

**REPRESENTATIONS OF MADNESS**  
**ON BRITISH TELEVISION:**  
**A Social Psychological Analysis**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to describe and delineate the ways in which madness is represented on British television. The empirical analyses are guided by two theoretical approaches. These are social psychology, particularly the theory of social representations, and media studies. The central findings are that madness is very strongly associated with violence on British television; that nearly all representations are negative; that there is a lack of explanation and accounting for madness; that psychiatric experts are tinged with the same negative evaluations and even violence that characterises the representations of those who are mentally distressed; that there is multiplicity and confusion in the representations and that filming styles mark off the mad person as different to other characters who appear in the data. These findings lead to the argument that the mad person is constituted as Other on British television. The empirical data are compared to the theoretical frameworks and it is proposed that, in terms of the theory of social representations, mental illness is not represented in the same way as other social objects. Madness does not obey the laws of representation as proposed by social psychologists. Rather the mad person *resists safe classification* and thereby is constructed as a fearful Other. The thesis also attempts to integrate theoretical ideas from social psychology and media studies. It is suggested that there is scope for this around the concepts of narrative structure, cardinal news values and dramatic form although integrating postmodernist approaches is more difficult. The methodological contribution of the thesis consists in the attempt to combine quantitative and qualitative means of analysis and to eschew the search for underlying meanings or deep structures. Future work will build on current analyses of audience responses to media representations of mental illness and will also look at those responsible for television productions. It is argued that the symbolic environment of television has an impact on social attitudes towards mental illness and may adversely affect the policy of caring for mentally distressed people in community, social settings.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b><u>CHAPTER ONE</u></b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION - THE CONTEXT AND THE PROBLEM</b>	<b>17</b>
Introduction	17
The Policy Context - Care in the Community	17
Historical Perspectives	20
Statement of the Problem	23
The Structure of the Thesis	25
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>27</i>
<b><u>CHAPTER TWO</u></b>	
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>28</b>
Introduction	28
<b>THE LITERATURE</b>	<b>28</b>
The Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG)	28
Gerbner and his colleagues	31
Wahl and other North American work	34
More peripherally relevant work	39
Medicine in general	42

DISCUSSION	42
CONCLUSION	46

### **CHAPTER THREE**

<b>THEORETICAL IDEAS FROM SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY</b>	<b>47</b>
INTRODUCTION	47
THE THEORY OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS	49
Communication	51
Stereotypes or branches of knowledge	53
The familiar and the strange	55
Objectification and visual images	65
<b>STIGMA, STEREOTYPES AND SOCIAL IDENTITY</b>	<b>68</b>
Social Identity Theory	70
ON OTHERNESS	75
CONCLUSION	80

### **CHAPTER FOUR**

<b>THEORETICAL IDEAS FROM MEDIA STUDIES</b>	<b>82</b>
INTRODUCTION	82
SITUATING MEDIA STUDIES	83
NARRATIVE STRUCTURE	86
BEYOND NARRATIVE	90
CAMERA ANGLES	97
THE NEWS	100
THE SOAP OPERA DRAMA SERIAL	103
DRAMA SERIES	107



<b>A COLLECTIVE MEDIUM</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>AUDIENCES</b>	<b>111</b>
Empirical work	111
Other work on audiences	115
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>117</b>
 <b><u>CHAPTER FIVE</u></b>	
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>CONTENT ANALYSIS</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>THEORY GUIDED RESEARCH</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>THEORETICAL DERIVATIONS OF THE CODING FRAME</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>EMPIRICAL DERIVATIONS</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>THE STRUCTURE OF THE CODING FRAME</b>	<b>137</b>
The most detailed level - subdivisions for scene-setting and narrative description	146
The most detailed level - subdivisions for explanation	148
The most detailed level - subdivisions for resolution	149
<b>VISUAL ANALYSIS</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>REMAINING METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES</b>	<b>151</b>
The Sample	151
Transcription	155
The units of analysis	156
Reliability	157
Mental Health on British Television - An Empirical Caveat	161
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>162</b>

## **CHAPTER SIX**

<b>NEWS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>THE SAMPLE AND INITIAL STATISTICS</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>THE DISTRIBUTION OF ITEM TYPES</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>THE CONTENT OF THE REPRESENTATION</b>	<b>175</b>
The third level of abstraction	175
Explanation	182
Resolution	184
Multiple coding	187
The narrative structure of the stories	191
<b>VISUAL ASPECTS OF TELEVISION NEWS</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>CONCLUSIONS AND THE QUESTION OF CONTROLS</b>	<b>200</b>

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

<b>MRS BISHOP'S STORY</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>MRS BISHOP'S BREAKDOWN</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>THE SAMPLE AND INITIAL STATISTICS</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>THE CONTENT ANALYSIS</b>	<b>207</b>
The third level of abstraction	207
Multiple coding	214
Explanation	216
Resolution	218
Narrative structure	220
A coda to the content analysis	224

VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS	225
CONCLUSION	240

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

DRAMA AND MADNESS	242
INTRODUCTION	242
THE SAMPLE AND INITIAL STATISTICS	243
THE CONTENT ANALYSIS	246
The third level of abstraction	246
Multiple coding	256
Explanation	259
Resolution	261
Narrative structure	265
VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS	271
CONCLUSION	279

## **CHAPTER NINE**

DISCUSSION	281
INTRODUCTION	281
THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS	283
Violence and crime	284
Negative representations	287
Explanation and the role of expertise	290
Narrative form	294
Differentiating photography	295
Diversity and multiple meanings	297

<b>THEORY AND DATA</b>	<b>299</b>
The theory of social representations - making the unfamiliar more familiar	299
Narrative theory	301
The theory of social representations - objectification	302
Stigma and out-groups	304
Dramatic requirements	306
Summary of theories in the light of the data	308
<b>SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND MEDIA THEORY - AN INTEGRATION?</b>	<b>309</b>
Media and Social Psychology	309
The concept of objectification	311
Narrative	311
Scandalous categories	313
Postmodernism and Social Psychology	314
<b>THE ROLE OF METHOD</b>	<b>318</b>
Theory	318
Counting meanings	319
The surface of the text	321
<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH</b>	<b>322</b>
<b>CONCLUDING REMARKS</b>	<b>324</b>
 <b><u>POSTSCRIPT</u></b>	
<b>WHAT IS TO BE DONE?</b>	<b>327</b>

## **APPENDIX ONE**

<b>THE PILOT STUDY OF THE NEWS</b>	<b>331</b>
<b>THE SAMPLE</b>	<b>331</b>
<b>ANALYSIS 1 - ITEM CONTEXTS</b>	<b>332</b>
Method	332
Results	332
<b>ANALYSIS 2 - SEMANTIC FIELDS</b>	<b>334</b>
Method	334
Results	336
<b>ANALYSIS 3 - VISUAL DIFFERENCES</b>	<b>340</b>
Method	340
Results	340
<b>ANALYSIS 4 - NARRATIVE STRUCTURE</b>	<b>342</b>
Results	342
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>343</b>
 <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	 <b>344</b>

## **LIST OF TABLES**

<b>Table No.</b>	<b>Table Title</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
Table 5.1	Matrix of codings for main coder and six others in the reliability exercise	159
Table 6.1	Comparison of the distribution of item types in the general news sample and the mental health news sample for nationally broadcast bulletins.	167
Table 6.2	Comparison of the distribution of item types in the general news sampler and the mental health news sample for regional news programmes.	168
Table 6.3	Comparison of the distribution of item types in the general news sample and the mental health news sample for all news programmes.	169
Table 6.4	Distribution of types of crime in the general news sample and the mental health news sample.	171

<b>Table 6.5</b>	<b>Distribution for detailed content categories defined by three narrative elements for the mental health news sample.</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>Table 6.6</b>	<b>Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Explanation in the mental health news sample.</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>Table 6.7</b>	<b>Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Resolution in the mental health news sample.</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Table 6.8</b>	<b>Frequency distribution of multiple codes for the mental health news sample.</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>Table 6.9</b>	<b>Frequency distribution of types of narrative sequence for the mental health news sample.</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>Table 6.10</b>	<b>Percentage distribution of camera angle by type of character in the mental health news sample.</b>	<b>198</b>

<b>Table 7.1</b>	<b>Distribution for detailed content categories subdivided by two narrative elements for Mrs Bishop's story.</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>Table 7.2</b>	<b>Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Explanation in Mrs Bishop's story.</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>Table 7.3</b>	<b>Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Resolution in Mrs Bishop's story.</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>Table 7.4</b>	<b>Frequency distribution of types of narrative sequence in Mrs Bishop's story.</b>	<b>221</b>
<b>Table 7.5</b>	<b>Type of shot and character during Mrs Bishop's breakdown.</b>	<b>227</b>
<b>Table 7.6</b>	<b>Type of shot and character after Mrs Bishop's discharge.</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>Table 7.7</b>	<b>Camera angle by character for single shots during Mrs Bishop's breakdown.</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Table 7.8</b>	<b>Collapsed categories for camera angle by</b>	



	character for single shots during Mrs Bishop's breakdown.	231
Table 7.9	Camera angle by character in single shots after Mrs Bishop's discharge.	233
Table 7.10	Camera angle by character in two-shots during Mrs Bishop's breakdown.	235
Table 7.11	Camera angle by character in two-shots after Mrs Bishop's discharge.	235
Table 7.12	Camera angle by character in group shots during Mrs Bishop's breakdown.	238
Table 7.13	Modified Table of camera angle by character in group shots during Mrs Bishop's breakdown.	238
Table 7.14	Camera angle by character in group shots after Mrs Bishop's discharge.	239
Table 8.1	Distribution of detailed content categories subdivided by two narrative elements for the Drama data.	247

<b>Table 8.2</b>	<b>Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Explanation in the Drama data.</b>	<b>260</b>
<b>Table 8.3</b>	<b>Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Resolution for the Drama data.</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>Table 8.4</b>	<b>Frequency distribution of types of narrative sequence for the Drama data.</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>Table 8.5</b>	<b>Percentage distribution of camera angle by type of character for the Drama data.</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>Table AP1.1</b>	<b>Comparison of distribution of item types in total sample and mental health sample for national and regional news programmes in the pilot data.</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>Table AP1.2</b>	<b>Results of the keyword search for the pilot news data.</b>	<b>338</b>
<b>Table AP1.3</b>	<b>Camera angle by category of person for the pilot news data.</b>	<b>341</b>

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION - THE CONTEXT AND THE PROBLEM**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This study aims to analyse representations of madness on television. It seeks to do this in as systematic and detailed a fashion as possible and also in a way that is theoretically informed. However, like many Ph.D. theses, this one has a context that is related to social policy. In my case, the context is the policy of caring for mentally distressed people in the community. At times, in the chapters to come, the work will stray a long way from this policy context as it considers the details of representational structure and content. This is as it should be. However, in this Introduction I shall try to situate the work in relation to both the practical and the historical considerations which provided the motive for carrying it out in the first place.

The introductory chapter will also contain a statement of the problem to be addressed and some thoughts on terminology. The chapter will conclude with a brief guide to the rest of the thesis.

This will not be a long introductory chapter as it would be inappropriate to rehearse the main theoretical arguments and empirical findings when they are dealt with at length in the body of the text.

#### **THE POLICY CONTEXT - CARE IN THE COMMUNITY**

In 1990 the British Government published its White Paper *Caring for People*. This was the precursor to the 1992 *NHS and Community Care Act* which gave legislative form to

the policy of closing large institutions and caring for vulnerable members of society 'in the community'. In respect of people with mental health problems this was not a new policy. It was first articulated by Enoch Powell when he was Minister for Health in 1962. In addition to this, the policy was well established in countries such as Italy and the United States before it was enshrined in law in Britain.

Much has been written in the academic sphere about the reasons for this policy. Scull (1984), probably the foremost commentator in sociology and history, sees it as largely a cost cutting exercise, a response to the fiscal crisis of the State. He also is concerned with the role of medical personnel. He pays very little attention to the representations and arguments that surrounded the inception of the policy. N. Rose (1986) by contrast looks to the changes in the discourses that surround mental health, the explanations, techniques and treatments that characterise the shift. Indeed, he argues that the policy of community care and its precursors represent an *extension* of the powers of psychiatry across the social fabric.

Before taking up the scholarly literature in more detail, a few general points can be made about this policy and its relation to the thesis. The burden of success of care in the community is squarely placed on the shoulders of mental health professionals and their patients. It is up to the experts to prepare the person with mental distress for life in the community. This involves teaching new social skills and new interpersonal skills because these are conceptualised as being in deficit for the mental patient. He or she is encouraged to take responsibility for life in the community and must adapt to new circumstances if that life is to be successful.

I would like to argue that this leaves one half of the equation unscrutinised. That is, if

people who have spent time in institutions are to find the community a congenial place, then the *community* must also adapt. There is a huge literature on the attitudes of the general public to people with a mental health problem (eg Rabkin, 1980; Furnham and Rees, 1988) and it makes salutary reading. If this literature is accurate, then people with mental health problems are entering an environment which is at best ignorant and at worst fearful and hostile. Training the patient is not going to work if the community is intolerant of difference.

In this thesis, reference will be made to the ways in which the general public gain information about mental illness and the effects of factors such as personal experience of mental distress on attitudes and responses to media representations. A main thrust of the thesis, however, is that people gain at least some of the knowledge (or mis-knowledge) that they have from television representations of madness. Television has a role in shaping the community response to people with mental distress. It provides a symbolic environment which may affect responses to people with a mental illness and so their quality of life.

This argument is admittedly speculative. I make the assumption that most people do not routinely and knowingly interact with people with a serious mental illness. Some such individuals keep their psychiatric histories a secret - out of shame and fear of stigmatisation, for example in employment. Others cannot do this, because of poverty, the side effects of drugs or symptomatology. People who are clearly different tend to lead a lonely or a ghettoised life, interacting with other users of mental health services and with psychiatric professionals. They live a life which is largely hidden from the rest of the community (eg. Holmes-Eber and Riger, 1990). Given the relative invisibility of serious psychiatric distress, it can be argued that the media, and particularly television, are a

potent source of information about mental illness for many sections of the public. Improvements in the response of the community to the new individuals in their midst may then depend on what is on offer from the media.

This study is a content analysis of representations of madness on British television and includes no empirical study of audiences. However, the above paragraphs give the backdrop against which the limited thesis can be read. If there is any practical value to this work, it is to contribute to the understanding of the symbolic and institutional environment in which people with mental illness must live as they make their way in the community.

### **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES**

There is a huge literature on the history of psychiatry and it is quite outside the scope of this thesis to review it here. However, writers with such diverse opinions as Foucault (1967) and Scull (1979) identify two main shifts in the treatment of the mad in the nineteenth century. The first of these is the birth of the asylum and the second is the growing hegemony of the medical profession.

For Scull the asylum was in large measure a place to warehouse the most difficult elements of the reserve army of labour produced by capitalism. Foucault gives more weight to discourses (or representations). For him, the asylum grew out of the 'great confinement' whereby mad people were classified as a separate category of the indigent poor, with a form of segregation specific to their type. Hence the asylum was born and here mental maladies were to be subject to the gaze of the knowing enlightenment thinker, who sought to capture them in reason. Enlightenment thought met its antithesis in the



figure of the madman and it sought to know him. The essence of madness was 'unreason' but this has to be interpreted broadly. Unreason also meant 'incivility', the incapacity or refusal to conform to the mores of civilised society. Hence the English title *Madness and Civilisation*. As we shall see, incarceration was both response and cause of eighteenth and nineteenth century conceptions of madness.

Scull (1979) argues that the birth of the asylum, at the same time as it obeyed the exigencies of capitalism, was motivated by a humane reforming spirit. The reality, however, often departed enormously from what the Victorian reformers had in mind. Equally, the public image of these institutions was woven of terror and misgiving. Writing in 1877, Granville remarked that:

(M)any among the higher, and nearly all among the lower classes, still look upon the County Asylum as the Bluebeard's cupboard of the neighbourhood.

(quoted in Scull 1979, p.195)

The forbidding spectre of the Victorian asylum, with its locks and barred windows, has henceforth held in the public imagination the place of a receptacle for the worst forms of dangerousness. It can be argued that the very fact of incarceration in a prison-like building produces representations that those incarcerated must be violent.

Earlier, community care was discussed. The Victorian asylum is closing its doors and its former and proto inmates are dispersed throughout the wider community. The question for the present research is whether representations will be dominated by the past - danger and institutions - or whether high walls will have given way to community settings. I shall come back to this in a moment.

The other major transformation of the nineteenth century was the growing control of mentally disturbed people by medical doctors. There are diverse points of view about the reasons for this dominance. Scull (1979) argues that medical men seized the initiative and engaged in a form of 'moral entrepreneurship' to gain control of the mad. He seems to believe that this onslaught by the profession was cynically undertaken. For Foucault (1967, 1973) the asylum itself, in virtue of its gathering together a given but diverse group, allowed the classification, association and dissociation of different mental conditions. The asylum population became subject to medicine's 'clinical gaze' and modern forms of diagnosis were born. The asylum made possible the concept of 'mental illness' and henceforth doctors were the acknowledged experts.

What are the lessons of these mutations, both for the present time and for the thesis to be presented here? It was said above that treatment of mentally distressed people increasingly takes place in the community. The day of the asylum is over. What about the dominance of medicine? N. Rose (1986) has argued that medicine is losing its grip on those designated mad. A myriad of associated professionals - social workers, nurses, counsellors, psychologists and so on - are arrogating to themselves some of the functions previously in the hands of doctors. As community care comes into action, the first port of call for both new patient and old is likely to be the Community Mental Health Team rather than the psychiatrist's office. The community psychiatric nurse may visit once a week or once a fortnight but appointments with the consultant are likely to be more sparsely spread. (Of course, nobody at all might call as the scandals remind us.)

It should be clear from the above that we are witnessing something of a sea-change in psychiatry. The asylums are closing and many professional groups compete for both the explanation and the treatment of madness. In this diverse and contested field, what can

we expect of representations? Moscovici (1984a) argues that the role of representations is to make the unfamiliar more familiar, to minimise dissension and produce an unambiguous discourse. And, of course, many scientific and technological fields are fraught with conflict but their popular representations play this down, producing a stability that does not exist among the cognoscenti (eg Silverstone, 1985). I shall try to show that the state of flux of psychiatry is duplicated and *magnified* in television representations of madness whilst at the same time the representations contain elements from the past. I shall also try to show that madness is symbolically troublesome in that its representation is not governed by the rules which cognitive and social psychologists have taught us to expect. What this means for representations of madness on television is that individuals designated mentally disturbed are represented as radically *Other* to the mainstream of society. This Otherness exists at the level of representation itself - the symbolic universe which is as real as the air we breathe.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The main objective of this study can be very simply put. It is to describe the representations of madness that are to be found in a sample of British television. All genres are included, from news to soap opera, from police series to sit coms. This description aims to be as detailed and systematic as possible and to provide a much more thorough picture than has been achieved in previous work on the subject.

The definition of 'madness' to be used is a relatively tight one. I am not here concerned with stories about stress, references to counselling or news items about eccentric individuals. In this work the qualification for a representation to be a representation of *madness* is that psychiatric categories or their cognates must be present at some time in

a news item or drama story. In line with what was said above, the emphasis is on what some professionals call 'serious mental illness'.

It is also necessary to state that in order to accomplish the description of representations of madness on British television, a good deal of theoretical work is necessary. The descriptive process needs theory to guide it and I shall be using theoretical work from both social psychology and media studies. The main social psychological concepts will come from Moscovici's theory of social representations. This has been chosen because, as will be explained in depth in Chapter 3, it is a truly social social psychology and in my view probably the only social psychology that can adequately handle the complexity of television. The work to be used from media studies centres on British Cultural Studies. A subordinate aim of the thesis is to consider the possibility of integrating these two bodies of work although I shall not be inured to their possible points of contradiction and conflict.

I also hope to make a contribution to methodological developments. One of the points of conflict between media studies and social psychology concerns the relative merits of quantitative and qualitative analysis of texts. Social psychologists have tended to use quantitative, including computerised, forms of content analysis whilst students of the media have deployed the methods of semiotics and structuralism and latterly post-modernism. I shall try to resolve this conflict.

In this study of social representations of madness on British television, then, there are three aims: to describe the representations in as detailed a way as possible; to consider the points of integration and conflict between two bodies of theoretical work; and to engage with methodological questions. But as we get down to the details of the work, it

is important not to forget the social context which is its motor.

### **TERMINOLOGY**

It may have been noted that I have already used several phrases in referring to 'madness': madness, mental illness, mental health problems, mental distress etc. This is deliberate. In the first place, all these terms are current because of the contested nature of psychiatry just outlined. Sometimes certain professional groups have a chosen form of terminology and groups of people who use psychiatric services also have their own preferences. Secondly, however, I do not wish to pre-empt the findings of this research. As should be clear, it is not self-evident that most representations will be based in the medical model (Clare, 1980) thereby making the term 'mental illness' appropriate. The use of psychiatric diagnostic categories as a criterion for inclusion in the research does make this more likely but the representation may nevertheless be developed from another perspective. An example would be some psychologists' preference for talking about mental health problems.

I have used the term 'madness' in my title and will use it often in this work. This is because it is a generic term and one that preceded the others that are currently deployed. Being generic, it carries less of the specificity of a given explanatory field than is true for the alternatives.

### **THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

The main body of this work consists in theoretical analysis, methodological discussion and the presentation of empirical results. The theoretical work is propounded in Chapters 3 and 4. In Chapter 3 social psychological concepts are considered and the focus of the

discussion, as has already been said, is on Moscovici's theory of social representations. It is suggested that this theory lends itself well to an analysis of the media and specifically television. There are concepts in Moscovici's work which make it possible to look at both dialogic and visual portrayals and it is argued that even other theories which eschew individualism cannot adequately handle the media in its distinctiveness. However, it is also suggested that the domain of madness may pose problems for some of the central tenets of the theory and here I propose some new concepts.

Chapter 4 is the other theoretical chapter. Concentrating on British Cultural Studies this it has two aims. First to furnish concepts useful to the empirical analyses. And secondly to consider how Moscovici's work might be integrated with concepts from media studies to produce a framework for analysing media representations. It will, however, be noted that integration is sometimes hampered by points of conflict between the two approaches.

Chapter 5 is the methodology chapter and it follows directly from the theoretical work. A coding frame for content analysis is presented which is guided by the concepts that have been developed in the previous two chapters. It is argued that empirical work must be, implicitly or explicitly, conceptually driven while it is at the same time sensitive to the details of the empirical data. The technique of content analysis is also considered, partly from a historical angle, and some modifications are put forward.

There are three empirical chapters and each presents the analysis of a particular genre. These are the News, a soap opera continuing story (from *Coronation Street*) and drama. The empirical analyses apply the coding frame laid out in the methodology chapter and also analyse visual images. To anticipate, a major finding is that television proposes an unequivocal link between madness and violence including violent crime. At the same

time, there is a wide diversity both within and between representations and this diversity produces a situation where the stabilising and familiarising functions of representational activity break down. Madness as an entity is symbolically troublesome. Taking these two findings together it is proposed that madness resists safe classification and positions the mentally distressed person as radically Other to the mainstream of society.

There are three other chapters. Chapter 2 is the literature review and is relatively short since there is not a great deal of existing work which looks at representations of madness on television. Most of the work that has been done is North American. For Britain, there is only one piece of work and some references in texts whose major focus is not madness.

There are also a discussion and postscript. In the latter, I shall attempt to come back to some of the questions which opened the present chapter. This will be speculative since one of the many shortcomings of this thesis is its lack of audience analysis. However, I shall be able to discuss facts which are known about audiences, extrapolate from these and draw out some of their implications. In this way, it will be possible to consider the symbolic and social environment in which people with mental distress must live out their lives in community, public, social settings.

## **CONCLUSION**

As well as stating the problem and providing an outline of the thesis, this Introduction has specified the policy context and the historical context in which the thesis is located. The body of the work will take us a long way from these contexts but their importance must be stressed here. The thesis will end with a Postscript which will return in some detail to the policy of community care and the nature of television as a symbolic environment which affects how the community responds to people with a serious mental illness.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

There is a small body of work, most of it based in North America, which analyses representations of mental illness on television. Some additional studies look at other media and a few texts focus on other topics but refer to mental illness incidentally. This is true, in some respects, of the work of Gerbner and his colleagues to be discussed below.

The work on television representations of madness that has been undertaken finds overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, that people designated mentally ill on television are the objects of negative stereotypes and are depicted as living on the margins of society. I intend, in reviewing these studies, to draw out implications for my own work as well as to describe the methodology and findings of what has gone before. My description of previous work cannot claim to be entirely comprehensive but it can confidently be asserted that the main studies are covered.

The review of the literature will be divided by authors or groups of authors and will be followed by a brief discussion.

#### **THE LITERATURE**

##### **The Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG)**

I will begin this literature review with the one British study that has looked at representations of madness in the media. It is also the most recent of all the research to be considered here. The Glasgow University Media Group (1994a, 1994b) looked at representations of 'mental health/illness' in a range of media in the month of April 1993.



For television, they looked at two news bulletins, several soap operas and three medical drama series. There is a great deal of overlap between the programmes analysed by GUMG and the sample for the study to be reported here. The time frames are different, however. The GUMG also carried out an audience reception study using focus groups including one group of psychiatric patients.

The GUMG content analysed the representations of madness which they found and divided them into five categories: violence to others, sympathetic, violence or harm to self, comic and critical. This order is in fact the rank order of the categories found by the Group. Violence to others accounted for more representations than all the others put together.

The GUMG go on to give specific quotations illustrating the different categories. Most of these come from the printed media, especially when it comes to violence to others. However, one example is given from the soap opera *Coronation Street* and here the significance of visual symbols is also drawn out, with the mentally disordered character being shot in shadow and in close up. Visual analysis will be important for the work to be presented here.

There may be some problems with the categories used by the Glasgow University Media Group. The 'sympathetic' portrayals, the second most frequent classification, come largely from magazine agony columns where readers are advised how to cope with mental distress. Nearly all the 'sympathetic' portrayals which they instance seem to conform to the medical model of mental illness and so could be seen as channelling representations of mental distress in the direction of the dominant discourse surrounding it. Critics of the medical model would not see these representations as 'sympathetic'. In this category there is also an example from *Coronation Street* which refers back to a storyline which was part

of my sample. The person who has been mentally ill is presented in a sympathetic light but the cameo as a whole includes negative portrayals. There is room for dispute as to whether the portrayal is, in fact, 'sympathetic'.

The work of the Glasgow University Media Group has no explicit theoretical perspective and I would argue that this is the reason why some of the categories do not have a sound basis. It will be important for my research to develop a firm theoretical framework that can be used to direct the coding categories used in content analysis.

The GUMG (1994b) also conducted an audience reception study which drew on their content analysis. One of the things that interested them was the role of personal experience in how representations of madness were received. Previous work by the group in other content areas of the media had revealed that personal experience affects how media representations are understood. They found this link to be weaker in the case of mental illness.

(S)uch is the depth of anxiety in this area, that some media accounts can exert great power. Our research in other areas has found that personal experience was a much stronger influence on belief than media content. One of the most interesting findings of this research is that we found cases where this pattern was reversed.

(Glasgow University Media Group, 1994b, p.31)

Even some members of their focus groups who knew a mentally ill person were nevertheless more affected by media representations than they were by personal knowledge. This was particularly true in the area of violence. For example, one subject

had visited a relative in a large psychiatric institution every fortnight for twenty five years. She had never witnessed a violent incident. Despite this, she associated mental illness with extreme levels of violence and gave film and television as the sources of her beliefs. This finding supports the argument made in the previous chapter that television will be a potent source of images of mental distress for the general public and will influence community responses to people with a psychiatric history.

There is one other text which makes reference to mental illness on television in Britain. This is Cumberbatch and Negrine's (1991) analysis of images of disability on television. Though mostly concerned with physical disability, it makes three references to madness. All three of these associate mental disturbance with violence. The violent madman is then the only portrayal of mental illness which they found in their study. This supports the findings of the Glasgow University Media Group and of the North American studies which shall be considered now.

#### **Gerbner and his colleagues**

The most consistent and long standing analyses of mental health portrayals on North American television constitute part of the 'Cultural Indicators Project' headed by George Gerbner. This project undertakes an annual examination of a week of dramatic prime-time programming in the United States. A central aim is to study representations of violence in the cohort of programmes. Within this objective, the incidence, characteristics and fate of mentally ill characters is assessed.

The most recent article from this project (Signorelli, 1989) investigated data for seventeen years. It was found that, since 1969, approximately 20% of the programmes sampled involved some depiction of mental health problems and that about 3% of major characters

were designated mentally ill. This latter figure did not alter throughout the seventeen years. As to violence, the characters designated mentally ill were more likely both to commit violence and to be the victims of violence than were other characters. On U.S. and British television alike, people labelled mentally ill inhabit a violent world.

Other indices examined by Signorelli (1989) concerned type of dramatic role (light/serious), depiction as a 'good' or 'bad' character and the mentally ill person's ultimate success or failure. Characters designated mentally ill were more likely to appear in serious roles; were the group most likely to be represented as 'bad' in make up; and were far more likely than other characters to be failures. The final dimension of analysis showed that mentally ill characters were much more likely than others to have no specific occupation. People designated mentally ill on television live outside the boundaries of 'normal' society.

Signorelli (1989) makes the important point that:

(t)he world of television is a very specialised world in which characters are designed to meet certain dramatic storytelling requirements. Unfortunately, on television, these dramatic needs result in overemphasizing the negative and stigmatized images of the mentally ill, such as violence, bizarre behaviour and failure. (p.329)

This argument, or variants of it, is made repeatedly in the literature and is something which will crop up again.

Signorelli's (1989) analysis was anticipated eight years earlier by Gerbner, Morgan and

Signorelli (1981). The results were very similar in respect of both incidence and content. This is not surprising since some of the data overlap. It does demonstrate, however, that portrayals have not altered in the intervening years. Such stability indicates the presence of a social representation.

The above findings, within the framework of the Cultural Indicators Project, led Gerbner (1985) to propose that characters with a psychiatric history are not only presented as violent, dangerous and as inhabiting a violent world - they are also touched with a sense of evil. The notion that a mentally ill character could be presented as ordinary or successful sounds strange to our ears:

How often have you read in the newspaper or heard on the radio or television that "Mr. John Smith, ex-mental patient, was elected president of the local Rotary Club last night"? And yet this is probably much more frequent than the more typical newspaper story reporting some outburst of seemingly irrational violence. (pp3-4)

It is instructive to replace 'ex-mental patient' in this quote with 'local black Councillor' or to begin the sentence with 'Ms Joanna Smith' and delete the reference to psychiatry. In the past both resulting sentences would have sounded just as out of place as Gerbner's example but they do so no longer. I would suggest that stereotypes of gender and ethnicity have altered in recent years but negative representations of people with mental distress go unremarked.

Gerbner makes an audience analysis under the concept of 'cultivation analysis'. This will be considered in more detail in Chapter 4. For the moment, it can be said that he argues

that television cultivates a symbolic world for the viewer and heavy viewers of television are more affected by the symbolic world of television than light viewers. He is particularly interested in how the symbolic world of violence cultivates fear. In this respect, it is interesting that a recent anonymous paper from the UK showed that viewers of television fiction were more likely to believe that people with a mental health problem are violent and to say that they feared them.

#### **Wahl and other North American work**

Wahl (1992) reviewed the literature on mental health and the media, including all media, and including, of course, the studies of Gerbner. He considered the prevalence of mental health portrayals, their stigmatising nature and their consequences. It will not surprise the reader by now to discover that, in respect to his second concern, Wahl summarises research which shows violence, unpredictability, failure and other negative attributes ascribed to mentally ill people. Wahl notes that there has been little work on the impact of media presentations but that what there is shows harmful effects. Here he instances the general work on cultivation analysis by Gerbner and his own study to be discussed shortly. One could add here the work of the Glasgow University Media Group.

Wahl argues that prevalence studies, of which there are a reasonable number for television, shows that mental health is an important enough topic to warrant investigation. He quotes figures of between 2% and 9% of characters depicted as mentally ill in entertainment programming. However, here Wahl makes a very important point when he notes that different studies are not consistent in their definition of poor mental health. He proposes a set of criteria and these will be attended to in Chapter 5 when methodology is discussed.

One of Wahl's own studies (Wahl and Roth, 1982) involved a "Media Watch" throughout February 1981. They and their volunteers viewed the entire output of five channels in the USA during the month. The number of programmes watched was 385. This endeavour was backed by various voluntary organisations working with people with mental health problems.

The project found that 19% of programmes involved minor reference to mental illness and 9% included mentally ill characters. These characters were rated according to ten negative and ten positive adjectives. The typical person designated mentally ill on television was a single male of unknown occupation described by such adjectives as "active, confused, aggressive, dangerous and unpredictable". Wahl and Roth (1982) conclude:

Mentally ill persons tended to be identified only by their mental illness.....The mentally ill on television are disenfranchised, not a part of the usual fabric of home and work. Such portrayals can only add to the public's tendency to view the mentally ill as a special, distinct and probably inferior, class of people.  
(p.605)

The authors emphasise that television representations have taken this form for a considerable period, at least since the earliest work in the field (Nunnally, 1961). Such consistency was also found in an analysis of the Canadian press over twenty years by Matas et al (1986).

Later, we shall consider another piece of work by Wahl and his colleagues. For the moment, it is worth pointing out that Wahl is heavily involved with the U.S. pressure group the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. This group has a specific set of

objectives and a specific analysis of mental illness. For example, it endorses the medical model. Its research, therefore, is measured against this analysis. If media representations portray physical treatments and aetiologies then this is 'accurate' in terms of this view.

Whilst I cannot claim to have no view on mental ill health, the aim of this study is to look at representations of madness on television in their own terms. I shall be less concerned with contrasting these representations against the 'real' than with looking at how they construct the meaning of madness on television.

I will turn now to the first content analysis of television representations of mental health problems which was carried out by Nunnally in 1961. The examination of the media formed part of a larger study of social attitudes towards mental illness and the study of television constituted but a part of the total analysis of the media. Gerbner also collaborated on the media part of the study.

Nunnally (1961) measured the opinions of both the general public and mental health professionals and then used factors derived from the statistical analyses of his data as coding categories through which to analyse the mass media. As with the public and professionals, he also employed the semantic differential.

The results showed, firstly, that mental illness coverage was relatively rare. Secondly, the representations that did exist were *more* misinformed and distorted than opinions held by the general public. It must be pointed out, however, that the standard against which such evaluations were made were the opinions of medical professionals. In the contested world of psychiatry this is not without its difficulties.



Finally, in terms of attitudes and values, assessed with semantic differential scales, both the general public and the media were found to be exceedingly negative. Specifically, both the media and the public evaluated the concept 'mental patient' as "ignorant, dangerous, dirty, unkind and unpredictable". The public strongly differentiated between concepts such as 'self' and those to do with mental illness.

Nunnally (1961) concludes that the media are misinformed about mental illness and represent people with mental health problems in a highly negatively stereotyped fashion. However, anticipating the argument of Signorelli (1989) quoted above, he cautions that some of the distortions on television have more to do with the requirements and conventions of dramatic and narrative form than with the attitudes of media personnel. This argument is given authenticity in an empirical study by Matas, el-Guebaly, Peterkin, Green and Harper (1985).

Rather than analyse actual media content, Matas et al (1985) investigated the attitudes of four groups of people - reporters (press, radio and television), psychiatrists, physically ill people and psychiatric in-patients. They concluded that reporters were not less accepting of mentally ill people than the other groups but that *all* considered the media to be inaccurate and distorted in their depiction of people with mental health problems. The reporters put forward factors such as the premium on sensationalism in commercial ventures and the lack of control over editing by supervisors. Again we find features such as sensationalism invoked as explanation for stereotyping and this will be discussed presently.

There is one study which departs from the consensus that television is stigmatising in its representations of people with mental health problems. Winick (1982), examining other

media as well as television, gives a singularly reassuring picture. He writes:

By and large, entertainment programmes that deal with the mentally ill are prepared in co-operation with professionals in psychiatry and/or psychology and reflect currently valid information on the different psychoses, neuroses and other conditions. (p.235)

The quotation continues with a gesture towards the argument I have just been discussing:

However, the demands of entertainment programs for colorful characters, conflict, and the requirements of continuing series for tension maintenance may impinge on accuracy of portrayal. (ibid.)

Winick (1982) concludes that media representations have changed markedly for the better since Nunnally's (1961) work twenty years earlier.

There is clearly a conflict between Winick's (1982) findings and that of the other research I have been discussing. Some of this may rest on differences in methodology. The Cultural Indicators Project (Gerbner, Morgan and Signorelli, 1981; Signorelli, 1989) uses a precise coding frame for content analysis whilst Winick (1982) gives no methodological information about his research - it may even be impressionistic. Further, Winick (1982) does mention the Cultural Indicators Project results concerning violence but he does not assess violence in his own work. This seems a serious omission given the importance of violence in previous research. Winick's (1982) work is published in a book (Gove, 1982) which is nothing less than a sustained attack on labelling theory and so takes a conceptual stance against the notion that mentally ill people are stigmatised. This, of course, is

perfectly legitimate but without details of the methods by which the conclusions were reached, it is difficult to evaluate the work.

I will turn now to three pieces of research which are slightly less central to my own work. Steadman and Coccozza (1977/78) analysed public perceptions of dangerousness; Fruth and Padderud (1985) looked at daytime television serials; and Wahl and Lefkowitz (1989) examined the effects on attitudes of a film about a mentally disturbed killer. I shall also look at two analyses of print media.

#### **More peripherally relevant work**

Steadman and Coccozza (1977/78) asked members of the public to name a criminally insane character. All those named had featured on the news media although *none* of them were convicted with mental illness being used as a mitigating circumstance. The authors conclude, although without examining media representations, that the public equation of criminal insanity with dramatic violent crime stems from the mass media. In judging the stereotypes found by Nunnally (1961) to be very enduring, they say that it is dangerousness and unpredictability that typify public images, not just of the criminally insane, but of mentally ill people in general.

Fruth and Padderud (1985) examined Canadian daytime serials or soap operas over a week long period. The depictions they investigated were very similar in content to those described above. There was a stress on violence and harm and a lack of portrayal of effective treatment. Their main finding, however, was that the frequency of representations greatly exceeded that found for prime time dramatic programming. No less than 50% of programmes featured a mentally ill person or someone with a past psychiatric history. A further 28% of programmes included minor references. Available

programming time included 11.4% devoted to mental illness topics. The authors argue that daytime television may be a greater source of information to the public than the less frequent images on evening prime time.

As one of their analytic categories, Fruth and Padderud used the presence of a therapist. They found the percentage of representations of therapy to be very low and so concluded that television distorts reality. There is a problem here and it has been mentioned before. Some of the studies which I have considered, particularly Wahl and Roth and Fruth and Padderud are working with groups which have specific views about the 'truth' of mental illness. This problem is similar to the category of 'sympathetic' in the work of the Glasgow University Media Group (1994a). These views do not go uncontested in the mental health arena. It is important to be very careful about measuring media representations against some putative 'truth' when that can often not be assessed. This brings us back to the conflicted nature of the mental health field and one of the reasons why it may be symbolically difficult.

The final study I wish to examine was carried out by Wahl and Lefkowitz (1989). This involved showing a film, based on a real life story, about a mentally ill man who kills his wife. There were three groups of subjects. The first group simply watched the film. The second group watched the film but were exposed to a disclaimer cautioning that this was not normal behaviour for people with psychiatric histories. The third group saw a control film. After the viewing, attitudes were measured. The first and second group evinced more negative attitudes than the control. The disclaimer did not seem to make any difference to the effects of the film.

This is the only North American study I can find where the *effects* of media

representations of mental illness have been examined. However, two other pieces of work can be mentioned. As already indicated, Gerbner's studies under the rubric of 'cultivation analysis' (see Chapter 4) allows us to infer that media representations of mental health problems have an effect in cultivating a symbolic environment where heavy viewers of television, at least, will fear those with mental health difficulties. Secondly, and in terms of self-reports, Lopez (1991) found that over half her sample of adolescents mentioned media and particularly television as the most important source of their information about poor mental health. This was more important than personal contact, echoing the findings of the GUMG.

To turn to print media, Wearing (1993) makes an interesting analysis of the interaction between journalism and the discourse of mental health professionals. Looking at a mass murder in Sydney in 1991, he shows how the expert discourse was used by the journalists to construct sensationalist stories. These took the form of 'biographies' seeking to explain the killings. Wearing is as critical of the mental health experts as he is of journalism, accusing both of breaches of confidentiality. The role of experts will be examined in this thesis.

Finally, one can mention a study by Shain and Phillips (1991). Although this is concerned with print journalism, it is interesting because it looks at the news and the news will be considered in this study. Shain and Phillips found a strong concentration on violent mental illness as has previously been seen for entertainment media. This coincidence between different genres is instructive. They argue that often the mental illness reference is incidental to the crime story and recommend that a person's psychiatric history should only be mentioned if it is intrinsic to the incident that is being reported.

## **Medicine in general**

The absence of a social object in a context where it might be expected is just as important as its presence in others. There is one British (Karpf, 1988) and one North American (Turow, 1989) book which looks at the presentation of medical matters on television. Apart from the title song to MASH - *Suicide is Easy* - these texts make no reference whatsoever to mental disturbance. This, perhaps, should alert us to the possibility that psychiatry is outside the mainstream for medicine just as psychiatric patients are marginalised in society. The question remains that, if one focuses on mental illness, what proportion of the representations will be situated within a medical model?

## **DISCUSSION**

From this review of one pertinent body of literature, I propose to derive one empirical point, one methodological point and two theoretical points.

The empirical point is the most straightforward. With the exception of Winick (1982), all the studies reviewed have discovered that television representations of people designated mentally ill are dominated by highly negative stereotyping emphasising violence, danger, unpredictability and evil. This group is also far more likely than others to be shown as outside the normal and familiar social networks of home and work and to be identified solely by their mental illness.

All of this work analysed dramatic programming or did not specify the type of media genres involved (Matas et al, 1985; McIlwraith, 1987). However, my study of news programming (Adlam, 1988/89) is quite consistent with the work discussed here. In order to increase the theoretical provenance of these empirical findings, more work needs to be undertaken on the subjects of stereotypes and stigma as well as on the organisation of

meaning. This will be the object of Chapters 3 and 4.

The methodological point I wish to consider has already been raised in reference to Wahl's (1992) review. It concerns the criteria through which a segment of television is considered to be a valid example of a representation of mental illness. There are two aspects to this problem. First, although the discrepancies are not large, the major pieces of work are not completely consistent regarding the amount of programming time devoted to mental illness topics. Second, some reports draw a distinction between 'major' portrayals of mental health and 'minor' ones. This is not without its problems.

