinism/libertarian dichotomy which is not always mirrored in the geographical literature (see diagram 2.2). Put simply, actions may have a latent content, unknown and inaccessible to the individual).

e) Humanistic Geography

As Searle(1984) has pointed out, an essential characteristic of most social phenomena is that,

"the concept that names the phenomenon is itself a constituent of the phenomenon."(p16)

They are, in practice, normally self-referential. For instance, in order to understand 'race' it is vital to understand what is generally meant by 'race'. The concept is intentional in that it involves a statement of mental 'directedness' or 'aboutness'. It is this problem that prohibits the formulation of a social science of the same nature as the natural sciences, where intentionality is not problematic. Hence,

"The fact that the social sciences are powered by the mind is the source of their weakness vis a vis the natural sciences. But it is also precisely the source of their strength as social sciences. What we want from the social sciences, and what we get from the social sciences at their best, are theories of pure and applied intentionality."(Searle 1984,p18)

The humanistic schools in both sociology and geography have grasped this, seemingly obvious, principle and as Entrikin(1977),Johnston(1983) and many others pointed out, produced a powerful critical analysis of positivism and other methodologies without producing any advance in theory construction much beyond reliance on neo-Weberian verstehen and Schutzian phenomenology. This reactionary rooting has been conceded by Ley:

Diagram 2.2 Action and Consciousness

<u>Social Action</u>	<u>Awareness</u>	Accessibility	Monitoring
Goal oriented purposive behaviour	Self-conscious	Total Total	Total
Reflex behaviour	Pre-consciousness	Total	Contingent
Social competence	Giddens' Practical consciousness	Total	Partial
Latent content of behaviour	Freud's subconsciousness	Partial	None
Physiological conditioning	Neural notions of 'the self'	None	None
Genetic endowment	Chomsky's pre-programming	None	None

"The tone of modern humanism was at the outset initially negative or at least broadly critical"(1978) and "The power of the critique is not yet matched by the power of the reconstruction".(1978)

The object here is not to review the increasingly divergent trends of phenomenology, idealism, pragmatism and other humanist work, but rather to analyse two problems that regularly appear in 'the reconstruction' in such studies.

The first concerns the nature of knowledge. The Kantian divisions of noumenon, or thing in itself, from phenomenon, or appearance of an object as we have it in experience, is often used in the humanist argument to question the status of any and all knowledge.¹ This is the threat of Kant to a correspondence theory of truth (the idea that for any true statement there must be a corresponding state of affairs either actually or potentially 'existing'). The power of this threat, resisted by Russell, the early Wittgenstein and the positivists, was only fully realized with the acceptance of Einstein's relativity theory and Poincare's (or Kuhn's) principle of paradigms. In the words of Putnam(1982):

"What we call 'truth' depends both on what there is (the way things are) and on the attribution of the thinker."(p197)

There exist equivalent descriptions of the same facts. Riemann geometry is logically flawless yet suggests that two parallel lines may meet, totally contradicting the equally flawless Euclidian theory. This argument for the conventional nature of the paradigm has been used by those in the humanist tradition to suggest that the assumption of realism is an implausible one. For example Smith(1984) has argued very strongly in favour of:

"a philosophical framework that rejects the notion of a fixed, extrapersonal truth, in favour of the knowledge inherent in doing or being."(p356)

Hence the argument is for theory selection based on utility rather than truth criteria. However, there seems to be a confusion of issues here.

The first point is that 'the Kantian clause' refers to man's apprehension of the world not the existence of the world. In Bhaskar's (1978) characterisation of realism man is here only accidentally, the world was not made for us, the Kantian noumenon/phenomenon division refers only to our apprehension of knowledge, not to the existence of knowledge itself. Secondly, the utility of theory can still not dissolve natural/social science differences. Intentionality remains problematic, as explained already. Only when intentionality can be taken for granted (eg profit-maximising economic man) can theories of knowledge in the physical and behavioural worlds be compared. Thirdly, and most importantly, in the face of such problems of truth criteria, the issues of knowledge become secondary to the issues of meaning. Given assumed unity of the species of homo-sapiens the correct field of investigation for the social sciences is the apprehension of meaning, ie not the man/noumena relation masked by the intervening phenomena but rather the man/phenomena relationship period. Note this is not an attempt to refute the claim that phenomena are all uniquely perceived, but rather a suggestion that the process by which they are perceived will be the same for all men, and it is this process that is the proper object of study for the social sciences. Proof is still provisional, the problem of empiricism v rationalism remains within this process, but the individual loses privileged status whilst keeping his humanity.

The second problem concerns the nature of experience. The work of Tuan, Buttner and Guelke which tends toward more implicit or explicit forms of idealism has been criticised by the more utilitarian humanists such as Ley, 1978; Smith, 1984; and Jackson and Smith, 1984. Again, approaches vary but the central thrust is that the Vidalian tradition, when taken to its logical conclusion, permits empathic characterisations of 'place' and sympathetic portrayals of the Umwelt which are of singular and not comparative value. Smith and Jackson (1984) have

asserted the need to maintain the supremacy of the observational method, and Gibson(1981) has attacked Guelke's refusal to admit evidence that is external to the mind. However, the danger is that within self-imposed constraints humanistic anthropocentrism seems to be self-defeating. If the solipsism of idealism is avoided then the search becomes that of Ley(1981), an attempt to identify 'intersubjectively verifiable' phenomena. By definition this excludes systematic applications of models of the subconscious mind. It has already been shown that the unconscious mind is not easily subjected to introspection. In humanist epistemology, only those parts of the subconscious that are theoretically or ultimately accessible can be considered as valid. This has two implications.

Firstly there is no differentiation of the actual self and the accounting self. This is the paradox of Gide, inherent in the problem, of self-deception. As Gellner(1982) has pointed out:

"Existentialism, while claiming to be a general account of the human situation, is in fact an account of a very distinctive variant of it."(p259)

Camus' Sisyphus showed rare insight and triumphed over 'the authority view' in revelling in the absurdity of his position. In Sartre's terms we must decide whether 'mauvaise foi' is pathological or corrigible. If the former is the case subjective versthens are a totally inappropriate focus of study and even if, as I would suggest, the latter is closer to reality then in this teasing juxtaposition of ego and superego humanistic evidence, shorn of reliability and having readily renounced 'objective' or 'real' status, becomes no more than a tendentious tissue of opinion.

Secondly, by suggesting that we have no access to unconscious processes humanists undervalue their own work and underestimate the limits of social investigation. Schutz's(1967) verification postulates

of logical consistency and adequacy are completely justifiable but the third postulate of subjective interpretation which demands that all features of the umwelt can be translated into forms of subjective meaning is ironically close to Wittgenstein's statement in the Tractatus(1922) that, "Whereof we cannot speak, thereon we must pass over in silence"(1922,p7), and even closer to Chomsky's sociological nihilism. For Chomsky(1982) has suggested that the constrictions of universal grammar are such that it is impossible to produce a useful behavioural science:

"There is no reason to believe that the mental representations and principles of mental computation that enter so intimately into our action, or our interaction with the world or with others, or our understanding, or our speech, are accessible to introspection any more than the analysing mechanisms of our visual system, or for that matter the working of our lives."(p190)

hence

"We have no idea how to approach these questions within the framework of science. We can write novels about them but we cannot construct interesting scientific theories, even false ones, about them. We simply have nothing to say."(p187; my emphasis.)

None of these criticisms in any way invalidate the substantive work carried out by the humanist school. Indeed the accusation is more one of false modesty than of falsehood. Investigations of the everyday world (cf Garfinkel) and the meanings of folk sociology have consistently provided the most fruitful work within social geography for the past decade. But such analysis, effectively the study of creative semiotics, must be placed within the nested hierarchy of structures, acknowledging both economic and subconscious forces in the determination of behaviour. In short, in the next sections I wish to suggest that when Rex(1974) claims that:

"the attempt to analyse patterns of social relations in terms of structures akin to those in linguistics, reduces what is specifically sociological to patterns of a non-sociological, and, from the point of view of human actors, a meaningless order,"

he is completely mistaken.

3 SPATIAL STRUCTURE : THE SOCIO-STRUCTURAL LEVEL : THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The structure/agency mutation of the perennial determinist/free will controversy is no more susceptible to resolution now than it has ever been. At the root of the problem lies the contradictory view man has of himself as both part of a world dominated by logical causality and simultaneously standing apart from that world, able to rationalise, apprehend and even alter the reality of this situation. It is for precisely this reason that the exaggerated claims of extreme, dogmatic psycho-analysis which confine behavioural causality to an inaccessible subconscious, notwithstanding the fact that this subconscious lies within the individual, pose exactly the same threat to agency as those of the most dehumanised versions of structural economism (Gellner 1985). Comprehension of spatial pattern must reconcile this dichotomy both within and beyond the single actor. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the manner in which the debate, in both geography and sociology, has been focused on 'explanation' ignores ontological definition, generally taken for granted by proponents of rival arguments. Giddens has thus far been one of few who have addressed this problem and I want to begin this section with a quote from his work. Stressing the difference between the attributes of the individual and the collective he claims that,

"social systems have no purposes, reasons or needs whatsoever; only human individuals do so. Any explanation of social reproduction which imputes teleology to social systems must be declared invalid"(1979,p7).

Hence, whilst concurring with Duncan and Ley's(1982) claim that

"all of these problems stem from the ontological status attributed to structures"(1982,p41)

along with these authors' positions on the perils of anthropomorphic structuralism(1982,p36) and functionalism (1982,p42), there are major points of disagreement. Specifically, the following propositions which run counter to their views will be advanced:

- a) Abstract theoretical entities such as economic structure do have causal powers(cf 1982,p36).
- b) Social relations are by their very nature internal rather than external, but this does not necessarily imply a holistic theory of social structure (cf 1982,p35). Indeed the form of holism Duncan and Ley rile against has been more pointedly criticised by Popper(1957).
- c) Once structure is given ontological status, analysis based on the 'logic of wholes' is justified but such logic must always be tied to this status(cf 1982,p38). Hence reification is a logical not empirical flaw(cf 1982,p37) because by their very definition structures do not exist as concrete entities.

The central question Duncan and Ley ask is do structures have "causal efficacy", "power over men and women?"(1982,p36). Their answer to this question is clearly no. Yet this presents a misleading dichotomy (either structure does or does not have power over men and women) and is a problem poorly presented, for if, as Duncan and Ley seem content to admit, economic and other structures do have some ontological status then they must relate to human behaviour by their very existence.

Hence the question should be, 'What sort of influence do abstract entities have on men and women?' Closely tied to this failure is the manner in which the meaning of causality is taken for granted throughout the article, and when some refinement of this vague concept is broached the authors make an incorrect distinction between formal and efficient causes(1982,p38). It is because of these problems that I wish to refute the statement that,

"What is of crucial importance is how dispensable structural theory around the mode of production has become"(1982,p54.)

Such a claim is seen at its most absurd not in the straw men of structuralist social geography that Duncan and Ley cite but in economic geography.

Economic theory shares a problem with sociological functionalism, in its attempt to discern how a system 'works' there may be an implicit assumption that the system itself is utilitarian, or at least outside the province of value. Moreover, the very boundaries of such systems are contentious. Brookfield's(1975) central argument is that,

"the interconnection of the world economy which has been progressively achieved over the last five centuries has brought into existence a set of processes which have operated, albeit in radically different ways, on all points and peoples touched by the interdependent system"(1975,p189).

He describes his own work as a form of operational structuralism, although Gregory(1978) has questioned what he means by this, but fundamentally his grouse is ontological, his work an examination of the prime analytical unit in development economics. Geography has too often focused on the illusory free-standing region, post-war economics on the equally illusory freestanding nation, but for Brookfield the process of development is global and the forces which determine this system ubiquitous. Although there is no prediction of the particular behaviour of particular people at a specific time, the suggestion that abstract structures hold causal powers over humanity appears so self-evident that

it is not even questioned in any economic theory, based as it is on the behaviourist, stimulus/response conception of economic man. The manner in which these systems intermesh is revealed by analysis, even though such explanations are not necessarily strictly susceptible to empirical testing (eg Brookfield's assertion that R+D investment in Lesser Developed Countries is minimal due to the nature of Trans National Corporations (1975, pp180-183) cannot be empirically either verified or falsified because of the absence of satisfactory 'control' comparisons). It is essential to recognise that this is because all economic theory is based on the virtues of behaviourism; abstract economic structures represent stimuli and the validity of theory is rooted in statistical generalisation rather than mechanistic causality.

An alternative perspective can be based on the assumption that the genesis of accounts that we give of our own society, which masquerade as 'knowledge', is itself problematic. I want to maintain that the insights and analysis of writers such as Brookfield are invaluable, but that the logical extension of what is taken for granted in 'macro-scale' studies, particularly in economics, is responsible for implausible explanation in the social realm. The problem might be stated thus. Underneath the ostensible empirical world of innocent meanings lies the more tangled 'social construction of reality' (Berger and Luckmann 1967) that may serve to transform the manner in which people 'know' their society. This latent content is exposed by structuralist authors such as Barthes or Castells, but the product, hermeneutic and emancipatory by nature (in Habermas' terms), serves well only in the descriptive mode. When looking for explanation the dangerous tendency is to locate a group of people best served by such transformations, attribute to this group the propensity to effect these transformations, and then dignify the group with the spurious unity of some omnibus, normally pejorative, title such as 'the bourgeoisie'. Significantly, for Lévi-Strauss the

business of locating such a force was considered irrelevant, just as if Darwin had tried to locate some teleological device behind evolution. Darwin's model works as a descriptive theory based on the situational logic of mutation and selection, it is not controlled by any entity in exactly the same sense as the mythologies explicated by Barthes are not, contrary to his own opinion, controlled by any one group, although as he often demonstrates the more perceptive and Machiavellian members of society may use the labyrinthine maze of synthetic meaning to their own advantage. This does not detract from the ontological status of such structuring of the world or the significance of power relations in social theory.

a) The social/economic interface; the 'needs' of economic systems/structures

This problem, most readily seen at the interface of the economic and the social, can be illustrated by examination of the economic causes and social effects of West Indian migration to the UK. For the sake of consistency and brevity I have chosen to cite principally the work of just one author, Sivanandan, although I would suggest that similar flaws underwrite most academic works in this field; certainly, inter alia, those as diverse as Rex, Miles and the CCCS. In the 1960s, Peach (1965, 1966, 1968) clearly demonstrated that, contrary to contemporary received wisdom, migration from the West Indies to the UK was reasonably finely tuned to the cyclical fluctuations and regional labour markets of British economy:

"Thus both in the movement into Britain and in the outward movement to the Caribbean, West Indian migrants have been largely governed by conditions in this country." (1965, p41)

In an article which leans heavily on Peach's work to highlight the invidious social effect of such movement, Sivanandan (1976) produces a powerful indictment of British capitalism. Chronic overcrowding in

those areas of labour demand arising from inadequate housing provision was linked closely to localised racial tension. Migrant workers were doubly cheap for the British economy, imported as a ready-made factor of production without the nation bearing any of the costs of rearing labour, whilst the new workforce were also prepared to take the lowest paid jobs, which had been shunned by the white community:

"The economic profit from immigration had gone to capital, the social cost had gone to labour, but the resulting conflict between the two had been mediated by a common ideology of racism." (Sivanandan 1976,p350)

For Sivanandan and Peach, the engine powering migration was the British economy, and although the status of the British economy's 'needs' are not clear, for Sivanandan this is no more than one manifestation of the power of capital. He goes on to suggest that,

"Together they, contract labour and nationality laws, fulfilled a third function - a political one: they prevented the integration of migrant labour into the indigenous proletariat and thereby mediated class conflict." (1976,p351)

There is nothing wrong with this statement as such, but it is ambiguous. The term 'function' conflates cause and effect. If Sivanandan is suggesting that the EFFECT of nationality laws and the relegation of the status of the migrant to that of the gasterbeiter was to prevent integration then the statement can be taken as historical description. If, on the other hand, he is suggesting that this result of policy was teleologically CAUSED, anticipated and planned by policy makers, then the meaning of this passage is crucially different. The ambiguity that surrounded the 'needs' of the economic system changes status from lexical inconvenience to analytical blur.

It is important to stress that the moral question of culpability is not moot at this point. The issue of whether or not people are any less responsible for the consequences of their actions because they did not anticipate those consequences is not addressed here. However, in historical explanation of behaviour the difference between the two is

important, given that two different sets of intentional states are at stake.

By the 1980s the ambiguity surrounding function in Sivanandan's work is resolved and the theory has evolved from descriptive disapprobation to conspiracy theory functionalism. There are two connected strains of the Sivanandan argument that I want to criticise. The first is no more than a conventional attack on the historical logic of the work. For whereas in 1976 the social and economic costs of racism were beginning to outweigh the benefits, and so Sivanandan predicted that

"racism dies in order that capital might survive"(1976,p367),

by 1984 the persistence of endemic racism must be accounted for, and the claim is that

"Racism does not stay still; it changes shape, size, purpose, function".(1974, p2)

Because "the system" was "afraid that black working class struggles would begin to politicise the working class as a whole", "the state" consciously reformulated the policy of divide and rule through the mode of ethnicity:

"Ethnicity was a tool to blunt the edges of black struggle, return 'black' to its constituent parts of Afro-Caribbean, Asian, African, Irish".(1984,p4)

The circular argument is complete. If racism subsides it serves the purpose of capital, if it persists it does so also. The second criticism concerns the force that drives Sivanandan's conceptual structure. There is always consistency and in 1976 he claimed that

"Cultural pluralism and political pluralism are both accommodations made by the system in the superstructure so as to consolidate the economic base" (1976,p365).

Thus, inanimate capital is not only endowed with powers of agency but also with powers of a remarkably tough, devious, positively prescient nature.

Regarding the first criticism; Sivanandan's work is obviously vulnerable to the traditional attacks on materialist structuralism (eg. Duncan and Ley, 1982; Parkin, 1978; Giddens, 1978, 1981; Peach, 1981). Manifestly dehumanising and circular arguments lack plausibility. More fundamentally, the feature which Sivanandan's work shares with so many others in this field is the attribution to the economic system of powers of causality in the social realm. It is the suggestion here that if such attribution is to avoid the extremes of self-evident truism and Althusserian structural determinism then the concept of causality itself must be refined. The economic structures exist and are not necessarily amenable to empirical investigation, but whereas the structure/agency debate tends to follow the lines of the juxtaposition of opposites what is really needed is the differentiation of the causal powers of structure from those of the individual. This problem can only be addressed when the ontological status of the two is clearly defined. Giddens' general position on structural needs, purposes and reasons has already been quoted, but he is also more specific in rejecting both forms of the common Marxian explanation of the creation of labour surplus (1979, p112), suggesting that neither the argument i) that since the capitalist system needs a reserve army one comes into being nor the corollary argument ii) that since the operation of capitalism leads to a reserve army this must be because it needs one, is valid. He prefers to resort to the refuge of time, claiming that reserve armies come about

"historically, as a result of concrete conditions that have in every case to be directly analysed; the same holds for their persistence." (1979, p113.)

The implicit demand for consideration of temporal specificity, the relevance of the particular, is a self-evident platitude, but such escape clauses say nothing of the universal, why pattern is repeated and common to many societies. It is possible to go further and suggest that the claim that social systems have no needs is a contradiction in terms, since under systems theory any system, be it

physical, social or economic can be defined by the parameters under which it may operate; these may commonly be described as needs, since without them the system will not exist. Whilst Giddens is mistaken when he suggests that social systems do not have needs, this does not mean that they have the powers to consciously fulfil them, for it is at this point that if suitable historical conditions prevail then such needs will be satisfied. [Duncan and Ley(1982, p42) adopt a similarly mistaken position on systemic need.] Like water flowing down a slope, the body economic follows the path of least resistance but is still responsible for shaping the surface on which it acts. Thus, in the above example, it appears that Peach's work is bordering on structuralism in the loose sense that it is based on the operation of economic mechanisms and trends which are systemic and out of the control of any one collective, although the structure remains reducible to its constituent human parts. This accounts for the approval of his early work by the structural Marxists such as Sivanandan. The economic structure exists as a logical whole but is not reified and the workings of this particular structure are realised in a manner susceptible to empirical investigation. Duncan and Ley's 'either/or ism' is inadequate. It is not the existence of economic structure that is moot, for Peach's work is a liberal formulation of the structural theory around the mode of production that they write off as dispensable.(1982,p54)

b) Class structure as action; Parkin's theory of social mobilisation

One social theorist much favoured by some geographers (eg Robinson 1979;Boal,1981;Smith & Jackson,1984) is Frank Parkin, and his recommendation that

"social classes be defined by reference to their mode of collective action rather than to their place in the productive process or the division of labour"(1979,p113; my emphasis),

and his formulation of Weberian social closure have been described by Jackson and Smith(1984) as

"an appealing conceptualisation of the articulation of voluntarism and determinism in social life".(1984,p64)²

I want to suggest that because of an ontological fuzziness, not dissimilar to that of Sivanandan, Parkin's schema can provide only a blinkered vision of social change.

Parkin claims that

"the very notion of closure only makes sense as a form of common action" (1979,p108)

because

"exclusionary groups would hardly be able to assert themselves in defence of privilege if they were less capable of acting collectively than usurpatory groups".(p108)

This statement, aside from bordering on reification of structure, assumes that exclusionary (often bourgeois) strength is based on solidarity, and in the normal capitalist application the bourgeoisie, for purposes of analysis, has become a collective actor. Although he concedes the possible relevance of unintended effects of action, this appears to be of little concern to an analyst of bourgeois behaviour

because

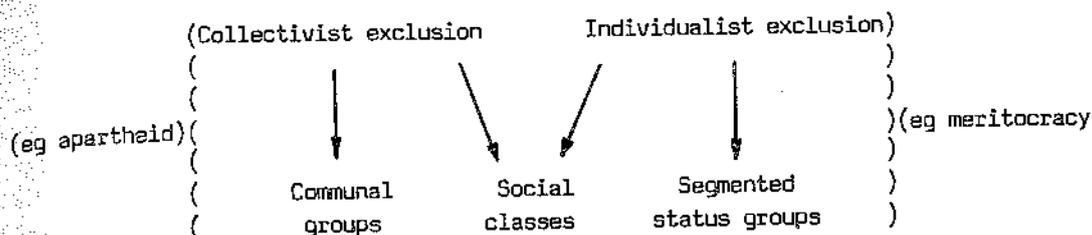
"bourgeois strategies yield little to those of the proletariat in their reliance upon co-operative and concerted action." (1979, p108; my emphasis)

The group acts to reproduce the group in its own likeness as a matter of policy. Yet this teleological aspect does not necessarily stand up to closer examination. The modes of social closure on which the bourgeoisie rely are those of property and credentialism. At this point Parkin falls into the same 'functional' trap as Sivanandan. Again it is vital to differentiate between cause and effect. Property is used to benefit kinship not class relations, but does the latter incidentally. Similarly, in a situation of increasingly effective widespread education there is a universal tendency to raise professional qualifying standards

as more people achieve the prior lower standard, in order to sustain the elitist position of the professions. This need is instrumental for the profession itself, which is the true collective actor in this instance, bourgeois reproduction being based on likely penetration of this system. Yet if this is the case credentialism is hardly a method of social closure as, given the effectiveness of increasing access to education (Simon, 1985), the credentialist professions such as law or accountancy might be regarded as much more egalitarian by nature than those that rely more on informal, 'old boy network', entry procedures such as merchant banking. Parkin's 'bourgeoisie' appear to be no more than a behaviourist product reacting similarly to similar stimuli. Bourgeois exclusion seems to be little more than the sum of individual actions, empirically defined; hence there is no bourgeois social formation per se, only a collective that behaves in a bourgeois manner, a mode of social mobilisation.

To try and define racial groups by their method of social closure would seem even more absurd on ontological grounds when this failure to distinguish between social mobilisation and social formation is considered. Members of a racial group may share a common history, similar positions in the structure of society and the structure of the economy and related, similar positions in the structuring of space (spatial concentration) without any empirical form of social mobilisation whatsoever. Such a matrix of shared life chances will endow the group with ontological status as a collective or social formation regardless of whether collective action occurs or not. The 'class' does not exist because of the way it behaves, as Parkin argues, and the one way of circumventing this problem is to suggest that this matrix of similarity will determine behaviour, which is to resort to the crude structural causation that he is so anxious to avoid.

Parkin is partially aware of these problems, as he reveals in the following diagram:



(From Parkin 1979; examples added.)

The lower row of communal groups, social classes and segmented status groups form a scale of solidarity necessary for usurpatory closure. Under Parkin's schema the social mobilisation of those subjected to collectivist exclusion must be communal. Yet in the Weberian model advocated all such mobilisation must be considered in terms of a "common vocabulary" (1979, p42) of social closure. However:

- a) if a group behave similarly for similar reasons they form a collective (a product of 'la condition humaine')
- b) if a group behave similarly because they feel obliged to each other as a group they form a different sort of collective (a product of solidarity/ideology)
- c) if people share history and social/economic location in society they are very likely to behave similarly and this collective is different again.

Even this simplistic typology of collective formation (not action) implies very different sorts of ontological status to the collectives so formed.

Determined to use a single vocabulary for all social mobilization, Parkin is not particularly concerned with whether or not 'collective action' is the behaviour of similar groups in a similar manner (the empirical collective) or a form of co-operation (the conscious collective). This is not the an sich/fur sich divide in another guise, for the simple reason that there is no contingent assertion of 'false consciousness'. [As Harré(1979) has pointed out, it is hard to imagine what 'true' consciousness could be.] The concerns (intentions) of the membership of the empirical collective need not be other than similarly selfish. [They may even differ as long as resultant behaviour is the same.] The solidarity of the conscious collective may influence its effectiveness as a social movement but its ontological status is defined not only by its method of social closure but also by shared experience.

Parkin intends to put criteria of (empirical) action over criteria of (possibly abstract) existence in the ontology of the collective, but ends up conflating description (social form) and explanation (social mobilisation), which inevitably blurs any distinction between cause and effect in social theory.

c) Castells' grassroots volte-face, logical wholes and ontological vagaries

Finally, I want to look briefly at Castells' 'The City and the Grassroots'(1983) which, it has been suggested (eg Jackson,1984), represents a major change from the structural determinism that characterised his work in the 1970s (1977,1978); indeed Castells himself suggests that there are major problems that lie "deep in the core of the Marxist theory of social change"(1983,p298), and the Althusserian paradigm once favoured is specifically rejected (1987, p298), with Althusser expunged from the bibliography. The sole purpose of this section is to suggest that one problem with Castells' newly-

assumed 'humanistic' mantle is that ontology is at no time considered explicitly, and the extreme structural powers that were once assigned to the economy are now tacitly assigned to cultural forms.

The basic analytical unit of the work is the urban social movement.

The point is made explicitly:

"The actors of the urban movements are the urban movements themselves since we have defined movements by the goals they set up for themselves. The movements become social actors by being engaged in a mobilization towards an urban goal " (1983,p320; my emphasis)

although he makes it clear that they are not in full control of such change(1983,p319), but rather that they bear

"in their structure and their goals the stigmas and the projects of all the great historical conflicts of our time."

Grassroots movements are defined as social actors but their precise powers are taken for granted. They are cast against the 'dominant class', for in these movements there emerges a view of "The Alternative City", dominated by use value rather than exchange value. However, the realisation of this conflict is problematic, precisely because the opposing collectives overlap. The 'dominant class' is no more than the personified expression of an economic logic. What Castells sees as two conflictual interest groups are more simply two ubiquitous, conflictual forces, exemplified by what might be described as the bourgeois grassroots movements that are normally focussed on some form of conservation (placing use value over exchange value, eg in the UK Green Belt, wildlife conservation organisations). The very individuals who play the parts of urban power brokers and gatekeepers may take part in 'grassroots struggle' whilst continuing to wear the hats of development capitalism. The very real difference in the power base of upper bourgeois social movements (eg Johnston 1985) obviously accounts for relative successes, but equally significantly members of the social movements

Castells examines may also be implicated in capitalist machinations (eg, Latino defence of neighbourhood against redevelopment had to placate demand for possible construction jobs, a situation mirrored in the development of the London docklands).

The popular movements are social actors in a particular historical context. In the hypothesised conflict between the grassroots and the 'dominant class' the suggestion is that these social actors tend towards naive Utopianism, trying to change the nature of life without the tools to change the nature of society. Nevertheless, they are able to "influence structural social change and transform the urban meanings" (1983,p305), but only if they fulfil three criteria: they must be connected with collective consumption demands, community culture and political self-management. The two case studies in San Fransisco reveal the power and the pitfalls of such analysis. The Mission Community Organisation (MCO), initially formed to prevent urban redevelopment in the principally Latino Mission District, is treated as a 'logical whole' (anathema to Duncan and Ley) and by carefully both tracing the conjunction of circumstance and the implicit contradictions of the movement, Castells argues that the MCO collapsed

"because Latinos wanted to be ethnically defined in order to avoid sharing the benefits of social programmes with other communities, while the community activists, trying to unify all the poor people, became totally absorbed by the management of social programmes that would create their own power".(1983, p325)

The collective actor is a valid theoretical unit which, when analysed in relation to a wider society, is seen to contain the seeds of its own destruction. The internal architecture of this unit and these contradictions may not have been visible to any of the membership. This vindicates both the privileged status of the analyst and the ontological status of the theoretical unit but, crucially, actual behaviour is never divorced from the intentional states of the constituent parts of the

collective. In marked contrast to this, when considering the San Francisco gay movement the suggestion is that

"they [the gays] won their right to existence but at the expense of their capacity to transform the city and society in unison with the other oppressed minorities" (1983,p325),

although as Castells himself has already pointed out such a transformation never was a goal of the movement and many gays were implicated in the capitalist system as part of the 'dominant class', and so would not necessarily see their interests and those of the other "oppressed minorities" as synonymous.

It appears that Castells has replaced the frequently implausible and clumsy blocks of structural economism with an equally implausible, occasionally romantic structural culturalism. The initial project, described as an attempt to understand

"how cities and societies change on the basis of collective projects and societal conflicts generated through history" (1983,p293),

is reasonable, but the analytical units, the basic structures within the theoretical systems, are crudely defined:

"There are three kinds of actors in history: the dominant elite, the creators of a new social order and the rentiers of any social organisation." (1983,p293)

When such units form the foundation of social theory logical extension leads Castells to a naively idealistic conceptualisation of popular movements. Although keen to stress that "our theory is not normative but historical" (1983,p304), Castells takes a cultural conflict (eg homophobia), identifies it at the synchronic level, arbitrarily extends it to the diachronic and then assumes, logically enough, that if this is the case there must be either 'radical' structural change or long-term necessary conflict. The cultural blocks are immutable and non-negotiable, which prompts him to refer back to the three criteria required for the success of social movements and state that

"our tried and tested hypothesis is that only when the three

themes combine in a movement's practice does it bring about social change" (1983,p328).

Under this "tested hypothesis" movements as diverse as the San Francisco gays and the US inner city riots of the 1960s are presented as having failed to produce social change, yet if these 'cultural expressions' may have had relatively little effect on the underlying economic structure, they were surely symbolic watersheds in popular consciousness, profoundly altering the way many, or perhaps most, Americans perceived their own society. It takes an idiosyncratic definition of the term to suggest that such movements did not precipitate 'social change', yet such subtleties cannot be easily fitted in to the crude cultural model. The old-style Althusserian economic pawns have been replaced with equally passive cultural ones. Crucially, Castells' analysis is flawed not because of the epistemological status he attributes to theory or because he deals in the 'logic of wholes' (both are completely defensible) but rather because of the simplistic ontology that underwrites his basic analytical structures.

4 STRUCTURAL POWERS

a) The problem of universals

There is an important step between acknowledging the existence of a latent element in the genesis of behaviour and ascribing causal powers to deep-rooted structures. In its most elementary form this can best be considered in terms of the age-old problem of universals.

Plato suggested that all statements consist of universals and particulars. A particular refers to a specific object of sensation, a

universal is a characteristic which may be shared by many particulars. All proper names are particulars as they refer to a thing or a finite number of things, pronouns are ambiguously particular, contextually defined: 'I' in the statement 'I kick a ball' refers to the particular person who is kicking the ball. Particulars have powers of reification; they correspond with matter. Universals are more complicated, and hence more controversial. To take a simple example first, the use of the word 'house' as "building for human habitation, occupation, etc." (Concise Oxford Dictionary) does not at first appear problematic. However, dictionary definitions are always forms of generalisation whose parameters remain necessarily unspecified; the point of decay at which the house is no longer a house but a former house is only one of many marginal cases. Plato's resolution is best understood in a comparison of two examples which are undisputably examples of houses. Whatever these entities have in common must contain elements of what we could call 'houseness', the essence of 'the house'. This process can be extended until one takes the theoretical set of all houses in the world, past, present or future. The suggestion is that whatever defines this set is the idea of house.

Significantly, relations are also forms of universal. The idea of 'betweenness' describes the existence of all relationships implied by the word between. Any one sense of the word between is a manifestation of the idea of 'betweenness'. In Plato's theory universals exist, but as abstract forms. There is a multitude of problems associated with Platonic idealism generally, there is no space here to catalogue twenty-four centuries of philosophical debate and no suggestion that the theory is valid in its entirety. Kantian contentions concerning apprehension of such forms have already been considered in relation to geographical humanism. Here I wish only to consider the 'nominalist' refutation of Platonic theory. The nominalist tradition describes universals in terms

of convention. The term 'house' is nothing more than a label applied by convention to a variety of dwellings. There is no essence as the meaning is contingent upon time and circumstance. The most influential twentieth century advocate of variations on the nominalist theme was Wittgenstein.

In his later work Wittgenstein renounced his own picture theory of meaning outlined in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, in which he had tried, in part, to circumvent Plato's rather tendentious supra-sensible world of ideas by describing a world of pictorial mental states. This was replaced by a focus on the generation of meaning: statements are seen in terms of language games with rules of proper use, games related by family resemblance but without specific common characteristics. Speech is purposive, yet governed by conventional, mutable rules. The vital point is that whilst Wittgenstein's is a radically different conception of universals it does not negate their ontological status. Unlike Plato, where the idea 'house' transcends any one tongue, Wittgenstein's considerations lead to Quinton's principle of the indeterminacy of translation: a word in English may quite obviously have no exact equivalent in French but at the same time any one language is "a publicly available social reality"(Quinton 1982); universals exist but not as "some kind of essence whose nature you can work out in your head by pure reasoning"(ibid). (NB cf structural linguistics.)

b) The need for a mechanistic theory of causality

In both nominalist and Platonic conceptions there is no potential for reification of universals in the strict sense of the word (ie to materialise). This has important ramifications. Firstly, investigation of 'that which exists' can not depend on simple empiricism. Verification or falsification of theory must be based on empirical evidence

but such evidence alone cannot possibly provide comprehensive explanation since it ignores process. In other words a generative rather than a correlative mode of causation must be provided. The suggestion is that the Humean conception of causality is inadequate, stemming as it does from the proposition that no matter how many times A is followed by B the causal link between the two can never be proved and so causal laws can only be considered as regularities of variable reliability. For Hume it was only the principle of induction that allows us to assume that the sun will rise tomorrow and our food is not poisoned, there is a very high degree of reliability since both have been the case throughout most lives, although as Russell(1912) points out it is the principle of induction that persuades the chicken to associate man with food until the day that man comes along and wrings the chicken's neck. The flaws of such a causal model have been pointed out in much twentieth century philosophy and have been picked up in the geographical literature by (among others) Ley and Duncan(1982).

Essentially we need a hypothesis generating mechanism within the model: it was not 1700 years of autumnal apples that induced the theory of gravity but rather the matching of empirical evidence with Newton's provisional theory. One of the most serious flaws within the Humean model is the inability to incorporate teleological causality into explanation, which effectively limits the role of purposive behaviour in the social world and makes the first step towards black-boxing humanity in a stimulus-response behaviourism. As a result, the model most often suggested to replace Hume's is that of Aristotle, which divides causality into material, efficient, formal and final elements. In Russell's(1946) example this is illustrated by the sculpting of a statue: the marble represents the material cause, the contact of chisel on marble the efficient cause, the essence of the statue(eg an armature) the formal cause, and the statue as envisioned by the sculptor is the

final cause, teleologically defined.

The second ramification is that such an epistemology supports an assumption of realism. Johnson(1983) wrongly associates realist philosophy with the dialectical materialism of Marxism alone, yet the most important claim of the realists is that there is an objective real world which includes abstract objects, even if understanding the relation between the world and man's perception of it is altogether more problematic. In short, as Searle(1984) has claimed there is no ultimate mind/matter dichotomy, this problem is more practical than ontological.

c) Structural ontology

I would suggest that an outline of the problem of universals must precede explication of structural powers because this effectively validates the structuralist project, whilst at the same time exposing the necessary limitations of such theory. The point I wish to make is that deep structures in the Marxian, Freudian or Lévi-Straussian sense are in many ways closely analogous to universals. The fact that they are not susceptible to simple empirical investigation does not prohibit possible existence. However, it does prohibit reification of structure. Structures are a synthesis of processes and relations, both categories of universal. Just as gravity can be proved almost vicariously, in realisation in the empirical world, so too can Freudian repression only be understood in its realisation. Similarly, as Marx stated, "the sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society" (my emphasis). The structures of language and the structures of the material economy are abstract entities.

The potential limits to structural properties are also illuminated in this way. Justice may be done in righting a wrong. It is not the

universal 'justice' which determined this to be a correct action in anything other than the material sense of causality. The action itself partakes of justice. This does not mean that structures can have no powers, just that the powers may not be the same as those of particular entities, and will vary according to the ontological status of the relevant structure.

This problem is easily illustrated by example. The statement that bourgeois "fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable" (Marx and Engels 1982,p126) is crucially ambiguous. Marx is justified in identifying a collective unit defined by the internal relations of the economic structure as 'a proletariat' regardless of empirical realisation in the an sich/fur sich transformation(cf Parkin 1971). If the collective unit act as one the statement may be taken as historical prediction dependent on this mobilisation or it may be taken as historicist 'law' based on the assumption that the proletariat is a unit that has powers of agency. It is because agency remains the property of the members of the group, not the collective itself, that the latter inference is erroneous.

The final point I wish to make with respect to the analogy of universals concerns the location of structure. The suggestion has been made by many structural analysts in the social sciences that certain elements of structure are 'independent' of human powers (eg Giddens, 1978; Gregory, 1981; Johnson,1983; Castells,1977,1983). This too is ambiguous. One example often cited is that of institutions. Yet, just because institutions have independent ontological status at one time it does not alter the fact that this existence is a function of convention (cf Wittgenstein). To take a simple example: 'the school'. A school can never be more than the sum of individual conceptions of 'school' held by participating members of the institution at any one time. It is

at this point that the humanist critique is ostensibly so devastating since it is only by understanding individual readings of meaning that we can understand the nature of the whole. Yet this is not problematic considered in relation to the universal 'justice'. Justice is a culturally specific term but within this context it forms part of Quinton's 'objective social reality', it is what the humanists might describe as 'intersubjectively verifiable'. The humanist perspective thus does not necessarily conflict with a structuralist approach. Harré(1979) goes further, suggesting that incidental to this nebulous process of the apprehension of structure is the reproduction and transformation of structure itself. Individual apprehension will always be partial, contingent and idiosyncratic. The procedure is effectively one of flawed iconographic reproduction. Each copy of the structure is modified according to variations within the individual. Crucially this flawed copying is not necessarily a conscious process. It may be as much accidental failure as deliberate modification. The effective mutation of structure will result in a Darwinian process of selection on the basis of utility. It is in precisely this way that in language meaning is transformed through time. To return to the institutional example, the definition of school is as much in flux as the rest of the language. The institution of the 'school' may have specific powers, may have independent ontological status, but remains tied to its constituent human parts. This suggests one further point: because it is impossible to reify structure and because structural properties are not only mutable but also continually changing through time, structural powers are intrinsically less predictable than the powers of materialised wholes.

d) Conclusions

Reification must be distinguished from ontology. Structures exist

but not in the same sense as material objects. Structure has powers but these powers vary and cannot be relied upon in the same manner as physical, or even at times human, powers (cf Harré and Secord 1972). Specifically, structures cannot possess the power of teleological agency, their manifestations are always present 'at one remove'; form must be transmitted via the behaviour of individuals and as a result is contingent upon human misrepresentation, miscalculation, or even intervention.

The causal relation between structure and action is most readily conceived of as one of material causality, within a mechanistic definition of the term 'cause' that allows for formal, final and efficient causality.

In terms of rioting the point is in essence a very simple one. People may be subjected to repression and despise the institutions seen as responsible for enforcing a repressive regime. That alone is enough to generate 'latent' or 'overt' conflict (Lukes 1974) with the prevailing social order (one set of structural influences). An account of the path of action taken in the light of this conflict (the genesis of rioting as a manifestation of conflict) demands an analytical exercise involving historical, social-psychological and spatial considerations, all implying further sets of structural influences, all set against the contingent nature of social action. Thrift (1983) is correct to cite the lack of determination of social action in structuration theory as problematic, but in stressing his own 'reconstructed' Marxism he classifies material causality above equally significant formal, efficient and final causes. Such an elevation can only ever be based on rhetorical, political or moral priorities, never on logical necessity.

Harré's ethogenic project is based on,

"the idea that social interaction is mediated by public performances which are treated by actors as signs. They are operative through their meanings, that is conventional associations, and not through their causal powers as physical objects in the material world, that is not as 'natural' signs."(1979)

The performances of social life are different in nature and in kind from the behavioural patterns of the practical world. The imperatives generated by the means of production and associated structures are acknowledged but do not constitute an exhaustive social psychology. These two realms are differentiated according to whether the means/end relationship of an action is causal or conventional. Thus:

eg digging(means):cropping(end) - practical realm
 C18th short hair(means):radical appearance(end) - expressive realm.

Social behaviour must be explained via a generative (Aristotelian) mode of causality, acting within a set of real structures. This,

"involves a competence/performance psychology of individuals who as members create social collectives, but who are created by these collectives in a thoroughly reciprocal fashion."(1979,p6)

The goal and its political implications are quite explicitly set out:

"part of my aim is to defend the autonomy of men and their reflexive powers of self-intervention within the necessities imposed by the fact that they would not be men at all unless they were creatures of the collectives in which they live."

The location of social behaviour within the social structure is established by an interpretation of the Saussurean linguistic model so favoured by Barthes and Lévi-Strauss (see above).³ Fideism is no issue here, so it does not really matter to what extent this represents a personal adaptation of the model by Harré. Valeur remains quite clear; as with Barthes lexical items are replaced by social items and are seen

to exist both paradigmatically, as part of a set of conventions (or langues) and syntagmatically, having a correct place determined by a set of sequencing laws. A social item of behaviour, such as a kiss, is thus seen as incomprehensible if taken in isolation, out of context. The conventionally defined set of potential meanings of 'the kiss', the valeur of the action, is understood generatively in terms of the correct position within a social sequence (the syntagmatic or metonymic dimension) according to the operative langue. As already demonstrated, langue can refer to any scale of behaviour and the socially competent actor will be expected to move with ease from one level to the next. National practice, such as a Mediterranean kiss on both cheeks, may be assimilated to sub-cultural norms. In Sloane Square this may constitute the apt protocol of greeting and parting from any member of the opposite sex, regardless of degrees of intimacy; in Oxford American habit and the bonecrushing handshake of the liberated lady academic may be more common. Neither is preferable, but to offer one in the place of the other would be considered offensive.

Harré's original contribution is to combine Saussurean valeur with a theory of performatives based on the philosophy of Austin and the later developments of one of his pupils, Searle (eg 1969 Speech Acts). The central assumption of such work is that:

"there are all sorts of utterances and sentences in the indicative mood that don't even set out to be true or false."(Searle 1982,p159)

Austin initially distinguished such 'performatives' from 'constatives' (statements involving elements of truth and falsehood) but realised that even the most ostensibly clear cut examples of constatives, such as simple statements or descriptions, involved performance as well. In Searle's terms each utterance is, in effect, a 'speech act'. Instead, Austin distinguished between speech acts in a narrow sense ie those utterances involving orders, apologies etc which he described as

'illocutionary acts' and the effects such utterances had on other people, which he described as 'perlocutionary acts'. The illocutionary act has both a propositional content, involving actions implied by the utterances, and an illocutionary force, involving the categorisation of the illocutionary act. For example the four utterances

Please write that thesis	(polite imperative)
Will you write that thesis?	(rhetorical imperative)
Will you write that thesis?	(simple interrogative)
Will you write that thesis?	(sarcastic interrogative)

all have the same propositional content, but the illocutionary force varies quite obviously between the statements. The perlocutionary act depends on the reading of meaning, influenced by a gamut of contextual considerations, by the speaker and the person who is addressed. Harré's point is that the illocutionary effect of a social act is conventionally defined in the generation of *valeur*, he shows, through a contentious interpretation of Saussure's *signifié*, that perlocutionary effects are the product of individual elaboration and interpretation. The 'social reality' of Wittgenstein that Quinton described still exists, but is plastic, susceptible to personal manipulation by the agent, not at all the rigid architecture of linguistic structuralism. Hence in Harré's model actions, the illocutionary, conventionally defined elements of an item of behaviour are distinguished from acts, the perlocutionary effects, conventionally constrained but unique performances in the expressive domain.

The ramifications of such agency are enormous. Social life is conceived as a forum for the accumulation of social credits in the expressive domain. Even the most practical task is riddled with potential elaboration. The don may be lucid, lecherous or light-

hearted, depending on the character he creates for himself, but such character, once formed, is reflected in the expectations others have of him. The production of this social identity takes place over time in the 'moral career' of an individual. This is a form of relational-network not role theory; the way in which social patterns are constituted by internal rather than external relationships (ie people wholly or partly constituted by being in a specific relation eg policeman/policed cf external relations when individuals so related do not change category when they cease to be in such a relation (eg the relation of distance, one person momentarily a hundred metres away from another). At any one time the actor or agent has a 'role', but this is subject to expressive interpretation and elaboration, not simply a predetermined 'given'.

I have already described the manner in which Harré sees this process of personal apprehension of structure as the mode in which structural transformation is achieved. It is worth noting that this exposes the flaw in Giddens' (1979, pp64-66) suggestion that the diachronic/synchronic split is inoperable. Synchronic analysis is valid as long as the process of change is embedded in the structure of the single moment. Giddens is right to suggest that the 'freeze-frame' is not practical in social life but wrong to completely discard the concept. Rather, it is because the process of mutation/adaptation and selection within structure is so haphazard that the simplistic historicist conception of historical laws and necessity are so absurd, and deterministic notions of structural causation so unreliable. Giddens' formulation of structuration is theoretically invaluable, but the ultimate power of generative transformation resides within the individual; the agent who both determines and is determined by his world.

The problem with the structuralist presentation of social semantics,

and to a lesser extent with Harré's version also, is that in the interests of academic lucidity the continual intervention of social opacity is underestimated. In Harré's world, it seems that people read the signs with ease and understand the level of langue at which an encounter occurs. The point he and Secord have earlier made (1976) that:

"in ethogenic social psychology precision of meaning corresponds to accuracy of measurement in physical science"

is valid, yet he seems at times to ignore exactly the absence of precision this implies. I would suggest that misunderstanding is much more frequently the case. Forms of sanctioned behaviour differ radically not just on the national scale (eg C19th Japanese tradition endorsing infanticide and euthanasia cf The Ballad of Narayama) but also both on a much more parochial level (eg use of narcotics, level of noise, even respectable bedtime!) and personal level (eg communication between individuals, particularly of opposite sexes). Even within the family, which should represent a paragon of 'langue tuition' (pace John Mortimer), there is not so much an infinite potential as an incorrigible pathology of communication breakdown, and uncertain protocol. Does the English father kiss his son? If so up to what age? Harré outlines a process of face-saving so necessary to maintain mutual status on these occasions, but how often are such techniques used?

Given that sanctioned behaviour, is the root of a loose form of moral imperative, the inevitable and structurally implicit social conflict within the expressive realm is as logically necessary as the contradictions of dialectical materialism are in the practical realm. Ambiguity is anathema to academia, despite Olssen's (1980) self-indulgence, but its consequences must be understood and subjected to the analytical process.

One further important drawback to the Harré model is the vision of just two social orders. There is the practical domain: individual motivation is based on material greed and the basic man/nature confrontation establishes structures of exploitation with all the well-known and hotly disputed ramifications in political, ideological and economic spheres. There is also the expressive domain: individual motivation is based on prestige-seeking and the meshed structures of langue and parole produce social orders of respect and contempt, which through their influence on behaviour form the basic elements of social psychology. These two domains are considered exhaustive. Harré specifically rejects most common notions of morality:

"Morality and its ethical systems will turn out to be among the ways in which we present our actions to enjoy the respect of our fellow moralists."(1979,p4)

Beyond this categorical assertion the relativist case remains unproven. Given the well documented fallacy of positivist 'value freedom', academic work may legitimately take the form of normative modelling incorporating Habermas' concept of emancipatory knowledge or incorporate existential metaphysics: the moral domain remains a valid third dimension of study both in considering and advocating specific behaviour. The realms of the Freudian unconscious are dismissed out of hand by Harré(1979,pp252-253), and in the light of the psychological theories examined there is no justification for this. Similarly, though less importantly, the human behavioural imperatives of ethology, which have undoubtedly been vastly exaggerated (eg Morris 1977), are acknowledged by Harré himself as decisive in certain situations. It is doubtful if such traits can be incorporated into either the practical or expressive domains.

The point remains that the existence of structure is not in question, but there is no monistic totality. Harré's expressive dimension is ontologically independent of materialist considerations

(except in a physiological sense) even if in realisation the two may be inextricably intertwined. This independence is crucial.

6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has not been to produce a psychological theory of agency, but rather to suggest that the concept of agency can be reconciled with acknowledgement of structure. This is not achieved by models of structuration, which are invaluable in analysing process but fail in trying to present a complete frame of reference for the social sciences.

An analogy can be made with the central hypothesis of Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* (1956). There is no correct form of representation. Each attempt to picture an object carried out in good faith includes elements of reality. Reality exists in such representation in exactly the same manner as structure exists in social phenomena⁴. Different modes of representation are useful for different things. The architect, as Gombrich clearly demonstrates, could not rely on Constable but might find his representation of landscape more helpful than that of an abstract expressionist. Yet someone like Jackson Pollock explicitly justified his work in Freudian terms and as a statement on the subconscious perception of landscape perhaps there is a case for studying, as well as passively appreciating, his work.

The argument is clear: monism is an illusion, most often seen in the social sciences as some search for the Hegelian whole via the thesis/ antithesis/synthesis cycle; convention, or structure effects

representation but there is an infinite number of variations within conventions, produced by agents, and a plurality of valid modes of expression. No creed or style or structural system can present a complete view of the world.

CHAPTER THREE

DESCRIPTION I : THE 'RIOTERS' IN LONDON : 'FACES IN THE CROWD'

- 1 SUMMARY
- 2 INTRODUCTION : FACES IN THE CROWD
- 3 STATISTICAL NOTES
- 4 ANALYTICAL AIMS
- 5 THE BRIXTON DISORDERS OF 1981
- 6 THE 1981 RIOTS IN LONDON
 - a) The Home Office Data Set
 - b) Age
 - c) Employment
 - d) Ethnicity
 - e) Residence and Offence
- 7 THE M.P.D. ELEVEN
- 8 CONCLUSION

The central themes of this chapter are as follows:

- a) Chapter One demonstrated the need to derive an explicandum before progressing to an explanation of rioting. The analysis of arrest records from the 1981 riots in London aims to fulfil this function.
- b) The empirical description of events produced in this chapter is not equivalent to a causal explanation. This is not because of the limitations of the data but because of the necessary relationships between description and explanation, quantitative generalisation and social action.
- c) The attempt to provide a realistic description of the rioting crowd does not question the existence of a second phenomenon, 'the riots' reconstructed as part of 'public knowledge' (ie how the riots are remembered). The nature of violent conflict and the cultural signification of that conflict are complementary, not competitive, descriptions of reality.
- d) Examination of the arrest data from the April rioting in Brixton clearly shows that those involved in violent conflict with the police were older, more often black and lived much closer to the disturbances than those involved in the looting.
- e) There are many problems with the Home Office data which is used to analyse the July riots of 1981, but if the data do not provide an ideal empirical source they can supply powerful descriptions of the 'faces in the crowd' at the scene of disorder. The contention here is that the

arrest records provide the most revealing empirical material available on a behavioural form such as rioting, certainly superior to either ecological analysis or post-riot questionnaires.

f) The Home Office data confirm the minimal value of notions of the 'average rioter'. The search for a single explanation of a reified object of analysis ('the riot') is an example of chaotic conceptualisation (Sayer, 1984). Rioting is a social form that covers many repertoires of behaviour. Actors in the crowd played very different roles and the Home Office data lend invaluable insights into the way in which these roles were not distributed evenly across all groups present but were related to age, residence and, most strongly of all, 'ethnicity'.

2 INTRODUCTION : FACES IN THE CROWD

A common call of the more rational pieces of work written on the British riots of 1981 was for the disturbances to be placed in 'their overall historical context' (Rock, 1981; Joshua and Wallace, 1983; Clare, 1984). Whilst recognizing the self-evident sanity of such an approach it is important to identify what is being placed before deciding where to put it.

The central tenet of this chapter is that the composition, actions and motivation of the people on the streets cannot easily be taken for granted or subsumed under some consensual generic label 'riot' if the charge of Lytton Strachey that "ignorance is the first requisite of the historian" (1918, p9) is to be preempted.

The easily won status of 'rioter' endows a group of people with a shared identity of which they themselves may be unaware, and initiates a clichéd ontological spiral: impressionistic reportage creates a descriptive unity ('the crowd'), reproduced in the hard print and received wisdom of those rarely present, and the semantic tag becomes an analytical structure, which lays claim to the vocabulary of animus; a mood, an identity, a purpose. It is not the suggestion here that such a transformation is necessarily flawed but rather that it is not necessarily valid. Writing in 1964 about "The Crowd in History", George Rudé forcefully suggests that the nature of a disturbance is intimately connected to the composition of the crowd itself, remarking that,

"this is an aspect of the question that has been almost entirely neglected by historians and sociologists alike. Historians have, as we saw, been inclined to take refuge behind such omnibus and prejudicial or 'value-oriented' labels as 'mob' or 'the people'; and adopting as their models Clarendon's 'dirty people without a name', Taine's 'la canaille' or Michelet's 'le peuple', they have appeared to assume that whether the crowd's activities were praiseworthy or reprehensible, the crowd must remain an abstract phenomenon without force or identity. And social scientists for all their serious concern with the crowd's behaviour have not done much better."(1964,p195).

There are significant practical problems arising from this need to look more closely at the constituents of the crowd. A major conceptual difficulty concerns the definition of 'the crowd' that is to be subject to empirical scrutiny. For Rudé, the crowd is not "merely an aggregate of individuals" (1964) and "the whole is often not simply the sum total of its parts" (1964), yet by such a priori holism he falls into the same trap as those whom he criticises for adopting a very different set of preconceptions. 'The crowd' cannot be objectively analysed solely in terms of the inferred motivation or other mental states of its members because in this sense the term itself becomes self-referential, doubling as explicans and explicandum; both the means for and the object of explanation. Chapter Two suggested this to be a ubiquitous problem in the social world and the main source of irreconcilable difference between social and natural science. 'The crowd' may have both force and

identity but must remain an abstract phenomenon, contrary to Rudé's stipulation, precisely to avoid preconceived accounts of history; the term should be seen as theoretical and contingent, its realisation on the streets not a given state identifiable by certain 'properties' but moot.

At a more mundane level, methodological problems abound. There are four possible sources for empirical work, all of which provide, at best, the raw material for a flawed picture of events. Two of these, the study of the actions of the crowd and empathetic analysis of behaviour, are dealt with elsewhere in this work (Chapters Four and Six).

In the wake of both the American riots of the 1960s and the British experience, much research was based on participation surveys in areas in which there had been a disturbance, with analysis based on division of the surveyed population into 'rioters' and 'non-rioters' followed by statistical comparison of the two groups in terms of socio-economic, demographic and attitudinal measures. The value of such research was critically examined in Chapter One, but leaving aside the epistemological problems concerning questionnaires mentioned before, I wish to suggest here that the ostensibly self-evident distinction between rioter and non-rioter is in fact tendentious. In late August 1981 I was walking along Coldharbour Lane in Brixton. Two police officers stopped a car driven by a thirty to thirty-five year old West Indian with a younger black passenger, both male. The car was searched by one of the police while the other kept an eye on the two men. This took no longer than two to three minutes but in this time a hostile crowd gathered of about one hundred to a hundred and fifty, most but by no means all of whom were black. The constable appeared to find something in the car. At this point the younger of the two men, realising that the attention of both officers had been caught by a particularly vociferous spectator,

made off into the crowd, initially at speed but then, aware that he was not being pursued, at no more than a jog, passing straight in front of me. I made no effort to stop him. He was cheered all the way by many of those present and there were blows exchanged between one of the constables and a member of the crowd. Such incidents were, and are, common in many parts of London and the resistance to arrests and the small scuffles that quite often ensue certainly border on behaviour that might be described as rioting, even if the events are not classified as such. Every action is an act; my doing nothing was an action, but whether it was an act of prevarication, cowardice, tacit support or even riot is less clear, just as the position of those in the crowd was so ambiguous as to belie any simple rioter/non-rioter dichotomy.

Similarly, in November 1982 the demolition of several properties in Railton Road led to clashes between police and young blacks that were described by both press and television as a 'riot'. When I arrived in Brixton that night almost the first thing I saw was a white youth who, when an off-licensee was distracted, 'lifted' two bottles of whisky. The 'rioter' ran off, exit stage left pursued by an Alsatian dog. Such anecdotal evidence is put forward not as a definitive refutation of the rioter/non-rioter juxtaposition, but rather as symptomatic of the problems that surround the status of 'rioter', and the difficulty in discerning a unity of purpose in the collective.

The fourth possible source of data for empirical analysis of 'the crowd' is the criminal records based on those arrested during disturbances. The most obvious flaw in such a method is that the behaviour of many of this group will be misrepresented, several will be found not guilty of any offence, several others will be convicted of offences they never committed, having been picked out, almost at random, from the crowd. Similarly, there will be accusations that the chance of

arrest in incidents of public disorder is disproportionately high for some groups victimised by the police; men and black people in the case of the British riots. There is no way to either confirm or refute the latter trend, although both intuitively and from personal experience I would suggest that in the chaos of collective violence the former problem (the antithesis of the latter) is more prevalent.

The value in study of arrest records in this context rests on two basic assumptions. The first is that those arrested provide a sample of the sort of people 'on the streets' during the violence, and the second that, however strong or weak the link, the actual offence charges against individuals will more often than not be indicative of an action or form of behaviour carried out by that individual during the disturbance. In a perfect legal system this connection would be explicit, in the circumstances this is manifestly not the case. Nevertheless, given this link it should be possible to identify, with some degree of certainty, the sort of people that were carrying out certain activities in July 1981.

Important caveats must be taken into account in this approach. Many decades of criminology have attempted to discern the distinctive determinants of offender patterns, whilst in the geography of crime, similarly detailed studies of spatial trends that relate to offenders have been produced without resorting to the ecological fallacy (eg Lynch, 1960; Baldwin 1975; Baldwin and Bottoms 1976; Herbert 1977, 78, 82; Ley, 1974; Baldwin, 1980) yet normally serving only to identify broad generalisations about offender characteristics. A central flaw in much of this sort of work is the frequently made tacit assumption of some form of trait theory, the belief that there exists the quintessential offender. Significantly, within the criminological literature the shortcomings of trying to classify offenders other than in terms of

crude 'offence prone groups' has been pointed up by the fact that

"even the most 'criminal' people may be entirely law-abiding in the majority of their actions"(Clarke,1985)

and it is this sort of problem that has prompted criminologists such as Sparks(1980) to call for a greater concentration on opportunity based crime rates. This latter trend, in part a legacy of the 'defensible space' school (Newman,1974) is itself beset with difficulties. As Clarke points out, such crime rates involve at least three variables: the targets of crime, people's routine activities and, most importantly for this work, the situations in which crime takes place. Quite possibly, the full scale riot may be an instance of society at its most anarchic, with maximum opportunity for potential offenders, including those not normally tempted. Given that the very blurred distinction between 'criminal' and 'political' action becomes even more opaque at time of riot and is matched with this overarching novelty of an 'open door' crime environment, the very idea of a definitive pathology of rioters emerging from arrest statistics becomes slightly preposterous. Nevertheless, if descriptive generalisation of this data is sought, then the question becomes one of the status of such classifications. By definition the extension of a class varies in inverse proportion to the intension. More all-encompassing groups must be less rigorously defined, analytically hazy. In the case of collective violence the problem arises both from trying to discern uniting features that bind a very extended collective and from any attempt at working out how representative the rioters are of the social groups from which they are drawn. The problem of extension is more one of logic than methodology. Once 'rioters' have been identified, by whatever means, it does not license the assumption that those properties common to this entity must necessarily, at some level, be functionally related to behaviour, or conversely, that the relative absence of a particular characteristic among the group makes that characteristic completely causally

irrelevant. This point is most easily demonstrated by two examples from the literature. Caplan and Paige (1968), comparing the income of rioters and non-rioters in America, find that there is no significant difference between the two groups and that

"whereas there may be very many people with very low incomes who riot, a comparable percentage of people whose incomes are just as low do not."(p17).

From this trend they deduce that poverty was not a significant factor in producing riots. Quite simply there are no grounds for such inference from their data precisely because generalised surrogate measures do not probe individual intentionality. Similarly, Paul Cooper(1985), using the Home Office data to analyse the Merseyside riots of 1981, validly points out that those arrested,

"included in significant proportions, persons who do not normally come into contact with the police"(p64)

and that the unemployed are not significantly overrepresented in the figures, but then concludes that the rioting was:

"an example of a community taking an opportunity to assert their right to equal concern and respect by means of violence."(p68)

Specifically, Cooper's explanation may well be correct, but the data do not, on their own, prove it as conclusively as he suggests. There is a danger, as can be seen from much of the American work on rioting, that the academic creates categories which may be descriptively related to riot participation at very high levels of significance but which are causally meaningless. Identifying statistically significant vectors in a data matrix is not tantamount to the creation of comprehensible behavioural structures. Yet it is only this that such analysis can aspire to. We pick 'faces from the crowd'.

For precisely the same reason it is important to be cautious about identification of 'the average rioter'. The Kerner Commission in the United States suggested that,

"the typical rioter in the summer of 1967 was a Negro, unmarried male between the ages of 15 and 24. He was in many ways very different from the stereotype. He was not a migrant. He was born in the State and was a lifelong resident in the city in which the riot took place. Economically his position was about the same as his Negro neighbours who did not actively participate in the riot.

Although he had not, usually, graduated from high school; he was somewhat better educated than the average inner-city Negro, having at least attended high school for a time.

Nevertheless, he was more likely to be working in a menial or low status job as an unskilled labourer. If he was employed, he was not working full-time and his employment was frequently interrupted by periods of unemployment.

He feels strongly that he deserves a better job and that he is barred from achieving it, not because of lack of training, ability or ambition, but because of discrimination by employers.