Signorelli (1989) found that 20.5% of programmes contained some reference to mental illness and that 8.2% took it as a major focus. 3% of adult characters were portrayed as having a mental illness. It is stated that these figures have remained stable in the life of the Cultural Indicators Project. Wahl and Roth (1982) reported that 29% of programmes had a mental illness content with 9% including mentally ill characters. It would appear that Wahl and Roth (1982) either studied an atypical week in reference to minor representations of mental illness or used looser criteria for inclusion than Signorelli (1989).

The suggestion that Wahl and Roth (1982) used looser criteria is supported by references in their paper to the inclusion of situations where one character says of another, "He was ranting and raving like some kind of maniac" (p.62). It is not clear whether other researchers have included such statements although there is an indication in the Fruth and Padderud (1985) study that they did.

At the moment, I would argue that references such as the example given above should be

included in an analysis of representations of madness on television because both parts of the simile use madness terminology. However, statements such as 'you're laughing like a lunatic' or 'what a nutter' should not. To say that someone 'laughs like a lunatic' is a *metaphoric* use of mental illness terminology. Such use abounds, of course, and again goes unremarked in a way that slang words or use of words about black people and women no longer do. I had intended to study metaphoric usage of mental illness terminology in the body of this thesis but space precludes this. The final criteria for a portrayal to count as a representation of poor mental health will be given in Chapter 5 and will draw on the recommendations of Wahl since he has put the matter very succinctly.

Methodological issues invariably involve conceptual matters. The authors whose work has been discussed have, for the most part, counted the incidence of certain types of representations. They have not looked at how the 'same' representations might vary in meaning, be differently weighted in relation to a given field of meaning or be constructed as organised 'stories' or narratives which imply different positions for mental health problems on television. The issue of metaphor is but one example of this. The question can be linked to the use to be made, in future Chapters, of the theory of social representations. Social representations are said to be more than lists of attributes, more than static stereotypes. They are theories or branches of knowledge (Moscovici, 1973; Moscovici and Hewstone, 1983) and as such have a structure that cannot be captured by the simple listing of attributes in a television portrayal.

My second conceptual point can now be dealt with. It has been seen throughout this review that many authors contend that at least some aspects of stigmatisation of people with mental health problems on television derive from the demands of dramatic programming and narrative codes (eg. Nunnally, 1961; Matas et al 1985; McIlwraith,



1987; Signorelli, 1989). This raises two issues. First, evidence of the use of conventions such as narrative codes and sensationalist plot development must be pursued. They will have to be sought in news and current affairs programmes as well as drama. Gerbner suggested this as long ago as 1961. Recent work from media studies around the notion of 'scandalous categories', which sharpens up the conceptualisation of 'sensationalism', will be considered in Chapter 4. Work on narrative and dramatic enigma will also be dealt with there.

Secondly, however, the invocation of dramatic convention as a reason for negative stereotyping begs a deeper question. Why choose mentally ill people to satisfy the requirements of sensationalism? Is there something in this group intrinsically fitting to the demands for violence, sensationalism and thrills? Again, I can refer to the position of ethnic minorities or women. In the past, sensationalist broadcasting often cast a black person as violent or menacing or a woman as sexually voracious. The latter still occurs but it seems that the sexually obsessed woman is on the verge of madness (eg. the film *Jagged Edge*). Arguments from ethnic minorities and women have made it plain that sensationalising stereotypes are a feature of discrimination and stigmatisation. This has not been said for mentally ill people and so, for example, the use of the mad person as a vehicle for sensationalism, fear and excitement is not challenged. The work to follow must not make the mistake of assuming that mentally ill people are uniquely appropriate to making a broadcast compulsive. The use of dramatic conventions in the portrayal of this group is not a reason for stigmatisation, it is part of the phenomenon. It is not a question of a particular object being uniquely suited to a particular representation. Rather, it is a matter of representations feeding on representations.

## **CONCLUSION**

The vast majority of previous work looking at representations of mental health problems on television has found evidence of highly negative stereotyping - a preoccupation with violence and a portrayal of mentally ill people as Other. The little work there is on audience effects suggests that these representations are powerful. In this Chapter, it has also been argued that methodological problems remain in identifying representations of madness on television and that the analysis of sensationalism is too simplistic. The task now is to develop a theoretical framework adequate to the complexity of televisual representations and this is the object of the next two Chapters.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL IDEAS FROM SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this and the following chapter is to discuss conceptual frameworks and theoretical ideas which can direct the analysis of representations of madness on television. The present chapter will discuss theories drawn from social psychology and the next chapter will consider theoretical work from media studies. The contribution from social psychology will consist in the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1972, 1984a, 1984b, 1993, 1994; Moscovici and Hewstone, 1983; Farr, 1991, 1993a, 1993b) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978, 1979, 1981a, 1981b, 1982, 1984; Tajfel and Forgas, 1981; Tajfel and Turner, 1985; Turner, 1987) as well as other work on out-groups, stigma and stereotypes. In addition to this, I shall have occasion to refer to the interdisciplinary work of Gilman (Gilman, 1982, 1985, 1988) on concepts of Otherness. In the next chapter, I shall concentrate upon the work developed by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and other approaches in the field of media studies.

Let me first return briefly to Chapter 1. Community Care, as noted there, is a *social* policy. It operates in terms of historically specific and socially shared ideas of what are problems, what are the responsibilities of the state and of individuals as well as what is the nature of mental illness. Moreover, the policy has evolved over years of argument and counter-argument by social and political agents and its target populations are conceived of as social groups - 'the' elderly, 'the' disabled, 'the' mentally ill and so on. The relatively recent legislation on community care (*The NHS and Community Care Act 1990*) also puts treatment of mentally distressed people into the public arena in a new way. It arises out of a contestation in which this policy is the object of public controversy and so

represents people with mental health problems in a space defined by transition and problematisation. Mental health is a *socially contested object* and we shall see later that this is not only for practical and legal reasons.

Television also enters social life at a collective level. Often its production is collective - for example, more than one writer for a soap opera. Moreover, production is undertaken by *teams*. The consumption of television is also frequently social - people watch in groups and discuss what they have seen. People only understand television because they have access to social codes and conventions. (Consider, for instance, the difficulties of British television viewers in decoding a Japanese game show.) More than this, television reaches millions of people simultaneously. There is even a growing tendency for programme makers to try to let the viewer or the 'ordinary person' determine the content of television broadcasts. This takes place through discussion programmes and phone-ins which are now common on daytime television. The social and even collective nature of television as a representational exercise will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.

It is, then, evident that both madness and television, as well as madness on television, are collective matters and should be analysed as such. This is relevant to the question of the type of social psychological theory that is appropriate to the study of such a representational issue and representational medium. In relation to this issue, I turn now to the debate in social psychology concerning epistemology and levels of conceptual and empirical analysis.

Some European social psychologists have taken their colleagues in North America to task for producing a 'social' psychology that is heavily underpinned by individualist assumptions. Both Moscovici (1963, 1972, 1993) and Tajfel (1972, 1979) have argued

that concepts such as attitude, belief and opinion, central to traditional social psychology, are being studied at a thoroughly individual level of analysis. Some writers from North America have made similar criticisms - McGuire (1976) and Gergen (1973) are but two. Farr (1991) and Jaspers and Fraser (1984) have argued that this state of affairs stems from the work of both F. Allport (1924) and G. Allport (1935) and Farr describes how it has been continued in the influential work of North American cognitive social psychology.

The call from writers such as Moscovici and Tajfel was to break with this tradition of individualism and found a specifically *social* social psychology. It is because this argument appears proper to the analysis of representations of madness on television that Moscovici and Tajfel are the social psychological writers I have chosen to utilise. I turn now to discuss their work.

### **THE THEORY OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS**

What does it mean to say, as Moscovici does say, that his work proceeds at a cultural, collective or *social* level of analysis? The most important feature of this for the present study concerns the analysis of communication. However, we can begin to answer this question by considering the dispute between Moscovici (1984a) and Harré (1984) in the journal *Social Research*.

Harré (1984) distinguishes between a 'distributive' concept of a group and a truly 'collective' concept of a group. (A collective concept of a group is true to the suggested Durkheimian ancestry of Moscovici's work.) There are four dimensions on which this distinction is made. I will consider only that which deals directly with representations. In respect to representations, Harré argues that they will be social in a distributive sense



if it is implied simply that all members of a group possess the representation in question as an attribute; but the representations will be social in a collective sense if they are comprehensible only as something more than any individual representation. This idea of an emergent property stands in contrast to the 'social influence' approach in social psychology. For example, Fraser (1994) is of the opinion that a social representation exists when it is widely shared by members of a group and this would indeed seem to be consistent with Harré's first concept. However, Harré argues that the theory of social representations at root and in general conforms to this distributive concept of a group.

The clearest indication that Harre is wrong about this comes from work on the mass media by social representations theorists. The most quoted example is the study of representations of the child by Chombart de Lauwe (1984) where the analysis of childhood as a 'world apart' was made through the study of books, magazines and so on. Moscovici's original examination of psychoanalysis (1976) also looked at the media, including the media output of institutions such as the French Communist Party and the Catholic Church. The media, too, are central to Jodelet's (1984) analysis of representations of the body. The important point here is that media representations are irreducible to individual representations, a point to be dealt with in detail in the next Chapter. Moreover, these representations circulate in society, they affect nearly everybody and they have the status of social actors. Of course, the media are not the only example of a collective concept of a group. It can be argued that *all* social groups in Moscovici's work are conceived of as 'collective' and do not conform in any way to Harré's concept of a 'distributive' group.

## Communication

I shall turn now to the issue of communication. Social representations have the form they do because they are both *based in* communication and *basic to* communication. In 1972 Moscovici stressed the importance of studying "all that pertains to ... *communication*" (p.55, emphasis original) and this is a recurrent theme. In the Introduction to Herzlich's (1973) study of health and illness he says that a representation:

enable(s) communication to take place between the members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history. (Moscovici, 1973, p.xiii)

and

The points of views of individuals and groups are then seen as much from the point of view of communication as from that of expression.....In reality, an individual or community *communicate* their ways of seeing things to their interrogator.

(ibid, p.xii, emphasis original).

Twenty years later, Moscovici (1993) reaffirmed the importance of communication to his work and allied himself explicitly with Wittgenstein. He has also argued (Moscovici, 1994) that work on social representations must go beyond the semantic level of communication and look to its pragmatics and its representational and social context. I hope to analyse a variety of dimensions of television representations in this thesis.

Moscovici's concept of communication can be compared with that which exists in some sociolinguistic work (eg. Hudson, 1980; Bell, 1976). There is a tendency here to abstract the inter-*individual* aspect of communication from its wider, and arguably more basic, features. Moscovici, however, writes of:

(T)radition, that is, collective memory, the images and words embedded in language, with respect to our beliefs, ideas and emotions. Tradition exerts a force against which our mind and conscience is powerless.

(Moscovici, 1984a, p.950)

This makes it clear that when two people communicate they are not isolated individuals freely exchanging thoughts of their own creation. They are bound by what Saussure (1959) calls the 'synchronic' dimension of language, a world of meaning which is itself a social fact (in the Durkheimian sense) and which makes their thought possible. This is not to imply concurrence with Saussure's belief that 'la langue' is a single, unified, general and unfractured system. But insofar as individuals, when they communicate, do not express pre-given and original thoughts but 'hook into' and transform representations, then the merging, attracting and repelling of representations has a social dimension even where it is apparently inter-individual. Representations provide a 'world of meaning' which constitutes the condition of possibility of something being sayable and intelligible.

Where communication is supra-individual, as is the case with the mass media, it is quite misplaced to think that those media could be analysed on the model of the communication processes of an 'isolated individual'. It is even misplaced to believe, as Potter and Reicher (1987) do, that the media can be analysed on the model of inter-individual dialogue or conversation. Billig's (1993) notion of dilemmatic thinking has similar



difficulties when it comes to the media. Conversation is an inadequate model because much of the media is not dialogue at all. Rather it has a collectively produced story-telling structure. This story telling structure has been recognised since the work of Vladimir Propp in the 1920s and is something which will be treated in depth in the next Chapter. Again, there is nothing in the day to day world which approximates the visual dimension of print and broadcast media and it is notable that this dimension is absent in the work of discourse analysts but is recognised by Moscovici's concept of objectification (see below). Wearing's (1993) work discussed in the last chapter suffers by using discourse analysis and not respecting the specificity of the media.

I have dwelled on the matter of communication because it has importance for this study. As has already been argued the mass media participate in this communicative process and are agents which engender the circulation of social representations. Television is a public agent and its products are disseminated across social networks of communication. This is itself a form of communication inasmuch as people interact with the media, as individuals and in groups, and are engaged with its 'traditions'. Television might be thought of as a symbolic environment with a particular form and Moscovici's work is known for including analyses of the environment, particularly in its symbolic aspect.

It is argued then that the media are communicators and as such enter into the process of production and circulation of social representations. There have long been objections to statements of the form "the BBC thinks" or "the Daily Telegraph says" but in a sense the BBC does think and speak and people speak back.

### **Stereotypes or Branches of Knowledge**

It has already been stated that some European social psychologists wish to contest the

individualism of social psychology as it developed in this century in North America. But linked to this, and to behaviourism and even curiously to much cognitive social psychology, is the issue of 'elementalism'. One aspect of the legacy of behaviourism is that to define an attitude as a 'response tendency' is to make it a unit in a theory of behaviour which is intent on dissecting it into component or elemental parts. This elementalism does not necessarily disappear when cognition replaces behaviour, and this is curious since cognitive social psychology was an initiative of social psychologists from the Gestalt school.

When Moscovici argues that social representations are "theories" or "branches of knowledge" (Moscovici, 1973), it is the disengagement of an attitude or opinion from its location in an explanatory and dynamic system to which he seems to be objecting. The idea of an 'attitude' abstracts an element from the social categories and values, the associations and images, the representational network which gives it meaning. It reverses the logical order of social thought where symbolic systems *constitute* the object (stimulus) that is 'responded' to.

In this study, frequent reference will be made to the concept of stereotype. However, it is clear that in the hands of some social psychologists this, like the notion of attitude, is a very static idea. Indeed, this might be true of some of the studies discussed in Chapter 2. It is relevant, then, to ask whether Moscovici has anything to say on the subject. Moscovici and Hewstone (1983) state that theories of stereotype and prejudice are superficial just as is the case with the concept of attitude. However, they do not reject the concept of stereotype out of hand. Speaking of race, they write:

(I)t is often thought that, by becoming aware of prejudice, it is possible to tear up

such racism by its roots. But if, in talking with people, one searches out the bases of their thoughts and actions, one often discovers a representation of human nature, including ideas on the hereditary factor in national characters or the blood relationship between individuals. One may also find a clear view of what is a 'normal' individual.....These ideas constitute the deep-seated inner core that is rarely touched upon.

(Moscovici and Hewstone, 1983, p.116)

This quotation indicates that care must be taken in using the concept of stereotype and to ensure that attention is paid to *systems* of representation and explanatory structures. It can be suggested that representations of madness on television will not be uniform either in cognitive content or in evaluation but that at the same time there may be a "deep-seated inner core" that binds together the diverse representations or, rather, is constructed from them. However, this notion of 'core' may be problematic as I shall discuss below.

### **The Familiar and the Strange**

As is well known, Moscovici (eg 1984b) argues that a central purpose of a social representation is "*to make something unfamiliar, or unfamiliarity itself, familiar*" (op.cit. p.24, emphasis original). This is achieved by two means. Firstly, an unfamiliar entity, idea or person is made comprehensible and safe by *anchoring* it to an existing category or concept. It is thereby identified. This process is described as similar to the idea of assimilation to a 'prototype'. Additionally, it is central that the unfamiliar should be *named*. Secondly, if the unfamiliar phenomenon first appears in the social world as an abstraction (as often happens with scientific ideas), it must be transformed into an image, an object in thought and so rendered into an almost tangible thing. So a 'complex' is

understood as a palpable structure in the brain/mind of the person who 'has' it, illness is caused not by actual viruses but 'germs' which contribute to the impure urban air, social ills are the results of plots concocted by evil-looking people meeting in dark, secret places. To make the unfamiliar familiar is an explanatory activity. The strange and disturbing is itself 'explained' and domesticated by being identified and placed in the explanatory network proper to its category and then becomes in turn a means of explaining other features of the world. Latterly, Moscovici (1993) has conceptualised the process of anchoring in terms of the presence of 'canonic themes' at the level of symbolic life.

There are, however, difficulties with the above analysis for the present study. These can be approached by asking whether the mechanisms posited are not too general. In other words, are all kinds of unfamiliarity equivalent? The unfamiliarity that lies behind decisions as to whether someone is a reader of *The Times* or a member of the British Labour Party does not seem equivalent to the unfamiliarity that leads people to classify people from other cultures as 'animals' or those from their own as 'loonies'. Indeed, such classifications would seem not to make the unfamiliar familiar but to amplify the unfamiliarity and intensify it by keeping it in a position of Otherness.

Moscovici (1984b) writes:

(T)he mentally handicapped, or people belonging to other cultures, because they are like us and not like us; so we say they are 'un-cultured', 'barbarian', 'irrational' and so on. (p.25)

In making identifications such as 'barbarian', are we rendering the unfamiliar familiar (everyone knows what a barbarian is and does) or are we *maintaining* the other as Other?

These options are not mutually exclusive. Dangerous or ambiguous categories of people are to some extent made intelligible by assimilating them to a familiar, if fearful, category or space of Otherness. However, this is clearly not the same kind of assimilation as takes place when an unfamiliar person is assimilated to an occupational class. Tajfel's analysis of racism, (1981a, 1984; Tajfel and Turner, 1985) and the questions which Brown (1986) argues should be kept at the forefront of social psychology are to do with why our society is so determined to keep some categories of people in a position of *difference* from the rest of humanity, even sometimes to cast them as less than human. Moscovici's strategy here is to analyse such classes of people in terms of the *ambiguous* nature of the unfamiliar. Ambiguity is unsettling. Even when the ambiguity is made safe, there is always the threat that this will be temporary at best. In 1984 Moscovici seemed to recognise the importance of ambiguity but in a later article he plays down its significance as a disruptive force. Ambiguity is no longer threatening but functional:

Presumably most ambiguities, polysemics and paraphrases are maintained to serve the vagueness necessary for the continuation of interactions.

(Moscovici, 1994, p.165)

This seems a weak argument. When the social resolution of those whom society casts as ambiguous involves custody and containment away from mainstream society then this solution may place the Other in the familiar category 'mental patient', but it does nothing to reduce the strangeness or ambiguous nature of such people or the institution in which they are incarcerated, and it does nothing to reduce social and individual fear. Ambiguity is not functional here - it is not a matter of a "necessary vagueness" at all.

Another relevant example is provided by Markova and Wilkie (1987) in their discussion

of representations of AIDS:

(I)f we take metaphors used by the press with reference to AIDS, we find that associations with plague, leprosy, war, aggression and with other images are transmitted. (p. 401)

These authors are concerned with the emotional dimension of social representations. This is far from absent in Moscovici's work - he makes constant reference to the power of representations to disturb, incite and provoke imaginary worlds. This shows that the theory of social representations is more than a cognitive theory. However, as with the examples above, the affective dimension is neither systematised nor differentiated with respect to types of phenomena.

In his position statement in the book edited by himself and Farr, Moscovici (1984b) makes frequent mention of the work of Jodelet (1991) concerning the social representations held by villagers in whose homes ex-psychiatric patients lived as lodgers. This is one of only three studies of which I am aware where writers in the field of social representations have specifically focused on madness. (Another is that of De Rosa (1987) which will be discussed shortly.) Moscovici observes that the lodgers in Jodelet's study:

continued to be seen as *alien*, despite the fact that their presence had been accepted for many years and that they had shared the villagers' daily life and even their homes.

(Moscovici, 1984b, p.27, my emphasis)

*In what sense*, then, were these people made familiar? Indeed, Jodelet (1991) provides

extensive discussion of the symbolic and practical methods employed by the villagers to distinguish themselves from the lodgers. The lodgers are obsessively studied by the villagers to make sure that they can be maintained as different. They are constantly discussed by the villagers and their difference dwelt upon at every opportunity. At the same time, any settling of their ambiguous status is always provisional and temporary. Distinctions are made between categories of lodger along such dimensions as 'harmless' versus 'dangerous'. In this respect, Jodelet also shows that one of the dimensions on which these differentiations were made was that of *fear*. At many levels and embedded in many different aspects of the social representation of insanity was the recurrent theme that lodgers might prove to be violent, dangerous and menacing. At the deepest level of the representation, decipherable only through practice and ritual, was the belief that madness as such is contagious.

Jodelet makes scant use of the idea of making the unfamiliar more familiar although this is not to say it is completely absent from her analysis. The central argument of her book, however, is to show that in Ainey-le-Chateau a massive work of exclusion goes on whereby the lodgers are persistently cast as Other, Different and dangerous. But this work of exclusion is not always successful. The problems posed by the lodgers require social and psychical resolution but margins of ambiguity consistently return.

I would suggest that the argument that the central purpose of a social representation is to make the unfamiliar more familiar is too general. It cannot deal with those very cases where the representations function precisely to marginalise and exclude certain groups and cope with the ambiguity they represent. It cannot deal with the tenacity of social representations whose central purpose appears to be to maintain, at a symbolic level, the 'outsider' quality of some groups. The anthropologist Mary Douglas (1966) has analysed

these processes in detail and has paid particular attention to outsider groups as transgressors of boundaries. This argument has influenced the concepts to be detailed below.

Representing is not, of course, a purely cognitive or logical activity. As already indicated, groups which are marginalised, and here I would include mentally ill people, are almost without exception *feared*. This trepidation and the representations which produce it can lead, at the social level, to the incarceration of the group cast as Other. The representations seem to be so intense that they both feed upon and produce fear. We may have "an instinctive dread of powers (we) cannot subdue" (Moscovici, 1984b, p.3) but it seems that there are some powers or some groups which we do not believe it is *possible* to subdue.

There is good evidence that mental illness is associated, both in the public mind and in the media, with danger, violence and fear. I have just discussed Jodelet's findings. In addition, Chapter 1 made reference to the attitude literature and in Chapter 2 it was seen that most analyses of madness in the media find strong evidence of danger and violence in representations of people with mental health problems. My objective here is to draw out the theoretical implications of these findings and I should like to proceed in this with the aid of a diagram (see next page, Figure 1).

To deal with the question of fear, a second dimension has been added to complement the dimension unfamiliar/familiar. (I do not of course mean to indicate that these are orthogonal since the unfamiliar always involves an element of anxiety.) In the 'safe' half of the diagram there are unfamiliar social objects who pose largely cognitive problems for a representation. The unfamiliar person - perhaps unusually dressed - who asks directions



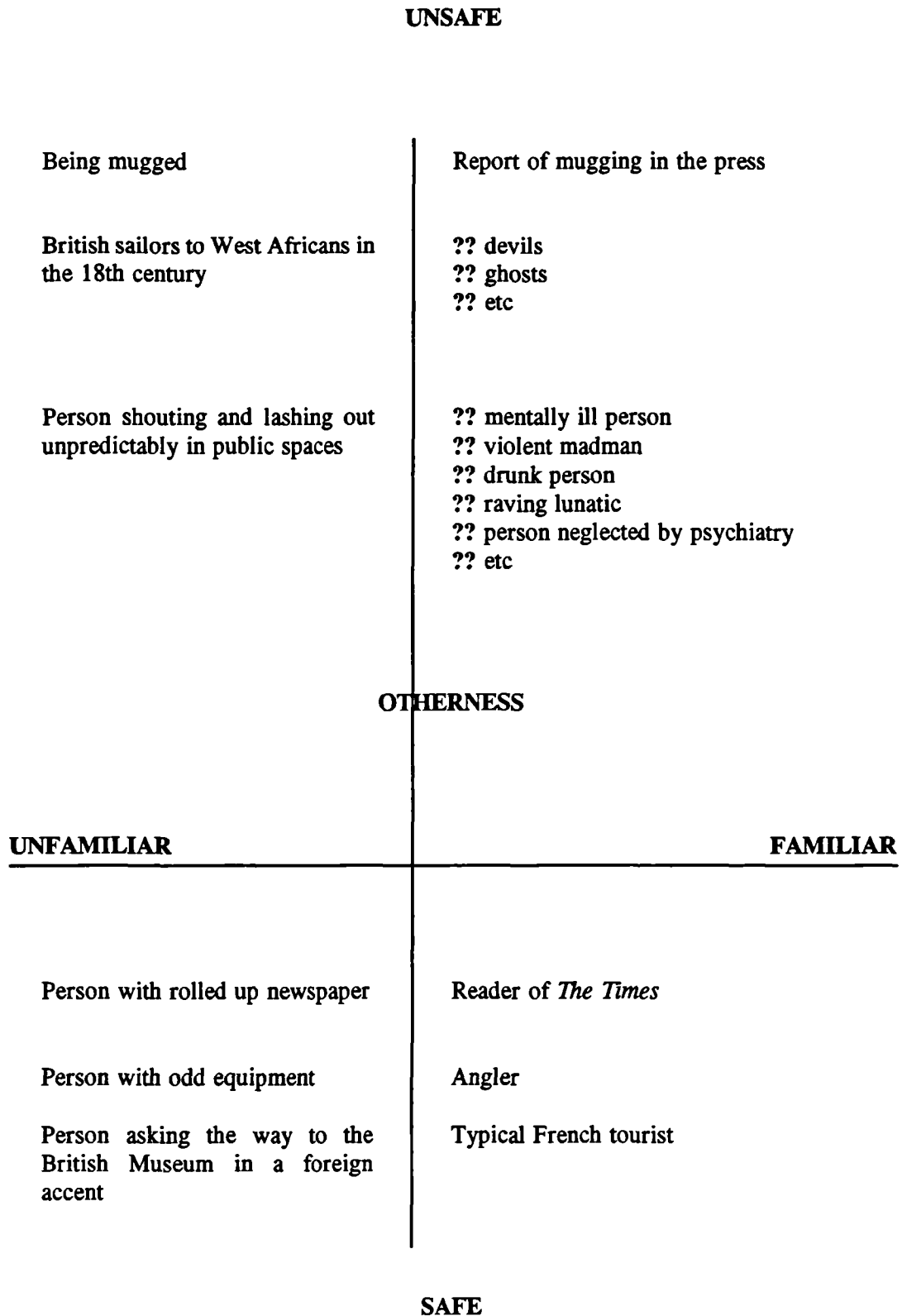


Figure 1: A Two-Dimensional Model of Otherness

to the British Museum in a foreign accent is quickly classified, quickly assisted and the resident of London goes on their settled way. This surely is analogous to assimilation to a prototype.

The 'unsafe' half of Figure 1 is different. Not only is the unfamiliar dangerous but the *process* of familiarisation or anchoring is difficult. Social objects which are both unfamiliar and dangerous may be hard to classify at all. They are often understood as unpredictable. There are many options when confronted with, for instance, a person talking to themselves in the street and generally acting in an eccentric manner. That is, we do not know how to classify this person - someone drunk, someone on drugs, a neglected sick person, a raving madman? The existence of fear intensifies the ambiguity of the behaviour and classification processes break down. In turn, the breaking down of the classificatory process augments the dimension of fear.

I therefore suggest that when the dimension of fear is added to unfamiliarity something unusual happens to the categorisation process itself. Fear and the object produce an excess of ambiguity such that the unfamiliar slips between different familiarisations and cannot be attached to any one class in a durable and stable way. In other words, the dangerous, unfamiliar and ambiguous social object *resists classification*. Any anchoring is mobile, temporary and provisional. It is always threatened by a return of the object to the status of an unknowable. This resistance to stable meaning is one of the reasons why madness is frightening. Its perceived actual threat is compounded by a semiotic threat. This is a more basic departure from the categorisation process than that described by Billig (1993). Billig suggests that anchoring is often negotiable but I am saying here that the position of madness is peculiar, that it represents a challenge to the rules obeyed by most representations.

It can added that madness resists *safe* classification in a simpler sense. It resists being anchored to safe categories and so will be represented by associating it with already known dangerous significations. Its unsafe and unfamiliar status will be fixed through incorporation into other systems for representing danger. The 'dangerous madman' could be seen as one of Moscovici's 'canonic themes' (1993) but a far more troubling one than those usually taken to provide anchors.

If this argument is correct, representations of madness may comprise a departure from the usual processes which govern social representations. Let me clarify this with reference to recent work on the 'core' and 'periphery' of representations. Abric (for instance, 1993) has argued that social representations consist in a homogenous, stable, rigid, consensual 'core' and a flexible, individual 'periphery'. Deconchy (1993) has criticised this conceptualisation as conforming to the features of the 'dogmatic personality' identified by Rokeach (1960). However, Wagner (1994), amongst others, has found evidence of a stable core in an empirical study using the techniques of multi-dimensional scaling. He also found that stability of the core was more evident with novel and troublesome social objects. This is in accordance with the proposition that in times of flux and change, individuals and groups will search for simplicity, coherence and stability in their social environment and so produce more homogenous representations (cf. Joffe, in press). The unfamiliar is domesticated in these representations - they tidy up a messy, often troubling, social world.

In the Introduction, it was suggested that the arguments over the nature and consequences of the policy of Community Care makes mental health today a contested, conflicted and, symbolically and practically, a difficult social terrain. From the general arguments of the theory of social representations, we would expect that representations would be structured

to subdue and fix madness and render more familiar its new (and recurrent) unfamiliarity. My prediction is that this will not be so. Representations of madness do not, I anticipate, obey the rules which social psychologists have taught us govern social representations. Instead of anchoring the novel and troublesome in terms of known themes, the anchoring process will be disrupted by a multiplicity of categories which contradict one another and make the social object difficult to explain and understand. The existence of a dimension of danger will enhance the symbolic difficulty in representing madness.

This discussion leads us to the concept of Otherness which will be discussed more fully later. For the moment I propose a definition of Otherness as a way of constructing social objects which maintains their resistance to safe classification.

What does this argument mean for representations of madness on British television? Firstly, it will be noted that the media are mentioned in the 'unsafe' part of the diagram but as anchoring an event in a less problematic way than occurs for other representational fields. In the next chapter I shall consider some ways in which television tries to fix meaning. If television has a tendency to stabilise meaning, this suggests a tension in representations of madness between homogeneity and multiplicity.

Secondly, however, I would argue that the above ideas give more support for the 'diversity' pole of this tension. The structure of a representation which produces and is produced by social objects like madness will not be coherent, unified and stable. If madness resists safe classifications then the meanings which surround it will be contradictory, contested, mobile and difficult to anchor. The belief in the unpredictability of the mad draws on a very potent representation. The image of unpredictability can be argued to be the result of the transgression of the classificatory process. Perhaps madness

will even be difficult to name - madness, lunacy, mental disorder, mental illness, mental health problems, mental distress etc.. Different terminologies compete and none is ever dominant. One could say that the present is layered over by other classificatory schemes. And if madness resists *safe* classification it can be expected that some of the categories into which it is placed will themselves be loaded with dangerous meanings and actions. In sum, it is expected that representations of madness on television will be constructed from both multiple meanings and dangerous meanings. The Otherness of the mentally disturbed person is produced at the interstices of these multiple and dangerous meanings. This is not to say that the tendency of television structurally to fix symbols will be absent in this field but it is to say that it will work differently.

Finally, there is evidence that at least some television representations do partake in the domestication of symbolically troublesome areas. Silverstone (1985) studied the making of a *Horizon* documentary which covered a field where there was intense debate amongst experts, conflict and contradiction. The documentary played down these difficulties and simplified the complexities. It achieved something of a 'resolution' of the problems it had posed. This is what we would expect from the theory of social representations. I anticipate, however, that television representations of madness will be different in structure and content and will often fail to produce a simple and consensual explanation of this contested field.

### **Objectification and Visual Images**

As mentioned above, 'objectification' is the second in Moscovici's mechanisms which render the unfamiliar more familiar. This concept will be treated only briefly here and will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter when visual images are discussed.

Objectification turns an abstraction into an image, something concrete, an almost tangible 'thing'. De Rosa (1987) has studied objectification in the field of madness. She asked subjects to draw three pictures. One was a general request (control), one was to draw a picture of a madman and the third was to draw a picture 'as' a madman. She found a reasonable variety of images ranging from the genius to the half-animal. At the core of the drawings, however, was the representation of the mad person as monster and these drawings had much in common with representations of the madman in art since medieval times. This makes an interesting link with Gilman's (1985) work which will be discussed presently.

The diversity of the images which De Rosa (1987) discovered disappeared when she administered to her subjects a semantic differential scale. Here she found the familiar differentiation between 'self' and madman; 'normal person' and madman; together with a congruence between 'self' and 'normal person'. She suggested that the greater fluidity of the drawings she elicited was because the pictorial representations touched a different level of the mind. To De Rosa, it is vital to study pictorial images:

Images, even at the level of pure perception, are an essential vehicle for the study of social representations, especially when utilised to project externally latent symbolic structures (often refractory to verbal expression) in a more articulated system of representations.

(De Rosa, 1987, p.56)

Television is a medium with a strong visual dimension. This is one reason why it cannot be analysed purely on the model of conversations. More than this, directors, camera people and production teams do not simply film 'what is there', they *construct* images.

The framing, background and type of shot all convey meaning to the viewer. Metaphorically speaking, they too 'paint pictures'. In this thesis I shall examine whether there is consistency in the way in which mentally ill people are filmed and if there are contrasts in the codes and conventions used to film such people as against those used to film others. It will further be interesting to see whether a 'figurative nucleus' can be identified in visual representations of people designated mentally ill. Whilst the concepts of objectification and figurative nucleus are obviously not confined to visual images, they do have an affinity with the pictorial and thus an affinity with the visual dimension of television. These concepts are controversial, however, and their relevance here will be an empirical question. The role of the visual dimension of television in structuring representations of madness will be more fully discussed in the next Chapter.

This concludes the discussion of the theory of social representations. I have tried to show that it is a social theory appropriate to a study of television. Moscovici's claims to have produced a truly *social* social psychology are defensible and this suggests that theory is applicable to studying social phenomena such as the media. I have emphasised the importance of communication to the theory and tried to show that television is a social actor participating in the communicative process. Some problems have been raised with the idea that social representations make the unfamiliar more familiar. This statement seems to be too general and insufficiently elaborated to deal with categories of people who are kept in a marginal, feared position at the representational level itself. In order to sharpen up the conceptualisation of this problem, the idea that madness resists safe classification has been proposed. Finally, I have alluded to the importance of visual representations and raised the issue of the applicability of concepts such as 'objectification' and 'figurative nucleus' to the study of television.

## **STIGMA, STEREOTYPES AND SOCIAL IDENTITY**

The classic analyses of stereotypes and stigma in relation to mental illness come from what is sometimes called 'sociological social psychology', a designation also applied to Moscovici's work. The labelling theory approach (Scheff, 1966) gives very strong weight to the process of stereotyping, including media stereotyping, in labelling and stigmatising as well as in actually *producing* what we call mental health problems. This view has been very heavily criticised (eg. Weinstein, 1983). Indeed, Winick's (1982) paper discussed in the last chapter appears in a book which is nothing less than a sustained theoretical attack on and empirical refutation of Scheff's views (Gove, 1982). However, some writers who accept that Scheff's deterministic hypothesis cannot be supported nonetheless argue that negative stereotyping and stigmatisation of mentally ill people are real socio-psychological phenomena. Townsend (1979) draws parallels between racial stereotypes and stereotypes of mental illness and suggests that they share not only content but also function and strength. He presents in addition some anecdotal evidence that television is complicit with these stereotypes.

Stigmatisation may be thought of as an extreme and negative form of stereotyping. Goffman (1963) argues that some categories of individuals are viewed as having a 'spoiled identity', that we do not simply negatively evaluate this or that characteristic of such people but that we perceive the deviant feature as a 'master status' (Scheff, 1966). A master status engulfs and lends meaning to everything pertaining to the category of person at issue. So once we know that someone is an ex-psychiatric patient, this comes to be the whole of what they are, the grid through which we read all of their actions and social existence. It should be noted that although 'sociological', Goffman's theory remains at the level of inter-individual interaction.



The notions of engulfment and master status have been picked up by mainstream social psychology in the work of Jones et al (1984). These writers use ideas from attribution theory and social psychological work on stereotypes in order to provide an analysis of stigmatised, or what they call 'marked', relationships. It is argued that some aspects of stereotyping of 'marked' individuals can be understood in the light of Hamilton's concept of illusory correlations (Hamilton and Gifford, 1976). Deviant individuals and deviant attributes will become associated because both the category and the attribute are unusual in social life. The use of cognitive heuristics will lead to similar outcomes:

(M)ost people will overestimate the percentage of former mental patients who are dangerous because instances of dangerous former mental patients come more readily to mind than instances of non-dangerous ones. This bias contributes to the stereotype that mental patients are highly dangerous. Of course, the tendency of the media to give more attention to dangerous mental patients exaggerates this bias even further.

(Jones et al, 1984, pp. 163-164)

There are both negative and positive aspects to the work of Jones et al. Although the title of their book is *Social Stigma*, their commitment to cognitive social psychology and attribution theory means that on the whole they focus on *interpersonal* relations rather than on social representations and group relations. Of course, as mentioned a moment ago, this is true of Goffman also. Again, like so many others, Jones et al gesture towards the role of the media in shoring up stigmatisation but without providing any analysis of the media. On the other hand, they are quick to underline the affective dimension of stigma. Like Goffman (1963), they argue that the essence of stigma is fear, that the stigmatised

individual or group poses a threat, and that the social function of stigma is to maintain the boundaries of the symbolic world through which society is made viable. This focus on fear is consonant with the arguments in the last section.

If Jones et al (1984) place too much stress on the *inter-individual* aspects of stigma and stereotyping, this is less true of Townsend's (1979) argument that certain stereotypes are particularly inflexible and difficult to shift because they fulfil both psychological and social functions. In suggesting that there are parallels between ethnic stereotypes and stereotypes of psychiatric patients, he employs Allport's (1954) distinction between in-groups and out-groups (see also Sherif and Sherif, 1953). It is not difficult to think of mentally ill people as an out-group; indeed, the literature reviewed in the Introduction and the previous chapter can be used to support such a conceptualisation. The development of the in-group / out-group distinction through social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981a, 1981b, 1982, 1984; Tajfel and Turner, 1985) might enable us to take this argument a little further.

### **Social Identity Theory**

In discussing Tajfel's work, I will be concentrating on the earlier *inter-group* (Tajfel, 1978, 1981a, 1981b, 1982, 1984, Tajfel and Forgas, 1981, Tajfel and Turner, 1985) theory rather than the later developments of Turner and colleagues in the formation of social categorisation theory (Turner, 1987). Tajfel's theory states that members of an in-group will cognitively differentiate themselves from the out-group on certain criterial attributes, especially those that have evaluative significance. Concomitantly, the similarities within both groups in respect of the significant attributes will be exaggerated. The 'stereotypes' or, one could say, representations, that comprise the contents of the differentiation are said by Tajfel to have several psychological and social functions. The

function that became most important as the theory developed was the search by the collectivity for *positive group distinctiveness*. That is, the group seeks a positive image of itself, along the criterial dimensions mentioned, and it does this by means of a comparison process which denigrates the out-group. In this way the in-group constructs a highly positive self-image.

There is empirical support for the above thesis. In using the semantic differential, writers from Nunnally (1961) to De Rosa (1987) have shown that mentally ill people are seen as different to concepts such as 'young man' or 'self' in that they are *more* dangerous, *more* unpredictable, *less* kind, *more* dirty, *more* sick and so forth. They are therefore differentiated on a range of attributes in the way Tajfel describes. It will also be noted that the category 'mental patient' is denigrated with respect to self. De Rosa (1987) writes:

The process of classification of social elements in relation with social representations plays a role in the development of social identity and the consolidation of in-group and out-group relations.

(De Rosa, 1987, p.92)

This quotation contains the possibility of a rapprochement between the theory of social representations and social identity theory.

However, it must be said that findings are constrained by the measuring instruments used. Until recently, the most widely used questionnaire in this field was Cohen and Streuning's (1962) *Opinions of Mental Illness (OMI)* scale which includes very strong statements about how mentally ill people should be treated. On factor analysis of the seventy item scale,

it was found that the largest part of the variance is accounted for by the dimension of 'Authoritarianism'. This factor includes questions taken from the F-Scale of *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al 1950) and some of the items which load most highly on it are explicitly eugenic.

Putting together the theoretical perspective of Tajfel and the statements endorsed by some people on the *OMI* scale, it can be suggested that the ways in which the concept of 'mental patient' is differentiated from 'self' are powerful enough to mean that it is not simply a question of relative difference, difference in respect of this or that quality, it is a question of absolute Difference, a special kind of out-group.

There is, however, a problem with some work on stereotypes. It appears to be assumed that functions are successfully fulfilled and the object of the stereotype is kept at a representational and psychic distance. I would propose, however, that a great deal of representational work is necessary to maintain this structure of Difference. This is another meaning of the term 'resisting safe classification'. The Other constantly returns as a problem and will not be kept in a representationally safe place. Nowhere is this clearer than in the work of Jodelet (1991) when she showed the symbolic and practical labour undertaken by the villagers to keep themselves socially and psychically different from the lodgers. For instance, both crockery and laundry were kept separate for washing. This separation must be constantly and continually recreated and this is a more troubling situation than one in which the Other could be kept at a safe and stable symbolic distance.

It remains to be asked whether 'normal people' and 'mad people' actually form 'groups'. Isn't normality such an amorphous social category that it cannot have the quality of 'groupness'? It would seem from the empirical work already referred to that subjects do

not find it difficult to identify with the categories of 'young man' (Nunnally, 1961) or 'normal person' (De Rosa, 1987). Moreover the villagers in Jodelet's (1991) study clearly saw themselves as a group. Jodelet also raises the interesting question of whether the lodgers formed a group and she answers in the negative. However, elsewhere in her study she describes interactions amongst the lodgers (sharing tobacco, buying and selling small items) that definitely have a group-like quality. In an otherwise exemplary study, a shortcoming of Jodelet's work is that she did not interview any lodgers and thus could not say how they reacted to the villagers as a group.

Finally, it can be argued that, at least in some contexts, when someone who has been through the psychiatric system confronts someone who has not, this interaction will take place on the basis of category membership and not at an inter-individual level. Tradition, stereotypes, representations and emotions will determine how this interaction proceeds and it is unlikely to proceed smoothly. This conceptualisation is consistent with Goffman and Scheff's arguments about engulfment and master status. Television, too, can be expected to depict mentally distressed people in terms of their mental illness alone.

The last paragraph suggests that interaction between people designated mentally ill and 'normal people' is in terms of category membership and so at the 'intergroup' pole of Tajfel's interpersonal-intergroup continuum (Tajfel, 1978; Brown and Turner, 1981). Allied to this distinction, and said at the theoretical level to be causal, is the social mobility - social change continuum. In a situation of perceived illegitimacy in social relations, the strategy of social mobility is individual because it entails individuals, on their own, seeking to move between groups. The social change strategy, however, is collective because it involves a change in group evaluation and representation which leads in turn to a change in group position, if only at the representational level. Does this apply to the

situation of mentally ill people? In fact, we can surmise that both poles of the continuum are operative. For people who can hide their psychiatric history the pressure is to keep it a secret and attempt to have nothing to do with the group. However, others cannot do this. They may be heavily involved with the psychiatric system, be visible going to day centres, be visible because of the side-effects of drugs or because of their symptomatology. What seems to happen for the most part in this situation is that the social structure which discriminates against the group is perceived as *legitimate* and negative social stereotypes are internalised. So there will be no social outcry against negative media stereotypes as there has been for some time with women and ethnic minorities. There will be no social outcry because these representations, amongst group members as well as the general public, are viewed as unexceptional. They may be frightening and ambiguous but they are not 'wrong'. The power of symbols makes the representations seem to be 'in accordance with reality'. It must be said that the seeds of change are about here with the development of a psychiatric 'users' movement' in Europe and the U.S.

It will have been noticed that at points in the discussion above the term 'representation' has been used interchangeably with the term 'stereotype'. I would argue that a partial synthesis can be attempted between social identity theory and the theory of social representations by recognising that the images which are held by social groups of other groups do not take the form of lists of attributes but are precisely what Moscovici (1973) calls "theories" or "branches of knowledge" or "canonic themes" (1993). They involve explanations and, as the quotation above from Moscovici and Hewstone (1983) shows, ideas about the nature of humans and the relationship between groups.

The notion of out-group may be valuable to the present study although I have argued that many of the concepts which it involves are too static and rigid in their conception of

representations and human life. Again, just as I have argued that the proposition that social representations function to make the unfamiliar more familiar is too general, so it must be said that out-groups are not all equivalent. Cinnirella (1994) has made a similar point but from a largely cognitive point of view. In this respect, it can be argued that mentally ill people are a symbolically powerful out-group in that they experience what all of us have been taught to fear - psychic disintegration. Representations both depend on and produce and reproduce this fear. They are therefore made provisionally safe by placing them psychically and socially on the margins but simultaneously this out-group always threatens from the limit. It may be that the processes discussed here constitute another definition of stigmatisation.

In terms of television representations we can expect a tension between the failure of classification and explanation, a representation of pure Difference (the out-group) and also representations which make the object safe and explicable. The work on stigmatisation also suggests, quite simply, that portrayals of mentally ill people on television will be negative. There may be a diversity and multiplicity of classifications but none of them will have positive connotations. However, we must be vigilant and pay attention to any positive representations which exist in the data and which do not conform to this argument.

### **ON OTHERNESS**

The importance of human fear in the social representations of mentally ill people has been stressed throughout this chapter. Neither of the two theories already discussed have a systematic analysis of this. I have also used the concept of 'Otherness' but in a provisional fashion. It is now time to say something more about these two problems.

Everyone creates stereotypes. We cannot function in the world without them. They buffer us against our most urgent fears by extending them, making it possible to act as though their source were beyond our control.

(Gilman, 1985, p. 16)

Throughout the history of any given culture the structure most often applied to categories of man is that of the polar opposite. Each category is perceived as either the embodiment or the antithesis of the group which has provided the category. Thus in Western culture a polar antiworld of human types has been developed, populated by the Black, the Jew, the Gypsy, the madman among others.

(Gilman, 1982, p.xi)

Sander Gilman is not a social psychologist. His background is the history of art and his theoretical stance is psychoanalytic. He has developed a theory of the 'Other'. Now many post-structuralist and post-modernist writings speak about Otherness. Woman has been identified as Other at least since Simone de Beauvoir's (1953) *The Second Sex* and this theme continues in feminist writings (eg Kirby, 1993). In addition, I could profitably make use of Edward Said's (1978) work on *Orientalism* where he describes the representation of the Orient by the West in terms of the cultural Other. The concept has also been used to conceptualise representations of ethnic minorities by Gilman himself. In this section I shall concentrate on Gilman's writings since these seem to have most to offer social psychology and the question of madness. For Gilman, as seen in the quotation above, there is a range of categories that can occupy the position of Otherness, but here I shall confine myself to the general argument and to madness.



For Gilman the structure of the stereotype is bipolar. This is also true of De Rosa's (1987) work. Gilman argues that this bipolarity mirrors the initial differentiation which the child makes between self and the world and the subsequent split in both self and object into 'good' and 'bad'. Stereotypes are not merely false, fixed generalisations but are projections of the inner world which are activated when the self is threatened with loss of control or disintegration, when boundaries are in danger of being breached. Projections of the 'good' self produce idealised stereotypes and projections of the 'bad' self give rise to highly emotionally coloured negative stereotypes. Certain social groups will trigger the fear of the 'bad' object or 'bad' self because they are perceived to have already lost control. One of these groups is the mad. Mad people are seen as Other in that their rationality has disintegrated and so stereotypes of the nature and consequences of this disintegration, feared for the self, are projected onto them.

This is not to say that stereotypes are an individual matter:

It is evident that stereotypes are not random or personal; nor is there some universal soul, a black box that generates these categories of difference. Every social group has a set vocabulary of images for this externalised Other. These images are a product of history and of a culture that perpetuates them.

(Gilman, 1985, p.20)

The propensity to externalise 'bad' aspects of the self by projecting them onto given human groups meets the language which tradition and history provides to speak about these groups and visualise them. Individual fears of loss of control are to a degree fixed by the use of cultural categories. It is plausible to argue that television, conceived in terms of the theory of social representations, is an important source of these cultural

categories.

The salience of the dimension of affectivity and particularly of fear for Gilman cannot be overstated. We saw above that it is also central to sociological social psychology. It is this which provides a contrast to social identity theory which, despite talking of evaluation, tends to remain at the cognitive level. At the same time, there are other emotions which colour our dealings with madness. Pity and guilt are but two. These emotions do not amount to empathy, actually identifying with the person with mental health problems, and to that extent they join fear in projecting images of Otherness. The present work must expect to find evidence of such representations.

The structure of the stereotype according to Gilman takes the form of the application of *root-metaphors*. A root-metaphor is a basic set of categories which is used to interpret new and unexpected information about the social world. The process is akin to thinking by means of analogies. The Other is constructed in a way that corresponds to already existing ways of making sense of the world. This argument seems to have something in common with Moscovici's thesis concerning making the unfamiliar more familiar. Analogising would certainly appear to be one way of anchoring. However, in Gilman's work we continue to fear the Other we have constructed. Gilman is not totally clear why this should be so but implicit in his work are the twin notions that the fear that we have is in excess of any attempt to domesticate it and that the basic root-metaphors which are used to construct stereotypes are themselves potent and fear-inducing. In fact, for Gilman, categories such as madness can themselves become root-metaphors so powerful and widespread are their contents.

Gilman's ideas have something in common with the arguments made earlier about the

classificatory threat posed by madness. Stereotypes do help order the world but the dimension of fear means that this fixity is always exceeded and the stereotypes themselves contain elements which induce dread. So the unfamiliar is made familiar in only a limited sense and there remains the fundamental ambiguity and ambivalence of which, it was suggested above, Moscovici is aware. We can expect a diversity of stereotypes on television because the dangerous ambiguity of madness extends beyond the categories proposed to capture it and render it stable. So, although Gilman insists on the bipolarity of stereotypes, the self/other division is fragile and psychic functions need perpetual work to be fulfilled.

The Other is also one embodiment of the out-group but, as stated above, it is conceptualised as rooted in fear and this intensifies the difference of the out-group as it becomes the Other. However, the fear of the Other is also a fear of the breakdown of the representational process - the fear of not being able to know. This is why I have defined Otherness in terms of resistance to safe classification.

Gilman is a historian of art and much concerned with *visual* representations. Such representations fix the other pictorially. In his 1982 book, *Seeing the Insane*, he provides a history of visual representations of madness and shows how particular codes and conventions can be traced down the ages, for example the themes of the demon and the jester. The *content* of representations of madness has, according to Gilman shown continuities and De Rosa's (1987) findings reveal the same visual images at work. It was argued earlier that the visual dimension of television is crucial to understanding its representations and that this can be grasped through Moscovici's concept of objectification.

Furthermore, Gilman argues that representations of the Other should be examined through texts. He gives texts the widest possible definition and television would clearly be included, in both its verbal and its visual aspects. Television, it can be suggested, gathers the fear of mental illness into its representations and so produces images of Otherness, both as a special kind of content and structurally in the gaps between its fractured representations of madness.

### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter has moved from concepts of familiarisation and strangeness - the theory of social representations - to stigma - sociological social psychology - to out-groups - social identity theory - and, finally, to concepts of Otherness in the work of Gilman. Much of the treatment of these theories has focused on people in everyday social interaction but the implications of the theories for a study of the media have been drawn out wherever possible.

I have concluded that it cannot be expected that representations of mental illness on television will be homogenous. Rather, it is anticipated that there will be a tension between portrayals which attempt to fix the meaning of madness and representations which are structured by processes of resistance to safe classification. Diversity *between* different representations on television may function as an example of this tension. As a result of this, it is firmly expected that some representations will have the quality of out-groupness or Otherness as that has been defined here.

The theories from social psychology which have been discussed are all explicitly social in their orientation. I have considered what this means. It is crucial that the theories

deployed should accept the fundamentally social and collective character of representations since television could not be analysed through the grid of theories whose basic assumptions were individualistic. It is futile to think that the mass media could be analysed as if they were equivalent to individual minds (assuming there are such entities as 'individual minds') or even inter-individual conversation. This argument will be taken further in the next chapter where conceptual frameworks from media studies will be considered.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THEORETICAL IDEAS FROM MEDIA STUDIES**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The pervasiveness of television in our culture cannot be underestimated. Some analysts, and doubtless some lay people, would say it is the primary cultural force of our times. As television has become more significant, so the academic discipline of media studies has expanded to encompass it. In this chapter, I shall concentrate on British media studies which has had a good deal of influence in the United States as well and can be thought of as a paradigm. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the discipline of television studies insofar as it can be integrated with the social psychological theories that were discussed in the last chapter. Some of the arguments in that chapter will be picked up again here in an attempt to develop the theoretical framework which will direct the empirical analysis.

The chapter begins with an attempt to situate the discipline of British media studies and its effects in other countries. There follows an examination of the concept of narrative which may be a fulcrum on which social psychology and television studies can be integrated. The chapter goes on to look at developments that go beyond the concept of narrative and considers some ways in which media theory may contradict Moscovici's theory of social representations, a key component in the theoretical orientation of this study. The chapter continues with a discussion of the minimal signifying unit on television - the camera shot - which will be crucial for the empirical part of this thesis. Following this, the three genres of news, soap opera and the drama series are examined. These again are central to the empirical analyses I shall undertake. The chapter concludes with an examination of audiences from both theoretical and empirical points of view. Although

this thesis does not examine audiences there is enough work in this area to draw some conclusions about media effects.

### **SITUATING MEDIA STUDIES**

Media studies grew out of the humanities and remains substantially within this domain. It disputes much of its heritage, however. For instance, the literary criticism of the post war years is rejected for its elitism as media studies seeks to recover legitimacy for despised or 'popular' cultural forms such as the soap opera or the romance novel. Nonetheless, this contestation itself takes much of its argument from the field of literary criticism - this time in the form of structuralism and formalism.

These roots in the humanities pose some problems for the present study since this is such a different tradition to that of social psychology. However, I hope to show that there is some compatibility between the two disciplines and that this compatibility can cohere around the theory of social representations. At the same time, there may be points of conflict.

A further aspect of media studies, especially in Britain, is its location in the wider field of 'cultural studies'. This largely developed from the work of Stuart Hall and others at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) and has since been developed by many other analysts (cf Fiske, 1992, Morley 1991). The field of cultural studies has a very specific theoretical import. It is concerned to show how the media and other cultural forms reproduce, or try to reproduce, the dominant ideology in capitalist and post capitalist societies. However, it is argued that this reproduction is never complete.

Starting perhaps with Stuart Hall's (1980) paper on Encoding / Decoding, cultural studies

has been concerned with how different categories of person produce different 'readings' of television. They argue that the dominant ideology seeks to produce a 'preferred' reading but that different classes of viewers may resist this and construct their own, oppositional readings. The classes of viewer of most concern are those of race, class, gender and nation.

Cultural studies' concern with social reproduction was based in complex theories of ideology such as were put forward by Althusser (1971) and Gramsci (1957). When these ideas, together with Lacanian theory, were picked up in the United States they were counterposed to mass communications research which was argued to be positivist and inattentive to questions of meaning (Livingstone, 1990). However, this concern with mass communications research does not seem to have been so important in the development of media studies in Britain. The main dispute that arose was in fact largely internal to the UK but to some extent has affected the USA as well. This was between the workers at CCCS and those writing for the journal *Screen* and cohered around the question of audiences.

From the point of view of this thesis, there are two reasons why I have differences with the emphases of the cultural studies writers. Firstly, I am concerned here with television representations of a marginal group, mad people, and there is no reason to suppose that these representations are centrally crossed by the putative fundamental contradictions of capitalism. An argument could be made about class and the unemployed status of most mentally distressed people but this is not the same as the basic oppositions, for instance between manager and trade unionist, which occupy the attention of those in the area of cultural studies. This point will be returned to briefly below.



Secondly, I believe that the project of a general theory of ideology has failed. To be brief, 'determination in the last instance by the economy' could never be defined or proven and the remnants of the idea of 'false consciousness' in Althusser's work finally undercut the project. These Marxist analyses could not cope with the full weight of discourse and representations, their density and their reality. The field is open, then, for other theories which recognise the reality of representations and this is, in fact, what has happened in the development of cultural studies. One example of this is current concern with the work of Michel Foucault. Equally apposite in its recognition of the centrality of representations is the work of Moscovici discussed in the last chapter.

A further point needs to be made about media studies although this will be taken up in more detail later in the chapter. In recent years, and as mentioned already, writers on television have turned their attention to audience research. Of course, sociologists and social psychologists studied audiences in the past (Hovland et al, 1953; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). The new concept which cultural studies has produced in its inquiries into audiences is that of the 'active audience'. No longer are the effects of the media seen as equivalent to that of a 'hypodermic syringe', nor even in terms of uses and gratifications. Instead the audience is seen to negotiate with television and even to produce oppositional and resistant readings (Hall, 1980). There has been empirical research in this area, starting perhaps with Morley (1980), although some of the work remains theoretical. The concern, noted earlier, with different audience 'positions' fits within this framework.

However, this study is a content or textual analysis and audiences will not be empirically examined. This is because so far there has been only a small amount of work on representations of madness on television and most of the work that there is originates in

North America (see Chapter 2). In addition, most of this work is somewhat superficial and nearly all of it is atheoretical. There is a need for a sustained content or textual analysis of the way in which television portrays mentally distressed people before audience responses can be examined. Some discussion of audience research can, however, be found later in the Chapter because it can illuminate the inferences to be drawn from the empirical work.

Finally, there is something of a problem in focusing in this chapter on British cultural studies and at the same time using the technique of content analysis in the body of the empirical work. Media theorists of the British school as well as some writers from the U.S.A. tend to use semiotic, structuralist and psychoanalytic modes of enquiry and to eschew content analysis, particularly in its quantitative form (Allen, 1985). In the methodology chapter I shall have some criticisms of these types of analysis. At the same time, I believe that there is sufficient of theoretical importance in the work of the British media theorists to make them the focus of the present chapter.

I turn now to the concept of narrative structure. This notion has been developed by media theorists and, as we shall see, has some theoretical commonalities with ideas from social psychology.

### **NARRATIVE STRUCTURE**

Fiske and Hartley (1978) first suggested that news programmes have a 'bardic function' - that they are the modern analogue of the 'teller-of-foes' of folk culture. They argued that the news incorporates elements from non-news genres and that news stories have a definite narrative structure. This argument was surprising because the news is not thought of as having this kind of dramatic aspect.

Later writers, including Fiske (1987), Hartley (1982) and Kozloff (1992), argue that a basic narrative structure is common to all genres on television although with some variations. Drama series, soap opera serials, sit coms and quiz shows all share this narrative basis - they all tell stories and these stories share a structure. Because we are familiar with this narrative structure, because it has a history going back to the folk tale, it becomes one of the main ways in which sense is made on television. The myth is created and through the mythology understanding is achieved (cf Barthes, 1975).

One theory of narrative that has been used to develop this argument is that of Todorov (1977). It is a complex theory based on linguistic categories and located in the field of structuralist literary criticism but it has been deployed by media analysts. Todorov argues that all stories start with a state of equilibrium or harmony, that the narrative progresses through a disruption of that state and that we follow the hero through the twists and turns of the story until a new state of equilibrium is reached. The story proceeds through a tension between the forces of equilibrium and those of disequilibrium and the forces of equilibrium always supervene. The story has a comfortable or 'happy' ending. This is what other narrative theorists (eg. MacCabe, 1976) mean by '*narrative closure*'. Todorov writes:

The minimal complete plot consists in the passage from one equilibrium to another. An "ideal" narrative begins with a stable situation which is disturbed by some power or force. There results a state of disequilibrium: by the action of a force directed in the opposite direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is similar to the first but the two are never identical.

(Todorov (1977), p. 111)

In respect of the question of madness, these ideas can be used. A character's state of equilibrium may be disrupted by mental illness and we then follow the movement of the narrative through the main plot and byways, its forces of disequilibrium and equilibrium, until she recovers her normal self. We shall see that this does fit one of the stories in the sample of television which is to be analysed shortly. I hope to make use of a (rather reduced) version of Todorov's theory in the empirical analyses in this study.

What I would like to argue, and will do so in more detail later, is that one of the ways in which the unfamiliar is made familiar in examples such as this is by anchoring it to the narrative or structure of the story itself. We are familiar with the *form of the story* and this diffuses the shock of mental illness in a familiar individual. Character itself is an element of narrative and so this further anchors the unfamiliar. I mean here explicitly to use Moscovici's ideas which were discussed in the last chapter.

Other theories of narrative can be found in Russian formalism and French structuralism. Silverstone (1981) provides one of the most detailed applications of these ideas to the analysis of a drama series. He makes use of the ideas of the formalist Vladimir Propp and the structuralists Barthes and Levi-Strauss, showing how television dramas share an underlying common narrative structure which serves to draw the viewer in. Silverstone writes:

Television's effectiveness consists in its ability to translate the unfamiliar into the familiar and to provide frameworks for making sense of the unintelligible.

(1981, p.181)

However, not all knowledge can be translated into familiar structures. Silverstone divides

knowledge in a threefold way - particular knowledge, common sense and non-knowledge. Particular knowledge, such as science, has to be re-framed into common sense and the area of overlap produced by this re-framing is called 'the mythic'. Television deals in myths; the re-posing of unfamiliarity through familiar narrative forms is a myth-making activity. Non-knowledge also has to be translated into common sense and once again the area of overlap is the mythic. But not all particular knowledge and not all non-knowledge can be so translated.

What is the exact definition of non-knowledge? It is the realm of "the unknowable, the unpredictable, the uncontrollable" (Silverstone, 1981, p.81). Non-knowledge occupies the domain of the borderline or the margins of social experience. Madness, it could be argued, fits this description.

Two things should be clear. Firstly, there is a good deal of commonality between Silverstone's account and that of Moscovici. Particular knowledge, science and that belonging to experts, is made familiar in Silverstone's scheme just as it is in Moscovici's concern with science as an unfamiliar entity. In this case we can say that anchoring takes place via the narrative structure of the story itself. Secondly, however, we might expect madness to be at once made familiar by its location in certain narrative structures and, on the other hand, to be kept unfamiliar as a part of non-knowledge that cannot be controlled. In other words, the mad person is kept in a position of Otherness as discussed in the last Chapter. We can then expect a diversity or even a tension in the representations of mental distress on television not only in terms of their content but also at the level of the form or structure of the story. Some mental health stories will be made familiar via anchoring to a familiar story form (or character type) but others will escape known structures of narrative. For instance, there may be a lack of narrative closure in stories involving

mentally distressed people.

### BEYOND NARRATIVE

Sociologically speaking, Silverstone's analysis is concerned with social constraint and the binding of people into the mythic, commonsense system of our times. This is, in a sense, a theory of television as a form of social control. This view is extended by some writers. Hartley (1992) (cf Chatman (1978) on the formal questions) understand television as a system that, in addition to obeying the laws of narrative, has to limit its semiotic *excess* (cf Tulloch, 1990).

Analysts of film (eg MacCabe 1976) assumed that films, understood as texts, have a coherent and single structure that produces meaning in the individual viewer and establishes a *specific position* for the audience if they are to make sense of the text. Hall (1980) calls this the 'cultural dupe' theory of reception. As we have seen, he argues that audiences are made up of many different social positions some of which lead to more resistive or oppositional readings than others. There is a plurality of social positions in the audience. For this amongst other reasons, television is plurivocal and produces more meanings than it can control. It cannot necessarily be captured in the relatively simple or formal structure of narrative. This division between *Screen* theorists such as MacCabe and the workers in CCCS has been a driving force in the development of cultural studies in Britain.

In these arguments, there are actually two positions which are not always clearly distinguished. The first concerns the plurality of audience positions and the requirement that television have sufficient meanings for every section of society to make their own sense. The second, however, concerns plurality *at the level of the text*. It is not the case,

as far as I can see, that the second is merely a product of the first, because arguments are made about the signifying form of television as such. These arguments highlight television's concatenation of image and sound, its *mise-en-scène*, its costume, scenery and camera angles and it is proposed that this signifying form itself leads to an excess of meanings.

There is a great deal that could be said about the somewhat confused relation in Fiske and Hartley's work between plurality at the level of the audience and plurality at the level of the text. Since I have argued in the previous chapter that madness is a social object which resists safe classification and further that this will lead to a diversity of televisual meaning, it is worth making two points.

The first argument concerns audience positions. When these authors discuss a representation that has a variety of audiences, defined sociologically, and a plural text, they tend to choose examples that 'fit' the way they conceptualise their audience. So, if it is a question of class, the programmes chosen portray conflict between management and unions; if it is a question of gender, the programmes are invariably soap opera and romance. It is not clear what the appropriate audience positions would be in respect of a social object like madness. There is no sociological classification which immediately suggests itself. Even the fact of having direct or indirect experience of mental illness does not seem to determine the responses to representations of madness on television (see Chapter 2). As a consequence I would argue that it is reasonable to begin an analysis of representations of madness on television by looking at the televisual text.

There is also a history to the notion of polysemy at the textual level in these writings. The key work is Barthes' (1975) *S/Z*. In this book Barthes sets out to demonstrate that the

classic realist text contains polysemic meanings. He analyses Balzac's story *Sarassine* which is about a castrato and shows how the transgression of the opposition male:female in the figure of the castrato leads to a gap in meaning through which plurivocality flows. This has echoes of the ideas expressed in the previous chapter but I am not proposing that the resistance to safe classification in the case of madness rests on a single antithesis in the way that the structuralists do.

Barthes' *S/Z* does confine itself to the level of the text just as I propose to do. At the same time, it invokes an implied reader and I shall not be able to escape doing something similar.

The last few paragraphs have tried to disentangle the location of the notion of semiotic excess in the work of Fiske and Hartley. This is important as I shall be using similar notions in my empirical analyses but will seek to tie them more closely to ideas from social psychology. There is, however, one more idea in the work of these writers which I wish to discuss. They believe that television's excess leads to an overemphasis on the borderline, the aberrant, the ambiguous or the *scandalous*. Fiske writes that television:

*over-represents* the marginal, ambiguous, scandalous areas of society. Action series, drama, news and movies alike are founded on violence, murder and criminality; on deviance, dissidence and pathological behaviour; on illicit, over-displayed or 'abnormal' sexuality; on breakdowns, break-ups and break-ins.....in order to limit meanings it must first produce *excess*.

(Fiske, 1983, quoted in Tulloch, 1990)

It could be said that on this view television will be centrally focused upon a range of



different out-groups.

Now it might be said that the notion of excess in these texts is itself plurivocal! We then find three significations for the concepts of excess and plurivocality in these writings -the audience, the structure of the text and the content of the text (the scandalous). Authors like Fiske and Hartley do not always distinguish these meanings but perhaps we can allow an element of propositional slippage. I would argue that in Fiske and Hartley's terms, madness is a scandalous category both in the sense that it is perceived as a threat to society and in the sense that it is a threat to categorisation.

The notion of a scandalous category has something in common with the references to 'sensationalism' found in previous work on representations of madness on television. This was discussed in Chapter 2 where it was cautioned that madness should not be seen as *intrinsically* suited to sensationalist television. The notion of a scandalous category is more sophisticated than the references to sensationalism and allows, to some degree at least, for the argument that the scandalous is such because prior representations make it so. Television, however, because of its specific signifying form, exacerbates this.

At this point a question can be posed. That is, is there likely to be a *dominant representation* of mental disturbance on television? It might be argued that the preferred representation would render mental distress safe - it would place the unfamiliar in a familiar discourse such as medicine or narrativise it through the experience of a familiar character in a drama series or soap opera. Indeed, a superficial reading of either Moscovici or Silverstone could suggest this as a blanket strategy. However, there are other considerations following from the theories that have been discussed. If the arguments are correct, familiarisation through anchoring to a safe and comfortable

discourse will not be the only tactic of television. As a scandalous category, as occupying the realm of non-knowledge, redolent with ambiguity in terms of what it actually constitutes, there may be the exploitation of the capacity of madness to shock and provoke fear. Once again, we reach the conclusion that the mentally ill person will be placed by television in the position of the Other on at least some occasions. And as suggested in the previous chapter, this very Otherness may be produced by the multiplication of meanings and the resistance of the object to safe classification and fixity. Narratives, also, will not take a single form thus defusing the potentiality of narrative for familiarising the unfamiliar.

In his later work, Fiske (1991, 1992; 1987, quoted in Morley, 1991) has taken this argument further as have other writers (Collins, 1992). At the extreme these developments become post-modernist. The argument is that *all* of television, not just scandalous categories or non-knowledge, is heterogeneous, plural, contradictory and full of multiple meanings. (And further, that the reader has a huge latitude in the meanings he or she can construct from television.) This poses problems for the present research. What is being said in this study is that madness is distinctive in resisting safe classification. My argument is not about culture in general but about a specific social object. If, as media theorists propose, all of television is crossed by multiple meanings then there will be nothing surprising in a finding that representations of madness take this form.

The best way of settling this would be to undertake control studies and there will be some attempt to do this in the chapters which follow. A well-formed control study would investigate whether madness is represented through dangerous and multiple meanings when other social objects show stability and homogeneity of signification. However, the control

studies which I will undertake are rather weak in respect of this. The other form of argument that can be made is to look at studies which are based in this position regarding the generality of heterogeneity to see whether their conceptualisation does indeed demonstrate that representations as a whole are characterised by instability, polysemy and lack of semiotic fixity.

White (1992) takes the example of the American cop show *Cagney and Lacey*. This is indeed a test case since the programme is hybrid in genre. It is a cross between a police show and a domestic soap opera. The series features two female detectives who are tough police officers on the one hand and women with female concerns on the other. White demonstrates how the camera work often frames the detectives in helpless poses thus foregrounding their femaleness. On the other hand, they are shown as efficient and brave in dealing with crime. White, then, identifies a contradiction in the representation of the female police officers. She also suggests that certain meanings are *closed off* by the programme - particularly that of female bonding.

It is true that White analyses only one programme and that if she had looked at more than other meanings would have been found. Nonetheless, *Cagney and Lacey* is meant to be the epitome of conflict and contradiction for women and its status as cross-generic would lead one to expect a greater range of meanings than she finds. White would also expect this herself from her theoretical point of view.

My theory of representations of madness suggests a great deal more heterogeneity than White demonstrates in the analysis of *Cagney and Lacey*. I am predicting that there will be a multiplicity of unsafe meanings and several contradictions and contestations in the meaning of madness on television. White's (1992) theoretical points about plurivocality

are not borne out in her illustrative examples.

Perhaps the favourite example of post-modern television studies is the Madonna videos. In the book edited by Allen (1992), two authors analyse the Madonna phenomenon and find heterogeneity particularly in respect to audience positions and young women. It is surely necessary to analyse more than one set of videos before making general points about the nature of all television.

From this brief discussion, I would argue that there is scant evidence for a general theory of television as multiple, heterogenous, plurivocal and contested. So, if the empirical analysis shows that madness is represented in the ways outlined in this chapter, I think it is feasible to say that these forms of representations are specific to this social object and not general to television. There may, of course, be other social objects which are represented in this way but that is a matter for separate empirical analysis.

One final point needs to be made regarding this issue. The media theorists concentrate on heterogeneity and the pleasure it can produce. Indeed, they often have more to say about psychological pleasure and desire than they do about the content of broadcasts. This position stands in contradiction to the emphasis of social psychology and cognitive psychology. The latter argue that cognitive and social-cognitive processes function to assimilate and make psychologically comfortable the unfamiliar or the novel. Of course this argument is made at the individual level with little concern for social categories. Media theorists argue that fragmentation and plurality are characteristic of texts and productive of psychological pleasure. It cannot be assumed that when two bodies of theory are brought together the process will be without difficulty and dispute. To an extent, social psychology and media studies reciprocally undercut each other with respect

to the problem discussed here. This point will be returned to in the Discussion.

However, there is a strand in thinking about late modernity (Giddens, 1991) and postmodernity (Lash, 1990) that is closer to some of the thinking of social representations theorists. This analysis looks at many facets of current social phenomena and one of them is identity. The argument is proposed that just as sure and unified identities are breaking down in late or post modernity, so groups cope with this by searching for ever more stability. In this way phenomena like nationalism are explained. This analysis, which states that in times of flux familiarity and stability will be sought, has more in common with work in social representations than does that line of thinking which studies the media from a post modernist point of view.

### **CAMERA ANGLES**

I turn now to another issue, one which will be important to the analyses of the data. It can be argued that the minimal signifying unit on television is the camera shot. It is made up of different elements, of course, but is the singular unit within any television text. The camera frames a person or a scene, action and dialogue take place, and then the camera moves onto another shot and this carries the story forward.

Camera shots vary. The shot itself may be wide or close up, the speed with which the frames change differs considerably between genres, shots can be steady or tracking, lighting can be bright or shadowy. The most important point, however, is that all these features of camera work encode meaning - the closeness of the shot, the speed of the action, the lighting and so on all make a difference to the meaning of the image on the television screen. Furthermore, they inflect the sound track with this meaning.

This point can be expanded by examining the shot which has received most attention from television analysts - the close up (eg Fiske, 1987; Geraghty, 1991). The close up draws attention to the face of a character and concentrates on emotion. The close up scrutinises. This shot allows the viewer to see every twitch of the facial muscles and if it is framed straight on it appears that the character is looking right into our eyes, conveying his or her emotion directly to us. In the close up there is no privacy for the character, be it in drama or a 'real' person on the news. The face takes up the entire screen so there is no distraction from the setting or surroundings. In the extreme close up - where the face fills the screen with only part of it visible because the camera is so close to the character - these aspects are all magnified.

Fiske (1987) argues that the extreme close up connotes hostility. According to him, villains are the predominant group shot in extreme close up. I believe this argument to be too restrictive. The extreme close up may on occasion encode hostility but other emotions can be scrutinised through this shot also. People or characters in emotional pain are often photographed with extreme close up shots. It can also be said that the close up and extreme close up isolates or even 'dislocates' the individual from the physical and social environment. This may be important for representations of madness.

Fiske argues that the close up and the extreme close up carry different meanings. To anticipate, I would argue that the difference between them is one of degree and not content. The extreme close up is an intensification of the meanings of the close up shot.

If the close up and extreme close up are a means of scrutinising and conveying emotions, other shots carry different, and opposed, meanings. The shots of neutrality and authority on television can be argued to be those used in filming news presenters. These people are

the voice of the BBC or ITN and carry all its gravitas. They are always filmed in either medium close up - the head and shoulders shot - or medium wide - where more of the body is visible. Other characters borrow this neutrality when they are photographed medium close up or medium wide. For example, experts on the news are often filmed in the same way as the news readers.

From this, it can be argued that mentally distressed people on television are likely to be filmed more often than other characters in close up or extreme close up. As stated in Chapter 1, there is uncertainty among the general population about what mental illness actually is. However, it is seen as involving the emotions and so we can expect that 'emotional' styles of camera work will be used in filming mentally disturbed people. Further, it has been argued repeatedly in this study that the mad person constitutes the Other. The scrutinising and dislocating function of the close up and extreme close up will be brought to bear, often voyeuristically, on the face and person of the Other.

I would anticipate, then, that the filmic conventions used to photograph mentally distressed people will involve a preponderance of the shots which scrutinise emotion and avoid neutrality. These are the close up and the extreme close up shot. These conventions can be expected to appear on all genres. The meaning of madness will in part be anchored by the camera codes employed.

Finally, it can be suggested that the visual dimension of television is one of the ways in which concepts are *objectified* (Moscovici, 1984b). The visual image makes ideas concrete, turns them into an almost palpable thing. The visual dimension of television has an affinity with the proposed 'iconic' dimension of objectification. If mentally distressed people are filmed in the ways just suggested, then madness will be objectified as

emotional, scrutinised, lacking in authority and Other. The face of the mad person will carry meanings which have been objectified in Moscovici's (1984a) sense. Again we have a tension between these processes making the unfamiliar more familiar (we identify with the person suffering) and, on the other hand, of these particular objectifying techniques intensifying Otherness (the camera frames the person as an outsider). This is consonant with the ideas of De Rosa (1987) and Gilman (1982) discussed in the last chapter.

### **THE NEWS**

Up until recently, the news was probably the most intensively studied of all programme types. A major reason for this has been the link between politics and the media and hence a preoccupation of media analysts with the issue of 'balance'. The Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG) (1976, 1980) have been at the forefront of criticisms of bias in television news. They have been particularly concerned, however, with industrial and political news which will not be of immediate concern here. Latterly, the Group have studied representations of madness on television and this work will be referred to later (see also Chapter 2).

More relevant to the present research is some of the work carried out at CCCS on the question of deviance (Hall et al, 1978). It is argued (eg. Connell, 1978; Hall 1982) that it is not *possible* for the news to be a 'window on the world', that processes of news selection and construction always intervene between an event and its depiction on a broadcast bulletin:

If the world is not to be represented as a jumble of random and chaotic events, then they must be identified (ie. named, defined, related to other events known to



the audience), and assigned to a social context. This process - identification and contextualisation - is one of the most important through which events are 'made to mean' by the media. An event only 'makes sense' if it can be located within a range of known social and cultural identifications.

(Hall et al, 1978, p.54)

Once again we can see some similarities between the work of television analysts, in this case studying news programmes, and Moscovici's ideas about the processes by which the unfamiliar is rendered more familiar. Hall et al's description of sense-making is very like Moscovici's (1984a) concept of anchoring.

The CCCS writers argue that even before processes of contextualisation and construction take place, those events which are to comprise the news bulletin must be *selected* from a range of happenings and that this selection is neither random nor determined by the nature of the events themselves. There is a code for the selection of what is 'news'. This was first suggested by Galtung and Ruge (1973) in their paper on 'news values'; that is, the values which define the salient features of a newsworthy event. Hall et al (1978) are especially concerned with how unexpectedness and drama have come to the forefront as features of newsworthiness in modern western societies. They say that the professional ideology of journalism:

involves an orientation to items which are 'out of the ordinary', which in some way breach our 'normal' expectations about social life..... We might call this the *primary* or *cardinal news value*.

(Hall et al, 1978, p.53, emphasis original)

People designated mentally ill in our society are an unusual category - they breach the boundaries of the 'normal'. They introduce Todorov's disequilibrium. It was also stated that madness can be seen as an example of what Hartley (1992) calls a scandalous category. It can then be expected that this unusual or scandalous category will tend to be linked to unusual or dramatic actions or events in news programmes. It was seen in Chapter 3 that theories of stereotype also suggest that the media will have this content and that it will be effective for audiences.

One way in which normality is often breached on television is through violence. The well-established link between madness and violence on television, shown in Chapter 2, produces a special kind of fear-inducing disequilibrium and this can be expected in the empirical analyses to follow. Madness will be allied with unsafety and anxiety.

The concept of cardinal news value has something in common with Hartley's (1992) notion of scandalous category and also with the idea of sensationalism discussed in Chapter 2. Once again, care is needed not to assume that madness is naturally the perfect candidate for the cardinal news value. For instance, twenty years ago young black men who were accused of crimes might have had their danger and difference dwelt upon. Indeed, Hall et al's (1978) analysis of mugging suggests this. But campaigns by black people have persuaded the media that this is a form of racism and practices have been changed. It is because people with mental health problems are defined wholly in terms of their madness, and because the representations go unremarked by campaigners, that madness seems to be intrinsically suited to the cardinal news value. This point will be taken up again in the Discussion.

The writers from CCCS, as against those from the GUMG, argue that the objective of the

news analyst should not be primarily to ask whether programmes are faithful and accurate in their portrayal of events. The aim should be to uncover and de-code the processes of selection and construction by means of which television news achieves an *effect* of transparency, how it is that factual television *appears* to give us the truth. The point for the present research is that much as we might criticise the news for being 'biased', the form of its presentation and construction points towards it *appearing* as a mirror to the world. When madness is anchored to the 'actuality' forms of television news, it appears that we are being allowed access to a window on its truth.

As noted earlier, Fiske and Hartley (1978) use the term 'narrative' to describe the news. The other side of the argument that the news produces a 'reality effect' is that it is no less than a story-telling institution and that there is a good deal of cross-fertilisation between factual and fictional television. Hartley (1982) shows how the news makes use of dramatic conventions initially developed in the crime-thriller television genre of heroes, villains and fast action. Schlesinger et al (1983) make the same point in relation to the portrayal of terrorism in 'factual' and 'fictional' television.

### **THE SOAP OPERA DRAMA SERIAL**

The defining feature of the soap opera (or continuing serial) is its lack of narrative closure. Particular storylines may come to a resolution but this is never final as a new disruption may soon appear to set the story off again. Overall, the soap opera occupies an almost infinite time where endings are never complete. The soap opera goes on and on, sometimes for decades. Furthermore, soap operas usually feature several stories at once. There is an intertwining of multiple story lines with the narrative moving from one to the other. This means that gaps in plots or inconsistencies are less visible. In terms of Todorov's (1977) theory described above, then, soap opera is more open than other

narrative forms. This is arguably also consistent with Eco's (1979) concept of the open text and with the arguments made by Allen (1985) regarding the permeable form of the soap opera.

It is sometimes said (Geraghty, 1981; 1991; Kilborn, 1992) that the soap opera approximates to 'real time' or that at least this is one of its conventions. Real time is assumed to have passed between episodes (we are invited to "drop in on the Square") and national events and festivals are celebrated. This is one of the ways in which British soap opera obeys the conventions of 'realism'. Realism, sometimes specifically called British realism, also involves a familiar setting (eg the street in *Coronation Street*, the Square in *Eastenders*), familiar characters and an emphasis on everyday life with all its mundane concerns. It has been argued (Dyer 1981, amongst others) that British realism also entails a preoccupation with explicitly working class issues.

It must be emphasised that realism is a set of conventions. However, these conventions mean for viewers that there is great concern over how 'realistic' the soap opera is. Viewers' knowledgeability about characters is important here. A viewer may be familiar with a character and that familiarity may be the consequence of years of watching that individual. 'Realisticness' then becomes whether the character is behaving consistently.

In this context, a mental breakdown in a familiar character is a form of disruption. When the character begins behaving oddly there may be uncertainty about what is going on and an enigma as to the trajectory of the story. As the situation is confirmed, the narrative carries the sense of the story. By this I mean that the development of plot, the involvement of other characters and the camera work will be the means by which the person's mental breakdown is made to mean. Given that soap operas do not have

complete endings, the episode of madness may then become part of the character's experience and history and will be referred to again in the future.

Several writers (Allen, 1985; Geraghty, 1991; Modleski, 1983) have argued that soap opera is 'women's fiction'. Soap opera contains a high number of female characters and usually features a goodly proportion of 'strong women'. These are women to whom other characters go for advice and who hold family and community together. These women are often middle aged and this is interesting since women of this age group do not feature prominently on most of television. Jordan (1981) in an analysis of the characters on *Coronation Street* was able to identify several categories of woman and found at least three actual characters to fit each category. Livingstone (1990) showed how the characters in *Coronation Street* could be placed on certain social and psychological dimensions and many of these characters were older women.

Soap operas are argued to be women's fiction for a further two reasons. Firstly, their realm of concern is the emotions. The world of work rarely features but the world of family and community is paramount. There is a great deal of 'gossip' in soap operas, it is one of the ways in which the narrative is carried forward, it allows character to be explored in depth and it is primarily the domain of women. (Although Geraghty argues that some of these features are changing.) Secondly, soaps belong to women's world because of the multiple story line structure mentioned above. There is much redundancy in soap operas and so it is possible for female viewers both to be busy in the house and to dip in and out of the soap opera at the same time without missing too much. This point has been made particularly in relation to daytime television drama serials in the United States (Allen, 1985).

Gossip is important on screen and off. Geraghty (1991) argues that soap operas are part of the lives of large sections of the population and that the primary way in which they circulate in society is through gossip. Hobson (1991) has demonstrated this empirically. People discuss what is going on in the drama, speculate on enigmas, pass moral judgements and comment on the conventions themselves. There is also a wide secondary literature on soap operas, fanzines and magazines as well as articles in the popular press. Readers of these may find out about future plots and even have the opportunity to put their own views on how stories should develop. In this way representations certainly do circulate in both the media and society and there is a limited amount of interaction between the two. There was, of course, the experiment of *Hollywood Sport* from Yorkshire Television where viewers actually voted on how they wanted the narrative to proceed. This form is now popular in North America.

The characteristics of soap opera outlined above apply more to the British programmes than to North American soaps such as *Dynasty* or *Dallas*. The soap operas examined in this study do not include any from the U.S.A. but they do include two from Australia - *Neighbours* and *Home and Away*. These programmes share the multiplicity of plots, the open-endedness of the narrative, the familiarity of characters, the focus on everyday life and community and the role of strong women. However, they do not deploy the conventions of British realism as much as the two British soaps in the study - *Coronation Street* and *Eastenders*. They make more use of what Geraghty (1991) calls 'entertainment values'. This means that the action is faster and that there is an emphasis on attractiveness and even glamour. This is achieved in the Australian soaps largely through the much higher proportion of young characters - hence their following amongst young people.