He rejects the white bigot's stereotype of the Negro as ignorant and shiftless. He takes great pride in his race and believes that in some respects Negroes are superior to whites. He is extremely hostile to whites, but his hostility is more apt to be a product of social and economic class than of race; he is almost equally hostile to middle class Negroes."(1968,p64)

Similarly, for the British riots Martin Kettle(1982) and The Times newspaper both try to draw up a picture of the 'identikit' British rioter. For The Times,

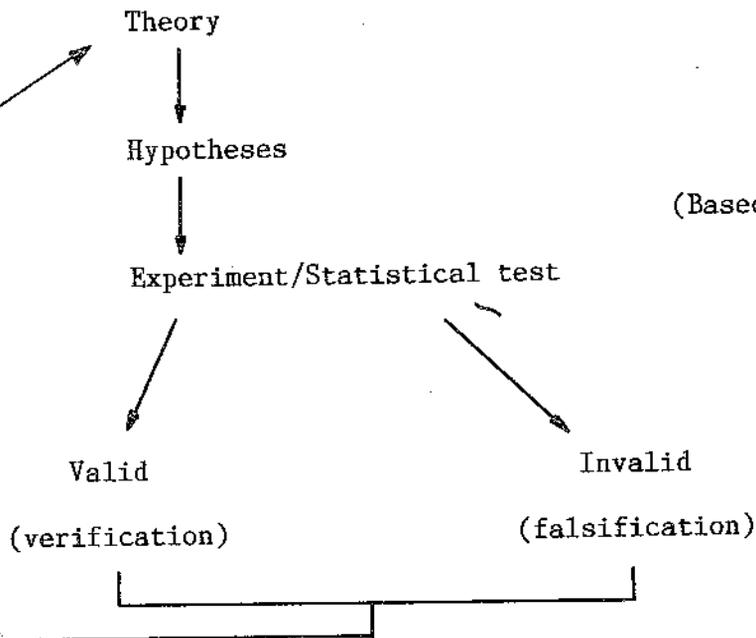
"he or she was young, unemployed and living close to the rioting" (Kettle 1982,p180).

Whether such averages are useful or not will depend not simply on the statistical significance of a set of personality variables but rather on the explanatory power of the theoretical construct they represent.

3 STATISTICAL NOTES

Much is made in standard statistical texts used in geography about the difference between inferential and descriptive statistical techniques. (Hammond & McCullagh,1978; Gregory,1978) I want to suggest that the semantic ambiguity produced by such a coinage can mistakenly

lead geographers to believe that statistical testing can operate at any other level than the truly descriptive. It is logically impossible for either experiments or statistics to definitively test hypotheses. This is a necessary truth, now widely accepted in the natural sciences (Harré,1984), which is logically demonstrable with the aid of the diagram below.



(Based on Johnston,1978,p16)

Diagram 3.1

Although the paradigm most commonly associated with such claims for the power of experiment is positivism, there are many other schools of thought that would not regard the above figure as contentious. Crucially it would seem a commonplace that if results from experiment, be it statistical or otherwise, are consistent at a high enough level of probability, then the theory may be accepted or new theory generated. Thus, theory is bound in by the tight circle of the empirical. In practice such a construction is epistemologically flawed. Underlying the diagram the tacit, but vital, assumption that creates this flaw is the idea that underwriting our empirical system is a principle of

constant conjunctions or regularities. This stems from a Humean conception of causality, touched upon in the preceding chapter. Hume contended that, "we can discern nothing in A by itself which would lead to produce B" and that at best all we could apprehend was "the constant conjunction of kind A with events of the kind B" (Russell, 1946, p639) and that under the principle of induction this will lead to an assumed causal relationship between the two. Hence Hume's view that "there is nothing in a cause except invariable succession." This schema has obvious intuitive appeal and is not so much incorrect as inadequate. As early as the 1590s, Clavius' paradox suggested that there would be an infinite number of explanations that could account for any observed results (in the figure above). In the twentieth century this point has been echoed many times by, among others, Poincare, Kuhn and most significantly by Godel who in 1932,

"demonstrated that ... no proof of the consistency of any deductive system which was rich enough for the expression of arithmetic, could be represented within the system."
(Ayer, 1982, p130)

Thus in his principle of hypotheses he suggested that any finite set of empirical results could be accounted for by an infinite set of hypotheses. The empirical circle is not tied so tight as might first appear, we choose one or more from many explanations; yet there is no necessary conclusion from such revelations that reality itself is questionable, as in the geographical humanist tradition (see Jackson and Smith, 1984, p9), but rather that the Humean causal model was an inadequate epistemological base. Theoretical and empirical domains are philosophically independent, inextricably realised. If this is the case a causal model closer to that of Aristotle (see previous chapter) is preferable, which, vitally, includes an explicitly theorised causal mechanism.

One attempt to escape endowing theory with such privileged status

has been made by Popper (1957,1959,1972) in his principle of falsification. He too realised that however many times a hypothesis was verified it would never be proved because a single definitive refutation would be enough to reject it. For Popper, knowledge advanced via a system of falsification of tentative theory, and it is hard to avoid noticing that in the social sciences the vogues of statistical theory and Popperian philosophy go hand in hand in the epistemology of the null hypothesis. The problem is that to claim that hypotheses must be falsifiable is more a statement of good intent than of logical necessity. This is the case because as Ayer convincingly demonstrates (1982) the concept of falsification itself blurs under close examination because hypotheses must be accompanied by a series of basic propositions that are assumed (if a hypothesis is shown to be invalid is it the basic proposition or the hypothesis that is falsified?) as in the positivist model, and also because statistical statements are impossible to falsify in the true sense of the word because probability levels are arbitrarily set.

Similarly, statistical techniques are philosophically unable to produce explanation. This has absolutely nothing to do with the uniqueness of the social world. Thus in a work on factor analysis in geology reference is continually made to sets of regularities expected in a data matrix given certain axioms of geological theory. It is such axioms that determine and constrict explanation couched in terms that must, by definition, be based on some causal philosophy and is always external to the mathematics. It is precisely because of this epistemic feature that realist philosophers (eg Bhaskar,1978) have accorded theory such an important place in epistemology. It is also for the same reason that the claims made for factor, principal components and path analysis have been exaggerated. (Johnson,1978) These are very useful, sophisticated methods of explaining variance in a multi-dimensional data

matrix; they cannot, without theoretical grounding, do more than this.

There are also particular problems in relating statistical inference to the social world. One way of characterising these is by examination of the truism that explanations must be reconcilable at all levels of detail. Macro-scale descriptions of behaviour must be, at least theoretically, reducible to the explanation of the behaviour of the smallest element involved in the explicandum. In the biological sciences the movement of my leg can be reduced to a certain pattern of neuro-sensory activity; in the natural sciences Einsteinian and quantum physics have proved particularly difficult to reconcile but nobody suggests that such a task is a theoretical impossibility. This is relevant for statistical social science precisely because mathematical descriptions at the macro-level can never be reduced in this way. As Herbert(1978) states,

"in a field of study such as deviance a perspective which adopts a scale larger than the individual is unlikely to provide a precise causal explanation."

The variables analysed in statistical work must, by definition, be quantifiable; mental states are not. There are several basic reasons for this which relate to the philosophy of action. Quite simply types of bodily movement show no necessary correspondence with types of action. Actions have preferred descriptions (the kiss of Judas has few affectionate equivalents), a finite number of empirical phenomena must stand for a structurally directed but infinite number of mental states. The mechanism to fit into our causal model is one of intentional causation. Philosophical intentionality, as mentioned in Chapter Two, refers to the way in which mental states relate to the physical world (beliefs, desires and, of course, intentions in the normal sense). Specifically, intentions in this sense are not necessarily based on prior reflection, they may incorporate elements of subconscious intentionality. Under the philosophy of action of Austin (1962) and

Searle (1983,1984) actions have both a physical(behavioural) and mental(intentional) content. Hence in intentional causation,

"there is an internal connection between the cause and the effect, because the cause is a representation of the very state of affairs that it causes." (Searle,1984,p78)

This obviously fits easily into the Aristotelian but not the Humean conception of causality, and is the source of the most fundamental weakness of statistical social science. For when the context is extremely complex but intentional states relatively simple and can almost be taken for granted, as in consumer demand or, to a lesser extent, in sephology (the act of voting itself is almost a parody of cognitive decision making), then sophisticated statistical analysis can emerge or, some might argue, has emerged as a powerful predictive tool. Notwithstanding this, however straightforward the context, if intentional states are of primary importance, particularly in those activities that deviate from a societal norm (eg suicide, criminal action), statistics can perform only a hazy, a posteriori descriptive role, precisely because of the logical not practical impossibility of expressing the infinite variety of nuance and ambiguity of the intentional world in a purely formal or arithmetic medium. Again it is important to note that even in the former (sephological) case it is still only arithmetic variance not human behaviour that is explained, and as with all such Humean statements, the causal mechanism is external to the statistical analysis. Put another way: the question, What am I doing? is relatively trivial when I vote, resonant when I jump off the top of a high building. Behaviour and action can be consistently matched in the former but not the latter case.

There is a tendency to refer to geography as a subject that is 'young' or 'immature' implying that the statistical problem is one that time will solve:

"Most academic disciplines, and especially those in the social and environmental sciences, are immature; they have very few axioms on which to base theoretical developments."
(Johnston, 1978, p17).

"True scientific theory, based on well established facts, is still the distant goal for most geographical study." (p18)

The point is not only, as the humanist school emphasises, are there no simple facts but also that such optimism is logically flawed because by the very nature of intentionality there can be no formal laws of the social world. Thus, not only is Thrift (1981) correct in deriding cognitivism by stating that a conception of decision making as a reflective choice from a given set of alternatives is "an invention of scientific rationality" but is also dangerously misleading when going on to state, in his preferred characterisation of the process, that

"it seems likely that they [decisions] are constituted in terms of a minimum logic which is fuzzy, contradictory and ambiguous and whose equivalences are cavalier."
(1981, p359)

Such a condescending view of the relationship between mental states and empirical phenomena both smacks of apologist behaviourism and paints a simplistic portrait of the human agent.

Leaving aside the conceptual conundra concerning the power of statistical inference, there are two simple mathematical problems with the data used in this chapter. The first is that the size of samples in many cells of the arrest record breakdowns are so small as to prohibit comparison based on even such simple tests as Chi squared (χ^2). In these cases the binomial test has been frequently used or, as has been the case in much historical and American work, comparison must be judged by straightforward juxtaposition of different results. A related problem concerns comparisons of sets of figures expressed in percentages, closed number sets. It will be seen that the classification of data by the Home Office, the most important source of arrest records, was oversimplistic and crude, resulting in only a few

classes for many of the most important variables, particularly residence. As Johnston (1978,p270) points out,

"the larger the number of classes in a closed number set the less the degree to which any one correlation between two of them is fixed, especially if the range of percentages covered by every variable is considerable."

Unfortunately this is not the case with much of the data here, and Johnston's point that

"if closed number sets must be used in the research then perhaps analysis based on the general linear model should not be; if such analyses are to be undertaken, then closed number sets are best avoided." (1978,p270)

is well made, and whilst the advances of Q analysis (Chapman,1981; Ashton,1974) and fuzzy set theory (Pipkin,1978) may be statistically sophisticated they remain constricted by the causal mechanism problem, as well as being mathematically unsuitable for this particular data set.

It is important to stress that the primacy of verstehen in any epistemology of the social world rests on this problem of intentionality but neither excuses rationalist self-indulgence in theoretical abstraction nor vitiates the utility of statistical techniques in social science. It is rather the status of the hypotheses deduced from these techniques that must be reassessed.

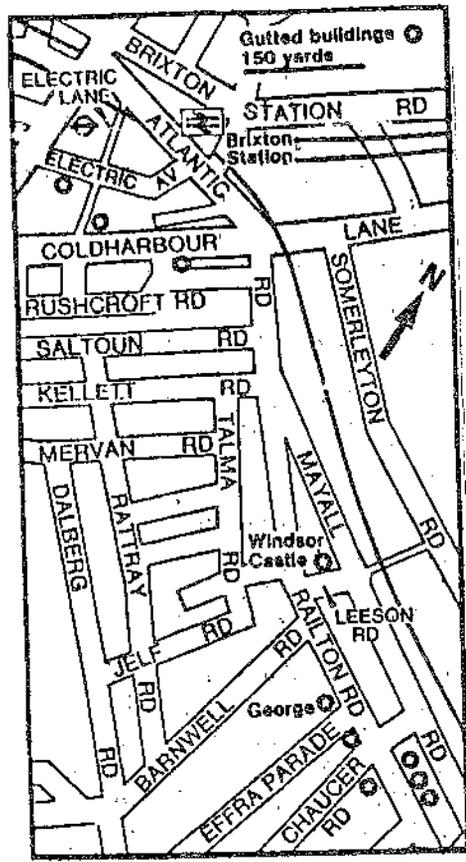
4 ANALYTICAL AIMS

Emotive, value-laden collective nouns such as 'the young', 'the herd' or 'the crowd' do not necessarily create powerful, or even useful, behavioural structures. Yet, paradoxically, by simple and repeated usage of the terms involved they become actual analytical or cultural phenomena. This is the substance of the modern myth which "transforms

history into nature" (Barthes 1957,p129) and results in the "oppressive divorce of knowledge and mythology" (Barthes,1979,p37). In this way many passages of history or social movements assume a double life: the contemporary context and the temporally distanced intentional states of the participants which constitute the causes of behaviour lie tangled up in hindsight justification and selective amnesia, and are overshadowed by the manner in which events have 'burgeoned forth' in time. The result is the divergence of the 'private' and 'public' lives of a parcel of history, social reality on the one hand and cultural mythology on the other. The idealised investigative task is to identify the former and expose the latter. Epistemological problems prohibit such total exegesis but do not threaten the realist ontology implicit in such a dichotomy. There is no suggestion here that the cultural phenomenon is in any way an inferior or specious object of analysis. Indeed history is littered with incidents whose 'public life' caused events more significant than those produced by their 'private life'. British humiliation at Dunkirk was transformed into a national triumph, the Gettysburg address may have had very minor material effect on a war but major ramifications in the more nebulous world of political symbolism. So too with the British riots.

5 THE BRIXTON DISORDERS OF APRIL 1981

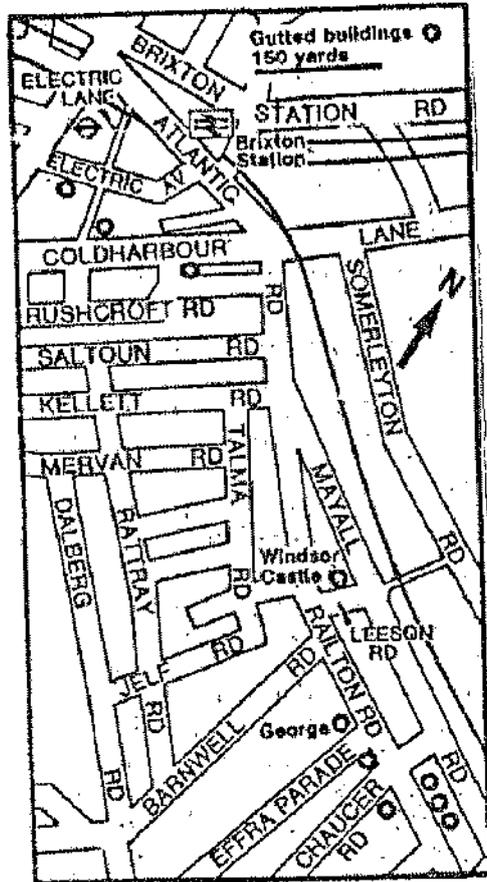
The basic chronology and background to the Brixton riots have been described in Chapter One. The purpose of this section is to attempt an empirical analysis of the crowd that was on the streets of Brixton in order to provide a suitable source for comparison of the various descriptions and explanations of the riots that have been offered; in



The conflict with the police was clearly focussed on Mayall Road, Leeson Road, Chaucer Road, most of the looting took place some distance away in Electric Avenue, Dalberg Road and Brixton Road.

Diagram 3.2 (Map 3.1)

Central Brixton



Whilst the conflict with the police was clearly focussed on Mayall Road, Leeson Road and Railton Road, most of the looting took place some distance away in Electronic Avenue, Atlantic Road and Brixton Road.

Diagram 3.2 (Map 3.1)

short an attempt to match rhetoric with reality, not an acknowledgement of the supremacy of either empirical or inductive epistemology but rather a suggestion that only by a combination of theoretical and empirical positions can a plausible reconstruction of events be made.

The riots in Brixton involved great variation in both actions of a crowd of people and the mental states of crowd members. It should be stressed that empirical work carried out after the events can hope only to record a flawed picture of the former, the latter resists facile apprehension and can only be deduced or inferred; two terms which may well stand as euphemisms for guessing.

Although the April rioting can be validly considered as a single event, there were important differences between the violence of Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the 10th, 11th and 12th. On Friday the 10th the rioting consisted entirely of a conflict between a group of young blacks and the police and lasted for a few hours only. On the Saturday much larger numbers of both police and rioters were involved in disturbances that lasted from four o'clock in the afternoon until late at night and, significantly, looting and arson spread throughout the whole of the area. On the Sunday well over a thousand police officers were deployed in a high profile occupation of part of Brixton and, although there was both looting and attacks on the police, the disorders were not as serious as the night before.

One hundred and forty-five shop premises were damaged, twenty-eight properties damaged by fire. The targets within this group were not randomly chosen. Predictably, suppliers of consumer durables (particularly clothes, shoe and electrical equipment shops) and off-licenses proved favourites, whilst shops owned by popular local figures in Railton Road escaped unscathed. Although it may appear a trite point

to make, such rational actions must stand in contrast to the 'mindless hooligans' that populated Fleet Street's rioting world. Similarly, the occasion was used by some to pay off old scores. The landlord of 'The George', a pub in South Railton Road by Effra Parade, had been reported to the Race Relations Board in 1966, and throughout the 60s and 70s treatment of black people at the pub had been a specific protest issue in several local marches. Even the South London Press, not noted for such local sensitivity, and which had taken an editorial line supporting the police actions at the time of the riots, remarked that this burning was "undoubtedly an act of revenge for years of racial discrimination" (1981). Similar tensions also quite possibly lay behind arson in the newsagent by the pub. Apart from these two, and a few other exceptions, most of the damage was to property some two to three hundred metres away from the conflict with the police on the Saturday night (see map 3.1). Lord Scarman even went so far as to say that,

"While the centre of the disorder was Leeson Road and the northern end of Railton Road, its effects were being felt over a wide area of central Brixton. In the commercial area of Brixton Road, the northern half of Atlantic Road, Electric Avenue and Coldharbour Lane, widespread looting had developed since about 6pm. Both whites and blacks - some of them very young - were involved. To several witnesses, the whites appeared to be generally older and more systematic in their methods. It also appears that the looters were, in the main, quite different from the people who were attacking the police in Railton Road. Several witnesses had the impression that many of the looters came from outside Brixton, and were simply taking advantage of the disorders for their own criminal purposes."

(Scarman, 1981, 3.61)

Nevertheless, Scarman's suggestion is based on only a few eye witness reports.

Although it was not possible to obtain comprehensive details of all those arrested during the disturbances, overlapping sets of data were gathered from local press, court records and personal research. Age distribution, offence and address were known for a group of one hundred and ninety-three, ethnicity and offence for a group of one hundred and

one, and all four characteristics for a subset of forty-six. Between the Friday and Sunday, two hundred and fifty-three arrests were made (with a further twenty-nine on the Monday).

There is a marked difference in the age distributions of those arrested for different offences. In Table 3.1 the data have been categorised to facilitate comparison with the Home Office data for the July riots. It can be seen that of the three major offence types (Violence Against the Person (VAP), Burglary/Theft and Threatening Behaviour) the VAP group has the highest average age. Of the thirty-eight, or almost 70 per cent, of this group that were older than twenty-one, thirteen were more than thirty years old. This compares with a figure of 60.37 per cent over twenty-one for the Threatening Behaviour group and the much lower figure of 37.31 per cent over twenty-one for the Burglary/Theft group. When the figures are amalgamated to divide offences into those directed at the police, the 'rioters' (VAP, threatening behaviour, obstruction of a police officer) from those directed at property, the 'looters' (criminal damage, theft, burglary) a clear difference in the age distributions of the two groups emerges. 66.12 per cent of the rioters were over twenty-one compared with only 36.11 per cent of the looters. Such a disparity is, not surprisingly, statistically significant. ($\text{Chi}^2 > 100$ alpha = 0.001)

The addresses of this data set were then plotted on a map to compare distance travelled to offence for rioters and looters. The Railton Road, Mayall Road 'triangle' was taken as the epicentre of the rioting, the retail section of the Brixton Road for the looting. Concentric circles of 200 metres were then drawn around these two centres with residence pattern tabulated in terms of distribution across these concentric zones. Obviously the area of each zone is not equal as area increases exponentially in a geometric progression with $\pi \cdot r^2$ as the

central term, even though circle radius is increasing only arithmetically. ($r, 2r, 3r, 4r \dots$ etc.) The difference between areal size of concentric zones decreases incrementally. Hence, for any concentric zoning where the radius increases arithmetically the second zone will cover three times the area of the innermost zone, the third zone two times the area of the second, the fourth 1.66 times that of the third, the fifth 1.50 times that of the fourth ... etc.

Because of this relationship, the 'real' concentration around the centre in diagrams 3.3 and 3.4 is understated. In a perfectly even distribution of offenders there would be three times the number in the second cell than in the innermost zone, in line with the difference in area between the two. However, it is evident from a glance at table 3.2 and diagrams 3.3 and 3.4 that whilst most rioters and looters lived fairly close to the disturbances, the former are much more localised; an effect which also shows clearly in a cumulative percentage graphical description. (Diagram 3.5) Whereas 18.18 per cent of all rioters lived within 200 metres of the centre compared with only 1.39 per cent of the looters, 62.80 per cent of the rioters lived less than one thousand metres from the disturbances compared with only 36.11 per cent of the looters. Similarly, the median, upper and lower quartiles of the dispersions reveal the much higher concentration of the rioting group around the centre of the rioting. In short, there seem to be clear grounds for supporting Scarman's suggestion that there might be a difference between the distances the two groups had travelled to the disorders. This difference is important more in relative than absolute terms. At the time of the Brixton riots the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, David McNee, was quoted as saying that, "people from outside the area inspired Saturday night's riot". (South London Press, 14/4/81.) Given that chronologically the looting in Brixton did not start until two or three hours after the rioting, the extremely

Residence pattern of arrest samples, Brixton April 1981

Diagram 3.3

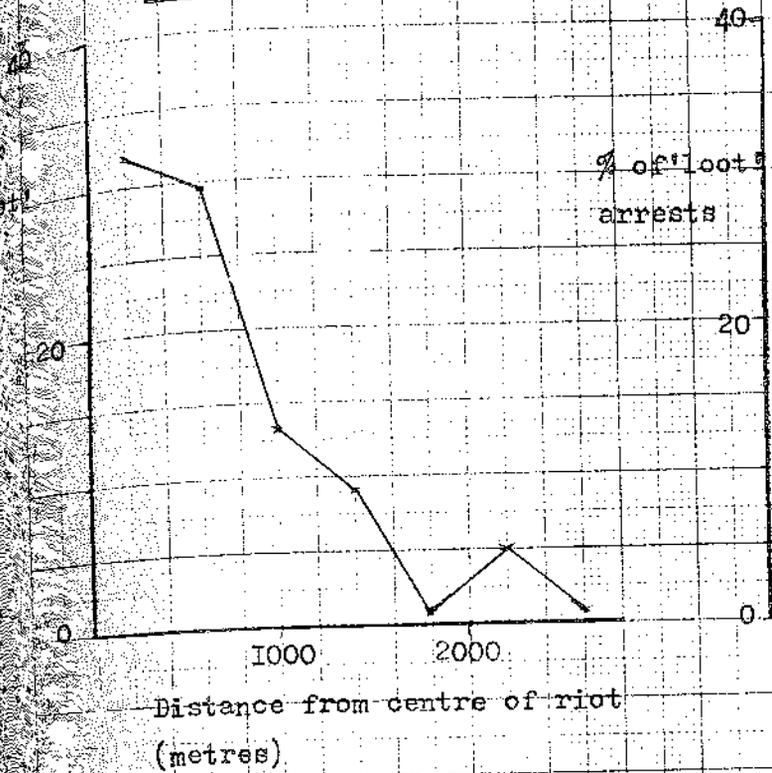


Diagram 3.4

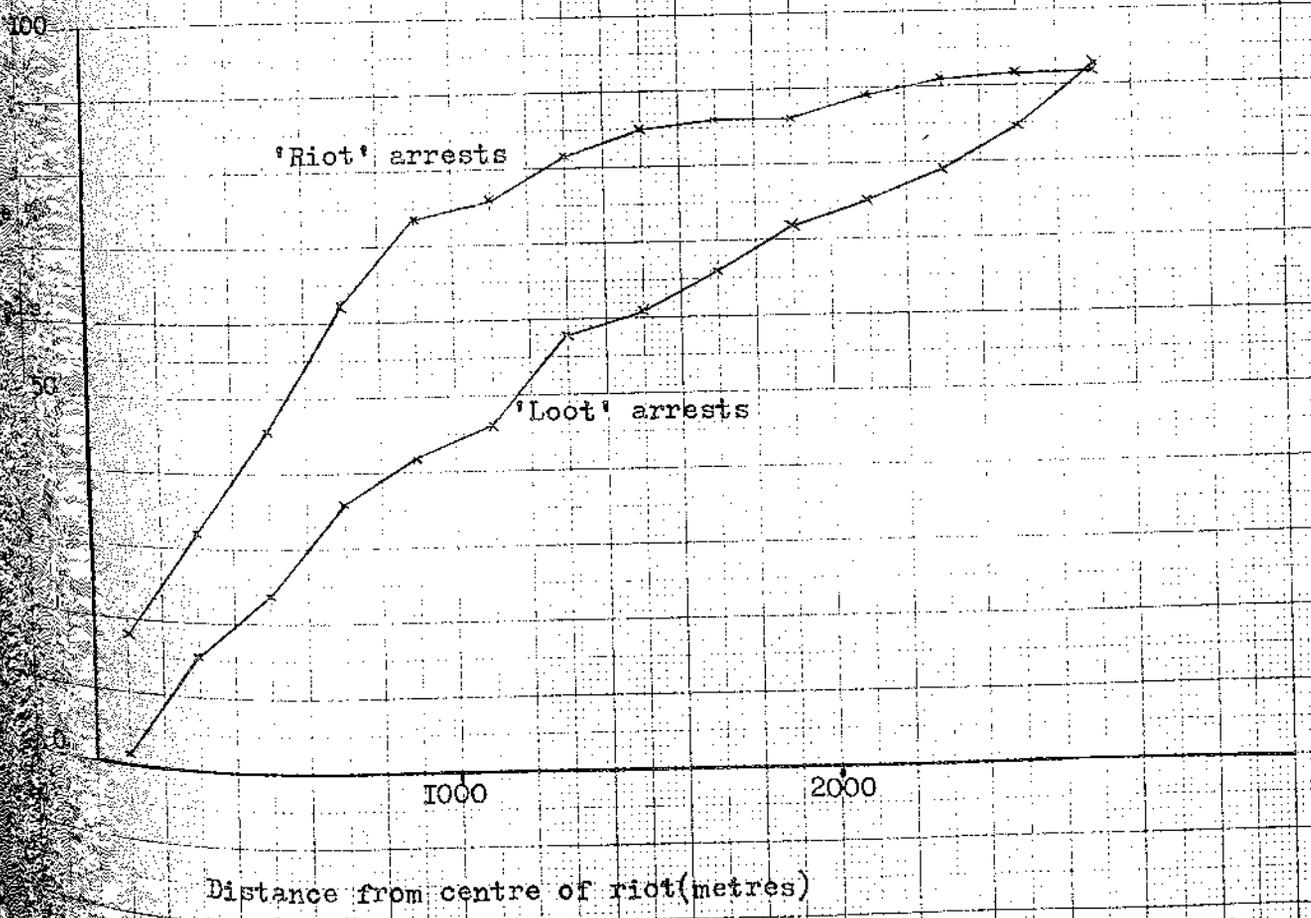
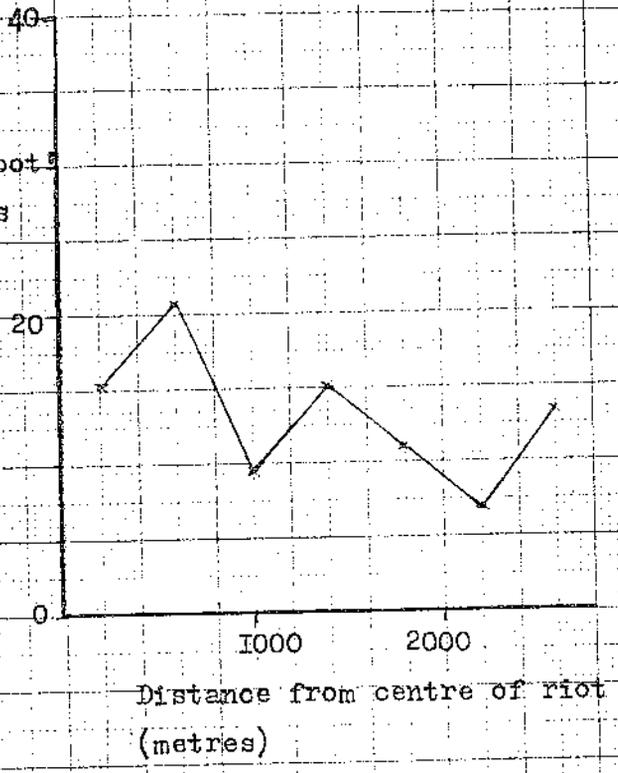


Diagram 3.5

Table 3.2 The April 1981 Brixton riots: Residence by offence type

		<u>Distance travelled to centre of disturbance (concentric bands)</u>														
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Further
<u>Rioting</u>																
Number		22	17	16	21	13	23	7	4	1	00	4	2	1	0	10
%		18	14	13	17	11	2.5	6	3	1	0	3	2	1	0	8
Cumulative %		18	32 ^{*1}	45	62 ^{*2}	73	75.5 ^{*3}	81.5	84.5	85.5	85.5	88.5	90.5	91.5	91.5	100
<u>Looting</u>																
Number		1	10	6	9	4	3	9	2	4	4	2	3	4	6	5
%		1	14	8	12.5	5.5	4	12.5	3	5.5	5.5	3	4	5.5	8	7
Cumulative %		1	15	23	35.5 ^{*1}	41	45	57.5 ^{*2}	60.5	66	71.5	74.5	79.5 ^{*3}	85	93	100

*1 Lower Quartile

*2 Median

*3 Upper Quartile

tightly clustered pattern of offender residence around Railton Road, the 'Front Line', would seem to belie any such suggestion, although it is obviously not possible to evaluate the significance of single instances in statistical generalisation.

'Ethnicity' also appears to be a crucial variable in differentiating between offence types. (Table 3.3) Data sets that overlapped with those used in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 facilitated both a general breakdown of the characteristics of a hundred and one offenders by ethnicity and a forty-six person subset of this group by both ethnicity and age. Again the most notable of the specific breakdowns occurs in the VAP category. Every single one of the thirty arrests in this group stemmed from a physical conflict between police and the person charged. Eighty per cent of the group was black. In marked contrast to this, those arrested for burglary or theft were still mostly black, but in this offence category twenty-three (41.07 per cent) were white. Hence when the offence categories are amalgamated the white group, whilst constituting 26.83 per cent of those arrested for rioting, make up a much larger percentage (38.33 per cent) of the looters. Even those whites that are arrested for rioting tend to be more often arrested for the less serious offence of threatening behaviour, a trend which is reflected in a comparison of the more serious indictable offence group (32.22 per cent white) with those arrested for summary offences. (45.45 per cent white) The multi-racial composition of the arrest figures might masquerade as a cross-cultural conflict with the police; this was certainly the interpretation of some (eg Howe, 1981), but when examined more closely this element seems to be almost exclusively a black preserve; only in the looting was there more general participation.

The breakdown of offence groups by both age and ethnicity is based on too small a sample size to endorse or produce any conclusive comment

BRIXTON : APRIL 1981

a) ETHNICITY BY OFFENCE

LOOTING AND RIOTING

	Looting	Rioting	Total
	%	%	
Black	35 (58.33)	30 (73.17)	65
White	23 (38.33)	11 (26.83)	34
Asian	1 (1.67)	0 (0)	1
European	1 (1.67)	0 (0)	1
	$\overline{60}$ (100)	$\overline{41}$ (100)	$\overline{101}$

CRIMINAL OFFENCE

	VAP	Burg/Theft	Crim.Dam.	Theft/Burg.	Obstruc.	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	
Black	24 (80)	31 (55.36)	4 (100)	4 (44.44)	2 (100)	65
White	6 (20)	23 (41.07)	0	5 (55.56)	0	34
Asian	0 (0)	1 (1.79)	0	0	0	1
European	0 (0)	1 (1.79)	0	0	0	1
	$\overline{30}$	$\overline{56}$	$\overline{4}$	$\overline{9}$	$\overline{2}$	$\overline{101}$

INDICTABLE v SUMMARY

	Indictable	Summary	Total
	%	%	
Black	59 (65.56)	6 (54.545)	65
White	29 (32.22)	5 (45.455)	34
Asian	1 (1.11)	0	1
European	1 (1.11)	0	1
	$\overline{90}$ (100)	$\overline{11}$ (100)	$\overline{101}$

b) ETHNICITY BY OFFENCE BY AGE [Subset of a)]

	Under 17	17-20	21+	Total
	%	%	%	
WHITE				
VAP	0	1 (9.09)	0	1
Theft/Burglary	2 (100)	7 (63.64)	1 (50)	10
Threatening Behaviour	0	3 (27.27)	1 (50)	4
	$\overline{2}$ (100)	$\overline{11}$ (100)	$\overline{2}$ (100)	$\overline{15}$
BLACK				
VAP	0	5 (38.46)	11 (78.57)	16
Theft/Burglary	0	2 (15.39)	1 (7.14)	3
Threatening Behaviour	4 (100)	6 (46.15)	2 (14.29)	12
	$\overline{4}$ (100)	$\overline{13}$ (100)	$\overline{14}$ (100)	$\overline{31}$

or statistical testing. However, the trend that does emerge to some extent is that the majority of both blacks and whites arrested for looting were in the 17-20 age range, contrary to Scarman's suggestion; again, only black arrests for VAP emerge as a class notable for the large numbers in the black 21+ group.

If offence type is accepted as an approximate, if not completely reliable, indicator of behaviour then Rudé's call for empiricism is vindicated by an analysis of the arrest data. For those who would see riots as an expression of greed or criminality (Taylor, 1984) the emergence of two valid analytical classes, the rioters on one hand the looters on the other, is difficult to explain. Suggestions of an influx of 'trouble-makers' into the area seem undermined by the fact that so many of those involved in the rioting lived so close to the scene of the disorders. Perhaps more importantly still, the crowd itself, so mythical, so bestial in rhetoric, begins to buckle under mundane rationality. In an earlier section of this work Scarman was criticised for his portrayal of an almost regressive mob, in the tradition of deindividuation and impressionistic melodrama:

"In Brixton over that terrible weekend they [the police] stood between our society and a total collapse of law and order in the streets of an important part of our capital."(4.98)

There is something slightly insidious in depriving a group of people of historical agency, reducing the considered to the instinctive or automatic and the human to the bestial. Scarman never rejected this sort of populist image of the crowd as animal and at times goes close to propagating such pictures himself. Such misunderstanding might be considered understandable in an old man talking about 'the young', yet it took an even older one to put his finger on the tacit assumptions of the Scarman report. C.L.R. James pointed out that,

"Lord Scarman is terrified by this power of young blacks. If he understood the reasons for this power he would not exaggerate and elevate their revolt into a force for the destruction of British society" (1981; my emphasis).

Throughout the arrest data a fairly simple pattern emerges. It is almost as if there were really two riots in Brixton; one a deeply-rooted, highly localised rejection of a police presence seen as more occupying force than community service, and the other an opportunist reaction to the temporary breakdown in public order. Not all local blacks were rioters, not all the looters were juvenile whites, undoubtedly many were involved in both rioting and looting. Yet underlying this the conflict was undoubtedly a black conflict with the police, not a 'black youth' conflict and not a multi-racial attack on the Metropolitan Police Force.

6 THE 1981 RIOTS IN LONDON

a) The Home Office Data Set

The ambiguities surrounding classification of 'a riot' are dealt with in two stages in this work. Initially, the problem is circumvented by accepting an official, ostensibly objective definition: that by the Home Office of serious incidents of public disorder in July 1981 (Home Office Statistical Unit 1982, London Breakdowns), which are based on police identification of such incidents. This data has generally been accepted unquestioningly as identifying those arrested in the 1981 British riots; by academics (eg Benyon, 1982; Cooper, 1985), journalists (Times, Guardian, September, 1982), politicians (Hansard, October, 1982) and, not surprisingly, the police themselves (eg Report of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police for the year 1981). Thanks to

the co-operation of the Home Office Statistical Unit, the original, published, material was extended by accessing further tabulations from the mainframe computer data set. In the following chapter, the validity of this blanket classification of rioting is examined and questioned.

Aside from the general difficulties in divining meaning in criminal records, there are particular problems with the Home Office data, which relate partly to the set as a whole, and partly to the specific categories within the set. The most strident objections to the Home Office work were raised by the Legal Action Group (LAG Bulletin, November 1982). Sally Hughes points out that the definition used by the survey of public disorder, "more serious than would normally be expected in the area", leaves classification totally in the hands of the local police forces and adds a constriction of relativity to the data; less public disorder might be expected in Keswick than in Liverpool. Another valid complaint is that there is no possible statistical base for comparing 'rioters' with 'normal' defendants as no complete set of statistics for such normality either are, or possibly could be, made available for all groups. This is not necessarily a fault of the Home Office. Some of the other shortcomings the LAG Bulletin claims to identify are more tendentious, particularly in the light of a rival survey the group tried to carry out which failed due to lack of cooperation from defence solicitors; a suspicion of sour grapes is inevitable. The claim that,

"the type of person indicators are used to give credence to conventional wisdom about the rioters: that is that many were 'outsiders' participating with purely criminal intentions."
(LAG 1982,p5)

is based on the assumption that by examining those arrested in terms of offence, residence and other indicators the group are transformed into criminal statistics, criminalised by tabulation, an assertion that will be examined later in this chapter.

More telling points are made about the workings of the national legal machine in the summer of 1981, based partly on the LAG's own evidence and partly on the work of Richard Vogler(1982). Vogler suggests that magistrates found themselves forced into a policy of 'internment' refusing bail where normally it would have been granted almost automatically, due to a situation occurring where,

"some magistrates think their primary role is to assist the police in street clearing operations rather than to administer justice." (1982,p12)

Over the first few weeks of July this policy was subverted by the resultant overcrowding of prisons which had forced the government to set up specialist detention centres. In the light of such systemic failure, the Legal Action Group are quite explicit in their suggestion that the problem of criminalising defendants in the Home Office data is diversionary, and is part of

"a failure to see the political importance of the riot trials as an instrument of social control."(1982,p15)

It would appear that two issues, the empirical validity and the political significance of the Home Office data set, are confused by LAG, for whilst they produce a plausible polemic against the latter they have not, aside from expressing one or two pertinent reservations, demonstrated the descriptive inadequacy of the former.

Criteria for the breakdown of data:

RESIDENCE: The categorisation of offenders by residence, relative to the location of the disorder is the most inadequate division of the data. For the Metropolitan Police District five categories are produced, with implausibly flexible demarcation between each, viz.

Home: The immediate area of the incident, as defined by the local police force.

Near: "Within reasonable walking distance of the incident of public disorder" (consistently measured by the Home Office).

Town: Either elsewhere in police district (roughly comparable with London boroughs or in an adjoining postal area.

County: Elsewhere in London.

Not County: Further.

(Other categories: No fixed abode; Residence not recorded).

The problems with this classification are threefold. Firstly, and most importantly, there are obvious limits to the comparability of locations when the classification of the 'home' residence class is subjectively determined by the local police. Because of this, the relative cell size of the 'home' and 'near' classes may be relevant for individual incidents but becomes meaningless when locations are compared, it was necessary to amalgamate the two classes when residence patterns of the arrested in all London disturbances were examined. Similarly, the division between 'town' and 'county' categories depends at least in part on the proximity of police and postal boundary lines to the incident itself. Obviously a riot close to such border lines is more likely to have a considerable number of those arrested in an adjacent police district than one which occurs in the middle of such an area. Thirdly, the distances involved in each classification are crude. The 'town' group, for instance, could include people travelling as much as ten or more kilometres to the disorder. Bearing in mind the Brixton data already examined, the differentiation of groups may require a much finer spatial sieve. Unfortunately, it was not possible to disaggregate these classes; residence, which in the Brixton study appeared such a decisive variable, could only be seen through a glass darkly.

OFFENCE: The behaviour implied by offence charges varies greatly from being drunk and disorderly to attacking a police constable and causing

grievous bodily harm to pocketing a camera that is lying on the ground by a broken shop window. For the purpose of this analysis three particular divisions have been made.

1) Seriousness: Indictable offences have been compared with summary offences. The difference in possible and actual sentences for such offences is as follows:

i) Maximum penalties for various offences (from J C Smith and B Hogan, 1978)

Violence against a Person:)	
Wounding or inflicting GBH - 5 years)	
Assault occasioning ABH - 5 years)	
Possession of an offensive weapon - 2 years)	
Burglary/Theft:)	Indictable Offences
Burglary - 14 years)	
Handling stolen goods - 14 years)	
Going equipped for stealing - 3 years)	
Taking and driving away (TDA) - 3 years)	
Robbery - Life)	
Threatening behaviour)	
(Section 5, 1936; Public Order Act) - 6 months)	
Breach of the peace - £50 fine)	Summary Offences
Obstruction of a highway - £50 fine)	
Drunk - £50 fine)	

ii) Percentage of those found guilty given custodial sentences by offence type:

Violence against a person	- 16.33%)	
Burglary/theft	- 15.57%)	Indictable offences
Criminal damage	- 7.55%)	
Threatening behaviour	- 6.18%)	
Breach of the peace	- 3.12%)	Summary offences

This division obviates any need for discussion of the politically contentious question of whether crimes against property should have higher penalties than those against people.

2) The second division is that used in the Brixton analysis between those charged with offences primarily against the police and those

charged with offences against property; the former loosely labelled 'rioters', the latter 'looters'. The charge of threatening behaviour under the 1936 Public Order Act had been at the centre of controversy before the riots because of the 'catch all' parameters involved in the offence. The Legal Action Group claimed (November 1982) that,

"people were arrested indiscriminately during the riots and frequently held overnight or during the weekend in overcrowded conditions".(p11)

and charged in this way in order to 'clear the streets', and cite the conviction rate of 68 per cent of those charged with public order offences compared with the 1980 conviction rate of 87 per cent for seventeen to twenty-one year olds similarly charged as substantiating their argument. In order to allow for such a tendency and refine the 'rioter'/'looter' dichotomy the two specific offence types of violence against the person (VAP) and theft/burglary were also juxtaposed.

3) One further problem was that only principal offence was recorded by the Home Office. As property crimes are generally considered officially 'more serious' than offences against people, somebody guilty of both attacking a police constable and looting a shop would be recorded only under the theft/burglary class, which further blurs distinctions between the two groups.

OTHER VARIABLES: The classification of ethnicity is based entirely on police recording (IC1, IC2, IC3, etc.) and reference in the text to 'Whites', 'West Indians' and 'Asians' are no more than an echo of this classification. Similarly the term 'offender' is sometimes used instead of the term 'arrested'. This is justified partly on the grounds that there is no significant difference between conviction rates for all offence types and partly to avoid repetition of the latter term. Likewise, to avoid the Scylla and Chyrabdis of double misinterpretation the very specific 'criminal' as used in the text should be clarified.

This term is used as neither a pejorative categorisation of action (a given reading of the action as a delinquent act) nor as action with a socially significant meaning (ie a given reading of the action as a political act) but rather more simply as a form of action which takes place during incidents of public order and is legally classified as criminal. This is the quintessential problem of the statistical techniques used in this analysis; we may measure surrogates but are not sure of the precise tie between the empirical and the comprehensible, or even if this tie is consistent.

b) Age (Table 3.4)

The conventional criminological life path passes from infantile conformity through a period of juvenile delinquency to a legalistic and moral, if not philosophical, assumed state of responsibility and stability in adulthood. This is a very simplistic model, as the limited notions of adult agency implied by common usage of phrases such as 'I could not help myself' or 'I had to do it' and the very conformist, rule following aspects of delinquency revealed by ethnomethodological studies (eg Goffman, 1983; Marsh et al, 1978) show. Nevertheless, such trends are obviously relevant to a study of behaviour in riots, which involved, inter alia, a great deal of 'criminal' activity. Whatever the 'broader' significance and 'deeper' causes there are some very straightforward similarities between incidents of public disorder which cannot be overlooked. Most take place at night, most in cities and the majority at weekends. In any city on any weekend the majority of those people on the streets on foot late at night will be young. The central concern of the police during disturbances is inevitably more with order than with law. In short, maximum opportunity for crime and large numbers of people from what are euphemistically referred to as 'crime prone groups' are paired in time and space; almost a parody of a criminologist's

TABLE 3.4

ALL LONDON M.P.D.

A G E

ETHNICITY	Under 17		17-20		21+		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
White	117	(23.35)	215	(42.91)	169	(33.74)	501	(100)
West Indian	118	(27.50)	181	(42.19)	130	(30.31)	429	(100)
Asian	13	(13.13)	32	(32.32)	54	(54.55)	99	(100)
	<u>248</u>	(24.1)	<u>428</u>	(41.59)	<u>353</u>	(34.31)	<u>1029</u>	(100)

OFFENCE

a) VAP Theft	30	(18.75)	73	(45.62)	57	(35.63)	160	(100)
	74	(31.09)	100	(42.02)	64	(26.89)	238	(100)
	<u>104</u>		<u>173</u>		<u>121</u>		<u>398</u>	
b) Indictable Summary	133	(27.76)	205	(42.80)	141	(29.44)	479	(100)
	113	(22.69)	211	(42.37)	174	(34.94)	498	(100)
	<u>246</u>		<u>416</u>		<u>315</u>		<u>977</u>	
c) Rioting Looting	140	(22.08)	276	(43.53)	218	(34.39)	634	(100)
	99	(32.04)	128	(41.43)	82	(26.53)	309	(100)
	<u>239</u>		<u>404</u>		<u>300</u>		<u>943</u>	

EMPLOYMENT (as %'s of economical active)

Employed	(27.16)	(49.63)	(69.14)
Unemployed	(72.84)	(50.37)	(30.86)

TABLE 3.4

ALL LONDON M.P.D.

AGE +

ETHNICITY	Chi ²	Significance Level (α)	Degrees of Freedom	Critical Value
i) White v W.Indian v Assian	22.65	0.001	4	18.46
ii) White v non-White	0.815	N.S.	2	
iii) White v W Indian	2.46	N.S.	2	
iv) White v Asian	14.08	0.001	2	13.82
v) W.Indian v Asian	22.07	0.001	2	13.82
OFFENCE				
Indictable v Summary	3.75	N.S.	2	
'Riot' v 'Loot'	17.10	0.001	3	16.27
VAP v Theft	8.54	0.05	2	5.99
EMPLOYMENT				
Employed v Unemployed	47.39	0.001	2	13.82

combustion equation. To state this is not to impugn the motivation of 'rioters' or to taint or 'criminalise' those on the streets, but rather to suggest that given the circumstances a large amount of criminal behaviour carried out by young males is to be expected. It follows that those people arrested aged twenty-one or older form a class which is, almost a priori, more 'interesting', precisely because they differ from the criminal norm. This becomes doubly the case if the composition of this class, in terms of ethnicity and offence charged (taken as a rough guide to behaviour) can be distinguished from the younger group, thus making the division statistically, and quite possibly descriptively, significant.

Alternatively, in a search for the 'average' rioter it is always possible, given a full set of data, to produce a mean, median or modal age to slot into our definition, in the manner of Kerner. Yet for such a figure to have any relevance it must be considered in the light of both the variance about the measure of central tendency for the whole data set and the variance about the means or the various subsections of this whole. Only if the value of a single standard deviation derived from the former is relatively small and the variation between the different subsets in the latter relatively minor can the average age of the whole be considered meaningful.

Unfortunately the Home Office data was collected on a nominal rather than interval or ratio basis and so it is possible to calculate neither a mean nor median nor standard deviation nor many of the rigorous statistical tests based on analysis of variance. The 'crime prone' seventeen to twenty year old class regularly form a modal group of around 40 per cent of those arrested when the data is analysed: 42.91 per cent of whites, 42.19 per cent of blacks and around 40-45 per cent of most offence groups fall into this category. The two notable

exceptions are the Asians (54.55 per cent over twenty-one) and the employed (64.01 per cent over twenty-one) modal groups. The latter figure is no more than a reflection of a national trend, the former more important because it alone is grounds enough for a rejection of an explanation of public disorder in terms of the delinquent or 'riff-raff' groups in the Asian community. Yet even where the seventeen to twenty group covers 40-45 per cent of those arrested, this still leave 55-60 per cent of those arrested 'unaccounted' for.

The percentage of those arrested who were over twenty-one also varies significantly between the sub-divisions of the data set. The total number of arrests of Asians is small in comparison to the other two principal ethnic groups but the age distribution would seem to suggest that those who were involved in the disorders came from a wide cross-section of the community. The difference between the age distribution of the Asian group and that of both the West Indian and White groups is statistically significant for very low levels of alpha (see Table 3.4). Given that there is also a marked difference between age and offence (see below) it was considered that this might be caused by a concentration of Asians in those offences with higher average age for offenders. Although to an extent this is the case, when standardised for offence an 'expected' figure for Asians of 34 per cent over twenty-one (cf White 33 per cent, West Indian 31 per cent), slightly higher than for the other two ethnic groups but accounting little for the overrepresentation of elder Asians. Nevertheless, this process does account for most of the small difference between the White and West Indian groups, which is already minor and statistically insignificant.

Similarly, it has already been stressed that there is a marked difference in the behaviour implied by the different charges placed

against those arrested in the riots. If such differences are not evenly distributed across all sub-divisions of the data this too would belie notions of the 'average' rioter and suggest underlying patterns among those arrested. This, in fact, is the case. Although there is no significant difference between the age distributions of those arrested for indictable and summary offences, there is a divergence between the classes in both of the remaining two classifications of offence type. Those arrested for crimes of riot tend to have been significantly older than those arrested for looting offences. Whilst the modal seventeen to twenty groups are very similar, 22 per cent of the rioters are under seventeen and 34.4 per cent over twenty-one, compared with figures of 32 per cent and 26.5 per cent respectively for looters. This juxtaposition is repeated in the more specific comparisons of those arrested for the more serious attacks on the police, grouped by the Home Office under the heading of Violence Against the Person (VAP) with those arrested for theft or burglary. Of the former, 35.63 per cent were over twenty-one, only 26.89 per cent of the latter, with only 18.75 per cent of the former under seventeen compared with 31.09 per cent of the latter. The fact that there is no significant difference between indictable and summary charge groups and both the potential and actual penalties for property crime already mentioned scotches any suggestion that the police might have been reluctant to make serious charges against young, and implicitly less responsible, offenders.

There is a strong case for considering any 'average' age of rioters a misleading figure. The age difference between rioters and looters is significant at a 0.1 per cent rejection level ($\text{Chi}^2 = 17.10$), that between VAP and Theft/Burglary at 5 per cent ($\text{Chi}^2 = 8.54$) and that between Asians and other groups invariably at 0.1 per cent. Put simply, Asian involvement in rioting was not a function of age, whilst large numbers of adult whites and West Indians were also involved in the

disturbances. The disorders cannot be considered only in terms of "the kids on the streets".(Rock,1981) However, age is a useful indicator for 'predicting' behaviour of the crowd. Those involved with theft and looting appear to have been much younger than those concerned with the conflict with the police. This too is significant. Explanation cannot be couched purely in terms of police/youth relations if it is the elder group who seem most demonstrative in their withdrawal of the consent upon which all police operations hinge.

c) Employment (Table 3.5)

Problems surrounding the precise relationship between socio-economic measures of deprivation and incidence of rioting, essentially variations on the theme of ecological fallacy, are dealt with elsewhere in this work. The one such indicator the Home Office examined in the arrest data was employment status. Three hundred and sixty-eight of the one thousand and fifty arrested in London (35.05 per cent) were 'seeking work'. This leaves 64.95 per cent 'not employed', a percentage figure that is slightly misleading, including as it does students, school children, housewives and those whose employment status was not recorded. Allowing for these groups this analysis takes as economically active only those who qualify in the records as either 'seeking work' or 'employed' and as unemployed the latter as a percentage of the total of these two groups. Both are flawed definitions, inevitably so in the circumstances. By this measure the unemployment rate among those arrested was 44.61 per cent, certainly a very high figure, but once again not sufficiently so to warrant description of the rioting as the revolt of the unemployed, nor to come to any conclusion at all on the employment status of the ever more elusive 'average rioter'.

At a national and London level, unemployment is not, and never has

TABLE 3.5

ALL LONDON M.P.D.

EMPLOYMENT

(Excluding Students, Housewives \Rightarrow Employed cf Unemployed)

<u>ETHNICITY</u>	<u>Chi²</u>	<u>Significance Level (α=)</u>	<u>Degrees of Freedom</u>
i) White v W.Indian v Assian	25.31	0.001	2
ii) White v non-White	5.69	0.05	1
iii) White v W Indian	13.96	0.001	1
iv) White v Asian	5.23	0.05	1
v) W.Indian v Asian	19.38	0.001	1
 <u>OFFENCE</u>			
Indictable v Summary	2.43	N.S.	1
'Riot' v 'Loot'	7.77	0.01	1
VAP v Theft	6.61	0.05	1

been, distributed evenly across ethnic groups. (Deakin, 1977; Smith, 1980; Rose, 198; MSC, 1981; NDHS, 1977-78; LFS, 1981). Black ethnic groups, even in the second generation after immigration, and when controls for class, age and education have been made, have regularly experienced higher unemployment rates than their white peers. This tendency is only partially mirrored in the arrest data. Certainly the 54.06 per cent of the economically active West Indians unemployed at the time they were charged is significantly higher than the 40.44 per cent of the white groups in the same position. Yet most notably, in stark comparison to the other two ethnic groups, only 26.83 per cent of Asians that were arrested were unemployed. It has already been noted that the Asian category consists of a much older cross-section of the population than the other two ethnic classifications, and this accounts for a sizeable proportion of this difference. If age-specific unemployment rates are determined from the London data as a whole and then matched with the age distributions of the different ethnic groups, the predicted, standardised results for the whites and West Indians differ little from the original figures with the latter group still overrepresented in the class. However, the underrepresentation of the Asians is much reduced (Table 3.6).

	Predicted % 21+	Actual % 21+
Whites	43.44%	40.44%
West Indian	45.93%	54.06%
Asians	36.50%	26.83%

Table 3.6

Actual and predicted unemployment of ethnic groups,
standardised for differences in age distribution

In spite of this operation, the Asian figure remains below the average, unlike the Asian population as a whole, which would undermine any suggestion that it is those Asians most marginal to the economy that are

most likely to riot. Conversely, this does not prove that unemployment or economic conditions are of no significance for Asian participation. Quite simply, these figures are more provoking than conclusive, useful in falsifying any simplistic notions of economic determinism, notably lower than the unemployment figures of the other two ethnic groups.

Employment is not a crucial factor in differentiating between offence types. The unemployed group do form a significantly larger proportion of both the 'theft' and the 'looting' groups, but this difference disappears when the figures are standardised for age. This illustrates one of the major problems with factor and principal components analysis. In this case, age differences by offence categories are not significantly altered by controlling for employment, whereas the differences between employment and offence category become insignificant when controlled for age. Three variables, age, offence type and employment, are obviously closely related. In this example the creation of secondary variables would focus on the relationship between the former two because in the data base their relationship is statistically stronger, in terms of explaining variance in the third variable. Nevertheless, this would not by any means prove that there is any logically stronger relationship underwriting such a pattern. To repeat an earlier argument: all three of the variables are surrogates for the intentional states of those so labelled (eg 'unemployment' is meaningless per se, we are interested only in unemployment as it is experienced). The factor and component scores which are produced in factor and principal components analysis are surrogates of surrogates, shadows of the shadow of reality. Given that it is a logical necessity that there are an infinite number of explanations for any given sets of results, such number crunching with data as contingent as that of the Home Office, or any other set where the precise relationship between intentionality and the quantitative measure is moot, can offer only a

vener of certainty. From the data it would seem that the relationship between ethnicity and unemployment in the arrest figures for West Indian and white groups does little more than reflect a national trend. The same cannot be said for Asian arrests, although some of this difference is accounted for by the fact that those who were involved in public disorder tended to be relatively rarely under twenty-one. Similarly, unemployment is a poor predictor of offence group which would suggest that a propensity to be involved in specific types of behaviour within incidents of public disorder, as measured by criminal charge, did not relate strongly to employment status. This is not to gainsay the fact that a very high percentage of those involved in public disorder were unemployed and that for a significant number, the 18.4 per cent of those arrested that were students, there was a very real threat of future unemployment, given the reality faced by their contemporaries.

d) Ethnicity (Table 3.7)

A notable difference between the 'long hot summers' of the 1960s in America and the British riots of 1981 was that in Britain the white ethnic group among those arrested was larger than any other. In the light of this, some tried to tie the self-evident relevance of police/black antipathy to a broader level of "national class based resistance to the policies of latter day capitalism".(Rex,1982,p98.) Nobody was unaware of the importance of race in the riots, but the ostensibly multi-racial nature of the rioters seems to suggest a cross-cultural sympathy, or shared experience, particularly among the 'young'. The very large numbers of white people arrested in the disturbances must be accounted for, and if, in the extreme case, ethnicity was of no significance at all then the different ethnic groups should display similar distributions across the classifications of the Home Office data set, given that the MPD totals showed similar proportions to the

national figures with five hundred and three whites in a total of one thousand and fifty arrests (47.9 per cent) the most represented ethnic group compared with four hundred and thirty West Indians (40.95 per cent), ninety-nine Asians (9.43 per cent) and eighteen of 'Other races' (1.72 per cent). In reality the reverse is the case, with ethnicity providing a useful tool for discerning pattern in almost every single form of data classification.

There are marked variations in the sorts of charge most commonly placed against members of the different ethnic groups. A much larger proportion of West Indians were charged with indictable offences than other groups (58.49 per cent of West Indians, 43.68 per cent of the whites and only 34.34 per cent of the Asians) which would suggest that the West Indian group were particularly involved in the more serious offences within incidents of public disorder. In contrast, only 32.37 per cent of all those charged with summary offences were West Indian, 54.23 per cent were white and 13.4 per cent were Asian. The differences between the West Indian and both the White and Asian groups are significant at $\alpha = 0.001$, using Chi^2 , whilst the white/Asian difference is also statistically significant but at a higher value for α . (Table 3.7.) The spatially naive picture presented for the whole of London is one of a heterogeneous crowd whose core is defined by the very serious forms of criminal behaviour acted out by its principally West Indian members but whose periphery is predominantly white and occupied with less serious types of criminal expression.

When comparing rioting with looting offences the most remarkable trend in the ethnic grouping is the concentration of almost 93 per cent of all Asians arrested within the rioting category. Once again it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that an understanding of Asian participation in rioting must be couched purely in terms of a rejection

TABLE 3.7

ALL LONDON M.P.D.

ETHNICITY

OFFENCE

	<u>White</u>	<u>West Indian</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Total</u>
A) INDICTABLE v SUMMARY				
	%	%	%	
Indictable	204 (43.68)	226 (59.01)	34 (34.34)	464
Summary	263 (56.32)	157 (40.99)	65 (65.66)	485
	467 (100)	383 (100)	99 (100)	
B) 'RIOT' v 'LOOT'				
	%	%	%	
Riot	326 (69.81)	224 (58.49)	92 (92.93)	642
Loot	141 (30.19)	159 (41.51)	7 (7.07)	307
	467 (100)	383 (100)	99 (100)	949
C) VAP v THEFT				
VAP	63	67	27	157
Theft	96	125	5	226
	159	192	32	
RESIDENCE				
	%	%	%	
Home/Near	306 (59.88)	256 (59.95)	68 (68.69)	
Town	137 (26.81)	132 (30.92)	19 (19.09)	
County	41 (8.02)	32 (7.49)	7 (7.17)	
Further	27 (5.28)	7 (1.64)	5 (5.05)	
	511	427	99	

TABLE 3.7

ALL LONDON M.P.D.
E T H N I C I T Y +

OFFENCE	Chi ²	Significance Level (α=)	Degrees of Freedom
A) INDICTABLE v SUMMARY			
i) White v W.Indian v Assian	25.49	0.001	2
ii) White v non-White	3.31	0.1	1
iii) White v W Indian	18.83	0.001	1
iv) White v Asian	3.21	0.1	1
v) W.Indian v Asian	18.45	0.001	1
B) RIOT v LOOT			
i) White v W.Indian v Asian	4.46	0.001	2
ii) White v non-White	1.43	N.S.	1
iii) White v W.Indian	11.81	0.001	1
iv) White v Asian	22.61	0.001	1
v) W.Indian v Asian	41.33	0.001	1
C) VAP v THEFT			
i) White v W.Indian v Asian	27.97	0.001	2
ii) White v non-White	0.21	N.S.	1
iii) White v W.Indian	0.83	N.S.	1
iv) White v Asian	21.41	0.001	1
v) W.Indian v Asian	27.57	0.001	1
RESIDENCE			
i) White v W.Indian v Asian	14.52	0.05	6
ii) White v non-White	6.83	0.10	3
iii) White v W.Indian	4.97	0.05	3
iv) White v Asian	3.26	N.S.	3
v) W.Indian v Asian	9.13	0.05	3

BINOMIAL TEST

RESIDENCE	Z Score	Significance Level (α=)
White v W.Indian	0.03	N.S.
White v Asian	1.95	0.05

of the consensus that underwrites public order. A comparison of white and West Indian ethnic groups is at once more ambiguous. One hundred and fifty-nine out of the three hundred and eighty three of the West Indian group charged (41.51 per cent) were arrested for crimes of looting, a much higher percentage than for either the whites or the Asians (Table 3.7). Whereas the West Indian category accounts for only 34.89 per cent of all rioting charges, it accounts for 57.79 per cent of all looting charges across London. There are two plausible explanations for this difference. Most obviously, the West Indian group might be identified more with the crimes of property than with the crimes of public order. The value-laden implication in this is obvious; political status is given much less readily to the thief than to the 'insurrectionary' (see E.P. Thompson 1980 on 'soppy' radical criminologists). Alternatively, a supposition that opportunity was a valid indicator of crime rates would imply that the extent of the looting would be directly related to the seriousness of the disorder. Given that the evidence already presented suggests that West Indian groups were overrepresented in the most serious forms of criminal behaviour during the riots, then if the complete breakdowns in public order occurred at locations where 'the crowd' was mostly black, then the looters with most opportunity throughout London would also be disproportionately black. No resolution of these two interpretations is possible at this scale of analysis, the problem will be returned to when specific locations are considered.

This problem is echoed when considering the specific offence charges of VAP and Theft. Again the Asian group stand out by their overrepresentation in the VAP class and again ambiguity surrounds the statistically significant overrepresentation of West Indians in the theft as opposed to the violent crimes cell. In spite of this it is interesting to note that although West Indians make up only 42.86 per

cent of the VAP arrests compared with 55.31 per cent of the theft category, they are over—represented in both classes in comparison to the percentage of total arrests that were of West Indian ethnicity (40.95 per cent) conversely whilst those of White ethnicity constitute 47.9 per cent of all arrests they are responsible for only 40.13 per cent of all VAP offenders.