Having outlined the characteristics of soap opera, what might we expect concerning the

representation of mental distress on these programmes? First, if any character had a mental breakdown it might be expected, especially in the British soaps, that the issue would be played out over a long period. This is consonant with the idea of 'real time'. Secondly, following the writers discussed above, we could expect that a weakened form of narrative structure would govern the story. The mental breakdown would have the form of a disruption and the plot would develop to a resolution but not a complete one. Thirdly, since the character is familiar, and through the conventions of realism, we would not expect his or her behaviour to be totally inconsistent with what we already know about them. The unfamiliar, madness, would be anchored to the familiarity of a soap opera character. At the same time the familiar character would become unfamiliar but not in an extreme manner. On the whole, madness would be made familiar, defused in its threat, through these conventions. I would therefore argue that soap opera, especially British soap opera, is the least likely of all genres to cast the mad person as Other. Processes of familiarisation, structurally and through content, would supervene. However, if the story was structured as an enigma or mystery we would then expect there also to be tension and multiple meanings.

Another possibility is that a completely new character brings madness in his or her wake. Here the character is not familiar, is not dense with history, and so can be allowed to pose fear and threat. In addition, and again partly because the character is not familiar, the convention of realism is less pressing and the situation is therefore more open to representations of Otherness than is the case with a long standing individual.

### **DRAMA SERIES**

Soap operas, of course, are a form of drama. I am here making the standard distinction

between the continuing serial and the drama series. The latter share some of the conventions of the former. These series tend to have multiple, intertwining plots and also have the same central characters from episode to episode so that the viewer becomes familiar with those characters. However, they differ from soap operas in that each instalment has a definite end. They have, therefore, a much tighter narrative structure and less allegiance to realism although this is not absent. In addition, each episode tends to include, as well as the central characters, several characters who are there for that one episode only.

What I am calling 'drama series' includes a number of genres or sub-genres. There are police series, medical series and sit coms. What they share is the form of their narrative. It has been said that more and more on television, different types of programme influence each other. So, as I have already said, drama series include some of the features of soap opera. This phenomenon is close to that known as 'intertextuality' (Tulloch, 1990; Feuer, 1992). This concept describes how in reading one television text, the viewer draws on knowledge gained, both as content and as form, from a whole range of other television texts, films and secondary literature as well. So, in interpreting a scene involving a mentally distressed person on a drama programme, the viewer might make sense of it by drawing on knowledge gleaned from a news programme. Intertextuality does not only take place between genres - the process of familiarising oneself with a character on a soap opera is also an example of the phenomenon. Indeed, the very concept of 'genre' is perhaps the prime example of intertextuality - in the space between different texts the viewer recognises similarities and these are what constitute the 'genre'. But, as I have said, intertextuality also refers to the points where similarities, structural as well as in terms of content, can be found between programmes of very different types.



The above is a very crude outline of a complex concept. It is, however, important since the drama programmes to be studied here are from different genres and sub-genres. The fluid boundaries between genres (Feuer, 1992) mean that the meaning of mental illness on television cannot be revealed in just one programme. It will be necessary to follow the fate of madness, in characters as in narrative structure, across a range of programmes.

As has been said already, drama series have a much tighter narrative form than soap operas. On the whole, they also have faster action than at least the British soaps. Where a narrative is tight and the action is fast, it can be argued that the disruption of the narrative (Todorov, 1977) will be clearer and more apparent as well as perhaps more of a shock. We might expect Hall et al's (1978) primary news value to be a value in drama as well. The unusual or the abnormal sets the drama on its narrative course. In this case, the mad person is a good candidate for a disruptor of the narrative and we can expect that person to be positioned as out-of-the-ordinary and even as Other. It can be suggested that the mad person is anchored as or in the disruptive function of the narrative.

On the other hand, and as argued above, the narrative itself in its familiarity will be the place where more work of anchoring is undertaken to make the unfamiliarity of madness more familiar. Whether or not it succeeds, whether this work can subdue the scandalous category of madness remains to be seen. What can be argued is that in drama there will be a tension between madness anchored as a force of disequilibrium and the attempt to make its unfamiliarity more familiar by anchoring it to other narrative functions of the story. At the same time, this means that there will be more space for representations of Otherness in drama series than in soap opera serials.

The empirical data which was collected includes two feature films. These are, of course,

examples of drama but we could expect the conventions of film and television to be sufficiently different to mean that the representation of madness on film would have to deploy other analytic tools than those used to look at television. Partly for this reason but also for reasons of space, the feature films will not be empirically analysed. They will, however, be referred to in the Discussion chapter.

### **A COLLECTIVE MEDIUM**

It was argued in the last chapter that the mass media are collective in character. I would like briefly to expand this here. The news, soap operas and drama are multi-authored. For a soap opera there are storyliners who decide in broad terms how the narrative will proceed, scriptwriters who write the script itself, editors who splice the programme together as well as sundry hairdressers, costume people, interior designers and so on. It is only necessary to look at the credits at the end of a soap such as *Neighbours* to see that there are more production people than there are actors. There are, of course, producers and directors but in the midst of all the other functions it is not tenable to say that they have overall control.

Drama programmes may involve less production individuals than soap operas but they are still legion. Similarly the news, as we can actually see on the screen when the journalists' room is shown as background, involves a great number of journalists, reporters and other workers. The news is not authored by the news presenter or the producer but by a large team of people working collectively. Even the news programme itself involves many reporters as each item goes to the journalist on the ground who can tell us the reality of the event at issue.

Allen (1992) has made this point from the perspective of television production and media

technologies:

(B)ecause of the technological complexity of the medium and as a result of the application to most commercial television production of the principles of modern industrial organization (including mass production and detailed division of labour), it is very difficult to locate the "author" of a television programme - if by that we mean the single individual who provides the unifying vision behind the programme.

(Allen, 1992, p.9)

The point of this brief discussion is to try and show that television programmes are social representations in the true sense of the term. No one individual produces or authors a television programme. It is multi-authored and manufactured by a panoply of people so that each voice contributes to a harmony that is more than the sum of the individuals taking part. Television consists of social representations in the fullest sense of the term 'social'.

## **AUDIENCES**

### **Empirical work**

As stated earlier, this study will not investigate audience responses to representations of madness on British television. I argue that it is necessary first to undertake a thorough content or textual analysis of programmes. There has been audience research in relation to some of the theories discussed above and this strengthens their usefulness for present purposes. It is also possible to consider recent empirical work on audiences to see whether it can shed light on textual analysis.

The first study to use modern forms of audience research was Morley's (1980) analysis of the reaction of groups of people to the British news magazine programme *Nationwide*. He found that social class and occupation influenced how people read the programme. This study was done as part of the work of Hall and others at CCCS. As stated earlier, however, it is not clear which social groups should be studied to delineate variations in the response to representations of madness. Personal experience may be a factor but, as seen in Chapter 2, this is unclear.

Livingstone (1990, 1991) has shown that audiences structure television stories as *narratives*. Indeed, they will often narrativise a story in a tighter way than was done in the original text. Livingstone selected a story from *Coronation Street* and asked individuals to recreate it. They reordered elements and gave a stronger ending to the story. This suggests that narrative form has a psychological reality and that it is important to study it in the empirical analyses to come. Gergen and Gergen (1988) have made this point about the psychological reality of narrative in relation to identity and biography and the argument has echoes of Bartlett's work in the 1930s.

Livingstone focused on individual members of the television audience. Hobson (1991) asked a group of female office workers to discuss recent episodes of British soap opera. This they were used to doing since it was a part of office life for them. The subjects used the opportunity to pass moral judgements about the episodes, to speculate upon enigmas and generally to engage in animated conversation about the various characters. This suggests that the television text both constrains conversation and is a springboard for it. It will be seen in Chapter 8 that a group of office workers with whom I was in contact reacted similarly. In particular, they speculated on the enigma of the behaviour of the central character in a story about a nervous breakdown. It must be stressed that they were

constrained by the text, as were Hobson's subjects, and not free to make just anything out of what was on the television screen. This point is important because writers such as Fiske (1991) have argued that the text as such does not exist. Only readers do. More realistically, Brunsdon (1991) has disputed this and called for a 'return to the text'.

In respect of the news, Graber (1988) studied the ways in which a panel of subjects made sense of political news and how it affected their voting behaviour. I am not here concerned with political news because, as will be seen in Chapter 6, most of the news stories with a mental health reference in the data are about crime. However, Graber does make some references to crime news. She shows that the media has the effect of influencing people to overestimate the amount of street crime, although they do not have quite as distorted a picture as the news media themselves.

Graber (1988) uses schema theory to conceptualise her subjects' reactions. She suggests that new current affairs material is assimilated to existing mental schemata which may in turn be altered if the novelty of the new information demands it. Alternatively, novel information that is inconsistent with existing schemata may be ignored. Graber's arguments have affinities with those of Moscovici (1984a) who has referred to the concept of prototype. The unfamiliar is either assimilated to existing schemata or it is excluded from the mental and social universe.

Finally, we will consider the work of the Glasgow University Media Group (1994b) which was described in Chapter 2. One of the things which interested the Group was whether experience of mental illness would affect the way in which people read television. They found that psychiatric nurses and some ex-patients were critical of, for example, violent portrayals. They were critical also of depictions which were too 'soft' and did not convey

the reality of suffering. However, these findings were not universal. Some respondents with considerable experience of mental hospitals, experience which had never included violence, nonetheless seemed to accept what television told them. They believed, in contrast to their own first-hand experience, that madness was associated with violence.

This brief discussion suggests four things. Firstly, that it is important to look at texts because these certainly do constrain the readings that are made of them. The audience is not free to make just any interpretation of the text and this means that textual analysis is important to media studies. Secondly, it has been shown that narrative structure is critical because it has a psychological as well as a televisual reality. This strengthens the arguments made in this chapter concerning narrative structure as a mode of making the unfamiliar more familiar on television.

Thirdly, Graber (1988) shows that the process of reading the media is consistent with Moscovici's ideas about anchoring. Again, this strengthens the search for modes of anchoring within texts. If anchoring is weak in the case of madness, we can speculate about the effects of this on psychological processes. Finally, the discussion suggests that there is no self-evident sociological classification in society where we would look for divergences in the process of viewing television texts about madness. Even direct experience does not consistently give rise to logical divergences. If this television text concentrates on dangerous and unstable meanings, then we would expect people to display stereotypes which are fearful and confused. This brings us to the final section of this chapter.

### Other Work on Audiences

I will conclude this section with a discussion of a different theory of the audience. This theory has been developed by George Gerbner (Gerbner 1973; Gerbner et al 1980) whose work on representations of madness on television was discussed in Chapter 2. The theory has been tested empirically, although not using the kind of ethnographic methods now fashionable amongst audience researchers. Here, however, I shall concentrate on the theoretical ideas.

Gerbner's main preoccupation is with violence on television. In respect to this, he does not ask whether there is more violence on television than there is in the real world or whether television violence will lead people to become more violent themselves. Rather, he asks what is the effect of a violent symbolic universe on how people *think* about the world in which they live. The effect of violence on television is, according to Gerbner, to make people *believe* that they live in a violent world. The main psychological effect of violence on television is not increased aggression - it is increased *fear*. He argues that heavy viewers of television are more likely to believe that the world is a violent place and are more likely to live in fear of violence and this has been demonstrated empirically. Neither Gerbner's ideas nor his methodology have gone uncontested (eg. Hirsch, 1980) but I would like to follow them through with respect to the present study.

The audience part of Gerbner's theory is called 'cultivation analysis', in the sense that the symbolic world of television 'cultivates' a symbolic world of culture and common sense. In terms of mental distress, we can expect that representations on television will influence how people *think and feel about* madness. This is the more likely since many people have little direct experience of mental distress either because mentally ill people are excluded in our society or because those who are not so excluded prefer to keep their psychiatric

histories a secret. Indeed, the social network literature shows that people with a serious mental illness have virtually no contact with the general public (Holmes-Eber and Riger, 1990; Cresswell et al 1992).

There is some overlap between Gerbner's concern with violence and the current research. We can expect representations of mental illness to include elements of violence since this has been found in previous studies (see Chapter 2) and in the pilot (Appendix 1). The violent madman is the epitome of Otherness: frightening, menacing, unpredictable, uncontrollable. I would argue that such representations must cultivate the way in which audiences understand and respond to issues of madness. They will produce fear of mentally distressed people in their viewers. Sometimes Otherness will have a different inflection. Madness may be portrayed as on the margins of society, as existing on the borderlines where 'we' would never freely venture either physically or psychologically. Here rejection will again be provoked, this time in the form of fear mixed with a non-empathic pity and perhaps disgust.

Gerbner's ideas seem quite compatible with the theory of social representations. Both bodies of work stress that representations are constructed through the medium of social communication and there is no reason why the theory of social representations cannot accommodate the media as an actor in the field of social communication. Indeed, I have argued in this and the previous chapter that of all modern theories in social psychology, Moscovici's is the best equipped to do this.

In conclusion, it has been argued that the symbolic universe of television will contain a tension or a diversity in its representations of madness. This tension coheres around the function of certain televisual conventions to produce depictions of Otherness, of scandalous



categories and the function of different conventions, particularly narrative and character, to anchor the unfamiliar and subdue it. It remains to be seen which side of the tension will be dominant. But with respect to this symbolic universe we would expect that the images of madness which are cultivated will duplicate this tension.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this chapter has been to outline some ideas from media studies in order, first, to examine their usefulness for the present research and, second, to discuss their points of interconnection with social psychology. It has been seen that ideas such as narrative structure and scandalous categories can be helpful for present purposes, as can work which has concentrated on specific genres. It has also been argued that there is scope for integration between media studies and social psychology, especially the work of Moscovici. At the same time, points of contradiction have been identified. Finally, work on audiences, both theoretical and empirical, has been investigated throughout and lessons have been drawn from this work concerning how to approach texts.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapters have specified the problem to which this thesis is addressed and discussed the chief theoretical arguments through which that problem is to be understood. A sample of representations of madness on British television will be analysed in this thesis using conceptual frameworks provided by social psychology, particularly the theory of social representations, as well as by media studies. In this methodological chapter, it will be suggested that these theoretical ideas can be used to guide the development of a coding instrument for the analysis of representations of madness on British television. The chief purpose of this chapter is to present this coding instrument. At the same time, this endeavour will involve a discussion of several methodological issues which surround the use of a method which encompasses both quantitative and qualitative inquiry.

The method entailed in the type of coding frame proposed here is a form of content analysis. I stress a 'form' of content analysis since this methodology has diversified since its modern inception by Lasswell in 1949. I too seek to make some modifications to the technique of content analysis for this investigation. In addition, this technique has been heavily criticised by writers in media studies (Allen, 1985; Leiss et al, 1986) who accuse it of an obsession with quantification which amounts to pseudo-scientificity. Allen is a leading analyst of soap opera in the United States. He, like others, seeks to replace content analysis with methods drawn from semiotics and structuralism or reader-response criticism. The dispute between content analysts and semioticians will be discussed here.

The chapter begins with a short discussion of classical content analysis and its developments, as well as a consideration of some of the critical points. After this, an argument will be made concerning the necessity of locating theoretically any coding instrument. A discussion of the theoretical and empirical derivations of the present coding frame will then be followed by a description of the instrument itself. This coding frame is to be used chiefly to analyse the verbal dimension of television broadcasts concerning madness although visual material will be constantly taken into account. The chapter then moves to a presentation of the methods used for analysing visual images alone. In conclusion, the remaining methodological issues of the sample, the process of transcription, and the unit of analysis are discussed. Issues of reliability will also be considered.

In order to aid understanding of what follows it might be worthwhile to say a little about the sample as part of these introductory remarks. The data to be analysed comprise a 320 page transcript of television portrayals of madness which appeared on British television during an eight week period in the summer of 1992. The sample includes three genres - the News, soap opera and drama series. The precise means of constructing the sample will can be found later. For present purposes it is enough to say that this transcript is the data to which the coding frame to be described in the following pages will be applied.

### **CONTENT ANALYSIS**

We may begin this section with Berelson's (1952) often quoted definition of content analysis:

Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.

(p. 18)

I want to focus here on Berelson's requirement that content analysis concern itself with the 'manifest' level of the text since this has been of much concern to the critics (Allen, 1985; Leiss et al 1986). Berelson expands his definition to explain that this 'manifest' level of the text pertains to meanings that are socially shared and so open to reliable inspection. He did not mean that there is no interpretive work involved in content analysis or that meanings were self-evident. Latent meanings were for him subjective and individual since they were idiosyncratic and concerned individual sources of communications.

The critics are, however, concerned with latent meanings. They point to generative structures in a text which may be revealed by psychoanalytic, semiotic, hermeneutic and structuralist methods of analysis. However, this foregrounding of the question of latent meanings is somewhat anachronistic. Later content analysts (Carney, 1972; Krippendorff 1980) also focus on latent meanings although from distinctly different theoretical perspectives. Indeed, this concern with latent meanings amongst content analysts was evident as early as 1959 when Osgood based his techniques on his mediational theory of meaning. The issue would then seem to be one of theoretical perspective rather than a concern with latent meanings per se.

I would like to go beyond this dispute over manifest and latent meanings and propose an alternative viewpoint. As will be argued later in this chapter, there is no such thing as a theory-free research method. Content analysts are as clear about this as are their critics. Theory, implicit or explicit, guides such aspects of communication research as transcription, the selection of the unit of analysis, the construction of the coding frame and the allocation of units to its categories. This point will be substantiated later in the chapter with reference to the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

The significance of theory means that there is a type of 'interpretation' involved in communications research. However, 'interpretation' is a loaded term with many connotations. The present research does not seek the 'deep' meaning of the text, it does not posit a latent meaning 'beneath' the text. There is no quest here for the generative binaries of structuralism or semiotics (Levi Strauss, 1968; Barthes 1973, 1977) or the unconscious processes of psychoanalysis (Kristeva, 1969). And it must be stressed that both content analysts and semioticians accept this manifest/latent distinction. By contrast, the present research aims to focus on the *surface* of the text and eschew the dualism of manifest/latent.

This is to propose that the text has no hidden meaning to which the concept of 'manifest' could be opposed. The meanings of a text pertain to the lines of visibility in how it is organised and put together. At the same time, there is difficulty with the concept of 'manifest meaning'. This is because readings of texts are always structured by concepts and theories which condition the finished analysis. Meaning is never transparent and was not for the early content analysts. There are forms of 'interpretation' involved or, better, theoretically directed description. The current coding frame can be called an *analytic of description* or a *language of description* since it provides a systematic method of transforming the language of the data into the language of theory (Bernstein, 1995). It is argued then that the opposition manifest/latent and each of its terms is unproductive.

An analytic of description is a theoretically regulated technique for delineating the salient meanings in a text and the way in which they are put together. It stresses the surface of the text in the belief that all the significations which inhere in the material can be analysed at this level. This position owes much to recent French work in the history of ideas (Foucault, 1972) and in philosophy (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) and, from a different

theoretical perspective, to the most recent work in the UK by Bernstein (1995).

The position adopted here does not mean the rejection of the lessons of semiotics and structuralism. The work of scholars like Barthes, Levi Strauss and Kristeva drew attention to the level of the text in a new way. They emphasised the complexity of textual products and taught us to pay close attention to the density of meanings which characterise texts. As will be argued later, I believe it is possible to count such meanings but the semiological method and its misgivings about quantification will not be altogether eschewed here.

The idea of an analytic of description is consonant with many aspects of the technique of content analysis in that it amounts to a theoretically guided language for describing the chief features of a text. There is, however, one aspect of content analysis which does not concur with this position and that is the focus on *inference*. Further, we need to consider the question of quantification since this has also disturbed the critics.

As early as 1959, the volume edited by Pool was concerned with the problem of inference and by the 1969 volume edited by Gerbner et al, this was the major focus. Inference was usually to states of the *source* of a communication and the process of inference was seen to be an integral part of a content analysis. A whole range of communications and their sources were considered and these ranged from psychotherapeutic interviews to institutional 'intentions'.

This question of inference will not direct the present research. As should be clear from the arguments made in Chapter 4 concerning the heterogeneity of the broadcasting institution, there is no coherent 'source' about which inferences could be made. There is no single author of the television broadcast. The analysis to be conducted here will

remain at the level of the text in an attempt to describe the principal structures of meaning which go to make up the representation of madness on British television.

There is one writer with whom this position is consistent. Gerbner (1969) in laying out the 'Cultural Indicators Project' was clear that analysing the meanings to be discovered in prime time television concerning violence and the different representations of social groups was a textual enterprise and no inferences needed to be made in order to validate it. It is interesting that, in adopting this position, Gerbner was the one author in the Gerbner et al (1969) collection who looked at prime time television. As has been the case before in this study, Gerbner's position on the inadvisability of inferring media 'intentions' is endorsed here.

To turn finally to the question of quantification. It is the importance of quantification in content analysis that leads critics such as Allen (1985; 1992) to accuse the method of pseudo-scientificity. According to him, meanings are qualitative phenomena and cannot be reduced to numbers. He goes further in arguing that if a researcher counts then they are not concerned with meanings at all but only with reified phenomena. But are meanings so ineffable that they cannot be captured in a categorisation and then assigned a frequency? I do not think so. Why should meanings, in their plenitude as well as their visibility, not be counted? The early content analysts were clear that the communicative material with which they dealt consisted in *symbols* (Lasswell et al, 1949) and they developed theories of *semantics* (Osgood, 1959). Of course, these theories were not equivalent to semiotics or structuralism and so once again we see that what is at stake in these methodological disputes is theoretical differences. It will be seen in this study too that a particular theoretical perspective produces a specific coding frame.

Of course, care is necessary in defining what is meant by 'counted'. The semiological strictures must be borne in mind. These are not metric scales where each unit coded under a given category carries equal weight. Still less do the coding categories themselves constitute a scale. Nevertheless, if there are discrepancies in the numbers of meanings coded under different categories, one can say that the emphasis of the text falls in certain directions. The numbers, then, are indicative and not true quantification. It may also happen that a category appears infrequently but that its salience supercedes its numerical status. Here, more qualitative analysis is called for. It is quite feasible to interpret a table of results in terms of other facts known about the text and thus supplement quantitative with qualitative analysis. Finally, it may be the case that a category appears infrequently but theory tells us that its *absence* is the most significant thing about it. Here we are drawing on semiotic ideas about what is absent in the text being just as important as what is present.

Other techniques devised by content analysts can be useful. Although I will not follow it precisely, the notion of *concordance* (Osgood, 1959) can be used to analyse multiple coding. That is, to give an idea of which meanings tend to co-occur in a text. I do not see that this reifies symbols. Indeed, it is only the positing of 'latent' meanings which can support such an argument and I have proposed that the manifest/latent distinction is not useful.

On one point, however, I concur with the critics. Computer programmes which use templates to code a text will always miss significant meanings. This is because of the 'interpretive' element in the analyses of communication where the same word can carry different meanings in different contexts and widely divergent symbols can mean the same thing when located in certain semantic environments. For instance, in the material to



follow the word 'psychiatrist' is used in part of the data in a highly ironic and comic manner. This instance of psychiatry as comedy is significant for the present research but a template analysis would lose the polyvalent meaning of the term 'psychiatry' in this material. Indeed, the dictionary semantics of the early content analysts was consistent with computer analysis and similarly failed to capture the different meanings which the same word could carry in different contexts. One has to be a competent speaker of the language and a competent member of the culture to do textual analysis and a computer cannot be these things. At the same time, some modern computer programmes are able to provide a form of contextual analysis.

Content analytic methods have also been criticised by scholars from within the tradition of social representations. Consider the following quotation:

(The author's) choice is to investigate the semantic aspects of a particular representation. I will not discuss this choice. The problem is that she uses for this purpose a fifty-years old technique of content analysis (a coding grid). Moscovici did so in his time and anybody does so for lack of better. But we all know the uncertainties, pitfalls and traps of this kind of procedure, more projective than conclusive, and which only affords first degree descriptions; as to the judges, they answer for the reliance of the grid, not for its validity. Inside our specific domain, content analysis is valid only when operated by the discourse producers themselves, from their own representations, beliefs and norms.... And if a social representation is finally a "discursive configuration", as argues Bhavani (1993), then its study requires a strong conception combining linguistics,

epistemology and history, very far from the illusion of immediate transparency attached to content analysis.

(Rouquette, 1993)

Rouquette's strictures have much in common with those of semioticians and structuralists and these issues have already been dealt with. In addition, he objects to the *age* of content analysis which is surely no criticism because other techniques used by these critics (eg ethnography) are equal to it in longevity. If a technique stands the test of time this surely strengthens rather than weakens its claims. Rouquette, of course, would deny that content analysis has stood the test of time.

To turn now to the argument that only discourse producers can analyse their own productions. This is surely false, especially in the case of media studies. For we know that audiences vary in their readings of text and vary again from the intentions of the producers and directors. Yet we do not often say that these readings are wrong. It has already been argued that the heterogeneity of the source of media productions makes inferences to the state of that source fragile. Here we can firm up that argument by saying that discourse producers do not determine the readings that are made of texts by either researchers or audiences. From a social representations point of view, the discourse producer is located in social relations and is not the sole author of his or her text. Still less is the discourse producer the sole person or persons equipped to analyse that discourse. (Indeed, Rouquette contradicts himself on this point.)

The idea that only the producers of discourse can adequately analyse it returns us to the problem of 'latent' meanings. It is these which Rouquette assumes the producers of a

discourse can access. I have already contested the manifest/latent distinction. What is being argued here is that we are not appealing to the 'latent structure' of the text, nor to the intentions of authors (what they 'really meant'), still less to an idealised 'speech community'. The content analyst and the reader of television apply socially structured forms of reading television when they watch a broadcast. Both must be televisually literate. In the case of the researcher, the rules which shape the reading are theoretically governed and provide general ways in which specific meanings may be understood and coded in any instance.

Finally, to the argument that content analytic methods rely on a notion of transparency. I hope that what has been said here shows the present position to be very far from that. Theoretically-regulated research cannot claim to capture the *sole* meaning of the text but rather that it has *constructed* a meaning or set of meanings. These are based on theoretical propositions, regulated familiarity with the data and an analytic of description that takes both of these into account. Such a procedure cannot propose that the text is transparent, only that it will focus on its surface contours and organisation and that these are delineated by the language of description. It seems that Rouquette is working with a version of the 'manifest' content that was not even dreamt of by the inventors of content analysis.

In this section, I have tried to outline a type of content analysis which owes much to the founders of the methodology but also takes into account the points made by critics. This will be developed further later. I propose to analyse the construction of the meanings and representations of madness on British television through this procedure. I have also suggested that the manifest/latent distinction in communication analysis should be replaced by an analysis that stays at the level of the surface of the text where the focus is on the visible organisation of meanings, an organisation that nevertheless needs theoretical

regulation if it is to be adequately described. The next section of this chapter considers this question of theory in a substantive manner. That is, it looks at how the theories outlined in Chapters 3 and 4 have informed the construction of the coding frame.

### **THEORY GUIDED RESEARCH**

Later in this chapter, specific examples will be given of how the theoretical ideas developed in Chapters 3 and 4 have guided the construction of the coding frame which will be used in the next three chapters. Here I simply want to make some brief remarks concerning the importance of conceptual work in drawing up a coding instrument for a content analysis.

Content analysts have always stressed the importance of theory in framing a research project as have those who would criticise them. Of course, the two schools start from different theoretical premises. The argument of this chapter is that it is important to be explicit about background assumptions - theoretical or otherwise - *because these always intervene between data and its analysis.*

It appears that there is still work, including some recent work, which is less than clear about theory. Some discourse analysts (eg Potter and Wetherall, 1987) or those committed to grounded theory include in their methodology the reading and re-reading of transcripts. They seem to believe that if the researcher reads the data often enough then the transcripts themselves will offer up their meaning and their truth. But this assumes that reading is a naive activity. It never can be. It is always an act of regulated re-description or 'interpretation'. The reader (researcher) has concepts and categories which structure what he or she finds in the transcript. The only solution to this, and it is admittedly partial, is

to make background assumptions explicit and the best means of doing so is to have a good theory. Kurt Lewin (1952) said that there is nothing so practical as a good theory.

I would hazard the argument that theory-weak textual research (for instance, grounded analyses) will be less reliable and less valid than research which is theoretically regulated. The researcher's unformed categories will intervene between data and results in a way that has not been made explicit. Lack of a formalised coding frame will add to this. It is true that research which is more explicit and systematic does not entirely overcome these problems, but at least it is more open to alternative interpretations. And, as said repeatedly, these problems surround experimental work as well. An ANOVA is a theoretical instrument containing assumptions about means and variation, normal distribution, correlation and cause. It is perhaps interesting that most scholars using the experimental method do not feel obliged to defend it. Its assumptions are hidden in its routine use.

Gigerenzer (1991, 1992) has made an interesting argument here about how laboratory tools and statistical methods condition the nature of cognitive *theories*, a conditioning which is masked in the routine carrying out of research. Only when the nature of the methodology is exposed does it become possible to see its determination on the types of theoretical models produced. Ordinarily, no such exposure is required and the techniques are non-controversial. When it comes to partially qualitative research, however, a justification is expected.

At the same time, the argument for the importance of theory leaves plenty of room for the data to challenge the coding frame. Categories established conceptually may turn out to have very few instances in the empirical material. In this case it is important not to drop

such categories because the scarcity of instances may mean that theory must be revised or even rejected. Equally, the absence of fields of meaning can be highly significant. Writers as diverse as Popper (1969) and Bachelard (1984) have argued that the experiment - or in this case the data - is the moment when the world can say no to theory. Only if the theory is explicit and the methodology applied rigorously can this occur.

The next section of this Chapter illustrates these points with reference to the coding grid which will be used in the present research. A diagrammatic representation of this coding frame can be found later in the chapter.

### **THEORETICAL DERIVATIONS OF THE CODING FRAME**

The methodology to be used here is in large measure derived from the theories laid out in Chapters 3 and 4. It is also data-driven, however, and its empirical derivations will be discussed in the next section. In this section I shall try to demonstrate how the two main theoretical areas used in this thesis - social psychology and media studies - have informed the structure and content of the coding frame. Key ideas such as Otherness, resisting safe classification and lack of narrative closure have been incorporated into this coding frame.

The coding grid has a hierarchical or tree structure (see diagram pp. 138-142). The top level of the coding frame consists in elements of narrative which were outlined in the chapter on the media. I shall return to these in a moment. Similarly, the most detailed or third level of the frame includes concepts which suggest Otherness and Difference. There are also categories which suggest familiarity or positive glosses to stories and this should enable us to explore any tensions in the representation of madness on television. If there are more positive instances than negative ones, this would indicate that some of

the theoretical ideas developed from social psychology are inappropriate to the television portrayals I have videotaped.

In the following paragraphs, I set out in a little more detail the relation of the coding instrument to theoretical categories by discussing the concept of the mad person as Other, of madness resisting safe classification, which was developed in Chapter 3. This idea of Otherness is one of the reasons why I do not expect to find a consensual universe of representations when it comes to madness. Partly because it is a social object in transition but also because it is a contested social object and thereby resists safe classification, we can expect to find dangerous categories and conflicts and contradiction in the representation.

So, in the first place, the most detailed level of the coding frame incorporates many different kinds of representations of mentally distressed people. The theory of Otherness developed in Chapter 3 has influenced both the structure and the content of the most detailed level (see the diagram of the instrument on pp.138-142) of the coding frame. There are multiple categories to realise the idea of slipping between different familiarisations or anchors and there are dangerous categories to realise the idea that madness resists *safe* anchoring. There are categories of strangeness and threat - **danger**, **maniac** and **strange**. There are also categories which are a bit 'safer' and provide more familiar anchoring grids - one example is the dominant psychiatric discourse of **medicine**. The category of **neglect** always moves between pity for the vulnerable and fear and disgust - particularly if that neglect is institutional.

The coding frame, then, includes multiple categories to incorporate the theoretical idea that madness resists a single or core classification. Its nature is undecidable. There are also

categories of danger to realise the idea that madness resists *safe* classification. These two proposed elements of representations of madness on television, which together produce a signification of Otherness, have been structured into the coding frame itself.

A further point can be made here. The importance of multiple categories for this analysis suggests that we should, as indicated above, allow multiple coding. There is every reason to suppose that some analytic units (camera shots) will contain material which can be coded under two or more of the categories in the coding frame rather than just a single one. Furthermore, it will be possible to look at concordance of meaning within short sections of the transcript (items for the News, story strands for fiction) and to see which meanings co-occur with which other ones. This follows Osgood (1959). Again, and at the risk of labouring the point, it can be seen that the theoretical framework has conditioned an aspect of the methodology.

Of course, it was suggested in the theoretical discussions that there will be a *tension* in the representations between a diversity of (unsafe) representations and the attempt in the representations to fix or anchor the meaning of madness. In Chapter 4 it was argued that familiarisation may take the form of placing madness in well-known story forms or narratives. This idea too is incorporated in the coding frame with narrative categories making up the top level of the instrument.

It should, however, be made clear that there are aspects of this coding frame which do not do justice to theoretical arguments. The theoretical focus of this study leans more towards social psychology than towards media studies. The top level of the coding frame uses ideas from narrative theory but is a rather reduced version of that theory. Based on Todorov's (1977) ideas, it scarcely measures up to the complexity of his notions of the



interplay of forces of equilibrium and disequilibrium when proposing the element of 'narrative description'. Nonetheless, this is close to his theory of 'iteration' and equally the concentration on the disruptive event and on narrative resolution or closure captures what is seen in narrative theory as the principal motor forces of a story. So narrative theory too can be found in the coding frame.

In sum, the theory and the coding frame are constantly moving between Otherness and familiarisation. We find this movement in both social psychology and media studies and it is hopefully incorporated in the coding frame. Nonetheless, empirical findings and the present data itself have a place in the development of the coding instrument and it is to these that I now turn.

### **EMPIRICAL DERIVATIONS**

The present coding frame is influenced by two empirical considerations. The results of the pilot study have informed the categories through which the investigation is to be conducted. A brief account of the pilot study, which looked only at News broadcasts, can be found in Appendix 1 and the reader is urged to consult this before proceeding. This pilot used a word-search and count procedure to indicate the types of meanings in which mental health problems are located on the news. 'Keywords' were identified in the text, refined by computer analysis and divided into semantic groupings. Most of the representational structures designated by the keywords in the pilot have been included at the most detailed levels of the present coding frame, but the intention here is to widen the scope of the study by coding the verbal dimension of every camera shot, as well as increasing the range of programme types which are studied. As with the pilot, positive classifications have been included to allow for the possibility that representations will be benign. As stated above, this is also a theoretical point.

It was found in the pilot that a minority of the keyword groups were problematic. Some computer-derived semantic groups did not seem to map easily onto televisual language. It might be useful here to go through the categories of the pilot keyword search to indicate the similarities and differences with the present coding frame. I will simply list the pilot keywords and point out their fate in the present coding frame. Where a category has been retained for the present analysis it is at the most detailed level of the coding frame for scene-setting (disruptive), narrative description (present and reconstruction) and to some extent for resolution. Again, this can be clarified by consulting the diagrammatic representation of the coding frame on pp. 138-142.

**Maniac, Strange, Obsessive:** These categories were retained.

**Depression:** This category was replaced with the wider one of **distress**. This change came about from the experience of preliminary coding of the news and soap opera data

**Damage / Violence:** These two categories were found to be problematic for the pilot study. They were replaced with the category of **danger**, although many of the criteria for assigning units to the **danger** category were similar to those used in the pilot for violence and damage.

**Respect:** This category was dropped because it had so few instances in the pilot. It also had little theoretical import given that the new coding frame does contain positive elements.

**Success:** This category was retained as it was felt to be important to include positive semantic elements.

**Care:** This category was retained under the rubrics of both help and the antonym neglect. **Help** is also a positive category.

**Cope:** This category was retained and is also positive.

**Vulnerable:** This element was not included because it is dealt with effectively by the new category of distress.

The fact that the means of coding the news are not exactly parallel for the pilot and the main study has the disadvantage that exact comparisons cannot be made. However, the main study contains a sufficient number of elements from the pilot to allow some assessment of similarities and differences. It should be realised, however, that in the pilot a keyword search was conducted whilst the present analysis codes every camera shot.

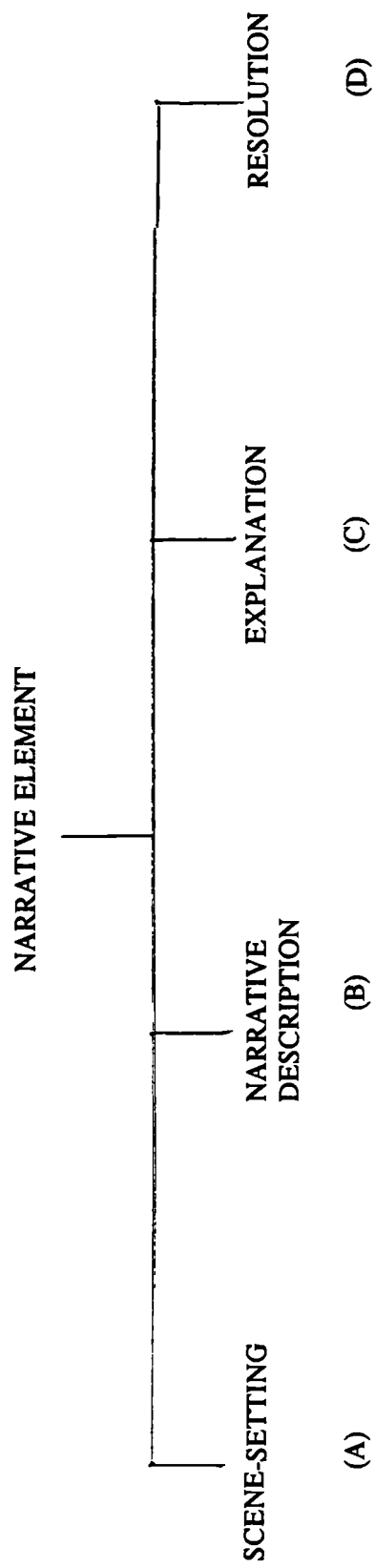
There is a second way in which this coding frame is data-driven. The categories which constitute the instrument have been modified by the results of preliminary coding of all three data transcripts (see below) - the News, the soap opera *Coronation Street* and drama. The coding frame which was initially drawn up and used for preparatory analysis was refined as a result of these investigations. The chief way in which this was done was to add categories, usually at the most detailed level. For example, the first analysis of the News, using the most detailed grid of the coding frame, resulted in 20% of units being allocated to the category of 'miscellaneous'. In plain terms, the dustbin category. It became evident on examination that there was pattern to the dustbin classification. Categories were therefore added to take account of this. This procedure also applied to preliminary coding of *Coronation Street* where two categories were added and to drama where one category was added.

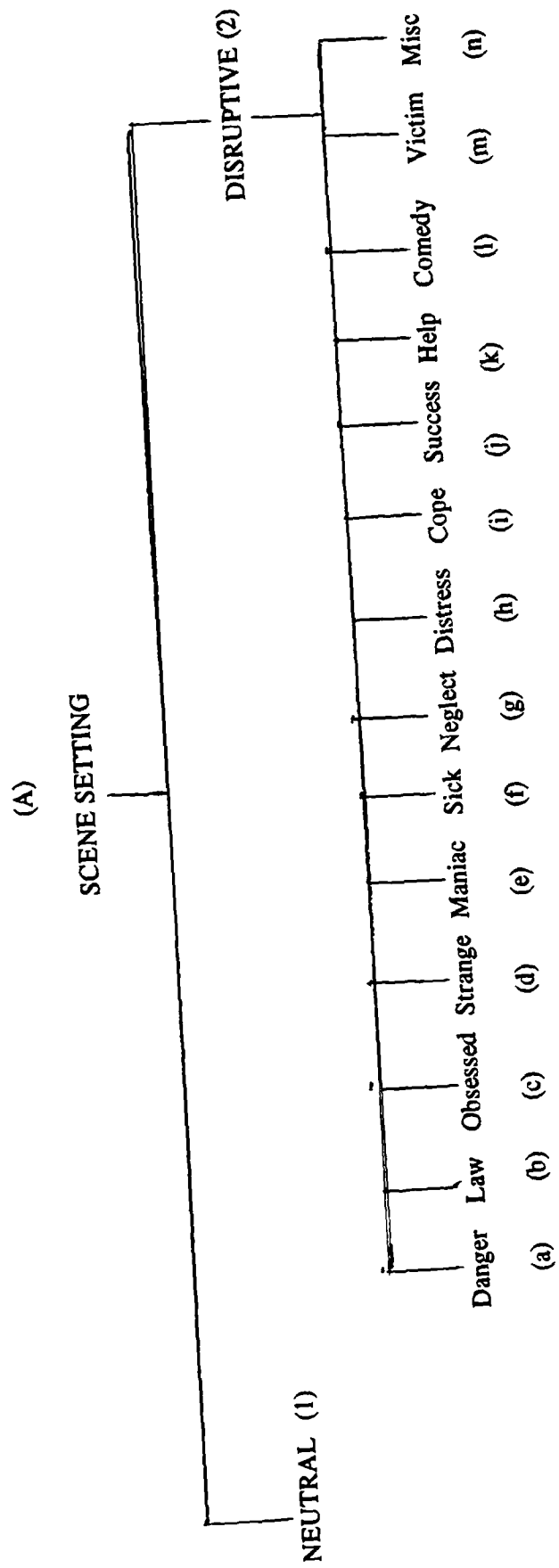
It must be stressed that steps were taken to preserve the theory-driven aspect of the research. So, and as stated already, categories were *not* dropped because of no or few instances if they were considered to be theoretically relevant. Classifications which derived from social psychological reasoning or media theories were retained so that the conceptualisations set out in Chapters Three and Four could be modified, or even rejected, in the light of the results of the analysis. For example, in the preliminary analysis of both news and soap opera, there were very few instances which were allocated to the category of maniac. But this category was not dropped since it was felt to capture the meaning of 'Otherness' which theory had suggested was important in attitudes towards and representations of mentally distressed people. If that category had also been found to be absent in respect of drama, there would have been a problem for the theoretical position laid out in Chapter three.