The residence category classifying the distance travelled to the offence by all of those arrested is the one variable for which the modal group can be considered of some use. This is partly because of the flaws in the production of the data (see above) but also is an illustration of the localised nature of the rioting in London. Approximately 60 per cent or more of each ethnic group lived very close to the centre of the disturbance. Nevertheless, there are statistically significant differences between the ethnic groups at $\alpha = 0.05$ using a χ^2 test. The West Indians appear statistically to have lived closer to the disturbances than the Asians or Whites, principally because 30.92 per cent of this group lived in the second closest residential category with very few travelling any distance to the disorders. However when a binomial test is used comparing those who lived in the home/near category (locals) with those who travelled further to location of offence ('travellers') then the Asian overrepresentation in the former category (68.69 per cent) is the only relationship that is statistically significant. One of the advantages of the Chi squared test (Evans, 1981) is that the parameters of the test allow for such disparity between expected cell values; nevertheless, when the difference in numbers is so great, the smaller cell sizes inevitably contribute more to the Chi square value than the larger cells. In short there is evidence that both the West Indians and Asians tended to live closer to the disturbances than Whites, repeating the pattern seen in Brixton, but this trend is weak, which is perhaps not surprising given the crudity of

the data division.

Ethnicity is the most consistently significant predictor of distribution of variables. The pattern that emerges from the arrest data would support the hypothesis that the nature of riot involvement differed significantly between ethnic groups. The Asian fraction tended to be much older, less often associated with property crime and in the vast majority of cases lived near to the centre of the disorder. The West Indian fraction had as a modal age the typical seventeen to twenty 'crime prone' group but also had large numbers in both older the younger age ranges. Significantly fewer West Indians were 'travellers', coming to the disorders from a long distance, than for any other group; again the image is one of a highly localised crowd, but much more frequently involved in the attacks on police that resulted in a proliferation of charges such as Aggravated Bodily Harm, Grievous Bodily Harm, Assault or Possession of a Dangerous Weapon as well as in the burglary and theft that accompanied the rioting. Marginally less residentially concentrated around the centre of the public disorder, the white fraction of the arrested tended to have a very similar age distribution to the West Indians but were overwhelmingly involved in much less serious offences. Of all the white group, 52.49 per cent were charged under summary public order offences. Here it should be noted that 65.65 per cent of all the 'Public Order' class in London were charged with threatening behaviour under Section 5 of the 1936 Public Order Act. This charge has, to some extent, become the focus of the controversy which has led, in a much broader context, to the drafting of a new Public Order Act in 1985 (Guardian May 1985; Times May 1985; New Society passim 1985). When confronted with a large crowd, police have often sought to gain control by the use of arrest as both a functional and symbolic exercise. For this purpose it has been suggested that the charge of threatening behaviour is often preferred precisely because

those charged will appear only before magistrates' courts, and the constitution of the offence itself is so vague that the merely unruly might be construed as criminal. The wisdom of such tactics has also been criticised for their occasional inflammatory effects, immediately creating causes celebres, focii for the crowd's anger, as occurred on 4 May 1985 when a march demonstrating support for the 'Newham Seven' turned into a demonstration outside the local police station when several members of the march were arrested in this manner. More significantly in this context there would seem grounds to believe that those charged under section five in 1981 were more likely to be members of a more peripheral group, albeit a sympathetic one, than those charged with indictable and other more specific offences. Essentially, there are grounds for suggesting that white involvement in rioting was different in kind from that of other ethnic groups, being focused on less serious offences of public order and with a greater number of people travelling some distance to the rioting.

e) Residence and Offence (Table 3.8)

There is little difference between the residential distribution of offenders when judged by seriousness of offence. A marginally higher percentage of those charged with summary offences live in the closest residential zone (62.84 per cent compared with 60.51 per cent) but this difference does not 'show' in a binomial test and the significant Chi^2 value is produced by the greater number of indictable offenders living in the second closest zone and the very small number of the same group who actually travel any distance to the disorder.

In contrast to this the rioters tend to come more often from the closest residential zone than the looting group, a difference that shows as significant in both the binomial and Chi^2 tests. This would suggest

TABLE 3.8

OFFENCE

	Chi ²	Significance Level (α =)	Degrees of Freedom
<u>RESIDENCE</u>			
Indictable v Summary	11.64	0.01	4
Rioting and Looting	14.59	0.01	4
VAP v Theft	6.96	0.10	4
VAP v Total			
Theft v Total			

BINOMIAL TEST

	Z Score	Significance Level (α =)
Indictable v Summary	0.59	N.S.
Rioting v Looting	1.32	0.10
VAP v Theft	1.04	N.S.

TABLE 3.8

ALL LONDON : M.P.D.

O F F E N C E

RESIDENCE	<u>Indictable</u>	<u>Summary</u>
	%	%
Home/Near	285 (60.51)	318 (62.84)
Town	148 (31.42)	128 (25.30)
County	21 (4.46)	46 (9.10)
Further	17 (3.61)	14 (2.76)
	<u>471</u> (100)	<u>506</u> (100)
	<u>Riot</u>	<u>Loot</u>
Home/Near	404 (63.03)	178 (57.23)
Town	159 (24.81)	106 (34.08)
County	59 (9.20)	14 (4.51)
Further	19 (2.96)	13 (4.18)
	<u>641</u> (100)	<u>311</u> (100)
	<u>V.A.P.</u>	<u>Theft</u>
Home/Near	104 (65.41)	136 (58.87)
Town	37 (23.27)	79 (34.21)
County	11 (6.92)	8 (3.46)
Further	7 (4.40)	8 (3.46)
	<u>159</u> (100)	<u>231</u> (100)

a hypothesis that the looting group tended to travel further to the disturbance than the rioters, although in truth the trend is a weak but significant one. Similarly, an even higher percentage of the VAP class arrested (65.41 per cent) came from the nearest residential zone compared with only 58.87 per cent of the theft group. This difference emerges as significant in a Chi² test but not in a binomial test; again there would seem to be a trend suggesting that those involved in property crime tended, on the whole, to live close to the disorder but were not as localised as those involved in attacks on the police.

7 THE MPD ELEVEN

In order to break down the cross-London trends and add a more refined spatial dimension, a further set of tabulations for eleven of the riot locations with most arrests was accessed from the Home Office computer. This subset totalled seven hundred and ninety-nine arrests or 76 per cent of the total for the whole of London. Before each location was analysed in detail, this set of eleven observations was tested to see if the trends present in the whole of London were consistent across the 76 per cent sample (the MPD 11), or whether the London 'trends' had been produced by singular distortions in individual locations.

The clichéd criticism levelled at sociologists by geographers is that they are spatially naive. Certainly it would seem from some texts (eg Miles, 1983; Joshua and Wallace, 1983; Howe, 1981) that the 1981 riots were, in essence a single phenomenon experienced by the whole of the country, a ubiquitous and momentous 'social movement'. If this was the case it might be expected that the sort of people on the streets would

share some features in common other than collective violence, or at worst the differences between the 'crowd' at different locations would be small enough to have occurred by chance. However, when the features of the crowd are compared for characteristics such as ethnicity, residence, age and employment there is on each occasion a statistically significant difference at a very low rejection level ($\alpha = 0.001$ with very high values for Chi^2) between the eleven scenes of public disorder. (Table 3.9) Statistically, at any rate, it would seem very unlikely that the eleven samples are drawn from the same 'parent', or statistical population; it would seem improbable that they could be considered statistical subsets of a valid national set, 'rioters'. To say this is not to falsify the assertion that the disturbances of 1981 were effectively the same across London, quite feasibly the variations in arrest patterns do no more than reflect the distinctiveness of situation; the ubiquitous phenomenon, riot, spread across heterogeneous space. However, an alternative, equally plausible explanation of this trend would be that there are genuine differences between the phenomena present at each location.

With a data set consisting of only eleven observations, use of both principal components and factor analysis would be tendentious as well as arithmetically unsound. This is unfortunate, in as much as the idea of examination at this stage is simply to provide a description of inter-correlated variables, for which such techniques are ideally suited. Instead, correlation matrices were calculated which, given the small number of variables being handled, served as a reasonable description of trends within the data set. Essentially, the same trends that emerged in the gross totals are reinforced when the data are examined to see if these relationships are sustained throughout the MPD eleven. Full results can be seen in table 3.10 but the most notable features are as follows:

TABLE 3.9Chi² Comparison of MPD 11

	Chi ²	(α =)	Degrees of Freedom
Age	73.24	0.001	20
Residence	152.15	0.001	20
Employment	60.36	0.001	20
Ethnicity	>200	0.001	20

Table 3.10 Correlation matrix for MPD 11

1																			
2	-0.06																		
3	0.46	0.57																	
4	0.49	0.14	0.53																
5	0.47	0.13	0.15	0.00															
6	0.23	-0.23	0.22	0.13	-0.04														
7	0.31	-0.31	0.68	0.38	0.67	0.31													
8	0.5	0.46	0.05	-0.99	0.55	0.06	0.52												
9	0.68	-0.21	-0.28	-0.35	-0.3	-0.61	-0.38	0.12											
10	0.96	-0.15	-0.5	-0.04	-0.24	-0.29	-0.34	0.33	0.80										
11	-0.2	0.73	0.69	-0.41	0.13	0.6	0.53	0.31	-0.23	-0.32									
12	-0.05	0.36	0.24	-0.45	0.02	0.67	0.31	0.21	0.71	-0.22	0.03								
13	0.48	0.03	0.07	-0.39	0.29	-0.31	0.35	0.53	0.11	0.68	0.56	-0.02							
14	0.24	-0.04	-0.49	0.37	-0.26	-0.35	-0.66	-0.29	-0.50	0.02	0.18	0.40	-0.29						
15	0.31	0.42	-0.2	-0.13	-0.04	0.21	0.21	0.44	-0.48	0.32	0.34	0.49	0.43	0.47					

Table 3.10 Coding

- 1 Total arrests
- 2 % of arrests Black
- 3 % of arrests in 'Home' and 'Near' Residential classes
- 4 % of Black arrests over 21
- 5 % of Black arrests charged with VAP
- 6 % of total arrests over 21
- 7 % of total arrests charged with VAP
- 8 Number of VAP arrests
- 9 % of total arrests charged with Theft
- 10 Number of Theft arrests
- 11 % of arrests Asian
- 12 % of Asian arrests over 21
- 13 % of total arrests with indictable charges
- 14 % of all arrests 'travellers' (from non 'Home' and 'Near' residential classes)
- 15 % of total arrests non-white

Age: For the over twenty-one group the strongest correlations are with offence type. There appears to be a consistent relationship with both VAP and Theft. ($r=0.53$ and $r=0.61$ respectively) Once again it would seem that the greater the collection of people that were variously involved in offences directed against the police appears to be, on the whole, the older will be the crowd. The rioters appear older than the looters. It also appears that on the occasions where the arrested were highly localised, there tended to be a high proportion over twenty-one. ($r=0.47$) Not surprisingly, given the pattern revealed in the London totals, Asian involvement also tends to be associated with a high percentage over twenty-one. ($r=0.6$) The under-seventeen distribution predictably correlates in almost a mirror fashion to that of the over twenty-one, but one notable difference is the connection with the West Indian group. ($r=0.75$) This would tie in with the West Indian overrepresentation in looting rather than rioting offences, but the ambiguity surrounding this relationship, which has already been touched upon, is not cleared.

Residence: Interesting patterns emerge from the residence data which were more hinted at than defined by previous analysis. A strong correlation exists between the percentage of whites and the percentage of 'travellers' to the riots. ($r=0.57$) The suggestion made earlier that the West Indian group were more localised than the whites would seem to be reinforced by such a relationship. The 'travellers' are also distinguished by their negative correlation with VAP offences ($r=0.66$) and the percentage over twenty-one. ($r=0.43$) Again it would seem that where there is a large proportion of the people arrested who come from very near to the scene of the disturbance, there are more likely to be significant numbers over twenty-one, serious attacks on the police and 'the crowd' are more likely to be of West Indian ethnicity. Again, the Asian group are almost invariably found among the 'locals' class.

Ethnicity: The Asian group in the data forms a distinctive class associated consistently with VAP or Threatening Behaviour charges, high percentages over twenty-one and a very localised crowd. Although for the whole of London the West Indian group were overrepresented in offences of theft compared with offences of VAP there is only a relatively minor trend reinforcing this in the data, $r=0.39$ for correlation with percentage of arrests for theft and -0.21 for VAP. It is doubtful whether such a comparison has much utility. The suggestion that where a large proportion of the crowd were West Indian there tended to be a large proportion of charges of theft is an extremely ambiguous one. Already it has been stressed that a comparison of totals in individual offence types has no necessary echo in the relative behaviour of the crowd because police attention may be focused more on the 'rioters' than the 'looters' in serious incidents of public disorder, and possibly vice-versa in minor incidents. The assumption made in this chapter was that those arrested might form a representative sample of those involved in the forms of behaviour implied by the charge placed against them, which is a different matter altogether. The riot itself cannot be reconstructed by merely calculating the percentages arrested in a different offence types, producing a proportionate 'recipe' of riot behaviour.

A further correlation shows that when a high percentage of the West Indian class are drawn from the most localised residential area there tend to be a high proportion of arrests for VAP. ($r=0.68$) This is a suggestive figure, but again one that would benefit from a closer look at individual locations.

There is a long literature justifying the validity of analytical classes which are not necessarily recognised by the actors who serve as their constituents (J.C. Mitchell, 1974; W.G. Runciman, 1982; R. Harré, 1978; K. Popper, 1959; A. Giddens, 1978) and this in itself is not a problem here when dealing with created dichotomies such as 'rioters' and 'looters' or 'locals' and 'travellers'. It is rather that although Rude's call for empirical analysis was commendable, there are enormous practical difficulties that surround material like the Home Office data on arrests. It is the suggestion of this paper that to use such data whilst fully recognising its limitations is preferable to forsaking empiricism altogether.

Hence, from the results, it is possible to suggest that the ubiquitous concept of the average 'rioter' has been examined and found wanting. It is the central term of a set united by few similarities, a set with maximum extension, minimum intension. It was not, of itself, a meaningful category; it became one after the rioting and has been one ever since. Patterns are present in the statistics which reveal that there are marked differences in the behaviour of different groups in different locations. In simple terms there are significant trends throughout all locations, between locations and within locations (eg Brixton). This creates three sets of intersecting analytical classes; the difficulty arises from assessing the utility of each. Statistical significance is an unreliable measure of this, precisely because a weak trend across all figures will, because of large sample and cell sizes prove more statistically significant than a strong trend with very small cell size. The resolution of these trends must be considered as tentative and contingent, rather than definitive or epistemologically

'strong', and must be squared with a closer examination of individual locations in the following chapter.

The arrest data are scrappy and full of problems, they provide a vital source of material for both initiation and examination of hypotheses, but these hypotheses must be regarded as provisional, since the tests, even when mathematically very rigorous, are no more than descriptive hints at explanation.

CHAPTER FOUR

DESCRIPTION II : THE REALITY OF DISORDER

1 SUMMARY

2 ELEVEN CASE HISTORIES : THE MPD ELEVEN

- a) Southall
- b) Wood Green
- c) Tooting
- d) Notting Hill
- e) Hackney
- f) Battersea
- g) West Ham
- h) Brixton
- i) Croydon
- j) Walthamstow
- k) Penge

3 RIOT SERIOUSNESS

- a) General
- b) Riot Intensity and Ethnicity in the MPD 11
 - i) Offence categories VAP v Theft
 - ii) Ethnic concentration in the MPD 11

4 SHAGGY DOG RIOTS AND COPYCATS : 'THE RIOTS' AS A MORAL PANIC

5 CONCLUSIONS.

The fundamental premise of Chapter Three was that 'the rioting in London in 1981' was a single phenomenon and could be treated as such. The fundamental purpose of this paper is to analyse the validity of such a premise, using the more detailed arrest data breakdowns obtained on eleven specific 'locations of serious public disorder', supplemented by additional source material gathered in late 1981 and early 1982 in order to produce histories of all incidents of rioting in London. This analysis involves three separate tasks. Firstly, eleven of the 'case histories' were compared with respective data sets from the Home Office to test, normally only qualitatively because of the small sample sizes, the regularity of those trends identified in the last chapter. Secondly, an index of seriousness drawn from American work is used to highlight variations in the severity of the breakdowns in public order and to demonstrate that such variations did not occur randomly in relation to the ethnic breakdown of those involved in disorder and the scene which provided the location for rioting. Finally, the relevance of 'public knowledge' of 'the phenomenon riot', firstly to the actions of certain individuals and institutions at the time of the disorders and secondly in bestowing upon disturbances a unity that was possibly specious, is evaluated.

Rioting is shown to be a complex behavioural form rather than a generic class of social action. Within this complexity specific descriptive classes are shown to be significant. The 'looters' and 'rioters' dichotomy is sustained, similarly those who travelled long distances 'to riot' differed from the local community.

Crucially, when the ephemeral, extraneous events that were tendentially classified as 'riots' are sieved from the Home Office data the level of white involvement in rioting is greatly reduced. In exactly the same way the most violent clashes at the heart of rioting were between the police and a wide cross section of the black community, not between the police and the frequently posited mob of multi-racial youths.

ELEVEN 'CASE HISTORIES' : THE MPD ELEVEN

The purpose of the background description that accompanies analysis of the eleven incidents of public disorder is quite specifically not to produce a definitive history of the roots and genesis of each riot. Rather, it is intended to flesh out the Home Office statistics, examine the trends identified in the last chapter at a smaller scale, as well as attempting to discern any systematic deviation from the more general trends. Such descriptions are based on a wide range of source material, inevitably ambiguity and uncertainty are sometimes lost in summary in the interests of concision. For each location special tabulations were obtained from the Home Office computer files for ethnicity, age, offence, residence and employment of those arrested and these tabulations were supplemented by three principal sources of background material.

The first set of data was gathered in the last months of 1981 and the early months of 1982 and catalogued the histories of all incidents of disorder in London in the summer of 1981. The pattern of data gathering was not replicated exactly in all locations and was dependent

on both the seriousness of the relevant incidents and the responsiveness of local informants in both formal and informal interviews. Almost invariably the most co-operative informants were shopkeepers, whilst the co-operation of local police officers varied considerably from the extremely informative to the openly hostile. The eleven 'histories' which are matched with the arrest statistics thus provide the broad outlines of basic reconstruction of the disorders. Although a conscious effort was made to speak to those who might have been witness to or involved in disorder, and was often successful in so doing, these reconstructions are undoubtedly at times over-dependent on shopkeepers and police informants.

A second data source consisted of a survey of forty-three local papers for June and July 1981 in all thirty-three London boroughs. Press reportage was generally not taken as authoritative and attempts were always made to substantiate journalists' accounts from other data sources. The local press was useful as much for providing a description of various conceptions or interpretations of the rioting phenomenon as for providing a chronology of disorder.

Other data and accounts of both the individual disorders and relevant local background histories were gathered from an assortment of borough council reports, GLC records, police reports and press statements, the 'ethnic press', and academic and political literature. Whilst the 'academic' works are cited in the text, the sources used for other material are grouped together in the bibliography.

For obvious reasons it has been necessary throughout this work to attempt to maintain anonymity of informants, although on several occasions with some local knowledge it would probably be possible to identify certain individuals.

TABLE 4.1

ATTEST TOTALS FOR MPD 11
(by Ethnic Breakdown)

	<u>Total</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
Southall	61 (100)	15 (25)	4 (6)	42 (69)	-
Wood Green	71 (100)	21 (29)	42 (59)	2 (3)	6 (9)
Brixton*	257 (100)	85 (33)	165 (64)	2 (1)	5 (2)
Hackney	108 (100)	30 (28)	75 (69)	2 (2)	1 (1)
Battersea*	82 (100)	58	24	-	-
Newham/West Ham	49 (100)	26 (53)	16 (33)	7 (14)	-
Croydon	45 (100)	40 (89)	5 (11)	-	-
Tooting	43 (100)	31 (72)	11 (26)	1 (2)	-
Penge	42 (100)	19 (45)	22 (52)	1 (3)	-
Walthamstow	29 (100)	11 (38)	1 (3)	17 (59)	-
Notting Hill	28 (100)	16 (52)	12 (48)	-	-
Elsewhere	241 (100)	157 (65)	56 (23)	25 (10)	3 (2)
TOTAL	1,050 (100)	503 (48)	433 (41)	99 (9.5)	15 (1.5)

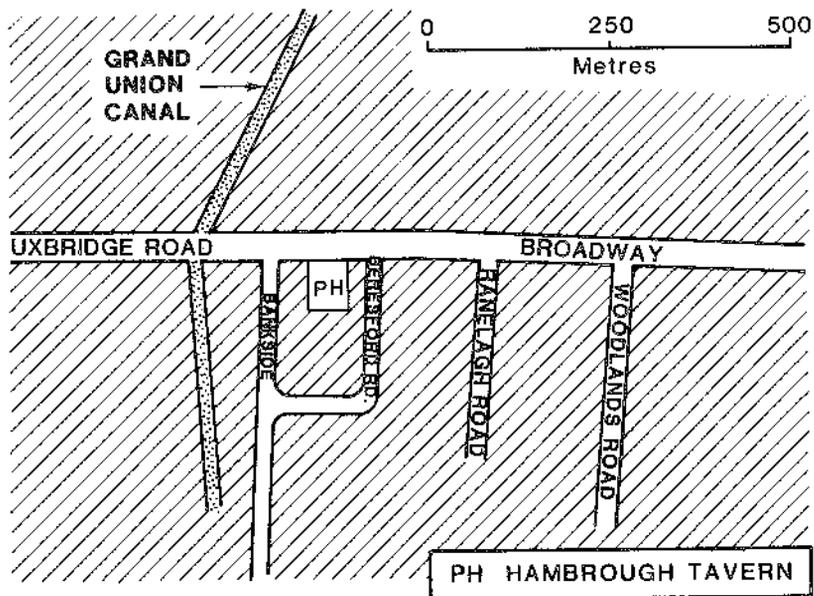
* For both Brixton and Battersea there are slight inconsistencies in the total number of arrests in the Home Office data.

a) Southall (3 July 1981)

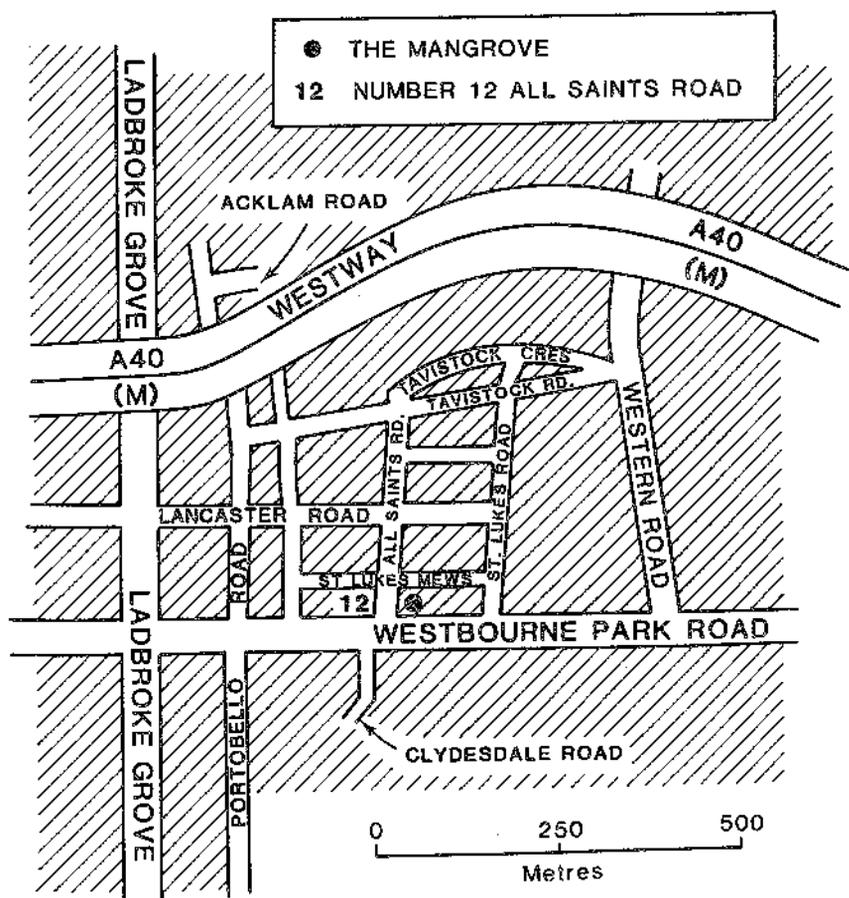
Superficially, the rioting in Southall on 3rd July shared only chronological coincidence with the other major outbreaks of public disorder in 1981. The Economist (3/4/82) went so far as to claim that,

"Only one of the major riots of 1981 could be described as a 'race riot': the one in Southall in West London where militant racists attacked the local Asian community and were driven off by force."

The principal events of that day are fairly well established. A concert given by the 'Oi' band, the Four Skins, a group with much skinhead support, was scheduled to take place on Friday, 3rd July, at the Hambrough Tavern close to the Grand Union Canal in central Southall (see map 4.1). In the early evening there were more than a dozen reports made to the police complaining about racial abuse from and attacks made by skinheads in the area, many of whom were wearing National Front badges and other insignia. Many were seen running down Southall Broadway, shouting National Front chants and racist slogans. The local, predominantly Sikh, Asian community constituted about thirty thousand of the sixty thousand population of Southall, and a large crowd gathered outside the pub to protest against another overt display of racism in this very sensitive area. Many of the skinheads arriving later in the evening were chased into the Tavern, which had become a refuge for those previously running amok along the Broadway, although there were also clashes between Sikhs and skinheads outside the pub. Attempting to both intervene and prevent escalation of this violence, the police surrounded the Hambrough Tavern, arresting many of those involved in these fights. However, this cordon appeared to be protecting the skinheads, symbolically akin to the heavy police escorts that had accompanied National Front marches throughout the 1970s, and so riled many Asian groups. This symbolism soon initiated not only a massive increase in the level of violence but also the substitution of the police for the



Map 4.1 Southall



Map 4.2 Notting Hill

skinheads as the prime targets of this violence. In the ensuing period of two to three hours the running battle was between Sikhs and police with many injuries suffered by both sides (sixty-one police and at least as many civilians). Petrol bombs were thrown and the Hambrough Tavern burnt out. The arrest data provide clear cut support for the different profiles of those involved in the disorder (Tables 4.2 to 4.4). The white group were clearly not local to the area with none of those arrested coming from the nearest residential class ('home') and only 20 per cent living 'near' to the disorder. In marked contrast, 82 per cent of the Asians arrested came from these two classes. Compared to the rest of London both Asian and white groups have high proportions of those arrested over twenty-one (50 per cent of Asians, 53 per cent of whites); there is also a significant juvenile (under seventeen) element among the white arrests (33 per cent) which is not noticeable in the Asian group (12 per cent under seventeen). To this extent the account given by the respectable or 'serious' press, police spokesmen and most politicians (see Times; Guardian, 4,5,6 & 7 July 1981), which described a police force unfortunately sandwiched between two aggressive crowds, is supported.

It is also important to refer briefly to the events that provided a background to the riot of 3rd July (for greater detail see Home Office 1979,1984; NCCL,1980; Kettle and Hodges,1982; Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council,1978; CRE,1978; Taylor,1979). Southall had been the site of both some of the most vicious incidents of racial violence throughout the 1970s and some of the more violent of the many clashes between the local community and the National Front during its period of rising popularity at this time.¹ Of particular significance was the murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar in 1976 by a group of white youths in Southall which prompted the notorious and well publicised comment by Kingsley Read of the National Front, "One down, a million to go", as well as the

TABLE 4.2

SOUTHALL

Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Residence

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Total</u>
	%	%	%	
'Home'	-	1 (25)	12 (29)	13
'Near'	3 (20)	3 (75)	22 (52)	28
'Town'	5 (33)	-	6 (14)	11
'County'	4 (27)	-	1 (2.5)	5
'Further'	3 (20)	-	1 (2.5)	4
TOTAL	15 (100%)	4 (100%)	42 (100%)	61

TABLE 4.3

SOUTHALL

Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Age

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Total</u>
	%	%	%	%
Under 14	-	-	1	1
14-16	5	-	4	9
17-20	2	3	16	21
Over 21	8 (53)	1 (25)	21 (50)	30 (49)
TOTAL	15 (100%)	4 (100%)	42 (100%)	61 (100%)

TABLE 4.4

SOUTHALL

Arrests by Date

3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Rest of July
27	4	-	1	-	-	1	11	2	1	-	-	-	9	1	1	-	3

formation of the Southall Youth Movement, which has grown rapidly in strength, numbers and militancy over the past decade.

Alongside the extreme, horrific attacks which grabbed the headlines were the constant, less serious but almost equally alarming forms of harassment that varied from the dumping on doorsteps of faecal matter to the numerous arson attacks on Asian homes (estimated by the GLC to be running at more than ten/month in Ealing Borough in 1982). There is also some evidence that, rather than subside with the popularity of the National Front in the late 1970s, the frequency of such incidents increased throughout London in the period up to the summer of 1981. (GLC,1985; Observer,4/6/81) The outright refusal of the Metropolitan Police to set up special squads to deal with racial attacks, the oft heard accusation that the police would not even acknowledge a racial dimension in such incidents and, most significantly, the apparent protection of racist marches in Asian residential areas, together created a growing hostility towards the police amongst a large section of the Asian community.

The deterioration of police/community relations culminated in the major clashes of the 1979 general election campaign. The police were again seen to be 'defending' National Front election meetings, particularly in London. The worst confrontation occurred in Southall and resulted in over three hundred arrests, mostly Asian men, and the death of Blair Peach, a New Zealand schoolteacher involved in a counter demonstration against the National Front. The NCCL Inquiry (1980) into the disorders highlighted police inadequacies that ranged from incompetence to serious misconduct and use of illegal methods of crowd control. Neither police prosecutions nor police disciplinary action resulted from complaints based on this inquiry, which did not receive police cooperation. The effects of the Southall clashes of 1979 on

confidence in the police amongst the local community were described by the report as "catastrophic". Strengthening this undercurrent of tension, on the night before the Four Skins concert, in an almost stereotypical arson attack on an Asian family, most of the Khan family of Walthamstow were murdered, a murder that resonated throughout the capital.

It is in this context that a second look at the arrest data, coupled with research carried out in the area, reveal that the police in Southall were not simply the victims of a rioters' sandwich. Tabulations giving the breakdown of arrests one day at a time were also obtained which highlight the fact that in Southall, in the wake of the incidents of 3rd July, there were further attacks on the police long after the fires of the Hambrough Tavern had been extinguished. On Friday 10th July, in particular, there were attacks on several police in central Southall, and on Thursday 16th dawn raids in the area, arresting Asian men allegedly involved in the riots of 3rd July, produced resentment and more spontaneous clashes over the next two days.

It is easy to dismiss connections between the Southall 'uprising' and the disturbances that occurred across the rest of the capital in the following week; certainly the absence of looting, the involvement of the Sikh community, and the specifically racist element are distinctive features. Yet behind such a list of differences there are traits in common with Brixton in April 1981 which, as will become apparent, are echoed also in the rioting in other parts of London. In particular, the 'core' activity of the rioting involved an attack on the police by a highly localised crowd, predominantly drawn from an ethnic minority. Collective violence implicitly involves a breakdown of the normative sanctions that underwrite the prevalence of order in society. It was suggested in the preceding chapter that different age groups will

require different thresholds for such a breakdown to occur. Given that those over twenty-one are not traditionally included in 'crime-prone' groups, the involvement of such individuals in public disorder is, in an a priori sense, more significant than the involvement of adolescents or juveniles. Such 'mature' groups are notably present in the Southall 'crowd', dismissing notions of an explanation couched in terms of juvenile delinquency and, perhaps more significantly, emphasising the depth of hostility invoked at this time across the community.

Because of the necessary absence of the realised 'ideal type', social phenomena only exist as part of a matrix of differences from and similarities to each other. A theory of collective violence concentrates exclusively on the similarities; one purpose of this chapter is to question how extensive the differences may be before it becomes imperative to reject the phenomenon as a useful analytical unit. It is perhaps geographically significant that it is much more this highly parochial nature of the riot than the very diffuse forms of 'collective action' that appears to link these examples of 'collective behaviour', tie Southall to Brixton.

D) Wood Green (7th and 8th July 1981)

Shopkeepers, press, police and local youth differ greatly in their accounts of the Wood Green disorder. Chronology and concept appear inseparable, with the riot itself tending to reinforce rather than reform a particular 'social construction of reality', even when eyewitness reports were gathered within days of the violence. The classification of the disturbance as a triumph (many, though not all, black youths), a disaster (all shopkeepers), or wanton criminality (some police), appears, unsurprisingly, to condition memory of actual events.

In particular, the initial trigger to the rioting is unclear. Descriptions vary from the conspiratorial profundity of the solemn claim in The Times that "fighting started at 10 pm precisely" (9 July 1981) to the rhetorically symmetrical suggestion of one Rasta that the SPG had organised the trouble to alleviate their boredom.

More plausible accounts focus on the arrest of a black man outside Huckleberry's 'take away' across the road from Turnpike Lane underground station. Above the station is a bus park, gathering place for many of the local young. On any day of the week it was not unusual to see a crowd of black and white kids, all caught up in what Corrigan (1979) describes as "the micro-sociology of doing nothing", waiting for something to happen, manufacturing excitement. Turnpike Lane tube station had also been a frequent site for SUS arrests, the ubiquitous, sometimes justified, suspicion of the loitering crowd seen throughout London. It was in this context that during the week rumours had told of "trouble on the Green", certainly talk of a possible Wood Green riot was common long before the event itself, and an affray on the preceding Sunday had resulted in five arrests for public order offences. On Tuesday night (7 July 1981) three incidents occurred at around 9 pm: the window of a wallpaper shop by Huckleberry's was smashed; several of the crowd appeared, 'armed with hammers, heavy metal instruments and pieces of wood' and, thirdly, the arrest already mentioned. Controversy surrounds the precise sequence of these three events but there is no doubt that they were succeeded by a two to three hour period in which at least fifty-nine shops were damaged, thirty or more comprehensively looted and eight police were injured. All the fighting and looting was concentrated in a very small area of about 100 square metres, focusing on Turnpike Lane, the High Road and Green Lanes. The SPG were drafted into the area and by midnight Wood Green High Road had been shut off. The next day's press release by District Commander Dickinson stressed

the materialist basis of the rioting:

"The object of the riot was criminal rather than political. Police injuries were light. Most rioters were intent on avoiding the police, they just wanted to loot and then run away, to return again. These were dominantly local youths, many of them still at school. This was not a race riot, it was a criminal exercise."

Many local black and white residents agreed and the Haringey Community Relations Officer, Jeff Crawford, was quoted in the local press (Hornsey Journal, 10 July 1981) as saying that,

"It wasn't a race riot. Look at the racial mix of those arrested. But I was surprised at the number of young Cypriots who were involved. They have previously never joined in anything like this. I do not believe that professional agitators were behind it, but that it was a childish imitation of Liverpool. The police behaved admirably. That was unquestionable."

The arrest data lend some support to such a description of the rioting. Only 11 per cent of those arrested were over twenty-one, the lowest figure in the whole of London. Only five charges of VAP were made, the theft/ burglary category forms the largest offence group. Wood Green was the only incident of rioting in London where those charged cover four of the five ethnic group classifications made by the police and a name survey of some of those arrested indicates a clear Cypriot presence amongst those arrested. The absence of petrol bomb attacks on the police and the manifest damage to property also speak for the materialist dimension of the rioting. On the other hand, several black youths boasted that it was they and black gangs generally who had been the real instigators of 'the uprising' and this too is supported by the fact that 59 per cent of all those arrested and 71 per cent of those arrested for looting offences were black. The non-whites arrested for serious offences tended to be more often 'local' than the whites. Of the non-whites arrested for burglary/theft, 35 per cent came from the closest ('home') residential class compared with 20 per cent of the whites. Hostility to the police was also very clearly expressed by all

TABLE 4.5

WOOD GREEN
Arrests by Offence and Age

	<u>Under 14</u>	<u>14-16</u>	<u>17-20</u>	<u>Over 21</u>	<u>Total</u>
VAP	-	1	2	1	4
Theft etc	-	10	13	3	26
Criminal Damage	-	4	3	2	9
Public Order	2	7	14	2	25
Breach of Peace	-	-	4	1	5
Other	-	-	2	-	2
TOTAL	2 (3%)	22 (31%)	38 (53%)	9 (13)	71 (100%)

TABLE 4.6

WOOD GREEN
Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Offence

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
VAP	1	3	-	-	4
Theft etc	5	17	2	2	26
Criminal Damage	2	7	-	-	9
Public Order	8	14	-	3	25
Breach of Peace	5	-	-	-	5
Other	-	1	-	1	2
TOTAL	21	42	2	6	71

my black informants, although they differed greatly in their descriptions of how relevant this was to their actions. Some claimed that the riot involved specific revenge attacks on the SPG, others scoffed at any distinction between the police and the society of 'them', of 'Babylon' in general. All revelled in the recognition, the occasion when they had shown 'what black kids can do'. Three separate police constables in informal interviews were also aware of a strain of hostility to the police running through the disturbances, all admitting to being personally scared, all rationalising this hostility in terms of the 'self-evident' criminality of the rioters. Most striking among all informants was this appeal to self-evidence, the obvious or 'common-sense' significance of the riot, even though such positions demonstrated a clear lack of consensus.

In trying to identify the 'efficient causes' of collective behaviour it is not possible to construct arithmetic partition of responsibility between greed, deprivation and hostility to the police; the genesis of action prohibits such attribution and the strictures of the 'material causes', the lifeworlds of the rioters themselves, are not amenable to neat distinction between necessary and sufficient elements. Nevertheless, in a situation of maximum opportunity a large crowd of predominantly black youth seized on the breakdown of public order to ransack, at will, a major retailing area of London. In this sense the riot was one of the most serious departures from common notions of public order seen in July 1981. The victims of the looting were not chosen at random. Nine clothes shops and three shoe shops had almost all their stock removed, whilst other favourite targets included off-licences and electrical goods shops. Such activity corresponds more closely with the symbolism of Hobbes than that of Marx.

The crowd that gathered on the evening of Wednesday 8th July at

Turnpike Lane was larger than that of the night before. After a major show of strength by the police (policemen in pairs up and down the High Road, ostentatiously-parked police vans, and patrolling Alsatian dogs) the crowd was broken up, not without some resistance. Several arrests were made for summary public order offences, particularly threatening behaviour. Perhaps significantly only 56 per cent of this category of arrests made in Wood Green were black and the white component for these offences was as localised as the black. Several local councillors talked of the role of police harassment in causing the rioting, but Wood Green did not see the all out confrontation between police and the local community witnessed in other parts of London, although the seriousness of the breakdown in public order belies any description of the incident as mere copycat disturbance.

c) Tooting (9 July 1981)

Balham High Road, a section of the A24, a major route into central London from the south, between Tooting Bec and Balham stations, is normally relatively crowded late in the evening when the clubs close. At around 11.15 pm on Thursday 9th July a crowd estimated at between fifty (eyewitness reports) and two hundred (police statements, South London Press report) caused extensive damage to at least thirty-five properties on this road and at least eighteen properties, including Argos department store, lost some goods in looting, although none were completely ransacked and several suffered only minimal losses (less than one hundred pounds worth of goods). The crowd dispersed quickly when the police arrived, with only a small group offering resistance with stones and bricks. Neither press nor police were able to describe the start of the violence and the two eyewitness reports I managed to gather differed substantially in detail. However, it appears that one very

TABLE 4.7

TOOTING
Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Offence

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
VAP	4	2	-	-	6
Theft etc	9	2	-	-	11
Criminal Damage	3	-	-	-	3
Public Order	9	3	1	-	13
Breach of Peace	1	1	-	-	2
Other	-	1	-	-	1
Not Charged	5	2	1	-	7
TOTAL	31	11	1	-	43

small group made up of either all white or black and white youths who appeared to be drunk, began smashing shop windows in the area, at which point many present seized the opportunity presented and the disorder escalated. This description of events appears to be substantiated by the arrest data, with twelve whites and two blacks arrested for 'looting' offences and nine whites, three blacks and one Asian charged with threatening behaviour or assault resulting from police dispersal of the crowd. Only in the percentage of those charged with VAP for serious attacks on police officers is there any slight discrepancy in the ethnic breakdown of the arrest groups (two out of six were black). Whilst Tooting was widely reported as one of London's major disorders in 1981 (see Appendix I) it is noteworthy that similar incidents to this had occurred in both 1978 and 1980 and not received national press coverage.

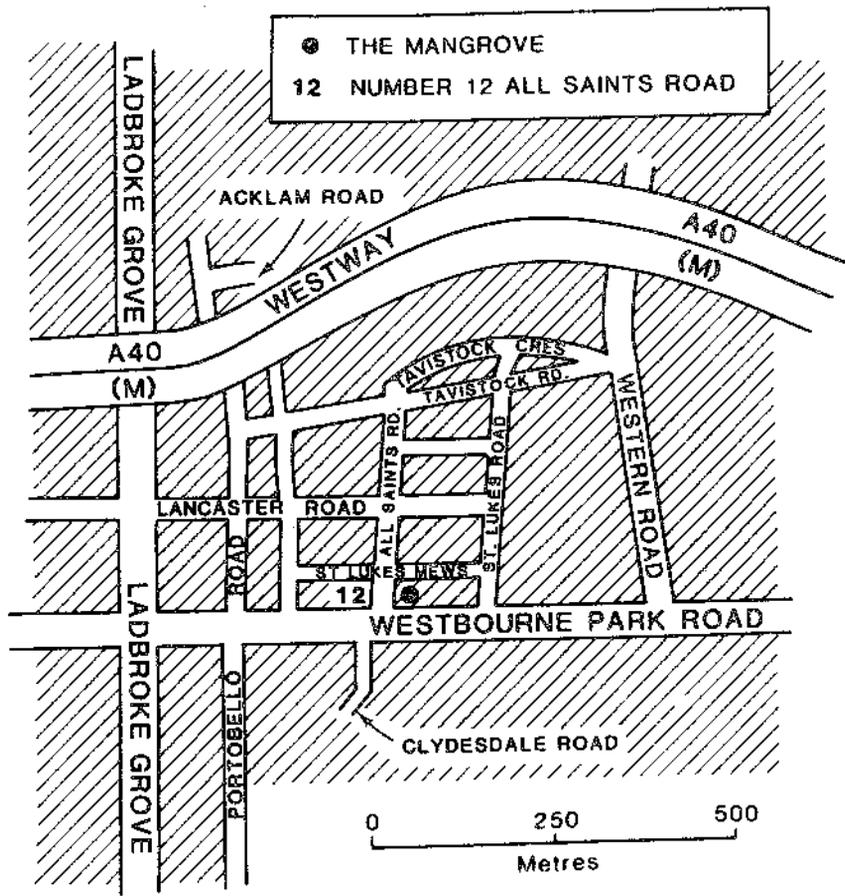
d) Notting Hill (10th/11th/12th/13th July 1981)

Notting Hill, in the London borough of Kensington and Chelsea, has both a long tradition of black settlement and a long history of inter-racial violence and poor police/black relations. This history is examined in greater detail in the next chapter; suffice to say at this point that the area was the scene of rioting in 1958 following an attack on the black community by white youths, saw a gradual deterioration in police/community relations throughout the 1960s and the growth of black militancy which flowered briefly in black power movements. The deterioration was most dramatically visible in the demonstrations and disorders that followed the 1969 raid on the Mangrove restaurant, in the clashes with the police that engulfed the Notting Hill carnivals of 1975 and 1976, and in the violence that occurred at times of SPG activity in the division. Further disorder had also been precipitated by another raid on the Mangrove in 1979. It was because of this catalogue of

violent conflict that the Kensington News and Post felt moved to comment on the 17th July 1981, after a week in which London appeared ablaze, that although there had been some trouble in Notting Hill "the scale of violence was less than expected", and as the Home Office data reveal only twenty-eight people were arrested. In a sense, Notting Hill was the major riot that was expected but failed to manifest itself; in reality the expectation was very nearly fulfilled, the pattern of events so close to cliché, only the result so dramatically different.

The first sign of trouble occurred on Thursday 9th July when a crowd of black and white youths ran down Portobello Road (see map 4.2), smashed four shop windows and some goods were taken from Lewis Turner electrical store. On Friday 10th, at several places in Notting Hill, police came under attack from scattered groups of young people who were principally concerned with throwing bricks at police cars. The fleeting nature of most of these incidents explains why accounts differ over the age and ethnic breakdown of the attackers. A shop window was broken in Westbourne Grove and three young blacks were arrested who had turned over and set alight a Mini Metro on Clydesdale Road, but no attempt was made to break up the large crowd that had gathered in All Saints Road until the early hours of the following morning, by which time most people had already gone home.

Saturday afternoon shopping trade in the area was much slower than normal, rumours of forthcoming trouble were endemic and at 3 pm the window of Thompson's jewellers in Portobello Road was smashed by a crowd of black and white youths, two of whom, one white one black, were arrested. In the evening, the night of the worst disturbances in the rest of London, an even larger crowd (estimated by the police to be over two hundred) gathered in All Saints Road and Saint Lukes and began to build barricades at the entrances to the roads. Again, several police



Map 4.2 Notting Hill

cars were stoned including that of Chief Superintendent Moore, there were also reports of petrol bombs being thrown. At 11.25 pm a car was turned over and set alight in Westbourne Park Road. Again no attempt was made to break up the large numbers of people gathered on All Saints Road and by one o'clock the next morning the area was relatively quiet, most of the crowd had dispersed of its own accord. No police had been injured and only ten arrests made.

On Sunday 12th July the crowd that gathered in the evening, again in All Saints Road, was much smaller than over the past two days. Two fire engines, called out to Saint Luke's Road, were attacked by members of this group and by about 11.30 pm a compressor and an overturned car had again been made into barricades at the lower end of All Saints Road. Yet again the police did not immediately try and disperse the crowd but instead waited until almost midnight when numbers were greatly diminished. Fifty police then marched in phalanx down along All Saints Road and cleared the street leaving plenty of chance for people to disperse along Lancaster and Tavistock Roads to avoid giving any impression of trapping people. Sixteen were arrested in the clashes that followed this manoeuvre and one police constable was injured. However, many eyewitness accounts describe this movement as well conceived but poorly executed, with little control by senior officers over the behaviour of the group of police marching down All Saints Road. One police officer present told me confidentially that there was a general resentment at the policy that Chief Superintendent Moore was later to describe as 'softly-softly' policing in the area throughout the attacks of the preceding three nights. The return of the police to the area around the Mangrove was achieved by what one journalist described as "unusual 'Zulu' style tactics" with truncheons used to beat a rhythm on riot shields whilst all the police constables "chanted". (Kensington News and Post, 17 July 1981) Others have described an exchange of

verbal abuse more ferocious than any violent conflict, with racist catcalls returned with interest by the crowd. By about 1.15 am the area was again quiet.

For the fourth successive night, on Monday 14th July a crowd gathered outside the Mangrove. Police estimated that only fifty to sixty youths between twelve and twenty were present, and local opinion generally suggested that numbers were smaller and the crowd younger than on previous nights. On this occasion the crowd were dispersed much earlier, at 10.30 pm, and although petrol bombs and piles of bricks were found there was little confrontation and no arrests were made.

At some time late on Sunday evening or Monday morning (the exact hour is disputed) the Unity Association hostel in Lancaster Road, occupied almost entirely by black people, was raided by the police. Widely disparate accounts of events came from the two sides involved in the raid. Most significantly, and agreed by all parties, no arrests were made for looting, no stolen goods found (the ostensible grounds for the search) and the hostel suffered extensive damage in the forcible entry into and subsequent search of the house. The police claimed that the door of the hostel was slammed in their face when they were chasing suspected looters and that no more than thirty officers were used in the raid (fifteen inside, fifteen outside the house). Residents claimed that approximately one hundred officers were used and that several black people were assaulted in the hostel. Perhaps the precise history is not as important as the symbolic, high profile police presence on the premises. This was certainly the perception of both local residents and, I was told, many police who were annoyed at the refusal of senior officers to take up the challenge offered by the barricades of All Saints Road.

The events of early July in Notting Hill represented in at least one sense the most successful strategic policing operation in the Metropolitan Police District in 1981. In an area where police/black relations were traditionally amongst the worst in London, there was only limited violence. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that this was because of police tactics between the 9th and the 13th of the month. There is certainly ample evidence to suggest a considerable potential for collective violence. Hints at the nature of an incipient full scale riot that was avoided can be found in the arrest data. Again, the 'sample' group were highly localised, 79 per cent from the 'home' and 'near' residential classes (the second highest proportion in the MPD), and whilst the total number of arrests was low, twenty-eight being the smallest total in the MPD 11, there were twelve arrests for VAP the fifth highest number for any location in the whole of London. The white ethnic group accounted for 57 per cent of the arrests, but when this figure is supplemented with reports of magistrates' courts appearances it was discovered that eight out of the nine arrests traced that occurred in or around All Saints Road were of black males.

Against the apparent public order 'success' of Notting Hill, anecdotal evidence suggests that this policy of refusal both to 'respond' to the attacks on police officers in the area and to attempt to disperse the hostile All Saints Road crowd was unpopular at the junior level of the local police. This resentment at what was seen as surrendering control of the streets to the local black community was vented in two police actions on the Sunday night; one the vociferous return to police 'control' of All Saints Road, the other a police search that by its own criteria and official report succeeded only in causing a lot of damage to a black household on Notting Hill's own 'front line'.

One further point of interest was the conception of rioting in both

TABLE 4.8

NOTTING HILL
Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Offence

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
	%	%			
VAP	6 (37.5)	6 (50)	-	-	12
Theft, etc.	1 (6)	1 (8)	-	-	2
Criminal Damage	1 (6)	1 (8)	-	-	2
Public Order	5 (31)	4 (33)	-	-	9
Breach of Peace	2 (13)	-	-	-	2
Other	1 (6)	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	16 (100%)	12 (100%)	-	-	28

TABLE 4.9

NOTTING HILL
Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Residence

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
	%	%			
'Home'	5 (31)	4 (33)	-	-	9
'Near'	6 (37)	7 (59)	-	-	13
'Town'	4 (25)	1 (8)	-	-	5
'County'	1 (7)	-	-	-	1
'Further'	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	16 (100%)	12 (100%)	-	-	28

local press (Kensington News and Post; Shepherds Bush Gazette; Paddington Times) and police statements at the time. Two features emerge strongly. One is that the violence in Notting Hill is by its limited form relegated to the status of 'copycat riot'. Typical in this sense is the Kensington News and Post headline description of "COPYCAT HOOLIGANISM" (17 July 1981). The second is the repeated reference to a probability of violence based on the prevalence of violence in other parts of London at the same time, the phrasing tending to be in terms of contagion and diffusion of rioting. Both work to one semantic end, endowing the collective action with the powerful property of irrationality. The effect of such attribution, whether or not it is intentional, is to prohibit making a connection between collective action and legitimate act, leaving history to be explained within an implicitly behaviourist paradigm of stimulus and response. The determination of what should constitute an adequate explanation of the 'non-riot' in Notting Hill is not a straightforward academic question, but is crucially related to the way in which the vocabulary used in discourse implicitly structures the range of our understanding of social process and the history of conflict.

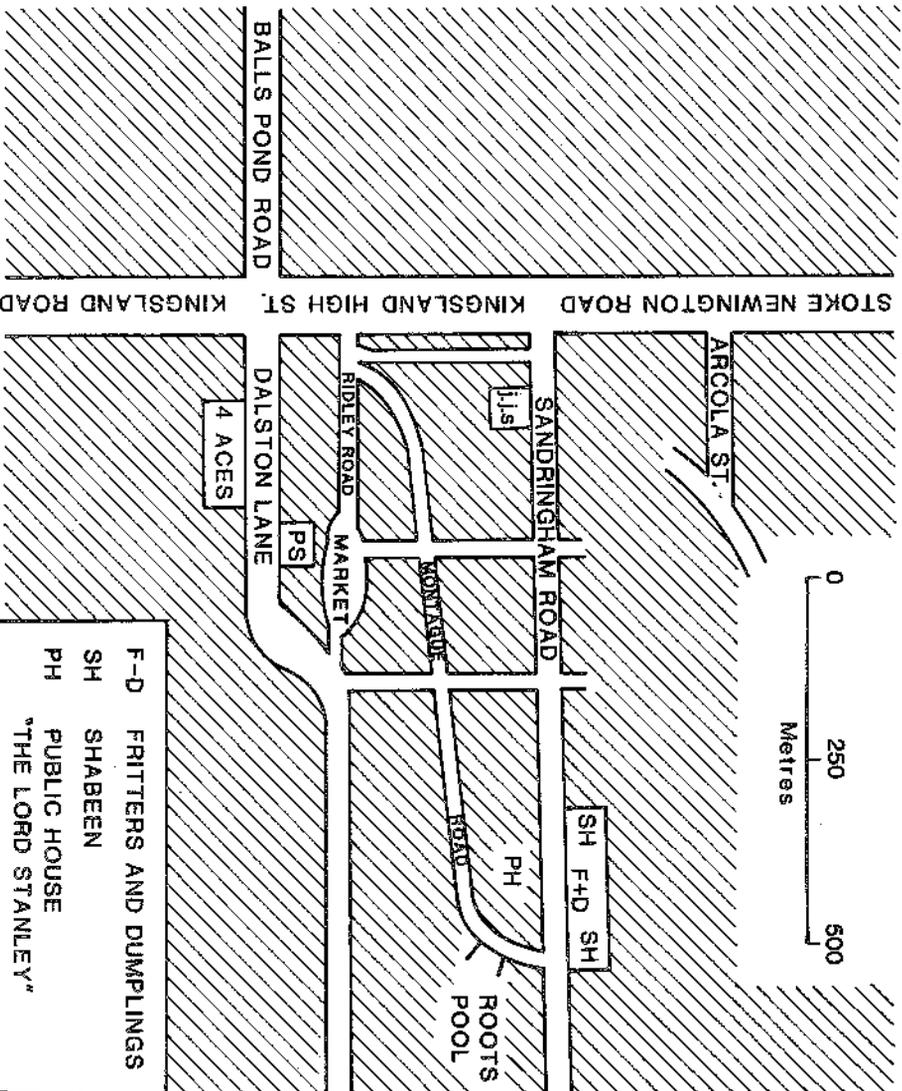
e) Hackney (10 July 1981)

An eyewitness report of the rioting in Hackney appears in Paul Harrison's *Inside the Inner City* (1983). This brief narrative both draws from Harrison's account and is supplemented by the information gleaned from my own research in the area in September and October 1981. More than in any other incident of rioting in London, reports from all sides provide a relatively consistent chronology of events.

Throughout the late 1970s the borough of Hackney, G District of the Metropolitan Police Force, had witnessed many incidents of public

disorder, varying greatly in seriousness. Most involved late night scuffles between police and youths, normally at weekends. Two of the most serious of many such examples occurred in mid-1981. In May a crowd in Kingsland High Street looted a jeweller's store and on the night of Tuesday/Wednesday the 23rd/24th June, only a couple of weeks before the July 'riots', many of the four hundred or so leaving Cubies dance hall at closing time again ran amok in Kingsland High Street as well as in Stoke Newington Road (see map 4.3). In the latter incident several individuals were 'mugged' and the till was stolen from the local Kentucky Fried Chicken shop. Neither disorder reached the national press, although a similar incident over the spring bank holiday in April 1981 in Finsbury Park did receive splash headlines in several of the tabloids (Daily Mirror; Sun; Daily Mail; 21 April 1981) and was firmly placed in the context of the Brixton riots rather than in that of the more traditional fighting that took place at Weston-super-Mare on the same weekend. (Greene, 1938.) Relations between the police and the local black community could have been described euphemistically as 'poor' and, in the view informally expressed by several local councillors and formally stated by the local Community Relations Council, had deteriorated throughout the 1970s, although the form and nature of any connection with the local history of incidents of public disorder was both moot and controversial.

In the days following the disturbances in Southall there was a gradual build-up of tension within the Stoke Newington area and an expectation of 'trouble', particularly in the wake of the mid-week disturbances in Wood Green, less than two miles away from Dalston Junction station along Green Lane (A 105). Indeed several local young black respondents to the questionnaire mentioned in Chapter One told me that they had either been involved in both disturbances or else knew people who had. On both Wednesday 8th and Thursday 9th July there were



F-D	FRITTERS AND DUMPLINGS
SH	SHABEN
PH	PUBLIC HOUSE "THE LORD STANLEY"
PS	DALSTONE POLICE STATION
L's	JOHNSTON'S CAFE

Map 4.3 Stoke Newington

incidents of police cars being stoned, and on the Friday the shopkeepers on Kingsland Road, Kingsland High Street and Stoke Newington Road were warned by the local police of the possibility or even probability of disorder over the weekend. Several shops went so far as to close early. It is important to stress that such warnings and rumours assume a far greater significance with the percipience of hindsight than they may have done at the time (see Shibutani 1966). One shop owner told me that there had been several similar rumours of trouble in the recent past and that he, to his cost, had taken this one no more seriously than any of the others, returning much later that night to an empty shell of a property. That disorder was anticipated is no evidence for its being premeditated.

The initial sign of trouble on the Friday (10 July 1981) was another jewellery robbery in Kingsland High Street, this time at 5 pm. This was subsequently described by police officers as the trigger to disorder. However this was an isolated incident and did not precipitate immediate escalation of violence. At this point the police closed down Johnson's cafe in Sandringham Road (see map), a meeting place of the black community, a social focus of the surrounding few streets of mainly privately rented, terraced housing in poor condition, occupied principally by black families. Johnson's had been raided several times in the preceding six to twelve months and had been compared by many of the Afro-Caribbean community I spoke to with the Black and White in St Paul's, Bristol. The move to shut the café down was resented by the crowd gathered there, which would normally have been expected on a Friday night, and there was much talk of proposed 'action'. Some time between 7.30 and 8 o'clock a petrol bomb was thrown into the Argos showroom, fifteen metres away from Johnson's near to the junction of Sandringham Road and Kingsland High Street and the shop window was broken. Over the next few hours there was certainly a running battle

between the predominantly black crowd gathered around Johnson's and the police, but accounts of the specific details of the exchange differ. In general terms the police tried unsuccessfully to disperse the crowd and suffered under a hail of cans, bottles, petrol bombs and any other detritus that came readily to hand. Thirty-one police were injured. Injuries were also suffered by the crowd, the most serious being that of a girl whose head wound needed immediate hospital treatment. More pointedly, many of those present claimed in interviews I conducted that there had been extensive use of truncheons on heads and several claimed to have been 'beaten up' after being arrested. Harrison too suggests that "some officers lost their cool" (1983,p349).

It was whilst this confrontation was at full pitch that groups of people who were on the streets seized the chance to loot and extensively damage fifty-eight shops on the Stoke Newington Road and Kingsland High Street. Harrison, who arrived on the scene shortly after midnight, describes an incident where the window of Mr H, a menswear shop, was smashed and then looted by "five or ten youths, black and white"(1983,p349) while three whites in their late twenties stood by as look-outs. Several of the shopkeepers who cooperated with the survey in Chapter One, too scared to act save to bear witness to the ransacking of their own property, also claimed that both black and white youths were involved in the looting.

The hypothesis that there are important differences between groups involved in the disorder is fully supported by the arrest statistics (see Tables 4.10 and 4.11), although because of the small sample size these differences are not always statistically significant. Black involvement tends to be much more localised than white with 28 per cent having travelled the minimal distance to the scene of offence compared with 17 per cent of the white group. Whereas whites made up 38 per cent

TABLE 4.10

HACKNEY
Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Offence

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
VAP	5	17	1	-	23
Theft, etc.	8	13	-	-	21
Criminal Damage	2	4	-	-	6
Public Order	9	38	1	1	49
Breach of Peace	4	1	-	-	5
Other	1	-	-	-	1
Not Charged	1	2	-	-	3
TOTAL	30	75	2	1	108

TABLE 4.11

HACKNEY
Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Offence Category and Residence

	'RIOTING'		'LOOTING'	
	<u>White</u>	<u>Non-White</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Non-White</u>
'Home'	3 (16.5%)	16 (27%)	2 (18%)	6 (35%)
'Near'	12	25	7	7
'Town'	2	13	2	3
'County'	1	6	-	1
'Further'	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	18 (100%)	60 (100%)	11 (100%)	17 (100%)

of all those arrested for 'looting' they accounted for only 21 per cent of those charged with VAP. Again the crude divisions of the Home Office residential classification hamper analysis but the 'black' element clearly came from closer to the centre of the disorder than the 'whites' although there was no residential difference between those involved in different offences from individual ethnic groups (as there was in the Brixton pattern of April 1981). There are clear grounds for supporting the assertion that the Hackney riot is best characterised as a deep-rooted and violent conflict between the police and the black community that escalated to a scale of disorder that was exploited by black and white alike, seizing on the opportunity to reap material reward from the weekend chaos. Harrison suggests that for many the seed, and for some the sole focus, of the riot was manifest:

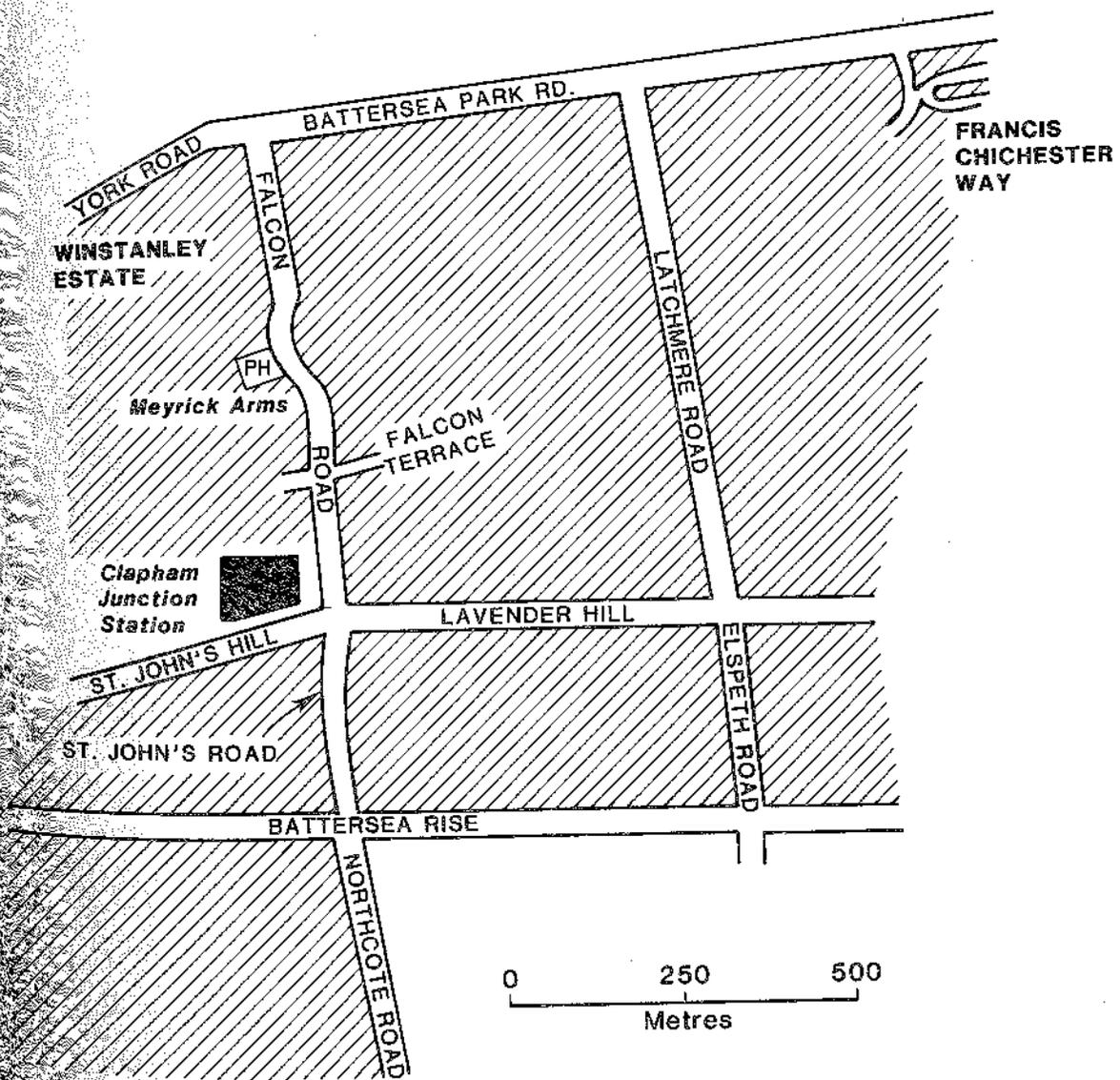
"These were not the first skirmishes in the revolution, nor were they an organised protest against monetarism or mass unemployment. Many of the rioters were at school, some had jobs. The conscious motivation of those who were not just in it for the looting was, quite simply and straightforwardly, hatred of the police among the young and the desire to hit back at them for humiliations received." (1983,p354).