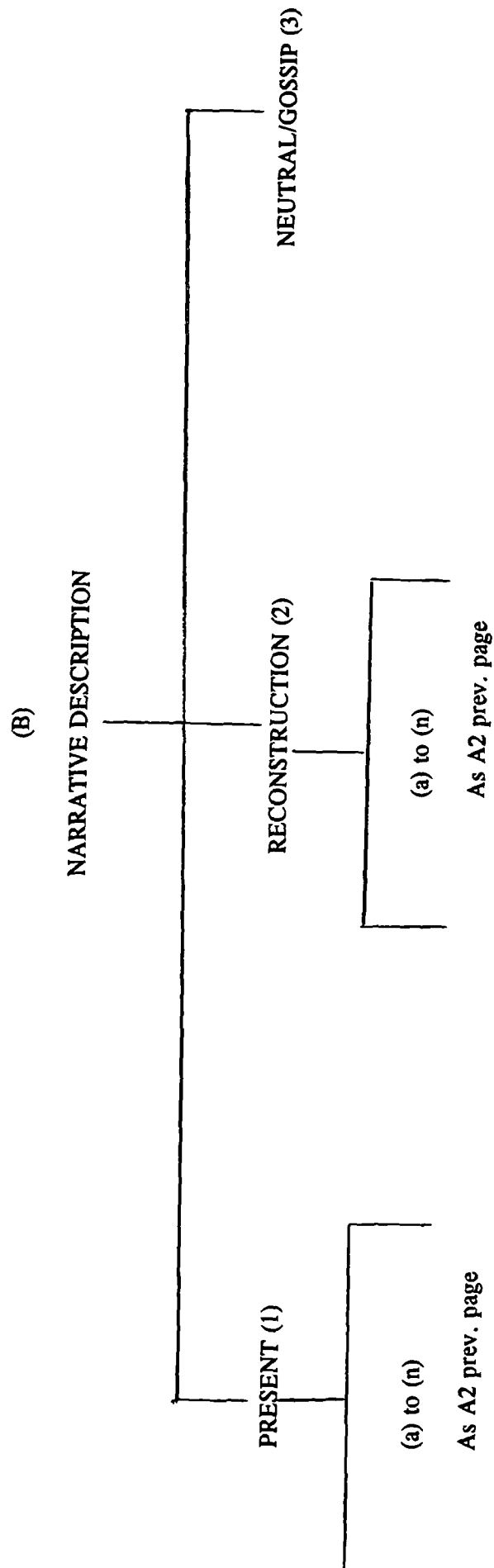
Similarly, when categories were added to the coding frame as a result of empirical analyses, these categories were 'suggested' by the data but were only visible in it because of prior conceptual assumptions. When examining the News, one half of the units in the dustbin category of 'miscellaneous' was found to be accounted for by references to 'law and order' but at the same time these references are a coherent category in terms of my theorisation of representations of madness. Again, in coding the soap opera *Coronation Street*, it was found to be necessary to add the category of victim and this is in line with what was argued theoretically. Further, for the soap opera, the category of gossip was added (at the second level of abstraction), consistently with what media theory has to say about soap opera. With respect to drama, the category of comedy was included in the coding frame and, as will be seen, this category involves a very particular representation of Otherness.

### **THE STRUCTURE OF THE CODING FRAME**

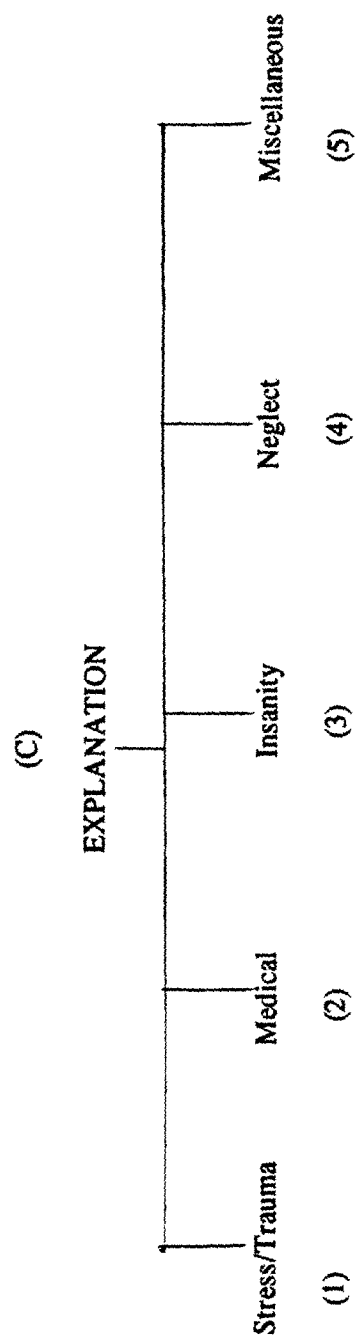
In describing the coding frame, I will start by concentrating on the top and middle levels although there will be some allusions to the most detailed level. This will be followed by consideration of the latter for each of the top level elements. The diagrammatic representation of the coding frame makes these 'levels' clearer and can be found in the following five pages.

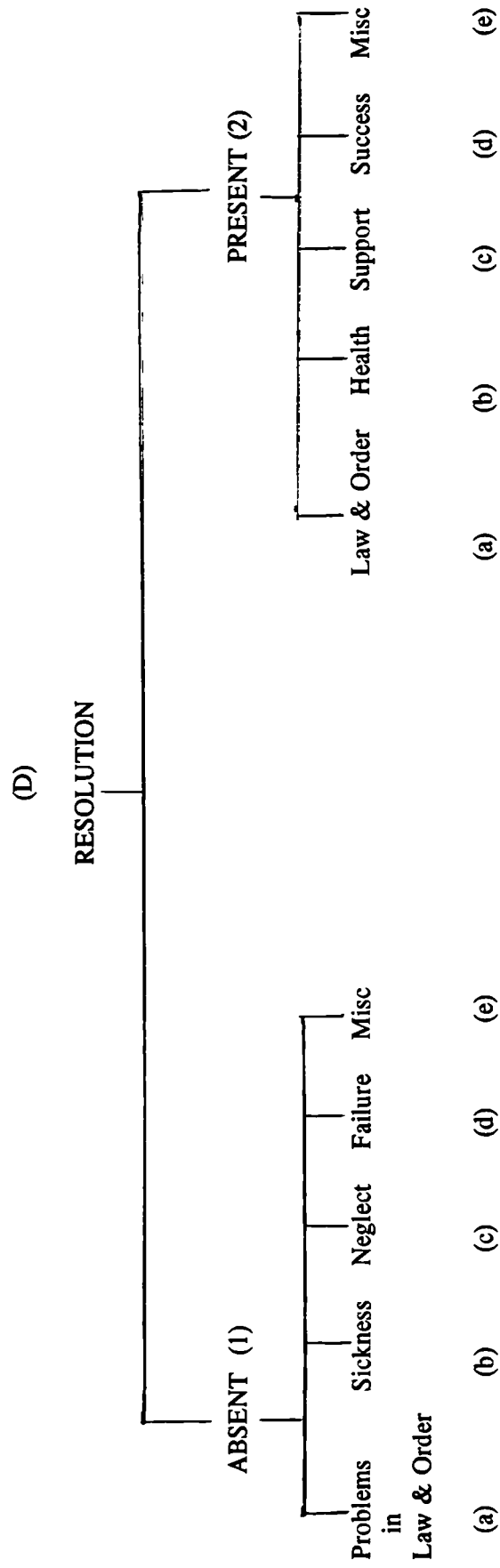












The top level of the coding frame comprises narrative elements. These elements are scene setting, narrative description, explanation and resolution. Scene setting is sub-divided into neutral beginnings and those which carry a sense of disruption. This follows Todorov (1977) as discussed in chapter 4. Resolutions can be present or absent, again following narrative theory. From this, we should be able to see if television representations of madness have the familiar story form of a disruptive beginning, a description of events and a narrative closure or return to social and personal harmony. As stated above the full dynamics of narrative theory's concept of a story will not be fully captured by this structure.

Narrative description is subdivided by 'tense' and 'value'. Stories can be told about the present or the immediate past or there can be reconstructions. Stories in the present or immediate past also have the dimension on the news of 'reportage', televisual reporting of events as opposed to reconstructions of events. It was seen in the pilot that reconstructions tended to bring conventions from drama and fiction into news programmes. These occurred mainly in the visual dimension.

Narrative description is usually filled with meaning but it can be neutral - a factual description of events, for example. The function of gossip in soap opera is similar to that of neutral description in news. It helps carry the story along but on the whole adds nothing new to the content of the narrative. It is inconsequential or repeats what the viewer already knows from elsewhere in the story line. Neutral description and gossip are therefore alternative functions in the coding frame. For reasons of space, this second level of the coding frame will be only briefly alluded to in the Chapters to follow. This is because it is not of great theoretical import for the analyses.

Explanation is not a central narrative element in most analyses of texts but it does seem to be important for representations which are often studied for their explanatory functions. It will be interesting to see the ratio of description to explanation in these data. The coding categories under explanation come from both theory and the experience of preliminary coding. So, for instance, medical explanations would be a way in which the unfamiliarity of madness is placed in a more familiar framework. The opposite is true for the figure of 'insanity' as an explanation for violent and irrational acts. Here, I would argue, Otherness raises its head.

Resolutions to stories can be present or absent - there may or may not be narrative closure. In this part of the coding frame the most detailed categorisations constitute pairs. So, for example, resolution is absent if the end of the story suggests problems in law and order which have not been solved, but it is present if the exigencies of law and order are seen to be met, that justice has been done. Similarly, there is a lack of resolution if the focus is on sickness, but resolution is present if the subject has been restored to health. From the ideas discussed in the chapter on media studies, we can expect there to be differences in the extent of narrative closure between the different genres of news, soap opera and drama. Of course, a story or news item can come to a close in the temporal sense without having any discernible 'ending' at all. It would be a theoretical mistake to code a resolution each and every time a story finished. Where there is no discernible 'ending' the units would probably be coded under one of the 'description' categories.

Lack of narrative closure can result from an on-going story which appears on several consecutive evenings in the news or in consecutive episodes in drama or soap opera. It is possible for television to build up a sense of suspense, an expectation or even a mystery about what will happen next. A story may have what Barthes (1975) calls an 'enigmatic'

structure when it is broadcast over several days or weeks. In the end, there may a much postponed closure. This will be discussed.

In the analyses of narrative sequence in the empirical chapters to follow, the codes detailed below will be used. These codes coincide with the numbers on the diagrammatic representation of the coding frame. They, in effect, treat the narrative elements without reference to the most detailed level of the coding frame.

- A1:** Scene setting (neutral)
- A2:** Scene setting (disruptive)
- B1:** Narrative description in the present
- B2:** Narrative description (reconstruction)
- B3:** Neutral facts or gossip
- C:** Explanation
- D1:** Resolution - absent
- D2:** Resolution - present.

So, the sequence **A2/B1/D2** means: disruptive scene-setting followed by narrative description in the present and ending with a return to social or personal harmony. This is, in fact, the classic narrative structure. The empirical chapters will consider different combinations of elements and the narrative structures which they encode.

We turn now to the most detailed level of the coding frame.

### **The most detailed level - subdivisions for scene-setting and narrative description**

The narrative elements of scene setting (disruptive) and narrative description (present and reconstruction) are further subdivided into fourteen categories which aim to disclose the meanings which mental health can assume on British television. The large number of categories is designed to realise the concept of multiple meanings, and it will be noted that some of the categories indicate danger and Otherness at the level of their content. These classifications come from the three derivations described above - social psychological and media theory, the pilot and the experience of preliminary coding.

The main unit of analysis is the camera shot. It begins and ends with a change in the scene that is in the picture. The nature of the coding frame means that each shot is allocated codes from each level of the coding frame. So, if a shot is coded **A2a**, this designates a meaning of Scene-Setting (**A**), Disruptive (**2**), Danger (**a**). The third level (**danger** in this example) encodes the most detailed categories and these will be described now.

**Danger:** This refers to violent or dangerous acts or emotions committed or experienced by anyone in the analytic unit.

**Law and Order:** This describes police or court procedures.

**Obsessed:** A category where individuals are characterised as obsessive or compulsive in their motivations and actions.

**Strange:** Here characters are defined as odd, bizarre, strange or outside the boundaries of normal life.

**Maniac:** This category indicates lay words or popular language which is used to describe mental illness, usually with a derogatory evaluation. It also covers actions and feelings which are portrayed in a very excessive manner.

**Sick:** Here the character is located in the discourse of health and illness.

**Neglect:** In this category, individuals or institutions are depicted as lacking in the care or control they are meant to provide.

**Distress:** People are here portrayed as in a state of mental or emotional distress.

**Cope:** Here the person is depicted as able to cope with personal and social life. This is a positive category.

**Success:** Any camera frame where someone is described as a successful person or where a successful policy is seen to be carried out. This is also a positive classification.

**Help:** The third positive coding category, here persons or institutions are depicted as helpful.

**Comedy:** This category arose out of preliminary coding of the drama transcript where one story focused humorously on a fraudulent psychiatrist.

**Victim:** This category arose out of preliminary coding of the soap opera *Coronation Street*, where there is a definite story strand involving the duping of the mentally distressed character by a business man of questionable morality. The category has some

similarity with that of neglect.

**Miscellaneous:** Any analytic unit which falls outside the above categorisations.

### **The most detailed level - subdivisions for Explanation**

As indicated above, the narrative unit of explanation is also subdivided into five types of account that can be given by television representations involving mentally distressed people. These are described below.

**Stress/Trauma:** In this category an action or emotion is explained with reference to a stressful environment or traumatic experience.

**Medical:** Here emotions, actions and judgement are accounted for by the invocation of medical discourse.

**Insanity:** In this classification, actions are depicted as the result of insanity.

**Neglect:** Here actions and events, emotions and judgements are accounted for by reference to personal or social neglect.

**Miscellaneous:** These are explanations which do not fall within the rubric of the main categories.



### **The most detailed level - subdivisions for Resolution**

Some stories or depictions are expected to exhibit narrative closure, as discussed above. In Todorov's terms, a narrative closure restores social or personal equilibrium or harmony. The coding frame divides the ends of stories into 'present' - those which do show narrative closure - and 'absent' - ends of stories in which a state of disequilibrium persists. The subdivisions of this distinction have been divided into pairs depending on whether resolution is apparent or not. As has been said earlier, a story may finish in the temporal sense without having an 'ending' at all. Here the codes of resolution would not be allocated.

The subdivisions for the narrative element of Resolution are as follows:

**Law and Order / Problems in Law and Order:** Resolution is present when events are portrayed as obeying the exigencies of the legal system, and it is absent when there is not restoration of law and order. Rather, legal problems remain.

**Health / Sickness:** Resolution is present when a subject is depicted as healthy, and absent when there is continuing sickness.

**Support / Neglect:** If a story comes to the conclusion that there is personal or social support on offer, then harmony is restored. If there is evidence of neglect, no narrative closure has occurred.

**Success / Failure:** Where there is a portrayal of success, either by a person or an institution, then the resolution counts as narrative closure. Where there is failure in the pursuit of some goal, including the pursuit of a successful life, then equilibrium or

harmony has not been restored.

**Miscellaneous:** Resolutions not covered by the above categories.

### **VISUAL ANALYSIS**

The material to be coded here is visual as well as verbal and the visual dimension will be taken into account when applying the coding frame. At the same time, it was decided to conduct an independent analysis of the visual material particularly in the light of Moscovici's concept of objectification and the importance of camera angle in media studies.

The analysis to be undertaken is focused on the camera angle. As will be detailed later, as the data were transcribed every camera shot was considered. A note was made of the camera angle for each camera frame, and the hypothesis is that different camera angles will be used to photograph mentally distressed characters than will be used for other characters. A description of the range of camera angles that could be coded is now given.

**Extreme Close-Up (ECU):** The camera is framed so tightly on the face of the character that both the top and bottom of the head are partially hidden.

**Close-Up (CU):** The camera hides either the top or bottom of the head (the neck).

**Medium Close-Up (MCU):** A head-and-shoulders shot.

**Medium Wide (MW):** A shot which reveals the top half of the character, ending around the waist.

**Wide-Angle (W/A):** A shot in which one or more characters are filmed full length.

**Tracking Shot (T/S):** A shot where the camera 'follows' a moving character or object.

The procedure with this visual analysis is simply to count the number of times different categories of people are filmed with different types of shots. Once again it can be argued that visual images are symbols, full of meaning, and that they can be counted.

### **REMAINING METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

#### **The Sample**

The aim of the sampling frame was to include as much popular programming as possible within the confines of the genres of drama, documentary and news. Only BBC1 and ITV were selected, as these two channels command much larger audiences than either BBC2 or Channel 4. All programmes were videotaped and the sample period was eight weeks, running from the middle of May 1992 to the middle of July 1992.

On each of the two channels, the aim was to sample at least two soap operas (continuing series), at least two drama series and at least two situation comedies. News was sampled as in the pilot study (see below), as was any documentary programme that announced itself as dealing with a mental health topic. In the event, there was no documentary during the data collection period that dealt with mental health topics. This can be seen as a shortcoming of the sample although it may also point to the paucity of such programming

on British television.

The News samples were collected in two week blocks because of concurrent broadcasting of relevant programmes. One block consisted of early evening BBC (*Six O'Clock News* and *Newsroom Southeast*) and late evening ITV (*News at Ten*); and the second block reversed this (*ITN Early Evening News*, *ITV Thames News* and *BBC Nine O'Clock News*). *Newsroom Southeast* and *Thames News* are magazine programmes which follow the early evening news broadcasts. The other programmes are conventional news bulletins. (*Thames News* has since been replaced due to the changes in franchising of the ITV network.) There are, then, effectively four weeks of data from each programme.

A list of the popular programmes that were videotaped is given below:

BBC1	ITV
<i>Neighbours</i>	<i>Home and Away</i>
<i>Eastenders</i>	<i>Coronation Street</i>
<i>Casualty</i>	<i>The Bill</i>
<i>Friday on My Mind</i>	<i>Firm Friends</i>
<i>Boys from the Bush</i>	<i>On the Buses</i>
<i>Birds of a Feather</i>	

As can be seen, I did not succeed in videotaping two comedies from ITV. This is because there was only one comedy broadcast in the period of data collection. Nevertheless, there was some success in the effort to include popular programmes. The sample regularly contained up to 50% of the BARB top ten programmes on the two channels (as reproduced in *Radio Times* and *The Guardian*) and always contained the top two for each channel. The top ten programmes included some news broadcasts. The main programme types not

included in the sample were Game Shows and Sport.

The estimated length of the sample is 141 hours and 30 minutes. Two hours of programming were lost through programme re-scheduling and human error.

The sample was coded for references to mental health and illness. The criteria for the inclusion of a reference was that it concern itself with mental health, feature psychiatrists or psychiatric diagnostic categories or that it consist of a lay term such as 'maniac' or 'crazy'. It must be stressed that the criteria for inclusion in the sample were quite tight. References to issues such as counselling and stressful situations were *not* included unless there was an additional psychiatric or mental health dimension. The answer to the question (which I have been asked), "How do you know when something is a depiction of mental illness?", is that the person portrayed has a high likelihood of coming to the attention of a psychiatrist. This definition is deliberately tight, the better to show variation in portrayals if these do indeed exist. It should be stressed, however, that a story was included in the sample even if the mental health reference was not central to it. What mattered was that mental health was *mentioned* in a story. This will be discussed in more detail below.

The criteria for inclusion of a story in the mental health sample owe a good deal to Wahl (1992) whose work was discussed in Chapter 2. Here he notes the inconsistency of definitions used in television research and offers his own. This I will now quote as it is substantially the same as the one I have advanced above.

I would favour, for example, the presence, *within the media presentation*, of a specific psychiatric label (including slang designations such as "crazy", "madman"

etc., as well as formal diagnoses such as schizophrenia or depression) or indication of receipt of psychiatric treatment as the appropriate criteria.

(Wahl, 1992, p.350)

The only quarrel I have lies with the use of slang words. This is difficult but I think there is a difference between metaphoric and designatory usage. Sometimes slang words are used metaphorically and sometimes they are used seriously to designate a state. It is up to the analyst to differentiate these two forms of use.

The sample was divided into three sections following the theory of genre described in Chapter 4. The first section is the News transcript which contains all news items where there is a mental health reference. The second section is an eight week story from the soap opera *Coronation Street* which concerns one of the main characters experiencing a nervous breakdown. This story was selected out separately as it was felt important to look at its overall narrative structure as well as because its coherence over several episodes made it a prime candidate for separate analysis. The final section of the transcript consists in the remaining dramatic coverage, including both soap opera and drama serials. A chapter of the thesis reports the analysis of each of these sections of the empirical material.

Other material was videotaped and noted but not included in the final analysis for reasons of space. There were two films in the videotaped material - *Psycho 3* and *The Couch Trip*. The first of these is about a very disturbed killer and the second is a comedy. The main significations in both of these films also appear elsewhere in the data.

A count was also made of every time there was a metaphoric usage of madness terminology. These are everyday phrases such as 'You're crazy' or 'What a lunatic'.

Such phrases were felt to add to the representation of madness on British television but there is not the space to analyse them in the present investigation.

### **Transcription**

Transcription is a theoretically and pragmatically-guided process. It is impossible to transcribe everything that is on the television screen. This is especially true of the visual dimension of television but applies to verbal material as well. Linguists have developed notational systems for the transcription of such aspects of verbal material as inflection but this is outside the scope of this study. It is similarly unrealistic to try to transcribe all the aspects of lighting, dress, posture and so on that go to make up the visual image.

It was decided to transcribe the verbal material verbatim and not to include any supra-verbal information. The exception was the notation of a raised or very quiet voice. This decision means that it is being accepted that what is said is more important than how it is said. It also involves the practical competence of the researcher in being able or unable to develop appropriate notation systems for the 'how' of verbal material.

The decision is not entirely satisfactory for although I would argue that what is said *is* more important than the how of the saying, nevertheless a great deal of information is missed. For instance, mentally distressed characters may be more hesitant in their speech than others. The transcription does not pick this up and all that can be done is to view tapes when coding and perhaps compute the ratio of number of words to time elapsed.

For visual material, the situation is more satisfactory theoretically. First, a brief description of the visual content of the television screen is made. Secondly, and as already mentioned, the camera angle used to photograph characters or objects is noted. Media

theorists argue that camera angle carries meaning, and particularly emotional meaning, and the framing of a character is also relevant to Moscovici's concept of objectification. The analysis of the visual dimension of the text is carried out in terms of the notation of camera angles.

The transcription is arranged in two columns. The left hand column contains the visual descriptions and the right hand one is the verbatim verbal transcript. Columns are arranged with a paragraph break between each camera shot although this is not always easy to discern as dialogue also involves paragraph breaks. Nonetheless, the transcripts are easy to read as I hope will become clear in the following chapters.

### **The Units of Analysis**

Two units of analysis are used in this research and both are commonplace in media studies. The first is the camera shot, as hinted at above. Whenever the camera changes frame, a new unit of analysis begins. This unit of analysis is the one to which the main coding frame will be applied. That is, each camera shot will receive one or more codes from the coding frame described in this chapter. The camera shot is also the unit of analysis for the visual investigation.

The camera shot will be allocated a three-level code (or codes). The levels come from the tree structure of the coding frame. So, as mentioned above, a code A2a signifies Scene-Setting, Disruptive, Danger. One exception to this is the narrative element of Explanation where there are only two levels. The classification of 'neutral' and 'gossip' also involves only two codes.

The second unit of analysis is the narrative sequence. For the News, this is a news item



or story and for both *Coronation Street* and the dramatic portrayals the narrative sequence is the story strand. This is a complete sequence of frames telling a particular story or section of a story. When the camera moves to a different story in the episode, the strand is over. Further, narrative sequences over each story as a whole will be examined. For *Coronation Street* this is the entire eight week tale. For dramatic programming it is the story as told over the course of, usually, one episode.

These analyses will follow the top and middle levels of the coding frame as allocated to camera frames. Thus, if a sequence of frames begins with a disruption, continues through narrative description in the present and ends with the restoration of social harmony then this can be said to correspond to Todorov's (1977) idea of the well-formed narrative. Other types of narrative sequence might contradict this theory or say something about the way in which stories involving mentally disturbed characters are structured.

### **Reliability**

A reliability exercise was carried out with a group of students and staff at the LSE. The results of this will be described now.

The reliability measure to be presented here is not conventional and it was not carried out in a conventional manner. The exercise, which culminated in a small assessment of reliability of the coding procedures described above, took place at a staff and postgraduate seminar at the Department of Social Psychology at the London School of Economics over a period of four weeks.

Consonant with what is said in this chapter and elsewhere the reliability exercise was premised on the importance of theory to the coding frame. The first week therefore took the form of a presentation of the theoretical background to this study. In the second week the coding frame was presented and discussed. These two weeks were seen as essential to an understanding of the coding frame. In the third week three extracts from the data were played on videotape and their transcripts made available. Members of the seminar were then invited to apply the coding frame to the data. In this third week there were ten participants besides the author.

Decisions about the allocation of units to categories were made and expressed by a show of hands. It was discovered that the people in the seminar agreed with the author about 50% of the time. However, when codes which had been double coded by the author or which were semantically close were included, agreement reached about 75%. This is important because there was a vast array of codes to choose from and so disagreement could be minimal or substantial. Agreement of 50% might not seem impressive but 75% agreement on the main semantic fields of the data is acceptable. It also must be remembered that ten people, with only two hours experience of a complex coding frame were involved.

In the fourth week, the procedure was more systematic. A new piece of videotaped data and transcript - from the news - was presented. Six people were present besides the author. These six people coded the transcript and handed it in. The full matrix of their codings can be seen below in Table 5.1. Each row represents a camera frame.

DR	Coder 1	Coder 2	Coder 3	Coder 4	Coder 5	Coder 6
A2a	A2a	A2a	D2a	B1b	A2a	A2a
B2k	B2k	A1	B3	–	B2k	B2k
B2a	B2e	B2a	A2a	B1a	B2a	B2a
B2a	B2a	B2a	B2a	B2a	B2a	B2a
B2a	B2a	B2a	B2a	B1a	B2a	B2a
B2k	B1e	B2d	B3	B2k	B2k	B2a
B2b	D2a	B1b	B2b	B1k	B2b	B2b
B2a	D2a	B2a	B2b	B1b	B2b	B2b
B1a	B1a	B1a	B1a	B1a	B1b	B1b
B2a	B2a	B2a	B1a	B1b	B1b	B1a
B1a	B1j	B1a	B1a	B1a	B1a	B1a
B1b	D2a	B1b	D2a	–	B1b	D2a
B1a	D2b	B1a	D2a	B1a	B1a	D2a
D2a	D2a	B1a	D2a	D2a	D2a	B1a
Agree1 <sup>1</sup>	6	7	6	6*	11	7
Agree2 <sup>2</sup>	9	13	14	10*	14	12

<sup>1</sup> Number of exact matches per coder (max 14) **Average 7.12 51.12%**

<sup>2</sup> Number of exact matches per coder plus semantically close codes (max 14) **Average 12 85.71%**

\* Totals with missing values

*Table 5.1: Matrix of codings for main coder and six others in the reliability exercise.*

It can be calculated that the average percent of exact matches with the main coder is 51.12%, whilst the average percent of matches with semantically close codes is 85.51%. This shows systematically what was evident from the show of hands in the previous exercise. It should be stressed that what is being measured is the extent of agreement with the decisions of the author. As stated above, agreement of 50% is not striking but

agreement of 85% with semantically close codes is acceptable since it shows that the disagreement for exact matches was not of the order of extreme discrepancy.

It is worth pointing out that the two coders with lower agreements - coder 1 and coder 4 - had not been present for the full number of sessions. Coder 5, with complete agreement in terms of semantically close codes had substantial experience with the coding frame as this coder was the supervisor. This shows the importance of familiarity with the coding frame, particularly one as complex as this. The codes which appeared to cause most difficulty were those concerning narrative structure. Again, this is not a familiar concept for researchers in the field of social psychology.

The full reliability exercise looked at 5% of the news, 2% of the soap opera and 2% of the drama data. This is clearly insufficient. However, it is instructive that a large group of people, having attained some degree of familiarity with both the theoretical background and the coding instrument, can reach an acceptable level of agreement over how to allocate coding categories to analytic units.

It might even be said that the existence of disagreement that was not stark but consisted in the allocation of codes semantically close to those selected by the author is theoretically interesting. We have seen that this coding frame seeks to capture, if indeed it exists, the fluidity and multiplicity of the meanings through which madness is encoded on television. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that a group of researchers should find the boundaries of the categories to be weak and fluid and that the group finds itself in a semantic world cast free of anchors. The existence of the semantically close, but not exact, matches is itself theoretically interesting. The exception to this was the high level of agreement on categories of **danger** and their significance will be seen in the three chapters to follow.

## **Mental Health on British Television - An Empirical Caveat**

As was outlined in more detail when the sample was discussed, the criterion for including a news item or a drama story in this study was that there should be *mention* of mental health, psychiatry, diagnostic categories and so forth. Now this means that some representations will only incidentally include reference to madness. A news story, for example, may be centrally about prison conditions and only in passing mention suicide and self-harm amongst inmates. A drama story may concern itself chiefly with a police interrogation and incidentally it is revealed that the suspect has been treated for depression. Other stories, both news and drama, are focused centrally on the subject of mental health.

It follows from this that we must be careful about what exactly it is that the empirical analysis undertaken here reveals about representations of madness on British television. It is most accurate to say that this investigation examines the way in which mental health issues are treated by television, *and the semantic context* in which these depictions are located. Another way of putting this is to say that we are looking at *the representational structure and content of television stories which include a reference to madness*.

It is necessary to defend the criteria for the selection of stories from the total television sample if some of them contain only incidental reference to mental health. Of course and at the same time, many are centrally focused on madness. An example can be helpful here. We know from the pilot that news stories with a mental health reference are far more likely to be about crime than are television news stories in general. It is equally important to know if an allusion to madness occurs in the context of a story where the majority of analytic units are concerned with violence and dangerousness. If it is found for a given story or for the data transcript as a whole that there is a large proportion of analytic elements which are coded for violence and dangerousness, this says something

critical about the way in which references to madness are semantically located on British television news stories. Madness would be seen to be situated in a semantic context of violence and danger. We would be able to say from the analysis that mentally distressed people on television both commit violent acts and are surrounded by violence.

## **CONCLUSION**

The coding frame to be used here has been called an analytic of description or a language of description. The aim is to apply the coding frame to the empirical material in order to describe the most salient meanings in the representation of madness on British television. This could not be done without theory for it is the conceptual categories that have directed the researcher's attention to certain meanings and not others. At the same time the data itself has had an influence on the coding frame. These twin derivations have produced a coding frame that will be used to describe the meanings of madness in the data which has been collected. As has been said repeatedly, I will not seek the 'beneath' or 'behind', the text but will focus on its surface and use the theoretically-derived coding frame to describe the lines of visibility that make up both the content and the structure of the representations.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **NEWS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the empirical analysis of representations of madness on British television news. It begins with some simple descriptive statistics.

The analysis proper starts with a replication of the pilot comparison between the distribution of item types in the sample as a whole, and in the sample dealing with mental health. This provides an estimation of the basic meaning of madness on the news.

The second section of the chapter consists in an application of the coding frame detailed in the methodological chapter to the verbal dimension of the sample under consideration. Although the focus will be centrally on language, visual information will be taken into account in allocating units to categories. The investigation will look at the semantic elements which make up the representations of madness which are to be found on British television news. The following section of the chapter will look at the types of narrative structure which characterise these representations. Narrative structure, as discussed in Chapter 4, is an important way in which meaning is produced in cultural forms generally.

The final part of the chapter will look at visual images on British television news. The separation of visual and verbal analysis should not be taken to mean that they can be disconnected with regard to systems of signification. Visual structures are taken into account in the content analysis.

## **THE SAMPLE AND INITIAL STATISTICS**

The bulletins were first divided up into 'items' or 'stories'. As discussed in Appendix 1, dealing with the pilot, an 'item' or 'story' is identified as a piece of broadcast news beginning with a definite change of content or theme and ending with another such definite change. In practice, these are not hard to distinguish. Sometimes an item or story appears on both news channels or on successive broadcasts. Where the latter occurs, it could be said that a 'story' develops over several 'items'. However, since this happened infrequently with the present data, the terms 'item' and 'story' will be used as synonyms.

The next step was to catalogue all those items with a mental health content. This procedure followed the criteria laid out in the methodology chapter. That is, an item or story was selected to be part of the sample when it included terms such as 'psychiatry', or 'psychology', or a diagnostic category, or when it portrayed behaviour indicative of poor mental health such as would come to the attention of a psychiatrist, or where there was the use of a lay term for mental distress in a non-metaphoric way (eg. lunatic, maniac). It is this sample of stories which I will refer to as the *mental health news sample*.

The mental health news sample consists of 43 items which meet the criteria outlined above. 22 of these are in the main news bulletins, with 11 each on BBC1 and ITN. 21 of the stories are on regional magazines with 14 on BBC1 and 7 on ITV. This latter discrepancy would appear to be largely the result of a 'running story' which was featured five times on BBC1's *Newsroom Southeast*.

In the news sample as a whole there are 1341 items and so the mental health news sample is 3.21% of the total in terms of *proportion of stories*. In terms of time, the news sample as a whole is 53 hours and 30 minutes long, and the mental health news sample is 1 hour



and 34 minutes in length. This means that in respect of the length of broadcasts, the mental health news sample is 2.95% of the total news sample. These figures are close to the pilot's 3.45% indicating some stability of reference to madness on British television news.

It is worth pointing out that Gerbner's analyses of drama programmes, discussed in Chapter 2, regularly find that about 3% of characters are portrayed as mentally ill. This bears a perhaps surprising correspondence to the present findings.

### **THE DISTRIBUTION OF ITEM TYPES**

As in the pilot, every news item recorded in the eight week period of data collection was assigned to a category of item type. The item types are based on those used by the Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1980) in their analyses of television news. The categories are familiar and include examples such as politics, economics, home affairs and crime. These categories were found to be easy to apply in the pilot. The full list can be found in the tables to follow shortly.

The purpose of this first analysis is to compare the distribution of item types for the mental health news sample with the distribution for the remainder of the total news sample. The total news sample minus the mental health news sample will be referred to as the *general* news sample. The tables then compare the distribution of item types between the general news sample and the mental health news sample. This will reveal whether mental health stories are distributed in the same way as the general news sample or whether they are concentrated in particular categories. The general news sample constitutes a control against which the mental health news sample can be assessed.

Tables 6.1 - 6.3 give the results for national news bulletins, then regional news bulletins, and finally for the two combined. Figures are in percentages. Had the calculations presented raw figures it would have been seen that statistical analysis of nominal categories is not feasible since too many cells have an expected frequency of less than five.

The first thing to note about Tables 6.1 - 6.3 is that there are some news categories where issues to do with mental health are never or only rarely dealt with. Neither sport nor politics ever appear with a mental health content. A politician can have a heart attack but not a nervous breakdown. Again, mental health appears in the context of economic stories only once. But this is a story about special job initiatives for people with mental health problems and is not in the mainstream of economic items dealing with such issues as consumer demand, manufacturing output and interest rates. It is nonetheless a more positive portrayal than most of the stories in the mental health news sample.

In the main bulletins, international stories are the largest category for the general news sample but comprise a much smaller percentage of the mental health news sample. There are in fact three international stories here and they all deal with war crimes. Two are about the disturbed mental state of the Nazi war criminal Herman Hesse and one is about American prisoners of war in Soviet mental hospitals. So again the infrequency is linked to a special cast to the items which puts them outside the typical content of the category. For example, much international coverage consists in issues such as diplomacy and summits between heads of state.

<b>Category</b>	<b>General News Sample (%)</b>	<b>Mental Health News Sample (%)</b>
International	38.4	13.6
Politics	5.7	00.0
Economics	10.3	00.0
Terrorism	4.7	9.1
Home Affairs	12.7	31.8
Human Interest	7.3	00.0
Crime	7.9	45.5
Sport	10.5	00.0
Other	2.5	00.0
Total N	981	22

**Table 6.1:**      *Comparison of the distribution of item types in the general news sample and the mental health news sample for nationally broadcast bulletins.*

<b>Category</b>	<b>General News Sample (%)</b>	<b>Mental Health News Sample (%)</b>
International	2.5	00.00
Politics	0.5	00.00
Economics	11.9	4.8
Terrorism	2.8	00.0
Home Affairs	35.3	19.1
Human Interest	15.3	4.8
Crime	18.8	71.4
Sport	9.2	00.0
Other	3.6	00.0
Total N	360	21

*Table 6.2: Comparison of the distribution of item types in the general news sample and the mental health news sample for regional news programmes.*

<b>Category</b>	<b>General News Sample (%)</b>	<b>Mental Health News Sample (%)</b>
International	28.8	7.0
Politics	4.3	00.0
Economics	10.7	2.3
Terrorism	4.2	4.7
Home Affairs	18.8	25.6
Human Interest	9.5	2.3
Crime	10.8	58.1
Sport	10.1	00.0
Other	2.7	00.0
Total N	1341	43

*Table 6.3: Comparison of the distribution of item types in the general news sample and the mental health news sample for all news programmes.*

The relative absence of human interest stories is surprising and a departure from the pilot. There is only one human interest item and it includes reporting of the potential damage to the mental health of a young child who spent six days alone with the body of his dead father.

The absence or relative absence of reporting of mental health issues in some categories of news is just as important as its presence in others. The meaning of mental health on the news is affected if the issue does not appear in certain story contexts. The first three categories in the Tables - international, politics and economics - comprise 54.4% of the content of national bulletins. They are the main body of these bulletins yet mental health issues rarely feature and when they do, as indicated above, the stories are very particular. Mental health is virtually absent from the mainstream of national news.

The category of 'home affairs' is relatively frequent in both national and regional broadcasts - in fact, it is the most frequent of all for the latter. Home affairs covers issues such as education, race relations, social services, the environment, consumer affairs and health.

In the mental health news sample, stories within the context of home affairs are relatively frequent. They are overrepresented Tables 6.1 and 6.3. This situation exactly parallels the pilot. However, it will be seen in the content analysis that the main focus of these stories is different from the pilot. In the national broadcasts in this sample, the principal issue is health. The discourse of medicine dominates the home affairs reporting in the mental health news sample. The type of 'social problem' story found in the pilot is confined to regional broadcasts and the theme is much weaker than before. Equally, we shall see presently that the 'social problem' issue has encroached on crime broadcasting.

The clearest and most obvious feature of Tables 6.1 - 6.3 concerns the category of crime. This category is most frequent in all the mental health news samples and is plainly over-represented in relation to the general news data. In the regional mental health news sample, crime stories account for nearly three quarters of all coverage whereas they make up less than one fifth of the general regional news items. Similarly, crime stories account for nearly half of all mental health items in national broadcasts but comprise less than one tenth of the items in the general news sample.

Crime was also by far the largest mental health category in the pilot (see Appendix 1). There it was noted that the crimes depicted tended to be very violent and dominated by murder (often multiple) and rape. It is therefore worthwhile making a comparison of the *types* of crime reported in the mental health news sample and the general news sample. Table 6.4 presents this analysis.

Type of Crime	General News Sample (%)	Mental Health News Sample (%)
Violent Crime	37.2	64.0
Fraud	13.8	00.0
Prison Conditions	15.2	28.0
Other	33.8	7.1
Total N	145	25

*Table 6.4: Distributions of types of crime in the general news sample and the mental health news sample.*

In terms of the types of crime which the news reports, it can be seen from Table 6.4 that in the general news sample just over one third of stories concern crimes that are violent. However, in crimes stories with a mental health reference, nearly two thirds concern crimes of violence. Looking at these figures differently, and taking account of the raw data, just under a quarter of violent crime stories contain a mental health reference (70 stories in all, 16 of them in the mental health sample). *The news constructs an extremely close association between crimes of violence and poor mental health.* In plain language, it suggests to the audience that nearly one quarter of violent crime is committed by mentally distressed people. The 'facts' about mental health and crime will be discussed shortly.

13.8% of the general news crime sample concerns fraud but no stories in the mental health crime sample do so. Once again, it can be seen that what is absent is just as important as what is present. The representation of the mad person focuses on violence but the world of business, intellect and money is closed to them.

Nonetheless there is a story in the sample that concerns falsification of evidence or at least failure to disclose all facts. This is a 'terrorism' story (two items) in which the courts decide that a woman has been falsely convicted for an act of terrorism. Three prosecution witnesses were singled out as providing false evidence. One of these was a psychiatrist. As will be seen again, not only are mentally ill people represented as engaged in acts of violence but those charged with their care themselves either commit violent crime or are engaged in fraudulent activity.

There is a category of story to do with prisons and the conditions that pertain in them and stories with a mental health reference are relatively over-represented in this category.



Much of the coverage here is critical of what goes on in such institutions and depicts negative reports from inspectors and policy making bodies. There is reference again to violence but also to neglect. The stories with a mental health reference cover the plight of mentally distressed offenders and the way in which conditions of violence and neglect can lead to behaviour symptomatic of emotional disorder. These stories also, of course, have the message that our prisons are full of mentally disturbed offenders.

The 'prison' stories seem to occupy the place in the present sample taken by the 'social problem' stories in the pilot (see Appendix 1). They at once criticise neglect and lack of care but also tie it more closely to crime and violence than was so in the first study. In both cases, however, the mentally sick person belongs on the margins of society. There are also 'neglect' stories in the home affairs category where the institutions which fail to care are psychiatric units. There is, then, a degree of commonality between some crime stories and some home affairs stories.

This first level of the analysis has been concerned with the general context of signification represented by item types. This is the initial level at which mental health references take on meaning on British television news. The single most important point which has emerged is that there is a strong correlation between madness and violent crime in these representations. Not only do items concerned with mental health frequently report violent crime as such, they also dwell on violence in penal and psychiatric institutions and even, in international coverage, concern themselves with war criminals whose mental integrity is in doubt.

It might be argued that the close association between violence and madness is due to the sensationalism of TV news and its focus on danger. This analysis shows that this is not

what is at stake. In fact, television news does not have a particularly strong focus on violent crime when looked at overall. But when it comes to poor mental health, portrayals of violence jump dramatically. Although 'the facts' about mental illness and danger are hard to find, the following can be said. A confidential report by the Royal College of Psychiatrists suggests that in one year 4% of murders were committed by those with previous contact with psychiatry. Again, it is estimated (Monahan, 1992) that between 3% and 6% of people with a serious mental disorder commit violent acts. However, only *current psychotic experience* is a modest predictor of violence and less so than age, gender and drug use. Past psychiatric history has no influence on violence levels which are similar to the the general population - around 2% In the present news sample, 60% of people portrayed as mentally ill are violent. This is a huge overestimation. It could be said that the figure of the violent madman (for all but one are men) fulfils the position of Hall et al's (1978) cardinal news value or Hartley's (1992) scandalous category. However, it would be mistaken to think that there is a natural link between madness and crime reporting. The association is a constructed one, a point to which I will return.

The emphasis on violence gives us a representation of one type of Otherness - the violent madman. He is anchored in terms of a dangerous category which involves fear. However, there are other representations, for example, the sick person. This supports the argument that there will be a diversity of representations as mentally disturbed people are classified first one way and then another, so that the meaning of madness is always provisional and difficult to fix.

The results reported here by and large confirm what was found in the parallel analysis in the pilot. They show that the distribution of item types differs markedly between the general news sample and the mental health news sample. Madness is virtually absent from

mainstream news and grossly over-represented in the dangerous category of crime. I have also pointed to some differences between the main study and the pilot, especially with respect to the category of 'home affairs'. To elucidate further the similarities and differences and to develop the present analysis, we now turn to the content analysis.