The substantive research carried out in Hackney also suggests such a conclusion, the arrest data cannot possibly do so, unable to probe subjective mental states. Nevertheless, it can and does strongly suggest that the involvement of black people was not the same as that of whites, that it is possible to distinguish 'looters' from 'rioters'. Implicit in such distinctions is the conclusion that there is no way that the 'uprising' in Hackney can be relegated to the status of 'copycat' riot, understood simply in terms of crime and criminality (as the Hackney Gazette suggested) but that the small scale yet ferocious confrontation with the police was symptomatic of a quite different problem.

f) Battersea (10th/11th/12th July 1981)

In popular perception, Battersea is often considered as merely the focal point for gentrification in the desirable inner arc of south-western London, yet the juxtaposition of 'dump' estates and offices alongside both the decaying and the refurbished Victorian terraces prohibits such straight-forward classification. In the late 1970s whilst some residential zones of the neighbourhood moved upmarket, other parts were more representative of the classical inner city image of high unemployment, particularly among the young and the large black population, and poor housing conditions. These two faces of late twentieth century British urban morphology are separated by tens rather than hundred of metres, although the area around Clapham Junction station, the railway station line and the Winstanley and Falcon Terrace estates (see map 4.4) showed and still show a higher concentration of 'urban blight' features than the rest of Battersea (see Wallman 1982,1985).

At first sight the disturbances in Battersea over the weekend July 10, 11 and 12, exemplify the 'copycat' designation used so derogatively by both government ministers and national press to describe those disorders that were considered as more criminal than political in nature. Certainly, in both the July disorders specifically and the area generally, there was/is a high incidence of what might be described as juvenile delinquency. Most Fridays and Saturdays when the pubs close there are conflicts between different local groups, most more mouth than muscle. Of those which degenerate into fighting, although serious injury sometimes results, the majority are quickly resolved and the antagonists pass on, shouting and singing, occasionally causing trouble for other pedestrians or one of the many shopkeepers, principally Asian, who keep very late hours. Both police and local people are aware of



Map 4.4 Battersea

this pattern, so common to very many parts of London, and the toll of weekend arrests can assume a routine, almost ritualistic format.

It is in this context that most local residents and local press reporters rationalised the disorders of 1981 as more an exaggerated form of the normal than an 'incident of serious public disorder' or 'a riot'. It appears that trouble started on Friday night (10 July 19/81) when four white youths came out of the Meyrick Arms in Falcon Road at closing time and threw some firecrackers at a group of black people leaving a disco at the Providence Centre. The fighting spilled over into Northcote Road and Lavender Hill, then several shops were looted (between five and ten) and Rajinder Sharma, a shopkeeper in Falcon Road, was stabbed. Although the police managed to displace the focus of the disorder from the area around Clapham Junction station in an hour to an hour-and-a-half, incidents of property damage and fighting spread as the crowd dispersed and it was not until 5 am the following morning that the streets were completely quiet.

On the Saturday (11 July 1981) rumours of trouble ran through Battersea, and many shop keepers took the precaution of boarding up their windows. Again the main disorder started at 10.30 to 11 o'clock and was anticipated by the police, who were present in large numbers (estimates vary from twenty to one hundred) at the junction of Falcon Road and Lavender Hill, patrolling Falcon Road in pairs, moving on all 'loiterers'. Several incidents of bricks being thrown at the police in this area were reported earlier in the evening and on one occasion two mattresses were set on fire and thrown at a police patrol from one of the tower blocks on the Winstanley estate. As the pubs closed there was a fight between a group of black youths and National Front supporters outside the Chopper pub in York Road which attracted police attention, but the main trouble occurred south of Clapham Junction station. Groups

of youths ran down Northcote Road throwing stones through those shop windows that were not boarded up and three shops were looted. Seeing the crowd moving towards them, the police at the Lavender Hill/Falcon Road junction blocked the route into the centre of Battersea by forming a wall across St John's Road. Although they tried unsuccessfully to break through the police lines the groups of 'rioters' were easily dispersed when the police moved forward against them. At around this time there was also a report of another group of youths throwing petrol bombs at a police patrol five hundred metres or so away from this incident in Latchmere Road.

On the Sunday (12 July 1981) there was no major crowd trouble, although in the afternoon four police constables were attacked in Battersea Roller Skating Park by a group of "about thirty black youths" (police statement), and in the evening there was an attack on a four man patrol by a group of about the same size, who threw petrol bombs at the police constables in Francis Chichester Way, about 400 metres north-east of Latchmere Road.

Undoubtedly there was more trouble in Battersea from 10-12 July 1981 than would be expected on a 'normal' weekend. Yet although there were clear signs of anti-police actions and inter-racial violence the nature of the disorder does appear, superficially at least, different more in degree than in kind from similar disturbances in the past that had occurred at weekends after the pubs closed. Nevertheless, if the temporary collapse of public order again involved a wide variety of behaviour, the arrest data indicate that this variation was not constant across all ethnic groups. Most notably, whereas the black contingent make up 30 per cent of the total arrests in Battersea (24/82), they account for 86 per cent of all those arrests that involved serious attacks on police officers (12/14 of VAP offences). This difference is

TABLE 4.12

BATTERSEA
Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Offence

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
VAP	2	12	-	-	14
Theft, etc.	8	1	-	-	9
Criminal Damage	2	-	-	-	2
Public Order	40	10	-	-	50
Breach of Peace	2	-	-	-	2
Other	4	1	-	-	5
TOTAL	58	24	-	-	82

TABLE 4.13

BATTERSEA
Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Age

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
Under 14	1	-	-	-	1
14-16	11	6	-	-	17
17-20	26	10	-	-	36
Over 21	20 (34%)	8 (33%)	-	-	32
TOTAL	58 (100%)	24 (100%)	-	-	82

statistically significant using the binomial test. Of the latter group (VAP arrests) 43 per cent come from the closest residential class ('home') compared with 35 per cent of all those arrested. Once again it appears that the world of disorder has as complex a form as that of order and that, in this example, black people involved in the violence tended to be particularly involved in conflict with the police, although the involvement of black youth in other crowd actions such as theft and criminal damage is suggested by the constant level of approximately 30 per cent of arrests for all other offences coming from the black ethnic group. This trend is supported by eyewitness evidence which suggested both that the crowds that 'rampaged' through central Battersea on Friday night contained both black and white youths, and the police assertion that the attacks on police in Battersea Park and Francis Chichester Way involved only young blacks. No arrests were made at the time for the latter two incidents, most of the VAP arrests arose from attacks on police around Clapham Junction station on Friday and Saturday night. There is no significant difference between the age distributions of the two principal ethnic groups; 34 per cent of whites and 33 per cent of blacks were over twenty-one. Indeed, relative to the rest of the MPD 11, the 'crowd' was fairly young, only four locations have a smaller proportion of those arrested over twenty-one. The majority of arrests (50/82) resulted in summary charges under the Public Order Act and consisted mostly of those members of the crowds who had confronted police outside Clapham Junction station on the Friday and Saturday nights. In short, whilst the age of those involved, and the seemingly alcohol-related nature of much of the action, might appear to justify local description of trouble in Battersea as purely criminal or 'copycat' violence, the empirical evidence again belies such facile classification. In particular there appears to be an important qualitative difference between black and white involvement in the disorders.

g) West Ham (10th and 11th July 1981)

On close inspection it is tendentious to describe the arrests connected with public disorder in one London borough as occurring at one 'location'. Even the Home Office classification is not quite sure of the name of this 'place', sometimes referring to it as Newham (the borough), at other times as West Ham. The disturbances that did occur at this one 'location' were in reality scattered across the borough of Newham, in Forest Gate, in Upton Park and in East Ham, with West Ham proper remaining relatively peaceful. Symptomatic of this dispersed pattern, three different police stations were involved in the arrests.

The 'rioting' that did occur was not greatly dissimilar from the trouble that follows a big match at Upton Park football ground. On Friday night (the 10th July) several 'incidents' were closely related to crowds leaving pubs at closing time. One group in High Street North, East Ham, was broken up by the police; another, estimated by the police to consist of about "twenty young men" began throwing some bottles at a police car outside the Queens pub in Upton Park. The latter group were moved on into Green Street where a dozen shop windows were smashed but no looting occurred. Similarly, the one incident in West Ham itself consisted of "a gang of about forty skinheads" (police statement) coming out of the Pigeons pub in Ranelagh Road and throwing a few bricks at two policemen. The crowd was broken up and four arrests were made. Later that night the crowd that remained in Green Street in Upton Park was involved in the most serious local incident of the weekend outside the Ace cinema. One or possibly two petrol bombs were thrown at police (accounts differ) and five people were arrested and charged with VAP. Perhaps significantly, four out of the five were black and one was Asian. (Four out of the seven charged with VAP in West Ham were black (57 per cent) compared with only 36 per cent of the total arrests for

TABLE 4.14

NEWHAM/WEST HAM
Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Offence

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
VAP	2	4	1	-	6
Theft etc	1	-	-	-	1
Criminal Damage	1	7	-	-	8
Public Order	6	3	6	-	15
Disorderly	6	-	-	-	6
Breach of Peace	5	1	-	-	6
Other	5	1	-	-	6
TOTAL	26	16	7	-	49

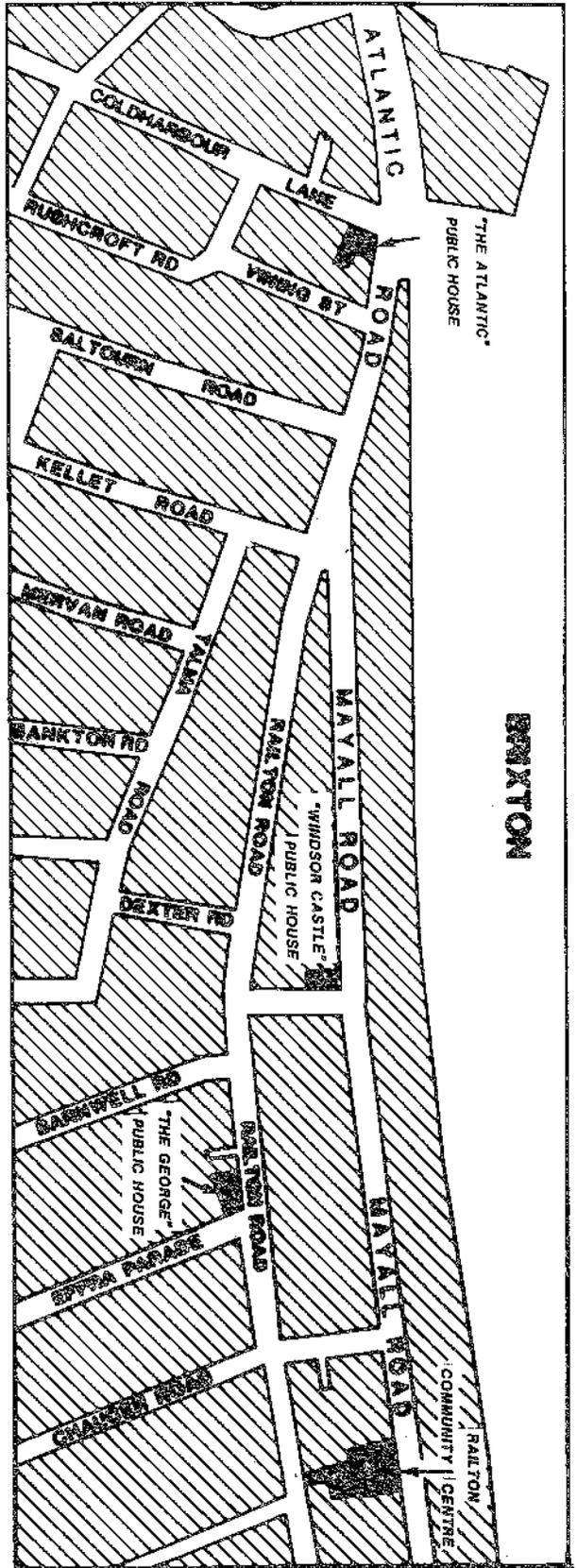
the location (see Table 4.14). At this point the crowd was broken up and by 2.30 am the streets were quiet.

On the Saturday there was further evidence of the rumour and anticipation of trouble so common throughout London, and again these expectations were not fulfilled. West Ham Park was shut down, shopkeepers spent part of their day boarding up their property and then reported a fall of between 40-60 per cent on normal Saturday trade, and the Newham Recorder felt moved to describe Forest Gate and West Ham as "ghost towns" on the Saturday afternoon (16 July 1981). Dixon's store in Queen's market did have a shop window broken and lost three hundred pounds worth of stereo equipment and at the local H Samuels jewellery worth eight thousand pounds was stolen. One police constable commented that two such robberies did not constitute a particularly busy Saturday night. Two small clashes with crowds did occur, one at Forest Gate, again outside a pub, involving a gang of about thirty white youths (police estimate), and another in Pier Parade, North Woolwich, where three shop windows were smashed by skinheads. No looting occurred, although there were reports of the latter group being involved in an attack on a group of Bengalis later the same night. Again, such racial attacks are common in this area (see GLC, 1985). As the Home Office data shows, most of the twenty-four arrests on the Saturday were for threatening or disorderly behaviour and for breaches of the peace. A crate of milk bottles was found on the waste ground behind the Queen's Market in Upton Park with an almost empty can of petrol nearby, although this possible manufacture of petrol bombs was not repeated anywhere else in the borough, and no more were thrown.

Brixton (10th and 15th July 1981)

A central tenet of police policy in Brixton in the period between

Map 4.5



April and July 1981 was to maintain a highly visible police presence on all parts of the division, including Railton Road. Possibly it was not conceivable that the area could ever 'return to normal' after the rioting in April, probably a return to the antagonism that had passed as normality was not desirable, certainly tension persisted throughout the months of May and June. More importantly, Brixton had achieved mythical status, central symbol in a host of very different political rhetorics at all levels of society. Whereas in other parts of London, in the general climate of rumour and anticipation, people feared further trouble, in Brixton many say that they resigned themselves to it.

After a week of disorder in the rest of London, on Friday 10th July during the evening rush hour a police car was overturned and set alight in the centre of Brixton but this did not incite an immediate reaction, although tension in the area was raised even higher. The actual trigger to the disturbances was the arrest of Lloyd Coxson, a well-known local Rastafarian businessman who, at the time of his arrest in Atlantic Road, was attempting to persuade local black people to avoid violent conflict with the police.² Trying to intervene in the arrest of a local black youth who he believed was being unfairly manhandled he was himself arrested and, he claimed, beaten up by the police. He was later released and allowed to resume his attempts to quell the violence which had now escalated into a full scale riot, behaviour for which he was subsequently thanked by senior police officers. Commander Fairbairn was keen to emphasise the differences between the July and April disturbances: the fact that there was relatively little arson of private property, that whilst there were attacks on the police the rioters were more concerned with looting than with violence, and that there were 'outsiders' involved in the disturbances.

There is some supporting evidence for all the Commander's claims in

the arrest data, most notably in the very high percentage of those arrested in Brixton who did not come from either of the two closest residential zones (56.6 per cent) (see Table 4.15). Well over thirty properties were looted and it is perhaps significant that whilst the amount of property stolen on Friday the 10th was as great as on any single day of the April riots, the number of injuries inflicted on police and the general level of police/black violence was universally regarded as less severe than three months previously. This is not to understate the undoubted ferocity of the violence, a facet of the riot illustrated by the rioters' determination to attack police cars and coaches, as well as personnel. There are also major differences from the arrest pattern of the April disorders studied in the last chapter. Whilst the difference in age between 'rioting' and 'looting' offenders is repeated, the distinction between the two is not so marked and the crowd in general appear to have been much younger than before (see Table 4.16). Of those arrested for VAP, 36 per cent were over twenty-one compared with 69 per cent in April, whilst the figures for theft arrests were 26 per cent and 37 per cent respectively. Ethnicity is still an important distinguishing variable in the data, but there appears to be no difference between black and white arrests in either their age distribution or general residential pattern. (Although none of the five white VAP arrests came from the closest residential zone compared with two out of the fourteen black arrests for the same offence, see Table 4.17). There is a marked difference between the ethnic breakdown of the various offences and here, once again, the 'paradigmatic' charges of theft and VAP are significant. Whereas white involvement accounts for 40 per cent of all theft arrests it accounts for only 26 per cent of VAP arrests, a pattern echoing that of April (statistically significant using the binomial test).

The actions that constitute 'the riot' once again show the

TABLE 4.15

BRIXTON
Arrests by Residence and Offence

	<u>'Home'</u>	<u>'Near'</u>	<u>'Town'</u>	<u>'County'</u>	<u>'Further'</u>
VAP	2	7	7	1	1
Theft etc	22	42	56	6	9
Criminal Damage	1	6	8	1	2
Public Order	7	16	30	4	2
Disorderly	4	-	-	-	-
Breach of Peace	-	1	2	-	-
Other	-	3	6	-	3
Not Charged	3	4	10	1	2
TOTAL	39	79	119	13	19

TABLE 4.16

BRIXTON
Arrests by Age and Offence

	<u>Under 14</u>	<u>14-16</u>	<u>17-20</u>	<u>Over 21</u>	<u>Total</u>
	%	%	%	%	%
VAP	1 (5)	3 (16)	8 (42)	7 (37)	19 (100)
Theft etc	11 (8)	42 (31)	46 (34)	36 (27)	135 (100)
Criminal Damage	2	4	6	6 (33)	18 (100)
Public Order	3	17	19	21 (35)	60 (100)
Disorderly	-	-	2	2 (50)	4 (100)
Breach of Peace	-	-	1	2 (66)	3 (100)
Other	3	-	5	4 (33)	12 (100)
Not Charged	2	3	2	13 (65)	20 (100)
TOTAL	22	69	89	91 (33)	271 (100)

complexity of 'collective behaviour' and the arrest data again indicate that the differences between involvement in specific offence categories does not occur randomly across age and ethnic groups. Again there are limits to the inferences that can be drawn from this pattern. Certainly the crowd was not as localised as in April. Quite possibly, given both the background history of Brixton in particular, and the mood in London in general, the opportunity in Brixton for the greedy and the important symbolism for the politically committed provided incentive enough to encourage people to travel to the area, expecting, or even hoping, for trouble. Again, to use a geometric metaphor, the epicentre of the riot was still Railton Road and the core activity on which the collapse of public order was based was still an attack on the local police. Nevertheless, the characteristics of the form of collective expression that evolved from this collapse were significantly different from those which had developed in April 1981.

This point is reinforced by the events of the subsequent week in Brixton. Whilst on the Saturday and Sunday nights there was minor disorder in the centre of town, violence gradually subsided until late at night on Wednesday 15th July when police raided eleven properties in Railton Road. The reason that was given for the raids was that senior officers had been told that caches of ammunition for further attacks on police were stored in these houses. The ostensible purpose, the metonymic power, and the actual results of this search will be examined in a later chapter, suffice to say that the raid immediately prompted a fresh disorder. It has been possible to trace seven out of the ten arrested during this outbreak of violence, an outbreak that had not been anticipated and did not produce any looting at all. All seven were black, five out of the seven were over twenty-one. Distinctive in form and in nature the violence of the 15th July contrasts vividly with that of the preceding weekend. Once again it would appear that the element

TABLE 4.17

BRIXTON
Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Offence

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
	%	%			%
VAP	5 (26)	14 (74)	-	-	19 (100)
Theft, etc.	48 (36)	81 (60)	1 (1)	5 (2)	135 (100)
Criminal Damage	7	11	-	-	18
Public Order	21	38	-	-	59
Disordersly	3	1	-	-	4
Breach of Peace	2	1	-	-	3
Other	1	9	2	-	12
Not charged	5	15	-	-	20
TOTAL	92 (33)	170 (63)	3 (1)	5 (3)	270*

* Race not known for one of the arrested.

TABLE 4.18

BRIXTON
Arrests by Date

July	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Arrests	-	1	174	52	14	-	-	6	4	6	-	-	-

of rioting behaviour that involved violent conflict with the police was much more the prerogative of the black community than the looting of shops, which was much more the shared experience of black and white.

1) Croydon (10th July 1981)

In the months before July 1981 the outer London Borough of Croydon had witnessed a dramatic increase in the incidence and seriousness of inter-racial violence which, after a series of assaults on both black and Asian individuals, had culminated in an attack by a gang of black youths on a pub in Thornton Heath, allegedly a National Front meeting place, which resulted in the tragic murder of Terence May: white, disabled, and nothing to do with any racist organisation. The front page headlines the event received in the tabloid newspapers, especially in the context of the resounding media silence on other racial attacks, did nothing to alleviate tension in the area. In late June a quasi-fascist group, the White Defence Force, had printed and distributed several hundred leaflets advocating racial violence, Asian shopkeepers had been attacked, two shop windows smashed and there was at least one attempted arson. Under pressure from the local Community Relations Council the police revealed that there had been eight arrests between February and July 1981,

"for such offences as daubing racialist slogans, and using abusive words with racialist connotations". (Police statement)

Chief Inspector Brian Turner of Z district went on record as suggesting that these figures demonstrated police awareness of the problems of ethnic minorities. Others thought differently, and as a result an assortment of local lawyers, social workers and black activists formed the Croydon Black People's Action Committee which was later, in August 1981, to attempt to set up "alternative protection" for the black

community in Croydon, in the face of opposition from senior police officers in Z Division. Exacerbating this tense situation, a group of youths had extensively vandalised Coldharbour School and Waylands Day Centre in Purley Way, Croydon, on Saturday 3rd July, an incident promoted to the status of "an orgy of destruction" by a "mob" in the local press in the light of that weekend's violence in other parts of the country (Croydon Advertiser, 10 July 1981).

In the week following the disorders in Southall and Liverpool 8, 'rioting' became the focus of local media attention, and rumour of imminent trouble abounded in Croydon. Replication of the incidents that were spreading throughout London appeared inevitable. Significantly, in both press coverage and the accounts given by local shopkeepers 'the riot' was described in the metaphors of combustion and medicine; the fire was spreading from central London, contagion (or perhaps diffusion) exemplified. In fact, nothing happened. On the Friday night, as occurs on every division of the MPD on every Friday night, there was a fight outside a pub; eleven people were arrested. On the Saturday (11 July 1981), the police maintained a high profile throughout the centre of Croydon, using Alsatian dogs in a clear symbolic gesture. Groups of hopeful youths that had gathered on the streets were quickly moved on, two speculative young blacks were apprehended on a bus coming into the town centre with milk bottles and petrol in plastic containers in their pockets. Saturday shopping crowds were smaller than normal; by 3.30pm Whitgift Shopping Centre was empty. Nevertheless, as the arrest data clearly show there were twenty-nine arrests on the Saturday (forty-eight over the whole weekend) consisting principally of one group of young whites who had travelled into the town centre looking for 'trouble', and were arrested for trying, and failing, to smash a shop window. There were some scuffles between police officers and both black and white gangs, but these resulted only in summary charges under the Public Order

TABLE 4.19

CROYDON
Arrests by Residence and Offence

	<u>'Home'</u>	<u>'Near'</u>	<u>'Town'</u>	<u>'County'</u>	<u>'Further'</u>
VAP	-	-	1	-	1
Theft	-	1	-	-	-
Criminal Damage	-	-	6	-	-
Public Order	5	5	6	8	-
Disorderly	-	-	-	2	-
Breach of Peace	2	1	1	2	1
Other	-	-	1	1	-
Not Charged	-	1	-	-	-
TOTAL	7 (15%)	8 (18%)	15 (33%)	13 (29%)	2 (4%)

TABLE 4.20

CROYDON
Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Age

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
Under 14	-	-	-	-	-
14-16	4	3	-	-	7
17-20	26	-	-	-	26
Over 21	10	2	-	-	12
TOTAL	40 (89%)	5 (11%)	-	-	45 (100%)

Act. Perhaps the most revealing feature of the arrest data is the fact that no less than 67 per cent of those arrested had come from outside the 'Home' and 'Near' residential classification (the highest proportion for the MPD 11). This was not a local crowd, but one that had found it necessary to move some distance into the town centre: 'all dressed up and nowhere to riot?'

Whether the events over the weekend of 10th to 12th July 1981 in Croydon are viewed as either a successful police operation or an example of mass hysteria is perhaps not as significant as the fact that they qualified as a major outbreak of public disorder in both the Report of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police for the year 1981 (1982) and the Home Office classifications. The Croydon 'riot' is no more and no less than a product of public and police anticipation, and the binary format of bureaucratic and media recording (presence/absence of disorder). Reified by report, the incident sits as a dot on a map (see map 0.1), the same size as that of Brixton or Southall, one on a confusing list. It is perhaps significant that of those arrested 89 per cent were white.

J) Walthamstow (11th July 1981)

One of the most horrific racial attacks of the late 1970s and early 1980s occurred in Walthamstow in July 1981 when one of the many arson attacks on Asian homes in the area succeeded in burning down the house of the Khan's in Belgrave Road, killing most of the members of the family. The funeral was scheduled to take place on Saturday 10 July, and in the light of disturbances in Southall and other parts of London at this time it seemed to some inevitable that there would be major trouble in Walthamstow. Rumours of organised violence were endemic, police asked

Unigate dairies to make double deliveries on the Friday and not deliver at all on the Saturday, several church and school fêtes scheduled for the weekend were cancelled, buses rerouted and cancelled on the Friday and Saturday and doctors at St James' Health Centre refused to make house calls. As the general worry began to turn into a panic which almost bordered on hysteria, it was agreed not to open Walthamstow Market at all on the Saturday and very many shops, pubs and garages boarded up their premises and shut up shop early on Saturday morning.

The reaction of established Asian groups at this time was remarkably restrained, with the widower Younis Khan putting out a public appeal for peace rather than revenge to be the dominant theme of any protest and the Joint Council of Asian Organisations (JCAO) announcing that there should be only a silent funeral procession on the Saturday. However, the younger elements of the community, angered at the history of racial violence, demanded a more demonstrative protest and formed the Khan Massacre Action Committee, headed by Shabhaz Khan, which immediately announced a march from Leyton to Walthamstow, scheduled for the Saturday morning of the Khan funeral. A similar march in Coventry in May 1981 after the murder of two Asians had resulted in conflict between the marchers and skinheads who had stood along the route of the march jeering. At the announcement of the march in Walthamstow, the inevitable rumours of a National Front countermarch began to pass around, at which point the JCAO themselves asked for this march to be banned and cancelled their own silent procession. Sir David McMee, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, asked the Home Office for, and received, a banning order on all marches in London and police announced that groups would be breaking the law if they marched in crowds of more than ten people.

On the night of Friday 10th July further rumours and unsubstantiated

tales of petrol bomb manufacture were not realised in a tense but quiet night. On the Saturday, the march from Leyton went ahead in spite of the banning order. Police did not try to break up the crowd but lined the route in pairs deploying "dozens of mounted police" (Waltham Forest Guardian 17 July 1981) and keeping several coachloads of police in reserve. Abusive skinheads clashed with police on the march route, ten being arrested and charged with possession of offensive weapons (Stanley knives) and threatening behaviour. As the march approached the sight of the funeral, behind Waltham Forest town hall, many of the marchers were diverted, which produced some clashes with the police. At the funeral itself there were some angry scenes involving clashes within the Asian community and afterwards groups of Asians, angry at both what was seen as an extremely heavy and ostentatious police presence as well as the sight of Walthamstow High Street looking "like something out of a Belfast newsreel".(Waltham Forest Guardian,17 July 1981.) Some were involved in both scuffles with the police and damage to some of the few shop windows that were not boarded up, although no looting occurred. Although this group were generally construed as the younger half of a generational split in the Asian community, they were clearly not simply a youth or 'juvenile' collection as the arrest data shows. Of all Asians arrested 71 per cent were over twenty-one and even when the younger average of the whites arrested is included, Walthamstow still has the highest proportion of all those arrested over twenty-one in the whole of London. The disorders were considered locally as negligible by shopkeepers, politicians, local press and local police and the 'non-march' considered a success by the organisers. Shahbaz Khan suggested that,

"we were told that there would be a funeral march, then that it would be called off. Then they called for our march to be called off. It is only the Nazis that should get their marches called off. It is very sad that we are not allowed to make our protest known. We could not bury our dead without a protest. We have shown today that we could have had a peaceful march."

TABLE 4.21

WALTHAMSTOW

Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Age

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
Under 14	-	-	-	-	-
14-16	-	1	1	-	2
17-20	4	-	4	-	8
Over 21	7	-	12	-	19
TOTAL	11	1	17	-	28

Although local opinion considered the day relatively peaceful, both national television (eg BBC news, 11 July 1981: "Asians rampaged through Walthamstow High Street") and national press (eg Guardian: Times, 13 July 1981; Sunday Times, Observer 12 July 1981) painted a more melodramatic picture of events and in the historical annals of the Home Office, the Metropolitan Police and the GLC, Walthamstow had 'a riot', even if the residents did not notice it.

(c) Penge (11th July 1981)

The danger of simplistic or exclusive reliance on the Home Office data alone is never more clearly illustrated than in the case of 'the rioting' in Penge which resulted in forty-two arrests. As in so many other examples the violence in other parts of London, and a particular conception of that violence, encouraged an expectation of trouble in Penge. There is an almost surreal facet to the disorder in this case, which on the Friday night consisted of no more than a serious fight outside the White Swan pub on Anerley Hill which resulted in the premises closing early and the unrelated smashing of some windows of the Salvation Army offices in Citadel Road. A milk bottle with some petrol in it was found outside. The expectation and rumours of trouble reached a peak on Saturday (11 July 1981), with rationalisations again phrased in the metaphors of combustion and diffusion, violence construed as contagious, spreading throughout the capital. In the Clockhouse Bridge precinct most shopkeepers boarded up their premises and shut at around 3.30 pm. The predicted source of 'trouble' was the notorious Blenheim council estate, and the newly-opened major branch of Bejams, part of the shopping precinct adjacent to the estate was one of the many shops to shut early on the Saturday. On Saturday night a noisy party in Strood House, Eveline Road, on the estate attracted the attention of police

when the owners of Penge Angling Supplies in Croydon Road claimed that they had seen some youths outside Hood House (also on the estate) making petrol bombs. The party was raided, forty-one arrested, thirty six of whom were not charged and no evidence of petrol bombs was found. However, an hour or so later, at around 12.45 am, a small group of allegedly black youths was seen to throw a 'petrol bomb' at Rumbelows electrical store in Penge High Street, opposite to the entrance to the Blenheim estate. The 'bomb' bounced back off the window and caught fire but caused no damage, at which point another youth tried a brick instead; this broke the window but did not leave a large enough hole for access and no looting followed. A more serious incident occurred at about the same time when a petrol bomb was thrown at the window of Penge Angling Supplies, an action repeated to greater effect two hours later causing damage to the shop front. It would be foolish to trivialise such an attack but it is perhaps no coincidence that the shop owned by those making a complaint to the police was attacked twice in two hours whilst only one other property in a retailing area was damaged. The Blenheim estate may be a rough place but it certainly did not witness a riot in July 1981. The Home Office arrest data suggest this only in the terms of the dichotomised distinction between public order and collective violence already rejected. It must be noted that although there were forty-two arrests in Penge in this period, there were only six charges pressed. Only if the whole data sample is taken at face value as a cross-section of 'genus rioter' is it misleading.

PENGE

Arrests by Ethnic Appearance and Offence

	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
VAP	-	-	1	-	1
Criminal Damage	1	-	-	-	1
Other	3	1	-	-	4
Not charged	15	21	-	-	36
TOTAL	19	22	1	-	42

a) General

In Chapter Three the exploration of arrest statistics for the whole of London assumed that this data served as a sample of those people who were on the streets of the capital in July 1981. Although the April rioting in Brixton was discussed separately, the principal contingent premise was that these disorders together formed a whole, the 1981 London riots, and that those patterns that were discerned related to this essentially aspatial single phenomenon. Quite clearly, the putative generic activity 'rioting' involved many different forms of behaviour and the analysis demonstrated that this variation was not randomly distributed across age, ethnic, residence and gender groups. The eleven case studies (the MPD 11) give a more specifically spatial background to this pattern and, whilst echoing the general trends identified in Chapter Three, highlight the important differences between disorders which is masked by a mere list of riot locations. In order to summarise such variation an accepted and logical technique often used in American studies (eg Spilerman, 1971, 1974; Wanderer 1969; Friedland, 1981), is to differentiate between incidents in terms of their 'seriousness' by awarding each a score based on the constituent events of each disorder, thus constructing slightly macabre 'rioting league tables'. The ostensible simplicity of this technique is belied by the problem of assessing the weight given to the different criteria involved in calculating such scores (are two arsons more or less serious than ten broken arms?). For the purposes of this work, a scale which is broadly based on that of Wanderer is used, although other indices would have served. 'Seriousness' of a riot can be conceived theoretically in terms of 'abstract distance' from an 'abstractly normal condition of public order'. Of course, this too is more complicated than it may at first

seen, implicitly employing an undefined conception of public order. This must inevitably be tied to more general social theory, however hidden this connection may appear, a point that will be examined in greater detail in a later chapter.

The results of the index used here are shown in Table 4.23. When rioting took place regularly over successive days at one site it was listed as a single disorder. Where disorder occurred at several sites and was listed as 'one location' in the Home Office data, this 'place' was broken down into different incidents of 'riot', even if those disorders occurred on a single day. Where disorder occurred more than once at a single location but the incidents were separated by several days, these too qualified as distinct incidents. Hence the July rioting in Brixton is broken down into two 'incidents', the rioting of the weekend of the 10th, 11th and 12th and the clashes later the following week in the wake of police raids in Railton Road. The troubles in All Saints Road, Notting Hill, over several days are treated as a single disorder but 'Newham/West Ham' is broken down into four separate 'incidents'. In this way thirty-three 'incidents' across London were analysed by extending the same sources as those used for the eleven case histories.

The index illustrates the diversity of behaviour that was subsumed under the label of serious 'incidents of public disorder'. The common fracas was commonly reclassified at this time, dressed up as disorder, the measure serves well in highlighting this process. At the same time it would be foolish to underestimate the importance of those occasions when large groups of people were involved in intensive, if short lived, looting in major retail areas of London (eg Tooting or Hounslow). The absence of any commitment to public order implicit in such actions is of major social significance, the 'meaning' of such behaviour throwing a

RIOT INTENSITY

in all 'Serious Incidents of Public Disorder' in London, July 1981

a) KEY TO TABLE

Site (of disorder):

- R Residential
- S Retail
- PH Public House.

Property: a quantitative measure of the type and extent of damage suffered by property at the scene of disorder.

- D Criminal Damage
- L Looting
- A Attempted or successful arson.

Conflict: a quantitative measure of the type and extent of violent conflict at the scene of disorder.

- CF Civilian fight
- P Violent confrontation with police
- R Racial violence.

Petrol bombs: taking one particular element of the 'rioting armoury' as symptomatic of the escalation of violence.

- A Petrol bombs present or found at the scene of disorder
- B Petrol bombs used against property
- C Petrol bombs used against people.

Each incident was assessed under these three criteria producing aggregate 'scores' of riot severity in the manner of Wanderer.(1969)

List of locations taken from Home Office records.

AN INDEX OF RIOT SEVERITY

		Site	Property D L A	Conflict CF P R	P. Bombs A B C	Total Rank
Spitting Hill	9/7	R + S	1 1 -	- 1 -	- - -	2 11=
	10/7	R				
	11/7	R	2 1 -	- 3 -	1 - 3	10 6
	12/7	R				
	13/7	R				
9, 10/7	S	1 - -	1 1 -	1 - -	4 13=	
Hackney	9/7	R + S				
	10/7	R + S	3 3 1	- 4 -	1 2 5	18 3
	11/7	R + S				
10/7	S	- - -	1 - -	- - -	1 29=	
10/7	PH	1 - -	1 1 -	1 - -	4 13=	
10, 11/7	R + S	2 - -	2 1 3	1 - -	9 7=	
11/7	S + PH	- - -	1 - -	- - -	1 29=	
11/7	S + PH	- - -	1 - -	- - -	1 29=	
West Ham	a) 10/7	PH	- - -	1 1 -	1 - 2	5 10=
	b) 10/7	PH	2 - -	- 1 -	- - -	3 18=
	c) 11/7	S	2 1 -	- - -	- - -	3 18=
	d) 11/7	R	- - -	- - 2	- - -	2 22=
Brixton	10, 11, 12/7	R + S	3 3 2	- 3 -	1 3 5	20 2
	15/7	R	2 - -	- 3 -	1 - 5	11 5
Southwark	10/7	R + S	1 - -	- 2 -	1 - -	4 13=
Penge	10/7	R + S	1 - 1	- - -	1 1 -	4 13=
Lewisham	10/7	PH + S	1 - -	1 1 -	- - -	3 18=
Harlesden	11/7	S	- - -	- 2 -	- - -	2 22=
Bexley Heath	11/7	PH	1 - -	1 - -	- - -	2 22=
Woolwich	9/7	S	1 - -	1 1 -	- - -	3 18=
Golders Green	11/7	S	- - -	- 1 -	- - -	1 29=
Chiswick	10/7	S	1 1 -	- - -	- - -	2 22=
	10/7	PH	- - -	1 1 -	- - -	2 22=
Hounslow	10/7	S	2 2 -	- 1 -	- - -	5 10=
Tooting	9/7	S	3 3 -	- - -	- - -	6 9
Battersea	9/7					
	10/7					
	11/7	R+S+PH	2 2 -	1 2 1	1 - 1	9 7=
	12/7					
13/7						
Acton	10/7	R + S	3 2 -	- - -	- - -	5 10=
Southall	3/7	R+S+PH	2 - 2	1 3 3	1 4 5	23 1
	10, 15, 16/7	R + S	1 - -	- 3 3	- - -	4 13=
Wood Green	7, 8/7	S	3 3 2	1 3 -	- - -	12 4
Croydon	10, 11/7	S + PH	- - -	- - -	1 - -	1 29=
Sutton	11/7	S	1 1 -	- - -	- - -	2 22=

RANK ORDER OF 'INCIDENTS' BY RIOT SEVERITY

- 1 Southall 3/7
- 2 Brixton 10-12/7
- 3 Hackney
- 4 Wood Green
- 5 Brixton 15/7
- 6 Notting Hill 10-13/7
- 7- Battersea, Walthamstow
- 9 Tooting
- 10- West Ham (a), Hounslow, Acton
- 13- Fulham, Chingford, Southwark, Penge, Southall 15, 16/7
- 18- West Ham (b), West Ham (c), Lewisham, Woolwich
- 22- Notting Hill 19/7, West Ham (d), Harlesden, Bexley Heath,
Chiswick (a), Chiswick (b), Sutton
- 29- Limehouse, Chigwell, Dagenham, Golders Green, Croydon.

light on the nature of society as a whole. Even those incidents which are ostensibly very similar to these 'looting sprees' may contain complex and diverse behaviour patterns, as the case histories of Battersea and Wood Green revealed.

It is not easy to weigh the spectacle of 'the crowd' against the concept of 'disorder'. These two facets of seriousness are not necessarily synonymous. The manner in which a normal state of 'order' did not obtain in one part of Notting Hill for a sustained period of several days obviously represented a serious incident of some kind, but lacked the drama of the short spells of violence seen in other parts of London.

Notwithstanding these problems surrounding the derivation of the index, two patterns in particular emerge from the London rioting when classified by severity. The ethnic breakdown of the crowds involved in the disorders is closely related to their seriousness. A positive correlation of $r_s=0.73$ between the proportion of those arrested that were non-white and 'riot seriousness' and of 0.67 between the proportion of those arrested that were 'Afro-Caribbean' and riot seriousness contradict notions of the rioting as a 'multi-ethnic' form of behaviour.

There were very many white people arrested in London in the July rioting (five hundred and three,48 per cent of the total), they formed the largest single 'ethnic group' in the Home Office data, but these people tended to be arrested in the most minor incidents. In those cases where the collapse of public order was most complete, in Brixton, in Hackney, in Wood Green and in Southall, the proportion of those arrested that were white is at its lowest and the involvement of white people at these locations is peripheral to the main focus of the riot itself (see Table 4.23c). In Brixton and in Hackney, white involvement,

with some exceptions, was basically confined to looting. In Wood Green, white involvement tended to concentrate mostly on the second day of less violent, more voyeuristic disorder. Even in acknowledging the role played by white racists in their 'invasion' of Southall, the riot as a form of collective behaviour was an expression of the local Asian community.

It is important to stress that no notions of either cause or allocation of guilt are implicit in such analysis. It is merely important to stress that the most serious rioting was the historical property of 'Afro-Caribbean' and 'Asian' people in London.

Riot seriousness was also clearly related to the location of disorder. The stage which provided a 'platform' for riot invariably consisted of permutations from three basic 'sets'; residential areas, retail property and public houses. The eleven case histories suggest that the most intense rioting often occurred in the residential areas, whilst the incidents that were exaggerated in media coverage seemed often connected with either drunken behaviour or public houses. Using a Kruskal Wallis analysis of variance it was possible to demonstrate that these differences were statistically significant for the whole of London. Each 'stage set component' (residential, retail, public house) was paired with the respective seriousness 'score', producing forty-seven pairs spread across the thirty-three incidents of disorder. Some locations (eg Battersea) provided complex 'stages' characterised by all three 'stage set components'; others (eg Wood Green) provided a much more homogeneous setting. The difference between the three groupings is marked, with the rioting in residential areas clearly more serious than that in shopping centres, which in turn was more serious than that connected with public houses ($H=7.31$ significant at 0.05 rejection level). When matched with the spatially concentrated conflict and the

highly localised residential pattern seen in most of the more serious disturbances, this trend supports the notion that of a series of almost 'parochial' disorders.

It was noted in the last chapter that the arrest totals of different locations served as a poor indicator of the intensity of a riot because the situations in which arrest is least difficult are not necessarily those of serious riot. Nevertheless, there is obviously going to be a loose relation between the two variables and this is indicated by a positive correlation of 0.52. However it is interesting to note that the charge of VAP, which was taken as a paradigmatic representation of violent conflict, correlates much more closely. There is a positive correlation of 0.79 between the total of VAP arrests and riot seriousness. This does not necessarily imply any important causal relationship but does suggest that this particular charge may be used in part as a reasonable indicator of the intensity of disorder.

The index of riot severity belies the clean cut certainty of those 'lists of riots' so favoured by historians and sociologists alike. In places like Sutton and Golders Green the small fights that were sometimes classified as serious disorder can be dismissed as fictitious insurrections but even in other locations no straightforward activity that can be labelled as 'rioting' can be traced.

Because it highlights the imbroglious form of disorder, the notion of riot seriousness is useful but only in a very restricted analytical sense. The term is defined purely by a set of negative differences within the language as a whole, 'what it is not' as much as 'what it is'. It is meaningful only as a state of abnormality, a departure from the day-to-day routine of everyday life. It is clear from the very varied reactions throughout London that there are very localised notions

of what constitutes such a routine. The concept of riot seriousness embraces both the relative distance from a perceived normal order as well as an objective evaluation of social states. Any measure of riot seriousness can at best quantify the latter, and then only in a one dimensional format. Such a measure is again one important piece in the descriptive mosaic that serves as an image of the 1981 riots, and such a mosaic may be evocative, powerful, even emancipatory but never contains immanent truths.

b) Riot Intensity and Ethnicity in the MPD 11

i) Offence categories, VAP v Theft:

One trend that emerged in Chapter Three was the overrepresentation of the West Indian group in 'Looting' and 'Theft' offence categories in the data for London as a whole. The ambiguity surrounding this relationship can be largely dispelled by comparing this overall relationship with the breakdown of the 'Theft' category in the eleven locations (see Table 4.24). In the MPD 11 the black component accounts for 56 per cent of all 'Theft' arrest charges compared with 46 per cent of all arrests, matching the pattern for the whole of London (54 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively). However, when this relationship is examined for each location in the MPD 11, in no fewer than seven of the nine instances in which there were theft arrests the proportion of those arrests that were of black people is smaller than proportion of black arrests in the total. If anything, rather than a simple overrepresentation of blacks in this offence category, the reverse is the case. The trend for the whole of London is produced by a concentration of blacks in those locations where most looting occurred.

Emphasising once again the concept of riot seriousness as abstract

Table 4.24

Involvement in 'looting' offences in MPD 11

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% black</u>	<u>Total Theft</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% black</u>
	<u>arrests</u>	<u>black</u>			<u>black</u>	
Southall	61	4	7	1	0	0
Wood Green	71	42	59	26	18	69
Brixton	257	161	63	135	81	60
Hackney	107	75	70	21	13	62
Battersea	79	24	30	9	1	11
Tooting	41	10	24	11	2	18
West Ham	49	16	33	1	0	0
Croydon	45	4	9	1	0	0
Penge	42	22	52	0	0	-
Notting Hill	28	12	43	2	1	50
Walthamstow	29	1	3	0	0	-

Table 4.25

Involvement in conflict with the police(VAP) in MPD 11

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% black</u>	<u>Total VAP</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% black</u>
	<u>arrests</u>	<u>black</u>			<u>black</u>	
Southall	61	4	7	21	2	10
Wood Green	71	42	59	5	4	80
Brixton	257	161	63	19	15	78
Hackney	107	75	70	23	18	78
Battersea	79	24	30	14	12	86
Tooting	41	10	24	6	2	33
West Ham	49	16	33	7	4	57
Croydon	45	4	9	2	0	0
Penge	42	22	52	1	0	0
Notting Hill	28	12	43	12	6	50
Walthamstow	29	1	3	9	0	0

distance from a state of public order, and the criminological conception of looting in terms of opportunity based crime rates, these figures reinforce hypotheses already put forward. Black involvement and riot seriousness are closely related. Collapse of public order creates an ideal crime environment for opportunistic action. Therefore it is inevitable that if looting is most often a secondary activity to violent conflict, determined principally by opportunity, peripheral to the central action, then those who take advantage of this environment will reflect the ethnic make up of the crowd at the scene of disorder (or adjacent to it). Yet this is only partly the case in the MPD 11; the most serious disorders involved a disproportionate number of black people and the looters were predominantly black, reflecting this opportunistic advantage. Nevertheless, this predominance is not as great as expected. The fact that in seven of the nine locations where there were theft arrests the black component was, relative to each incident as a whole, underrepresented, again supports the contention that black involvement was more concerned with violent confrontation with the police than material accumulation of plunder.

A much more emphatic and equally important pattern emerges when the offence category of VAP is examined in the same way (see Table 4.25). The black component is overrepresented in the VAP offence category in eight out of the eleven locations, a pattern that is significantly at a rejection level of 8 per cent (binomial test). This is the case even in locations such as Battersea, Tooting and West Ham where the black group accounts for only a small proportion of total arrests. If the VAP offence is an effective indicator of the most serious physical conflict, and examination of magistrates' courts records and the disproportionate link with riot intensity would suggest that it is, then this overrepresentation again indicates that even where the crowd on the streets was preeminently white and not so violent, conflict with the

police was dominated by black groups. The Asian pattern of arrests almost entirely absent from the 'theft' category (only four Asian 'theft' arrests in the whole of London) but accounting for 14 per cent of the VAP arrests, serves to highlight the underrepresentation of the white group in the latter category, accounting for only 30 per cent of VAP arrests compared with 41 per cent of all arrests in the MPD 11. Moreover, whereas almost all the black and Asian charges for VAP were associated with conflict with the police (96 per cent of those traced for the former, 82 per cent for the latter) 41 per cent of the white VAP charges traced are associated with attacks on Asians in Walthamstow, Southall and West Ham.

One further method of illustrating this pattern can be derived from a data set that was again accessed from the Home Office computer files, but refined existing information for the six locations with most arrests by obtaining a three way breakdown of offence, residence and partial ethnic coding for this group. (All other tabulations were based on two-way breakdowns. The ethnic breakdown in this case was into white and non-white offenders).

The crudity of the residential divisions in the data set are again a major drawback. For the six incidents taken together there is again white underrepresentation in the VAP offence, the white ethnic component accounting for 24 per cent of the VAP arrests compared with 40 per cent of total arrests but this is not accompanied by any major residential difference between the two groups (see Table 4.26). Fifty nine per cent of white VAP arrests came from the 'home' and 'near' residential classes compared with 54 per cent of the non-white. There appears to be a major concentration of the white component in the 'near' rather than the 'home' residential classification and a slight concentration of non-whites in the 'home' grouping, but because the division between the two

Table 4.26 Offence X Residence X Ethnicity for six locations in London

	Home		Near		Town		County		Further		Total
	White	Non-white	W	ML-W	W	ML-W	W	N-W	W	ML-W	
Brixton											
VAP	0	2	3	4	2	5	0	1	0	2	19
Theft	8	14	10	32	25	31	1	5	3	3	132
Battersea											
VAP	1	5	1	1	0	3	0	2	0	1	14
Theft	3	1	2	0	1	2					9
Hackney											
VAP	1	4	3	4	1	7	0	3			23
Theft	1	4	6	6	1	2	0	1			21
Roaring											
VAP	2	2	1	0	1	0					6
Theft	6	1	1	1	2	0					11

Table 4.26(cont)

	H	N	T	C	F	Total
Wood Green						
VAP	1	1	0	1	0	4
Theft	1	7	1	10	3	3
Southall						
VAP	2	0	2	10	1	4
Theft	0	0	0	1	0	1

residential classes is inconsistent it was not possible to discover whether or not this difference was significant. However, the most interesting pattern that emerges from this data is the contrast between the white and non-white residence patterns for 'theft' arrests (significant at 5 per cent rejection level in a binomial test), which again supports the image of looting carried out by a local and opportunistic black element and a white crowd, the majority of whom had travelled some distance to the scene of the disturbance. The latter trend does not necessarily imply that this journey had been made with explicit intention to loot but it does highlight the different 'profiles' of white and black involvement in rioting.

In summary, it is possible to identify the offence categories of 'Theft' and VAP as epitomising two very different forms of riot activity. The latter is slightly ambiguous as it picks up those involved with all the most serious violent behaviour, although those VAP charges not related to conflict with the police arose only in Walthamstow, Southall and West Ham and came mostly from the 1C1, white ethnic group. In almost all disorders, blacks are disproportionately involved in those activities that relate to violent clashes with the police and almost invariably the majority lived very close to the centre of the disturbance. Their involvement in looting tends to reflect the extent of the breakdown of public order generally, and whilst there is overrepresentation for London as a whole, this occurred because the most serious disturbances tended to be those in which most black people were involved. Although some question marks hang over the power of the data classification, white involvement in VAP offences tended also to be highly localised, but was much less so for theft offences. Asian involvement was both highly localised and almost exclusively concerned with protest, both peaceful and violent.

ii) Ethnic concentration in the MPD 11

If the disorders were truly 'multi-racial' in nature it might be expected that the data breakdown of all those arrested across the eleven disturbances would either be constant for the MPD 11 (ie a regular proportion of each ethnic group represented in each location or, more realistically, the concentration of ethnic groups on various locations would be approximately equal. One way of measuring this pattern is to compare the proportion of arrests of each ethnic group at a single location with the proportion of each in the total number of arrests, repeating the exercise for all eleven locations. In this way it is possible to calculate an index of concentration, measuring the relative concentration of each ethnic group (on a scale from 0 for maximum dispersal across the eleven locations to 100 for maximum concentration). The results of such a calculation, shown in Table 4.27, highlight the marked differences in this measure. The singularly high figure for the Asian group is accounted for by the concentration of 80 per cent of Asian arrests in Southall and Walthamstow. The black figure is higher than the white principally because of major overrepresentation in Wood Green, Brixton and Hackney. When these figures are considered in the light of evidence already examined concerning both riot intensity and offence type variation in ethnic background, they lend some support to the conception of a series of breakdowns of public order which tend to be closely related to non-white ethnic groups but are seized on opportunistically by all within the area at the time. It is this opportunism that is perhaps largely responsible for the relatively constant level of white contribution to the arrest statistics.

Table 4.27

Index of concentration/dissimilarity MPD 11 by ethnic groups

On a scale from 0 (minimum concentration) to 100 (maximum concentration):

'White' arrests	17.27
'Black' arrests	22.43
'Asian' arrests	71.8

Although realistic explanation must be placed in historical context, the rioting in 1981 has burgeoned forth in time, lives on in a set of cultural accounts of the past that underwrite our understanding of the present. This is the 'public life' of a 'parcel of history' that was referred to in the last chapter, the manner in which a series of events is coloured by contemporary insight, confusing understanding. Two controversies stem from this problematic distinction between the riots as part of the cultural present and the 'reality' of the riots as part of the historical past.

One, an almost stillborn debate, concerns the actual or supposed unity of the London rioting as an 'object' for analysis. That the disorders of July 1981 in Britain are today generally classified together in one rhetorical pigeon-hole is obviously no guarantee that they were produced by the repetition of a consistent set of causal processes across a variety of locations, indeed in absolute terms this is very unlikely to be the case. Yet defining any social entity is no more than an exercise in generalisation, placing it in the context of differences from, and similarities to, other events and processes. In this sense, treatment of the London rioting as a single explicandum is no more and no less problematic than analysis of any other diffuse historical phenomenon, and it is only through empirical work that the degree of this unity can be evaluated.

A more interesting and irresolvable debate concerns the relationship between public perception of events and the actions of groups of people. Publicity stemming from a particular instance of a problem may focus attention on similar, related events, creating the false impression of a sudden increase in the incidence of such a problem. Thus, in late 1985,

a series of gruesome court cases connected with mistreatment or murder of infants in Britain resulted in an observable increase in press coverage of the apparent increase in child abuse. Whether such an alarming trend actually existed or whether instead the cases were coincidental or produced by changes in detecting child abuse was rarely discussed. This 'creation' of a new 'social problem' is the phenomenon that Stan Cohen in a study of Mods and Rockers in 1960s Britain (1972) described as a 'moral panic', and his work has since been taken as paradigmatic by a great many studies that incorporate widely differing political stances, varying from Marsh's social psychological study of football hooliganism (1978) to Hall et al's structuralist sociology of the British mugging 'problem' in the 1970s (1978). Crucially, the success of such work hinges on an ability to identify the manner in which 'public knowledge' (common perception) is generated, which structures discussion of, and reaction to, the moral panic. This is a particularly problematic task because the concept of public knowledge is so nebulous (Keith, 1984) and the links between belief and action in this context so intangible.

In an important sense personality itself is no more than a story we tell ourselves. For the psychoanalyst Oliver Sacks,

"It might be said that each of us conducts and lives a 'narrative' and that this narrative is us, our identities." (1985)

It is this identity that determines interpretation of the unwelt (lifeworld). Each new experience is 'digested' by mental sets that are social not natural in origin. Each new experience must be fitted into this conceptual framework that we may make a sense out of past and present that will lend coherence to life. This was as much Hobbes' point in the 17th century when he stated that

"no action of a man can be said to be without deliberation, though never so sudden, because it is supposed he had time to deliberate all the precedent time of his life" (1642)

as it is that of Berger and Luckmann in the 20th century when they point out that

"All social reality is precarious. All societies are constructions in the face of chaos" (1966,p121).

The inevitable mismatch between reality and the historical account will be structured by this inescapable subjectivity of the individual view of the world, a bias that contains whole sets of tacit normative principles and evaluative systems, a bias that is 'ideological' in the loosest and the most literal senses of the word. The concept of public knowledge is most usefully seen as just one of the many influences that shape such individual perception. It refers to the way in which a social event or process is portrayed in those impersonal sources of information that are available to society as a whole; in literature, in the media and by the judicial, executive and legislative arms of the state.

In both the continental structuralist tradition (eg Barthes,1967, 1973; Eco,1979) and the related British field of 'cultural studies' (Williams, 1981; CCCS,1982; Glasgow University Media Group,1985) a central aim has been to expose the latent (ideological) content of various 'social constructions of reality' implicit in public knowledge. Methodologically, this process relies on steering a careful course between analytical acuity and unwarranted speculation in order to tease out the hidden reference.

To take just one relevant example: Errol Lawrence's study of 'The Roots of Racism' can be seen at its best when demonstrating that the notion in popular discourse, so common in 1981, that bad parenting causes riots,

"performs a number of different but related ideological tasks quite apart from its dubious explanatory power"(1982,p54)

relating to the supervision of young people and the debate surrounding police policy. He is less convincing when trying to tie the social

category 'youth' to the capitalist division of labour (1982,p55). There comes a point when the submerged reference must be considered drowned.

This again raises the distinction between cause and effect. It is quite possible to produce a convincing exposition of 'media ideology', whether it is the nationalism of the BBC (Glasgow University Media Group,1985) or the racism of the tabloid and 'serious' press (Hall et al,1978), but it is neither easy to evaluate the credibility of such coding (does anybody believe Daily Mail editorials?) nor always possible to connect the exposed ideology with a plausible mechanism that explains its deployment. The former problem is self-evident, the latter relates to the problems of functionalism covered in Chapter Two. Just as Sivanandan powerfully demonstrates that 'ethnicity' may divide black people but cannot justify his claim that it is 'the state's tool' for so doing, the CCCS (1982 passim) may astutely expose the effect of racist reporting in the press on the creation of black stereotypes in public knowledge but are less than convincing when attributing responsibility for this process to those who benefit most from it, a collective they sloppily identify as 'the power bloc'. The perennial trap of functionalism persists; effects are exposed, causes assumed.

This confusion of cultural product and historical reality arises in the case of the British rioting in 1981 because media portrayal was quite clearly instrumental both in the creation of a 'moral panic' so similar to the phenomenon identified by Cohen, and in endowing the different disorders with a unity that was not necessarily present. The evidence for the existence of a moral panic is particularly persuasive. There was certainly a process akin to that cited by Knopf in relation to the US riots of the 1960s when

"The continued media use of the term ['riot'] contributes to an emotionally charged climate in which the public tends to view every event as an 'incident', every incident as a 'disturbance' and every disturbance as 'a riot'."

As the analysis of riot seriousness has already demonstrated there were instances of this process occurring during the summer of 1981. Whether or not it was possible to distinguish without difficulty between genuine riots and mere manifestations of copycat hooliganism is a different matter, not to be confused with this process. Nor is it the purpose of this section to re-examine the ideological basis for the creation of the media images of rioting, only to recognise their significance. Media portrayal of 'the rioter' fits perfectly Cohen's definition of the folk-devil, a symbolic threat to establishment society. Crucially, the riot was always implicitly, and at times explicitly, classified as an expression of irrational behaviour, "A wave of horror" (Daily Mail, 9 July 1981), a contagion that was spreading through "Burning Britain" (Sun, 6 July 1981). The similarity between such barely hidden polemic and some of the assumptions made in academic treatment of disorder has already been observed in Chapter One and elsewhere (Keith, 1986). As part of such a bestial crowd, the rioter as irrational folk-devil was indisputably the object of the easy manipulation implied by headlines such as, "SEARCH FOR MASKED MEN" (Daily Mail, 7 July 1981), "EXTREMISTS MASTER PLAN FOR CHAOS" (Daily Mail, 10 July 1981) and "PLAYGROUND RENT A RIOT" (Sun, 7 July 1981). Such images are, in their deployment, clearly metonymic; single items which represent a wider, concomitant set of values, rationalisations and conceptions. Nevertheless, the distorted mirror of media reportage provides an easy target for attack and these latent meanings have already been analysed elsewhere (CCCS, 1982; Murdock, 1984; Burgess, 1985), the most interesting question remains to what extent did this moral panic affect the actions of people.

The most crude formulation of possible influences stemmed from the

related debates on the effects of violence on television. Clutterbuck claimed that "the thirty-eight separate riots" which followed the news coverage of 3rd July rioting in Liverpool and Southall,

"can have no possible explanation other than the copycat phenomenon" (1982).

The notion that the sight of violence prompts young people to 'go forth and imitate' lacks a superficial credibility, the more so given Tumber's claim that most 'rioters' did not even find out about rioting through television or press (1982). Nevertheless, such an argument is as difficult to falsify as it is to substantiate, as the inconclusive, if substantial, literature on the subject would imply.

More convincing evidence is available to describe the effect of common conceptions of the rioting on the behaviour of other agencies and individuals. Most notable among these groups were the police. Murdock (1984) has suggested that news coverage of the early rioting may have,

"primed them [the police] to expect trouble in major cities and strengthened their resolve to crack down on it early by stepping up their activities in inner city areas."

Two factors compromise such generalisation. One is that there was no single police reaction in London at least to the rioting in Liverpool and Southall. Policy over the early period of July in relation to possible 'cracking down' was principally formulated at the level of Chief Superintendents in charge of individual stations and Commanders in charge of London's twenty-four police districts. There were clear variations in police reaction throughout London, whilst the meaning of the riots for 'streetline constables' was not necessarily the same as that for senior police officers. Moreover, a second problem stems from the impossibility of quantifying the relative importance of 'public knowledge' and private or professional experience in forming police interpretation of the 'Toxteth' and Southall disorders. A factor rarely acknowledged by cultural studies is that for any one event the

significance of the reconstruction of the past as a public event is, a priori, in inverse proportion to the level of relevant experience (see diagram 4.1). Fleet Street imagery is most likely to be taken literally on issues about which the reader knows nothing at all. In this sense it would seem probable that Murdock exaggerates the influence of media reportage on the police. What is apparent from police action is a series of implicit conceptions of conflict in London that can be more easily related to the local histories of the areas concerned than to public knowledge of rioting. The reality of 'disorder' at several locations in London supports this point.

In Lewisham in the 1970s there had been a rapid deterioration in relations between the police and the black community which was closely related to the use of the SPG in the area on several occasions for operations of 'saturation policing' (see Hain, 1979; Scarman, 1981) and ostensible police 'protection' of National Front marches. One march had resulted in serious disorder in 1977. Tension in the borough was particularly high in the spring of 1981 because of the local deaths of thirteen young black kids in the New Cross fire. According to several lists of the 1981 riots (see Appendix I), including those of the Home Office and the Commissioner, Lewisham was one of the 'places' in London that experienced 'rioting' in the summer of 1981. Yet whilst there were some isolated, minor clashes between very small groups of black people and the police, with eighteen arrests made, there was no serious collapse of public order. Indeed, Asquith Gibbs, head of Lewisham Council for Community Relations, went so far as to make a public statement congratulating Commander J Smith of P District for the success of community policing by home beat officers at this time in the borough. There was no riot but there had been anticipation of a riot by the local police, and they had prepared their force accordingly, cancelling leave and drawing up contingency plans for disorder.

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF 'THE RIOTS' AS A 'PUBLIC EVENT'

(For alternative interpretations see

Joshua and Wallace 1983, Murdock 1984, Burgess 1985)

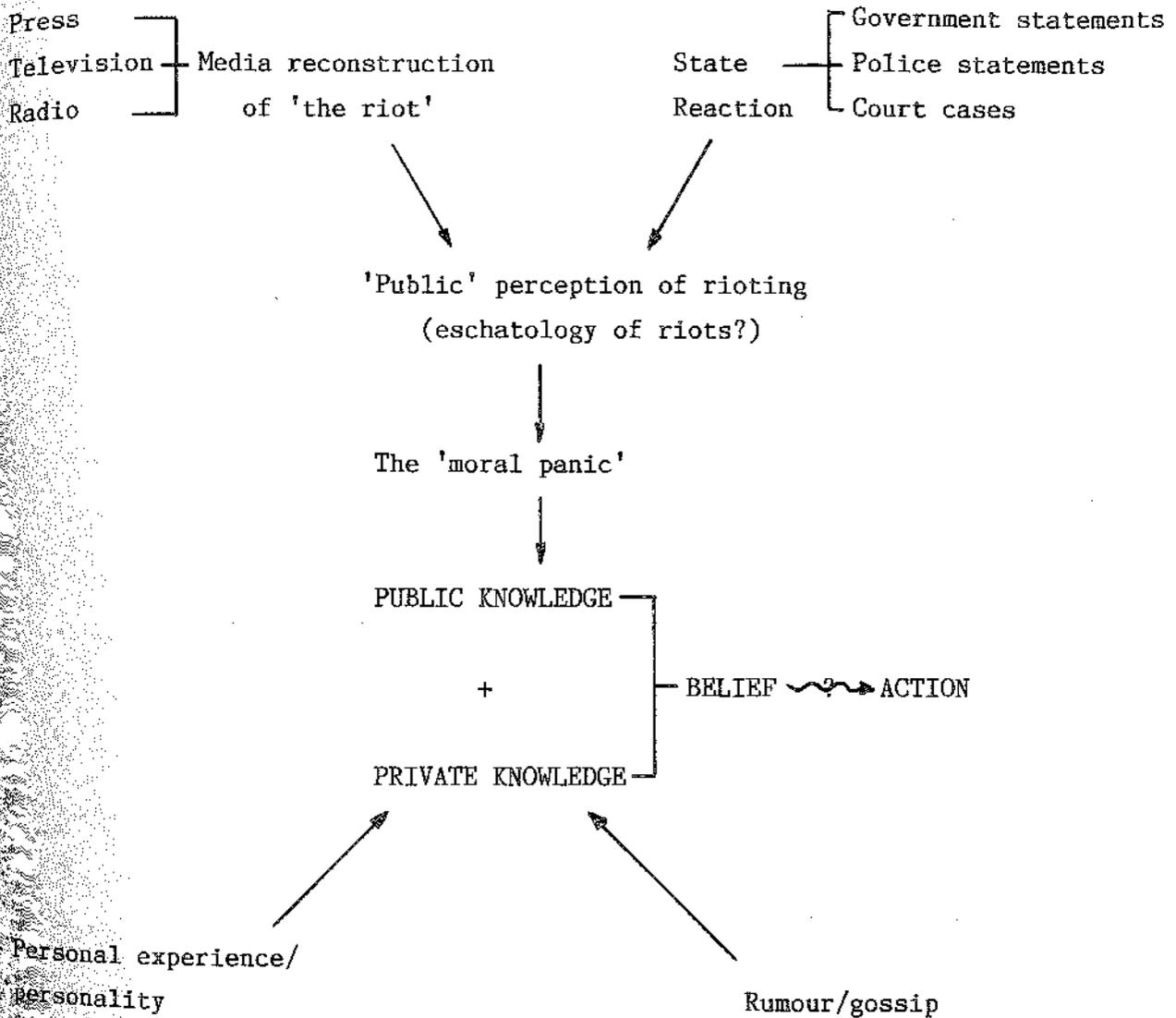


Diagram 4.1

The comparative importance of the reconstruction of the riot as a public event and introspection/personal experience will always remain impossible to assess. Similarly, beliefs are not always susceptible to generalisation, particularly when they are beliefs of the past, as opposed to hindsight rationalisations. Only the actions that flow from this process can be observed, the link between belief and action is always contingent, that between action and 'public knowledge' always crucial but nebulous.

Similar action has already been described in the case of Croydon. Again the local history and the contemporary context suggested possible trouble and the police responded with a symbolic and ostentatious presence in the town centre. In other parts of London such as Dalston, Wood Green, Battersea and Fulham, numerous shopkeepers reported that they had been told by their local police constable that disorder was expected. It was not always possible to find out from the relevant police officers whether such warnings arose from personal initiative and individual interpretations of the phenomenon of rioting, or whether they were the result of instructions from senior officers. Certainly there is evidence of the latter in Walthamstow where senior police asked Unigate dairies not to deliver milk from the 10th to 12th July, and in Hackney where local shops were 'advised' to shut early on the Saturday afternoon of the same weekend. It is not easy to evaluate such forward planning by the police. For the sympathetic, pre-emptive 'heavy' policing was always justified. Either police presence was needed where there was disorder or accredited with preventing trouble if there was not. Several local papers in areas of London that were 'quiet' congratulated senior officers in this way. Equally, for those more antipathetic, the police were blamed for those disorders that did occur.

One unavoidable effect of this process is that the Home Office list of "major incidents of public disorder" is, in part, as much a police index of London's trouble spots as a catalogue of locations of 'riots'. This list in turn reproduces and reinforces common classification of parts of London; a form of criminalisation by area which may act cumulatively as the 'hot spot' is subjected to the sort of 'intensive' policing that may itself result in a deterioration of police/community relations locally. Paradigmatically, beliefs cause action, regardless of their accuracy. This stigmatisation of space was clearly manifested in the complaint of two shopkeepers in Lewisham who described to me how

after the alleged 'rioting' in their area their insurance had been doubled because they were now considered a particularly high risk.

Although the precise influence of 'public knowledge' is again difficult to discern, the interpretation of rioting shared by many London residents is also implied by their actions in July 1981. Again the evidence is scarce but persuasive. The local press of every single London borough reported rumours of potential rioting in early July. Such rumours take on the gloss of percipience on those occasions when they were justified by ensuing disorder, yet had more tangible and consistent manifestations in the behaviour of shopkeepers across London. In outer London boroughs such as Sutton and Merton shop windows were boarded up as 'the fire' appeared to spread outwards into suburbia. In the spirit of the welter of metaphoric contagion (Murdock, 1984) several areas of inner London which witnessed few, if any, disorders, prepared for the onslaught. The East London Advertiser described how "The East End waited its turn for the riots which had swept the rest of London." (17 July 1981) Under a headline "READY FOR RIOTS - FACE OF EAST END IN 1981" the paper showed pictures of shopkeepers covering glass with wood, and described how

"the borough streets resembled a battle torn war zone as the boards went up on Friday" as "the word went round that Tower Hamlets was next on the rioter's target list."

Notwithstanding the purple prose of the journalist, many shopkeepers confirmed that they had taken such preventative action, not only in Brick Lane, which has a history of racial violence, but also in other parts of the borough. In South London, Woolwich, Greenwich, Southwark and Wandsworth, all reported a similar phenomenon, whilst the reaction of residents of West Ham has already been described. It was not only the shopkeepers that submitted to this wave of anticipation; most boroughs reported instances of fetes and fairs being cancelled and a major jazz festival was later cancelled. It would seem reasonable to

attribute such ubiquitous precautionary action at least partly to the imagery used in the reconstruction of the rioting as a public event, as part of public knowledge. Moreover it would be naive to assume that such actions did not in turn have any effect on the behaviour of other residents in these areas. An opinion poll published in The Sun on 10 July 1981 was headlined, "SUN POLL SHOWS ALL BRITAIN FEARS RIOTS WILL SPREAD", claiming that 40 per cent of all people living in British city centres thought they would see rioting on their own streets. Whether press reportage created or reflected such expectation is not as important as the behaviour that may have resulted from it.

The events in Acton provide a case in point. Many shop windows in the area had been boarded up and, as elsewhere, rumours of possible trouble were rife and the shops had emptied early on the Friday night (10 July 1981). One informant I spoke to in December 1981 claimed to have been involved in the events which the Acton Gazette (16 July 1981) was later to label, "A MOB'S RIOT ... A SAD DAY FOR THE TOWN." A celebration at Hutchies, a private taxi firm, was interrupted when, as the pubs were closing, a group of youths tried to 'gatecrash' the party but were refused admission. Hutchies is near the busy junction of Churchfield Road and Acton High Street and this rumpus attracted other groups who were milling around the area at the time. When one drunken youth smashed the window of Galleon Wines in Churchfield Road several others followed suit and eleven shops were looted, including a 'hi-fi' store and a kebab house which had its till stolen. The whole 'riot' took less than half an hour. It would be facetious to suggest that expectation can be considered the sole cause of disorder in Acton but as I was told, in a High Street that was waiting for trouble, once one window was smashed, tearing down the boards and smashing a few others "seemed like the right thing to do at the time."

In fact the most complete plagiarists, the true 'copycats' of 1981 were the shopkeepers of London. Using the dramaturgical metaphor Goffmann has consistently shown (1968,1972) how much social behaviour corresponds to a form of social protocol, conditioned by time and place. In this sense, when the pubs closed on the Friday and Saturday nights of 10th/11th July 1981, the clientele in very many parts of London found themselves almost literally thrown onto streets that were like stage sets designed for disorder. That putative 'riots' sometimes developed from the usual weekend late night clashes cannot be entirely dissociated from such stage design, even if the actions of the designers were never causally sufficient to induce a disturbance.

Through examining, albeit briefly, the relationship between media portrayal, belief and action it is possible to throw some light on the second question that relates to classification of the London riots of 1981 as part of a moral panic, namely 'To what extent were the summer riots of '81 a media creation?' There is certainly an element of the shaggy dog story involved in enumerating all the London disorders. No two lists agree on how many 'riots' there were or even where they occurred. Some press reported incidents of 'riot' were exaggerated, others were more symptomatic of police anticipation of trouble than examples of conflict on the streets. Significantly, this anticipation always involved potential conflict with black people. Both trends highlight problems of defining a riot as much as detract from the validity of such lists. Although it is not easy to draw out reality from myth, the reconstruction of the rioting as a public event was more a systematic distortion than creation of a 'new' social phenomenon. The forms of collective behaviour that were seen in the summer of 1981 were not new to the streets of London, not novel even in the recent past. They had previously, and have subsequently, been under-reported in national media coverage. Nevertheless, the rioting represented both a

qualitative and quantitative scale of seriousness of disorder that had not been seen in the preceding twenty years and, notwithstanding events of 1985 in Tottenham, Brixton and Handsworth, has not been seen since. In spite of this qualitative change in the nature of disorder, the seriousness of the 1981 rioting was often exaggerated. As John Clare of the BBC stated (1984), the worst rioting in London, that of Brixton in April 1981, was nowhere near as serious as many of the riots he had witnessed in Ulster throughout the 1970s. The social significance of popular violent conflict on the streets of London is not diminished by acknowledging that violent reality was not quite up to melodramatic insurrection. It is instead the case that adjectival exhaustion might blur the difference between the incidents of 1981 and 1985, devalue the escalation of violence that these individual riots later embodied.

In some instances what was seen on the streets of London was no more than the normal weekend outbreaks of drunken aggression and in other locations the seeds of Saturday night trouble were placed on a stage, a stage with a quite explicitly communicative scene and a line of prompters in the wings. These were not the mythical conspirators, the Moscow agents, that The Standard talked of but the local gossipmongers and rumour-hawkers who constructed folk discussion in the metaphor of contagion, and to a man (or woman) 'knew' that trouble was coming. That the response of assorted potential trouble spots was non-existent in so many parts of London that were so pump primed is ironically one of the most powerful arguments against the irrationality of collective violence.

There can be few more surreal images than that of the young black man in Croydon 'commuting to riot' with a milk bottle in one pocket and a Tupperware tub of petrol in the other, never reaching a destination where nothing happened, a destination that succumbed to the triumph of

'common sense' over introspection. Yet such a scene was the echo of very real trauma. On its own, such a scene is piquant; beside the fire bombs of Brixton it is grotesque.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Tat tvam asi, that which cannot be said?

The notion, implicit in the positivist paradigm, that in studies of the social world epistemological certainty could be based on naive empiricism was an illusion and is now widely recognised as such. Data does not sit innocently on a computer file inviting induction and it is as well to establish the conclusions that cannot be drawn from the Home Office statistics before progressing to those that can.

The arrest records provide a link between individuals and actions, no necessary connection exists between the data and mental states of the actors, intentionality is not probed and statements that are essentially semantic, relating to the meaning of behaviour, cannot be based on these records alone. Actions may be manifest, acts remain opaque.

The records also relate to forms of behaviour that took place at a certain time, in a certain 'place': London in July 1981. In order to analyse the data it is essential to make certain assumptions about the way in which this pattern of behaviour deviates from normality, public disorder as abstract distance from a state of order. This involves certain preconceived notions of both 'normality' and the society in which such normality is defined. Similar assumptions are the preconditions of all social analysis but it is important to remember

that they are external to the data.

Related to the second point, and most importantly of all, the data has only descriptive status. Explanation is always a rationalisation of an explicandum and each rationalisation has its own history, unrelated to the data itself. The value of the empirical descriptions is that they can be used to subvert or support explanations, not falsify or verify alleged 'truths'.

That which can

Some of the conceptions that underwrite the explanations of rioting examined in Chapter One can be dismissed outright. The notion that black and white regularly fought together on the streets becomes virtually untenable in the light of the analysis. White involvement in rioting was consistently very different from that of black people in terms of age, residence and, most significantly of all, actual behaviour. At times different 'ethnic groups' may have shared the same streets but, leaving aside instances of 'multi-racial looting', a history of united ethnic insurrection can be rejected.

Similarly, the common sense rationalisation of trouble solely in terms of a 'police/black youth conflict' is equally spurious. Lawrence's (1982,p54) suggestion that the social category 'youth' may hide rhetorical preconceptions or ideologies is nowhere more insidiously supported. In confining the ambit of the conflict to 'the young', those who remain immature and not quite agents of their own destiny, there is an implicit, possibly accidental, relegation of the status of the rioting. The unspoken assumption behind such a move follows the classic Barthes path. People on the streets, 'the rioters', are endowed with a new history. They epitomise the long, traditionally fractious,

socialisation of the adolescent, the riot as part of the twentieth century rites of passage. History is transformed into nature, the natural pains of growing up, albeit that these pains are exacerbated in the immiserated inner city. In benevolence condescension.

The data pattern shows consistently that violent conflict with the police, so common to disorder, was not the province of 'black youth' alone, indeed that the black people that dominated this conflict tended to be older than those involved in other activities at times of riot.

Generalisations that do emerge from the statistics have the status of competing descriptions of the shadows of reality. The 'academic' descriptive classes may be modest but are no less invaluable for being so. Human behaviour does not fit into neat pigeon holes. Two that are consistently useful, in both analysis of London as a whole and in individual histories, are those which distinguish in the residence pattern between 'travellers' and 'locals' and offence groups between 'rioters' and 'looters'. Typically, the 'rioters' were older and more involved with attacks on the police than the 'looters' and in almost all occasions, even when the majority of the crowd were white, were themselves in the main black people. The residential division is blurred by the Home Office classification process but highlights the fact that on those occasions when a large proportion of those arrested were 'travellers' the disturbances were generally less serious and involved relatively young crowds of people. The individual examples of the MPD 11 invariably differ from these 'ideal types' in some respect but in general this pattern was common throughout London and serves well in defining the elusive nature of different disorders.

The moral panic reduces the blurred colours of real life to the stark monochrome of print, silhouettes a subject like rioting against a

'self-evident' notion of society. The 'phenomenon of rioting' was not of itself a simple media creation, a mirage, but individuals drew on both introspection and the mythological qualities of the 'public knowledge' of rioting in rationalising or 'making sense' of the disturbances. The numerous conceptions of 'riots' in turn conditioned the actions of such individuals and set the stage for further disorder, a classical example of the recursive nature of society. People are made by a social world which is built up by the cumulative effect of individual actions over space and time.

There are quite obviously major differences between incidents of public disorder in July 1981 in London as well as trends that are consistently repeated throughout all locations. Whether or not these differences are great enough to prohibit consideration of the disorders as a single phenomenon is, in its absolute form, a sterile question which can be answered only in relative terms. This is so particularly as the unity of individual incidents of disorder seems seriously questioned by the arrest data. If classifications suggest that different sorts of people were concerned with very different sorts of actions in Brixton or Hackney, and they do, then the terms 'the Brixton riot' or 'the Hackney riot' are, like 'the London riots', descriptively meaningful but of restricted analytical use. It is simply not good enough to assume that individual disorders, which are by definition 'abnormal' or 'deviant' forms, must be united by a "commonality of cause". Themes of motivation will run through the crowd, never repeated identically for any two individuals but by their relative strengths defining the nature of specific 'riots'. Explanation must relate to these themes, not to a pathology of rioters, nor to a pathology of any subset of these rioters. It is this thematic diversity that makes explanation so difficult, so contingent on this 'character' of the disorders.

Combining the Home Office statistics with other background information highlights three common facets of behaviour. Firstly, a conflict between the black community as a whole and the Metropolitan Police. Secondly, there was a highly localised, predominantly black, male crowd on the streets prepared to turn this conflict of interest into a conflict of arms. Thirdly a series of processes related to commitment to public order evolved around these initial clashes and transformed the nascent riot into a highly complex behavioural form.

It is this complexity of the end product that prohibits easy rationalisation of this 'type' of collective behaviour. As the riot proceeds and is conjoined with repertoires of behaviour not directly related to the genesis of violent conflict, it becomes progressively more difficult to identify a generic form of activity that could be called rioting. Scenes of disorder appear to converge on one, almost equifinal, product, regardless of whether they are produced by a wrongful arrest in London or a power cut in New York. Rioting is more comprehensible as a state of disorder than a verb of action, one more reason why the rioter/non-rioter dichotomy is so problematic.

This manifest absence of commitment to public order seen in the summer of 1981 immediately links the scenes of violent conflict on the streets of London to other, ostensibly comparable, expressions on the football terraces and the bank holiday beaches of Britain, forms characterised by the age of those involved in delinquent behaviour. The fallacy of attributing the rioting to such problems of 'youth deviance' has already been considered. Yet whilst it would be iniquitous and empirically mistaken to focus on 'delinquency' as central to the main conflict with the police, the 'secondary processes' which determine the evolution of the riot are quite possibly not dissimilar.

To what extent the involvement of 'the young' in such, principally looting, activity depends on mere presence at the breakdown of order, the scene of maximum opportunity, and to what extent it depends on deficient 'normative socialisation' of young people in general cannot be calculated, yet the character of such behaviour casts a light on the so-called 'copycat' violence.

Generally, adolescent deviance is accounted for theoretically by variations on two competing interpretations. To some (eg Willis, 1977) youth subculture challenges the legitimacy of social institutions. To others (eg Marsh, 1978) it merely challenges the efficacy of these institutions as a vehicle to build a 'moral career', a peer group reputation. The difference between these two approaches reflects the distinction between the practical and expressive modes of behaviour (Harré, 1979) already considered in Chapter Two, akin to the distinction made by Habermas between labour and interaction. However it is theorised it is clearly a strain of behaviour that affects principally the young and does not differentiate between black and white. It is a strain of behaviour that flourishes in situations of disorder and can be considered a ubiquitous influence on all incidents of riot. The absurdity of distinguishing between 'credible' and 'copycat' riots is revealed by the fact that such behaviour was present both in Brixton in April 1981 and in Acton the following July. This exposes the precarious state of civil order in particular situations, not the irrationality of those who reject it and come, almost incidentally, into conflict with its custodians, the police force. Nor does it reinforce the myth of the inner city as a lawless frontier of civilisation.

Abstracted, these are processes that raise serious questions about the nature of 'order' in late twentieth century British society, but these are not the same processes as those that underwrite the violent

conflict between the police and a wide cross section of the black community as a whole. In the particular instance the young black man may have been motivated by greed, delinquency, and anti-police feeling but in general these three realms of action are represented by the distinctive patterns that emerge from the Home Office statistics.

It is because the arrest data represent the empirical realisation of these broad trends that they provide a powerful and indispensable source for description of the rioting in London in 1981.

CHAPTER FIVE

UPRISINGS IN CONTEXT : THREE CASE STUDY LOCATIONS

INTRODUCTION

ALL SAINTS ROAD, NOTTING HILL

- a) Background History
- b) Black Power and the Mangrove
- c) The Carnival Clashes, 1975/76
- d) The Development of All Saints Road as a Symbolic Location
- e) Revenge
- f) Transforming All Saints Road : Whitfields's Law
- g) A Successful Solution?
- h) The Lessons of All Saints Road.

RAILTON ROAD, BRIXTON

- 1 BACKGROUND HISTORY
 - a) Police/Black Relations in Brixton
 - b) Locational Background.
- 2 THE FRONT LINE
 - a) Social and Drinking Clubs
 - b) Political Groups
 - c) 'Shepherds' and other Youth Clubs
 - d) 'Crime' on Railton Road.
- 3 THE POLICE VIEW
 - a) 'The Job'
 - b) Tit for Tat : 'Front Line Deviancy'
 - c) Railton Road Patrols.

SANDRINGHAM ROAD, HACKNEY

- 1 BACKGROUND HISTORY
- 2 ROOTS POOL
- 3 CRIME ON SANDRINGHAM ROAD
- 4 THE POLICE VIEW
 - a) Senior Management
 - b) Institutional Complexity
 - c) Junior Officers : Policing without Consent
 - i) The reputation of Sandringham Road
 - ii) The Sandringham Road Patrol : Challenge and Reponse
 - iii) Cowboy Policing?

"The worst, most insidious stereotype, however, is the characterisation of black people as a Problem. You talk about the Race Problem, the Immigration Problem, all sorts of problems. If you are liberal, you say that black people have problems. If you are not, you say they are the problem.

But the members of the new colony have only one real problem. That problem is white people. Racism, of course, is not our problem. It is yours. We simply suffer the effects of your problem."

Salman Rushdie, writing in *New Society*, 9/12/82

INTRODUCTION

Given that the most consistent theme that recurred throughout most riots was the sense of a highly localised conflict between police and the black community, it was decided to examine the small scale, detailed context of disorder in three locations which provided the scenes for some of the most serious clashes in 1981: All Saints Road, Notting Hill; Railton Road, Brixton; and Sandringham Road, Hackney. Inevitably, such a study excludes the specific influences that resulted in white youth and to some extent the Asian community becoming involved in violent disorder. This is not to understate the importance of these influences, this study is not exhaustive, only to suggest that in the 1981 London context they were not quite as significant as the characteristic police/black antagonism that underwrote almost all of the clashes in the '1981 riots in London'.

All three locations are at times referred to as the 'Front Line'. All Saints Road and Railton Road are more well known than Sandringham Road where, thanks to the co-operation of very many people, it was possible to gather the most complete social and historical description. Consequently, this Hackney location is dealt with in greatest detail of all. Conversely, All Saints Road is dealt with relatively briefly because the characters and the places of the local history are well known and much written about; emphasis there is thus placed on events in Notting Hill of lesser renown.

Neither is the emphasis on the local intended to suggest the irrelevance of more general factors in the genesis of disorder. In particular, three universal influences are taken mostly for granted, touched on in passing, because it was considered that other research had

highlighted and explored the following topics as common to the experience of all black communities in Britain, regardless of geographical location and local history.

i) Racism

Britain is a racist society. The most obvious universal feature facing British black people is not only the personal but also the institutionalised racism encountered in every field of everyday life. Racism is thus both flexible ideology and common practice and has underwritten the confrontations between all the sectors of white society and migrant communities for several centuries, not least the confrontations between migrant groups and the British police force (for extensive bibliography of relevant research see Gordon and King, 1984).

ii) Marginalisation and Unemployment : The alternative reality

The New Commonwealth population that mainly migrated to Britain in the post-war era entered the economy in large part in response to specific needs of an economic system and was located in certain specific sites in the economic structure (Peach, 1966, 1968). In this sense there is much power in Miles' caution (1982, 1984) that production relations should not be lost in the purported analysis of race relations, particularly as structural changes in the national economy have marginalised many in the second generation of migrants, Black British people selectively excluded from a post-industrial economy with contracting labour demand. The theoretical class position and consciousness of this group is of great importance to the study and political mobilisation of black communities (Hall et al, 1978; Sivanandan, 1976, 1982; Gilroy, 1981, 1982; Gutsmore, 1977) but is referred to only tangentially in the analysis of the local realisations of this

general set of circumstances.

(iii) Cultural Pathologies and Criminalisation

The notion that black communities are in some way 'problematic' has frequently led to a focus of research interest on those communities themselves rather than the societies in which they found themselves. Lawrence (1982) has analysed the way in which the commonly resultant cultural pathologies of black life contributed to the stereotyping of black communities. One of the most invidious social realisations of this process, related to the process of marginalisation, has been the criminalisation of young black people through the unholy alliance of manufactured images of 'black youth' (Hall et al, 1978; Solomos, 1984) with the self-justification of 'black criminality' built into the charge of 'SUS', although again sociology has not been innocent in the amplification of this labelling (Gutsmore, 1983).

One final consideration must also be taken into account in a background to the three local studies:

(iv) Rioting as a Political Expression

The riots of 1981 were by no means the first or in the broad temporal context an unusual manifestation of social conflict. Not only does Britain have a long history of powerless groups expressing protest in violent disorder (Rudé, 1964; Hobsbawm, 1959), there is also an equally long record of racial violence involving migrant communities (Joshua and Wallace, 1983; Gaskell and Benewick, 1986; May and Cohen, 1974). Again these histories can provide only a general context to the local analysis of this chapter.

a) Background History

Possibly more than any other place in Britain, Notting Hill has witnessed in microcosm the full history of Caribbean settlement in Britain. In the 1950s the area of cheap multi-rental property in North Kensington, close to Portobello Road, became a favoured settlement destination for West Indian migrants. The welcome they received ranged from the pernicious activity of the notorious landlord Rackman, who owned 147 properties in the area, to the steadily increasing number of racist attacks by the local Teddy boys (Fryer, 1984) and the marches of Mosley's fascists in the streets. By the summer of 1958 the attacks were so common that in one week more than thirty were noted by the local police in North Kensington alone. As 'nigger-hunting' reached a peak in the August of that year a Jamaican was shot in the leg and there were several petrol bomb arson attacks on West Indian homes. With racial clashes in Nottingham over the weekend of the 23/24th August, the tension spilled over into serious, but isolated incidents of inter-racial fighting, much exaggerated by the press (Miles, 1984) but including a retaliatory petrol bomb attack on a fascist club by West Indians trying to organise the defence of their own community. These Notting Hill 'race riots' continued to bubble into occasional street clashes for the first half of September, and were echoed in other parts of London, but the incident that was to make an equally lasting impression locally occurred eight months later, when the situation had appeared to calm down. In May 1959 Kelso Cochrane, a West Indian carpenter, was stabbed to death in Notting Hill. No murderer was ever

found and time and again between 1982 and 1986 I was reminded by the people in the area of the case. His death was not and is not forgotten.

The resentment at police treatment before and during the 1958 'riots' and the failure to find Cochrane's killer soured relations between the police and the West Indian community; the overt racism with which migrants were treated by both white public and white police made matters even worse. Pansey Jeffrey, working at the Citizen's Advice Bureau at this time, commented,

"From 1959 to 1961 we at the Citizen's Advice Bureau found it difficult to believe the behaviour of the police which appeared from stories told to us by callers who came to us for advice. Then it began to seem that there must be some substance to these stories."

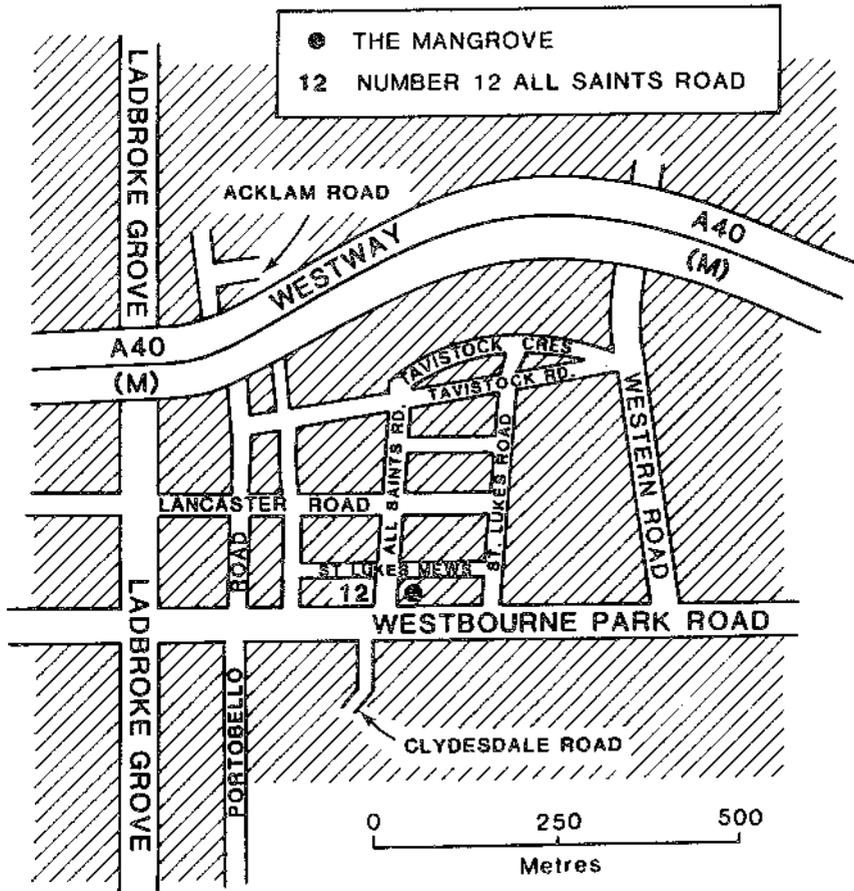
(Evidence submitted to the 1971 House of Commons Select Committee on Police Immigrant Relations, henceforth Evidence 1971).

The situation deteriorated rapidly throughout the 1960s. In 1969 Tony Leander, a local youth worker, took a survey of one hundred and thirty young black people in Notting Hill and found that out of this group sixty per cent felt that relationships between police and black youth were 'very bad' and almost sixty per cent had already been arrested; the most common charges were loitering and obstruction/assault, two of the more subjectively assessed forms of 'criminal' behaviour. He concluded that,

"the expectation of black youths in the area is that they run a high risk of being arrested."

George Clark of the West London Fair Housing Trust said of this period,

"The generality might be taken from the Portobello Road. Between the years 1966 and 1969 the youngsters were really exploring the area and finding their own territories ... One remembers scarcely a day passed without a plea from the black youngsters, 'We are being harassed. We are being moved on. We are being picked up.' Indeed they were picked up, that was not say so, and they were being moved on and they were being harrassed." (Evidence, 1971)



Map 5.1 Notting Hill

Contact with the police came about in four arenas, all structured by the racist treatment of Caribbean migrants generally, all stemming from the group's position in white society. Overcrowded housing encouraged many young black men to leave home when still young and this shiftless, often jobless, population could rely only on shelters like the one at 57 Acklam Road (North Kensington), which inevitably often acted as crucibles of delinquency. Those who had nowhere to go were often in trouble for loitering, those who went somewhere were often in trouble at youth clubs like the Sunspot or the High Street Wimpy bar. Lastly, there were the drinking clubs that similarly provided sites of confrontation. Each of these four arenas placed the police inevitably at odds with West Indian people but also provided a forum for racist behaviour under the guise of law-enforcement, an opportunity that too often was not missed.

b) Black Power and the Mangrove Restaurant

It was in this climate of increasing hostility and in the wake of the contemporary American disorders that the Black Power movement briefly flowered in London. Michael de Freitas (Michael Abdul-Malik, Michael X) established RAAS (the Racial Adjustment Action Society), the Universal Black People's Improvement Association (including Darcus, then Radford, Howe) set up in Notting Hill and several cells of the Black Panthers were also founded (see Abdul-Malik, 1967). The national press and the Metropolitan Police reacted to these associations with virtual paranoia, at what they saw as incipient subversion and revolution. The focus of this paranoia was the Mangrove Restaurant in All Saints Road (see Police magazine, January 1970). Set up in 1969 by Frank Critchlow, who had run several similar restaurants in London before, the place soon became well-known for political discussion but was hardly a seedbed of 'the revolution'. Yet the police regularly raided the Mangrove from its

opening, never arresting anybody or pressing charges against the proprietor, establishing a symbolic vendetta that has persisted to the present day. As Darcus Howe commented, the Mangrove

"opened as a meeting place for ourselves and others where we could discuss issues that we face ... the Mangrove is quite different from what it was then. Today it has become a centre of resistance to police harassment, a black centre of resistance. We did not set out to make it like that, the police did. And that is not how we see ourselves, that is how black people see us. It is now a political fact that we are what we are because of certain experiences of black people in the area [Notting Hill]." (Evidence, 1971)

Again, it would be wrong to equate the struggles of the Mangrove with the ubiquitous and dubious term 'black youth'. In fact Ben Bousquet, who now works for Lambeth Police Support Unit but lives and grew up in Notting Hill and keeps a detailed local history of the area, pointed out in a formal interview that the Mangrove was the haunt of older, politically active people, not teenagers like himself at this time. Younger people tended to congregate instead at the youth clubs, another site of confrontation; a raid at the Metro Youth Club in Notting Hill led to serious clashes with the police in 1970.

Following the repeated raids on the Mangrove (all with no charges pressed) an informal protest group banded together under the name 'Action Group for the Defence of the Mangrove' and mounted a demonstration on the 9th August 1970, demanding "an end to the persecution of the Mangrove restaurant" which also developed into a confrontation with the police. After the incident Race Today (1970, p456) commented,

"There is a tension hitherto unknown. The police, the black community insist, are out to kill the Mangrove and other centres where blacks get together."

Further marches followed the Black Defence Committee support of the Mangrove 9, arrested at the first demonstration, which culminated in twenty-two of the charges against the group (who included both Critchlow and Howe) being dismissed and only seven minor counts proven. The

Mangrove was firmly established as the focus of police/black conflict in Notting Hill, All Saints Road the site on which control of the streets would be disputed.

c) The Carnival clashes 1975/76

The tensions in Notting Hill burst into large scale violent disorder at the Carnivals of both 1975 and 1976. This confrontation between police and community has been described in detail on many occasions (Race Today passim; Howe 1980; Rollo 1980, IRR, 1979; Fryer, 1984) but two accounts stand out above all others. Foremost is that of Abner Cohen (1980, 1982), who has described how the Carnival became the classic example of 'resistance through rituals', a cultural expression subsuming political protest. Cohen's study of "how symbolic performances reproduce or modify power relations" highlights how throughout the early 1970s, in the face of societal repression,

"the various cultural elements are shown to be linked together in political action but the event itself is an artistic form sui generis".

Hence

"the cultural is structured by the political though not determined by it".

Bound up in the Carnival was a statement about an oppressive white society.

The police responded by actively campaigning to prohibit the Carnival, co-ordinating and publicising a petition demanding that the event be banned. When this tactic failed, police chose instead to station more than fifteen hundred men at Carnival in what was later conceded by some officer as "oppressive formations". Typically, forty police were placed as an 'escort' on each steel band. The violence that ensued was almost inevitable but the crudity of the conflict was perhaps

only truly captured in Gutsmore's description (1977) in which he stated that the black community had taken on the British bobby - and won. By that time the conflict in Notting Hill was almost that simple. Blue versus black.

Crucially, at the heart of these clashes was the Mangrove and the All Saints Road. On the Sunday night of the 1976 Carnival the police cordoned off the road at the height of the festivities and raided the Mangrove in strength. On the Monday the retaliation, the open fighting and what was seen by both police and black community as a 'defeat' for the police made banner headlines in the national press.

d) The Development of All Saints Road as a 'Symbolic Location'

Clashes in All Saints Road grew in ferocity throughout the 1970s. In 1977, although there was less trouble at the Carnival as a whole, there was again a major raid on the Mangrove. Race Today commented at the time,

"The savage manner of the police invasion and the fact that no arrests were made, had left everybody in no doubt that what took place was part of a planned attack by the police on the Carnival."

Two police informants, both working at this time in Notting Hill, who asked to remain anonymous, described the events of the late 1970s from the opposite perspective. For them the All Saints Road had become both a dangerous place to patrol and hub of illicit activity. The Apollo pub, a hundred yards up the road from the Mangrove, was a well-known site of drugs sales and there were "four or five" illegal drinking clubs on the road as well. The explicit suggestion of one informant was that in this situation the police were unable to enforce the law in this part of their division and occasional raids en masse, particularly on

the Mangrove, seen as the source of greatest hostility toward the police, were quite clear demonstrative gestures of police power.

It was against this turbulent context of violent clashes that in the summer of 1981 the police did not try and remove the crowds and the barricades from the All Saints Road (see chapter four). Quite simply, the reason for this was that in the ongoing confrontation, by 1981 the All Saints Road and the Mangrove had won a form of de facto 'privileged status'. Any police action, sensitive or senseless, was likely to be opposed, a state of affairs widely resented at PC level, reluctantly acknowledged at managerial level, but recognised by all actors, black and white, involved in the life of the area. It was a situation Chief Superintendent Whitfield (Notting Hill, 1982-84) described thus,

"It was a stand off and a virtual no-go area for a while both before 1981 and at times since" (personal interview).

e) Revenge

On 24 December 1981 the Mangrove was raided. In April 1982 one of the first operations involving deployment of the newly formed public order units of the Metropolitan Police (the Immediate Response Units) was another raid on the Mangrove, after a suspected thief was seen 'entering the premises'. There was no doubt in the minds of most of the black community and most of the police in Notting Hill that these two raids in part made up for the loss of face suffered in the preceding summer. Again the fearful symmetry of views.

Shortly after this raid, Chief Superintendent Whitfield assumed command at Notting Hill. He described the atmosphere in the station at the time as "euphoric" because of this triumph.

f) Transforming All Saints Road

During his three years at Notting Hill, Whitfield was involved in a conscious attempt to "take away the symbolism of All Saints Road". This project was to be achieved by completely changing the style of policing in the area. The first step Whitfield took was to prevent all cars patrolling All Saints Road and have instructions placed at Scotland Yard that no car from any other division was allowed in 'hot pursuit' into the road either. This was not popular with either junior officers or several sceptical superiors at Scotland Yard itself. The reasons that Whitfield first gave for this order was straightforward: he could not afford all the wrecked police cars on his budget, but underlying this problem he admitted was his desire to prevent incidents where officers drove into the road, jumped out of the car and piled a 'prisoner' into the back seat before driving off at high speed.

Mass raids in All Saints Road were also dramatically curtailed. Again the ostensible reason was down to earth: "in the main it was to stop visiting PCs in hospital", again there was an obvious secondary purpose, again the new policy was unpopular with many of the PCs in the division. Similarly, police from adjacent divisions were given the message to keep out of Notting Hill.

Replacing the raids on All Saints Road, Whitfield introduced to the area high technology targeting and surveillance of the road. At this time anyone walking down the road who looked a potential customer would be offered drugs for sale. It was always impossible to establish where any of the many dealers came from, yet I was frequently offered a full selection of 'products' to choose from. Notwithstanding this, the location of drugs became more subtle as people caught on to the presence of cameras and used truanting children of twelve and under to 'front'

for sales; once paid they would dart into basements with the cash and emerge minutes later with a suitably weighed bag. However, it would be a grave mistake to either confuse this trade with a long history of All Saints Road or suggest that anything more than a small minority of these 'dealers' traded in anything other than cannabis, for which the road had become a market place well-known across London.

The third step Whitfield took which was to win him respect both inside and outside the police, was to make two arrests at considerable personal risk on All Saints Road in May 1982. He also embarked on an extensive PR campaign, making himself available to all 'community leaders' twenty-four hours a day, a move that won him grudging respect from some of the most hostile local people. For much of his time he was one of the very few Chief Superintendents on speaking terms with Frank Critchlow. Along with his deputy, Superintendent Aitcheson, he set up a series of informal police/community consultative meetings which included one-off special meetings on All Saints Road itself at times of greatest tension.

A fourth strategy was to attempt to involve other agencies in 'policing' the area. A story was leaked to a Sunday tabloid on the "festering sore" of the Apollo pub and by Monday morning the brewery had shut it down. This property and several others on the road were bought up and administered by the local Housing Trust.

Yet the most profound change that Whitfield introduced was the All Saints Road special patrol. A squad of twenty-four PCs, picked from all officers on the division, was set up with the express purpose of 'recovering' All Saints Road. From the end of the Carnival in 1982 the idea was to keep six officers stationed in the road twenty-four hours a day. The initial local reaction to this move was one of fury. On

several occasions pairs of policemen were bundled off the road by large crowds of people who resented what they saw as an 'army of occupation'. In spite of this, the patrol has been maintained to the present day and certainly the police goal of reducing the number of 'frequenters' on the road was in broad terms achieved.

With increased participation by the Housing Trust and the co-operation of other agencies, the face of All Saints Road began to change. Indeed, Whitfield claimed that with the Mangrove receiving a lump-sum grant for refurbishment,

"When the Mangrove re-opens as a decent West Indian restaurant that will be the end of the symbolism."

g) A successful solution?

There are two major flaws in the logic of Whitfield's claim. The first became increasingly evident throughout the last months of his time in charge at Notting Hill. The problem was that among very many of his junior officers his new reforms were extremely unpopular. Through a snowball interview technique I managed to secure in-depth formal interviews with seven PCs working on Notting Hill Division. All gave extremely critical reports of the changes in policing methods and greatly resented the restrictions placed on police discretion on All Saints Road. Whitfield was not unaware of this feeling and after he had left the area remarked,

"We are not in business to be popular ... I know that in many ways I am not popular at the Hill",

suggesting that

"I have got no illusions about policemen and the fact that they are human."

Several incidents occurred in both 1983 and 1984 where the special

restrictions were effectively subverted. One PC admitted to flouting deliberately the regulations about car patrols, another caustically remarked when I defended Whitfield's approach,

"Well obviously he should have told us more about what was going on."

The second flaw stems from an assessment of the achievements on All Saints Road in the early 1980s. For though the number of people using the road as a social centre has greatly diminished, there remain 'official' clubs at number 12 (Frank Critchlow's 'alternative' property for use while the Mangrove is being repaired), number 26 and number 28 (the Sunlight and the Paradise), as well as occasional 'unofficial' clubs in other parts of the road. In spite of the permanent police presence, the drugs trade continues. Because of their own manifest ineffectiveness in combating this trade and a reluctance to stand for eight hours at a time on one road, the All Saints Road patrol became an increasingly unpopular tour of duty, until in 1985 it was effectively separated from the rest of the station only to become within months notoriously referred to as the 'Black Watch'. The level of antagonism between the two parties remained as high as ever, only the numbers involved decreased.

This numerical decrease was not due solely to police action. The superb but delapidated rental properties of the 1950s and 1960s have to a great extent been lost to 'the reclaiming of the inner city'. In 1985 the Residents' Association of newly refurbished St Luke's Mews threatened to sue the police for their failure to enforce the law in the area (particularly drug trafficking). The old black community area of Notting Hill has been significantly eroded, people are forcefully displaced and if there is no serious disorder in Notting Hill in the immediate future it might be as much due to gentrification as to

successful policing strategy.

b) The lessons of All Saints Road

The post-1981 experience of Notting Hill is significant because it confirms the role of one particular place in the symbolic vocabulary of the language of conflict. Prior to 1981, during the summer of 1981 itself and subsequent to 1981, there existed a remarkable consensus about the importance of this symbolism, 'Who controlled All Saints Road?' This question was the spatial realisation of a deeply-rooted historical struggle. The uneasy peace that has almost prevailed from 1981 to 1986 was no more than a compromise answer to this question, not an authentic resolution of any conflict.

RAILTON ROAD, BRIXTON

There is no way that this tangential account can do justice to the complexity, the diversity of opinion and the multitude of different histories that are simultaneously present in accounts of Brixton's past. The intention here is only to pick out some of the principal threads in this tapestry, suggesting that Railton Road and the surrounding few streets were the one place in Brixton where all the forces that brought police and black people into conflict came together.

BACKGROUND HISTORY

a) Police/black relations in Brixton

In its historical context the rioting of 1981 in Brixton was unsurprising. Police/black relations did not suddenly collapse at local

level in the period just before the riots as the Metropolitan Police (1981) submissions to Lord Scarman at times suggested. Nor can mutual hostility be traced to the incidence of crime within the marginalised black population as the new 'radical' criminologists have posited (eg Lea and Young, 1982; Kinsey, Lea and Young, 1986; Mathews and Young, 1986) or to the media distortion of this level of crime. The roots of this hostility go back much further.

Put simply, 'relations' between the black community and the police in Brixton have never been 'good', partly because a relation of this sort can not be measured on a simple one dimensional scale, principally because of the pervasive and persistent racism of white society as a whole, exemplified by the treatment of black people by the Metropolitan Police Force.

It is the contention throughout this thesis that the police force as an institution and police officers as individuals are no worse and no better than the society from which they are drawn. The circumstances in which police/black interaction has occurred structured the particular realisations of societal racism. Inevitable points of contact between police and black people became the arenas in which racism was manifested and hostility flourished.

The evidence of this historical depth is well documented and clearly seen in the warnings of trouble in the late 60s and early 70s by local community workers such as Jeff Crawford (1969), George Greaves (1970), Courtney Laws (1970), in the submission to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure by the LVSC (1979), in the Report by the Council Working Party into Community/Police Relations in Lambeth (January 1981) and in the submissions to Lord Scarman by the Lambeth Youth Committee, the Brixton Neighbourhood Community Association, Concern and the

Runnymede Trust (all 1981).

Yet in hindsight perhaps the most significant document was the work by Joseph Hunte titled 'Nigger Hunting in England?' (1966). This report states quite categorically that,

"for the seven years that I have been residing in Brixton, I have been constantly besieged by members of the immigrant population with matters of conflict between them and the Police Force",

going on to cite the ready use of dogs against black people, overtly racist abuse and the allegation that

"it has been confirmed from reliable sources that sergeants and constables do leave stations with the express purpose of going Nigger Hunting" (1966,p12).

More recently (in 1966) he suggests that this victimisation had taken the form of

"trying innocent West Indians before the court for loitering with intent to commit a felony" (1966,p14).

When asked about the accuracy of this report in a private interview Commander Alex Marnoch, who worked in Brixton at the time of Hunte's work, commented,

"It has to be said that although exaggerated the allegations in that report were basically true. When there had been some trouble, especially if a PC got hurt, it was not unusual for a group of police to pile off down to Somerleyton Road for a fight. It was very regrettable and it has to be seen in context. At that time everywhere you went in Brixton you could see signs saying 'no coloureds' and lots of pubs wouldn't even serve black people. Yes, racism was very common in the police force but it has to be compared with everywhere else and in comparison with that the police record was a good one."

Crucially, the report alleges, and Marnoch confirmed, that not only was hostility long established in time, dating back to the early 60s, but it was also spatially imbedded in the scenes in which confrontations occurred; Hunte mentions several times the small area of Brixton around Goldharbour Lane and Somerleyton Road.

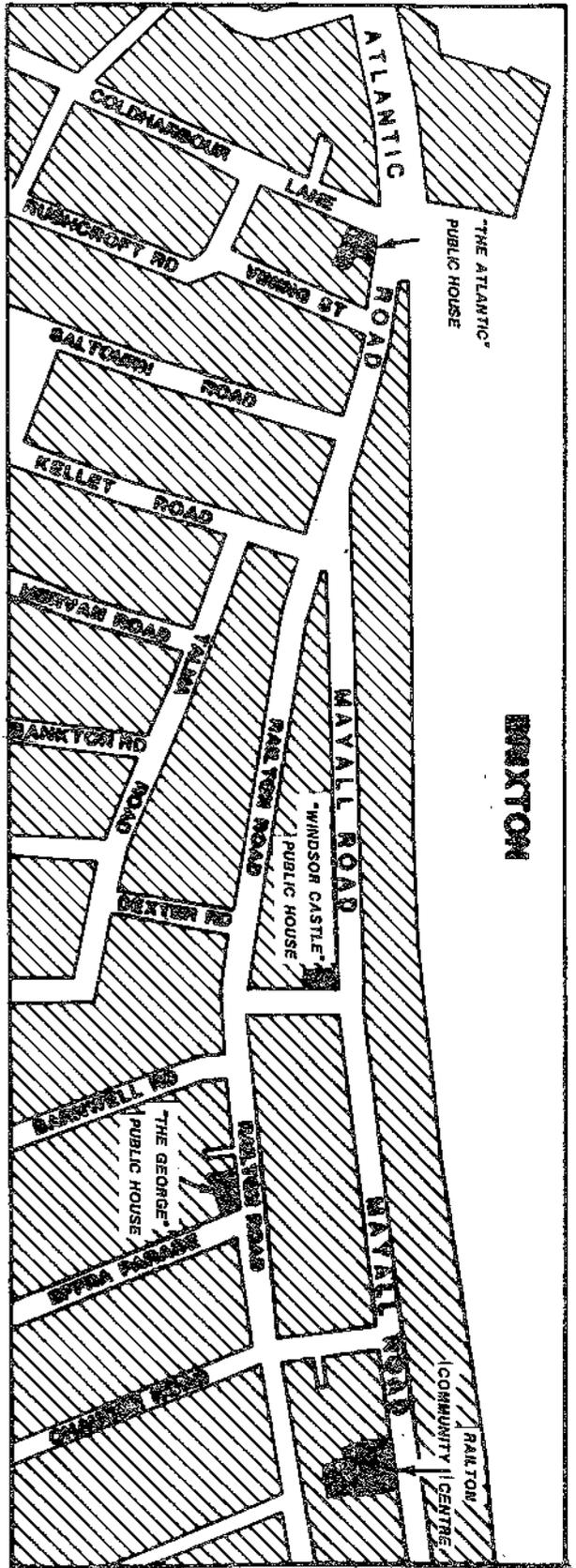
Hence relations between the police and large sections of the black community have been 'bad' for a very long time. This does not mean that they have been bad for the same reasons for all that time or bad in the same way. The nature and form of this conflict has changed. Overt racialism, institutional racism (stereotyping by SUS), and policing a divided society are disparate phenomena. Similarly, antagonism may be realised in resentment, passive subjection, open abuse, violent resistance or many other forms of behaviour. 'Rioting' is merely one of several alternative expressions of this conflict.

b) Locational background

The central part of Brixton that provided the private rental reception area for Caribbean migrants in the 50s and early 60s (Patterson 1961) gradually shrunk in size over the following two decades. The delapidated old housing districts were gradually knocked down and replaced by the new estates such as the Moorlands Estate on Somerleyton Road and the Stockwell Park Estate. These Council developments may not have been unqualified social successes but they answered a pressing need and the problems they produced were new problems. As part of this process the area of Railton and Mayall Roads was scheduled for redevelopment, but this project was defeated in 1975 after a protracted period of protest, public inquiry and ministerial prevarication. By 1977 only 22 of the 400 properties in the Railton/Mayall Road Housing Action Area were considered by the Council to be,

"satisfactory in terms of state of repair, housing conditions and general environmental quality." (Scarman 1981,p5)

A vital element in the growth of Railton Road as a 'Front Line' was that by 1981 whereas the face of Brixton as a whole had been refashioned (often several times), the face of Railton Road was unchanged but for



Map 5.1

the progressive deterioration in the quality of property. Nowhere else was the living history of black people in Brixton so clearly embodied in bricks and mortar. There was no need to continually remember the past because on Railton Road more than anywhere else the past was always present.

2 THE 'FRONT LINE'

"To some, whose knowledge of these streets came only with hindsight in the aftermath of the disorders, the 'Front Line' may seem an apt description for an area where a mob battled with the police. But, almost certainly, the term is used to describe a place where people meet on the street to talk and relax." (Scarman 1981,p17)

One of the minor, but significant, debates that ran through the public hearings of the Scarman Inquiry concerned what the term 'Front Line' actually meant. Courtney Laws (Brixton Neighbourhood Community Association) suggested that,

"The historical fact of the Front Line, as I understand it - because I helped to name it - is where people from the Caribbean normally gather, meet and talk and often start up socialising groups and functions. It is very peaceful and quiet."

District Detective Chief Superintendent Plowman flatly contradicted this image:

"the words 'Front Line', as far as most people understand it, came about from ... a film that was done by the BBC in 1965 when they said that Railton Road was the front line of confrontation between black and white in the Brixton area and ... that is why it is called the Front Line." "there is only about 200 of that black community that collect in the Front Line or Railton Road area. They are mostly black people that are unemployed or Rastafarian type who display an anti-authority attitude",

also the Front Line was used to "dispose stolen property". Plowman was candid, the 'place' was stigmatised, explicitly labelled as a 'criminal area'.

In stark comparison, in 1976 Race Today (pp148-152) claimed that,

"Railton Road is a heavily policed area. The Brixton end of the road is referred to among blacks in military terms as 'the Front Line'. It is the front line of defence against the police."

In the political campaign for 'black resistance' Race Today saw the Front Line as a source of potential black political solidarity. From this perspective the 'riots' were the logical outcome of this local mobilisation (see Chapter One supra).

Similarly, although everybody accepted that the Front Line covered some part of the Railton Road, several different definitions of its precise boundaries were offered at the Inquiry, some confining it to a very small stretch of the road between Atlantic Road and Leeson Road, others including a larger section of Railton Road, yet others using the term more generally to describe a whole area.

The point Scarman missed was that the term Front Line may have been clearly defined for some individuals but on closer inspection there are many different understandings of this 'sense of place'. There is no one meaning of Front Line. A social centre, the epicentre of black resistance, a location for trading stolen goods, a home, a drugs market place. At one time or another the Front Line has been, in part, all of these things. In a strictly geographical sense it is a term that serves in 'the naming of parts', spatial parts. As meaning, shorthand definitions of places, based on subjectively defined salient characteristics of those places, are near universal features of the way in which the umwelt is internally reconstructed in comprehensible form.

A name denotes a place and connotes a history. As ever, assorted histories are woven together, sieved by experience. Front Line did not mean the same for old and young, black and white, police and policed. Yet, through all these histories a common theme is the conflict between black people and the police. This section attempts only to touch on

this complexity, to illustrate that there are variations on this theme, not a simple phenomenon but a stage on which history has been played, each act linked to its predecessor, each act perceived from many different angles.

a) Social and drinking clubs

As in Notting Hill one of the oldest bones of contention between black people and the police in Brixton stemmed from the existence of clubs (shabeens) that were used for drinking and gambling. Again, the history of these places is not straightforward, neither simple 'cultural expression' nor manifest criminal behaviour. It has often been suggested that the latent and overt rejection of black custom in pubs in Brixton made the growth of these (technically illegal) facilities inevitable. As the Brixton Domino and Social Club (1981) stated,

"In the 60s there were no recreation facilities for blacks. We used to have lots of house parties. The pubs that existed in England then did not cater for West Indians and people from the Caribbean. Thus we created our own social gatherings and clubs."

Certainly drinks were sometimes sold at blues parties, certainly this was at times used as a pretext by some local police to raid any black house where there was any sort of party, certainly at least one individual who used to run a shabeen is now a pub landlord in the Brixton area. Most of the clubs were set up in the Coldharbour Lane/Atlantic Road/Railton Road area (Hunte 1966,p3). This pattern persisted throughout the 60s and 70s. Just before the riots of 1981 there were at least three well-known clubs on Railton Road, so that in 1981 the Brixton Society commented,

"The past pattern of the police activity in the Brixton area has been to tolerate the clubs etc in the Front Line area of Railton Road for most of the time, but to stage the occasional raid in strength, apparently in connection with drugs offences."

Several long-serving Brixton police officers confirmed this pattern;

in the nebulous divide between the illegal and the criminal the raids on drinking clubs provided a forum for the rationalisation and justification of racist police behaviour, taking on the respectability of official police actions. Some of these raids, professionally conducted and well organised, passed peacefully; others most certainly did not (eg raids on clubs in Kellet and Talma Roads in 1975).

b) Political groups

A second longstanding element in the Railton Road scene has been the high profile presence of political and quasi-political groups. In 1968 a Black Panther group was set up in Shakespeare Road, and campaigned for both blackrights in general and over specific issues such as the Joshua Francis case. In 1970 Francis was severely injured in his home and later charged with assaulting three police officers in what was widely believed at the time to be another instance of the 'Nigger Hunting' that Hunte had drawn attention to. This group were regularly monitored by Special Branch.

Similarly, a lot of groups who became incidentally involved in black political mobilisation of one sort or another were clustered in this area; the radical paper Race Today was based at 38 Shakespeare Road (and later in Railton Road), the Melting Pot Foundation and the Law Centre had offices in Atlantic Road, and Brixton Neighbourhood Community Association at number 1 Mayall Road. That the white, predominantly middle-class, Anarchists' Centre and bookshop were set up in the mid-70s at 121 Railton Road said a lot about this political symbolism, though the shop itself was a near irrelevance for most of the black community.

This author is not in a position to evaluate the significance of this pattern of clustering on the 'political consciousness' or the

political attitudes of black residents of the area, but the various institutions were for a long time part of the identity of the Front Line, particularly when perceived from outside, particularly when perceived by the police.

c) 'Shepherds' and other youth clubs

The youth club may serve as a refuge from the hostility of the 'outside world', a place in which dignity and self-respect are internally defined. Such a place was and is the Railton Road Youth and Community Centre (RRYCC) of the Methodist Church, more commonly known as Shepherds, since the mid-60s a major social focus for young black people in the Railton Road area:

"Over the years the Centre has provided a home for many who have few roots in the community and some have found themselves welcome in the Centre who might well have found themselves rejected elsewhere." (RRYCC,1981)

The club was considered somewhere safe from police interference and as early as the late 60s hostility against the police was such that there was physical resistance to attempts to search the club (normally when a young black suspect was seen to run towards the club).

Hence in her column in the 70's Front Line Jennie (Race Today,1978), furious at a police presence at prizegiving in Shepherds, comments,

"Dem haul out Country fi get prize fi weight-lifting and guess who dem call fi present it? (me know seh oonu would a nevah did guess) noh one a di hag dem from di poliece station! Bwoy, if y'ah evah evah si how country wash him han after di hag shake it! Him is a man who noh deal wid pork."

In the late 70s as unemployment among young black people in Lambeth grew rapidly, the average age of the clientele and the social importance of Shepherds grew alongside it. These changes prompted a struggle between those, often older, members of the club who wanted to increase participation in control and organisation and the traditional youth

worker system of the Methodist Church, a struggle Race Today described as the "Brixton's Battle of Jericho". In 1979 the Methodist hierarchy tried to close the club but this was successfully resisted through an occupation by the members. The Action Committee at the time stated,

"We cannot look for continuity in the workers because they come and go. Some are promoted, some get married, some get fired. We cannot look for continuity in the Minister/Warden. They too change from time to time. The membership on the other hand, has, in its older members, people who have been participating in the club since its inception."

At its heart this struggle was about two irreconcilable visions of the function of the youth club; one based on the paternalistic role of juvenile socialisation, the other on the significance of particular 'places' in local black dignity, self-respect and mobilisation. This struggle continued right up to the rioting of 1981, over such issues as the attempt to ban all members over 21 from the premises.

At the time of the disorders the club remained untouched, "a haven of tranquility in a sea of destruction".(RRYCC,1981) In this context the contrast between the feeling of security inside the club and the violent clashes outside reveal much about the nature of the rioting in 1981:

"The other strong sense created by police presence and action is that of claustrophobia. The loss of open space to run and play is keenly felt. But this central Brixton area has become a home in which the community like to feel free to wander, congregate and stop and chat with friends. The sense of a heavy and pervasive police presence in this area is not a friendly and communal presence but a multiple and hostile one." (RRYCC,1981)

Also

"the black community of Brixton is not a lawless community whose area has to be policed as though it were hostile territory requiring an army of occupation." (RRYCC,1981)

The sense of indignation at violations of this 'home' was exacerbated in raids on Shepherds, first in 1974 and then at least ten times between 1974 and 1981:

"They have sometimes come in with dogs and once with guns ... once inside their treatment of members has varied from moderation to provocation. Their sudden and sometimes violent entry into what is otherwise felt to be a secure black community creates immediate tension and contributes to longer term resentment."

Most often these raids were in pursuit of a suspect and in such circumstances it is notable how cynical or, perhaps more often, thoughtless police can be.

This problem was clearly outlined by a senior member of Brixton's Community Involvement Section, who is now on the managerial board of Shepherds:

"PC's just don't understand the damage they do. I mean I would defend what they do. I've even done it myself. The kids are all there and all of a sudden some prick with a blue hat on kicks the door in and comes charging in. Now I'm the youth worker; that place, those kids, are my responsibility. I walk over to the policeman and say, 'Excuse me officer, can I help you?' and he just says, 'Who are you?' and tells me to fuck off in front of everybody there. Now the kids there don't know that he was chasing his prisoner, he's angry with himself for losing a body, and he doesn't understand or doesn't care about the damage he is doing. And then if anyone in the club starts getting out of hand, the youth worker has been seen to lose his authority and if the place goes bang anything can happen."
(private interview)

At one time I was witness to the description of a case almost identical to this Inspector's hypothetical illustration, when the police raided the youth club on the Moorlands estate on Somerleyton Road (a couple of hundred yards from Railton Road). The youth club leader there is noted for being prepared to stick his neck out in entering into dialogue with the police; such incidents are potentially disastrous for people in his position. I have lost count of the number of similar incidents that have occurred in Brixton and elsewhere. Horrendous tales of District Support Units and Immediate Response Units charging in at the slightest sign of trouble, making large numbers of random and unnecessary arrests, are countered with defences of the need for police officers to support their own at times of trouble. In such

circumstances conflict reproduces itself, becomes cumulatively more entrenched. It was in such circumstances that a common belief on the Front Line in 1981 was that,

"the police were no longer protecting the people, or policing the area in a responsible manner. They were in fact a force of occupation within the Brixton area, and the people felt threatened by their presence in the area in such large numbers." (Brixton Rastafarian Collective, 1981)

In this context the police role is crucial but actual behaviour cannot be divorced from the institutional practice of 'occupation of the ghetto', practice that is tied to the societal forces that have racialised space, created the ghetto in the first place.

a) 'Crime' on Railton Road

Much of the debate in the Scarman Inquiry focussed on the relative levels of crime, particularly 'street crime', in Brixton and Lambeth compared with other divisions and Districts in London (eg Concern, 1981). What was rarely disputed was the existence of certain criminal activity in Railton Road. In particular:

- i) Certain properties in the area were used for fencing stolen goods, particularly after street robberies.
- ii) Drugs were sold on the street and at certain properties there. The level of 'hard' drugs as opposed to 'ganja' (cannabis) and the alleged historical complicity of certain CID officers in this trade were both moot points in Brixton. In the immediate aftermath of the 1981 riots this trade grew dramatically as police, fearing public order problems, were reluctant to take action against dealers operating openly on the street.
- iii) Because the people who used the Front Line frequently opposed any arrest, street robbers were known to make a run for Railton Road if caught, in order to seek protection from the crowd there.

Time and time again in the Scarman Inquiry police officers made it clear that they regarded all people who used the road as involved in at least one of these three categories. The whole road was stigmatised as a criminal area. District Chief Superintendent Plowman stated that,

"the type of person that commits footpad robberies are the young fleet footed youngsters between 12 and 17 that commit these offences (sic). They do not get down the Front Line except to dispose of stolen property."

This statement was made in the full knowledge that on Front Line was a youth club (Shepherds) which on a busy night held almost two hundred people (RRYCC,1981). Implicitly, all people who used one of the few leisure facilities in the Brixton area were labelled as criminals and the charge of SUS was readily available to confirm this label in a perfect exercise in circular verification. The high incidence of SUS charges on Railton Road (Demuth,1978) 'proves' the road was a criminal area.

As Astel Parkinson, a youth worker in Brixton since the mid-60s, explained to me,

"Our kids just could not walk down the street without the risk of being picked up and charged."