## **THE CONTENT OF THE REPRESENTATION**

### **The third level of abstraction**

This part of the chapter presents the results of the content analysis carried out using the coding frame described in Chapter 5. It will be recalled that the coding frame has, for the most part, three levels which range from narrative elements at the top level down to detailed content categories at the finest level. For ease of exposition and to give some idea of the detailed nature of the representation at issue, the results will be presented 'from the bottom up'. That is, the analysis of the detailed categories will be explained first and the consideration of the narrative structure of the stories I will largely leave to the next section. However, some examination of narrative elements will take place as we proceed.

It will be recalled that the unit of analysis is the camera frame. That is, analytic units are bounded by a change in the camera shot. In the excerpts to be used for illustration later in this section, these boundaries are represented by paragraph breaks.

Table 6.5 presents the results. The table shows the number of instances for the content categories defined at the most detailed level of the coding frame and divided by the relevant narrative elements at the next level up. The narrative elements considered are: scene-setting (disruptive) and the two types of narrative description, present and reconstruction. The table also gives totals for the content categories across the narrative elements and percentages for these totals where the denominator is the total number of

Narrative Element	Danger	Law	Obsess	Strange	Maniac	Sick	Neglect	Distress	Cope	Success	Help	Comedy	Victim	Misc
Scene Setting (Disruptive)	15	0	4	0	1	6	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	3
Narr. Descript. (Present)	78	49	2	0	1	77	55	19	0	8	18	0	0	44
Narr. Descript. (Recon)	75	11	3	1	1	1	3	9	8	1	5	0	7	20
Total	168	60	9	1	3	84	63	28	8	9	25	0	7	67
% Total Units (N=697)	24.1	8.6	1.3			12.1	9.0	4.0	1.2	1.3	3.6		1.0	9.6

Table 6.5: Distribution for detailed content categories defined by three narrative elements for the mental health news sample.

camera frames in the mental health news sample. The percentages add up to less than 100% because not all frames are included in the analysis. For instance, 'explanation and 'resolution' will be dealt with later and neutral facts are also excluded.

As might be expected, given the emphasis on violent crime revealed above, Table 6.5 shows that the most frequent category for all narrative elements and in total is **danger**. In news stories with a mental health reference, nearly one quarter of all camera frames are identifiable as concerned with violence and danger. Add to this other references to law and police procedure and we find that nearly one third of the analytic units are about the law, crime and danger. It is the case that on news stories with a mental health reference, violent crime is committed by mentally disturbed people and also that mentally distressed individuals are portrayed as living in a world of violence. For example, one man accused of multiple rapes of women with learning difficulties is a psychiatric nurse. The environment as well as the individual is violent. This confirms the very strong association between mental distress and violence found in the analysis of item types and contexts and the argument that the figure of the violent madman occupies the position of the cardinal news value or scandalous category. An example of how people designated mentally ill are linked with danger on the news is given below.

VISUAL	VERBAL
News presenter, MW, pic man CU	Police in Dorset are co-ordinating a widespread hunt for an escaped prisoner after a man was found shot dead near Christchurch. Detectives say KH, who's been on the run for more than two weeks, is armed and extremely dangerous.
Country lane, scene of crime, W/A	Police carried out a forensic examination of the jaguar car in which the murdered man was found. He
CU car	

CU photo KH

of KH who escaped less than three weeks ago from Grendon prison in Buckinghamshire where he'd undergone psychiatric treatment.

Police officer MW

We believe that this man H is armed and extremely, and I can't stress that enough, extremely dangerous and should not on any account be approached by members of the public.

### BBC1, SIX O'CLOCK NEWS, THURSDAY 21ST MAY

This extract shows how psychiatry and violent crime are woven together to produce a signification of the violent madman.

Another point worth noting about the **danger** category is that it accounts for 68% of units coded under the narrative element of 'reconstruction'. These are frames which recount and reconstruct a past event. In the pilot it was found that narrative reconstruction is a convention often used in reporting crimes committed by mad people and that this convention often makes use of fictional codes and conventions. The very high proportion of **danger** references in the reconstruction category confirms this. For the moment, an example is given.

#### VISUAL

#### VERBAL

Photo victim, MCU

CL had been walking to her home in Croxley Green, Hertfordshire after a night out with friends last September.

Street, pan out, W/A

Shortly afterwards, tragedy struck. She was spotted by CG, a labourer, who was driving past. Moments later he dragged his young victim into the back

Street, camera follows a car, tracking.

of his allegro. Passers by heard her cry

	'let me go', but did nothing. G drove her to a country lane, raped her and then
Countryside, police car, police tape, W/A	throttled his young victim to death. He buried her body in a shallow grave
Motorway W/A	after driving up the M1 to a field 25 miles away near Luton in Bedfordshire.

#### ITV, THAMES NEWS, MONDAY 29TH JUNE

In this example, the camera following the car as it speeds down the street is a shot that borrows its meaning from fictional genres such as the crime-thriller. This example shows a particular type of reconstruction of violent acts which occurs often in the crime stories.

The second most frequent category in the analysis of the most detailed level of the coding frame is **sickness**. That is, it concerns medical discourse. This is quite a different theme to that of **danger** and this supports the theoretical expectation that representations of madness on British television will be diverse, mobile and even contradictory. The medical stories occur in the general context of home affairs items.

It was stated in the methodology chapter that some of the videotaped material contains only incidental reference to mental health. This is the case with three major medical stories. They concern government targets for improving the nation's health. There are several such targets and only one of them is concerned with mental health. The stories report each of the targets in turn including, of course, the mental health one. This means that many of the units coded under **sickness** are concerned with physical ill-health. There may be a danger that data of this kind and the coding procedures used overemphasise the role of medical discourse in relation to mental distress in the sample. At the same time, and as emphasised in the methodology chapter, locating mental health problems in the

discourse of such heavily medical stories does place it squarely within representations of health and illness. The mental health target in these stories borrows medical meaning from the context of the items in which it is situated. These stories will be returned to below.

The third category to which a significant number of units is assigned is that of **neglect**. In the pilot, **neglect** was associated with community care stories and the agent of neglect was argued to be the government. In the present sample too, lack of care is represented as the fault of institutions. This time the institutions are prisons, Young Offenders Institutions and psychiatric units. In the prison stories there is a much closer link between crime, violence and neglect. Violent people are not properly cared for, a violent atmosphere in institutions leads to disturbed behaviour and poor conditions are responsible for the unnecessary plight of mentally ill inmates in institutions. Lack of care in prisons seems to have the place that lack of care in the community did in the pilot but of course the change of institutional site also changes the signification.

It was said in the pilot that the plight of those for whom care has been denied evokes pity but it is a pity which is different from *sympathy* and may also involve negative feelings such as disgust. This would be applicable to stories of young offenders who self-harm of which there are three in the sample. There may be some residual pity but the viewer is also likely to say "We are not like that, on the margins of society, cutting our wrists in prison cells".

Something needs to be said about the **help** classification. It is not a prominent category but some of the instances have a particular relation to **neglect** stories. In the context of poor care, officials sometimes promise improvements and help to come. There is then a



counterpoint between **help** and **neglect**. Often the promises of help in one frame are rendered rather hollow by evidence of neglect in the frames preceding or following. The coding frame by itself cannot capture this but an example can illustrate the point.

VISUAL	VERBAL
Interior of prison roof, pan down, W/A	The report says too many prisoners were mentally disturbed and should have been in hospital. It lists a catalogue of
Woodwork shop W/A	faults expressing particular concern about the kitchen
Another shot same, men, MW	which was described as filthy and unhygienic
Man sanding wood, MW	producing poor food.
Governor CU	We are installing integral sanitation right the way through the prison, all the wings will be refurbished, better facilities have been provided already for visits and for education, we have the workshops up and running. There's a limit to what we can do. We will do what we can.

#### BBC1, NEWSROOM SOUTHEAST, FRIDAY 22ND MAY

The first four frames in this example are categorised as **neglect** and the last one as **help**. Given what has gone before, whether the help is credible is open to question. Clearly, this issue is not addressed in the content analysis but has to be made more qualitatively.

What of the categories with a low incidence? Again this shows what is absent in the data set and how this absence structures meaning. **Success** hardly figures in these stories and neither does **cope**. **Comedy** is completely absent. This supports what was found in the pilot. The news items dwell on the negative - **danger**, **sickness** and **neglect** - although

the possibility of positive representations will be raised below.

The categories **strange** and **maniac** are virtually absent in the data. This departs from what was found in the pilot. It also raises difficulties for some of what has been said about Otherness. Together with **danger** these are the unsafe categories in terms of which we would expect the Other to be provisionally anchored. We must wait for the analysis of drama to see whether these proposed instantiations of Otherness are absent there too.

In Chapter 3, it was anticipated that television portrayals of madness would be overwhelmingly negative. The patterns of presence and absence of meanings in the data supports this. There were two slightly positive stories - one about a job scheme for people with mental health problems and one about a young man who had been through a psychiatric institution and was now trying to save it from closure. Even here, however, the body of the reporting focuses on the negative and in the latter case, on violence.

The other story that is not entirely negative is the case of a man who shot the lorry driver who killed his son in a road accident. Despite the fact that he clearly did obtain a shotgun and shoot the lorry driver in the stomach he was acquitted on all charges. The jury were moved by his plight and the viewer is invited to participate in this in the broadcasts. Nonetheless, the semantic field is one of violence associated with poor mental health caused by violence at a previous time.

### **Explanation**

The next narrative element to be examined is that of 'explanation'. Table 6.6 overleaf gives the frequencies.

What is evident from Table 6.6 is that there is a very low incidence in general of explanatory frames in the sample. The units assigned to these categories account for only 3.6% of the total. It should be said that 'explanation' is quite tightly defined in the coding frame. Nevertheless, the results are surprising when we consider that the news presents itself as factual and explanatory. John Birt, the Director General of the BBC, speaks of the 'mission to explain'. But there is very little explanation around the issue of mental health. Instead, in the mental health news sample, there is a very strong emphasis on narrative description. The news dwells upon recounting, describing and reconstructing but not upon explaining events involving mad people. For example, in terms of violent crime there is very little signification of the 'bad *because* mad' kind. The emphasis on description rather constructs the meaning structure '*not only* bad *but also* mad'.

Category	Frequency
Stress/Trauma	15
Medical	0
Insanity	5
Neglect	1
Miscellaneous	4
Total	25

*Table 6.6: Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Explanation for the mental health news sample.*

The only category with a significant incidence is that concerning trauma and stress. This

appeared in a story about a man who shot a lorry driver who had killed his son by reckless driving. The man was in turn described as obsessed with the death, suffering from 'abnormal grief reaction' and driven to violence because of the trauma and stress resulting from the killing. In the whole mental health news sample, this story is the only instance where a mental health *expert* plays a major explanatory role in the reporting. And this expert is a psychologist rather than a psychiatrist. This story is the only one in the whole mental health news sample where concerted explanation has a role.

There are, however, two other appearances by mental health experts. One is a psychiatric nurse accused of multiple rape and the other is a psychiatrist accused of misleading the courts in a major terrorism case. Here these 'experts' do not have an explanatory function but are themselves part of the criminal semantic context in which people with mental health problems are portrayed in the news. This will be returned to in the Discussion.

## **Resolution**

We turn now to the categories of resolution. It will be recalled that resolution can be present or absent in the sense that social harmony can be restored or not. 30 units were coded as resolution being absent and 20 as present. This poses problems for narrative theory since it means that social harmony is, at the end of a story, more often absent than present. Table 6.7 overleaf gives the figures.

It can be seen from Table 6.7 that law and order preoccupies the resolution units. This is what would be expected given the very strong link between madness and violent crime which has been revealed throughout this chapter. In the law and order category, there are twice as many instances of a continuing disruption of social harmony as there are of a return to social harmony. In other words, a high proportion of crime stories lack narrative

Category	Resolution	Resolution
	Absent	Present
Law and Order	14	7
Sickness / Health	5	2
Neglect / Support	1	5
Failure / Success	3	5
Miscellaneous	7	1
Total	30	20

*Table 6.7: Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Resolution for the mental health news sample.*

closure. This is partly accounted for by the running story described above but this still leaves some news items which conclude with continuing problems for law and order. People are not generally restored to mental health on television news. Although the numbers are small, we can say that a positive resolution in the realm of sickness and health is rare. For instance there was a story, broadcast on both channels, about an anorexic girl who was not to be helped with her psychological problems but was to be force fed by judicial decree. Home affairs stories can lack narrative closure just as much as crime ones. The two stories which complete narrative closure are those of the Government's health targets.

The situation in respect of the discourses of neglect and support is the reverse of that for

health and sickness. Stories can end with a situation of personal or institutional support and help. However, these are stories which conclude with promises of improvement in the institutional conditions which have been criticised in the body of the story. Although the promises speak of a return to harmony, they have to be set against what was said earlier about the believability of the resolution. Again, these can be crime stories or home affairs stories. An example of this kind of story was given above and it should also be pointed out that support is provided by institutions and not by mentally distressed people themselves.

In Table 6.7 instances of success slightly outweigh instances of failure but the gap is too small to say anything significant with such numbers. It is perhaps interesting that there is as much reference to success and failure at the conclusion of stories as there is in the body of them (see Table 6.5). Two of these stories (three units) do indeed include positive representations of people with mental health problems. From 43 items, only these two alleviate the diet of negative representations. They will be dealt with at greater length in the Discussion chapter.

The category of 'miscellaneous', where 7 stories lack narrative closure, includes the three international stories about war crimes where 'what really happened' is presented as a continuing mystery.

Of course, stories can finish without coming to any conclusion at all. It should not be supposed that just because a story finishes it comes within the category of 'resolution'. That would be a circular argument. For example, stories can 'end' with a description. This is a matter of overall narrative structure which will be considered shortly. Before this, the results of multiple coding will be presented.

## Multiple Coding

This section of the chapter looks at the camera frames which were allocated more than one code. It will describe the patterns of meaning and the concordances which are to be found in the data.

Let me begin with the percentage of times that the category of **danger** is combined with **law** at the level of the camera frame. 51.18% of units signifying **danger** also make reference to **law**. This high proportion is exactly what we would expect given that we know that the violence in these stories occurs in the context of violent *crime*. This was shown in Table 6.4. A high proportion of the remaining **danger** units occur in stories about violent crime, whilst the actual unit does not refer to legal or police procedures. However, the category of **danger** does sometimes appear in 'home affairs' stories. For instance, there is a story about a psychotherapy centre for young people which is under threat of closure. One of the clients speaks about his involvement in violence. Although this is a 'success story', the dominant discourse is that of **neglect** and so we can see that two disparate significations are combined.

63.5% of units which are coded **neglect** also make reference to **law**. Again we would expect this high proportion since we know from Table 4 that these stories mostly concern prison conditions. As with **danger** there are units which signify **neglect** in the context of an item about prison conditions but which have no reference to **law** as such. And again, there is some reference to **neglect** which has nothing to do with legal matters. The story just mentioned is an example and there are also examples of poor conditions in psychiatric hospitals.

The two forms of double coding just analysed make up the bulk of units which are multiply coded. They account for 127 units and in addition there are 61 more units where multiple coding seemed appropriate. Table 6.8 overleaf gives the results. **Danger** and **law** have been combined in Table 6.8 because of the close association found already and because otherwise the numbers would be too small to be meaningful.

The most frequent combination in the sample is **danger/law** and **sickness** and these tend to be of two types. One is the invocation of psychological treatment in the context of violent crime and this mostly occurs in the lorry driver story. The other type of combination occurs when there is a health issue and the law is relevant. There are two examples of this in the data (one story was broadcast on both channels so there are three items). One of these stories concerns legally enforceable treatment for anorexia and the other is about possible Mental Health Act intervention in the case of an HIV positive man who insists on being promiscuous. Here mental health problems are circumscribed by law in a non-criminal context and this reinforces the involvement of legal procedures in the case of those designated mentally ill.

**Danger/law** combined with **distress** occurs often in the story of the man who shot the lorry driver who killed his son. This is also the story that accounted for the preponderance of stress/trauma explanations which clearly are close in meaning to **distress**. **Distress** can also be mentioned when a person is threatening or carrying out violence to self at the same time as violence to others. One such man in one unit was described as 'ranting and raving' as he threatened to kill his wife and commit suicide.



<b>Codes</b>	<b>No of Units</b>
<b>Danger/Law with Sickness</b>	20
<b>Danger/Law with Distress</b>	17
<b>Danger/Law with Obsess</b>	4
<b>Neglect with Sickness</b>	9
<b>Distress with Sickness</b>	5
<b>Other</b>	6

*Table 6.8: Frequency distribution of multiple codes for the mental health news sample.*

**Neglect with sickness** tends to combine conditions of institutional neglect with reference to poor mental health, self-harm and depression, as well as physical illness. This combination occurred in stories of poor conditions in prisons and in psychiatric hospitals. It was often possible to make a further coding of **distress**.

Stories as a whole were also analysed for the presence of multiple codes. Stories were counted as containing multiple codes if more than 20% of the codes were different from the dominant one. The dominant code, defined at the lowest level of the coding frame, was that which appeared most often. Only disparate codes were included so the co-presence of **danger** and **law** or **neglect** and **law** did not count as a multiply coded story. **Neutral** and **other** codings were excluded from the analysis. So, for example, if a story had 10 units coded **sickness** and three units coded **danger** then it would be counted as having multiple codes. However, if only two units were coded **danger** it would be

counted as an internally consistent story.

Twenty out of the forty three news stories were counted as having multiple codes. It can be argued that this is a high proportion. Although I did not analyse them, I would suggest that, say, political stories are highly internally consistent in terms of their significations. They could be argued to be organised according to Moscovici's (1994) concept of 'canonic themes'. Again, this suggestion is borne out by Graber's (1988) analysis of political media which was discussed in Chapter 4.

At the same time, a small measure of control can be introduced here. The three stories about Government health targets were largely internally consistent in their representation of illness - nearly every code in the story was sickness. They conveyed a wholly medical representation and mental illness here was located in that semantic field. Further, where other codes did appear they tended to be positive. The stories offered advice as to what to do to stay healthy. Indeed, the one condition where no positive advice was given was that of mental illness. Here the visual and verbal representation posited poor mental health as intractable when compared with physical illness. Although three is a small number, it suggests that medical stories are more internally consistent and less multiple in their meanings than stories which *focus* on psychiatric conditions. They also have a positive dimension in the form of suggested self-help. Two of them further showed narrative closure. Clearly, a bigger sample would be needed to show whether this was of any significance.

Examples of multiple meanings within a single story have been described already. So, the story of the psychotherapy unit that was to be closed down includes units coded **distress**, units coded **danger** and **law**, units coded **help** and units coded **success**. It combines these

units into a meaningful story but at the same time reinforces the impression that mentally distressed young people are involved in violent crime. The prison stories also tell a coherent tale of how neglect and violence beget violence and can lead to behaviour symptomatic of poor mental health. But again, it brings together **danger** and **neglect** in a way that spices the squalor of poor conditions with the drama of self-harm and Otherness. We have also seen the role of the **help** classification in some of these stories.

Whether at the level of the camera frame or at the level of the individual story, multiple codes usually tell meaningful tales. However, I have tried to show that the combining of multiple codes often involves the use of disparate categories or discourses such that the stabilisation of meaning around mental health is difficult. Is this person sick or dangerous? Is this young offender distressed, violent or in need of better care? Why is a mentally disordered person in prison? Is psychiatry about illness or control? Who is the expert here? The way that mental illness is made to signify means that it slips between various discourses and fixity of signification is difficult. There is a tension between story forms and contents which seek to anchor madness and subdue it and those which leave the meaning of madness at the level of an 'open text'. As expected, this means that the Otherness of the mad person resists safe classification at least some of the time.

### **THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE STORIES**

This part of the investigation analyses the structure of the mental health news stories using the narrative theory outlined in Chapter 4. My theory is that to the extent that madness is anchored on British television, this occurs through the structure as much as the content of the stories. The structure of the news item is examined by considering the narrative element with which it begins, the elements which make up the body of the story and the nature of the unit or units with which it concludes. The results of this investigation are

given in Table 6.9 but before this the codes for the table will be explained. It should be noted that there were no elements in category A1 which represents neutral scene-setting.

**A2/B1/D1:** Disruptive scene-setting followed by a majority of narrative description in the present followed by lack of resolution.

**A2/B1/D2:** As above but concluding with the restoration of social harmony. This is the classical narrative sequence.

**A2/B2/D1:** Disruptive scene-setting followed by a majority of elements in the reconstruction mode followed by lack of return to social harmony.

**A2/B2/D2:** As above but concluding with the restoration of social harmony.

**Other:** Any other sequence of narrative elements.

It can be seen from Table 6.9 overleaf that the commonest narrative structure is to begin with a disruption of social harmony, move to a description of events in the present and conclude with an ending which continues to emphasise social disruption. A2/B1/D1 sequences are three times as common as A2/B1/D2 sequences. This relative lack of narrative closure is not what would be expected from narrative theory. From the point of view of representations of madness on the news, there are two possibilities. Coming back firstly to the theory of social representations, it is quite feasible that stories which lack a psychologically comfortable ending are familiar to modern viewers. Madness, then, would be anchored in terms of a modern, familiar story form. This would be particularly true of running stories but not only of these. On the other hand, it was seen in Chapter 4 that classical narrative structure has a psychological reality.

The second possibility is that lack of narrative closure may mean that anchoring is more provisional, more mobile and less stable or satisfactory than it would be with the classical

structure. This would support the idea of Otherness in the sense of madness resisting a fixed classification. The presence of problems in law and order also supports the finding of **danger** as highly significant in the news transcript.

There are eleven items where the body of the story uses a preponderance of reconstruction to tell its tale. All but three of these are crime stories and they use the device of reconstructing a crime as the main body of the report. As with the pilot, these stories sometimes use the conventions of drama especially in the visual dimension. This was seen in the example given above. In these stories, there are many shots of police officers searching deserted ground and police tape marking off scenes of crime. There is one episode of library film of a woman who killed two children being interviewed at the time of the crime as she pretended to have tried to save them. This also occurred in the pilot.

Sequence of Elements	Frequency
A2/B1/D1	17
A2/B1/D2	6
A2/B2/D1	6
A2/B2/D2	5
Other	9
Total	43

*Table 6.9: Frequency distribution of narrative sequences for the mental health news sample.*

There is, however, nothing as blatant in this sample as the story in the pilot where an actor reconstructed the actions of a rapist and murderer.

I would argue that the narrative trope of crime reconstruction is familiar to British television viewers and it is familiar in its borrowing of the conventions of fictional television. It is a structure in terms of which madness is anchored onto the familiar on British television. Nonetheless it is an anchoring in terms of dangerous categories and so carries overtones of Otherness. It can be argued that the lack of narrative closure in some of these stories intensifies this. For instance, a trial may fail to establish a motive for a violent crime or it may be unclear whether a criminal will actually face charges.

Nine items do not conform to the A/B/D sequence I have been discussing. Six of these items start with a conclusion - their structure is D/B/D. Now, it is sometimes extremely difficult to distinguish between scene-setting in the news and the presentation of a news conclusion at the start of a story. News stories usually begin with a summary of what is to come. The question then is whether the summary leaves open what is to follow and, as it were, whets the televisual appetite or whether the summary foreshadows the ending and closes the structure off from the very beginning. Consider the following examples.

#### VISUAL

News Presenter, MW

#### VERBAL

A father went on trial today accused of trying to murder the partially sighted lorry driver who killed his twelve year old son in a road accident. The court heard how Steven Owen became obsessed with taking his revenge on KT after the man served an 18 month prison sentence for causing death by reckless driving. James Cameron reports.

BBC1 NEWSROOM SOUTHEAST, MONDAY 18TH MAY

## VISUAL

News Presenter MW, pic KH CU

## VERBAL

Within the last hour, an escaped prisoner who had vowed to kill a police officer and threatened his family and friends, has given himself up. KH walked back into the prison in Buckinghamshire that he had escaped from two weeks ago. A massive police search began this morning after a man H knew was found shot dead at an isolated spot in Dorset.

## ITV, NEWS AT TEN, THURSDAY 21ST MAY

My argument is that the first of these extracts presents an 'open' start to the story with many strands set for development. It 'scene sets' a story which is to come. The second extract, on the other hand, presents a finished episode and the viewer is invited to follow the story only to discover a conclusion which he or she has already been told. It is also a conclusion where law and order is presented as being restored. These distinctions are not easy, but it is important that we should avoid circularity and not assume that because a news story 'starts' somewhere this necessarily coincides with the ideas of narrative theory.

It is clear that the narrative structure of news stories varies and varies more than would be expected from the strictures of narrative theory. Again, the narrative conventions used in crime reporting are not the same as those used for home affairs although there is overlap. Crime reporting often uses reconstruction whereas the home affairs stories use reportage in all but one case.

There are two possibilities which need to be addressed in the Discussion. One is whether the types of narrative sequence can be argued to be sufficiently limited to mean that all are familiar to viewers. The second possibility is that we are here faced with *multiple*

*categories of narrative* in the same way as multiple categories of content were found in the previous analysis.

### **VISUAL ASPECTS OF TELEVISION NEWS**

I have already briefly mentioned some aspects of the visual dimension of the mental health news sample in discussing the narrative element of reconstruction. However, the analysis to be presented here looks only at some specific aspects of the visual dimension of news stories which make reference to mental health. What I shall do is examine the ways in which different categories of people are filmed on the news. The reader may have noticed codes such as 'CU' or 'MW' in the extracts given above. These codes refer to the type of camera shots explained in Chapter 5 and my hypothesis is that there will be differences in the type of shot used for filming different categories of people.

The unit of analysis here is again the camera shot. This poses the problem that there can be more than one person photographed at once. It was therefore decided to set up a list of priorities in terms of which characters are chosen for coding. So, the first priority is the person designated mentally ill and that person is coded regardless of who else is in the frame and others in the frame are not coded. The second priority is news personnel and they are chosen for this because they are the 'anchor', both visual and verbal, on British television news. This means that if a reporter is with someone who is mentally disturbed, that person is coded but if they are with any other character, the reporter is coded. The remainder of the list, in order of priority, is: experts, legal personnel and other characters. Shots which show only the natural or the built environment are coded 'environment' and not distinguished in terms of camera angle. And similarly, for the category of 'other' which includes artifacts such as computer screens and guns.



The data refer both to live shots and photographs but not to drawings which are coded as 'other'.

Table 6.10 overleaf gives the results of this analysis. The figures are in percentages for each group of characters.

It was stated in Chapter 4 that certain camera shots can be argued to have a 'scrutinising' function. The extreme close up and the close up dwell on the features of the character and emphasise emotion. The tracking shot follows the character as he or she goes about their business giving the impression of 'watching' him or her. These shots are heavily over-represented in the filming of mentally distressed people. They account for two thirds of the shots in which these characters figure. This means that mentally distressed people are mainly filmed using voyeuristic and invasive techniques. By contrast, news personnel are never filmed with any of these shots and they account for less than 15% of the photographing of experts and legal personnel. This difference and contrast carries meaning, separating the mentally ill characters from others in the visual mode. Other characters have a slightly higher incidence of extreme close up and close up shots and this is largely accounted for by the camera angles used to film victims of crime and their families. Victims of crime too are sometimes filmed using scrutinising shots because of the emotionality of their position.

Type of Shot	Mad People	News Personnel	Experts	Legal Personnel	Other Chars	Environ.	Other
ECU	8.2	00.0	00.0	00.0	1.6		
CU	20.6	00.0	11.8	2.9	10.0		
MCU	23.3	27.4	58.8	25.7	23.0		
MW	2.7	67.1	29.4	27.1	32.3		
W/A	11.0	5.5	00.0	35.7	22.2		
Tracking	34.3	00.0	00.0	8.6	10.9		
Total N	73	73	17	70	248	139	77

Table 6.10: Percentage distribution of type of shot by type of character for the mental health news sample.

The 'neutral' camera angles are the medium close up and the medium wide shots. These are used to film news presenters and news reporters and so carry the authority of the news institution which presents itself as impartial. These are also the shots used to film experts who are equally meant to be neutral. In addition, these shots account for more than half the frames for legal personnel and other characters but only one quarter of the frames for those designated mentally ill. The medium wide shot is virtually absent for people with mental health problems. This is the other side of the contrast pointed out above. The reader can check this contrast with even the very limited illustrative material given earlier.

The wide angle shot allows many characters and the details of an event to be shown. It is like the tracking shot but the camera is static. Police officers and events concerning the police are often filmed wide angle. For instance, there are shots of police officers questioning people in lines of cars. Other characters are also filmed relatively frequently with the wide angle shot and what this means is that groups of people are shown. Mentally distressed people are less often photographed wide-angle and this is because they are mostly filmed alone. The frequent use of the extreme close up and close up shot emphasises their solitude and isolation from other people. Technically speaking, there is no room for anyone else in the frame so they appear isolated, even dislocated, from social life.

It should perhaps be pointed out that the relatively high frequency of camera frames which focus on the environment includes many shots of court and prison buildings. This adds to the findings above about the focus on matters of crime and penal institutions.

This analysis has shown that different photographic conventions are used to film mentally ill people and other categories of people. The mad person is scrutinised, followed and

filmed alone whereas many other categories borrow from the news institution the camera angles of neutrality and authority. Close up photographs and some live film of violent criminals are frequent when the verbal reference is to danger and the two modes thus intensify each other.

As has been said already the *difference* in the photographic conventions for filming mentally distressed people and for filming other characters is a potent conveyor of meaning. The visual grammar of the news sets the meanings of madness against the meanings of authority, neutrality and impartiality. This is so whether the mad person is a danger or a victim and so the visual mode intensifies the signification of Otherness.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND THE QUESTION OF CONTROLS**

This chapter has demonstrated several things. First, there is a heavy emphasis in the mental health news sample on danger and violent crime. This was shown in the comparison of item contexts, the content analysis and the examination of narrative structure. Madness is anchored on the news in terms of the category of **danger**. Here madness would appear to satisfy the conditions for Hall et al's (1978) cardinal news value. Secondly, however, there are other discourses at work in the sample. One of these is medicine and another which is prominent is that of institutional neglect. There are then multiple categories of representation and two of them are 'unsafe'. This supports the argument made in previous chapters that madness is represented on British television as a form of Otherness because it resists safe categorisation. The anchoring of madness is a complex question and this was seen especially in the analysis of multiple coding.

Thirdly, it was found that there are, in the mental health news sample, multiple types of narrative sequence and that this poses problems for narrative theory's notion of a single

universal story form. It would be tempting to argue that this multiplicity, and especially the lack of narrative closure, also contributes to madness being an 'open text', a social object which cannot be pinned down and captured in news discourse. Once again, anchoring in a stable structure is resisted. However, there is a major problem here. This analysis does not have a control sample of items from the news as a whole which is analysed in terms of narrative sequence. It is entirely possible that the whole of the news has a variety of narrative forms and that this is not specific to the representation of madness. The argument, then, that the depiction of madness on British television news resists incorporation into a single story form has to be set against the possibility that other social objects are also variously narrativised.

The analysis of visual representation did contain the possibility of a 'control' in the form of other characters who appear on the news. It was found that mentally distressed people are photographed differently from other groups. This difference takes the form of scrutinising shots for those designated mentally ill compared to authoritative shots for some other groups of characters. It was stated earlier that the concept of objectification has an affinity with the visual analysis of television and that the theory of social representations is the only current social psychological theory which can deal with this. Television photography produces an 'iconic' image of the mad person. This icon is of a person who is scrutinised and isolated and it is sometimes used to intensify danger. It is set in contrast to the authoritative image of news personnel, experts and, to some extent, those responsible for carrying out the law.

As well as the controls in the visual analysis, this chapter has attempted to build two other controls into the investigation. One is robust and the other less so. Firstly, the investigation of item types compared the mental health news sample with the general news

sample and differences were found in the concentration of item types in news categories. Since the control sample was four weeks output of four news programmes, totalling more than 1000 items, this finding is a strong one.

Secondly, it was possible to compare three stories dealing with Government health targets with the rest of the sample. These were definitely 'medical' stories and mental health was only part of the representation. It was found that these stories were highly internally consistent in using a single discourse - that of medicine. They also had a positive dimension. This can be contrasted with the multiple and negative meanings found in other stories more centrally focused on madness. Whilst paying due attention to the small numbers, it can be suggested that stories which concentrate on physical illness, and so possibly other types of item, do not exhibit the multiplicity of meaning found in mental health stories.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **MRS BISHOP'S STORY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

During the period of recording, the soap opera *Coronation Street* featured one of its long-standing characters experiencing a mental breakdown. She was already behaving oddly at the start of the videotaping period and this strange behaviour intensified over a five week period. Eventually she was admitted to a psychiatric hospital for a brief period with a diagnosis of clinical depression. The character was all but recovered by the time the recording of data ended.

The character who is central to this story is called Mrs Emily Bishop and this chapter starts with a brief account of her breakdown. It then moves on to present some initial statistics. There follows a content analysis of the data transcript. The final part of the chapter looks at visual representations. This examination of visual images is both more extensive than the visual analysis of the news and is also different in some of its details.

#### **MRS BISHOP'S BREAKDOWN**

Of all the British soap operas, *Coronation Street* is described by those who write about it (eg Dyer et al 1981; Geraghty 1991) as the most committed to the conventions of British realism. These conventions were described in Chapter 4. People I talked to whilst Mrs Bishop's story was being broadcast expressed a great deal of concern about its 'realisticness'.

The characters in *Coronation Street* tend to stay in the show for a very long time so

viewers become quite familiar with them. This is certainly true of Mrs Bishop who has been in the programme for more than twenty years. Marion Jordan (1981) was able to describe her in the course of a categorisation of characters in *Coronation Street*. She belongs to the group of single (widowed) and eligible women, middle aged but strong in personality. Livingstone (1990) showed that viewers see Mrs Bishop as highly moral.

As well as this, Mrs Bishop is one of the few middle class characters in the show. She is known for her charity work and her unfailing desire to help others. Sometimes she overdoes this. She is an active and sociable person although she has not had a happy life. It is important to be aware of Mrs Bishop's usual persona because this provides the context in which her changing behaviour is made to mean. So, when she begins to withdraw and engage in strange activities, people become worried. In particular, her lodger, Mr Sugden, is most aware of the changes and becomes very concerned. Mr Sugden is to be the other main character in the story of Mrs Bishop's breakdown. The more bizarre her behaviour becomes, the more he tries to help her. However, other characters in the Street see this as interfering and controlling and start to blame him for her condition. Mr Sugden is not well-liked in the Street. Eventually he manages to persuade them of the gravity of the situation when she flees her home leaving the front door open, with no money and no belongings and wearing a pair of pink bedroom slippers. She is then admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Upon her discharge, and after some initial awkwardness, the neighbours rally round and Mrs Bishop begins her reintegration into Coronation Street.

During her period of mental distress, Mrs Bishop is persuaded by a businessman of known dubious integrity to lend him £10,000 to start up a new concern. Mr Sugden is horrified by this and insists that she do something about it once she is out of hospital. This she



resists and she refuses to talk about it. Her lodger then tells another character who, equally horrified, confronts the businessman. This is the one theme in Mrs Bishop's breakdown which was outstanding when the period of recording ended.

Throughout the time that this story was being broadcast, I was in regular contact with some devoted viewers of *Coronation Street*. When Emily Bishop began to behave oddly, there was some disagreement amongst them as to what was happening. Everyone recognised that their familiar character was acting in an unfamiliar way. However, some people thought she was developing Alzheimer's disease and others thought she was having a breakdown. Of the latter, some put it down to Mr Sugden's controlling behaviour (as the characters themselves were to do) and others to different deleterious events in her life. Again, some thought she was physically ill. It has been argued that television drama often offers its viewers puzzles or enigmas in this way and thus engages the play of multiple meanings. At the same time, from the point of view of the theory of social representations, we have an inversion. The familiar becomes unfamiliar in the figure of Emily Bishop and her strange behaviour.

### **THE SAMPLE AND INITIAL STATISTICS**

*Coronation Street* is broadcast three times a week for half an hour with one commercial break. It is on at the peak viewing time of 7.30pm and is the most popular British soap opera. It and its personalities are habitually featured in printed media concerned with television. Mrs Bishop's breakdown was regularly watched by between 14 million and 19 million viewers.

The programme typically runs several storylines concurrently. Sequentially, an episode

of the programme criss-crosses between these storylines. A single appearance of a storyline I shall call a 'strand'. It is easy to see where one strand ends and a new one begins because nearly always there is a change in the characters featured. Once it was realised that Mrs Bishop's story was relevant to the question of representations of madness on television, it was decided that all strands in which she appeared should be transcribed. Her appearance, whether the story referred to mental distress or not, was the criterion. In the event, virtually all strands which featured her carried forward the narrative of her breakdown.

There were two additional criteria for transcription and thus inclusion in the data set. First, since he was so central to the story, all strands in which Mr Sugden appeared were transcribed. Again, these strands mostly included reference to Mrs Bishop and so moved the narrative on. Finally, any strand in which other characters *discussed* Mrs Bishop and her predicament was also included in the data. It has been noted by others (Fiske 1987; Geraghty 1991) that much of the action in soap opera has *gossip* as its motor. Often this gossip is 'redundant' because it repeats what the viewer already knows. This redundancy is said to be important to the way soap opera is watched but this point need not detain us here. Suffice it to say that the characters in the programme gossiped about Emily Bishop and their discussions were transcribed.

There are 564 camera frames in this data. This compares to 697 for the news in a transcript of virtually identical length. It can be argued, then, that *Coronation Street* is visually slower-moving than the news. This is perhaps not surprising given the use of the codes and conventions of British realism. What would be surprising would be if this applied to the rest of drama as well. The conclusion would have to be that *factual* television is the most visually complex and exciting of all the genres studied.

There are altogether 85 strands in the transcript. This is twice the number of news stories which means that individual soap opera strands are shorter than individual news items. Indeed, some strands are very brief and comprise just one camera frame. Sometimes a relevant strand follows on from a previous one with just the interruption of another storyline. These tend not to have narrative beginnings and ends. However, others do have a recognisable narrative structure and there is also the issue of the narrative form of the tale as it develops over several episodes.

There are 11 hours of *Coronation Street* broadcasts in the data, excluding advertisements. Mrs Bishop's story accounts for 1 hour and 22 minutes making it 11.36% of the soap opera's time. The relatively low proportion is because, as is always the case with soap opera, several stories were running concurrently. In the next chapter I shall compare the time proportion with other dramatic forms.

### **THE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

This content analysis presentation will replicate the format used for the news. Firstly, results will be presented for the most detailed level of the coding frame. Multiple codes and multiple meanings will also be considered at this stage. Following this, the narrative element of explanation will be examined and then the narrative element of resolution. Finally, overall narrative structure or sequence will be investigated.

#### **The third level of abstraction**

Table 7.1 gives the results for the most detailed level of the coding frame sub-divided by the two narrative elements of scene setting (disruptive) and narrative description (present). As would be expected, there is no element of reconstruction in soap opera. It is a genre which happens in the present.

	Danger	Law	Obsess	Strange	Maniac	Sick	Neglect	Distress	Cope	Success	Help	Comedy	. Victim	Misc
Scene Set (Disr.)	0	0	0	9	0	0	1	2	0	0	9	0	0	0
Narrative Descr.	1	1	0	70	6	39	7	54	5	3	99	0	53	55
Total	1	1	0	79	6	39	8	56	5	3	108	0	53	55
Total % (N=564)				14.0	1.1	6.9	1.4	9.9			19.2		9.4	9.8

*Table 7.1: Distribution for detailed content categories subdivided by two narrative elements for Mrs Bishop's story.*

Table 7.1 shows that the most frequent code for the data is **help**. It accounts for nearly one fifth of all frames (note that the denominator is the total number of frames in the transcript and not the total in Table 7.1). What this means is that Mrs Bishop is seen as in need of help and people do try to assist her. She is represented, at least some of the time, as needy. In the scenes leading up to her hospitalisation, it is mostly Mr Sugden who reacts in this way. During her period in hospital, the doctor is represented as helpful although this depiction is very brief and amounts to only one strand. After her discharge, the whole Street is portrayed as helping her to get back to normal. Indeed, more than half the **help** categorisations pertain to the period after her discharge although, in terms of time, this accounts for about one quarter of the transcript. At the same time, although infrequently, Mrs Bishop herself is depicted as returning to her former helpful self. As will be shown more systematically when discussing visual images, there are differences in the representations of Emily Bishop as between the period leading up to her hospitalisation and the period after her discharge.

The second most common substantive category in Table 7.1 is that of **strange**. This representation is almost entirely confined to the pre-hospitalisation depictions. Mrs Bishop does **strange**, out of the ordinary, things. For instance, several times she is portrayed sorting through pictures of dead people in semi-darkness. This behaviour is not floridly bizarre (see the pilot) but its power stems from the fact that it is completely out of character. Other characters comment on her **strange** actions. They are **strange** in themselves and **strange** for her. This is crucial to the viewers of the slow-moving, familiar soap opera that is *Coronation Street*. It shows the importance of understanding that meaning is contextual - it takes its significance from what we already know about Mrs Bishop. As stated, the **strange** codes disappear once she is out of psychiatric hospital and starts to return to her familiar role in the life of the Street. There follows a short

illustration of Mrs Bishop's **strange** behaviour.

VISUAL	VERBAL
Photographs spread out on table, hands laying more, shadow	silence
Mrs B sitting at table laying out photographs, MW; Mr S in kitchen, shadow	Mr S: I'm just making a bit of supper Mrs B, do you fancy anything? (no response) Mrs B?
Mrs B CU, shadow	silence
Mr S MCU	silence
Mrs B CU, pan down to hands laying photographs on table, shadow	silence

#### ITV, CORONATION STREET, MONDAY 25TH MAY

As already indicated, the photographs in this episode are of characters in *Coronation Street* who have died. As well as the behaviour, the form of the strand, with its lack of talk on the part of the person being photographed, is extremely unusual in the soap opera and this is another reason for the **strange** codes. Filming in shadow during daylight hours is also uncommon. It is worth pointing out that Mr Sugden's offer of supper in this strand is coded **help** and this interaction between **strange** and **help** will be commented upon later.

Mrs Bishop is also represented as **distressed**. Sometimes **distress** and **strange** occur together as she becomes upset when another character - usually Percy Sugden - comments on her odd behaviour. It was often necessary to re-run tapes to pick this up as her **distress** was signalled in her tone of voice and demeanour. The following extract illustrates this counterpoint of representations. The dominant code in the first part of the strand is **strange** because the behaviour is completely out of character as well as being odd in itself. The dominant code in the second part of the strand is **distress** as she becomes

very upset at Mr Sugden's reaction to her.

## VISUAL

CU hands with cutlery box, cleaning cutlery, pan up to CU Mrs B's face

Mrs B cleaning cutlery, sitting MW, Mr S walks in and stands

Mrs B cleaning cutlery, MW

Mr S MCU

Mrs B gets up from table, MW

Mrs B and Mr S face each other across table, MW, she sitting, he standing

Mrs B CU

two facing each other across table, Mrs B sitting, Mr S standing, MW

cutlery box and Mrs B's hands

## VERBAL

silence

Mr S: You did that the other day

Mrs B: I know perfectly well what I did the other day, Mr S, thankyou

Mr S: Ah well, fair enough but it's not as if you use that much cutlery.

Mrs B: No, we don't very often hold a banquet, do we? But all the same, I like to keep the cutlery in order.

Mr S: But it was in order.

Mrs B: Mr S, will you find something else to occupy

you and leave me to do this my own way, thankyou.

Mr S: But I just can't see why it needs all doing again.

Mrs B (raised voice): What does it have to do with you?

Mr S: Well nothing I suppose.

Mrs B (upset): Right, exactly, nothing.

Mr S: Alright then, I'll say nothing.

Mrs B (very upset): You don't say nothing, you won't say nothing. Why can't I just sort out my cutlery without people constantly criticising

and interfering.

Mr S: Alright, alright, I'm going.

Mrs B CU	Mrs B (upset): Oh, now, look what you've made me do. Oh, I've got to start all over again now.
Mrs B's hands sorting cutlery	clink of cutlery.
Mr S MCU, shot lingers	clink of cutlery in background.

# ITV, CORONATION STREET, MONDAY 18TH MAY

We can also see in this extract the possibility for some viewers that it is indeed Mr Sugden's interference that is responsible for Mrs Bishop's **distress**. However, she also becomes extremely **distressed** when Mr Sugden prepares to take the advice of other characters and move out of her house. Although he is so concerned, others have told him that his behaviour is the root of the problem. At the point of his leaving they *both* become upset and in fact she persuades him to stay, saying weepily that he is her friend. In this strand, which space precludes showing, there is a counterpoint between **distress** and **help** about which more will be said later.

The **victim** story, which accounts for nearly 10% of total units, represents Mrs Bishop as vulnerable to the depredations of a character whose moral values have always been seen as questionable. This classification has something in common with the category of **neglect**, as discussed when considering the news. The story also interacts with **help** codings as other characters try to do something about what they see as an outrage. This partly explains why the **help** frames continue after she leaves hospital and indeed, one presumes, beyond the boundary of the data collection period.

Mrs Bishop is sometimes portrayed as **sick**. In fact, these representations often pertain to the concern of other characters for her physical health. Bodily illness is invoked as the



meaning of her condition. Depictions which make use of a psychiatric discourse are not frequent and this will be seen again when explanations are considered. We see only two doctors (and one doctor's receptionist) in the whole narrative and each of them appears only once. Of course, the fact of her being admitted to a psychiatric hospital as the climax of the first part of the story highlights the medical representation. However, even this does not go unquestioned as one character refers to it as the 'funny farm'.

There are certain categories of the coding frame which are never used or are used very infrequently. This was also true of the news but the specific categories of absence vary between the two genres. Although the coding frame functions well in both contexts there is some variation in the discourses that are put into play in each. So **danger** and **law** are virtually absent in the soap opera whereas they were dominant in the news. Mrs Bishop is not represented as in any way dangerous and in fact Mr Sugden brushes aside Mrs Bishop's only veiled reference to suicide. There is no involvement of the law although this could have been an option when she disappeared. It can be said that the Street tries to cope on its own terms as witness also the low involvement of doctors.

**Success** and **cope** are virtually absent in the soap opera just as they were in the news. Mrs Bishop has, in fact, been quite successful in her life and usually copes prodigiously but this cannot be represented whilst she is mentally disturbed. The category of **obsess** is also absent although it does crop up in multiple coding. Finally, there is a low incidence of the category of **maniac** - only slightly higher than for the news. This chiefly takes the form of slang used by other characters, usually unkindly, to talk about Emily Bishop's situation.

The category of **comedy** is also absent - there is nothing funny about Mrs Bishop's plight. This should not surprise us because we know already that **comedy** arose from preliminary coding of another genre - the drama data.

There are, then, three main discourses at work in the tale of Mrs Bishop's breakdown. They are **strangeness, distress and sickness**. For all of them there is the counterpoint of **help** as other characters, principally Mr Sugden, try to assist her. It would appear that these representations *compete* for control of the representation of madness as such. Their co-presence leads to questions. Is she ill - physically or mentally? What is the significance of this bizarre behaviour? Is she simply upset about something? As mentioned earlier, viewers regarded her behaviour as an enigma to be solved - Alzheimer's disease or depression? Mr Sugden or her sad life? Eventually there is a solution to these questions but before it there are five weeks of competing meanings to contend with both on and off screen. And even after the solution of the psychiatric admission not everything is semantically settled. After all, what kind of medicine is it that concentrates on cups of tea and never mentions medication or examinations?

I do not wish to overstate this point. Against it can be set the possibility that the interweaving of these various discourses tells a coherent story in soap opera terms. It is probably best to say that there is a tension between these two possibilities. On the one hand the story unfolds in a recognisable way but, on the other hand, it can be said that discourses do compete for control of the tale. There is a diversity of meanings, anchoring is unstable and meanings are protracted in their resistance to fixity. This can be seen also in the results of multiple coding to which I now turn.

### **Multiple coding**

The proportion of frames which were assigned multiple codes is low, standing at only 6.55% of the total frames in Table 1. This is less than for the news and may be accounted for by the slow-moving nature of *Coronation Street* and the way it dwells upon subjects.

The most common combination was **strange** with **help**. This is not surprising in the light of what has been said above. These frames represent instances where within a single camera shot Percy Sugden expresses concern at Mrs Bishop's bizarre behaviour and offers help. In a similar fashion, **help** is combined with **sickness** and with **distress**. These combinations of **help** with **strange**, **sickness** and **distress** support what we already know about this narrative. The three main representations of madness are on occasion combined with the frequently proffered **help**. **Strange** also intersects with **obsess** as Mrs Bishop's odd behaviour sometimes has this quality (see the extract on pages 211-212).

Interestingly, there are three occurrences of a triple combination. Of course, not much can be said on the basis of three frames but they are consistent with previous arguments because they take a single form. They combine **strange**, **distress** and **sick**. These are long shots where the three main representations can be argued to vie for control of the representation of madness at the same time as they attempt to tie the diverse significations into a coherent whole.

It is also possible for a single strand to combine representations. This was measured in the same way as for the news. If more than 20% of codes in a strand were different from the dominant one (where that existed) then the strand was counted as having multiple meanings. The strand reproduced on pages 211-212 is an example of multiple meanings - it combines **strange** and **distress**.

35 out of the 85 strands were assessed as having multiple codes. This figure is high when it is considered that some strands consisted of only one frame and others comprised exclusively **gossip**. The actual combinations that were found are in no way surprising given what has been said already. **Help** intersected with the other discourses first in the figure of Mr Sugden and then the rest of the Street. However, these combinations were more frequent before Mrs Bishop's hospitalisation. The other combinations were permutations of the themes of **strange/distress/sick**. This is consistent with what has been found for the transcript as whole - that these diverse significations are present in the data set as is clear from Table 7.1. It also supports the findings for multiple codes within an analytic unit - these varied meanings can be combined within a single frame. The structure of individual strands supports the argument that diverse significations exist in a space of tension where they combine to compete for the representation of madness as well as combining to tell a coherent tale.

### **Explanation**

We turn now to the narrative element of explanation and the results of this part of the content analysis can be found in Table 7.2 overleaf.

Table 7.2 is dominated by the **stress/trauma** discourse. This is equivalent to what was found for the news but the frequency is higher. However, it is still the case that explanation is a narrative element with a low incidence in this genre as it was in the news. It accounts for only 7% of total units. As with the news, description is the chief mode through which Mrs Bishop's story is told.

Category of Explanation	No.
Stress/Trauma	33
Medical	5
Insanity	1
Neglect	0
Other	0
Total	39

*Table 7.2: Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Explanation in Mrs Bishop's story.*

For many of the characters in *Coronation Street*, the source of Mrs Bishop's stress is Mr Sugden. He is felt by them to be interfering and controlling to a degree that puts intolerable pressure on her. Her strange behaviour is believed to be a result of his impossible personality and the viewer is engaged in this because Percy Sugden has a reputation for being impossible. This representation is most pronounced in the period leading up to the crisis of Mrs Bishop leaving home without any belongings. After this most, but not all, of the Street express guilt at having left him to cope on his own with a serious situation. At this point, a second **stress/trauma** discourse is brought into play. This refers to damaging events in Mrs Bishop's past life which are represented as having mounted up and caused her finally to break down. As one of my viewers put it, "a very nice lady who has had a very sad life".

As has been said several times, what is absent in a representation is just as important as

what is present. **Insanity and neglect** do not figure here as explanatory devices. Perhaps more significantly, there is only limited mention of **medical discourse**. Indeed, the mentions that do appear often refer to physical rather than mental health. There is something surprising here and it reinforces the limited and not altogether positive use that was made of psychiatric discourse and medical expertise in the news. We live in a culture where medicine, in the form of psychiatry, is supposed to be the harbinger of expertise about and institutional control over madness. Yet psychiatric categories and explanations are infrequently used to anchor mental distress in either the soap opera or the news sample that have been studied. This is an empirical finding that will be discussed later. For the moment it can be said that surely psychiatry is just as familiar a representational strategy as the popular, and quite recent, account of stress and trauma as the cause of mental breakdown. Why then is it relatively absent in these televisual representations?

### **Resolution**

The final part of this content analysis concerns the narrative element of resolution. Table 7.3 gives the results.

Inspection of Table 7.3 (and indeed of Table 7.1) shows that there must be many strands without a discernible ending (or beginning). There are 85 strands but only 38 'endings'. This will be returned to in a moment when narrative structure is considered.

Category	Resolution	Resolution
	Absent	Present
Law and Order	1	0
Sickness/Health	1	0
Neglect/Support	0	6
Failure/Success	3	1
Other	26	0
Total	31	7

*Table 7.3: Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Resolution in Mrs Bishop's story.*

What stands out from Table 7.3 is the high proportion of resolution elements which fall in the category of **resolution absent: other**. These account for the disproportionate number of elements which signify a lack of narrative closure. The units in this category are all of one type, are familiar to soap opera viewers and have been commented upon in the literature. They are a type of 'cliff hanger' where the camera lingers on the face of a character after the dialogue has ceased. Sometimes enigmatic in quality, they say to the viewer "what is going to happen next?".

The face upon which the camera most often lingers is that of Mr Sugden. It dwells on his bafflement when Mrs Bishop is behaving strangely and he has shown a concern rejected by her. Mr Sugden is puzzled and worried and, it can be argued, the viewer may

identify with the concern on his face even though he is not normally a particularly sympathetic character.

The categories of **resolution absent** indicate a lack of narrative closure to strands. There is a discernible ending but there is not a return to social harmony. Writers on soap opera (eg Fiske, 1987; Geraghty 1991; Kilborn 1992) have pointed out that the genre tends to consist in 'open texts' where stories weave in and out of each other, where there is a lack of closure and no definite conclusion. As one story draws to a close another starts in its interstices. So far, this analysis is in accord with these ideas and as far as soap opera is concerned it is unlikely that they are specific to representations of madness.

The six **resolution present: support** stories indicate that a restoration of social harmony is possible in *Coronation Street*. All these units occur at the ends of strands after Mrs Bishop is discharged from hospital. However, as stated, these endings are much less frequent than those which resist closure. This would seem a good point at which to extend these investigations by turning to the examination of narrative structure as such.

### **NARRATIVE STRUCTURE**

Each of the 85 strands was inspected in terms of the sequence of narrative elements which made it up. For this purpose, the most detailed level of the coding frame was ignored as was the number of times an element appeared in a strand. Table 7.4 overleaf shows the frequencies for a range of narrative sequences. The key to the codes was explained in the methodology chapter but for ease of exposition I shall briefly repeat them on the next page.



**A1:** Scene setting, neutral.

**A2:** Scene setting, disruptive.

**B1:** Narrative description in the present.

**B2:** Narrative description in the form of reconstruction of events.

**B3:** Neutral facts (the News) or gossip (drama).

**C:** Explanation

**D1:** Resolution - absence of social harmony

**D2:** Resolution - social harmony restored.

<b>Narrative Sequence</b>	<b>No.</b>
<b>A2/B1/D1</b>	13
<b>A2/B1/D2</b>	1
<b>A2/B1</b>	8
<b>B1/D1</b>	16
<b>B1/D2</b>	5
<b>B1 or B3 only</b>	39
<b>Other</b>	3
<b>Total</b>	85

*Table 7.4: Frequency distribution of types of narrative sequence in Mrs Bishop's story.*

The most frequent narrative 'structure' is that which consists of description or gossip only. This accounts for nearly half the strands. Some of these strands comprise a single camera shot and so there is no space for a narrative structure to develop. Other strands are made up principally of gossip of an inconsequential sort and yet others consist of dialogue and description with no discernible scene-setting or conclusion. The lack of structure in this data is consistent with the idea that much of the action in soap opera, of which *Coronation Street* is taken to be the epitome, has a quality of redundancy and repetitiveness. The relative absence of clear narrative form means that Mrs Bishop's story is told as a permeable or open text and this may pose difficulties for the hypothesis that narrative structure is an important means of anchoring meaning on television.

However, not all sequences lack form. The **A1/B1/D1** sequence was found to be the most frequent on the news and it is relatively frequent here. It is interesting that the same structure should appear in such supposedly distinct genres. The sequence **B1/D1** can be thought of as a fragment of the **A2/B1/D1** structure. It lacks the scene setting but narrative theorists take closure to be the more significant element. These two sequences taken together show the significance of endings which are discernible but which leave social life unsettled. We know the nature of these endings from the discussion of Table 7.3. They are the ubiquitous 'cliff hanger'. They are Percy Sugden's baffled countenance.

The sequences discussed in the last paragraph are concentrated in the part of the narrative which describes Mrs Bishop's breakdown and culminates in her hospitalisation. After this, there is a preponderance of description-only strands and a few which end in support for her. It can be suggested that this is because Mrs Bishop is being reintegrated into the life of the Street. Life in the Street is mundane and so she engages in mundane activities such

as helping another character in his garden or having a drink in the pub. Life goes on and in *Coronation Street* ordinary life does not have much structure.

Mrs Bishop's reintegration is represented through narrative form in another way. Throughout her tale the focus of strands is firmly on her. But right at the end of the recording period we witness two stories intermingling and Mrs Bishop's narrative being combined with that of another. The character whom she assists in the garden is dying of a brain tumour. He has told this only to his future wife but in this strand his story supervenes as Mrs Bishop, unwittingly, engages him in a profound and helpful conversation. So her story reaches no final conclusion but is combined and merged with the tales of other characters.

As with the news, there is a diversity of narrative forms in this data. And as with the news, there are two possibilities. The first is that the number of sequences is sufficiently limited to mean that they can reasonably function as a way of making the unfamiliarity of madness more familiar in soap opera. The actual lack of structure is another point. The second possibility is that this multiplicity of structures feeds into and embodies in a formal way the multiplicity of meanings revealed by the content analysis. What has been argued several times throughout this study is that dual possibilities such as this may exist in a relation of tension.

One other issue needs to be taken up in respect of the narrative structure of Mrs Bishop's breakdown. That is, there is an over-arching narrative to this tale - the narrative of the entire story. I cannot say exactly how it begins since it was already in train when the recording started. The viewers to whom I talked said she simply began to withdraw and do things that were unusual for her. It can be inferred that the story began diffusely and

quietly although this statement must contain a measure of speculation. What can be said is that the story develops slowly over several weeks and reaches a climax with Mrs Bishop's admission to psychiatric hospital. This is a resolution in one sense because it solves the enigma of what exactly was the matter with her. However, it is not a return to social harmony in the sense that I have been using that concept because it designates her as mentally ill. It is an 'ending' but not one with narrative closure.

As already indicated, the conclusion of the tale is diffusely represented. Gradually, she starts to do normal things and other stories become combined with her own although she remains the focus of attention in the time frame used in this study. Mrs Bishop recovers but this is rarely explicitly represented. The narrative closure is fragile and leaves open the possibility that the story of her breakdown will reappear. In fact, I was told six months after the end of the recording period that the issue of Emily Bishop's mental health had been picked up again. In a perverse way, it had become part of the familiarity of a favourite character.

#### **A coda to the content analysis**

One final point about the content analysis needs to be made before proceeding to the analysis of visual representations. There is one element in the story of Mrs Bishop's breakdown which was very imperfectly picked up by the coding frame. In some respects, it concerns the category of *maniac* but this is used sometimes in a particular way. It does not appear very often but it is significant. On occasion, other characters try to distinguish between Mrs Bishop and really mad people. Really mad people are those who go to the chip shop in their nighties (not just their bedroom slippers), who are locked up for years in loony bins or who try to commit suicide. She is not like this, she is not floridly mad. And indeed she is not. As argued in Chapter 4, it may be difficult for soap opera to

represent a familiar character as frankly insane. A complete change of personality would not be credible. So madness is to some extent made familiar or anchored in the very familiarity of a long-standing individual.

At the same time, when other characters distinguish Mrs Bishop from those who are deeply unhinged they are counterposing the little Otherness of her strange behaviour to the stark Otherness of madness as such. There is a social group beyond Emily of which we know not and do not want to know. This social group is represented in the interstices of the reluctance of the Street to assimilate Emily Bishop to that group as such.

### **VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS**

The analysis of visual images in the story of Mrs Bishop's breakdown will be more complex and detailed than that carried out for the news. Closeness of shot will be studied as before but prior to this there will be an examination of appearances in different types of shot. Additionally, the visual analysis will systematise the finding in the content analysis that differences in representations were apparent in the period before her hospitalisation and the period after her discharge. Chi-Square statistics will be used where possible with frequency counts as the data. The purpose of these investigations is to find out how Mrs Bishop's mental distress is visually represented and whether it accords with or adds to the findings of the content analysis.

In *Coronation Street* as in other soap operas, characters can be filmed using single shots where only one subject is in frame, two-shots where two people are filmed together or group shots where three or more people are in the frame at the same time. It can be suggested that single shots isolate the character from others and single him or her out for

particular attention. Two-shots often precede a shot-reverse-shot sequence, where the two people are established as a group, and then proceed to carry on a conversation filmed one after the other as they speak. Two-shots signify conversation and sociality. Group shots are even more social than two-shots, often occurring in a social setting such as a pub.

Shots were coded by single shot, two-shot and group shot and also by character. The characters coded were Mrs Bishop, Mr Sugden and 'others' who are other characters in *Coronation Street*. In all these shots Mrs Bishop is either present or is being discussed by other characters. Again we see the function of 'gossip' in the soap opera where the talk of other characters is used to establish what is going on.

In coding shots, it is the number of *appearances* and not the number of shots that are counted. If Mrs Bishop appears in a two-shot that is coded but the other character who appears is also coded. It would be impossible to compare filming of characters if this were not done. The same holds for group shots.

The data for this analysis was split between episodes during which Mrs Bishop was experiencing her breakdown and episodes after she had been discharged from hospital. As a result of the content analysis and analysis of narrative structure, it was hypothesised that differences in filming technique as between Mrs Bishop and others were more likely to be apparent during the breakdown.

Table 7.5 on the next page shows the data for type of shot and character.

	Mrs Bishop	Mr Sugden	Others	Total
Single	131	86	69	286
Two-shot	61	80	123	264
Group	13	26	49	88
Total	205	192	241	638

Chi-Square = 58.59; df = 4;  $p < 0.001$

*Table 7.5: Type of Shot and Character During Mrs Bishop's Breakdown.*

The Chi-Square for Table 7.5 is highly significant. Inspection of the data shows that Mrs Bishop is much more likely than other characters to be filmed with single shots and that, by comparison, she is less likely to be filmed with two-shots and especially group shots. The data for Mr Sugden are almost exactly what would be expected by chance, making him a 'neutral' character. This contradicts the findings of the content analysis and the contradiction is interesting. Other characters appear much less frequently in single shots than chance would predict and are over-represented in two-shots and especially group shots.

These results suggest that Mrs Bishop is most frequently filmed in a style that isolates her and marks her off as different. This coincides with the finding that she is represented as **strange** but dilutes the significance of the help she is offered. Single shots are by far the most frequent in the data set (remember that counts are by *appearance* and not shot as such). The more social two-shot appears half as often and group shots are less frequent still. However, this still means that overall other characters appear twice as often in two-shots as in single shots. Mrs Bishop, on the other hand, is filmed with the single shot more than twice as often as she appears in a two-shot. Her appearance in group shots is minimal and, in fact, most of the group shots where she does appear take place on the day of her hospitalisation where people are concerned about her and surround her.

Some single shots bind characters into social life more than others. Sequences of single shots making up a conversation do focus on the individual but are in the context of interaction. Other single shots dwell on the individual with minimal social context. This difference was not coded systematically although it is evident that Mrs Bishop is often filmed 'on her own'. It can be said, then, that the mentally distressed Mrs Bishop is separated from others by these filming techniques whereas Mr Sugden, and more especially other characters, are filmed socially and in company.

We can turn now to an analysis of type of shot after Mrs Bishop is discharged from hospital and is on the road to recovery. Table 7.6 shows the pertinent data.

	Mrs Bishop	Mr Sugden	Others	Total
Single	22	19	36	77
Two-shot	19	17	38	74
Group	9	10	35	54
Total	50	46	109	205

*Table 7.6: Type of shot and character after Mrs Bishop's discharge.*

Chi-Square = 4.28; df = 4; p = n.s.

The Chi-Square for the distribution of shots in Table 7.6 is not significant. The type of shot by character analysis shows a distribution that could be expected by chance. Unlike the situation with Table 7.5, there is no skewness about the filming of Mrs Bishop in comparison with others.

Two things about the table are worth noting. First, as before, single shots are the most frequent framing device and there are more two-shots than group shots. This time,



however, Mrs Bishop appears as frequently in two-shots as in single shots. Moreover, proportionally, she appears more frequently than before in group shots. This can be said to signify her new integration into the social world. Secondly, there is overall a greater appearance on the part of 'others' after Mrs Bishop leaves hospital. We have already seen that after her discharge, other characters appeared with Mrs Bishop and they also appeared discussing her and trying to sort out situations left over from her breakdown. Once again, the filming techniques suggest a re-integration of Mrs Bishop into the life of the Street.

During her breakdown, Mrs Bishop is filmed in a different way to other characters and it is a way which marks her off as isolated and Other. It also reinforces the discourse of strangeness found in the content analysis. After her breakdown, she is filmed similarly to other characters and in a way that removes the earlier separation and re-connects her with other characters.

Let me turn now to a finer-grained analysis of type of shot. Here I shall look at photographic techniques in terms of camera angle following the method used for the news. The analyses will be carried out separately for single shots, two-shots and group shots. This is because camera angle and type of shot are correlated. It is practically impossible to have an extreme close up angle in a group shot, for example (without the use of zooms). Further, the finding that there is an uneven distribution of characters by type of shot suggests that these shots should be treated separately.

As with the previous analysis, transcripts were coded in terms of whether the camera angles occurred during Mrs Bishop's breakdown or after it. Table 7.7 shows the data for Mrs Bishop, Mr Sugden and other characters during the breakdown. Table 7.7 looks at single shots only.

Camera Angle	Mrs Bishop	Mr Sugden	Others	Total
ECU	13	2	0	15
CU	32	6	9	47
MCU	42	33	41	116
MW	22	36	16	74
W/A	2	3	0	5
Tracking	12	5	1	18
Other	8	1	2	11
Total	131	86	69	286

*Table 7.7: Camera angle by character for single shots during Mrs Bishop's breakdown.*

It is not possible to carry out a Chi-Square test on Table 7.7 because the number of cells with an expected frequency of less than five is more than 20% of the total. It was therefore decided to collapse the 'ECU' and 'CU' cells into one category and also to collapse 'W/A', 'tracking' and 'other'. This is not entirely theoretically satisfactory. For example both 'ECU' shots and 'tracking' shots are conceptually important as was demonstrated in the analysis of the news. I shall therefore refer to Table 7.7 in discussing the new Table 7.8 which is given overleaf.

Table 7.8 is highly statistically significant. It can be seen from inspection of the data that in single shots Mrs Bishop is filmed in close-up far more frequently than other characters and proportionally more frequently than she is filmed using medium close-up and medium wide shots. So we can say that the preponderance of single shot filming for Mrs Bishop is intensified in its signification of isolation and strangeness by the camera angles by means of which the single shots are framed. It could be argued that when she is filmed

Camera Angle	Mrs Bishop	Mr Sugden	Others	Total
ECU/CU	45	8	9	62
MCU	42	33	41	116
MW	22	36	16	74
Other	22	9	3	34
Total	131	86	69	286

Chi-Square = 45.6; df = 6;  $p < 0.001$

*Table 7.8: Collapsed categories for camera angle by character for single shots during Mrs Bishop's Breakdown.*

on her own, in close up and extreme close-up, the chief meaning conveyed is that of someone *dislocated* from the social world. These shots also signify emotional intensity and the observing function of the camera. Their frequency supports the suggestion that this is the way in which emotionally distressed people will be filmed and this finding is also consistent with that for the news. Table 7.7 shows that there is a much higher frequency of extreme close-ups in the filming of Mrs Bishop than in the filming of other characters and this would heighten the sense of dislocation and scrutiny.

The scrutinising function of the camera intensifies the meaning of the distress found in the content analysis and, similarly, the isolating and dislocated images intensify the meaning of *strangeness*. These intensifications, it can be argued, mean that the visual representations carry more of a sense of Mrs Bishop's Otherness than does the dialogue and description.

Mrs Bishop also is filmed with 'other' shots more often than her co-characters. From Table 7.7, it can be seen that this is partly the result of the use of 'tracking' shots. There are not a great number of these but they are more frequent in the camera angles used for

Mrs Bishop than for others. Tracking shots 'follow' a character and, like the close-ups, have a scrutinising function. Mrs Bishop is *being watched* by these filming techniques and this parallels what was said about the news and the pilot study. The significance of tracking shots was seen in the news and they were more frequent there because there is more activity in news filming compared with the slow pace of soap opera.

Mr Sugden again is filmed in ways that are almost exactly what would be expected by chance apart from the less frequent use of close-ups and extreme close-ups. Mr Sugden is a neutral character at least in the filming of single shots. So the camera is intensifying Mrs Bishop's Difference but playing down Mr Sugden's emotional involvement when compared to the findings of the content analysis.

Other characters are also filmed less with close-ups but more with medium close-up shots. As stated in the analysis of the news, the medium close-up is a neutral shot. At least this is so when the medium close-up films a single person. It is the commonest shot in these data and thereby signifies 'normality'. It is the 'normal', average shot and this is its significance. Once again, the contrast can be seen with the filming of Mrs Bishop in emotionally charged and scrutinising ways.

Single shots were then analysed when characters appeared in them after Mrs Bishop's return from hospital. The results are shown in Table 7.9 on the next page.

Camera Angle	Mrs Bishop	Mr Sugden	Other	Total
ECU/CU	2	0	7	9
MCU	7	6	20	33
MW	11	13	6	30
Other	2	0	3	5
Total	22	19	36	77

*Table 7.9: Camera angle by character in single shots after Mrs Bishop's discharge.*

It is not possible to carry out a statistical test on Table 7.9 due to the high number of categories with an expected frequency of less than five. The table is suggestive, however. No longer is Mrs Bishop frequently filmed in close-up and extreme close-up. Additionally, there is a relative absence of tracking shots. She is most frequently filmed in the more neutral shots of medium close-up and medium wide. After her discharge from hospital she is less frequently filmed with shots that dwell on her emotions, study and scrutinise her. There appears to be no difference in camera angles used between her and Mr Sugden. This again indicates that by means of differing filmic conventions she is represented as being reintegrated into the life of the Street. The visual codes themselves support the findings of the content analysis in this respect.

Table 7.9 shows that there are more close-up shots of other characters than there are of Mrs Bishop. These close-ups come from the argument that develops between two characters in the victim story. Emotional intensity in other characters stems from a concern that justice should be done for her and that loose ends should be tidied up. Other characters seem to have a preponderance of medium close-up shots compared to Mrs Bishop and Mr Sugden. I would argue that this is not of great theoretical importance because both these camera angles signify neutrality when used in single shots.

As already discussed, after Mrs Bishop's breakdown there is a greater appearance by other characters when compared to the situation during her breakdown. Partly this is accounted for by the story-line about justice and it is also because, as was mentioned above, her story gradually starts to be woven into the stories of others. As with type of shot, the camera angles used after Mrs Bishop's breakdown suggest that she is being re-united with the social life of the Street.

We turn now to two-shots. These are less socially isolating shots and also shots which do not dwell on one person. Sometimes they precede shot-reverse-shot sequences where the two characters engage in conversation and are filmed in sequence. Sometimes, conversations are carried on while the two-shot is held. These are shots of conversation and sociality.

Table 7.10 gives the data for camera angles in two-shots. It refers to the filming during Mrs Bishop's breakdown. Statistical tests cannot be carried out on Table 7.10 for the same reason as before. In this case it was decided to be theoretically justified to pool together medium wide shots and 'other' shots. This is because most of the 'other' shots were wide angle and this is a continuum with medium wide. When this was done, it yielded a Chi-Square of 25.88. With  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

Camera Angle	Mrs Bishop	Mr Sugden	Others	Total
ECU/CU	8	7	0	15
MCU	32	29	41	102
MW	21	38	78	137
Other	0	6	4	10
Total	61	80	123	264

*Table 7.10: Camera angle by character in two-shots during Mrs Bishop's breakdown.*

The modified Table 7.10 (not shown) is then highly significant. Again this is mainly due to the differences between character-types in close-up camera work. The difference is not as striking as with single shots but it is there. However, it has to be set against the fact that technically it is not easy to film two people together in close-up. It is therefore significant when this is done.

Although Mr Sugden's pattern of filming is largely as would be expected, there are 7 close-up shots of him this time. Mrs Bishop's eight close-up shots and Mr Sugden's seven are due to two-shots which filmed them together in close-up. This tended to be when highly emotionally charged issues were being discussed such as his move out of her house.

We may now look at the pattern of two-shots in the episodes representing Mrs Bishop's recovery. The distribution of cells in Table 7.11 cannot be statistically tested because of the proportion of cells with an expected frequency of less than five. Further, the same amalgamation of cells as was carried out with Table 7.10 would not improve matters in this case. It can, however, be seen that the pattern of close-ups has shifted from Table 7.10. Mrs Bishop is never filmed in close-up whereas Mr Sugden and others occasionally are. These close-ups occur in the victim storyline.

Camera Angle	Mrs Bishop	Mr Sugden	Others	Total
ECU/CU	0	2	4	6
MCU	5	5	2	12
MW	11	10	24	45
Other	3	0	8	11
Total	19	17	38	74

*Table 7.11: Camera angle by character in two-shots after Mrs Bishop's discharge.*

In Table 7.11 the pattern of filming Mrs Bishop does not appear different from that of the filming of other characters. Table 7.11 does lend some weight to the argument, made earlier, that the styles of filming varied as between the period during her breakdown and the period after it and that they varied in such a way as to increase the frequency of single, emotionally intensified, scrutinising shots during her breakdown and to diminish this afterwards. Again, it can be suggested that the filming of two-shots after her breakdown helps to signify a passage back to 'normal' life. This, however, has to be said with caution because of the low frequencies in this case.

A group shot can only have a close-up element if there is the use of zooms. Zooms (and pans) have not been discussed in this analysis so far because they are very infrequently used in this sample of *Coronation Street*. There were, nonetheless nine zoom in to close-up shots in the filming of Mrs Bishop in single shots. However, given the problems we have had with low frequencies zoom shots have been classified up to now with the camera angles the zoom 'resulted in' at their end. It should be noted that there are two close-up shots in the group shots to be analysed now and both of these were the result of zooms.

It has been seen already that this data suffers the problems of low frequencies in cells if we try to analyse it according to camera angle. Nowhere is this more true than in the analysis of group shots. Group shots are 'social' shots but they are not very frequent in this soap opera. Table 7.12 overleaf gives the data during Mrs Bishop's breakdown.

The classic or average angle for a group shot is medium wide or wide angle. Technically this makes sense as it is the best way of fitting three or more people into the frame. Socially it also signifies 'groupness' or community as these shots are frequently used for pub scenes, shop scenes or outdoor group scenes.



Camera Angle	Mrs Bishop	Mr Sugden	Others	Total
ECU/CU	1	0	0	1
MCU	5	5	7	17
MW	6	15	30	51
W/A	1	6	12	19
Total	13	26	49	88

*Table 7.12: Camera angle by character in group shots during Mrs Bishop's breakdown.*

It can be seen from Table 7.12 that Mrs Bishop is infrequently filmed using these 'average' shots whilst she is experiencing her breakdown. As has been noted above, she appears less frequently in group scenes tout court. When she does appear in them she is as likely to be filmed medium close-up as medium wide and she only once appears in a wide-angle shot. Her group shots mostly appeared on the day of her hospitalisation where the camera was framed quite tightly on three or four people. Partly because of the dialogue but also because of the filming, they are highly emotional shots.

By contrast, Mr Sugden and others are proportionally most frequently filmed in the neutral, social camera angles of medium wide and wide-angle. Though the shots overall are less frequent than two-shots or single shots, their deployment locates the other characters within a neutral social group.

Since I have just said that with group shots there is a conceptual similarity between medium wide shots and wide angle shots it is possible numerically to combine these categories. The close-up shots and the medium close-up shot can for these purposes also be collapsed to yield Table 7.13.

Camera Angle	Mrs Bishop	Mr Sugden	Others	Total
ECU/CU/MCU	6	5	7	18
MW / W/A	7	21	42	60
Total	13	26	49	88

Chi-Square = 7.03; df = 2;  $p < 0.05$

*Table 7.13: Modified table of camera angle by character in group shots during Mrs Bishop's breakdown.*

The data in Table 7.13 when, tested with Chi-Square, yield a probability value of less than 0.05. Whilst this is not as highly significant as other data that have been tested in this investigation it does lend support to the argument made above. That is, that Mrs Bishop, during her breakdown, is relatively denied the neutral, social shots which visually bind Mr Sugden and others into the community.

We can now look at camera angles in group shots after Mrs Bishop's breakdown. Table 7.14, on the next page, gives the data. It should be remembered when looking at Table 7.14 that figures refer to characters and not shots. It would therefore be expected for there to be more 'other' characters framed in group shots since each shot must include at least three people. With this in mind, it can be said that Table 7.14 suggests no difference in the filming of Mrs Bishop in group shots after her breakdown when compared to the filming of other characters. All are filmed in the neutral and social shots of medium wide and wide angle.

The differences found in examining camera angles in group shots during the breakdown have disappeared and Mrs Bishop is framed like everybody else.

Camera Angle	Mrs Bishop	Mr Sugden	Others	Total
ECU/CU	0	1	0	1
MCU	0	0	0	0
MW	2	6	15	23
W/A	7	3	20	30
Total	9	10	35	54

*Table 7.14: Camera angle by character in group shots after Mrs Bishop's discharge.*

It can be argued from the above analyses that a particular style of filming predominates in the visual representation of Mrs Bishop during her breakdown and that this style disappears when she is well on the road to recovery. The style that characterises her breakdown emphasises the single shot and within that the close-up and extreme close-up. It has been suggested that the dominance of this style of filming signifies scrutiny, emotionality, isolation and even dislocation. This is the visual grammar of her mental distress in *Coronation Street*.

She is also relatively less likely to be filmed in the more social style of the two-shot and group shot. When she is filmed with these shots, she is less likely to be framed in the neutral, and again more social, codification of medium wide and wide angle. She is separated from the community in these styles of filming.

After her discharge from hospital these differences in visual codes disappear and the more social shots signify Mrs Bishop's return to her familiar self and role in the life of *Coronation Street*.

## **CONCLUSION**

The content analysis and examination of narrative showed that Mrs Bishop's state was an enigma and encoded in multiple meanings. It was difficult to fix, once and for all, what was really at stake, at least until her admission to psychiatric hospital. Entangled in this diversity of significations was a representation of her as **strange** in behaviour and emotion. This is one dimension which is intensified in the filmic conventions which represent her as isolated and dislocated. At the same time, her **distress** is codified in the photographic convention of the close up. The camera intensifies both elements of the representation. It can be argued that Mrs Bishop is **Other** more clearly in the visual than in the largely verbal dimension.

Mrs Bishop is not 'floridly mad'. Her breakdown takes the form of depression and, as was argued in Chapter 4, her familiarity as a long-standing soap-opera character does not completely disappear. She does not undergo a sea-change in her personality. Nonetheless, it can be said that the visual images locate her as **Other** more strongly than the description and dialogue. They also normalise Mr Sugden's role to a degree not found in the content analysis.

The portrayal of Mr Sugden is a nice puzzle. In dialogue and description he is involved, helpful and sometimes distressed himself. Visually, however, he is largely neutral as if the photography were pulling him away from over-involvement with madness. Indeed, at one point he says it could never happen to him because he is too busy to get depressed.

Mrs Bishop's reintegration into the mundane life of *Coronation Street* and the slow diffusion of her story as it becomes woven into the stories of others is represented in a balanced way in both the visual and verbal dimensions. In the description and dialogue

the multiplicity of unsafe meanings gives way to normality and in the filming her isolation and dislocation are replaced with social forms of photography.

Mrs Bishop recovers and recovery is not always possible for television characters who suffer madness. However, the complex web of descriptive and visual meanings which surrounded the five weeks leading up to her hospital admission leave a residue of meaning for the viewer which becomes incorporated into her post-breakdown personality.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **DRAMA AND MADNESS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is concerned with representations of madness in dramatic programming. It includes the remaining coverage in soap opera broadcasts and all of the portrayals in drama serials. It was considered justified to consider serials and series together for three reasons. Firstly, it has been argued (eg Feuer 1992) that these genres are converging in television. For instance, series follow characters from week to week and develop stories around them. One of the stories in the sample - concerning the depression and suicide of a hospital nurse - is in fact the culmination of weeks of concern with her behaviour. Secondly, none of the soap opera stories concerned with madness develops over a long period of time as was the case with Emily Bishop. One story is played out over one week but the other occurs within a single broadcast. Finally, and more practically, it would have been very cumbersome in terms of analysis to treat serials and series separately. Two chapters would have been required and the content analysis would, misleadingly, have contained many empty cells in both cases. At the same time, it is quite possible to separate out the two genres within the context of the analyses in the present chapter.

This chapter follows a similar structure to those of the two which precede it. It begins with a description of the sample and provides some initial statistics. There follows a content analysis of the data transcript, including an examination of narrative structures. Finally, visual representations are considered. This analysis of visual images is similar to that undertaken for the News and is not as detailed as the one carried out for *Coronation Street*. The complexity of the drama transcript precludes such a replication.

## **THE SAMPLE AND INITIAL STATISTICS**

I shall begin this section with a brief description of the stories which are to be analysed in this chapter. There are fifteen occasions on which a dramatic broadcast references mental disturbance and there are twelve 'stories'. This discrepancy is due to the fact that five broadcasts account for one story and one broadcast includes two separate stories with a mental health content. The following description gives each story a 'title' to aid with the exposition to come, states on which programme and channel it appeared and gives a very brief account of its content.

**The killer with a psychiatric history** - *The Bill* - ITV - concerns a man who killed three young girls, tried to kill a fourth who resisted, and is described at the end of the story as an alcoholic with a psychiatric history.

**Psychiatry as comedy** - *Boys from the Bush* - BBC1 - about the friend of a brothel owner who pretends to be a consultant psychiatrist married to her in order to persuade her strait-laced parents that she is respectable. He 'cures' the parents' sexual repressions.

**Out of character for Harold** - *Neighbours* - BBC1 - a long standing pillar of the community behaves strangely and psychiatric discourses are implied. It turns out that he has lost his religious faith.

**The wandering psychiatric patient** - *Casualty* - BBC1 - a patient from the psychiatric wing wanders about in the accident and emergency waiting room and the hospital grounds.

**Hysterical blindness** - *Casualty* - BBC1 - a 'blind' woman recovers her sight after an accident but the consultant believes her original blindness was psychologically based.

**The nurse's suicide - *Casualty* - BBC1** - a nurse who had always been a problem is discovered to have been taking anti-depressants which she has used to overdose with fatal consequences.

**The sad wife killer - *The Bill* - ITV** - a man with a psychiatric history beats his wife, she dies later, and he is interrogated and charged by the Sunhill police force.

**The visit to the mental hospital - *Firm Friends* - ITV** - a man has disappeared and his wife believes he is depressed. She visits a mental hospital in the hope of finding him but is unsuccessful.

**The threatening phone calls - *Neighbours* - BBC1** - a long standing character receives threatening phone calls accusing him of murder. The neighbours believe the caller is a 'psycho' but turns out to be rather preoccupied with his own guilt about the death.

**The bulimic dancer - *Casualty* - BBC1** - a dancer is admitted to hospital with physical symptoms which, it transpires, are due to an eating disorder.

**The self-inflicted cigarette burns - *Casualty* - BBC1** - the staff discuss what to do about a woman's self-injury. She behaves oddly and has a violent husband. There is a second strand to the story to do with an ectopic pregnancy.

**Running amok in the waiting room - *Casualty* - BBC1** - a man behaves in an extremely disturbed and violent fashion in the hospital waiting room and finally punches one of the nurses.



As can be seen from the above, all but three of the stories were broadcast on BBC1 and half of them were shown on the series *Casualty*. The preponderance of stories on BBC1 does not really indicate an imbalance between channels since Emily Bishop's breakdown, which ran over twenty four episodes, appeared on ITV. In terms of pages of transcript for the two analyses, 122 come from ITV and 104 from BBC1. The news has slightly more pages from BBC1 and so there would seem to be an approximate equivalent time devoted to mental health problems on the two channels. On the other hand, *Casualty* coverage of mental health issues takes up 30% of the drama transcript. This will have to be borne in mind as the analysis proceeds.

There are 979 frames in this transcript which, in terms of time, is one quarter as long again as both the news and *Coronation Street*. The drama transcript is visually the fastest moving of all the genres although we shall see that the data contain great variability in this respect. Further, in terms of visual diversity, drama is closer to the news than it is to British soap opera. It will become evident that there other similarities between factual and fictional television.

There are 121 strands in the drama transcript. Once again, this shows a somewhat greater movement between narrative structures for drama than for *Coronation Street*. As has already been indicated, the news has the least narrative complexity of all genres, at least as far as this crude measure is concerned. This, of course, is due to the news being comprised of self-contained items.

The general drama sample is 77 hours long, whilst the mental health drama transcript is 1 hour and 45 minutes long. This means that the mental health stories in drama take up 2.27% of the total time. When this drama data is combined with that from *Coronation*

*Street*, we find that mental health on dramatic television takes up 3.41% of the total time. Once again, there is the commonality with previous findings, particularly those of Gerbner of the Gerbner team (Signorelli, 1989).