Those who looked suspicious were picked up, yet the criteria by which this suspicion is defined was rarely questioned. Crime was and is a major problem on Railton Road, and a difficult problem for the police, but it was a problem perpetrated by a small minority not a whole community.

A notable exception to the stereotypical view was expressed by the Home Beat officer on the road, PC John Brown (in the police since 1963). Between 1971 and 1981 he had never been attacked in Railton Road and although keen to point out the problems of criminal activity, painted for Scarman a much more subtle picture of the Front Line, going so far as to say that black people were friendlier towards the police locally

than white. Once again the mythical Railton Road was perhaps not so readily susceptible to blanket classification as hindsight might suggest.

3 THE POLICE VIEW

a) 'The Job'

Spending time in participant observation work on patrol with police in Brixton it was not difficult to appreciate the variable calibre of personnel, the major problems involved in 'the job', the entrenched nature of the mistrust between police and much of the community and the low morale of police officers in Brixton division of the Metropolitan Police.

One incident was typical of very many that I witnessed. Answering a call from a council estate at 12.30am saying that two IC3 (black) youths had been seen trying to break into a flat, we arrived to find two people 'answering to the description' walking away from the block the call had come from. The car stopped (abruptly) and one of the two ran off. One PC in the car, after a chase on foot, managed to catch this individual whilst the other was detained. The noise of the siren, the speed of the car and the ensuing chase had drawn a large crowd of onlookers. The crowd grew rapidly as the names of the two suspects were checked by radio for criminal records. Angry at being made to chase a suspect, angry at the realisation that there was no proof that the two had done anything, one PC in particular made little effort to hide his contempt for the black youths, yet his questioning remained technically correct in every other respect and violence was never threatened. After ten minutes of waiting it was discovered that one of the youths had a

criminal record. A friend of his, who had subsequently appeared, protesting the innocence of the two, was nearly arrested for assault when his verbal abuse of the two police began to get out of hand. These 'secondary' offences, known as 'knock-on offences', are common in this sort of situation, are in part the product of the rift between the police and the black community, and are a major element in amplifying the process of criminalisation already described. Just as the two PCs decided there was nothing more they could do, a couple of bottles were thrown from the back of the crowd.

As we drove away both were convinced that the two suspects were guilty, both had acted correctly (in spite of the poor manners of one) and both had been 'bottled' for their pains. Similar incidents, all involving objects being thrown, occurred four times on this one shift. One of the police in the car regularly 'explained' these experiences in explicitly racist characterisations of black people.

It is the sense of hopelessness in the face of the outright collapse of 'policing by consent' that made one PC suggest to me, "this nick must have the lowest morale in the whole of London". This problem also dates back a long way. Another PC, who had been in Brixton since the mid-70's, said,

"before 1981 everyone knew that Brixton was a place where you got a lot of hassle. Nobody wanted to come here. As a result, it became a sort of punishment centre. I personally know PCs who turned up on a Monday morning after annual leave at their station in - say Croydon - only to be told, 'No you're not here any more, you've been transferred to Brixton.' Senior officers used it all as an excuse to get rid of the men they didn't want."

Consequently, mistrust reproduces itself within the police service, poor expectations confirmed by experience. As PC Peter Lawrence commented,

"In my time here I have seen the most liberal and left wing people come down here and within months completely change their attitudes. The hatred on the streets is so awful that you have to conform to the views of the rest of the group to survive."

Antagonism has become built in to the job itself. To say that the police are hated by large sections of the black population in Brixton is no exaggeration. The reactions of police officers vary enormously between individuals but this extreme hostility was and is reciprocated by many members of the police force working in the division. But for most of the people I spent time with, the reasons for this mutual hostility were rarely considered, only occasionally were rationalisations offered and these were often openly and explicitly racist. However, for the majority the hostility was just 'a fact of life', part of the daily routine.

When this level of antagonism is placed alongside the high degree of discretion of the PC, the frequently scant respect of senior management that is common and the difficulties involved in supervising police work, some of the more well-known events of the past on Railton Road become more comprehensible.

b) Tit for tat : 'Front Line Deviancy'

As part of the informal code that underwrites all police actions it is very often taken as given that violence against fellow police officers is settled in kind. I was told several times by police themselves that this is in part no more than self-defence. By definition police work can be violent work.

Increasing regulation of what happens to prisoners in police stations has undoubtedly had a significant effect but as one very senior officer stated,

"I have no doubt that such incidents (violence against prisoners) almost never happen at police stations any more but I am equally sure that they do sometimes occur en route to the police station."

Scores which build up can be settled at future dates. In Brixton repeated clashes stemming from arrests have for a long time led to many police injuries. On Railton Road, where, since the early 70s these clashes were always at their most serious, there were a lot of scores.

It was the awareness in the Metropolitan Police of these incidents (particularly in Brixton and Notting Hill) that led senior management to coin the term 'front line deviancy' to describe the way in which junior officers could subvert official goals to ensure that scores were settled in this way.

One of the most notorious incidents of front line deviancy occurred in the wake of the 1981 riots when, on the 15 July 1981 at 2 am, one hundred and seventy six police were deployed to search eleven houses on Railton Road, in an attempt to find petrol bomb stores. The houses were torn apart.¹ A later report of the Police Complaints Board commented on these raids,

"it was difficult not to come to the conclusion that every senior officer in possession of a warrant regarded it as a license to enter the premises and, once having gained entry, to search for evidence of any crime. The board find it difficult to believe that this can be attributed entirely to ignorance of the law" (Guardian, 24/9/83).

More to the point, as both Commander Alex Marnoch (ic L District [Lambeth] 1983-85) and several PCs I spoke to who were present acknowledged, the raids had been used by some police to 'avenge' the 'defeats' of the riots earlier in the year.

Similarly, in November 1982, when several of the derelict properties in Railton Road which were being used for squats and shabeens were demolished, the new 'Immediate Response Units' were deployed to quell any public order problems. Another PC involved at the time stated categorically that the police had shown "who controlled Railton Road".

A police presence was functionally necessary to aid the demolition but this function was reinterpreted and reconstructed by those carrying out the policy.

Marnoch also described to me instances of 'fishing raids' on Railton Road drinking clubs which had been made for similarly demonstrative reasons, totally contradicting his own instructions.²

In such a climate a major problem for senior officers is simultaneously to maintain both discipline and morale. It is this context that reveals a secondary function of Operation SWAMP, the stop and search operation that preceded the April '81 rioting in Brixton. When asked about the success of the operation at the Scarman Inquiry public hearings Detective Chief Superintendent Plowman did not mention catching criminals (in these terms it was a manifest failure) but said instead, "Yes I thought it was successful. It motivated officers."

c) Railton Road Patrols

On taking charge of L District in 1983, Commander Alex Marnoch was given a free hand to attempt to 'pacify' Brixton. A central part of his strategy involved the introduction of a form of policing in the Railton Road area that would defuse the symbolic power of the Front Line. Marnoch's policy was in these terms, perhaps in these terms alone, remarkably successful.

There were three main elements to this strategy. One was to introduce a form of 'multi-agency' policing into Brixton; achievements in this field were in no small part due to Marnoch's personal relationship with the Labour leader of Lambeth Council, Ted Knight. Rather than repeatedly raid the squats and drinking clubs on Railton

Road, the Council repossessed and redeveloped several premises. Other developments in Railton Road included the building of an Afro-Caribbean centre, the reconstruction of a pub and the extensive redevelopment of the most derelict housing and the refurbishing of an adventure playground. The physical, and hypothetically the social environment as well were transformed.

Secondly, targeting and surveillance operations were introduced, as on All Saints Road. A tower block of flats to the south of Railton Road was used to monitor all activity on the road with the aid of high magnification camera equipment. There were several major successes in combating drug dealing.

Thirdly, a special patrol of a sergeant and three pairs of PCs from each relief (shift) was introduced to guarantee a permanent police presence in the Railton Road area. For Marnoch, this patrol obviated the need for high profile raids in the road, 'showing the flag': "Raids get you nothing - drugs on the floor and down lavatories, etc." Similarly, Marnoch felt that he needed to "recondition the minds of the police officers" on the patrol. Arrests for "a few cannabis cigarettes" were strongly discouraged, any arrest at all on the Front Line itself was to be avoided if possible, suspects were to be arrested once they had left Railton Road. One aim of the patrols was to prevent the use of the Front Line as a safe haven for escaped prisoners and drugs dealers. This goal was to a notable extent achieved, not least because of Marnoch's personal commitment to the scheme. He described to me how many of the PCs had been scared to work on Railton Road "for the good reason that so many police had been injured there", yet on other occasions both members of the local community and his own junior officers described examples of Marnoch's personal courage. Moreover, when tension broke out into "a mini-riot" in June 1983, Marnoch held an

open meeting at Shepherds, where all the public were able to vent their feelings to the Commander in person. This meeting in particular won him much respect locally.

Yet there have been drawbacks to this policy. The high profile patrols are still seen by many as a 'force of occupation' and although in an interview Chief Superintendent Webber (ic Brixton division) suggested that the Railton Road patrols could serve as "community patrols", most people on the Front Line regard the omnipresent sight of several police in a very small area with the same, if not greater, hostility as before. Webber also claimed that,

"My men on Railton Road are there to police positively. It is made clear to them the sense of purpose in what they are doing. It is made clear that they are there to arrest people if there is cause to do so."

Perhaps inevitably, much of the drinking club/drugs trade have been displaced to other parts of Brixton rather than removed. Acre Lane (where in early 1986 there was a shooting and several stabbings) and Landau Road were the two main 'new' sites. Similar patrols were formed for these areas. However the 'public order' sensitivity of the new sites is not (in 1986) yet in the same league as other parts of Brixton, even if, as several people have pointed out to me, "Railton Road is not the place it was".

1 BACKGROUND HISTORY

The part of Hackney around Dalstone and Stoke Newington is less well-known as a scene of confrontation between black people and the police than either Brixton or Notting Hill yet the problems and people of Sandringham Road in particular seem to differ little from those areas. As early as 1970 the local Community Relations Council was demanding an inquiry into the poor state of police/black relations. Again the worst confrontations occurred with groups of young black people, again they occurred most often at youth clubs, dance halls and cafés. Local black people working in such places in the early seventies and several local black ministers have given me long accounts of numerous incidents of blatant police misconduct at that time, involving the same sorts of complaints about SUS, knock-on offences and provocation. Significantly, amongst the older black community, particularly the church ministers, I was frequently told that the level of such manifest misconduct declined significantly in the late seventies. During the same period Hackney was hit hard by economic decline and by 1980 was the poorest borough in London (Harrison, 1983), with high rates of unemployment generally and even higher levels of black unemployment in particular.

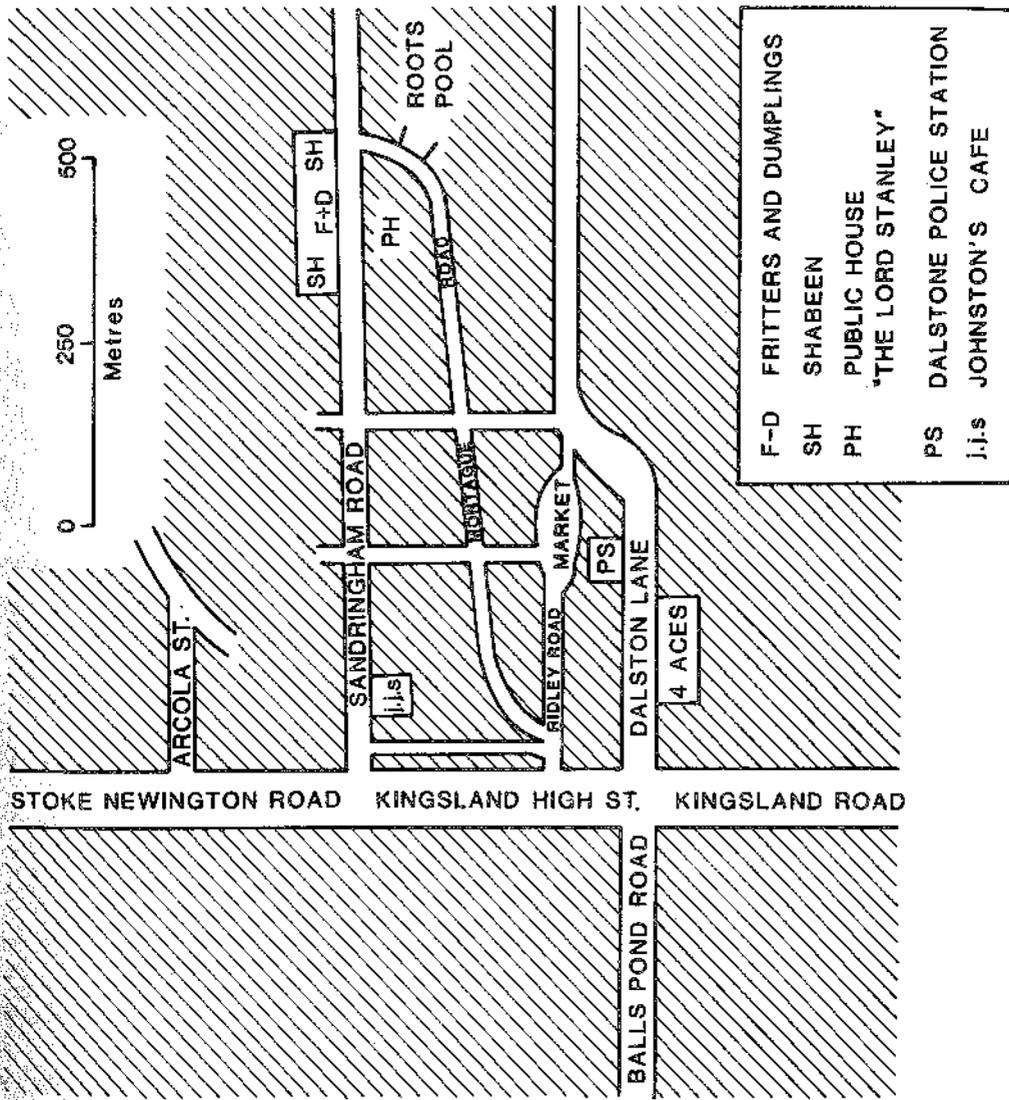
The area close to Dalstone Lane and Sandringham Road became in the late 1960s and early 1970s the principal focus of young black community social life in the borough. Johnston's cafe, which opened in 1972, served a purpose typical of many similar premises in London at the same time. Talking of the daily routine of the young black man using such places, Stevenson and Wallis (1970) commented that after spending two to

six weeks in a fruitless search for a job,

"he is likely to stop trying and to join a group of similarly discouraged friends at some common centre - often a café. There he will stay more or less permanently, only surfacing every so often to try for a few more jobs. If he does not succeed with the first few jobs he goes back to the cafe."

Much of the housing in Sandringham and the surrounding roads was in a derelict state and several itinerant shabeens would set up for a while before being shut down by the police. Mr Lusardi, a local white resident who has kept meticulous records of the history of the road at this time, and who is overtly racist in his comments about young black people, claimed that it was not unusual for over a hundred people to be milling about in a twenty to thirty yard area at the Johnston's end of the road (see Map 5.3) and "loud music" to go on through the night at the shabeens and blues parties. Police would occasionally raid these premises and by the mid-seventies it was not unusual for fighting to break out as a result. On 16th July 1975 in one such raid (with dogs) at the Four Aces Club on Dalstone Lane these clashes escalated into what was described at the time as "a battle" (Race Today, 1975, p173) and several people were seriously injured. Later that summer similar fights occurred in Sandringham Road, as they did again several times over the next few years.

By the late seventies Sandringham Road was already known as 'Front Line'. Over the same period groups of pickpockets (dippers) had begun to use Johnston's (JJ's) as a premises on which they could fence stolen goods (particularly cheque books, cheque cards and cheap jewellery) and by the late seventies the area also became well-known for the sale of cannabis. The life of 'hustling' (see Hall et al, 1978; Pryce, 1979; Cashmore and Troyna, 1982) became a common, if not a normal, way of life. The road offered a series of, sometimes transient, locales for people to pass the time twenty-four hours a day: by the early eighties JJ's,



Map 5.3 Stoke Newington

Fritters and Dumplings take away, the Lord Stanley pub and several shabeens, dance halls and youth clubs lay within a few hundred yards of one another. Subtle variations developed between locales (eg JJ's clientele tended to be older than those at Fritters), but together they formed an organic whole; 'the Sandringham Road scene' that existed alongside residual, sometimes resentful, white residents who would at times lay claim to the title of being the true Sandringham Road 'community'.

It is impossible to assess accurately the attitude of the rest of the black community in Hackney to Sandringham Road at this time (pre 1981), though it would clearly be both an empirical and a logical error to assume that there was any single 'black perception'.³ Many of the more politically active knew that the place was a site for clashes between police and young black people, many of the older members of the black community that I spoke to in 1981 regarded the road and the rioting with some ambivalence; having great sympathy with the plight of the younger generation but talking of JJ's and some of the shabeens with great suspicion.

In this context the riots of 1981 are best seen as one event in the evolution of this 'place'. The rioting became a watershed in the history of the road, but not an unexpected watershed.⁴ The confrontation was one 'battle' of many, the most violent clash experienced but not surprising in its arrival.

In the wake of the disturbances, Sandringham Road received special police attention, including the controversial use of dogs to 'patrol' the road, a policy that produced numerous complaints and a political furor. Similarly, when a young black man, Colin Roach, shot himself in Stoke Newington police station, the police version of events was

considered inadequate locally, reflecting and amplifying local hostility towards the police.

2 ROOTS POOL

One of the many places on Sandringham Road that serves as a community focus is Roots Pool. In 1982 several of the younger black people who spent much of their time in the road squatted in number 144, about a hundred to a hundred-and-fifty yards down the road from JJ's, close to two shabeens which were operating at the time. The borough council managed to persuade them to leave this council flat, in return allowing them to occupy three derelict shop premises at numbers 165, 167 and 169, further still down the road. Here they set up Dalston Community Centre, generally known as Roots Pool.

After the council repossessed numbers 165 and 167, 169 was gutted by a petrol bomb attack (10 July 1984). The council offered temporary use of an old synagogue in Montague Road which was accepted, and they remain there in spite of an ongoing dispute with the council and a possibility of a further move just up the road to Arcola Street. The difficulties faced by the community centre could be said to display in microcosm the history of a 'symbolic location'. Members of this group were fully co-operative with this work.

A striking feature about the people who work at Roots Pool was how remarkably local their knowledge of relations between black people and the police remains. There was surprisingly little knowledge of events in other parts of London, even when these events meant a great deal to the people using the centre. Broadwater Farm Estate was only a couple of miles up the road yet there was no contact at community worker level

between the Youth Association there and Roots Pool. However, if local knowledge was spatially circumscribed it was, in equal measure, temporally extensive. The various raids people had witnessed, as far back as the early seventies, particularly when dogs were used, were not forgotten. More obviously the whole set of rationalisations and understandings that make up the 'common sense' of any group was dominated by the bitter personal experience of Black Britain in the 1970s and 80s, for some ordered by the Rastafarian faith. Rasta 'reasoning' (see Cashmore 1979) makes a 'sense' out of 'reality' and the two principal social workers at Roots Pool accounted for all local events in terms of Rasta cosmology. The police in particular were seen in conspiratorial alliance with the malevolent state.

The police attitude towards Roots Pool is characterised by a certain ambivalence. At one time in 1985 Chief Superintendent Barr commented on the police records that he considered that "their main pre-occupation was dealing in drugs". However he also distinguished the centre from JJ's, the Lord Stanley, Fritters and Dumplings and the shabeens, which he considered were all purely criminal enterprises. After their move to the synagogue, Barr suggested that Roots Pool made efforts to restrict their membership and

"without doubt have made efforts to obey the law and deny access to 'fugitives'." (1985, private correspondence.)

As a result, by 1986 he was trying to formulate a policy by which he could encourage the centre to act as the arena for the legitimate social functions of front line, whilst removing the other 'locales' altogether. To this end, Sir Kenneth Newman had been photographed handing over a cheque of police funds to 'Sir' Collins, treasurer of Roots Pool. Nevertheless, the drug squad at Stoke Newington believed that 'drugs' were sold on the premises and at different times two PCs were later to try and persuade me that the people there that I had worked with were

nascent mafiosi. Whilst there was a possibility that I was deceived by the Roots Pool staff in such matters, I believe that this was extremely unlikely. Nobody would question that 'ganja' is smoked openly by many in the centre, including some of the staff. However, I never saw any evidence of harder drugs on the premises.

Two things were most striking about the relations between police and the people using the centre. The first stems from the relationship between 'officials' and 'clientele' there. At one time Michael Muirhead, chairman of the centre, explained to me,

"White (the Inspector at Dalstone station) comes in here, turns around and says, 'Look we've been good to you. Now you have got to go and stop them dealing in drugs out there' [the courtyard of the synagogue]. First he's got no right to come stamping in here like that. Second, he doesn't understand that if I go out there I can't just tell the brethren what to do. We sometimes have a hundred to two hundred people here at one time and there is only six staff. This is their centre, I'm not some sort of boss. I don't even know some of these people."

The idea that a 'community leader' like Michael Muirhead sits at the head of a pyramidally structured collection of people is mistaken, just as is the idea that 'only one type of person uses Roots Pool'. It is the failure to recognise this diversity and the naivete in the assumptions of both police and council about the power of 'community leaders' that leads to a homogenised, stereotypical view of Sandringham Road. When such stereotypes are placed in the context of a raid on such a premises the results have only to be imagined.

Linked to this problem is the standing of those involved at the centre who are prepared to talk to the police. Michael Muirhead at one time explained that whenever there was any trouble with the police he was subjected to extreme criticism by many of the young black people at the centre. Yet he was also well aware that his actions in taking the side of some of the people at the centre against the police had made him, in the eyes of many PCs and other ranks 'a trouble-maker'. As a

result he found himself in a very precarious position, knowing full well that at a time of outright confrontation there would be no fence to sit on.

3 CRIME ON SANDRINGHAM ROAD

There is undoubtedly a great deal of what is, strictly speaking, 'criminal activity' on Sandringham Road, yet this omnibus term covers a multitude of different repertoires of behaviour. In my position it was obviously difficult to produce a wholly accurate picture. Certainly, cannabis is smoked openly, and frequently people come some distance to buy it; harder drugs are on offer, though not ostentatiously so. It is alleged that organised crime groups (eg 'the Yardies') have tried to 'move in' on the drugs trade in the area. It is almost certain that in recent years the Lord Stanley has been used as a site for the sale of firearms and that there have been extremely violent clashes between members of different 'gangs' on the road (several stabbings and possibly one shooting). What is stressed by many of the local black community is that this serious crime is very different from the fencing which is also common (particularly at Johnston's) and that both serious and petty crime involve only a minority of the people who use the road as a social centre.

4 THE POLICE VIEW

With the full co-operation of G District (Hackney), it was possible to gather a much more comprehensive picture of the policing in Sandringham Road than in either of the other two case study locations.

a) Senior management

For some time Sandringham Road has been recognised by the police as a 'symbolic location' with a high potential risk of public order problems. Special Branch have a group of people at Scotland Yard briefed to monitor the level of tension in such places and they take a keen interest in all operations in the road. Although a registered special file on Sandringham Road was 'officially opened' only in July 1982, a series of unregistered dockets concerned with specific properties there was in existence for several years before that. Yet rather than reflect the end product of a consistent and considered strategy, this official status subsumes a set of very different conceptualisations of the problems and history of Sandringham Road, a set that has underwritten police actions in the area. Preferred policy has varied both through time (before and since 1981) and, more markedly, between individual officers, whose 'policing prescriptions' have often differed; sometimes only by implication, sometimes in outright contradiction and rancour.

Such differences can best be illustrated by comparison of the opinions of three senior officers involved in the policing of Hackney. Commander W Taylor was in charge of policing G District, contiguous with the borough of Hackney, from 1981 to 1984. In the period of time following the riots of 1981, several minor incidents locally threatened to escalate into much larger scale conflict. In the light of this potential for trouble Commander Taylor was a keen supporter of Sir Kenneth Newman's new policing strategies developed for use in 'sensitive areas' (1983,1984,1985), emphasising the 'prioritisation' of maintaining public order over law enforcement. A concentration on intelligence and surveillance in crime fighting was expected to minimise the abrasive street contacts brought about by random stop and search operations.

Police officers were encouraged to make arrests away from 'symbolic locations' through methods of targeting of known offenders; repeated raids on premises being used as bases for petty crime were discouraged; patrolling officers were reminded that in such locations they must consciously balance law enforcement with the danger of public disorder. In the context of these commitments a major disagreement arose between Commander Taylor and Chief Superintendent Barr, who was in charge of Stoke Newington division (which covered Sandringham Road). On several occasions throughout 1983 and 1984 requests to grant permission to raid Johnston's in particular and other places in Sandringham Road in general were turned down by Taylor. At one time, Commander Taylor sent his Chief Superintendents a copy of a paper given by the Commissioner at a conference outlining Newman's new strategy, and drawing attention to the policy on minimising the number of such raids, pointedly remarking in a covering note,

"This speech has been reproduced in whole or in part in a number of publications. Hackney Borough Council will have a copy."
(Chief Superintendent Barr's personal correspondence.)

With the reorganisation of the Met by Newman in the mid-eighties the District officially disappeared as an administrative unit and the executive role of the District Commanders diminished. Chief Superintendents now reported more directly to the Deputy Assistant Commissioners (DACs) in charge of the new Areas. Within this hierarchy, DAC G W Jones was appointed to head Number 2 Area, which included the old G District. Jones' view on the necessary policy for Sandringham Road differed from Taylor's in several key respects. In answering a question on the value of raids on Johnston's in an interview with me he commented,

"You seem to be a believer in symbolism. We have to show the whole community that we will not tolerate indefinitely petty crime in any area of London. We have to demonstrate that there are no places we will not go."

He went on to state that in such raids the total number of arrests was not, for him, the sole criterion by which success should be judged. One implicit meaning is straightforward; where police power is challenged, the police must not only respond to that challenge but must also be seen to respond.

For Chief Superintendent Barr the problem was bitterly clear; through refraining from taking strong action against illegal practices because of the fear of public order problems, criminal activity on Sandringham Road had dramatically increased. On top of fencing stolen goods and selling cannabis at JJ's there was by 1984 clear evidence of harder drugs, notably cocaine, coming into the 'secure market place', as well as one pub, the Lord Stanley, establishing itself as a suspected major centre for the arrangement and equipping of armed robbery. Significantly, such activities would not necessarily 'show' on crime statistics for the division. With the departure of Taylor to the City Police Force there was an almost immediate change in policy. Although openly sceptical about the value of targeting and surveillance operations, principally because of the high manpower investment per arrest and the feasibility of such work in Sandringham Road, Barr had initially persevered with a special patrol (see below) and intelligence gathering on Sandringham Road but by early 1985 was allowed to supplement this policy with a series of raids on both ends of the road. JJ's was raided on 16th February, 28th February, 19th March and 3rd June (1985) and "five or six" operations were carried out at the other end of the road as well. There is no single purpose of these raids; again the success of operations is judged by a full set of criteria:

"Firstly I would seek results, secondly the calibre of prisoner, thirdly the morale boost to avoid front line deviancy and then finally add no complaints." (Barr, private interview.)

By June 1985 Barr felt able to report in an internal memo that JJ's was,

"not the place it was in the numbers it attracts and that is without doubt due to 'raids' on the premises."

Two further aspects of police management in Hackney are noteworthy. One concerns the conspiratorial notion that because of the power of the police force, senior officers are able to control the 'passage of events'. The police have often been accused of seeking confrontation in order to justify increases in police powers (eg Bernie Grant, leader of Harringey council, speaking in the wake of the Broadwater Farm riot in 1985; Haine, 1980) and/or orchestrating public opinion to stigmatise all black people (Hall et al, 1978; Joshua and Wallace, 1983). Yet, again whilst the effects of police actions may well be those alleged, the picture that emerges from any causal study of policing 'policy' in Hackney is much more confused. Time and again during my period of observation instances occurred and occasions were recalled of decisions that were either based on pragmatic reaction or political/personal expediency.

After the political row that followed the deployment of dogs on Sandringham Road, Chief Superintendent Young, Barr's predecessor committed himself to avoiding such tactics in future. The miner's strike in 1983/84, the prison officers' dispute and the Wapping print works dispute in 1986 made sudden and drastic alterations to the manpower available to police at a local level. A scheme of Inter District Transfers to encourage individual PCs to serve in different parts of London every five years had similar, if less precipitate, effect on Stoke Newington division. Although the number of officers applying to leave was less than the London average, almost nobody would voluntarily go there on transfer. Relations with the Council and other politicians are also a major focus of management attention. In such circumstances practical exigencies ensure that management is most often

defensive and reactionary, more concerned with justifying practices and rationalising operations than with long-term policies.

Related to this essentially bureaucratic characteristic is the remarkably limited 'local knowledge' often possessed by senior officers. Serving only three years in any one post prohibits any one individual from gathering full background information about the policing history of his/her own division. When Barr first moved to Hackney in August 1983 it was in the wake of the protests over the death of Colin Roach, and it was this issue that appears to have featured principally in what (informal) briefing he received on arrival. He had never served before in Hackney and knew "little to nothing" about the development of Sandringham Road as a symbolic location. Hence, in a letter to the Commander of G District in mid-1985 he comments,

"With regard to JJ's café; this has been in operation for some six years and featured in the 1981 riots."

(in fact JJ's opened in 1972). As a result Sandringham Road was seen by Mr Barr principally in terms of crime, as being first and foremost a criminal area and only secondly as a sensitive location. The pressures of management mean that these two salient characteristics almost inevitably become consciously or subconsciously linked, history is neither suppressed nor forgotten but simply not learnt; any rioting in Sandringham Road can only be the activity of 'criminals' resenting police interference in their own professional activity.

In this context, Barr's understanding of the events of July 1981 is revealing. His predecessor, an unpopular officer notorious for going on leave at the times of the Colin Roach protest marches, had, on the orders of his superior officer, Commander Howlett, given instructions for truncheons to be drawn and the crowd on Sandringham Road charged. That was basically all Barr knew of the disorders; he had been told

that this action was considered extremely effective, he appeared unaware of the extensive looting that had occurred or the deep resentment felt by so many of those present who had been caught up in this charge.

The internal rows and the corporate politics are important not so much in themselves as for what they represent. The distinctive characteristics of bureaucratic organisation are once again present. The chain of command is neither cybernetic nor conspiratorial but is mediated by personality. Disparate aims shape managerial behaviour. Ambition and promotion-seeking would dictate a strict conformity to rules and norms which may not be related to functional policing. Being a popular 'governor' sets different problems again. Chief Superintendent Barr suggested that his position was at least clear. Because he had 'rocked the boat' too often he considered that his chances of promotion were gone. As he repeated several times,

"The worst they can do is turn around and say 'Barr, we're going to do the worst thing possible to you' and send me back to Stoke Newington for another three years."

For Barr this has the advantage of allowing him a free hand in the policing of the division, and although I shall take issue with some of his policies I would never question the integrity that lies behind them. Two strategies in particular seemed to distinguish Barr's approach. One was his determination to take action against criminal activity in Sandringham Road, already described. More revealing was the awareness of the discontent that existed among junior officers about the policing of the road. In this context he was quite candid about the sensitive issue of front line deviancy. This impression was reinforced when on one night duty a dedicated but slightly slow PC whom I had come to know well, put quite openly to me the following proposition:

"If you raid somewhere and there is this bloke, who you know pushes, standing in there and there's drugs all around him on the floor that he got rid of as you arrive, you've got a choice. Either you let him go away to spoil more lives or you say you saw him drop the bags on the floor or 'find' one of them in his pocket. That's not framing somebody. That sort of thing used to go on all the time but Roger (Barr) is particularly tough on it ... It's not worth risking my money and my career for some little shit who we will catch later anyway."

How common this sort of practice ever really was it is not possible to say, but the very attempt to curb it might be considered significant. Rightly or wrongly I personally believed from the nature of the explicit defence offered by the PC that he either had witnessed or perpetrated such behaviour and that he genuinely saw such act not as cynical malpractice but more simply in terms of naive ideals of 'justice'. It was this thin borderline between discretion and deviancy that lay behind a comment by Barr that he knew that "low profile policing" on Sandringham Road was considered degrading by many in the junior ranks and that he considered it a real danger that if he insisted on a police style there that was completely alien to the 'crime fighting' definition of 'the Job' held by many officers then "PCs will take steps to defeat that policy". In realisation of police strategy, maintaining the morale of junior officers is seen as a key goal for Barr. At one level this is obviously no more than a facet of good management, yet at another it may become dangerous if the standard of morale hinges on the settling of old scores in the guise of 'victories' on Sandringham Road.

b) Institutional complexity

At any one time only a minority of personnel at Stoke Newington are involved in relief-based patrols of the division, although it is this aspect of police work that has received greatest sociological attention. Yet the different perceptions of Sandrington Road within Stoke Newington often reflect the institutional complexity of any police station.

Space prohibits a detailed account of some of the more impressive community relations projects I witnessed. Citing just one individual, PC Steve Longhorn serves as a Community Involvement Officer (CIO) at Stoke and has worked in Hackney for almost twenty years; his connections with the 'outside' community were excellent, at times perhaps better than with the 'inside' community of his own police station. He is on speaking terms with several of the staff at Roots Pool and he sometimes, though not often, drops in there. Similarly, other police in the Youth and Community section are involved in trying to persuade local teachers to allow the police back into schools (they are barred from schools in Hackney), in work with several youth clubs and in liaison with several tenants' associations. However, there is a marked difference between the attitudes of those involved in this sort of work and many other police in the division. Overgeneralisation must be avoided but certainly PC Longhorn's awareness of the bitterness and the problems of young people in Hackney was not typical of most people I met at the station, who tended to view such 'community work' with either scepticism or scorn. Jobs such as CIO were seen as soft options, a license to go drinking. This hostility came from both junior and senior officers, with the notable exceptions of the Superintendent and Chief Superintendent. The bureaucratic compartmentalisation of 'community relations' almost seemed to be functionally independent of other sorts of policing. This comparison was dramatically reinforced one day in mid-June 1986, when, in my presence, a call came through from Special Branch to PC Longhorn demanding to know why a raid was planned on Sandringham Road the following Saturday given Newman's policy (see above), given the road's status as a 'symbolic location' and given the hot weather at the time. Though even I knew from other interviews that the raid was due, nobody on the community relations side knew anything about it.

A different voice is heard from the plain clothes officers on special squads (eg robbery squad, vice squad, drug squad, all overlapping with CID). Two examples were particularly telling. One was the public announcement of a campaign to combat street crime, particularly 'dipping', in the Ridley Road market. The Detective Inspector in charge announced at several public meetings that although the operation was to concentrate on surveillance and arrest rather than random stop and search, some 'public order problems' were to be expected and catered for. In a private conversation he explained that for him such announcements were based on experiences of resistance to arrest in the Ridley Road/Sandringham Road area. At one level such experience vindicates such announcements but at another level, and this was confirmed by the DI, such notions highlight a conception of public order problems as synonymous with criminal activity.

At another meeting I was present when a Detective Sergeant from the drugs squad was pressing Chief Superintendent Barr to raid Roots Pool. In a private conversation the DS explicitly defended a set of professional goals which placed the detention and arrest of drugs dealers as of a much higher priority than the risk of public order problems. The suggestion that such raids should bear in mind community relations ramifications on Sandringham Road was considered risible. As Barr later pointed out, similar demands are presented to him almost daily.

c) Junior Officers : Policing without consent

"One way you could stop most of the crime round here would be by closing down Sandringham Road. The crime rate would almost disappear overnight." (PC at Dalstone station.)

i) The reputation of Sandringham Road.

Two caveats must be entered with respect to comments on the attitudes and behaviour of 'streetline constables' in the Stoke Newington division. The first is that any opinion voiced here is based on both limited participant observation and prolonged exposure to the sociological literature on policing. The second is that in the fifteen to twenty formal and informal interviews of police constables in the division any generalisation that could be made was always contradicted by individuals. Notwithstanding this, the one issue on which there was most consensus at Dalstone station (a sub-division of Stoke Newington) was Sandringham Road. Hostility towards the black people who frequented the road was, with one notable exception, unanimous. Most officers were keen to differentiate between this 'location-specific' hostility and 'racism'.

The explanations of this hostility are much more varied. For some the knowledge that several police from the division have been seriously injured when making arrests and the regular abuse they receive on the Front Line are enough to generate reciprocal animosity. For others the road is deemed a 'criminal area': "They are all villains down there" one WPC claimed when suggesting that without exception anybody who walks down Sandringham Road deserved to be stopped and searched. I spent some time with two probationer PCs who had only been in the division a couple of months. Their graphic descriptions of Sandringham Road, given independently, gave the impression of a den of evil, a criminal community prepared to "declare war to protect their interests". Some other PCs gave less lurid descriptions, suggesting that the problem is principally one of,

"too many kids on the streets being a nuisance. If we could just get them off the streets and inside the place wouldn't be such a big thing to everybody."

The point is an important one. Sandringham Road signifies 'Trouble' for almost every single police officer on the division but the rationalisations and explanations of this problem differ from one individual to another, there is no single 'subcultural account'. In linguistic terms the place (Sandringham Road) becomes a sign that is easily read, explicit communication. Yet the signification process, the roots of front line, remain opaque.

It is not easy to pinpoint a date at which Sandringham Road assumed this status for local police officers. Again it was striking how little local history was known or understood by most PCs. (One extreme case was the PC who told me that, by 1986, the local black community had completely forgotten about Colin Roach). Promotions, transfers and departures ensured that by 1986 the majority of PCs at Dalstone station had not been present before 1981. However, I did speak to several of those who had. One suggested that within a few months of Johnston's opening in 1972 Sandringham Road was already a site for clashes between police and black people since by that stage there was also trouble from blues parties and shabeens. Another claimed that the violent confrontations had started when young black people began selling drugs there in the late seventies. What is certain is that before 1981 it was not unusual for crowds to gather and resist arrest or attempt to snatch back prisoners. Before 1981 'Trouble' was anticipated when policing Sandringham Road, when the rest of London was seen to burn in the summer of that year the police of G District knew in their own minds where to expect confrontation.

ii) The Sandringham Road Patrol : Challenge and response

In 1982 Chief Superintendent Young set up a special patrol for the summer months on Sandringham Road of one sergeant and eight men, operating off two reliefs (shifts), similar to the patrols already described in Notting Hill and Brixton. His successor, Mr Barr, was not keen on such patrols, worried that PCs would become "obsessed" with the problems of Sandringham Road. Partly for this reason and partly because of manpower shortages the patrol was not reintroduced in the early summer of 1986 (officially this was only a temporary measure). Officially, the pre-emption of public order problems was considered a major justification for the patrol yet it appeared in discussion with PCs who had been involved in this group that such potential was not considered particularly important for them in comparison with the 'crime problem' in the area.

Service in the group was not a popular duty. People tended to be 'volunteered' in their absence, several expressed concern about both personal safety and the high element of tedium involved in spending eight hours at a time in such a confined area. It was suggested that some on the patrol had expressed their feelings by finding excuses to leave the road when on duty and also that some officers were reluctant to make arrests there that they would make elsewhere out of personal fear rather than diplomacy. The patrol operated only in the daytime and early evening.

One of the central contradictions of the special patrol was summed up in a comment by one PC:

"I used to stand there outside Roots Pool for hours on end with my arms crossed, just staring into that place. That used to really wind them up ... they used to call me Hitler; when you next go in there ask them about Hitler."

Two points are clear. To have four policemen standing around one street for eight hours at a time could easily be seen by innocent people using the area as provocative. The very collapse of policing by consent that leads to these special patrols could be said to guarantee 'institutionalised harassment' and the criminalisation of a whole area. The second point is that the behaviour of the individual PC can not easily be faulted because such actions are doing no more than take the role of such patrols to their logical conclusion. The policemen (sic: only men are allowed on the patrol) are there to establish control of the road. This task highlights the flaw of Webber's claim in Brixton that similar patrols can prepare the ground for improved community relations. These patrols may at times be functionally essential but on the street they drive the conflict between streetline police officers and the 'habitués' of the 'symbolic location' deeper into the consciousness of both parties. That such operations can form the basis of a renewed 'contract' between police and community is implausible.

Instead of resolving conflict it is possible to manage it, contain it and prevent escalation. In the jargon of social psychology the outcome is one of 'agonistic resolution' not liberal reconciliation, hostility is sustained or even intensified but major violent clashes are averted.

There is a fundamental paradox built into the role of the PC in such situations. Because he is instructed not to make 'inflammatory arrests', because he is expected to ignore 'petty crimes' (notably car and cannabis offences), because he always must be ready to defend himself, his renowned discretion is strictly circumscribed. Never does he more explicitly symbolise state power on the streets yet never is his discretion in exercising that power more emasculated. It is this contradiction that made the Sandringham Road patrol so absurd and

unpopular in the eyes of so many of those officers who had served on that patrol, an absurdity that caused much friction between senior officers advocating this policy and those who had to enforce it.

iii) Cowboy policing?

Two incidents summed up the essential problems of policing without consent. Holly Street estate is officially designated as one of twenty London housing estates which "Have a similar potential for disorder as exhibited on Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham." These are "graded in their likelihood of spontaneous public disorder occurring" (1986, Scotland Yard, internal), the Holly Street Estate is classified as 'Medium Risk'. Late one Friday night (10.00pm), when I was in Dalstone just as the reliefs (shifts) were changing over, a call for 'urgent assistance' came through from a PC on the estate. Immediately everybody in the station jumped into the nearest available car and we all made for the estate at high speed with sirens blazing and lights flashing; nobody knew at this stage how serious the incident was. Within minutes between thirty and forty police were at the scene, cars coming from all directions, drawing groups of spectators with them. I was with the Home Beat Officer for the estate at the time and he was livid when it transpired that a fairly young PC had panicked when called to the scene of a stabbing and one of the victim's family had lost his temper and struck out.

"This is just what I don't want happening on my beat," the Home Beat Officer commented as some of the gathered crowd began to get agitated and criticise what was a clear case of police over-reaction. Yet at no time was it simple to allocate blame for the incident. I talked to members of the crowd who had gathered: "They behave like fucking cowboys round here", one middle-aged white man said to me, "A small

fight and they send in the cavalry to beat up anyone who moves." Yet the PC who had put out the call had been in a similar incident before on the same estate and been seriously injured; when they heard the call for assistance all the other police knew a friend's life was in danger, so by the very nature of the job there was no way they would hold back from a rapid and collective response to the call. The number that responded was increased by the overlapping of two shifts. The impression of the police action for the watching, and unknowing, public was wholly negative. As the Home Beat Officer suggested, "there goes a few months work down the drain," though he seemed relieved that in the tension and confusion which surrounded the incident nobody had been thumped.

On returning to the station the changeover of shifts continued for a few minutes until a second call for 'urgent assistance' came through from the same housing estate. The same deployment, the same over-reaction occurred but this time one of the abusive crowd was thumped. The incident was a secondary fight related to the first. I did not see the whole confrontation between the young black man who was arrested and the PC, but it later became obvious that he had nothing to do with the fighting parties. Possibly the PC had lost his temper in the face of more abuse, more likely in this particular case the young black man (who had been drinking) threw a punch first. Certainly he now felt aggrieved, certainly he was about to be processed (criminalised) by a legal system, definitely he had just drifted into disorder.

There has never (yet) been a riot on Holly Street Estate. However, resistance to arrest is not unusual there and police have several times lost 'prisoners' to crowds of, mostly black, youths. To understand why this occurs it is obviously necessary to go back in time to explain why the police are not readily allowed to 'do their job' on that particular

estate, why 'consent' was lost. Yet the past is lost to people trying to cope in the present.

The issue of 'levels' or 'rates' of crime that occur on an estate like Holly Street is only a secondary, complicating issue. In one sense it matters little what the rates of crime actually are if in reality it has become almost impossible to take even the limited police action possible against such problems. In these circumstances, policing with heavy support becomes the only alternative to withdrawal of police from the estate altogether (a pattern that may creep in as individual junior officers become afraid to patrol an area and individual senior officers become afraid of public disorder potential). The frequent result is the sort of 'cowboy policing' outlined, which drives conflict and confrontation into the routine of both the young black community on the estate and the police. In this sort of situation bystanders are easily drawn in; police behaviour may get out of hand; as the Home Beat Officer stated, "PCs tend to thump whoever's standing nearest"; 'knock-on' offences may proliferate. Experience of such incidents prompts police officers to stereotype a whole estate as a potential source of trouble, residents (particularly black residents), as all criminals. For many residents of the estate, old and young, black and white, such incidents confirm an impression of a police force 'out of control'. Thus 'places' are made. Once consent is lost the antagonism between police and community reinforces itself as confrontation becomes routine, a facet of institutional practice rather than individual proclivity.

iv) Front Line Deviancy

The obvious interpretation of the term 'front line deviancy' is in terms of malicious breaches of police discipline in sensitive areas.

The phenomenon is in reality much more complicated, best understood by

illustration.

On one occasion one of the more intelligent and dedicated members of the Sandringham Road patrol saw a black man in the road ostentatiously put a bag of cannabis resin in his pocket. Challenging him, the PC suggested (as is the norm in this part of the division) that he empty the bag on the street and then no further action would be taken. The man refused and when arrested tried to eat the resin. The PC grabbed hold of the man, forced his jaws open and recovered the cannabis, by which time the onlooking crowd had grown rapidly and were claiming retribution for this apparent act of police brutality. As a result of the ensuing melée, which involved the District Support Unit, the PC was informally disciplined by senior officers and warned that if he were to become involved in a similar incident again stronger action would be taken against him. His bitterness, in part directed at senior officers, had quite obviously shaped his attitude towards the whole road; I was left in no doubt that the incident had not been forgotten.

Scores were undoubtedly payed off in the wake of the disorders of 1981. I spoke at length to one PC about the pursuit of several of the rioters into JJ's. This was by now several years later and there was quite possibly some exaggeration in his dramatic account, but again it was explained to me in detail that little effort was made to avoid damaging the premises in this pursuit; 'summary justice' was done.

Location is a vital element in understanding conflict. The 'right of the police to police' Sandringham Road has regularly been challenged for a long time; front line deviancy is primarily the lower ranks' occasional response to that challenge. Rioting in 1981 was in this sense both a symptom and a realisation of this conflict as well as a mechanism by which this hostility became yet further entrenched.

CHAPTER SIX

THE REALISATION OF SOCIAL CONFLICT IN SPACE

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 - c) Front Lines and the 'Sanctuary Effect' : Power Relations Inverted
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- 3 THE STAGE : RIOTING AS EXTEMPORISED DRAMA
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 - a) Immediate Response Units/District Support Units
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- 6 THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF CONFLICT
 - a) Routine and the Escalation of Violence
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- 7 IDEOLOGIES OF RESISTANCE : RATIONALISING RIOTS
 - a) Police Rationalisations, Rationalisations of Police Work
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- 8 CONCLUSION

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Points to one end, which is always present.

From T.S.Eliot *Burnt Norton*

Study of the policing histories of the three locations that witnessed some of the worst rioting in London in 1981 reveals the importance of the local context in the timing, nature and extent of the transformation of police/black conflict into a full scale riot. In generalising from such variations this chapter attempts to demonstrate that:

- 1 Rioting is most readily understood as the violent rejection of the traditional police/policed power relation; a relation that is constituted and challenged in everyday life at particular 'locales'.
- 2 Places act as signs. For a local community these signs are tied to the set of affective associations based on the local history of that 'place' (past processes), for the police these signs are read as guides for behaviour (present action) based on the internally defined (expressive) criteria for good policing.
- 3 Understanding the way in which particular 'places' signify specific meanings (spatial semiology) is the key to understanding the social processes that constitute the development of conflict. Only by thus revealing the reproduction and transformation of power relations in such places is it possible to understand the genesis of the 1981 riots. In this way the set of analytical problems outlined in chapters one and two concerning the status of 'the crowd' as an analytical unit, the status of rioting as a social movement, and notions of riot causation, can be resolved.

Police responses to rioting confirm the notion of a power struggle

based on specific 'symbolic locations', though do not do so intentionally. The policies that have been formulated in such locations, often accidentally, do not so much win back the 'consent to police' that has been withdrawn as impose police authority.

5 In this imposition the police role as an agent of social control is paramount. As a result, the police/black conflict is driven yet further into the institutional practice of policing and the practical consciousness of black communities in London. In these circumstances factors such as the personal racialism or the professional commitment of individual police officers can not necessarily impinge greatly on the police/black conflict per se, only on the way in which this conflict manifests itself.

6 The incidence of riots affects subsequent actions of both police and local communities but not in any straightforward sense. Instead the rioting is 'reconstructed' as part of the social reality of different interest groups (the public life of a riot). These reconstructions, cultural phenomena, reflect ideological conceptions of rioting as a behavioural form. Consequently when two people talk about 'the riots of 1981' they are not necessarily talking about the same 'thing'.

BUILDING STAGES FOR CONFRONTATION : POWER RELATIONS AND POLICING

1) The Reproduction of Power Relations in Everyday Life:

"It flows from the nature of police work that it is important for officers to keep control in any encounter".

(Smith and Gray, 1983, p66)

The ultimate sanction available to any police officer in dealing with members of the public is the legitimate use of force. In the final analysis this is the fundamental basis of 'police power', a resource that underwrites every single contact between police and public. Ideally, the 'control' alluded to by Smith and Gray is sustained by the professional management of encounters, the sort of micro-sociology of face engagements analysed in detail by Goffman (1971,1972). In my own observations several PCs were highly skilled at weighing up situations and defusing potential problems through such pragmatism. (For the study of such behaviour in police generally see Cain,1973; Skolnick,1966; Manning,1977; Holdaway,1983). As Smith and Gray go on to suggest,

"The strategies used by the best police officers are the ones that would emerge from a social psychology text book"(1983,p67),

namely responses to a situation that are impassive, thoughtful, receptive, watchful, sceptical, not voluble and using eye to eye contact the whole time in order not to lose a grip on an encounter.

Giddens (1984,1979) has regularly stressed the point that it is such mundane performances that subsume the whole process of social reproduction. Institutional forms, social rules and norms, power relations and interpretative schema are all implicated in the duree (routine) of everyday life. In this way any single interaction involving a police officer can be seen to operate on at least two levels (see Diagram 6.1). On the level of manifest content a meeting may be purely functional but through the repetition of such practice the police/policed relation is reproduced, reinforced or even, in the process of structuration, redefined. In the policing of a democratic society this power relationship is in principle more complex than an exercise in coercion, resting ultimately on the institutionally embedded historical role of the police as both social service and an agent of social control. Hence in a non-Utopian society the police will always

Police and Public : The 'Content' of Routine Interaction

Manifest Content: Functional policing (the 'purpose' of interaction : stop, arrest, caution, advise, etc.

Latent Content: Social reproduction (defining and redefining the role of police in society).

Reproduction of power relations (the 'internal' relation between police and the policed).

The manifest content will normally only produce conflict with individuals transgressing particular 'laws'. The latent content of police action may involve conflict with social groups. This phenomenon may involve potential as well as actual conflict (raising questions of the perception of the police by the policed, legitimation, hegemony), and covert as well as overt conflict (concerning the 'interests' of those groups involved, depending on the relation of the police institution to the state and changes in this relation).

(for elaboration of concepts see Lukes 1974; Giddens, 1984)

at best be the upholders of a transparently flawed status quo. It is this defence that creates the genuine distinction between law and order, the police as both 'crime-fighters' and enforcers of one particular social and moral order, a dichotomy that echoes in the tension between the community of interest in combating certain offences and a common ambivalence towards a great many of the laws that define such 'crimes'. (The mismatch between what is criminal in law and criminal in sentiment).

The reconciliation of such uncertainties by the police constable forms part of the process by which 'the job' is redefined and internally regulated within the police service. As in other 'occupational cultures' the lower ranks, through a system of rules and norms, have a far greater license than the strict managerial structure would suggest (Harré, 1979). Partly as a result of this, the behaviour of a police officer towards individual members of the public will be conditioned by a set of expectations based on the classification of that individual and the setting in which the interaction takes place. The 'moral career' of the individual PC (see Harré, 1979 and chapter two supra) will depend as much on the protection and enhancement of status in the expressive realm of respect and contempt in such encounters over time as in the practical realm of functional policing. Being 'had over' or 'wound up' by a prisoner will constitute a loss of face, over-reaction will be ridiculed; when the PC driving me in the Dalstone car made an idiot of himself in a chase he was more concerned with personal reputation than with the escaped 'villain'. Kudos can take precedence over catching criminals. Within Dalstone station one of the most respected PCs was a well-built Scotsman, renowned for his displays of physical courage on Sandringham Road, his drinking and his generally gregarious manner. An industrious, conscientious but more reticent sergeant was scornfully referred to as 'the wandering genie' (having lost his bottle), whilst a

WPS on the graduate escalated promotion scheme was less popular still. The social hierarchy neither reflects the managerial structure nor conforms to the goals of that structure.

The reproduction of power relations is thus not necessarily a conscious part of the PC's role but is built into the sub-cultural definition of doing the job well and being seen to sustain 'the respect' of the police service, which incidentally reproduces the police role within society at large.

b) Spatial and Social Categorisation

In order to sustain control and respect in encounters, the police officer has to adjust his/her behaviour to the individual with whom he/she is dealing. The sergeant who explained to me that he had received the first of many broken noses when addressing somebody in the East End as 'Sir' highlights the need as well as the inevitability of developing a cast of 'typical characters' that must be handled, a cast that is stereotypical by definition. Hence, as Holdaway (1983) points out, doctors, lawyers, teachers and social workers are often classified as 'challengers' and, as the PSI (1985) confirmed, the poorer and powerless sections of society are often referred to as 'slag'. The struggle of the individual to elude his/her label is not confined to police work. It is a struggle in which racial stereotyping (black youths as noisy, truculent, violent) can falsely justify itself (Solomos, 1984) and it is a cultural process for which white society generally is as responsible as any sub-cultural pathology within the police force.

Space too is categorised in this process. In James' (1979) comparison of senior and junior management definitions of

'professionalism' the attitude towards the area covered by the division is telling. Under the model of 'practical professionalism' (junior ranks),

"the police have a prior and absolute claim to control the geographical territory within which they work".

Ironically, the definition by PCs of spatial control and territoriality so stressed by James and confirmed by Holdaway (both police officers at the time of their research) implies a conception of the social control aspect of police work which closely resembles a radical or Marxist definition of the function of the British police force (see Diagram 6.2). This conceptual division of space, producing a 'mental map' of the policed area, influences contact with ethnic minorities in two significant and divisive respects.

First, the normative division of the population is reinforced by a spatial division of expected routines. Expectations of the spatial 'daily path' (Pred, 1981) of distinct groups inform police conceptions of suspicious behaviour. A revealing comment is highlighted by Smith and Gray (1983, p129):

"If I saw a black man walking through Wimbledon High Street I would definitely stop him. Course down here it's a common sight, so there's no point."

Quite literally, there is a place for everyone and everyone is expected to be in their place. Anyone who deviates from the expected social orbit is by definition suspicious. As part of this process the geography of suspicious persons can reinforce a perceived norm of social and racial segregation via the process of criminalisation (see Gilroy 1982 on the relationship between SUS and ghettoization; Christian 1983).

Secondly, distinct 'places' within an area will be classified in order to contextualise the appropriate police behaviour at particular sites. Holdaway suggests that,

MANAGERIAL PROFESSIONALISM

PRACTICAL PROFESSIONALISM

THEORY OF POLICING	Specialist squads of PCs. Local knowledge of patterns of offence vital.	Practical activity of policing (arresting offenders) takes priority over local knowledge.
TECHNOLOGY	Information storage based on technical aids assist in build up of information prior and subsequent to arrests.	Action orientation (scuffle, chase, fast drive) form basis of police work. Technology useful but of secondary importance.
INFORMED DISCRETION	Slow build up of knowledge before arrests made. Discretionary decision to arrest based on judgement in relation to judicial evidence.	DISCRETION Speedy arrest of suspect, later questioned in confines of police station takes precedence over method of slow build up of evidence by observation.
RULE OF LAW	Extra-legal techniques of control unnecessary; evidence gained before arrests and so questioning after arrest reduced. Policing can and should be performed within the rule of law.	Extra-legal techniques of gaining evidence accepted as necessary. Violence and pressurising of suspects are two routine examples of such techniques.
CRITERIA OF SUCCESS	Crime arrests one of several measures of success. Clear up rates takes second place to policing within the law.	Arrests provide primary measure of successful policing and achieve esteem for the officers concerned.
CRITERIA OF CONTROL	<u>"The police share their function of control with other agencies; they have no absolute claim to control over a geographical territory".</u>	<u>"The police have a prior and absolute claim to control the geographical territory within which they work".</u>
RACE RELATIONS	Some policemen discriminate against blacks. The definitions of managerial professionalism help eradicate such discrimination.	The police do not discriminate against blacks.

The contrasting definitions and perceptions of 'The Job'
by senior and junior police officers

Diagram 6.2

The diagram is taken from D James
"Police-black relations: the professional solution."(1979)

"The area policed from Hilton station, the ground as they call it, belongs to the police. They possess it; it is their territory and members of the force from adjoining stations have no right of entry into or patrol of the ground save by invitation ... the view of Hilton as police controlled territory forms one central organising principle of a mental map which officers use to order their work in the subdivision."(1983,p36)

He outlines a typology of sites of danger, sites of trouble, sites of work, mump holes ('places' to escape work), sites of interest and home territories. Again it is important to note that in intent and in its functional roots such practice is not deliberately racist. But yet again through the form of the job the essential perceptual mapping of space, along with all its divisive ramifications, is stereotypical incidentally rather than deliberately, racist in effect even if not racist in cause. Black social centres and social events become labelled as variously foci for political agitators (1960s,London) scenes of mugging, drug dealing and street crime (1970s, London) and/or potential sites of public disorder (1980s,London), as the conflict between police and black people becomes part of police routine.

c) Front Lines and the 'Sanctuary Effect' : Power Relations Inverted

One way of understanding the creation of 'front line' areas is in the vocabulary of time-geography. In a very obvious sense the concentration of social functions principally used by black people reflects the realisation of a racialised social system in terms of space-time convergence, with the clubs and shabeens acting as 'stations' or 'locales' characterised by 'bundles' of interaction constrained by 'presence-availability' and the 'packing of space-time' (see Carlstein, Parkes and Thrift, 1978; Hagerstrand, 1978, 1983; Pred,1977,1981).

However if time-geography is to provide any conceptual base for analysis as well as an analytical glossary two aspects must be stressed (for elaboration see Giddens 1985). One is the traditionally weakly

developed theory of power within time-geography. The social centres ('locales') on front line are 'places' where the role of black people in Britain is acted, re-enacted, defined and re-defined, every day. An integral part of that role (an integral part of the umwelt) is the relationship with the police, which has deteriorated steadily for more than thirty years through the combined influences of racism, marginalisation, labelling and criminalisation already outlined. The fundamental point to grasp about the locales on front line is not that police/black relations are worse on All Saints Road, Railton Road or Sandringham Road than anywhere else in the surrounding area. It is rather that these are the locales at which resentment of power relations is transformed into resistance of power relations. It is not just as Giddens puts it that

"back regions are zones in which agents recover forms of autonomy which are compromised or treated in frontal contexts"(1985,p278),

but that the power relation which is taken for granted across other parts of London is challenged as a matter of practice within a particular context. Crucially, such challenges become a part of routine long before any incidence of collective disorder in Notting Hill, Brixton or Hackney.

The form which such challenges assumed was fairly limited throughout the sixties and seventies on All Saints Road and throughout the seventies on Railton Road and Sandringham Road. Somebody would be arrested, a crowd would gather and try, often successfully, to snatch back the prisoner. Alternatively, in attempting to effect an arrest a PC would chase an individual, normally young and black, into a cafe or club and would be physically beaten off by the people using that facility.

The second point that must be built into any time-geographical

analysis is that,

"even if it is plainly bracketed, temporally and spatially - no strip of interaction can be understood on its own."

Giddens, 1985, p292)

The rhetoric and dramatic realisation of struggles for the control of front line highlight the remarkable similarity between the perceptions of junior police officers and the voices of many black people in such areas. The notions of Holdaway, James, Smith and Gray concerning police claims to territorial exclusivity are exactly mirrored by the Brixton Rastafarian Collective's description of the police as a force of occupation within Britain's internal colonies. For the police, resistance of arrest and other attacks are normally rationalised in the stereotyping of front lines as criminal areas. Yet for people on front line the whole relevance of functional policing is overshadowed by the context of the encounter. The manifest content of a police action (taking action against criminal activity) is lost in the significance of the latent content of the same behaviour (enforcing social order). It is quite simply not possible to see black reaction to any police action on All Saints Road as divorced from a thirty year history of injustice and repression. History weighs down on the present day. The Mangrove is a sign, a symbol of that history.

One result of such locationally specific challenges to authority is the creation of what I shall call a 'sanctuary effect' in certain areas on the front line. When the prerogative of the police is challenged on such a regular basis the reality of the power relation is inverted. Junior officers will become afraid to make arrests in certain areas at certain times out of concern for personal safety. When senior officers, fearing public order problems, build the precedence of public order over law enforcement into formal policy they effectively sanction this inversion. This change is openly exploited on the front line. 'Challenges' become part of the routine because of what the police/black

interaction symbolises. Often, all the challenging crowd see is a policeman chasing a black man and they immediately interpret the situation in a particular way for the reasons already cited. Petty criminals readily exploit this situation. The cases in Brixton of bag snatchers who were seen to use Railton Road as a safe haven and the open selling of cannabis are clear examples of this. The use of the Lord Stanley for the sale of arms and the organised crime trade in heroin and cocaine are the more sinister and secondary forms of the same phenomenon. The fact that police moves against such operations are resisted by local people is greeted with bewilderment and cynicism by senior officers, who then subscribe to stereotypes of the whole area, often genuinely unaware of the historical context of their action, the existence of the 'different reality' that informs the life of Black Britain.

Once front line has developed into a sanctuary the conflict between the police and the black community is driven further into the institutional practice of the police. Because authority is successfully challenged so regularly it becomes a priority for many police of all ranks to re-establish control. Symbolic raids or 'fishing raids' are often seen as one example of appropriate response. I was told time and again by both PCs and local black people that such operations are regarded by both parties as ostentatious demonstrations of police authority and by some senior officers that it is important to 'fly the flag' in this way. (Other senior officers would strongly disagree with this tactic.) Even when the purpose of raids in front line locales may be wholly functional (eg Railton Road raids in July 1981, Sandringham Road raid July 1981) it is quite possible for PCs to subvert the manifest purpose of such actions by emphasising their own latent purpose, settling old scores and "not paying too much attention to the furniture" (PC in Hackney). The concept of 'front line deviancy' was

developed by senior police officers themselves to describe such behaviour. Again it is note worthy that there were signs of the development of such confrontations in all three case study locations long before 1981, although rioting was to intensify this tit for tat process.

At any one time there is a high degree of uncertainty about the 'real' state of power relations in such areas and so both police officers and 'front liners' are never sure 'how far they can go'; the relation is continually being redefined, the boundaries of 'normal behaviour' continually renegotiated. A classic illustration of this point occurred in a police car in Dalstone when I explained to the driver, on being asked about Notting Hill, the regulation about no cars being allowed to patrol on All Saints Road at one time. The driver, who had not heard of this, was surprised, saying that he thought such policies disgraceful and that if ordered to do likewise on Sandringham Road he would refuse to conform with such instructions. We immediately drove to Sandringham Road (at about 1.30am on a Saturday night/Sunday morning) and stopped a car in what was clearly a performance for my benefit. The black driver of the stopped car could not prove that he owned the vehicle (he was not the registered owner though the car was not listed as stolen), he had no driving licence, the car was untaxed and clearly not roadworthy. However, some ten to fifteen spectators had immediately gathered and their number was growing steadily. Whilst not physically threatening the police operator (the second member of the car crew with responsibility for such questioning), they were openly hostile to our presence. The operator, none too impressed by his own driver's demonstration, let the Sandringham Road driver off with a warning, clearly an abnormal decision in the light of his many violations, clearly understandable in the light of the attitude of the crowd, which had by then doubled in size.

Although the events of July 1981 in Brixton, Hackney and possibly Notting Hill could be described as 'riots' and although the sites of conflict were clearly similar in many respects, the respective clashes demonstrated the very different status of police authority in the three locations. The control of All Saints Road was never really contested by the police and this was much resented by many local PCs. In Railton Road in April 1981 a very common interpretation of events was that the authority of the police was clearly seen to be usurped. In Hackney, successful challenges to police practice had become common but in the final analysis police were seen to be in the ascendancy on Sandringham Road. The internal disagreements within the police in Stoke Newington can be seen in part as a re-evaluation of the status of Sandringham Road in the light of these disorders. In this sense the very obvious animosity that characterised the minimal disorders of Battersea and Wandsworth could be understood in terms of the relative immaturity of the police/black conflict in those areas, which had deprived both parties of a suitable scene for the transformation of manifest conflict into much more serious open confrontation.

d) The Collapse of 'Policing by Consent'

Diagram 6.3 illustrates the pattern that has characterised the growing gulf between police and black communities across London. The central contradiction behind all police work (law v order) will need an ideological support to sustain the police role as a widely accepted and legitimate social service (Hall et al, 1978; CCCS, 1978, 1982; Burgess, 1985). Faced with the reality of racism, and structurally positioned within British society to come out poorly from this central contradiction, a growing number of black individuals had withdrawn their consent to the police by the mid-1960s and early 1970s. The

The Collapse of Policing by Consent

The fundamental policing contradiction:

Community of interest
(Crime/Law)
-v-
Conflict of interest
(Social Order)

Legitimation

Support
for police
actions

Black experience of policing

Reality
-v-
Rhetoric

because of i) Racism
ii) Social injustice

Legitimation Crisis

Power relations challenged

First clashes between black
people and the police

Building stages for confrontation

The growth of 'front lines'
The institutionalisation of conflict

THE RIOT

Extemporised drama?

Popular mobilisation
against the police.

Diagram 6.3

police/black conflict dates back a long way.

However, the simple withdrawal of consent is never enough to provoke open confrontation. Conflict is bound up as much in the space in which it is realised as in the time in which it is generated. The element of time is crucial because it takes so long to progress along the path of the diagram. Because conflict is realised in space it becomes 'local' by definition, even when the experience of conflict is national, or at least metropolitan.

The CRE (1981) remarked to Lord Scarman that it was not that riots had occurred that was remarkable, it was that they had taken so long to occur. The reason for this is rooted in the fact that most people are reluctant to take to the streets. There is a wide gap that separates open animosity towards the police from a predisposition towards collective violent disorder. This evolution of conflict, spatially realised, preceded the incidence of collective disorder across London. Quite literally this evolution set the scene for rioting.

3. THE STAGE : RIOTING AS EXTEMPORISED DRAMA

One of the dangers of stressing the dramaturgical metaphor of Goffman is that space and particular places will be seen as explicitly communicative settings for social action. I would suggest that this is very far from the case; places act as signs but the symbolism is read in very different ways by those deciphering the 'spatiality' of social life (Soja, 1985). This is not simply a question of ambiguity (cf Olssen, 1978) but a matter of the proliferation of meaning (see supra chapter two) which can be reconciled with dramaturgical analysis by borrowing

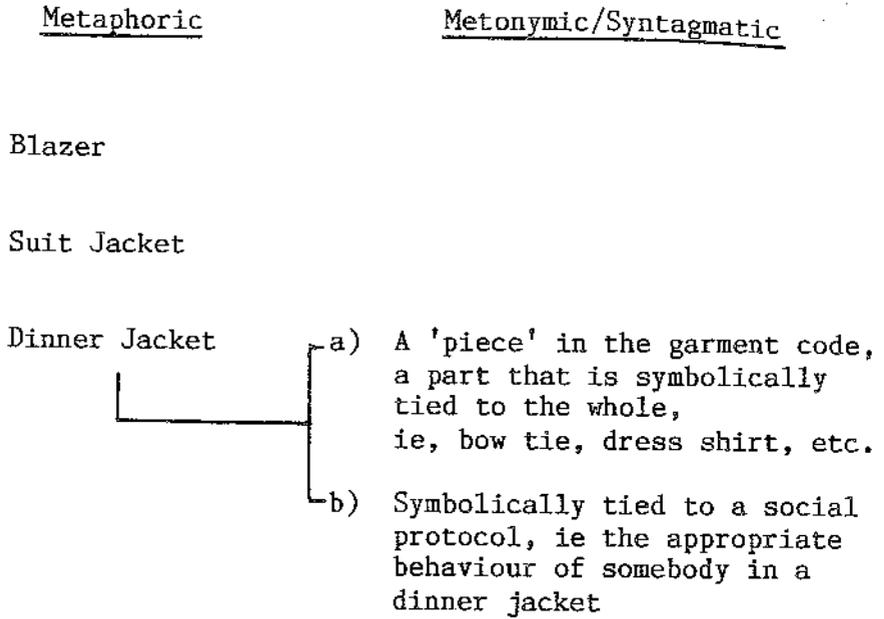
some of the concepts developed in the field of continental structuralism and semiology (Barthes, 1971, 1973; Eco, 1977).

a) 'Places' as 'Signs'

'Places' form part of our cultural shorthand. Expectations of particular patterns of behaviour are contextualised by location, each location may have certain historical associations, trigger a Proustian process of recall. Significantly, in such 'readings' of the social world the tension between individual apprehension of and socially given meaning is as problematic in Vadian studies of 'a sense of place' as in other studies of human behaviour (cf Buttner, 1974, 1978; Gregory, 1978, 1981). The memories bound up in a particular place may be the property of one, two or a handful of people. The significations of the Somme battlefield may be vicariously accessible to Western European culture generally, tied by the experiences of real and imagined relatives, whilst the symbolic power of Hiroshima is self-evidently universal. Places may act as signs but the messages they communicate will not be the same for everybody who reads them.

Returning to the linguistic paradigm (see supra chapter two) the three 'symbolic locations' can be seen as metaphorically linked. They are not precise replications of each other, but in terms of the sign systems involved they are almost mutually interchangeable (see Diagram 6.4). But it is the property of metonymy that most clearly renders comprehensible the set of actions that recur when police authority is challenged. For many black people who live in Notting Hill, Brixton and Hackney any police action at all will trigger off a set of mental associations about the relationship between black people and the police, when any police action at all is set in the context of front line, the signification is that much more powerful, the sense of injustice at the

CLOTHING:



SPATIAL SEMIOLOGY:

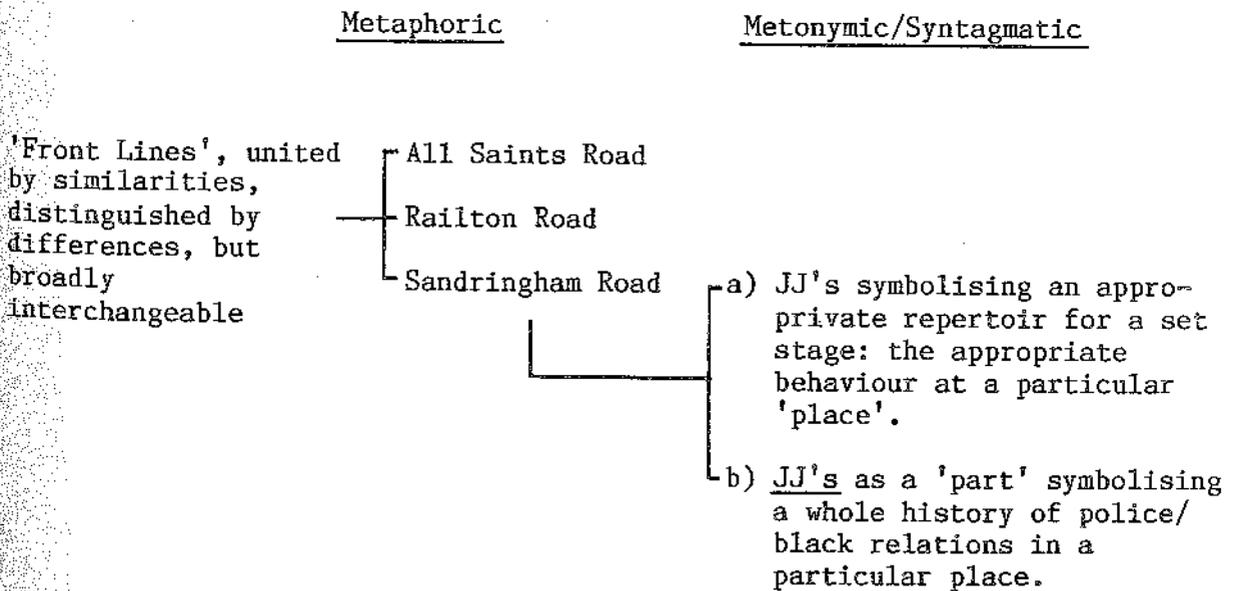


Diagram 6.4

Two dimensions of linguistic and symbolic representation

(For theoretical background see Chapter Two)

'different reality' of Black Britain (see Bhavnani et al, 1986) is overwhelming. For black people in particular parts of London that reality is bound up in particular locations, history is deeply imbedded in the places in which that history was enacted.

For the police, a completely different set of codes and messages are based on exactly the same set of locations. All Saints Road and Railton Road have a renown that stretches throughout the Metropolitan Police, the 'canteen mythology' of Notting Hill that a senior officer there described to me. For junior officers these places are the sites of regular 'attacks' on the police by black people. Such associations may or may not be rationalised in terms of racist 'folk psychology' depending on the individual, significantly these rationalisations (both the racist and non-racist ones) may well not alter police behaviour on such 'stages'. Moreover, even for those individuals keen to learn, the rapid three year turnover rate of senior officers will frequently constrict any understanding of local history among senior management. For all ranks the sedimentation of history in particular places remains of little interest.

Thus in terms of social theory a distinction could be made between the metonymic¹ (historical) and the syntagmatic² (operating principally in the present) modes of linguistic symbolism. Black perceptions are constructed as a form of local knowledge (cf Geertz 1973, 1982) and are

1 Metonymy "Substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant (eg crown for king, turf for racing)." Concise Oxford Dictionary.

2 Syntagm "Word or phrase form in syntactic unit; orderly collection of statements" Concise Oxford Dictionary.

fundamentally metonymic in the reading of the social world; the police action seen as part of a historical whole, invoking a twenty to thirty year history of black experience in a particular 'place'. For the police, operational goals have priority and 'place' as a sign is read syntagmatically; the action as part of an expected sequence, an anticipated repertoire of behaviour that occurs wholly in the present and characterises a particular location. It is this very structure of police practice in such areas that guarantees that the policing institution acts as a 'machine for the suppression of time', history is lost.

It is of paramount importance to acknowledge that such symbolism, such evocative properties of places, are not 'summoned up' by the individual. As Goffman and many others (eg Marsh et al, 1978; Harré, 1979), have demonstrated, the reading of such spatial signs is not reflexively monitored but is either part of subconscious or 'practical conscious' apprehension of the world in which we live (see chapter two supra). Such powerful affective connections between places and our understandings of those places are inseparable, precisely because we internally define these places by this set of mental cross-references.

b) Riot processes : Trigger events and the escalation of violence

The most serious disturbances of 1980 and 1981 shared many similarities, particularly in the escalation of violence. Most descriptions of the major 'riots' consider the events that immediately precede trouble, the triggers to violence, as either irrelevant or inconsequential. They are normally characterised in terms of metaphoric combustibility, merely the spark that causes the inevitable fire (eg Hytner, 1981, 33.6) "the spark that led to the conflagration", (Scarman,

1981,8.9, "the spark" that led to the rioting). Whilst it would be facile to overestimate the importance of the single instance, any explanation of rioting is incomplete unless it can account for the manner in which seemingly trivial incidents develop into major forms of collective destruction. Central to such a thesis is a rejection of the behaviourist conception of violence as some form of pressure release and an assumption that in crowd situations violence is both rational and meaningful. It is the suggestion here that an understanding of the relationship between action and location, based on a form of spatial semiology, can render such behaviour rational and meaningful whilst simultaneously not losing sight of the wider social context in which such behaviour is set.

With the notable exception of Moss Side, Manchester, the basic early chronology of most of the major disorders of 1980 and 1981 has been relatively clearly established even where there is controversy over the sequence of events that followed on from the initial trigger.

In April 1980 a protracted police raid on the Black and White café, at the centre of black settlement in Bristol, led to the St Paul's riot. In April and July 1981 three separate incidents, widely interpreted as examples of wrongful arrest in Railton Road in Brixton, resulted in three instances of massive 'mobilisation' against the police. In July 1981 a well-known local young black man, suspected of stealing a motorcycle, was stopped late at night in Princes Avenue, close to the Amberley Street/Upper Parliament Street heart of Liverpool 8, an area that was later erroneously described as Toxteth. He was subsequently charged with two counts of Grievous Bodily Harm and one of Assault against the three police officers involved in his arrest. The motorcycle was his own, the scenes that surrounded his apprehension turned into full scale rioting. In London, on the same day, the arrival

of large numbers of National Front supporters at a centre of Asian settlement in Southall for a pop concert, and their subsequent behaviour, induced a violent reaction against both the arrivals and the police force who tried to intervene in this conflict. In Hackney the attempt to disperse a crowd that had gathered outside Johnson's (JJ's) cafe in Sandringham Road resulted in a major conflict with the police and widespread looting. Only in one of the most serious incidents of disorder in London, that of Wood Green, where the smashing of a shop window prompted extensive looting, did the trigger not involve the violent confrontation of two parties. Any understanding of the escalation of violence obviously rests on an ability to divine the feelings and perceptions of those who reacted to these 'trigger events'.

There is a fundamental problem relating to all historical reconstruction that tends to be lost in the vagaries of methodological discussion. Both in understanding somebody's actions and in evaluating a symbolic event one is effectively 'reading' the social world. Problematically, the social equivalent of the basic 'speech act' or 'parole' is surrounded by exactly the same complexities as those faced in the philosophy of language (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1983, 1984; Eco, 1977). Actions have preferred descriptions. Even if a major element of the rioting is the conflict between the black community and the police, the action of throwing a petrol bomb may be considered by one person as avenging a specific insult, by another as a blow against thirty years of racial harassment and by yet another as a blow against white society in general. More pertinently, it would be unusual if any one individual in such a situation did not consider that he was doing more than one such thing at the same time. Motives may be rationalised into neat lists post hoc, but tend to be much more complicated in realisation. This is the power of 'mental direction', in essence the problem that intentionality sets to any study of the social world, prohibiting glib

statements about the relationship between mental states and physical behaviour (see supra chapters two and three).

The arrests that precipitated rioting in Bristol, Liverpool and London may have been ostensibly commonplace events but, more importantly, they took place in a specific context, which endowed the straightforward action of arrest with a far greater symbolic power than normal, a context defined by time and place. The police force represent in part the state's claim to a monopoly of legitimate violence, the rioting is in part a rare, if resounding, rejection of this claim, yet it is not a rejection that is made equally by all sections of society, rather it is dependent on such factors as age, gender and the scene which provides a backdrop to the trigger. It was significant that the rioting in 1980 and 1981 was confined to very small areas of cities and was not obviously linked to any consciously articulated social movement; those involved tended to live very close to the scene of the disturbance.

Arguably, the trigger is interpreted metonymically by those who either see it or hear about it. It is an act which is representative simultaneously of both a general situation and particular grievances, it is an act to which violence is a response sanctioned by a large enough crowd of people to constitute collective disorder. This does not mean that violence is sanctioned by all present, as has already been suggested the propriety of violence does not vary arbitrarily between different age groups, genders or even times of day. Nor does it mean that this action of violence is considered the same act by all involved, the preferred descriptions of the same actions may be traced to differing intentional states. However, the reading of the signification of the trigger event must be sufficiently clear to induce collective action. Within the 'social language' of a particular area at a

particular time the trigger is read similarly by a large number of people.

It is because the trigger incident is taken as a single item, which in part symbolises a much larger whole, that the question, 'Do people riot because of police or unemployment or greed?', or any other neat reason, is quite literally meaningless. Such precise categorisations and partitions find no equivalents in the structure of action. So, although it is vital to understand the perception of those involved in rioting, it is very difficult merely to cite a collective that is called 'the rioters' and try and discern some straightforward average or communal 'perception' for this group. Perception studies (eg Downs and Stea, 1977) have tended to be based on an assumption that perception may be generalised for 'homogeneous' groups. This assumption is a dangerous half-truth, both because any one actor belongs to many such groups (eg profession, gender, family, age group, etc) and so such classification is at best partial, at worst stereotypical, but also more importantly because it misrepresents the fundamental problem of any language, be it literal social or perceptual. For it is in the very nature of language that it facilitates communication, but equally guarantees communication breakdown between any two individuals. The medium itself only exists by its system of differences and similarities that is contingent upon both context and subjectivity. The negotiation and evaluation of space that informs the social language constitutes part of this context.

Upper Parliament Street, All Saints Road, Railton Road, Sandringham Road and Grosvenor Road (site of the Black and White cafe) were all community foci. The superficially different rioting in Southall occurred as a direct result of an influx of National Front supporters into the centre of an Asian community, an influx so widely read as one more racist violation that it prompted a violent response which rapidly

turned on the police, not as vicarious target, but because it was considered by a large enough number of those present that police had singularly failed to protect the Asian community from attacks, not only in London in general but in their own homes in particular. Similarly, as an eyewitness to serious rioting in Brixton in 1982, 1983 and 1985, and Tottenham in 1985, a common theme that ran through the chilling events on each occasion was the repetition of the claims that in avenging grievances, attacking the police in those particular circumstances was fully justified; the forceful and fearful realisation that the gruesome events of those nights were not the result of some criminal force majeure (not discounting the presence of large numbers of looters and others joining in 'for fun') but the violence was being accounted for by fully rational individuals as the 'proper' way to behave. It is not necessary to make a value judgement about such accounts, other than to establish their sincerity. Nor is there a suggestion that all rioters felt in this particular way, rather a contention that such feelings were common and crucially relevant to the transformation of situations of tension and occasional resistance to arrest into scenes in which many hundreds of people became involved in full scale confrontations with the police. In this way such confrontations were, in the first instance, very often parochial and defensive in nature.

There is also clear evidence that when this confrontation occurs the collapse of public order will very often be seized upon to facilitate looting and other criminal activities. In this way most riots tend to move toward some approximate equifinal product. Allowed to escalate, one looks very much like another, regardless of its roots. It has already been suggested (chapter three) that given the fact that riots often produce the perfect 'safe' criminal environment, such pragmatic, opportunistic behaviour is almost to be expected, which coincides well

with late twentieth century criminologists' notions of opportunity-based crime rates. In Chapters Three and Four this analysis was supported by both chronological evidence that in almost every instance of serious rioting, looting followed at some time after the initial disorder and the fact that the sort of people involved with looting offences was significantly different from those involved in the clashes with the police.

Trigger events are not epiphenomenal or incidental to the development of violence. They provide a key to the signification of action, the meaning of the riot set against its spatial and social context.

4 RIOTING AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

a) Intension/Extension and the Status of 'The Crowd' as an Analytical Unit

Understanding the processes that underwrite the escalation of violence helps to clarify the status of 'the crowd' in analysis (see chapters one and two supra). In the study of social action the relevance and ontological powers of such units will depend on the relationship between intension and extension in defining the unit itself (see Harré, 1979). A human behavioural set of minimum extension would consist of 'the individual' whose characteristics are, pace subconscious influences, broadly unitary; hence the set is also representative of maximum intension. The number of characteristics that is shared by a group of humans must inevitably decrease as the size of the set increases and the parameters that define that set are relaxed. Hence extension increases as intension decreases.

Just as extension and intension are in inverse proportion to one another, the probability of a shared 'social language' with similar intentional states (shared perceptions) decreases rapidly as extension increases. Put simply, the preferred descriptions of actions and events (including the action of throwing a petrol bomb) are likely to be similar only when behavioural sets show maximum feasible intension and minimum feasible extension.

In the case of rioting as a generic activity, the smallest analytical division, 'the rioter', can be defined by a series of averages calculated from those known to be on 'the streets' at the time, thus creating a set of extreme extension. Individuals in this set will interpret any one action in terms of widely differing intentional states. Poor explanations may select a couple of normatively derived salient characteristics from such meaningless averages and then 'subject' these straw men to explanation. Such analysis is flawed, partly because the term rioting covers so many different activities that are not randomly distributed among members of 'the crowd' (see supra chapters three and four), but also because by explaining the creation of the actors constituting 'the crowd' rather than the actions with which they are involved, 'the crowd' is endowed with a unity of purpose, is itself given the status of a social actor (eg Castells, 1983, on the US riots of the 1960s).

The reality of London in 1981 was much different. The rioters, at least those involved in confronting the police, shared a similar interpretation or 'reading' of the nature of incipient disorder, so much so that they considered violence an appropriate response. The reasons why they shared such perceptions were not wholly because of the shared experience of being 'Black and British', shared experience that is part of the 'different reality' already mentioned. In particular locations

the violent challenges to the police prerogative had become routine rather than exceptional. Because black resistance was locationally specific, the escalation of this conflict in the context of such elaborately prepared stage sets was no more than a novel, but not surprising, part of the reproduction and transformation of power relations in particular places. The location of the disorder was at least as important in binding the crowd together as the shared experiences of ethnicity, age and gender.

The rioting of 1981 was a behavioural form of the moment rather than a consciously organised social movement. 'The crowd' was united in space for a brief time but its status as an analytical unit can not be taken far out of this context. 'The crowd' was never really a supra-individual but was always more than a mere aggregation of people. The idea that rioting can be assessed in terms of whether it succeeded in creating social change (eg Friedland 1981) or in terms of whether it can serve as a viable political strategy (eg Castells 1983; Sivanandan, 1983) is misconceived, not because the rioters were a momentary collection of people, but because the genesis of collective disorder occurred in a manner that was both historically and locationally specific. This does not mean that the relation between place and action is replicated in all incidents of rioting. Nor does it mean that collective disorder in Britain will in future reproduce the relation between action and locales that was seen in London in 1981. In this sense it is dangerous to refer to the disorders that occurred in British cities in 1985 as a repetition of the events of 1981. Place did in the past, and always will, mediate in the transformation of conflict into confrontation. There are no 'natural' laws of such transformation; it is rather that disorder must be realised in space as well as time.

b) Spontaneity and Rationality - Contradictory Properties of Rioting?

In defining the form of mobilisation evident during 1981 it is possible to avoid both the notion of the riot as the 'outcome' of a recipe of preconditions (which devalues the rationality of the crowd) and the notion that because people in the crowd were not 'deindividuated' they necessarily either acted as cohesive groups (Howe, 1981) or plotted the riot in advance (Anderton, 1981). In chapter one it was shown how both in America and in Britain those accounts of rioting that had stressed the spontaneity of disorder tended to see rioters as responding to a set of stimuli; either explicitly or incidentally powers of agency are lost to the explanation. Conversely, those accounts that tried to rescue the meaningful, purposive nature of collective disorder from such behaviourism tended to define rioting in a way which, paradoxically, closely mirrored the conspiratorial theorists obsessed with putative planning of riots and insurrection.

By linking the historical power struggle to particular places it can be seen that 'challenges' to police authority in such locations could be traced back long before 1981, the riot was the logical, if horrific, extension of such challenges, neither reflexively monitored (preplanned), nor unequivocally responsive to environmental stimuli. Conflict between police and black communities took many years to develop into full scale confrontation, conflict became imbedded in places and practice (the *durée*) so as to gain a quasi-autonomous status.

However, this quasi-autonomous status does not accord well with the sociology of 'social movements'. For Castells (1983) rioting in America was conceptually equivalent to the gay movement in San Francisco or the mobilisation of Mission District Latinos. The problem is precisely the point stressed in chapter two reiterated above. Ontology is simply not

considered in Castells' cultural model (see also Holmes 1985) and the ontological status of the collectivities involved in such movement, which varies so dramatically, defies the simple attribution of the label 'social actor' to any mobilisation of repressed minorities. Nor does the status of 'the crowd' fit easily into either the alternative typology of Pickvance (1985), or the more traditional interpretations of the sociology of conflict (eg Rex, 1981) or the 'empirical collective' formations of Parkin (1979) and supra chapter two).

The principal reason for such non-conformity again appears to stem from the confusion of actors and actions. There is a major analytical flaw in attributing to a whole section of society the control or mastery of disorder based on the sustained use of the discredited and over-extended analytical class of 'the average rioter'. There are those who have claimed that the 1981 riots are symptomatic of the rejection of British society by the second generation British black community (Cashmore and Troyna, 1982; Lawrence, 1982). Quite obviously the majority of young black people were not involved in rioting in 1981. More subtly, such analysis, whilst intending to draw attention to the plight of one particular disadvantaged section of society may boost a 'moral panic', go hand in hand with the sort of racist stereotyping that stigmatises all young black males in Britain as potential rioters. In shifting the focus of attention from action to actors a cultural pathology of rioters is created that is as iniquitous in all its consequences as the cultural vision of young black people as potential muggers (Hall et al, 1978; Solomos, 1984).

Description and explanation : 'Causes' of Riots'

It is not enough to reveal the path of conflict through time and the understanding of those involved in this conflict. Such descriptions

only perform part of the analytical task (Runciman,1983; Keith,1986). There is a danger that in an attempt to understand behaviour the notion of causes of action is replaced by an emphasis on the meaning of action. In this sense understanding the 'reading' of trigger events is at best a semantic exercise, uncovering the meaning of behaviour at the level of the individual social language(s), whether it is the feelings of a policeman or somebody 'on the streets' that are thus revealed. This can only be the basis for partial explanation, for whilst it is only by tracing the link between intentional states and the real world that explanations will be plausible, it is only by linking the nature of intentionality with social form that explanations will be useful (Sayer,1984).

This can only be done within the framework of a mechanistic theory of causality (see chapters two and three). This chapter has stressed the way in which conflict between black people and the police becomes spatially imbedded in such a way that the intentional power struggles (final causes) focus on the power relations enacted at particular 'places' through a set of conventional 'challenges' to police authority (formal causes) which are realised through patterns of behaviour (efficient causes) that escalate the violence of these confrontations from physical demonstrations of the withdrawal of consent to the full bloodied (sic) riot. Yet behind these causal processes it is also vital to recognise the significance of unacknowledged conditions of action underwriting such interaction.

Through the incorporation of a mechanistic theory of causality it is possible to understand the relationship between general economic forces and particular examples of social behaviour. Just as the stone and the final statue are causally linked, lifestyle and position in relation to the means of production are similarly inseparable. In neither case is

the tie one of simple determinism. In both cases the relation is one of material causality. Just as the statue is fashioned out of the stone, the 'umwelt' is fashioned out of the material relations of production, work, worklessness and the exigencies of a racialised labour force. In both cases this relation of material causality both constrains and enables final pattern. The 'life paths' and 'personal projects' of the black population in Britain are embossed with the multiple deprivations of 'racism, unemployment and the inner city', the stigmata of the marginalised population.

However, economic life chances are not the sole determinant of any single item of behaviour. Mobilisation in riots is not a straightforward case of the an sich/fur sich transformation, an economic class in itself becoming a social movement for itself. In particular, the locational 'challenges' based on respect, contempt, criminalisation, power relations and a history of racism implicate the social-psychological criteria of Harré's expressive realm (1979 and chapter two supra). Crime, powerlessness and the historical struggle between black people and the police are seen in the context of the blighted cities of 20th century Britain, the incidence of the latter does not necessitate the occurrence of the former.

All four aspects of causality (material, formal, efficient and final causes) are indispensable in understanding any particular social action, no class of cause is superior to any other. Yet it must be recognised that in imposing a typological causal mechanism on the flux of social life the analyst introduces the theoretical to the empirical domain. It already has been suggested that all 'knowledge' involves such a reconciliation, it has only to be re-emphasised that in such practice lies the very roots of epistemological contingency (Sayer, 1984; Foucault 1982; McCarthy, 1978; Habermas, 1971).

The notion that the struggle over power relations in particular places formed a central theme in rioting is reinforced by the policing strategies adopted in such areas since 1981. It is not the suggestion here that all such policies have been the successful product of centralised control, indeed a principal element of the Metropolitan Police reorganisation of the early and mid 1980s has been to focus managerial power on the division, decentralise policy making, making it responsive to local needs. Rather it is the contention that such changes have been the almost inevitable product of the localised collapse of policing by consent that has already been described. Senior officers who have co-operated with this work have openly disagreed with certain specific policies employed in other 'symbolic locations', yet whilst often differing in form from one place to another these strategies share the common goal (content) of re-imposing the power prerogative implied in the internal relation between police and the policed. Such strategies are of major significance for two reasons. One is because they recognise the de facto inversion of power relations within the context of the need to consider maintaining order as a higher priority to law enforcement on those occasions when the two are mutually irreconcilable. Secondly, they embody the imposition of social order on a particular place. The exigencies of policing without consent make such an imposition part of all police action in such areas.

Immediate Response Units/District Support Units

Immediate Response Units, normally eleven PCs and a sergeant in a van, were introduced in the immediate aftermath of the 1981 riots in order to provide quick support on occasions of spontaneous outbreaks of public disorder. Their name was later changed to District Support

Units. Two of the earliest occasions on which they were deployed, in Brixton and in Notting Hill, have already been described.

One of the problems that arose out of the creation of such groups was that the sort of police work which they involve is quite obviously closer to a military model than to the traditional independence of the police constable. Superintendent Murray at Brixton talked at length about what he saw as the growth of a "DSU mentality", the habits and norms that grow out of the close team work, amplifying the sub-cultural evaluations of 'good policing' that may centre on action, speed and ostentatious operations involving the gathering of large numbers of 'prisoners'. As has repeatedly been pointed out, seeking such expressive rewards in the practical realm of any job is a normal not a pathological trait, but with the DSU's the rewards of 'action' may be particularly welcomed because,

"The problem with these units is that most of the time there is no public disorder for them to deal with and there is therefore a difficulty in finding them something to do." (Smith and Gray,p37)

Such difficulties have a particular impact on the symbolic locations such as Railton Road and Sandringham Road (and since Chief Superintendent Whitfield left Notting Hill, All Saints Road as well). For the moveable squad represent the custom-made response to challenges to police authority, a presence that is often seen by junior officers as enforcing the sort of symbolic control already discussed, which may or may not operate outside the management goals of senior officers. Brian Hilliard, the editor of Police Review, has remarked,

"There are areas in London which are recognised as potential trouble spots where serious disorders might break out at any time, the areas are almost fully manned, all the stations are up to strength, not only that but the District Support Units, which are supposed to patrol a wider area, tend to congregate there so you have a more visible presence of policemen, you also (sic), because there's more police about, they feel they have to do more and so more people get stopped in the street, more motorists get checked, more roadblocks are held."

(London Weekend Television,11/7/86)

Not only are the sort of 'cowboy policing' incidents that were described on the Moorlands and Holly Street estates an almost inevitable part of policing without consent, but also they are most likely to occur where they can do most damage, entrenching mutual antagonism, making the transformation from conflict to confrontation that much more common.

b) Dog Patrols

Watching dog patrols on Sandringham Road in both 1982 and 1983 there is no doubt in my own mind that it is almost impossible for any social contact to occur between police using dogs and local residents. Most people, black and white, steer well clear of the dog patrols, several complaints arose from those people who had been mistakenly bitten (see Policing, London, passim 1983). One such complaint arrived in Stoke Newington police station when I was present in July 1986. I spoke at length to two PCs who had been involved in these patrols on Sandringham Road, one a dog handler. Again it was remarkable how close were the views of both the junior police officers and the resentful young black people I had spoken to in Roots Pool. The dogs were seen as explicitly establishing police control of the front line. As I was told several times, when an Alsatian dog gets angry people get hurt (including other police officers). Everybody knows this on the front line and behaves accordingly.

In his inquiry into the Brixton disorders, Lord Scarman said,

"On two occasions ... dogs were deployed in an undesirable way in the handling of a crowd. All officers who gave evidence to the Inquiry recognised that dogs are not appropriate instruments for dispersing crowds in sensitive situations. Chief Superintendent Marsh clearly recognised as much ... Arrangements must be introduced to prevent the deployment of dogs in handling major crowd disorders in the future." (1981,4.84)

Although dogs have rarely been used on Railton Road in 'normal' situations, in spite of this stipulation I witnessed such deployment in

disorders in Brixton in 1982 and 1985, when I saw one PC badly bitten by a police Alsatian.

In the micro-sociology of police patrols, the implicit or latent resource of the legitimate use of force is normally hidden; with the dog patrol it is manifest. That it should be manifest on front line is quite clearly a 'pre-emptive response' to possible challenges to police authority.

c) Special Patrols, Special Orders

The existence of special patrols in Notting Hill, Brixton and Dalstone has already been outlined in some detail. Although the common resistance to police actions in such places provides a severe handicap to police work, the level of crime alone, which may often be higher than in other parts of the division, seldom, if ever, justifies the level of policing that such patrols involve. Quite clearly, the secondary function of police work, the latent content of interaction, is of singular importance in the deployment of such groups, they again establish the police right to police all of London, an ostentatious refutation of no-go areas.

However, the contrasting opinions of Commander Marnoch, Chief Superintendent Whitfield and Chief Superintendent Barr are revealing (all three are in fact friends, all are similar intelligent, personable characters with a more pragmatic approach to policing than many of the notorious new 'Bramshill club'). For Marnoch and Whitfield one of the principal functions of such patrols is that they demonstrate police control of symbolic locations whilst obviating the need for the "mob-handed" tactics that become necessary when failed arrests and lost prisoners lead to sudden fights and when using demonstrative raids in

particular premises. The latter task is to be handled not by police action but by co-operation with local government in the removal or closure of premises which provide a locale for criminal activity and regulation of those premises involved with 'anti-social' activity. Certainly, in all three front line areas the failure to distinguish, or even to try and distinguish, between the 'anti-social' (late night, often illegal drinkers, street gatherings) and the genuinely criminal (hard drugs, arms dealing) in such front line areas has cost dear in terms of police/community relations. Significantly, Richard Allen, head of Lambeth Police Support Unit, suggested that Lambeth Council should in the past have taken an initiative to provide an arena for the social functions of front line in order that the Council could be involved in preventing the attraction of criminal activity to such places.

In contrast, Barr's scepticism about the Sandringham Road patrol and his keen pursuit of a policy of raids suggested a very different sort of policing in Hackney. Yet several points can be made in his defence. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly for Barr, Stoke Newington had for obvious reasons never achieved the same privileged status as Brixton and Notting Hill in the allocation of manpower. The heavy personnel commitment required by such special patrols clearly hit an undermanned police station like Stoke Newington (and its sub-division of Dalstone) much harder than it would do in Brixton or Notting Hill. Secondly, unlike the compliant Conservative council of Kensington and Chelsea, and the 'special relationship' that Marnoch built up with Ted Knight in Lambeth, the Hackney Council were not prepared to involve themselves with 'multi-agency' approaches of any sort until changes in the accountability of the Metropolitan Police had been made, particularly after relations had been soured by the Colin Roach affair. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, was Barr's concern that his officers might become "obsessed" with Sandringham Road as front line. This was a

revealing attitude because it not only reflects the hostility of many PCs towards such patrols but also because, given the many constrictions applied to PCs on special patrols (eg no stops for minor offences, limits on car patrols, no inflammatory arrests), it is hard to avoid the impression that even in the ostensibly enlightened policies of Marnoch and Whitfield the police on the streets are never more explicitly acting as agents of social control rather than a service of law enforcement. The conflict between the black community on the front line and the police becomes accidentally built into police practice. In such circumstances the positions of committed senior officers such as Marnoch, Whitfield and Barr are not enviable. Prisoners of history, they run the risk that whatever action they take will emerge on the streets as an intensification of conflict. Personality matters, but is always trapped within the institutional structure in which the individual operates.

d) Symbolic Raids

Though officially discouraged by many at the highest level of management, the raid on front line is often seen by some senior officers as establishing the police right to operate there. If all such raids were conducted precisely according to the rule book such a policy might be defensible.

At their worst, such exercises in ostentatious control turn into 'fishing raids', cases of police raiding premises on speculation of picking up prisoners. Although all senior officers I spoke to quite clearly disapproved of 'fishing raids', not one denied that such raids had occurred on sensitive premises in the past, nor that such "outings" could be used to settle old scores; one senior officer suggested that such raids epitomised the sort of behaviour covered by the concept of

front line deviancy. In spite of such, doubtless sincere, protestations, the distinction between a 'fishing raid' and the raid designed to "remind the frequenters of a particular cafe of police presence is" a fine one; notably both operate on the level of explicit symbolic communication rather than the level of straightforward functional policing.

e) Targeting and Surveillance

The connection between targeting and surveillance operations and the criminalisation of black communities in Britain (Christian,1983) is discussed in more detail below. It must be acknowledged that the principal reason for the introduction of such techniques has been to replace the sort of disastrous operations like SWAMP 81 with its arbitrary stop and search tactics that brought such massive numbers into hostile contact with the police and reaped such little long term reward in fighting crime. However, for the communities who live in such areas, who often spot the observation vehicles used by the police, who know the houses (and sometimes the owners of the houses) which are used for observation and who occasionally see the cameras and binoculars that are used (Gifford,1986), there is often a bitter resentment that their lives are monitored, scrutinised and spied on in this way. It is hard to gauge how strong these feelings are, but several representatives of black organisations in both Brixton and Notting Hill were very bitter about such 'Big Brother' tactics.

It is important to stress that the introduction of special policing strategies in symbolic locations has occurred thus far (in 1986) in a singularly inchoate fashion. Many of the police officers in the three locations studied expressed open and honest disagreement about the effectiveness and value of policies advocated by senior staff at

Scotland Yard or divisional staff in the other symbolic locations. Yet one central thrust of these policies is consistent. The routine and the organisation of police action become structured by the conflict between the police and black people. Policy relating to symbolic locations takes no account of the history which produced that symbolism, organisation becomes organisation to control specific areas and 'win' in any confrontation. In short, conflict becomes institutionalised.

6 THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF CONFLICT

The policing experiences of the three symbolic locations highlights the nature of changes in police practice. At each stage in the escalation of conflict, dating back to the 1960s, police policy can be seen normally reacting to events rather than analysing them. In large part this is no more than the precedence of 'reactive' over 'pro-active' policing that has been debated within the police service itself (eg Alderson 1979,1984; Newman 1983,1986). One significant feature of this phenomenon is that the historical context of changes in the form of policing is not considered (cf Reiner,1980,1985). Quite possibly this derives from the singular concentration of management on present day objectives, taking the worst incidents of yesterday as the worst possible case that might be handled today.

a) Routine and the Escalation of Violence

After the experiences of Notting Hill and Lewisham in the mid-seventies, police 'trouble' with 'black youth' became considered as normal and the police were equipped with shields to deal with future incidents. With increased clashes at the scenes of arrest and the

rioting of 1981, 'rioting' by 'black youth' was considered permanently on the agenda and the Immediate Response Units, protective clothing and militaristic training were introduced to cope with this phenomenon. By 1986, following the armed insurrection on Broadwater Farm Estate and serious rioting in Brixton and Handsworth in 1985, the response was the use of 'riot cities' for more training, new truncheons for public order situations and the mooted use of plastic bullets and water canon. The police are seen to go hand in hand with the escalation of violence. At each level police take the new public order phenomenon as given, one of many natural phenomena of contemporary society, unaware or unwilling to be aware of their own causal role in this process. The anticipation of public order problems is obviously one essential part of police management. Yet it appears that the primary managerial goal is to ensure that in situations of public order conflict the police 'do not lose'. Incidental to this anticipation, in preparing this capacity to control disorder, police management build into the very structure of police practice the conflict between police and black people. The distinction between cause and effect is again vital. It is this managerial task itself that, like the modern myth, "transforms history into nature" (Barthes, 1963, p129), treating riots as 'natural' phenomena, divorced from history, not cultural products of particular times and places.

In exactly the same sense it is important to understand the locational interplay of power relations ('stage building') that preceded the rioting of 1981 as part of this process of institutionalising conflict. There is plenty of evidence of overtly racist behaviour and overtly racist beliefs in the Metropolitan Police (see PSI, 1983), although it is not possible to quantify how common either actually is I saw evidence of the latter but not the former (if it is possible to separate the two). Nevertheless, such behaviour, however common, was

only of secondary importance in the immediate genesis of violent conflict, precisely because long before 1981, in those places which witnessed serious confrontations, the conflict between black people and the police had become part of the durée (daily routine) of police practice and black 'resistance', even before a majority of PCs had arrived at the respective police stations. The relative significance of personal racism in the inception of this conflict in the late fifties and early sixties is a different issue. The effect of the rioting was to hammer this conflict yet further into this institutional structure. Rioting in 1981 was about the whole history and social context of policing Black Britain, not about a cultural pathology of racist police officers (however many such officers there are), nor about a violent clash of 'personalities'.

b) Routine and Stigma : The Labelling Process

The process of stigmatising outside groups (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1972, 1981; Young, 1974) both precedes and is reinforced by the incidence of rioting. On a very simple interactive level, the mutual suspicion between police and young black people can reproduce and even amplify such hostility. In all the time I was involved in participant observation at both Brixton and Stoke Newington stations (see Appendix 2) I saw no deliberately racist behaviour by police officers. Given the limited time spent in both locations this was quite possibly related to the obtrusive nature of the 'fly on the wall'. What was extremely common and was admitted quite openly by many of the PCs with whom I spent time was that in dealing with young black men 'on the street' a degree of caution and expectation of trouble characterised the approach of officers in the 'focussed interaction' of encounters (Goffman, 1963). Almost invariably correct and polite in every technical respect, this

level of suspicion remained obvious to both the observer and the black individuals concerned. Virtually all such encounters passed off peacefully, yet the tension and hostility remained built into the 'micro-sociology' of the meeting, the antagonism between black individuals and the police hardened. It is only one very small step from this level of suspicion to the 'knock-on offences' already described. Such behaviour, not deliberately racist by cause, is manifestly racist in effect.

Similarly, the role of the police has become clearly defined in the minds of very many black people in London, especially in Brixton, where most police actions I witnessed were met with open hostility and vociferous abuse whatever their nature. Two cases in particular illustrate this process of definition. On a visit to Stoke Newington police station a group of a dozen, mostly black, schoolgirls (aged fifteen to sixteen) were very taciturn in the presence of the police escorting them and in open discussion. When the 'official tour' was completed, they began to talk about their understanding of 'the British policeman'. Openly claiming that they represented the members of their class who were most friendly towards the police (others had apparently refused to come), their vision of the PC was clearly that of the racist bully. Only one of the girls had been involved with any contact with the police personally, a black girl who was more readily disposed to police than the others, yet the police role was clearly defined in their own minds. More horrific was the scene on Broadwater Farm Estate of a group of black children between the ages of eleven to fifteen whom I had watched petrol bombing police lines. In a lull in the violence they described to me in lurid detail how the police had deliberately murdered Mrs Cynthia Jarrett and lots of other black people before that and how they saw it as only right that people on the estate

should "take a life for a life"* , most chilling was the certainty, the sincerity and the well-known outcome of similar such beliefs.

Exactly the same processes operate at a spatial level. Areas of conflict between the police and the local community become stigmatised by both the police and many other groups as 'criminal' or 'undesirable' areas, the violent realisation of this conflict (not necessarily full-scale riots) rapidly drives those residents who can to escape. Rioting in Sandringham Road in 1981 prompted an exodus of about half the people who lived there, according to the local residents' association; the resultant substantial increase in the number of vacant properties prompted a concomitant increase in the level of squatting, and social/petty crime problems that accompanied an itinerant population and reinforced the creation of a 'problem road'. Labelling and criminalisation by area assume the nature of a self-fulfilling prophecy, a cumulative spiral of decline that callously victimises the poorer and powerless groups in society.

c) Personality traits v Institutional Practice

All police must operate within the context of this labelling process. The degree to which both police and public are able to distinguish between the cultural classification of 'places and peoples' and their actual experience of those same people and places will obviously vary greatly between individuals. The perception of the Railton Road home beat officer of 'front line' compared to other police

* These children did not know that at the time of this conversation a policeman had already been killed in the rioting

in the same division is a classic example of this. Most significantly, the behaviour that was conditioned by classification of time and space confirms the fact that this classification had by 1981 been shaped by the long history of police/black conflict in London, a conflict built into the institutional practice of police work, operating at a different level to the personality traits of individual police officers.

7 IDEOLOGIES OF RESISTANCE : RATIONALISING RIOTS

The final aspect of the relationship between rioting and 'police/community relations' that must be considered is the way in which interpretations of the nature of riots influence future behaviour. It was suggested in chapter three that individual decisions are based on a cultural conception of rioting, a cultural conception that does not necessarily bear a very close relationship to the actual events of the time. This 'public life' of a riot involves more than just the media reconstruction of the past. (Burgess,1985; Murdock,1984; Sumner,1981)

a) Police Rationalisations, Rationalisations of Police Work

In this process of reconstruction, Sir Kenneth Newman has provided an explicit 'police rationalisation' (an official account) of the existence of 'symbolic locations' in sensitive parts of London:

"This brand of destruction and hostility is at its height in certain parts of ethnic areas which have become a focal point for congregation and association by black youths. In these locations confrontations with the police are deliberately engineered either to make a political point or to create a diversion in order to facilitate organised crime in relation to drugs or stolen property. If allowed to continue, locations with these characteristics assume a symbolic importance, a negative symbolism of the inability of police to maintain order."

"The youths take a proprietorial posture in this location; they regard it as their territory. In general they will regard the police as intruders ... " (1983,p9 and p13).

Two connected themes provide the backbone for this conception of clashes on the front lines of London. The first is the notion of disorder as purely criminal activity. Rather than the suppression of time, Newman's statement goes further and turns time on its head, inverts chronology. Notwithstanding the long record of officially 'illegal' social activity in such places, history shows that serious crime tends to exploit disorder, moving in on the collapse of policing by consent into the front line areas. Black 'challenges' to police action predate the very real major crime problems that grow up in the symbolic locations, they are not caused by that crime. The chronological inversion is an example of criminalisation by area which simultaneously discredits the 'validity' of violent protest in symbolic locations by categorising it as a form of criminal behaviour in the same class as street crime and drug dealing. The notion that 'all rioters are criminals' is a powerful ideological classification that has obvious policing implications. It is only fair to Newman to acknowledge that as an individual he might not concur with such a simplistic equivalence, certainly DAC Wells, one of his closest advisors, publicly contradicted this sort of classification (London Weekend Television,11/10/85). However, the refusal to acknowledge any element of protest in the rioters' actions is common within the Metropolitan Police Force.

The second theme in the quotation is one of territoriality. There is a very real difference between the ethological conception of the human 'territorial imperative' (Ardrey,1961) and the dramaturgical concept that individuals' behaviour will be conditioned by scene, a conditioning that will include the social sanctioning of violence in particular contexts (Marsh,1983). Both might be described as conceptions of 'territoriality', yet the former connotes a vision of

human behaviour which is essentially pathological, or at best bestial, a powerful political transformation (Miller,1982). The failure to make this distinction is not rare (eg Sack,1983). It is the contention here that the employment of the ethological concept of territoriality is often mistakenly used in the 'theoretical' analysis of police behaviour (eg Holdaway(1983) explicitly uses Ardrey's model), suggesting a pathological view of police culture. It is also the contention that the connoted view of black culture implied by Newman employs the same approach, an approach which incidentally devalues the form of location-specific black resistance by transforming the social into the natural (Barthes,1971), the rational act into a manifestation of animal nature.

It is because this form of accounting and rationalisation is so value loaded that it remains important to be aware of the status of social science as one type of 'discourse' (Sayer,1984). Terms like 'riot', 'crime' and 'territoriality' may connote whole value systems and social orders, they do not exist simply as fixed objects open to study. This is not to subscribe to the essentially nihilistic school of relativism, merely to recognise that "objectivity is a direction, not a terminus" (Harre,1979). In this sense the phenomenon of academic appropriation of 'rioting' outlined in chapter one is repeated by Newman:the 'explicandum' 'riot' is determined by the preferred explanation of the phenomenon rather than vice versa.

Ideology, in the loosest sense of the term, that runs like a sewer through, but always underneath, the forum of academic explanation, similarly underwrites the 'reconstruction' of rioting made by individuals. Such elementary preconditions to explanation can only be revealed, not empirically demonstrated. This is the essential task that is implied by both Habermas' concept of emancipatory knowledge (1971,1981), related to but distinct from traditional hermeneutics, and

also by Barthes' comment that such connotative forms know "only one operation: reading or deciphering" (1973, p114).

There can be no dialogue with 'criminals'. The claims of the rioting to political substance are compromised by classification. The secondary benefit of this same ideological vision of rioting is that in the allocation of 'blame' the police service is vindicated. There is a traditional and unhealthy confusion between the concepts of cause and blame (the Greek 'aitia' from which we derive the term aetiology covered both cause and blame, there was no distinction). It is a confusion which runs deep in the 'Western' consciousness and is displayed in all crudity in exercises of self-justification in the wake of any rioting, when not only the police but also local government, national government, press, white society generally and specific black interest groups all try and excuse themselves of 'the blame' for the incidence of violence; history is forgotten (the tradition of rioting as social protest), and the cake of guilt is shared out, each slice a proportionate 'cause'.

b) Disorder and Resistance

In the statement of 'What we believe' which appears regularly in the 'CROSSROADS Black Community Newspaper' the Black Liberation Front make their approbatory classification of the events of 1981 explicit:

"We strive to keep our community aware of the need to be vigilant and to promote activities whereby the ability to defend ourselves can be obtained. Within this context we consider the uprisings of the summer of 1981 as well as those since the 1970's as legitimate self-defence actions."

Historical events are subject to multiple readings of significance, questions of judgement rather than measures of truth, and in this particular context the Black Liberation Front's reading is more likely

to be more valid than most. But this notion of what an event means is not the same as what an event was. Again, the 'private' and 'public' lives of a riot.

This is important not so much in analysis which seeks to use the wisdom of hindsight, the past perceived from the present, as in the description of past events in their own historical context. This is the definitive distinction between political and academic discourse, both are authentic modes of analysis but they are different modes of analysis. All academic discourse is ideologically rooted but may still aspire to the status of realism, political discourse does not attempt to do so.

The Institute of Race Relations and the Race Today Collective are active political institutions. A problem arises when writers such as Sivanandan and Howe purport to advance a historical account of events which is also a contemporary perspective on those same events. Realistic account and putative significance are woven together.

It should theoretically be possible to distinguish critical social theory based on the revelation of unacknowledged conditions of action (emancipatory knowledge) from rhetoric, albeit possibly laudable rhetoric, based on political campaigning. In practice it is often extremely difficult to do so; perhaps much of the 'committed' writing on the 1981 riots (see Chapter One) should be evaluated not solely on the grounds of accuracy alone, but also from an assessment of the function of the work, its intended effects. Yet even this is problematic, particularly if, as already suggested, the desire to place a proprietorial claim on the 1981 disorders as the uprisings of an oppressed black community inadvertently amplifies the social processes which stigmatise all black communities as potential sources of public

disorder.

CONCLUSION

There are significant theoretical insights revealed in the realisation of social conflict in space. The context in which police/black antagonism briefly flowered in violent disorder was structured as much by local history as by social theory. This conflict itself was a historical product, accessible to most of the black community as a form of 'local knowledge'. Most people did not seek out the violent clashes of 1981, they were just appropriate at a particular time and at certain specific places. In this sense, conflict is not synonymous with confrontation. The historical product has been reproduced and reconstructed in the duree of social practice, changing its nature but remaining as an imbossed social division. The roots of violence remain.

Yet perhaps more important than any theoretical advance, the justification of 'realistic' analysis of rioting lies in provision of a clearer perspective of this social schism. The Front Lines of London in the wake of the summer of 1981 witnessed a continually renegotiated stand-off rather than a reluctant reconciliation of two parties. The stand-off itself perpetuates stances of conflict, there is no simple equivalence between bad police/black relations and violent uprising. On the Front Lines of London the Metropolitan Police bought time with space.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT BY CONSULTATION : ASSUMPTIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS

1 SUMMARY

2 BACKGROUND

- a) Lambeth
- b) Hackney/Islington
- c) Kensington and Chelsea.

3 WHY CONSULTATION

- a) Police Expectations
- b) The New Critics
- c) Consultation and Accountability

4 THE CASE AGAINST

5 CONSULTATION AND THE TRIUMPH OF BUREAUCRACY

- a) Contradictions in the Concept of 'Taking Conflict off the Streets'.
- b) Who are 'The Community' that are Consulted?
- c) The Power of Committees
- d) The Micro-sociology of the Committee.

6 CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

The contention of chapter six was that the conflict between black people and the police had become part of the institutional practice of the Metropolitan Police Force and the practical consciousness of large sections of the black community in London. Reproduced and amplified through time and space, the roots of this antagonism are complex and were not always consistent. Violent confrontation was a historical product, part of the 'alternative reality' of 1980s London; particular realisations of this conflict were not, it was suggested, determined solely by personal racism, revolutionary mobilisation, criminal behaviour or 'cultural habits'; though most of these proclivities might exacerbate antagonism at particular places at particular times. In this sense 'rioting' was seen as one outcome, if possibly the most dramatic of several potential outcomes, of longstanding conflict. In this sense an absence of 'rioting' does not imply the resolution of conflict, and the incidence of 'rioting' in 1985 does not imply a recurrence of the same phenomenon. The nature of the conflict between police and black people changed continuously from the early fifties up to the summer of the riots; in the period after 1981 as the underlying social, economic, local and political environments changed, this evolution continued and the nature of the conflict along with it.

In order to analyse the distinct ways in which conflict was conceptualised by the different interest groups, to assess one of the principal attempts to resolve conflict and to examine whether it is possible to 'institutionalise' conflict by taking it 'off the streets' and into the committee room, participant observation in the process of police/community consultation was carried out over a year-and-a-half in all the three case study locations as well as in several other boroughs

of London.

The first two intentions of this project were in time seen to be either impractical or misconceived. It was immediately obvious, for reasons that will become apparent, that only a selectively biased spectrum of opinion was represented in the consultation process, a spectrum that can be broadly aligned with a 'social problems ideology' (Joshua and Wallace, 1983; Fisher, 1984; Keith, 1986). Secondly, this conflict was not a 'problem' synonymous with 'misunderstanding', was not susceptible to resolution through consultation, for the reasons outlined in chapter six and above. Only the possibility of removing violent conflict from the streets, one of the purposes envisioned for consultation by Lord Scarman (1981), was amenable to straightforward evaluation.

It is the contention of this chapter that the consultative process in London can not serve as a mechanism by which those people who are likely to 'riot' are given access to the power structures enacted in the policing of the inner city. In this sense and in this sense alone consultation cannot possibly 'take conflict off the streets'. The exigencies of a bureaucratic structure are quite simply irreconcilable with the depth and nature of the police/black conflict in London. One of the few occasions when this contradiction was possibly resolved, in Brixton in 1985, will be examined in detail and seen, paradoxically, to highlight this intrinsic flaw. However, this alone does not mean that the new consultative process has 'failed', only that it must necessarily fail in the one particular goal with which this chapter is concerned. Whether the process can succeed in other areas will be seen to depend on:

- i) Personalities involved in consultation (on both police and community sides);

ii) Broader issues that relate to the definition of such 'success', which are contingent on the assessments of social change derived from the perceived nature of the state, preferred notions of ideal policing, the contrast between Fabian and Marxist strategies of democratisation, and the attitudes of approval or opprobrium at the incidence of violent disorder. These broader issues do not depend on the consultative process per se but have shaped opinions of consultative groups and the reactions of different social actors to their inception.

2 BACKGROUND

Under section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE):

"Arrangements shall be made in each police area for obtaining the views of people in that area about matters concerning the policing of the area and for obtaining their co-operation with the police in preventing crime in the area."

The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police was obliged to establish statutory consultative groups in each London borough, which were to conform with both PACE and Home Office guidelines, issued firstly in 1982 when their establishment was first mooted and later in restyled form, in 1985, subsequent to the passage of PACE through Parliament. It is not intended here to outline the history or debates concerning this passage in any detail (for full account see Jefferson and Grimshaw, 1984; Morgan and Maggs, 1984, 1985). As with so many legislative changes, consultation was not so much introduced as a planned satisfaction of an articulated demand as conceived as part of a legislative package that was deemed appropriate at a particular time. Notwithstanding this, the primary political force behind its inception lay in the report of Lord

Scarman (1981), who had recommended that,

"a statutory framework be developed to require local consultation between the Metropolitan Police and the community at Borough or Police District level." (1981,p96,5.69)

Crucially, Scarman placed consultation on the political agenda in a context which linked it to the prevention of public disorder and the resolution of the clashes between police and black people in London.

Progress in the implementation of section 106 has varied greatly: in some places (eg Wandsworth) Conservative councils resisted the need for such a structure, maintaining that existing liaison with senior police officers was adequate; in other places (eg Southwark) the new model was seen as a bulwark against any genuine reforms in the policing of London and received no co-operation from, generally Labour, councils. Across London the speed and form of adoption was similarly varied, disparate groups which all vaguely fitted in with Home Office Guidelines gradually appearing (see London Association of Community Relations Councils (LACRC) 1984 for greater detail of a constantly changing situation).

In the three case study locations the situations and research were, in brief form, as follows:

a) Lambeth

In his report Scarman was critical of the failure of a voluntary liaison scheme that had existed in Lambeth before the rioting of April 1981, and it was in order to prevent a repetition of the collapse of this sort of group that he suggested that the consultative structure in London should take a statutory rather than a voluntary format. Consequently, on the 14th April 1982 the Community/Police Consultative Group for Lambeth (CPCGL) adopted a new constitution that established

the right of the consultative body to discuss police policy and tactics with the local Commander, the right to consider policing matters that affected London as a whole and the right to make representation direct to the Home Secretary and the Commissioner (CPCGL,1982). An 'open door policy', whereby any bona fide organisation in the Borough which represented a significant section of the community and supported the Group's objectives might affiliate with full membership, was introduced. Members of the public were also encouraged to attend and contribute at meetings.

Initially, Lambeth Council were both fully co-operative and participating members of the Group, but between 1982 and 1986 this enthusiasm waned, diminishing at first to passive non-involvement which by 1986 had developed into outright hostility. Not surprisingly, Council relations with police and with the CPCGL from 1981-86 were a major political issue in Lambeth.

In spite of this breakdown the group has received regularly favourable press coverage and in 1984 the LACRC suggested that,

"There is widespread agreement that during the past two years the Lambeth Police/Community Consultative Group has played a useful and effective role in improving community police relation in that borough." (LACRC,1984)

Similarly, Lord Whitelaw commented at the time the PACE Bill was first announced that CPCGL were "a model of what the Bill would require" (Hansard,5/11/82,column 225). Significantly, at meetings of other consultative groups in Merton, Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth and Islington at which the author was present 'the Lambeth model' was referred to by senior police officers as the 'ideal type' to which other groups should aspire.

The CPCGL meet on the first Tuesday of each month, keeping the third

Tuesday of each month open for 'special meetings', a provision that was more often than not adopted during the period of observation which lasted from July 1985 to September 1986 and also involved interviews with leading members of the group, the secretary of the group and the Lambeth Council Police Support Unit (council employees monitoring police activity in Lambeth). Most of the examples in the text are taken from this experience in Lambeth, although replication of the observation in other parts of London provided invaluable comparative material.

b) Hackney/Islington

No formal consultative group has yet (in mid-1986) been introduced in Hackney, principally because of the Council's opposition to the new proposals. In early 1985 Sir Kenneth Newman issued an instruction to senior officers to take

"immediate action ... to establish Consultative Groups where they do not presently exist."

(quoted in Morgan and Maggs, 1985, p50)

DAC G W Jones, the senior officer in Number Two Area (which covers Hackney) is an enthusiastic supporter of the new arrangements and keen to use the new legislation as a channel for improving the historically poor relations with Hackney Borough Council (see chapter five). Although Newman's instructions emphasised that Councils had

"no right to veto or determine the format of consultation. Any failure by the Local Authority to respond to the approach by Police or refusal to participate in the process will not invalidate the Group" (quoted in Morgan and Maggs, 1985, p50).

Jones was much less sanguine about the feasibility of consultation without Council participation. He readily conceded (private interview) that in all probability statutory consultation would be futile without council co-operation.

Yet following on from Newman's original instructions (and before

Jones took up his post) Stoke Newington and Hackney police had arranged preliminary meetings with 'community representatives' in early 1985 to prepare the ground for the introduction of a new consultative group. A Community Liaison Officer (PC Steve Longhorn) was appointed at Stoke Newington to co-ordinate this process, on the understanding that Newman's comments on council participation were sincere. Already, in March 1983, a form of consultation had been set up in Stoke Newington with the division divided into five 'neighbourhoods', each covered by an Area Liaison Panel at which community groups and elected representatives were invited twice a year to voice their opinions about local policing. Hackney Council also did not recognise the Area Liaison Panels, although several Labour councillors regularly attended in an unofficial capacity.

It was against this background that in early 1985 all the groups attending the Area Liaison Panels were called together to discuss the formation of a borough consultative group under PACE. This meeting was boycotted by the council and those who attended were assured that this boycott would not affect the introduction of the group. Shortly after this, Jones was appointed and, in trying to re-open negotiations with Hackney Council, halted this formation process. Throughout 1986, these negotiations remained at the level of senior councillors and the DAC, a major bone of contention for police at Stoke Newington who had to explain to community representatives their failure to set up consultation whilst they themselves knew little to nothing about the state of talks with the council.

As a result of this confused situation research consisted of attendance at Area Liaison Panel meetings in Stoke Newington, along with interviews with many of those involved, as well as regular attendance at the statutory consultative group meetings in the adjacent borough of Islington, whose Labour Council, whilst taking a similar political

profile to that in Hackney, had negotiated co-operation in the consultative process on the basis of council representation on the group that was greater than in other London boroughs (ten councillors).

c) Kensington and Chelsea (Notting Hill)

An informal police/community liaison scheme had been set up in Kensington and Chelsea in 1982 by Chief Superintendent Whitfield (see chapter five) and in 1985 this was transformed into a consultative group under the PACE specifications. The new body was opposed by the minority Labour group on the Council, although Frank Critchlow, owner of the Mangrove, agreed to sit on the new committee. Meetings were held quarterly although because their dates tended to clash with the meetings of other groups only three were observed as part of this research.

Because this thesis was concerned with manifestations of a phenomenon in the consultative process rather than with the consultative process per se, there is no attempt here to provide a categoric, exhaustive or chronological description of this exercise in participant observation. Instead, central themes have been chosen and illustrated by reference to personal experience in an attempt to answer the question, 'How relevant are the statutory consultative groups in London to the conflict between police and black people that led to the major riots of 1981?'

3 WHY CONSULTATION?

If the context of the introduction of consultation was firmly tied to the rioting of 1981 and the politicisation of policing issues in the

early 1980s (Downes,1983; Lea and Young,1984; Reiner,1985; Mathews and Young,1986), interpretations of its potential value are much more diffuse.

a) Police expectations

Three slightly different schools of thought appear to condition police evaluation of consultation. One stresses the service role of the police in co-operation with the community. On leaving his post in Lambeth, Commander A Marnoch commented at his last consultative group meeting,

"We have to identify not only priorities but also high priorities. We are not competent to do this on our own".
(19/11/85)

Similarly in a paper prepared for internal assessment of the prospects of reform at Stoke Newington, PC Steve Longhorn noted,

"The Divisional Police should view the process as a method of obtaining from its community the direction and priorities it should consider when planning its tactics for policing the area"

and that

"the Consultative Committee will have absolutely no value if due consideration is not taken of the views propounded by the community side of the Consultative Committee."
(1986,1.1b and 1.2b)

A second strand of opinion prefers to stress the need to measure, implicitly to increase, police efficiency in combating crime (Clarke and Hough,1984; Morgan and Maggs,1985) and the role consultation might play in 'mobilising the community against crime'. A senior officer at Stoke Newington reporting on the Area Liaison Panels in an internal memo mentioned that,

"Police have used them to promote several ideas and schemes, including Neighbourhood Watch, the feedback from which has been gratifying."

Similarly, it was not unusual for police representatives at the Lambeth

group to stress that one of the four main aims in their constitution was,

"To work for the better prevention of crime."¹

Typically, at a meeting on 1st July 1986, Chief Superintendent Fairbrother, senior officer at Kensington division, after outlining the details of several knifings, appealed for the CPCGL to 'speak out' about this series of murders. When Greta Brooks, newly elected as chair of the group, asked him to be more specific he suggested that,

"I believe that this is one area where the police and the consultative group must speak with one voice."

The value of such publicity was questioned by the secretary, Sean Creighton, who feared reinforcement of commonly existing negative stereotype images of Lambeth. As happened on several occasions, what might have seemed straightforward was in reality more controversial. 'Mobilising the community against crime' appears self-evidently laudable until the implications of the platitude are considered in detail.

A third, connected theme revolved around the concept of 'multi-agency' policing. One recommendation of the PSI report on the Metropolitan Police (1983) was that the police should attempt to work more in conjunction with other social services in co-ordinating crime prevention. A subsequent stress on multi-agency policing was seen both in policy initiatives across London and in the Commissioner's reports for 1984 and 1985. It was the belief that the consultative machinery would provide the most suitable arena for advances in this field that lay behind DAC Jones' extended efforts to involve Hackney Council in the process.

b) The New Critics

Roughly contemporaneous with the inception of the consultative

groups and thematically linked to mobilisation of the community against crime, the Metropolitan Police in the early 1980s encouraged the establishment of Neighbourhood Watch schemes in London, aimed at increasing the level of awareness of civic responsibility in looking out for suspicious behaviour, reporting offences and crime prevention. Although several reservations were voiced about the possible criminalisation of specific social areas and social classes and the uses of information gathered in neighbourhood watch (GLC,1983), there was a significant involvement of representatives of these schemes in the consultative groups of Lambeth, Kensington and Chelsea and, to a lesser extent, in Hackney as well.² The central concern of these representatives is often with the minutiae of statistics and levels of reported crime. At one meeting of the Wandsworth group (21/11/85) a move to set the police targets to improve their clear up rates, a dubious measure of police efficiency (Clarke and Hough,1984), was only quashed by the outright rejection of such a principle by police officers present.

Similarly, residents' association and tenants' association representatives, who are encouraged under the Home Office Guidelines to participate in consultative groups, frequently have interests strictly circumscribed by their organisation's concerns. Thus, over the whole of 1986 a running row in the Lambeth meetings stemmed from the Stockwell Park Resident's Association worry that levels of visible police presence on their estate might be reduced. The estate, one of the top category 'riot potential' sites in London, as classified by Scotland Yard (see chapters five and six), was from 1982 onwards the site of a manpower intensive trial scheme of neighbourhood policing. The apparent relative success of this scheme in the light of increasing demands elsewhere on Brixton division prompted Chief Superintendent Webber to reduce the manpower commitment to the estate in 1986, to the fury of Maurice

Styles, the Association representative, who threatened to resign from the Lambeth group over the issue.

As several senior police officers pointed out to me, in asking for a community response, the consultative groups are instrumental in developing a new set of police critics from those predisposed towards the police force as an institution but keen to improve the service provided to their own residential area, as defined by their own set of criteria.

c) Consultation and Accountability

That London has no democratically elected police authority has been one source of political controversy for the past decade.³ Given that PACE introduced statutory consultation to London alone, this was seen by some as a sop to those who argued the need for some form of democratic accountability in the capital. It is this perception that underwrites the policy of non-co-operation seen in Lambeth and Hackney, the refusal of the Councils to legitimate what is seen as a synthetic and worthless alternative to genuine accountability. Such a position, often referred to as 'left idealist' contrasts with the stances of Islington Council ('left realist'), which is similarly in favour of a democratically elected police authority, but chooses to maximise the opportunities offered by the new legislation, whilst reserving the right to campaign for its reform. Islington Council saw the function of the consultative group as one step in bringing the police to account for their strategies and actions in a public forum, notwithstanding the fact that this accounting could not trespass on police authority.

These viewpoints are only three examples from a spectrum of interests caught up in the consultative process. Voluntary service

groups, charitable institutions, the Inner London Education Authority, MPs and political pressure groups have all become involved in consultation, as well as the borough Community Relations Councils (CRCs) and ethnic minority organisations. This very multiplicity of interests is itself controversial. The Government at first encouraged limited numbers of participants in consultation for the sake of 'efficiency', but later sought to minimise the influence of councils, particularly 'left-wing' councils, by encouraging the replication of the Lambeth 'open door' policy on membership. Whether or not ethnic minorities could maintain a fair voice in the light of this open umbrella structure has become a moot point, with Islington Council in particular campaigning to limit the number of voluntary organisations enfranchised on the consultative group. However, the incorporation of so many interests has inevitably led to a more complex set of consultative constitutions than is implied in the Scarman Report.

There is not space enough to analyse the success of consultative groups in fulfilling this varied list of informal goals. Nor is there any intention to denigrate the diversity of different objectives seen by the participating members in consultation. But it is of major significance that whilst concern with rioting and the police/black conflict in London was the dominant driving force behind the introduction of statutory consultation, it was not the prime concern of many, or very often most, of those participating in the consultative process itself. Not only did this affect the structure of agendas and the focus of concentration at each meeting, it also weighted voting patterns so that those whose interest and specialist knowledge did relate to this conflict were frequently either outvoiced or outvoted in the cause of democracy.

"The state must be a transparent robe, clear as water, that clings close to the body of the people. Every ripple of the sinews, every tensing of the muscles, every swelling of the veins must be imprinted on its form."

(Buchner, 1835)

The notion that the state acts as an independent arbitrator, society's honest broker in the resolution of conflict, has long been discredited (Poulantzas, 1973; Lukes, 1974; McClennan et al, 1984), but there remains little or no agreement on the actual form of this elusive entity. Hence the position of all minority groups in a multi-racial society will in theoretical terms be as dependent on the preferred conceptualisation of the state as on the position and circumstances of the minority groups themselves. Such conceptualisations rationalise the experience of migrant communities in Britain and are frequently the source of opposition to institutions like the police/community consultative groups.

The critique is in many ways a powerful one and is best understood from an account of the other government aid institutions that stand at the interface of popular mobilisation and the state (see Diagram 7.1). These include both the area based groups such as the Inner City Partnerships and the specifically race related organisations such as the Commission for Racial Equality and the local Community Relations Councils (CRCs). The relationship between the state and these groups is one of patronage/sponsorship and so they can never venture outside the strictly circumscribed limits set down by government policy. In short their working practices are dominated by the social problems ideology that is their very raison d'être. The relationship between the institutions and popular (ethnic or racial) mobilisation (eg migrant associations, residents' or tenants' associations) is primarily financial.

Diagram 7.1 Systemic problems of 'Popular movements' and 'Ethnic' mobilisation

Success Criteria

a) Need to be neighbourhood based to enlist popular support

b) Need concrete achievements to sustain support

DIVIDE AND RULE EFFECT I

'Neighbourhood' interests may conflict with 'issues' that divide movement (eg construction jobs v opposition to redevelopment).

Must subscribe to 'social problems' ideology to be accepted in dialogue with

DIVIDE AND RULE EFFECT II
'Ethnicity' as a divisive influence

- (i) RACE RELATIONS INSTITUTIONS
- (ii) GOVERNMENT AID INSTITUTIONS

DIVIDE AND RULE EFFECT III
i and ii act as institutional buffer, shifting debate into competition for government funds

Fiscal and de facto control

Patronage and sponsorship

THE STATE

The description in the flow diagram contains no causal mechanism. Every effect does not have a premeditated cause (i and ii may effectively act as an institutional buffer but are not necessarily designed to do so). Each element of the diagram cannot necessarily be treated as a historical actor because of the relationship between intentionality and action.

In order to sustain their own support, neighbourhood and community groups need to show material successes in either combating racial injustice (involving the expenses of law suits) or in compensating for racial inequality (eg the provision of amenity facilities such as youth clubs and community centres). To gain this success the popular groups must conform with the social problems ideology of the aid institutions and place their case for financial support in the arena of comparative need in a competition for scarce resources. This serves to 'divide and rule' popular groups because antagonism is inevitably built up within the aid institutions in this competition. In racial mobilisation the distinct backgrounds of different migrant groups exaggerate this effect, an influence that is behind Sivanandan's vilification of the divisive facet of 'ethnicity' (see chapter two).

As well as defusing popular mobilisation via the tool of ethnicity (Sivanandan,1983; Ben-Tovim and Gabriel,1982), the CRE and the CRCs are alleged to co-opt members of racial minorities as symbolic tokens of progress in organisations which have little or no reforming power and also act as an institutional buffer between race based groups and 'genuine' reform (Castells,1983; Ben-Tovim et al,1986). As Friedland (1982) remarked in the North American context,

"In short, they [the local state] could not solve the blacks' problems but they could manage them."

The very institutions that were ostensibly created for the benefit of racial minorities may be the instruments of their continued suppression.

Though it is not possible here to assess the validity of this account of the relationship between state and 'race', the dangers of co-optation, the potentially divisive role of ethnicity and the ambivalent patronage (and implicit control) of aid institutions by the government are all plausible, if not proven, criticisms of state funded

organisations. For the purposes of this analysis it is important to make two points in particular. The first is the renewed significance of the distinction between description and explanation (see chapter two). The radical critique of the race relations industry may provide a useful description of reality but can not serve as the sole basis for explanation. The problem with the analysis of writers like Sivanandan is, as has already been suggested, that the ontology of the component parts of the description is not considered, failing to recognise that the model in Diagram 7.1 is synchronic, in that it describes a conjunction of structures at a particular point in time, described from one particular angle. The strength of this vision is that in such essentially structuralist work a viewpoint transcending that of the actors that are the living realisation of the description can reveal the unacknowledged conditions of action of those same actors. The result is, in Habermas' sense of the term, emancipatory, validating the social need and theoretical power of critical theory.

Yet this strength is also potentially the model's greatest weakness, because just as an object may be photographed from many different angles this description is only one of many valid descriptions. In particular, problems arise when analysis ascends to causal explanation, tacitly assuming that this description defines a monistic whole, is sufficient for understanding behaviour. Consequently, the tendency is to transform the descriptive structure into a cast of social actors with implausible powers (see reference to Sivanandan and Castells in chapter two). The inevitable result of such methodology is that analysis moves inexorably towards some form of conspiratorial functionalism because of the failure to recognise that explanatory accounts must be potentially reducible to individual actions and must therefore take into consideration the major problems of philosophical intentionality. Cause and effect are in this way transposed. That the effect of reforming institutions may be

detrimental is not disputed, possibly it is a valid criticism of both the race relations industry and the new consultative groups. But the functionalist argument assumes that the prescient state was aware of these effects, a level of planning that would be remarkable.

This raises the second important consideration for analysis of the police/community consultative process. This is that regardless of the social reality the perception of the relation between community organisation and the state will implicitly or explicitly determine the reactions of individual actors to the consultative process as a whole. Hence it would be perfectly possible to support the descriptive power of Diagram 7.1 without impugning the integrity or devaluing the efforts of those who invest much time and work in consultation. For these individuals are only involved because tacitly or openly they espouse a liberal/democratic vision of society which stresses that any problems between police and community stem in the final analysis from misunderstanding, from a failure to communicate. This is exemplified by the number of times at both Islington and Lambeth reference was made to the 'rotten apples' in the police force, without whom everything, it was implied, would be fine. That there might be a deterministic foundation to the confrontation between the police force as representatives of white bourgeois social order and the black community (Mingione, 1981, on social conflict) as many on 'the Left' might suggest, or that conflict was a historical product deeply rooted in the places and experiences of the British black community (as this thesis has tried to suggest) simply does not and can not enter into this concept of rotten apple racism. Such considerations are simply not open to discussion in the context of the committee room liaison committee. This is why the police consultative groups themselves selectively include only those who are prepared, in the committee room at least, to subscribe to a social problems ideology. Moreover, for those who genuinely believe in the

analysis of Diagram 7.1 one possible strategy is to not only refuse to co-operate with the consultative process (the policy of Hackney Council), but also to attempt to destroy any group that is established. I would suggest that it is this latter course of action that was adopted, initially by accident but increasingly as strategy, by Lambeth Council over the period of participant observation.

As already mentioned, the gradual withdrawal of Labour Party representatives from the CPCGL occurred principally through apathy, partly through constituency party pressure and partly through the exigencies of local politics from 1982-85 (see Cansdale, 1983). In June 1982 the GLC Police Committee published a report which stated that,

"borough level accountability will also be important. It will be necessary to oversee the operation of the Metropolitan Police local districts/divisions and accountability at this level should be based on borough councils."

Setting the tune for some Labour groups across London, the report went on to suggest,

"The proposed new consultation groups (liaison committees) would be a step in the wrong direction."

These views were echoed by Richard Allen, a member of the Lambeth Council Police Support Unit from February 1984 and the head of the unit since 1985. He quite clearly saw the CPCGL as having no impact on the police and believed there was a danger of the Metropolitan Police extending their power in London by manipulation of the Consultative Groups. He stated (personal interview) that for him one of the main aims of the Lambeth Police Support Unit was to "push back the frontiers of multi-agency policing", suggesting that the Council should play the dominant role in organising crime prevention, only involving the police force at a much later stage in the process. He also rejected the idea that the consultative group could act as an arena in which the police were called (verbally) to account, claiming that "they [the police] just obfuscate". Hence not only did he see "no point in co-operating with a

group that has failed" but also in answer to the question,

"Because you say the consultative group causes damage do you see a need to destroy it?" he replied,

"We do not need to destroy it, only to marginalise it."

It is in the light of these views that the relations between the CPCGL and Lambeth Council in 1985/86 are most readily comprehensible. In mid 1985 the council circulated those voluntary bodies receiving council funds or using council facilities, stressing the need to avoid legitimisation of the CPCGL by taking part in consultation. The hostility that was by this time growing rapidly was brought to a climax on 20th May 1986 when the recommendation of a CPCGL sub-committee inquiry into the disorders of the previous October that "plastic bullets should only be used as a last resort" in public disorder was passed by the full committee, amid much concern from two of the senior black representatives, Astel Parkinson (the chairman of the group at the time) and George Greaves (head of Lambeth CRC). There was also uproar among several black members of the public present, who claimed the CPCGL were supporting police militarisation.

The reaction of the council was swift, issuing a press release that in condemning the possible use of plastic bullets in Lambeth stated that,

"the Consultative Group is now supporting the use of these lethal weapons against the residents of Lambeth. The Council has long ceased to take part in the Consultative Group because the Group has failed to represent the interests of those who experience most in the way of bad policing."

The press release also called for people to leave the consultative group and announced that the council would henceforth withdraw all facilities (photocopying, use of town hall for meetings) from the group. From this point onwards hostility from the council toward the CPCGL intensified, with the new leader of Lambeth Council, Linda Bellos, regularly making

statements in press and media interviews attacking the CPCGL.

In this situation the considerable mutual antagonism which built up was such that even though both Astel Parkinson's successor (Greta Brooks) and senior police in Brixton were keen to emphasise the importance of council involvement, they readily admitted that any change of position on the part of the council was extremely unlikely. The critique of Diagram 7.1 had been taken to its logical conclusion and the council were now engaged in a policy which quite deliberately tried to discredit the CPCGL.

5 THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS AND THE TRIUMPH OF BUREAUCRACY

This section suggests that community consultative groups are neither panacea for police/black antagonism nor calculating and fraudulent exercises in co-optation and public relations. Instead they are a flawed reform, institutions that cannot satisfy one of the main functions for which they were created because of the salient characteristics of their design. This is so because their role of 'talking away conflict' is contradictory, because their structure incorporates a fallacious notion of 'community', because the power of committees is often largely illusory, and because of the nature of bureaucratic procedure itself.

a) Contradictions in the concept of 'Taking conflict off the streets'

The reasoning behind Scarman's recommendation of statutory consultation was that at the heart of the riots in Brixton were real grievances felt by an oppressed black community, grievances which had no

other outlet than violent street protest; essentially an echo of Martin Luther King's comment that riots are the language of the unheard. In providing an arena for such expression the implication was that in the consultative group the black community could be heard, and could explain their plight in person to senior officers. In this sense it was hoped to institutionalise conflict, taking it off the streets and into the committee room.

On three occasions in London in the period after 1981 it could be said that this goal was achieved, if not always in formal consultation, then in informal organisations which were close approximations to the official consultative structure. In 1984 in Notting Hill and in 1983 in Brixton, rising tensions which had escalated to the point of nascent public disorder were partially defused after public meetings on All Saints Road and Railton Road, respectively, when senior police officers (Whitfield in Notting Hill; Marnoch in Brixton) held public meetings where they explained the police position amidst general hostility and abuse.

A third occasion occurred in Brixton on Tuesday 1st October 1985, when in the wake of the widespread rioting that had followed the police shooting of Mrs Cherry Groce (a middle aged black lady), a public meeting of the CPCGL was seen by members of the group itself, by senior police officers and by press present at the time as acting as a peaceful outlet for the anger of local people. Yet it is possible, without contesting this general description, to suggest that this meeting, rather than being the exemplary success of the CPCGL, highlighted the flaws that handicap its very existence.

Astel Parkinson was at the time chairman of the group. He has lived in Brixton since 1959, been a youth worker since the mid-sixties (full-

time since the mid-seventies) and his son Horace was one of the Stockwell Park 3. This was one of the several causes célèbres in the Brixton history of clashes between the police and the black community referred to in chapter five and Parkinson had been active in the campaign protesting about police behaviour. Friendly and generous, he can talk with authority on the history of the area because this sort of 'local knowledge' is for him no more than autobiography. He is certainly no 'mouthpiece' or 'puppet' of the police and was one of the few members of the group who was well-known and respected on Railton Road, where he was chairman of the Afro-Caribbean Community Association (ACCA). He was also a friend of the Groces and at the start of that night's meeting introduced one of the members of the family to those present, whilst making a moving speech for serious but controlled discussion of the emotive issues that had occurred in the preceding few days.

The public gallery in the committee room of Lambeth town hall that was being used for the meeting had rapidly filled up and before business opened there had already been heckling of the police present. Within seconds of the start, three black people (two men, one woman, all in their late twenties/early thirties) in paramilitary gear, shoved into the room, snatched the microphones from the committee table and began to harangue both Parkinson and the police. Every time either he or Commander Marnoch, the senior police officer present, tried to speak they were shouted down by the slogan chanting of the intruders. Whenever Astel Parkinson tried to retaliate he was drowned in a chorus of 'Uncle Tom, Uncle Tom, Uncle Tom' from the three paramilitaries, who had now placed themselves strategically around the room and controlled all the microphones. Their amplified vilification was often echoed from the floor and they frequently demanded that the meeting should be stopped because of the futility of even talking to 'filth' like the police. About fifty people filled the room and a great many more had

been locked out of the town hall and were noisily demanding to be let in.

The meeting continued fitfully in this vein for about half-an-hour until a group of about fifteen to twenty from outside the town hall overpowered the security guards and demanded that all those outside be allowed into the meeting. The leader of this group made a scathing attack on Astel Parkinson, labelled him a parasite on other people's misfortune and a toady to the police. Visibly upset, Parkinson lost his cool and a further row followed. The back door to the committee room was now open. With the numbers of this second vociferous protest faction growing rapidly, the collapse of the gathering was avoided only when a council official allowed the meeting to move from the committee room into the main Lambeth function room, where between two and three hundred people filled the hall, many covering their faces to prevent identification.

There then followed a meeting more reminiscent of the tribunals of revolutionary France than the protocols of the twentieth century committee, a gathering so intense that by the end of the evening as an observer, I felt emotionally drained, after the most sustained display of mass anger I have seen inside a single room. It was not the self-righteous anger of politics. There was rhetoric, but not much. Only a small minority indulged themselves. It was the anger of the indignant, the wounded, the shocked. There was a feeling of incredulity, 'How could they have done this?', and over everything a fury at the police that regularly surfaced in overt and palpably sincere hatred.

In the larger hall the paramilitary group stepped back and Parkinson's authority as chairman was again usurped, this time by Tony Morgan, a local young member of the black community better known for

self-publicity than for 'street credibility', who openly abused the members of the committee on which he had once served. Assuming command with a shout of "We're taking this meeting over Astel," it was under his aegis that the rest of the evening took the approximate form of a public interrogation of Marnoch, with individuals taking turns to come to the microphone to say their piece. Sometimes Marnoch was given a chance to reply.

Throughout this time a series of minor scenes were enacted just off the main stage. A television cameraman was bundled out of the room, not without force, after an impromptu vote ruled against his presence, whilst John Clare, the BBC correspondent, hid his tape recorder under his jacket and looked nervous. A group stood on one side of the room chanting, 'Fire, Fire, Fire'. Occasionally the flow of the meeting would be interrupted. Once somebody ran into the room, advanced on Marnoch and accused him of having the building surrounded by police. Hostility and tension increased dramatically and the numbers of those present who had kept on their anorak hoods and wore scarves over their faces, notably increased. At another time somebody interrupted the meeting with the cry, "Toxteth's on fire" to the prolonged cheers of the gathering.

Throughout all, one person after another came up to the front of the hall and explained their experiences and feelings of the last three days or the last thirty years. Their hurt and their bitterness turned the night into an abridged, but moving, account of a racist society. Occasionally this would become personalised. Two individuals threatened to kill Marnoch and another announced to the audience that the Lambeth Police Commander was responsible for jailing him eight times and that, "I will get you before I die, Marnoch."

In replying, Marnoch made some outspoken comments that included declarations of support for any public inquiry into the shooting of Mrs Groce and a democratically elected police authority in London, as well as the statement that,

"I have stated several times in the past, and I still believe, that it will not be possible to have peace on these streets with the current high levels of deprivation."

But eventually it was all too much. Briefly, Marnoch broke down and was visibly in tears. Tough, gregarious, very large and very tall, the senior policeman in Brixton stood in front of a couple of hundred people in Lambeth Town Hall and cried. "Crocodile tears", somebody standing a foot away from him shouted in his face.

Neither Marnoch nor Parkinson nor the rest of the committee, who for the most part had remained silent throughout, could assuage the anger at the horrific shooting of Mrs Groce of those present; in fact most of their statements seemed instead further to rouse most people. At about 9.45pm a lady from the 'Black Parents' support group strode to the microphone and demanded that everyone walk out of "this fiasco", at which point the meeting broke up in disarray.

In private interviews several months later both Marnoch and Parkinson suggested that this meeting was successful. The number of registered informants on Railton Road doubled within two days, which Marnoch took as a sign of some public support. The police had been called to account, in Parkinson's mind. Yet in reality both men had been trapped by the contradictions that undermine the whole value of consultation as a mechanism for the resolution of conflict between the police and black communities in London. The roots and nature of this conflict were simply not susceptible to being talked away. Their remarkable actions might have served to buy time but not to resolve conflict. Astel Parkinson's exemplary and principled position may well

have persuaded many to be more reluctant to take to the streets. Marnoch's courage may have won friends and informers on Railton Road. But the level of sustained abuse and the public humiliation of both men revealed that such successes were tokens buying time at enormous personal cost.

Parkinson did not stand again as chairman of the CPCGL and told me that he saw his prominence in police/community affairs in Lambeth diminishing in the near future. Marnoch had a breakdown. When interviewed six months later after prolonged medical leave he still looked physically and mentally exhausted. Fine words can not gloss over the fact that these two individuals had achieved so little yet paid so much. Certainly, antagonism between police and community had not 'diminished', almost certainly their equals in calibre could not be found in Brixton. As individuals they could not have invested more in the consultative process but they worked within an institutional structure that could offer only occasional palliatives to a social schism.

b) Who are 'The Community' that will be Consulted? Invoking images of a 'Community'

One of several elements that was poorly thought through in PACE was the way in which 'the community' was to be defined and found. This in part reflected the Home Office switch from their initial emphasis on manageability and the restriction of membership to the later determination to ensure that all 'valid' community associations had rights of membership. This quite obviously raises the problems of minority groups' status in consultation. Richard Allen in Lambeth openly doubted the chances of black organisations receiving a fair hearing under the 'open door' constitution of the CPCGL. In practice,

the point he made is not without substance but is really dependent on the personnel of management and chairmanship, rather than being an intrinsic flaw of the consultative arrangements per se. In fact the issues raised are much more profound than this.

The assumption that underwrites both PACE and Home Office guidelines on consultation is that there is, out there in the real world, a natural series of geographic, ethnic and religious groupings, hierarchically structured and answerable to the individuals who assume a position at the apex of each social pyramid. The expectation is quite clearly that given ready access to consultation the people who occupy these strategic positions will magically come forward. Two factors, one contingent, one necessary mar this vision of society.

Necessarily, where 'representatives' willingly come forward to serve in consultation they will not collectively have any prerogative to act as the delegated representatives of the particular London Borough in which they operate. Many groups (younger people, the unwaged, the 'unmembers') will not belong to any organisation that might possibly be involved, many of the members of the committee (eg clergy) cannot be said to 'represent' any constituency, even if they have a valuable contribution to make to consultation. In such circumstances the consultative group can never claim any local mandate of democratic representation in a particular community, for to do so would be to parody democracy. This does not denigrate the groups' status, it only demands a more subtle analysis of consultation than the Home Office hierarchical model implies. Each individual may occupy a distinct role within the consultative structure; the black minister as an advisor, the TA representative a delegate, the black youth club leader a possible middle-man or honest broker between the police and the people using his club, three of many different contributions. None control a

constituency, all may have something useful to say. In short, this sort of complexity validates the need for consultation but curtails the legitimate ambit of consultative group interests. In practice, this need for caution is readily flouted.

The contingent factor often occurs where police are least popular and there is relatively little popular mobilisation in community groups. In these circumstances there is a very real danger that the police (as government agents) are forced virtually to 'invent' a community by defining 'community leaders'. Consequently, the consultative process is restricted to those who are:

- i) already predisposed towards the police ('our friends' as several officers classified for me groups like shopkeepers and old people);
- ii) the committee men and women, born bureaucrats, who would happily spend their lives moving motions and reading minutes.

At times reluctantly, the police are placed in the powerful position of creating a group that is supposed to monitor their own behaviour.

Both sets of problems were clearly illustrated in the struggle to construct some form of consultative structure in Hackney. Those groups taking part in the Area Liaison Panels are dominated by a very strong 'law and order lobby'. At one meeting Reverend J Tuitt, a black minister with both personal experience of the sharp end of police/black relations in London and a genuine desire to invest time and effort in reforming the situation, was shouted down for raising the most muted of criticisms of police behaviour. At the Liaison Panel that covers Sandringham Road, Mr Lusardi, the white residents' association chairman, dominates discussion. Although the Community Liaison Officer is aware of the obvious problems that stem from such selective 'representation', some of his senior officers at Dalstone station were quite clearly not. On one occasion in particular, two Inspectors appeared content to let

committee discussion degenerate into saloon bar rows. As an exhibition of bigoted Britain the open recurrence of racist remarks from both senior police and members of the public (particularly Lusardi) was singularly obnoxious. In such circumstances there is clear potential for consultation to exacerbate police/black antagonism, legitimising police practice under the spurious mandate of 'the community' consultative group.

Lost between social principle and the reality of the committee room there is a danger that the 'community' becomes less of a Durkheimian social fact or entity than a rhetorical syntagm which subsumes a constellation of ideological notions⁴ about the nature of society. In this sense the consultative group itself may become more of a polemical tool than a debating forum.

It is quite possible that a not dissimilar phenomenon will develop in Kensington and Chelsea, which covers Notting Hill but is dominated by affluent white groups and a safe Conservative Council. Typically, at a meeting of the borough Police Consultative Committee (20/3/86) a new 'street crime' operation which caused great controversy at the local level among the black community received eight minutes attention compared with a twenty-seven minute discussion on the value of wheel clamps.

c) The Power of Committees

Though limited in formal powers the actual power of the police consultative groups is moot. The GLC commented in 1982 that,

"in essence large voluntary committees with no clear lines of accountability to the community, no clear relationship with the police, and whose function is no more than an exchange of information or views, on terms solely dependent on the police, are not likely to meet current demands."

In contrast, the view of Islington Council was that it was possible to subvert the apparently powerless status of the new consultative groups by forcing senior officers to account for themselves in a public forum. It is certainly the case that senior police officers in both Brixton and Hackney confessed in private interviews that they feared 'interrogation' in the process of consultation. It is also certainly the case that in Conservative dominated Merton, Kensington and Chelsea and Wandsworth the predispositions of the majority of representatives on the committee often made the claims of the 'Left realists' look slightly thin, as criticisms of the police were drowned in a chorus of indignation (although see 'new critics', section 3b).

Yet both of these arguments overlook the fact that the police force is an institution that is characterised by the paradoxical structure of ostensible regimentation in a formal hierarchy in which the real powers of senior ranks over junior ranks is strictly circumscribed by the nature of 'the Job' (see chapter six). Quite possibly these two elements of police organisation make the relationship between police practice and any committee, however powerful in statute, a tenuous one.

In the most obvious sense, the discretion of the junior ranks allows ample room for redefinition of managerial objectives, license for the expressive realm of personal criteria to dominate the practical realm of professional policing laid down by senior ranks. That the police who appear at the consultative groups have authentic control over police practices is not as straightforward as the clear chains of command would imply.

More subtly, the rank structure can cut across those matters that are of greatest interest to the consultative group. In removing the District tier of organisation from the Metropolitan Police the

Commissioner removed the one level of management that most often covered the same geographical area as the London Boroughs on which consultation is based. This angered the consultative groups of Lambeth and Islington, who in 1985 and 1986 both registered official notes of protest with the Home Office about the failure to consult before this reform was announced. Significantly, only divisional staff were to be represented at the consultative meetings, with the result that each group would be faced not by a single set of officers in a clear cut hierarchy but with two or more parallel sets of management, one coming from each division in the borough. In Hackney there were two divisions (Hackney and Stoke Newington), in Lambeth four (Clapham, Kennington, Streatham, Brixton) and in both cases the contact at inter-divisional level within the police service was necessarily limited. Exceptionally, in Lambeth, the flagship of the new groups, a police Commander continued to attend meetings, though by 1986 Commander Lloyd's attendance at CPCGL was not as consistent as his predecessor, Commander Marnoch. In all other cases the most senior officers regularly present would be the Chief Superintendents in charge of each division. The effect of this was to downgrade the level of authority which dealt with the police consultative group.

Again, it is impossible to know if this was a calculating move by the Commissioner. Yet its benefits for the police rapidly became visible in hindsight and Newman's senior officers were not slow to take advantage of this change. DAC Jones, talking about police representation on consultative groups, cited one example where the police Commander in charge of the District (borough) of Tower Hamlets had, "said something which is now providing bullets for the council to attack us with" (private interview.)

For Jones, the removal of the Commander from the consultation

process guaranteed that major policing issues which arose at consultative meetings could be considered carefully within Area management, with the official responses passed back to the borough level groups, rather than having policing commitments extemporised or pledges 'on the record' forced out of senior management in the heat of public debate. Again there is ambiguity, the corollary of this sort of 'considered management' being the potential to emasculate consultative groups, to defuse the calling to account of police in a public forum.

The most clear cut example of this phenomenon occurred in Islington in the wake of what became known as 'the Holloway incident'. In 1983 five boys were assaulted by officers from a police van on the Holloway Road in Islington. An official inquiry by the Police Complaints Authority recognised the validity of the complaints of the five, but failed to establish the identity of the officers responsible. Only the actions of the local MP, Chris Smith (an active member of the Islington group) ensured that this result met with a blaze of publicity. On 14/2/86 the London Standard led with a banner headline, 'POLICE THUGS' and an editorial condemning the Home Secretary for claiming that nothing more could be done about the incident. The Islington consultative group met on 18/2/86 for the first time with no officer of higher rank than Chief Superintendent. At this stage the Commissioner was alleged to have reported to Tory back benchers that there was no point in taking the matter further and the Home Secretary had told Chris Smith that the incident was closed, two positions that infuriated the committee.

To the surprise and disbelief of almost all present, the police who came to the meeting that evening said that they had nothing to say about the incident and at one time Detective Chief Superintendent Meek commented,

"Those reports in the press, you read the same as I do, I know nothing more about this matter than you do."

The group were furious. Councillor Calnan, who was regularly the most astute exponent of Islington's policy of bringing the police to account in consultation, but who was to lose his seat in the 1986 local elections, claimed the police were putting up,

"a wall of silence that does more justice to the Mafia than to the Metropolitan Police," going on to state, "The fact that there is nobody here to answer to us tonight makes a mockery of the whole function of this consultative group ... this crisis is the worst yet for the group."

Similarly, the leader of the council, Margaret Hodge, scathingly remarked,

"Why do you come here saying you know nothing when the issue is quite clearly on the minutes?"

The dismay was such that there was talk of withdrawing the council from the consultative process altogether.

Yet the Mafia allusion was perhaps misleading. At one point in the evening a senior police officer said in an aside to one of his colleagues that he had not even known that the Home Secretary was holding a press conference that evening on the Holloway incident. It was not less alarming to realise that the police present were not deceiving the consultative group, only being used as canon fodder for their superiors.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC) Richards, responsible for the Area, pointedly refused to come to this and subsequent meetings of the Islington consultative group. Though the group protested, the Home Office reply (read at the meeting on 15/4/86) stated that the Commissioner's policy was for Chief Superintendent only to attend consultative meetings, unless matters of policy were at issue. In the event, the official inquiry into the Holloway incident was reopened amid further front page publicity on the 19/2/86 and by the 24/2/86 four PCs

had been charged with the offences. But by September 1986 DAC Richards had still not appeared before the Committee.

d) The Micro-sociology of the Committee

A ubiquitous social-psychological facet of committee practice is that the procedural niceties of meetings may at times become more important than the issues which are being discussed. Occasionally, Harre's liturgical metaphor for analysis of social behaviour (1979) seemed appropriate in all consultative groups. The protocols of recording minutes, moving motions, setting up sub-committees and voting on the most insignificant procedural matters often gave consultative meetings a rigid, almost ceremonial, structure that was familiar to all committee members but arcane to members of the public who would occasionally come to air grievances. This was particularly resented in Lambeth on the limited number of occasions when representatives of the young black community came expecting a less formal and more visceral discussion of the reality of police/black relations in Brixton. In these circumstances certain officers of consultative groups, caught up in the ceremony, clearly overestimate their own significance.

There is also a more insidious, connected problem that stems from the relationship between 'committee officials' and the police. This was most clearly seen when on 24/7/86 the police staged a massive raid on the Railton Road Afro-Caribbean Community Association (ACCA), in what was known as 'Operation Condor'. Commander Lloyd stated several times in television and radio interviews that he had consulted with 'community leaders' before the raid. Astel Parkinson was shattered. As Chairman of ACCA and a vigorous anti-drugs campaigner he had himself arranged for the club to be shut down over the bank holiday weekend a few weeks earlier, recognising the rising tension on Railton Road. In spite of

this, Lambeth Council, heavily involved in financing the centre, insisted that it was reopened and Parkinson was actively involved in trying to clean up the very real problems of criminal activity that were developing there. However, he knew nothing of the police raid in advance yet he told me that after Lloyd's public statements not a single person on the Front Line would believe this. He felt that his credibility had possibly been shattered by the police. For him, his own alleged co-optation, once risible, had become a more plausible accusation.

The construction of co-optation is haphazard. It is difficult to locate the elusive 'they', the personification of the power-bloc, the anonymous managerial 'controllers' of fictional dystopia. At the level of the consultative process itself such Machiavellian types rarely, if ever, exist. If some of the police I observed and interviewed pragmatically recognised that 'community relations' was 'in vogue' and a promising promotion channel⁵, the majority were working within a vision of society that incorporates the common sense notion that if only everybody 'understood each other' then the bitterness of police/black conflict would dissolve. As it happens, this is a vision which is profoundly alien to both the personal views of the participant observer and all the findings of this research project. The institutionalisation of the police/black conflict, the sedimentation of antagonism in time and place, and the social context of racial injustice all undermine such ingenuous notions; the rhetorical assassinations of Alec Marnoch and Astel Parkinson were the product of this contradiction of common sense. This in no way negates the sincerity of many police involved in consultation. If co-optation was designed into the consultative process, it was designed in such a way to deceive police as well as public. More plausibly, the flaws of functionalist sociology are once more exposed, cause and effect confused. In these circumstances co-

optation may be an incidental facet of the consultative process, an equally alarming phenomenon. The case of Parkinson and the raid on ACCA is a clear cut example of this contingent property, yet this was produced by the insensitivity of the local Police Commander rather than by the institutional imperatives of the consultative process, though the result is no less unfortunate. In pairing the living tragedy of conflict with the protocols of the committee room only the body bureaucratic can triumph.

6 CONCLUSION

It is not possible here to produce a comprehensive analysis of the value of statutory consultative arrangements in London. In general, the case for consultation must rest on the grounds of modesty. As the showpiece counterweight to the increases in police powers embodied in PACE 1984, the consultative group is a paper tiger. As an arena for communication, complaint and explanation it is a potentially valuable supplement to local democracy. It has not and can not have a major impact on any of the crucial issues of policing in post-industrial Britain. Yet the groups have become political issues in their own right. Functional significance is overwhelmed by political symbolism. Both participating members and non-participating opponents tend to play up the importance of the consultative groups to the detriment of all. The groups are cited as major reforms (by the police) or as the locus of co-optation (Hackney and Lambeth councils), when in fact they are neither. In the midst of this crossfire the potential contributions of people like Parkinson and Tuitt can be cruelly overshadowed.

But most of all, this study of one aspect of consultation confirms the nature of police/black conflict highlighted in chapters five and six, conflict that is beyond polite discussion, contradicting images of liberal-democratic Britain, institutionalised in the social divisions of the racist nation.

POSTSCRIPT, FOOTNOTES, APPENDICES AND
BIBLIOGRAPHY

POSTSCRIPT

This thesis has looked in detail only at the London experience of disorder in 1981. Because of the focus on local processes, the distinctive elements of rioting in Liverpool, Manchester and other parts of the country could not be studied, although superficial evidence suggests again that in the locations of most serious conflict the forces at work were not dissimilar.

Similarly, the whole range of behaviour that is subsumed in the term 'to riot' was also not covered in depth. White involvement and the looting of retail areas were classified as secondary phenomena on almost all occasions but this does not make them in any way inferior phenomena. Again, the work is not intended to be exhaustive.

Finally, there has been little effort made to predict future states from past and present events. Principally this is because of serious doubts relating to what form such 'prediction' could take, partly this is related to the sort of pessimistic stance that any prediction would have to take.

Throughout this analysis the central argument has been that the conflict between police and black communities is a historical product, not merely the necessary result of social form. As Diagram 6.3 highlighted, there is an inevitable problem built into all policing work that stems from the tension between law and order. Yet the conflict between black people and the police was established at a time when 'consensus' was an ideological possibility, if not a materialist reality. It was the pervasive nature of racism and racial injustice that restricted this possibility to the majority white society. Today, in an economic situation where Black British people have become socially stigmatised and economically marginalised there is a danger

that the reconciliation of law and order becomes impossible, regardless of changes in the police practices that were responsible for making the contradiction so evident for so long.

In short, the sort of liberal reforms which occasionally surface in police behaviour, such as neighbourhood policing, community involvement and public consultation might have exerted powerful influences in the past but can now do little to resolve conflict. Indeed, the reforming purpose of such initiatives is itself susceptible to distortion. Neighbourhood policing may incidentally amplify the stigmatisation of space, community involvement may evolve into community surveillance and public consultation may embrace co-optation. Moreover, because these measures tend to be tried in those areas where police/community relations are at their worst (in London, Notting Hill, Brixton and Hackney are favoured 'testing grounds') they are tested in those areas where they have least chance of success, most chance of being discredited.

This is particularly important in the wider context of British society in the 1980s. The very incidence of rioting in 1981 conditioned expectations for the forthcoming decade, to an extent normalised perceptions of social conflict, altered perspectives on group violence. In this sense it is important to understand the processes of displacement by which street clashes in the inner city leak into the coalfields of Nottingham. There is no need to resort to images of the conspiratorial, authoritarian state to recognise the shadow of 1981, not only on changes in police practices but also in popular discourse.

Only in this way is it possible to tie the specific determination of social action on the streets in a formal explanation to the broad canvas of description involved in social theory. In the rarefied levels of generalisation that are the stuff of political discourse, football

hooliganism, the miners' strike and the localised rioting of oppressed black communities were at times in the early 1980s knitted together in a single constellation of 'common sense' values that could serve as the raw material of popular ideologies of 'law and order'. It is the analytical task of critical theory to expose the polemical hubris behind such association, it is the explanatory task of realistic analysis to provide an accurate and plausible account of events in their own time rather than in hindsight. It is hoped that this thesis has made some contribution to both of these tasks.

FOOTNOTES:

CHAPTER 1

1 What happened?

Although estimates vary, something like three hundred or more cities in the USA experienced riots in the period 1963-68, some cities suffering several disturbances in this period (Kerner, 1968; Feagin and Hahn, 1973) Downes, 1970. The Kerner Commission defined the principal incidents between 1963-67 as follows:

1963:

There were serious disorders in Birmingham, Savannah, Cambridge (Maryland), Chicago and Philadelphia. Although these conflicts sometimes involved attacks by white people on black groups, normally Civil Rights marches, they usually took the form of clashes between black people and the police. The most violent rioting in 1963 was seen in Birmingham (Alabama), where whites attacked black marchers and several shootings were reported.

1964:

In the spring of 1964 the arrest and convictions of members of a Civil Rights demonstration led to clashes with the police in Jacksonville that involved allegedly the first use of Molotov cocktails (petrol bombs) in American rioting. However, the major clash of the year followed the shooting of a black adolescent in New York. A march protesting about this incident escalated into a violent conflict over several days in the Harlem and Bedford Stuyvesant areas of New York. One person was killed. Rioting also broke out in New Jersey in Jersey City, Elizabeth and Paterson,

1965:

Further violence surrounded Civil Rights protests in Alabama and Louisiana but the worst rioting followed the arrest of a drunk driver in Los Angeles on August 11. Two miles away from this incident, in the Watts area, in the midst of a heatwave, a large crowd began looting several stores and the ensuing confrontation with the police lasted for thirty-six hours. Thirty-four people were killed and there was approximately thirty-five million dollars worth of damage to property incurred. The National Guard were used to subdue the riot.

1966:

Forty-three disorders and riots were reported in 1966, including major violence in the Hough section of Cleveland and in Chicago as well as a further flare up in Watts which required 4,200 National Guardsmen to control.

1967:

Again estimates vary but somewhere between fifty-one and two hundred and seventeen disorders occurred in 1967 (see Feagin and Hahn, 1973), the worst summer of the 1960s for ghetto riots. Kerner lists a hundred and

sixty four incidents in a hundred and twenty eight cities over the period January to September 1967, ranked in three categories of riot severity. Eight disorders (5 per cent of the total) were classified as 'major' in Buffalo (New York), Cincinnati (Ohio), Milwaukee (Wisconsin), Minneapolis (Minnesota), Plainfield (New Jersey), Tampa (Florida), and the two most serious in Newark (New Jersey) and Detroit (Michigan). Altogether there were 83 deaths and 1,897 serious injuries in these riots, although more than 80 per cent of all deaths and 50 per cent of all injuries occurred in Newark and Detroit. Property damage was estimated at 40-45 million dollars in Detroit and 10-12 million dollars in Newark. Twenty-five cities had two or more disturbances; New York had five separate disturbances, Chicago four, and Cincinnati, Hartford, Houston, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Wichita three.

1968:

In April 1968, less than two months after the Kerner Report was actually published, Martin Luther King was assassinated and over the following month "more cities saw ghetto violence than during the whole of the year 1967" (Feagin and Hahn 1973, p105). At least one hundred and seventy two cities experienced two hundred and two racially motivated civil disorders in which more than twenty seven thousand arrests were made for riot related offences, three thousand five hundred people were injured and forty-three people killed. The Lemby Centre for the Study of Violence estimated that from January to April there were some two hundred and ninety-five disorders in the USA.

Although the number of incidents in 1969 and 1970 was considerably greater than is often believed (Graham and Gurr, 1979), the intensity of incidents of disorder in the very late sixties and early seventies was nothing like as severe as those of the mid-sixties.

It is also worth noting the extensive nature of property damage suffered during these disturbances. Hence, in the 1964 riot in Harlem 112 sites were plundered
in 1965 in Watts 600 stores were looted or burned
in 1967 in Newark 1029 stores were looted or damaged
and in 1968 in Washington DC, 900 businesses were looted or damaged.

For obvious reasons it was very difficult to assess the proportions of the ghetto residents that were involved in rioting and those attempts to do so cannot be regarded as particularly accurate (Fogelson, 1971; Sears and McConahay, 1970; Caplan and Paige, 1968) yet the numbers of people either actively involved in disorder or passively supporting the rioters was regularly estimated in thousands (Kerner, 1968; Feagin and Hahn, 1973). In short, it is clear, even from this brief and potted history, that the clashes in American cities constituted major breakdowns in public order and, although they tended to be confined to specific parts of major parts of cities, quite often the riot area remained an effectively autonomous zone for a period of several days and nights.

CHAPTER TWO

- 1 Typical of this confusion Jackson and Smith comment that under humanism "reality does not exist independently of the observer or the observed" (1984, p9),

a generalisation that fails to recognise that the humanist project is founded on problems surrounding apprehension of the world (questions of epistemology) not on problems surrounding its existence (questions of ontology).

- 2 In the search to explain everything within the single conceptual structure, Parkin too falls into the trap of functionalist 'only connect' sociology; hence symbolic hierarchies give

"normative support to the system of inequalities set up by the unfair distribution of material advantage" (1979,p370).

- 3 See Sayer (1984) on the need to advance 'practical adequacy' ahead of 'radical relativism'.
- 4 Although Harré does not acknowledge the similarity between his use of the linguistic model and the tradition of continental structuralism, it is a central contention of this thesis that only by combining the ethogenic social psychology outlined by Harre (heavily influenced by Goffman) with the semiology of this tradition can a powerful analysis of the role of space in the realisation of conflict be achieved.

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 See NCCL (1980 and 1982), in particular the Dummett Inquiry into the 1979 election clashes in Southall which led to the death of Blair Peach.
- 2 The suggestion that this incident started the summer disturbances was to be questioned at the Scarman Inquiry.

CHAPTER THREE

No footnotes.

CHAPTER FIVE

- 1 Commander Marnoch described the behaviour of police officers involved in this raid as "blatantly malicious" (private interview).
- 2 Even if these institutions were outside or peripheral to the strict boundaries of 'the Front Line' as defined by many (or perhaps most) of the local black community they remained part of a 'social whole' perceived by both insiders and outsiders.
- 3 The Caribbean House group, based in Hackney, when presenting evidence to Lord Scarman, claimed both that

"The situation in Hackney is just as bad as in Brixton and it is certainly worse than in St Pauls, Bristol. The miracle is that in Hackney there has been so few incidents up to now."

and that,

"Many parents cannot understand why the police refuse to do anything to stop these black clubs preying on children and destroying them in this way. The same police that refuse to withdraw their presence at times of disorder, are the same police that treat these clubs as 'no-go areas'"

The latter comment referred to the clubs on Sandringham Road.

4 For the Hackney Legal Defence Committee.

"In Hackney on 10-11 July 1981 the uprising of black youth led to over a hundred arrests. We witnessed a military type operation by the police who were drafted in in hundreds. The SPG led the baton charges and snatch operations which caused numerous bloody injuries."

CHAPTER SIX

Footnotes in text.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1 Built into the constitution of the Police Community Consultative Group for Lambeth when it was set up in 1982 were the following "Aims, Terms of Reference and Scope" :

- a) To work towards a substantial improvement in relations between the community and the police, in particular the black ethnic communities;
- b) To work for the better prevention of crime;
- c) To work for the maintenance of a peaceful community in the Borough of Lambeth;
- d) To work for a statutory provision to govern the consultative arrangements.

2 Senior police officers in Lambeth, Wandsworth, Hackney and Islington have all conceded that there are major problems in initiating Neighbourhood Watch schemes on the large council estates, whilst in marked contrast there is often an overwhelming response from more middle class, property owning areas.

3 At the time of writing, the Home Secretary serves as the Police Authority for London.

4 This is a common phenomenon. Cf terms like 'the family' in political discourse and 'the young' in Chapter Four.

5 In fact, not only did Newman tell his officers that,

"Police officers must be willing to change their views and actions, and must be seen to do so, under the influence of discussion,"

but also pointedly remarked that performance in the consultative process would affect career prospects:

"success in this aspect of their duties will be an importance element in any assessment of the professional abilities of divisional officers."

(Quoted by Morgan and Maggs, 1985, p51)

APPENDICES

- I A variable catalogue :
lists of 'riots' in London in 1981.

- II Methodological note.

- III The ecological fallacy.

- IV Submission to the Independent Inquiry
into the Disturbance of October 1985
at the Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham,
Chaired by Lord Gifford.

APPENDIX I

A variable catalogue : lists of 'riots' in London in 1981

The following very different catalogues were all offered as lists of the 1981 summer disturbances:

GLC Policing London Report, March 1982

"the situation in Lambeth was far from unique" (p5):

Acton, Balham, Battersea, Barnet, Brixton, Camberwell, Chelsea, Chiswick, Dalston, Ealing, Hackney, Paddington, Peckham, Putney, Shepherd's Bush, Southall, Stoke Newington, Streatham, Sydenham, Walthamstow.

Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police (Annual Report for the year 1981):

Wood Green, Lewisham, Woolwich, Hounslow, Tooting, Brixton, Paddington, Fulham, Stoke Newington, Chingford, Peckham, Wembley, Hampstead, Southall, Croydon.

Kettle and Hodges (1982)

"there was an orgy of looting, and for a while it seemed that a sort of civil war had broken out" (p155):

Brixton, Southall, Woolwich, Balham, Lewisham, Stoke Newington, Fulham, Dalston and Battersea.

Joshua and Wallace (1983)

"the incidence of violence in London was too widespread to recount" but cite in particular as places where there was "particular" trouble: "Tooting, Dalston, Fulham and Woolwich." In fact in the latter two locations there was only very minor disorder (see Chapter Four).

Home Office

"Notting Hill, Paddington, Fulham, Hackney, Limehouse, Chingford, Walthamstow, Dagenham, Chigwell, Newham, Brixton, Southwark, Penge, Lewisham, Brent, Bexleyheath, Woolwich, Golders Green, Chiswick, Hounslow, Tooting, Battersea, Acton, Southall, Wood Green, Croydon, Sutton".

APPENDIX II

Methodological Note

Chapter Five

Participant observation was carried out with police during a period of three months in Hackney and one month in Brixton. Interviews with officers in the three case study locations took place throughout the research from 1982 to 1986, using the 'snowball' technique to build up list of serving police in each division. All formal interviews lasted not less than two hours, normally a lot longer, and concentrated on both personal accounts of present practices and oral histories of past events.

The local histories in Chapter Five were gathered by a combination of archival research, interviews with those whose comments and experiences feature in the text, extensive formal and informal interviews with representatives of community groups, residents' associations, political parties, local government pressure groups, and participant observation at youth clubs.

Notes on the ecological fallacy

Initially, one facet of this research project investigated the ecological background of the riots in British cities. Eventually, after a great deal of time had been spent on this aspect of the research, it was decided not to follow this work to its conclusion on both conceptual and explanatory grounds.

Conceptually, three problems of definition which at first appeared empirically intractable were later seen as logically insuperable:

- i) Riots as singular events: The most obvious problem (see Chapter Four and Appendix I) arose from defining events. If Croydon did not see a 'riot' but Hackney did, what about the confused events in Tooting and the even more confusing events of Battersea? Similarly, was 'West Ham' one riot, no riots or several different riots in different places? Moreover, the analysis of the three case study locations highlighted a recurring history of violent conflict, most of it either under-reported or not reported at all. Were these events riots?
- ii) A real definition: Not only would any definition of ecological conditions be in the final analysis arbitrary, it would often destroy the very fine contours of social space which the studies of the MPD 11 showed are separated by only tens of metres.
- iii) Rioters: Rioting was shown quite explicitly to be not a generic form of behaviour (Chapters Three and Four). There are different characters involved in disorder and it is not easy to decide whose ecology should be assessed.

The explanatory problem stems essentially from the point that such ecological work can stand either as description and nothing but description (ie comparisons ecological areas not used) or else as part of a Humean causal explanation which for reasons analysed extensively in Chapter Two would be both theoretically and epistemologically inadequate.

APPENDIX IV

Part of Submission to the Gifford Inquiry

An eyewitness account
of the events of 5th/6th October 1985 in Tottenham

The account of events that follows here was not easy to set down in writing. Leaving aside questions of memory error, the position of any observer at scenes of rioting is not without an element of moral ambiguity. There is certainly a danger that any attempt to find out 'what is going on' will border on macabre voyeurism.

a) Sunday lunchtime:

I arrived in Haringey around lunchtime on Sunday, 5 October. In the wake of the events in Brixton the week before and Handsworth a few weeks earlier, the tragic death of Mrs Jarrett and the circumstances that surrounded the incident seemed highly likely to precipitate some form of disorder in Tottenham. Many black people of all ages were standing along Tottenham High Road in small groups of four or five people in the area around the police station. I think there had been a march to the police station which had now mostly dispersed. The BBC were notable by their presence and the general atmosphere was typified by one incident in which a young black man walked down the High Road towards a cafeteria/restaurant openly carrying a baseball bat. He was stopped by a police constable and in an abusive verbal exchange both the officer and the individual made references to 'trouble tonight'. This is not to say that either was making any predictions, only to illustrate the tension prevalent at the time. After walking around the area for a while I left in the late afternoon.

b) Sunday evening - Broadwater Farm:

I returned at about 7.30pm-8pm only to hear that there was already major trouble on Broadwater Farm Estate. Over the next two to three hours I spent most of the time wandering around Tottenham and made several attempts to get on to the estate. After being barred from entry to the estate several times by police, I eventually managed to find a way past the blockades. Although I am not certain of the precise time I think that this was at about 10pm or slightly later. In total, I spent about thirty minutes to one hour on the estate itself. Most of this time I was standing some distance behind the crowd that confronted the police on Adams Road. A house on Adams Road was on fire by the time I arrived. Compared with news footage I saw later it seemed that the worst fighting had already occurred before this time. Effectively, lines had been drawn up between the police and the crowd which would stay calm for a short period only to surge like waves on a beach as either the crowd would run forward throwing whatever came to hand or the police would counter, attempting to make arrests (although I cannot remember seeing many, if any, arrests at this time). I then got into conversation with a group of much older West Indian men, several of whom had been visiting the estate at the time the rioting started and had become trapped. Fearing that at some point in the near future the police would make a full scale assault on the rioting group I joined up with these men and managed with some difficulty to leave the estate from a different exit away from the epicentre of the riot.

c) Sunday night - off the estate:

Having managed to move off Broadwater Farm, I spent some time walking around the police blockade of the estate. At one time I was caught up in a further attack on the police which started on Winborne Road. The police had cleared a large area around their 'end' of Adams Road which stretched about twenty to twenty-five yards up and down Mt Pleasant Road. This included a line of police stationed across the junction between Mt Pleasant Road and Winborne Road. I was walking from Lordsmead Road down Winborne Road and into Drayton Road when this line of police was attacked. Winborne Road slopes quite steeply at this point towards Mt Pleasant which meant that the police stood at the road's lowest point, quite exposed. As I was turning into Drayton Road a small group of no more than four or five young black men ran into Winborne Road and threw something at the police. I moved back into Lordsmead Road which, like all the surrounding roads, was crowded with large numbers of disaggregated spectators milling around trying to see what was going on on the estate. However, this initial attack was rapidly supported both by people in the crowd standing around and by others arriving in the area. At one point two people began to rock a garden wall half way up Winborne Road until it collapsed, providing ammunition for further attacks on the police. One or possibly two cars were also turned over and (unsuccessful) attempts made to set them alight. Throughout this period 'the crowd' grew rapidly and there were soon well over two hundred people, on my own count, involved in physical and verbal abuse of the police, although a minority of this group accounted for the greater part of the physical attacks on police lines.

For the next hour to an hour-and-a-half the police moved forward and back against this group in a series of clashes which were not dissimilar in kind, though nowhere near as severe, as the confrontation I had earlier witnessed in Adams Road. The crowd were forced away from the estate through the residential area of terraced housing. At each stage the police would move forward against a bombardment of assorted missiles, taking up new positions as the crowd regrouped. At each stage a mini rush hour would ensue as most of the people owning cars in the area would attempt to prevent their vehicle being used to block police advances. Although the number in 'the crowd' fluctuated, I estimated that there were approximately two hundred and fifty plus at one time. Eventually they were driven back to Bruce Grove where there was some, fairly small scale, looting before the remainder of the crowd were dispersed onto the High Road by pursuing DSUs.

d) Sunday night/Monday morning - Tottenham High Road:

As the crowd were chased onto the High Road by the railway bridge, pandemonium broke loose. A traffic jam heading north blocked the road yet at the sight of people running down Bruce Grove many of the cars began to execute impromptu U-turns. Several cars drove along the pavement, hooting at those standing around.

By the time 'the crowd' had actually been driven onto the High Road the numbers had dwindled as people ran off down side streets. Although by this time it was well past midnight, many were gathered along the High Road passing on rumours and gossip about the exact passage of events over the past twenty-four hours. It was very difficult to distinguish exactly what happened next. Several minutes after most of 'the rioters'

had merged into the crowd of spectators along the High Road and after the chaos of the rogue traffic had begun to die down, several groups of police in full riot gear began running down Tottenham High Road from the direction of the police station. Although there was one fight outside the Hunger Cure burger bar the reaction of most of those on the High Road was to move in great haste away from the approaching police. There was a great deal of verbal and racial abuse from both civilians and police officers. One police officer started shouting at everybody to clear the street although it was not possible to distinguish his rank or whether his actions were strategic or pragmatic as the language of his commands and his own demeanour suggested anger and fear rather than self-control and organisation. It seemed that this movement was directed at those people who had previously been driven onto the High Road, yet because this group was now a very small minority of a much larger, passive crowd I know for certain that at least two bystanders, who had not been involved in earlier clashes, were injured in this manoeuvre. It is not my intention to make criticism of police operations out of context, but it is important to note that in the confusion of this difficult situation several innocent people were hurt and many individuals who had previously not been in any way involved in attacks on the police were drawn into vociferous abuse of passing officers to the point of further clashes as the behaviour of a few individual police officers got out of hand. This whole scene could have taken no longer than twenty to thirty minutes, at which point the High Road seemed to calm down.

During the rest of the evening I returned to the area around Broadwater Farm and mixed with the press who had congregated along Mt Pleasant. Several of the police came over to talk to the journalists and

cameramen. Again it struck me very strongly that their reactions were first of shock and fear and only secondly of anger. Although the appearance of police in riot gear was undoubtedly ferocious the impression at close quarters was certainly not one of ruthless or paramilitary efficiency. I stayed in the area until about three or four o'clock in the morning by which time I was soaking wet (it rained spasmodically throughout the evening). Everything had been quiet for some time, with the exception of one arrest made when a young black man tried to leave the estate via Adams Road, when the police invited a group of journalists to go with them onto the estate. I did not accompany this group and at this point left Tottenham.

Organisation:

After the Tottenham riot, as after every riot, there were many allegations of conspiratorial planning, outside agitation and military organisation. From what I saw I would suggest that such notions are profoundly misleading. Most of the people on the streets were united by a sense of anger which regularly escalated to fury. In this situation a dramatic cast representative of any cross section of society was clearly evident. There were the people who were 'all mouth', loudest in the cries of abuse, standing furthest away from the police lines, throwing the occasional brick from the safe distance of a hundred yards or more. Others were more committed, outdoing one another in their attacks on police, going as close as thirty, twenty or ten yards away from police lines before throwing brick, bomb or baked bean can. Many more spent most of the time giving moral support, joking with each other, but no less committed in occasional forays against the rows of riot shields.

Amidst all these characters there inevitably emerge those who try and impose some order upon confused actions. In this sense, organisation was extemporised. Typically, at one time late in the evening when the crowd was being driven away from Broadwater Form towards Tottenham High Road, two people, both black, started shouting orders at the others. "We need more ammunition". Immediately five or six responded by running round the houses gathering up empty milk bottles while four others turned over a car for petrol. In less than five minutes I counted more than fifty petrol bombs completed. It is in the light of such rapid production that the true absurdity of claims of pre-planning based on a crate of empty bottles is revealed. It takes virtually no time at all to produce a petrol bomb. Of course, there were individuals running around telling everybody else what to do; there always are.

Throughout all this, particularly off the estate, it appeared that many of the people present did not know each other, certainly nobody ever questioned my presence. Without a doubt, the hostility towards the police was the principal binding force. As the police advanced they beat their shields and shouted the 'gorilla chant' of the football terraces. The crowd would often respond in kind with repeated chants of "Murderers, Murderers, Murderers", and several times I heard people cry, "A life for a life". Every single person I spoke to quite clearly felt justified in what they were doing.

'Race', 'Age' and Sex.

I have tried to suggest that at any one point in time it was very difficult to make any easy distinction between rioters and non-rioters. The norm throughout the night tended to consist of large crowds of people who

were differentially involved in the riot itself. Hence there were always black and white people together 'on the streets' although it was my distinct impression that the involvement of white people tended to be less committed, more voyeuristic. Nevertheless, this was not always the case. This is best summed up by the actions of one white man, about twenty-five years old. He was among the crowd in Winborne Road when I was talking to him late in the evening. Initially he said to me, half joking, "I'm only here because I want a new suit for Christmas" and he and his (white) friend repeatedly urged the others to move on to the High Road shops. Nevertheless, he was also keen to go nearer to the police and throw more petrol bombs than anyone else. Yet in one lull in the conflict there was a major row between him and several black members of the crowd who thought that looting would devalue the riot. In spite of this, when the crowd was finally broken up and running down Bruce Grove, it was this man who smashed the first shop window and many of the other (black) members of the crowd did not hesitate in joining him.

Undoubtedly most of the people attacking the police were under twenty-five, many under twenty-one, quite a few under sixteen. Yet there were most certainly significant numbers of black people who were older than twenty-five among the rioters. Moreover, many others called out messages of support. At one time somebody in the crowd recognised a friend who must have been about thirty and called for him to lend a hand turning over a car. He laughed and replied, "I'm too old, go on mash up the car and the police." In the argument already mentioned two of the black people most involved in rebuking the putative looter were both in their late twenties at least.

Finally, although it may be an obvious point to make, the female members of the crowd were normally spectators rather than principal actors in the violence.

Summary:

It is not easy to present an account of one night in Tottenham without sounding alternately blasé and melodramatic about the events of the 5th/6th October. In no way is this account intended to devalue the horror of the riot itself or the tragic deaths. At the time, particularly on Broadwater Farm itself, I was convinced that more than one life would be lost. In this context there seemed to be a dreadful inevitability about the murder of the police constable. Yet at no time was I personally either questioned or threatened by any of the rioters; all hostility was directed at the police.

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