### **THE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

The presentation of the results of the content analysis will take the same form as that used in the two previous chapters. Firstly, results will be given for the most detailed level of the coding frame. Multiple codes and multiple meanings will then be considered. Following this, the narrative element of explanation will be examined and then the narrative element of resolution. Finally, the structure of the narratives, both strands and overall stories, will be discussed.

#### **The third level of abstraction**

Table 8.1 on the next page gives the results for the most detailed level of the coding frame sub-divided by the two narrative elements of scene-setting (disruptive) and narrative description (present). As with the analysis in the last chapter, there is no element of reconstruction in the drama data. Reconstruction in drama would usually take the form of flashbacks but none were evident in this data.

As can be seen from Table 8.1, the most frequent signification in the data is that of comedy. The relevant story concerned a Madame of a brothel who had told her strait-laced parents that she was a chiropodist and married to a consultant psychiatrist. To support this she had sent them a photo of one of the central characters in the series, Dennis Tontine, who is always depicted as something of a roue who constantly gets himself into difficult situations. The parents come to visit unexpectedly and Dennis is expected to play the part of a psychiatrist. He 'explains' psychiatry in terms of

	Danger	Law	Obsess	Strange	Maniac	Sick	Neglect	Distress	Cope	Success	Help	Comedy	Victim	Misc
Scene Set (Disrup)	18	5	0	14	3	10	0	3	0	0	0	7	2	1
Narr. Descri. Pres.	108	44	0	41	30	96	4	93	0	4	26	180	26	86
Total	126	49	0	55	33	106	4	96	0	4	26	187	28	87
Total % (N=979)	12.9	5.0		5.6	3.4	10.8		9.8			2.7	19.1	2.9	8.9

Table 8.1: Distribution for detailed content categories subdivided by two narrative elements for the Drama data.

psychoanalysis, sex and 'letting it all hang out' and, although they are at first shocked, the parents in their different ways take his advice seriously and in the end their sexual repressions are lifted and they fall in love again. The story is played out in the form of banter and irony, largely taking place through conversation, and nearly all the frames are coded **comedy**. Psychiatry is here made into a figure of fun as someone who is far from serious and has no connection with therapeutic discourse nevertheless succeeds in 'curing' his 'patients'. In not taking Dennis seriously, we do not take psychiatry seriously. And if Dennis can 'cure' repression then surely psychiatric expertise is a joke.

There are nonetheless problems with the dominance of **comedy** representations in this data. In the first place, 'Psychiatry as comedy' is a relatively lengthy story. Secondly, however, the frames in this story are typically extremely short. In the transcript as a whole there are an average of eight frames per page although there is also great variability in this respect. By comparison, there are up to seventeen frames per page in 'Psychiatry as comedy'. The camera moves between participants in conversations who typically speak in very short bursts. This is one reason why the category of **comedy** has such a high incidence.

To try to correct for this, a very crude analysis was carried out of the dominant meaning on each *page* of the transcript. This is crude in the extreme since most pages contain a variety of codes. Nonetheless, the result of this was that **comedy** dropped from first place in the rank order of codes to fourth. Places one, two and three, were taken by **danger**, **sickness** and **strangeness** respectively.

With this proviso, then, **danger** is the most common code in the drama transcript and this dominance is further reinforced by the resolution analysis as will be seen presently.

**Danger** occurs in the two stories from *The Bill* as would be expected and an example of this is given below.

<b>VISUAL</b>	<b>VERBAL</b>
DS MCU opening door in hotel, enters room, shadow, squalor	DS: Mr Morgan? Mr Morgan? Are you Paul Morgan?
Shadow, man on floor, W/A	PM: Who are you?
DS, MW, shows identification, shadow	DS: I'm a police officer.
	PM: How did you get in?
	DS: I'd like to have a word with you about Angela, Angela Andrews.
PM on floor, W/A, shadow	PM: What about her?
	DS: She's in hospital, Mr M. I have to tell you that she's made a statement. She said you attacked her.
	PM: She's a nutter. Doesn't know what day of the week it is most of the time.
DS, MW, shadow	DS: Do you deny it?
	PM: What else did she tell you?
	DS: She said that you grabbed her by the jaw and smashed her head repeatedly against the wall. This is a 16 year old girl.
PM on floor, W/A, shadow	And you half beat her to death.

#### **ITV, THE BILL, THURSDAY 28TH MAY**

It turns out that Paul Morgan is responsible for three other attacks on young girls, all of them fatal, and that he has a psychiatric history. The other story from *The Bill* also

involves someone with a psychiatric history who kills violently but in this case there is also a great deal of distress.

However, violence does not only occur in police stories. In *Casualty* there is the incursion of danger into the medical arena as psychiatric patients attack other patients, punch medical staff or try to poison others with stolen drugs. And in the quite different story context of *Neighbours* the menacing phone caller threatens physical violence to Joe and actually commits acts of vandalism against his property. As with the news, we find a strong association between madness and danger. But the signification of **danger** is dispersed across a range of story types and contexts. This distribution carries the meaning that the dangerous mental patient is to be found in diverse places and contexts.

The second most frequent category to appear in the coding of the data is that of **sickness**. This representation also occurred in the previous two analyses but is more pronounced here. This is partly as a result of the dominance of the programme *Casualty*. There is, in fact, a specific representational movement at work here. Often the sickness codes refer to *physical* illness. These might be contextual significations where medical staff are shown attending to a sick person. But this is infrequent. More commonly, patients are shown as having a psychiatric diagnosis and a linked or entirely *separate* physical condition. The psychiatric diagnosis is then *downplayed* and the focus of attention becomes the physical problem. So, the 'Self-inflicted cigarette burns' story involves physical injury but also takes an entirely new tack when an ectopic pregnancy is discovered in the woman. 'The bulimic dancer' story opens with the main character having rectal bleeding, she is then examined for cancer and treated for haemorrhoids. Only later does she confess to a nurse her eating disorder. In 'Hysterical blindness' the woman is a victim of a motor accident, 'recovers' her sight and is then diagnosed by the doctor as hysterical, and the psychiatrist

called. However, we never see a psychiatrist and the focus of attention continues to be the woman's head injury. Again, in the murder stories, medical codes appear around violent physical injuries.

It seems that only rarely is mental distress positioned in these representations *as an illness*. The relation between mental disturbance, hospitals and illness is an uneasy one. Madness is not being anchored *as an illness*. Rather, it is located within a medical context and it is *associated* with physical illness without being *assimilated* to the category of illness as such. Mental illness is only weakly anchored in a medical discourse. This is connected with the lack of representations of psychiatric specialists in the data and the absence of psychiatric explanation. Mental illness is an illness by association or juxtaposition but not by membership of a representational field or explanatory discourse. This point will be considered again later.

Almost equivalent to the incidence of sickness, is the incidence of distress. Once again, this signification appears in a range of stories. It was also prevalent in Mrs Bishop's story and appeared on the news. In the drama transcript there is distress on the part of 'The sad wife killer', a man with a psychiatric history who is horrified that a row with his wife resulted in her death; there is distress amongst the staff of *Casualty* when they realise that a student nurse who had been behaving strangely was being treated for depression and has killed herself with an overdose of her tablets; and, in 'The menacing phone calls', there is distress on Joe's part at the havoc that is being wreaked with his life and that of his family. There is also distress on the part of some of the patients in *Casualty* as witness the following extract from the story of the bulimic dancer. Here she is discussing with her sister their relationship in connection with her eating disorder.

## VISUAL

Abby ECU

Abby and Sis, Abby back to camera lying down, Sis MW

Abby ECU

Sis MW

Abby MCU in bed, throws tissue

Sis MCU

Abby ECU

Sis ECU

Abby ECU

Sis MCU

Abby MCU, lying down

Sis MCU

Abby ECU

Sis ECU

Abby ECU  
(shot fingers, tearful)

## VERBAL

Sister: Don't worry, Abby.

You're going to be fine.

Abby: You couldn't even stay with me, could you?

Sis: You know what I'm like.

Abby: Yes, I do

Sis: Come on, sis, What have I done?

Abby: You taught me this little trick, didn't you?

Sis: Look, lots of dancers have to. I didn't know you were ill.

Abby: You should have seen

what was happening to me.

Sis: You didn't let me, did you?

Abby: I had to be as good as you.

Sis: And I'd have done anything to help you.

Abby: Even when you saw I wasn't going to make it?

Sis: I tried to make it work for you, Abby, because I love you.

Abby: You could have saved me

from all this.

Sis: And then you'd have never forgiven me.

BBC1, CASUALTY, SATURDAY 27TH JUNE



Of the categories with a lesser incidence, **law** and **strange** have an almost equivalent frequency, whilst **maniac** has slightly less. **Law** occurs mainly in the two crime stories but there is some representation in the context of health stories and also in the story of 'The menacing phone calls'. Once again, we see an interpenetration of story contexts and significations around madness. **Law** occurred frequently on the news and **strange** was an important category in *Coronation Street*. Here **strange** features in 'Out of character for Harold' which has certain similarities with Mrs Bishop's story despite its brevity. The code also occurs in 'Running amok in the waiting room' which is the most extreme depiction of madness in the entire data transcript.

It is only in the drama data that there is a representation of madness as **maniac** and even here it is not considerable. The extremity of the representations nevertheless make it significant. The story just mentioned - 'Running amok in the waiting room' - has many **maniac** codes and would have had more were it not for the length of some of the camera frames. In fact, it could be said that the methodology of choosing the camera frame as the unit of analysis breaks down in respect of this story. The following extract mostly consists of just *one* shot as the camera tracks what is going on in the hospital. The last two paragraphs are two separate shots. It will also be seen that the frame combines two psychiatric stories. Woman1 is the woman with self-inflicted cigarette burns who steals a poisonous drug which she later administers to her violent husband. The man with whom the extract opens is the reason for giving this extract the dominant code of **maniac** (it is also multiply coded). **Maniac** terminology abounds when the staff discuss him later.

## VISUAL

Woman with arm in sling sitting MCU, man pacing beside, leaps up to her, CU then ECU, touching her, attacks her, she struggles

Woman stands up, man grabs her, bites her, ECU, attacks

Staff come running W/A

Nurse in cubicle with Wo1, second nurse enters, exit both nurses, W/A

Staff struggling with man, W/A, woman with sling being led away, distressed, everyone screaming

Camera tracking scene

Woman and two nurses pass cubicle occupied by Wo1, MCU, she exiting, moves across corridor and picks up bottle sitting on trolley. Wo1 walks out past scene with man who now has blanket over his head.

Other people come to control man, W/A

Charlie starts to remove blanket from man's head W/A

Blanket removed, man lying on ground, W/A

Man punches Charlie in the face, W/A

Aerial shot chaos

## VERBAL

Man: ..(inaudible).. fixes, darling. Ebony black devils. You know what I'd like to do with them? I'd like to bite the bastards' heads off and put them

between my

Wo: Get away from me.

Man: Growls. Screams.

Nurse2: Ash, quick, there's a bloke gone berserk out here. Come on

Wo: Oh, my arm, my arm, oh, oh, oh my God, oh

Charlie: Calm down. Calm down.

Nurse: Easy

Charlie: Don't just stand there

Man: I'm choking.

Charlie: Alright, alright. Take it easy. Alright, alright.

Porter: No, I, I wouldn't

Man: I'm going to faint.

Charlie: Alright. Alright. I'm going to take it off now. Now you behave yourself.

Man: Alright. ...(inaudible)... lovely.

Charlie: Oh!

Man: Oh!

Wo1 Exiting hospital, police officers pass (No speech)  
her and enter. All MW.

#### BBC1, CASUALTY, SATURDAY 4TH JULY

This extract is not easy to read and was not easy to transcribe. Watching the videotape gives (to me at least) the impression of complete chaos, lack of structure, imminent danger and transgression of rules and norms. At the centre of this is a man who speaks an Other tongue, loaded with dangerous and psychotic imagery, who is uncontrollable and ultimately physically violent. The multiplicity of meanings and lack of structure in this strand will be discussed again later in this chapter. The fact that this extract largely comprises a single unit of analysis means that the **maniac** representation is underestimated in the content analysis.

This signification **maniac** is also found in 'The visit to the mental hospital' where the woman in search of her husband is taken to a drama therapy group where everyone is wearing white masks, the filming is in shadow, there is haunting music and the participants thrust their faces at the woman in a menacing fashion as they unmask.

As with previous analyses, part of my argument is that what is absent in a representation is as important as what is present. There is a limited incidence of **help** classifications and those that do exist occur in the *Neighbours* stories and have an analogous function to their appearance in Mrs Bishop's story. **Success** is negligible in its incidence and **cope** does not appear at all. Once again, we see that positive depictions are significant by their absence in representations of madness on British television.

**Neglect** and **obsess** are also absent. Representations of **neglect**, largely by institutions,

seem to be confined to the genre of news. There are, then, both overlaps and differences between genres. **Obsess** appeared only infrequently in the previous analyses and does not figure at all for the drama data. The category was important for the pilot but appears relatively insignificant for the present material.

### **Multiple Coding**

157 frames were assigned multiple codes and this accounts for 16% of the total. 134 of these frames were assigned two codes and 23 were allocated three codes or more.

Of the double coded frames the most frequent combinations are: **danger** and **law**; **danger** and **sickness**; **law** and **sickness**; **sickness** and **distress**; and **law** and **distress**. **Maniac** was combined with **danger**, **law**, **sickness** and **strange**. These combinations show how diverse elements of the representation of madness can come together to produce new meanings. **Danger** and **law** is not a surprising association for viewers of television and it occurs here largely in the context of the two murder stories from *The Bill*. Again, **sickness** and **distress** make a televisually coherent representation, even if its inflection here is rather unusual. However, **danger** and **sickness** and **law** and **sickness** associate two discourses that are normally kept apart. In the case of madness, the portrayals put into play a dialogue between two elements of the representation that not only brings them together but inflects each with the significations of the other. In the most common portrayal in the data, the police enter the hospital to deal with the danger of the mad person, or the consequences of his or her actions. The mad person is the figure who can make it necessary to call the forces of law and order into the hospital to deal with a type of sickness that has violence at its core - a type of sickness that is Other to the routines of the caring institution. At the same time, there is reluctance to represent this as sickness at all and so the semantics of **danger** and **sickness** also coexist in a collision of meanings

that cannot be satisfactorily integrated or made coherent. **Maniac**, the category in the coding frame that most encapsulates Otherness, is itself combined with all three of the categories just mentioned. Here disparate meanings are both uneasily juxtaposed, and sometimes condensed, to produce a pure representation of Otherness.

As stated above, **law** and **distress** occur together and of the 23 triple and quadruple codes, the most common combination was **distress/danger/law**. This coding occurred ten times, always in the story 'The sad wife killer' and the dual combination was also concentrated in this narrative. Here the suspect with a psychiatric history describes the violent blows he inflicted on his wife to the police who are interrogating him and who have told him that the beating was fatal. Throughout the interrogation, he is tearful. The representation combines violence and distress in the figure of a man about whom a police officer comments "doesn't look much, does he?". Although there is some sympathy for his predicament, the thrust of the combination of codes is to make **distress** a sign of lack of moral strength and rectitude. The representation that is produced by this combination of elements is thus of mental distress as a form of *weakness*.

The second most frequent combination of meanings concerned **danger** or **law** with **maniac** and **sickness**. This has been alluded to already and an example was given above on pages 254-255. This juxtaposition of *contents* goes together with lack of structure or a formal raggedness. The camera tracks the actions and speech of a dangerous maniac, see-sawing along with the action and seeming to career round corners. In the example shown, the penultimate shot is the unusual one of an aerial frame which reveals chaos. And chaos could be argued to be a signifying element in this representation - chaos as to its content but also its narrative structure. For instance, conversation takes place but there is no use of the familiar shot-reverse-shot structure. Here madness fails the test of familiarity in the

most extreme manner - language and behaviour transgress norms in an excessive fashion while at the same time familiar narrative structures are lost. Again a new meaning is produced by the combination of codes - *chaos* and *unpredictability*. Indeed it could be said that multiply coded frames and strands carry the meaning of unpredictability as they produce one meaning or action only to supplant it with an entirely different one.

Having said this, and as with *Coronation Street*, the signification of multiple codes can be to tell a coherent story. In 'Menacing phone calls', Joe is confronted with a **maniac** who threatens **danger** and so he makes contact with the **law**. This is an unsurprising concatenation of representational elements. The significance of multiple codes lies in the tension they map out. On the one hand, they can interact to form a coherent story with a familiar field of meanings and, on the other, they can combine uneasily to signify semantic chaos, unpredictability and threat.

To turn now to multiple codes within strands, there are 65 units which have this feature out of 121 in total. The percentage is 53.7% and this is higher than for either of the two previous analyses. Of the internally consistent strands, some comprise only gossip, some consist of only one frame and those within 'Psychiatry as comedy' all feature nearly solely **comedy** codes. The story has no semantic complexity.

The strands with multiple codes carry the same combinations of meaning as those found for compound coding within frames. The exception is 'Out of character for Harold' which combines **strange** and **distress** in a way analogous to Mrs Bishop's story. **Law** and **distress** appear together within strands in 'The sad wife killer' and again produce the signification of weakness. In the stories from *Casualty*, the context of **sickness** is brought together with **distress** in the case of 'The bulimic dancer' who is **distressed** because she

is physically ill but at the same time her unhappiness is part of her eating disorder.

Sickness is also combined with **danger**, **law** and **maniac** in other narratives as has been shown in the analyses of multiply coded camera frames. It could be argued that the programme *Casualty* has two ways of representing mental distress. Either it is bypassed through the focus on physical illness or damage or it represents the incursion of danger and wholesale transgression of social and psychological rules into the space of the hospital which exhibits a failure to cope. Thus again unpredictability becomes a constructed meaning.

### **Explanation**

Two sorts of explanation exist in this data. One is analogous to the narrative element of description and the other to that of resolution. That is, explanations can occur in the descriptive body of the text or they can appear as part of narrative closure. This section is concerned with the former and the latter will be discussed under the heading of 'resolution'.

Table 8.2 gives the frequencies for the narrative element of Explanation, and can be found on the next page.

Category of Explanation	No.
Stress/Trauma	15
Medical	8
Insanity	1
Neglect	4
Other	1
Total	29

*Table 8.2: Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Explanation in the Drama data.*

It is apparent from Table 8.2 that 'explanation' is not common in the body of these drama stories. It accounts for only three per cent of total frames. This is even less than in the previous two analyses, although it is closer to the figure for the news than for *Coronation Street*. Once again we are forced to the conclusion that these stories are told through the narrative mechanism of description. They *dwell upon* and elaborate events and actions but they do not offer explanations of these. At least, this is so for the relatively tight definition of explanation in use here.

Once again, the dominant explanatory discourse is **stress/trauma**. In 'Out of character for Harold', his strange behaviour is put down to the accidental death of a boy in his care; in 'Menacing phone calls', the threats of the caller are explained as a result of the death of someone close which in turn has driven him mad; and in 'The bulimic dancer' Abby, as we have seen, blames pressure from her sister for her bingeing, vomiting and use of laxatives.



There are interesting parallels here with the previous analyses. In the News, the violent death of someone close was held to have led to insanity and a similar theme is found here. In Mrs Bishop's story intolerable pressure from Mr Sugden was said to be responsible for mental distress and the same reasoning is invoked in Abby's story. Violent death and intense social pressure appear across the transcripts as an explanation for mental illness.

The category of **medical** shares with narrative description an emphasis on physical illness, even though it is juxtaposed with madness. Most of the codes concern a viable explanation for extreme stomach pain which occurred in the woman who self-injured. She turns out to have an ectopic pregnancy and this is simply added on to the story of her self-injury. However, the two sub-stories are partially linked in the figure of her violent husband. Thus medical explanation applies to physical illness in a disturbed person. There are, however, a few **medical** codes which do concern mental health problems. They appear in the story of 'The nurse's suicide', where the nurse's strange behaviour over a long period of time (or episodes) is reinterpreted by the medical staff as depression which, in turn, accounts for her suicide. The **neglect** codes also occur in this story as her medical colleagues blame themselves for their inadequate care of her and partially explain her suicide by their failure to realise what was happening.

## **Resolution**

Table 8.3 gives the results for the narrative element of Resolution and can be found on the following page.

Category	Resolution Absent	Resolution Present
Law and Order	15	7
Sickness/Health	9	5
Neglect/Support	4	5
Failure/Success	10	0
Other	19	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>23</b>

*Table 8.3: Frequency distribution for the narrative element of Resolution in the Drama data.*

As with the results for *Coronation Street*, it is evident from the above table that there must be many strands without a discernible 'ending'. There are 121 strands but only 70 'endings' and some strands had more than one frame coded 'resolution' at the end of the narrative. This will be returned to shortly.

Just as was the case for the soap opera, there is a high proportion of **resolution absent: other**, although the frequency was higher in the case of Mrs Bishop. These constitute the 'cliff hangers' that anticipate later developments in the narrative. The camera lingers on the face of a character and an enigma is proposed. It is often said that these forms are typical in the 'open text' of soap opera and they do indeed appear in the *Neighbours* stories in the data. However, they are as frequent in the series genre and the discussion of narrative will show further similarities.

Fifteen strands end with **problems in law and order** and seven with the **restoration of law and order**. This is consistent with the dominance of themes of **danger** and **law and order** and further intensifies the representational association between madness, violence and crime. In this respect, it is instructive that strands more often end with problems in law and order than with solutions. When law is involved with someone designated mentally ill the strand is more likely to lack resolution than to end with closure, thereby suggesting intractable legal or criminal failure in the realm of madness.

Once again, the **sickness/health** representations are more likely to be concerned with physical than with mental illness. There is a great deal of concern about what is *physically* wrong with 'The bulimic dancer', until it transpires that her physical problems are self-inflicted. But even here there is no restoration of social harmony as it is far from clear that Abby will change her behaviour. The **resolution present: health** codes once again refer to the discovery of the ectopic pregnancy. In the case of Kelly, the nurse who overdosed, there is a solution to the enigma of her behaviour but since it coincided with her death there is no return to social harmony. In fact, this is difficult. It could be argued that death is the ultimate narrative resolution but in the representation here the focus is on the psychological and social problems it poses for those who knew her. The **sickness/health** endings all occur in stories in *Casualty*.

The **neglect/support** codes occur in two stories. **Resolution present: support** occurs in the story of 'The menacing phone calls', as Joe receives support from friends and families. At the end of the story he, in fact, gives support to the one time 'psycho' when he realises how guilty the phone caller has been. The **resolution absent: neglect** codes occur in 'The nurse's suicide' just as the 'explanation' codes with **neglect** as their focus were seen to do. They also refer to the staff neglecting one another's distress as work supervenes.

On the whole, the **failure** codes are concentrated in no particular story. They are present in 'The sad wife killer', and this supports the argument made earlier that in this story a representation of *weakness* is constructed. The **resolution absent: failure** classification also appears in 'The visit to the mental hospital', where a woman fails to find her absent husband whom she suspects of having had a nervous breakdown. Other instances of this category are scattered throughout the transcript adding to the prevailing sense of negativity in representations of people with mental health problems. Unsurprisingly, there are no instances of **resolution present: success**.

There are two and a half times as many open endings as there are endings which signify narrative closure. This will be taken up in the next section. However, one more point needs to be made here. Strands which end with resolution can function as a type of explanation. So, in 'The killer with a psychiatric history' the final frame takes the form of a conversation between two police officers.

#### VISUAL

Front of hotel, forensics, PO, DI comes out, another DI enters frame, both MW.

#### VERBAL

DI1: Ian

DI2: Hello, Jack, how are you? Fill me in.

DI1: Morgan's at the hospital now. He looks fit for all three killings. He's an alcoholic with a history of psychiatric disorder, no previous for violent offences.

DI2: How did you get onto him?

DI1: Your Sergeant R found personal possessions belonging to the victim, PH. I suppose he could have found her body by the railway line and robbed it. Much more likely he killed her before dumping her there.

DI2: And our girl AA is very nearly his latest victim.

DI1: Yeah. Must have put up one heck of a fight. Otherwise.

#### **ITV, THE BILL, THURSDAY 28TH MAY**

This story ends with the restoration of law and order. At the same time, it offers an *explanation* for the behaviour of the killer. Or rather, it offers several explanations one of which is the existence of a psychiatric disorder. Another is alcoholism and the third is the general rationale that Morgan is good for nothing as a character. He is mad, bad and alcoholic. Three of the twelve stories ended with this type of explanatory closure with the other two invoking stress and trauma. The placing of these explanations at the end of the story gives them rather more weight than they would have had as part of narrative explanation/description. This brings us on to the question of the narrative structures in the transcript and this is the subject of the next section of the chapter.

#### **Narrative structure**

Narrative structure will be considered at two levels. Firstly, at the level of the strand and then in terms of the overall narrative structure of the stories. Table 8.4 overleaf gives the results for narrative sequences within strands.

<b>Narrative Sequence</b>	<b>No.</b>
<b>A2/B1/D1</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>A2/B1/D2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>A2/B1</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>B1/D1</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>B1/D2</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>B1 only or B3 only</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>A2 only</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>D1 only</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>D2 only</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>

*Table 8.4: Frequency distribution of types of narrative sequence for the Drama data.*

Table 8.4 has some similarities with the corresponding Table in the previous chapter, although here there is a greater variety of narrative sequences. There is a high proportion of strands which lack any discernible beginning or end. These are the 'B1 only' or 'B3 only' strands which can, as with Mrs Bishop's story, consist mainly in gossip but are more likely to begin by picking up where a previous strand left off and end without any form of conclusion. As was seen with the excerpt from 'Running amok in the waiting room',

the lack of structure can also participate in the construction of a signification of chaos, rule breaking and violence that is out of control. The strands which consist in the narrative fragment **A2/B1** also show this lack of identifiable ending to their story-telling.

As with the News, and consonant with the findings from *Coronation Street*, the dominant narrative sequence is **A2/B1/D1**. The strand begins with a disruption, the story continues through description, often with forces of equilibrium and disequilibrium at play, but the conclusion of the strand is a failure to restore social harmony. We know from Table 8.3 that some of these are strands which end in 'cliff hangers'. These are said to be characteristic of the open text of soap opera but are certainly evident here in drama series as well.

The lack of narrative closure in the data thus comes from two sources - strands which have no discernible ending, and strands which do come to a conclusion but leave social harmony disrupted. These account for 75% of the strands which again casts doubt on the proposition that madness will be made familiar on television by being anchored within a definitive narrative structure. Either strands are *structureless* or they dwell upon the absence of personal and social harmony by invoking negative meanings of **danger**, **sickness**, **neglect** and **failure**.

Since most of the present data comes from drama *series*, it is arguably more sensible to look at the overall structure of the total story as it unfolds throughout an episode. As pointed out in Chapter 4, although series feature some characters from week to week, there are always characters specific to the episode whose story is told and who disappear with the ending of that episode. Of the twelve stories in the data, ten came from series. Table 8.4 shows that these stories include strands which focus on a disruptive beginning,

and strands whose sole purpose is to narrate an ending. The stories were therefore inspected as to their overall narrative structure.

When this was done, it was found that five of the twelve stories exhibited an overall structure of the form **A2/B1/D2**. Interestingly, the five included the two soap opera stories which goes against current theories of soap opera and is at variance with what was found for *Coronation Street*. In 'The threatening phone calls' there is a definite conclusion as Joe supports the caller and decides to shield him from the police. An example of overall closure was also given in the extract from *The Bill* on page 264.

Further examination of these stories showed that they contained nested narratives - strands within them exhibited an **A/B/D** sequence but which usually ended without closure. For instance, 'Psychiatry as comedy' has seven nested strands without resolution (and one with resolution) and 'The threatening phone calls' has seventeen without resolution (and four with). However, both of these stories' final conclusion consists in firm restoration of social harmony. This structure is easy to understand. As the narrative proceeds, little enigmas are set up to keep the story moving and the audience interested. At the end of the tale, however, the main themes are brought together in a fashion that leaves a settled narrative world. These five stories, then, place madness within a familiar narrative form.

However, more stories lack than exhibit a form that finally complies with the strictures of narrative theory. And here we have a problem. Of the seven, six are from the medical series *Casualty*. No story from this series conforms to the theoretically typical narrative form. It is therefore difficult to know whether an unstructured form is typical of representations of madness or typical of this particular programme. This is an example of the point made in previous chapters concerning the possibility that the lack of typical



narrative sequences found in this data may apply to television representations as a whole rather than just to representations of madness. A control study would be necessary to resolve this issue once and for all, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis. What can be said is that other studies of television have found strong evidence of the narrative forms expected by narrative theory (eg Silverstone, 1981). This would suggest that the lack of structure found in the present research is more typical of representations of madness than of other social objects.

It can also be argued that the representations of madness in this data that most clearly conform to the present theory have the least compliance with narrative theory. That is, representations which involve a *multiplicity* of meanings and which also construct *dangerous* meanings are more likely to breach the principles of narrative form. So, 'The visit to the mental hospital' has just two nested unresolved strands and 'Running amok in the waiting room' has one. These stories include strands without form (B1 only strands) and they end without the restoration of social harmony. An example of lack of structure from 'Running amok in the waiting room' has been given on page 254-255 and below it can be seen that this story concludes with a dispute between Charlie, the nurse who has been punched, and a police officer.

#### VISUAL

Charlie being attended to, enter doctor,  
police officer present, MW

Exit Dr. PO MCU

#### VERBAL

Charlie: Thanks, lovely job.

Dr: How are you?

Charlie: Sore.

Dr: Yeah, we're doing an HIV status on him.

	Charlie: Yeah. Yes.
	Dr: So I'll leave you to it then.
	Po: You did a hell of a job.
Two shot MW	Charlie: Yeah. Can we get on?
	PO: Look, are you sure you want to prosecute this loony? It would save a lot of time and money if we committed him.
	Charlie: Not to mention the paperwork, eh?
	PO: Alright, point taken. But we'll be needing photos. (Speaking into radio) Moss receiving
Two shot CU	At present on detail. I'll contact you as soon as it's completed.
Charlie MCU, PO in frame	Charlie: Look, I'm not going anywhere.
	PO: Unfortunately, our job is as threadbare as yours.
PO MCU, Charlie in frame	So there's no guarantee he'll come today.
	Charlie: Tell him it's a wedding.
Two shot MW	

#### BBC1, CASUALTY, SATURDAY 4TH JULY

In this extract, which closes the story, Charlie and the Police Officer argue about the proper disposition of the man. The Police Officer categorises him as *mad* and Charlie proposes that he is *bad*. In the extract as a whole, as was the case for the news, he is represented as mad *and* bad. On top of this there is intimation of another danger - HIV - and there is also resignation and cynicism about both the legal and the health system. This story closes, then, with at least six loose ends left unresolved. And we have seen that it is a story whose formlessness exacerbates the chaos of the content of the representation.

This is the most extreme example but 'The visit to the mental hospital' (not a *Casualty* story), 'Hysterical blindness' and 'Self-inflicted cigarette burns' also fit this analysis.

The examination of narrative has shown, as with *The News* and *Coronation Street*, a diversity of narrative forms. Some stories comply with the propositions of narrative theory and surprisingly two of these are from soap opera which showed a tighter construction than was the case for Mrs Bishop's story. However, a small majority of stories showed a distinct lack of narrative form, more so than for *Coronation Street* and coinciding with some of the items from *The News*. It has been pointed out that lack of a control analysis makes the argument that this is specific to representations of madness rather weak. However, previous analyses can be invoked to strengthen the claim. And this claim is that, in some representations, content and form together produce a representation of madness that resists familiarisation, classification and anchoring, that is dangerous both physically and semiotically and which positions the mad person as radically Other to the mainstream in the sense that I have defined it.

### **VISUAL ANALYSIS**

The analysis of the visual dimension in the drama transcript will not be as complex as that undertaken for the story of Emily Bishop. This is because there would be twelve central characters instead of one, rendering an investigation of their visual representations in relation to other characters much too complex. Rather, the method adopted is analogous to that used for the news. As with the two previous chapters, the analysis is conducted in terms of the distribution of different camera angles used to film various characters.

A priority list of various character roles was drawn up just as was done for the news. That list is: people designated mentally ill; involved others; medical personnel; police officers; other characters not covered by the previous categories; the comic 'psychiatrist'; the comic 'patients'; and comic others. People designated mentally ill are the first priority - regardless of who else is in the frame, it is their visual representation which is counted. Involved others occupy a structurally similar position to Mr Sugden in *Coronation Street*, are usually relatives and are the second priority. So, if an involved other is portrayed with a medic, the former is the one who is coded. And so on.

The 'Psychiatry as comedy' story was separated out because otherwise all personnel would have to be coded 'other'. I was interested to know whether some of the comic effect of this story derived from the similarities to, and differences from, 'real' patients and medical personnel in the visual dimension of the representations.

The results of the visual analysis are given in Table 8.5. Figures are given in percentages where the denominator consists of column totals. The codes for the camera angles can be found in Chapter 5.

The first thing to note about Table 8.5 concerns the neutral shots of Medium Close-Up and Medium Wide. For all characters except those designated mentally ill, these shots account for two thirds or more of the visual representations. For some categories, for instance medical personnel, the figure is as high as 80%. This is consistent with what was found for The News and *Coronation Street*, and demonstrates that mentally distressed people alone of all character roles are unlikely to be filmed with neutral camera angles. These

Camera Angle	Mentally Ill	Involved Others	Medics	Police Officers	Others	Comic 'Psych'	Comic 'Patnts'	Comic Others
ECU	23.4	7.6	0.00	10.4	2.08	2.8	8.6	0.00
CU	22.9	13.2	17.1	16.7	9.0	15.5	3.8	11.8
MCU	16.0	29.1	32.9	31.3	54.2	33.8	53.3	39.7
MW	10.3	36.3	45.3	35.4	18.8	46.5	20.0	45.6
W/A	14.7	11.5	3.9	0.00	10.4	0.00	12.4	1.5
Tracking	10.4	0.8	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.9	0.00
Other	2.3	1.2	0.9	6.3	5.6	1.4	0.00	1.5
Raw N	175	251	117	48	144	71	105	68

*Table 8.5: Percentage distribution for camera angle by type of character for the Drama data.*

filmic conventions have been argued to have the meaning of neutrality in previous chapters. They mirror the photography used with 'neutral' characters such as news presenters; the camera distances itself from the object of its gaze by dissipating attention from facial expression; often (though this has not been demonstrated systematically here), the character is filmed in the context of social two-shots or group shots; and the shots allow background to be shown, sometimes background contextualising a particular profession such as doctors or police officers. These neutral shots are the typical ones in the data, except when it comes to those designated mentally ill.

Let us turn now to the Extreme Close-Up and the Close-Up shot. As argued before, these shots, by virtue of their framing of the face alone, carry significations of emotionality, scrutiny, isolation, dislocation and objectification. In the drama transcript, mentally distressed characters are filmed with these angles nearly half of the time. This is more frequently than was the case for the other two genres and further elaborates the representation of dislocation and emotional scrutiny across this drama transcript. It can also be suggested that it augments the appeal to *voyeurism* that was argued to characterise some representations in the content analysis. Further, it can be proposed that the use of the tracking shot carries this meaning, as the camera voyeuristically follows the mentally disturbed character. Examples of the use of these shots can be found in the extracts that have been presented in this Chapter. Without overstating the point, this type of filmic representation is consistent with the form and content of the meanings that have been argued to characterise such stories as 'The visit to the mental hospital' and 'Running amok in the waiting room'. These dimensions together condense a range of dangerous and negative meanings of madness that situates it as Other, both in the context of television representations and in the social world which these claim to portray.

It is evident, however, that there is greater use of the Extreme Close-Up and Close-Up in this genre as a whole when compared to the other genres that have been analysed. Involved others are filmed this way 20% of the time which is a higher figure than for the analogous Mr Sugden. It appears that the Extreme Close-Up and the Close-Up are more characteristic of drama. These shots also signal emotionality and tension and may heighten the dramatic narrative. At the same time, even the involved others have only one-third of the ECUs of characters designated mentally ill and this difference is well exemplified in the extract from 'The bulimic dancer' on page 252. Although there are ECUs of the sister, it is Abby who is more consistently filmed this way, thus heightening her distress and dwelling on her difference.

Police Officers are also filmed with ECUs and CUs in this data which distinguishes it from the pattern of shots on the news. This appears to be because on the news Police Officers are shown investigating, warning and summing up, whereas in drama these shots characterise scenes of *interrogation*. In 'The sad wife killer', both suspect and interrogator are shown with Extreme Close-Up shots. In shot-reverse-shot sequences the suspect is shown in distress and the interrogator thrusts his face forward into the camera signifying commitment and a determined effort to get at the truth. However, it must be noted that the total number of shots of Police Officers alone or with others is only 48 and so the actual frequency of these portrayals is low when compared with other roles.

The Close-Up is also used for medical personnel and it carries two meanings in this data. Firstly, and analogously to the situation with Police Officers, it signifies expert commitment and a desire to reveal the truth. This occurs in the case of 'The bulimic dancer' and 'The self-inflicted cigarette burns'. In the analysis of the news, a similar pattern was evident. At the same time, there are some Close-Up shots in the story of 'The

nurse's suicide' where there are a few shots of doctors and nurses in distress and blaming themselves for the tragedy. Thus understandable distress is sometimes filmed with scrutinising shots just as is disturbed distress. Interestingly, though, there is no intensification of the distress through the use of the very tight framing of the Extreme Close-Up in the case of medical personnel. At the same time, and importantly, we know the *reason* for the distress of the medical staff but for those designated mentally ill, the camera scrutinises and objectifies distress that is without apparent external cause.

A word needs to be said about Wide Angle shots. In respect of mentally ill characters, these often show a group of people where something is 'being done' to the patient. Wide angle photography characterises stories from *Casualty* where medical procedures are undertaken on the body, or more rarely the mind, of someone who is mentally distressed. So they too focus attention on the person as an object of procedures and tests and thereby have a function quite similar to the tracking shot. In addition they carry the signification of tension between care and objectification. These shots are also evident in the extract from 'The killer with a psychiatric history' reproduced on page 249. Here the wide angle shows squalor and shadow, which, as will be discussed below, indicates threat and mystery.

To turn for a moment to 'Psychiatry as comedy'. It can be seen from Table 8.5 that the fraudulent psychiatrist is filmed in a way that almost exactly parallels the filming of medical personnel in the rest of the transcript. However, the Madame's parents are *not* filmed like other 'patients' but in a more neutral fashion. It might be argued that part of the comic effect of this episode stems from a filming pattern that positions the false psychiatrist as a 'true' doctor but declines to film his 'patients' as a diegetically realistic counterpoint. Dennis, then, appears visually as the serious psychiatrist but this is undercut



by the photographing of his clients in a neutral mode. Further, we know that Dennis is not a serious person, let alone a psychiatrist, and so the camera is 'playing' in representing him as such.

With regard to the totals, it might be expected that the role of mental patient, since it is the first priority and every camera shot including someone with mental distress was counted, would have a higher total than it does. The reason for this is simple. One mentally distressed character does not appear as she is dead ('The nurse's suicide') and in 'The menacing phone call' the caller is absent until the closing strands. The high raw total for 'involved others' is due to the high profile of relatives in 'Out of character for Harold', 'The bulimic dancer', 'Self-inflicted cigarette burns' and 'The visit to the mental hospital'. Joe in 'The menacing phone calls' was also coded as an 'involved other' because he has the position of victim. The low raw total for Police Officers is accounted for by the fact that these characters were usually shown together with people designated mentally ill who have a higher analytic priority in this data. This also applies to medical personnel but there are more shots of them counted simply because of the dominance of the programme *Casualty*.

However, despite the frequent appearance of medical personnel, the only psychiatrist (or psychologist) who appears in this data is the fraudulent Dennis Tontine. Once again, we find a dearth of portrayal of psychiatric expertise, exactly the expertise that would be expected to figure frequently if the discourse of medicine was being used to anchor mental disturbance as mental *illness*. The appearance of people with psychiatric problems in medical contexts does not take this form but seems to juxtapose the physical with the mental, dwell on expertise in dealing with the physical and provide a semantically uneasy placing of mental distress in medical spaces. This is consistent with the finding that the

narrative element of 'explanation' is both very rare in the data and hardly ever gives an account of mental distress in terms of mental illness. This point will be dealt with at greater length in the Discussion.

There are two other supra-verbal elements in these representations which require comment. The first is the use of filming in shadow. This was found to be important in the pilot and is here evident in two stories - 'The killer with a psychiatric history' and 'The visit to the mental hospital'. In the pilot, it was argued that this use of very dim lighting signifies something that should not be seen, that should be hidden away. This is certainly the case here as well but there is also the representation of **threat** concerning what will become evident if the shadow is lifted. In 'The killer with a psychiatric history', the shadow allows the slow revelation of extreme squalor but also of the fact that Morgan is himself injured, stabbed in a fight with the victim who escaped. It adds to the representation of marginal existences and matrices of violence and death.

In 'The visit to the mental hospital', the wife looking for her husband is represented as terrified by the psychiatric patients. They whirl about slowly wearing white masks in a space that is only dimly lit. Overtones of violence are evident and the menacing atmosphere is made more complex by the representation of this as *therapy*. In addition to the shadow, this story features the type of eerie music that used to characterise Hollywood films about marginal people. The music and the shadow combine to produce a menacing social space which is fearful for the wife, but which she must enter if she is to find her husband. Realising that she has failed in this quest, she flees the hospital.

Eerie music also appears in 'The threatening phone calls', when Joe arranges to meet the person who is harassing him. Elaborate plans are laid lest Joe be attacked by the madman

and, right at the end of one episode of *Neighbours*, he is shown walking in the woods, looking for the caller, his lonely walk accompanied by haunting, spooky music which is used to signify threat, the unknown and the unfamiliar.

Filming in shadow and eerie music are two supra-verbal representational elements in this data. It has been argued that they add to certain significations. As stated in the methodology chapter, other elements could have been noted on the transcript but were not. For instance, the poor state of repair and disarray of some characters' clothes might be important but this was not systematically noted. It is not possible to do a 'full' transcription, something will always be missed out. Shadow and music, borrowed as they are from well-known filmic contexts and genres such as the Hollywood movie, seem to be important in adding to the meanings produced in the drama data. It is further significant that both these forms were also present in the pilot, news data.

## **CONCLUSION**

The drama transcript shows a wide dispersal of significations. Moreover, these significations contain meanings that are incompatible. They range from danger to others through danger to self to consuming distress that is dangerous to no-one to the mildly miraculous and curious to the downright hilarious. This multiplicity of meanings together with the focus on danger is consistent with the theoretical ideas put forward in Chapter 3.

This diversity of significations is also combined in diverse ways. Some combinations are familiar to television viewers, as consistent categories are brought together in a semantically settled manner. In other cases, however, the combinations of meanings are unsettled and unsettling. Significations collide rather than combine and, in the

impossibility of fixing the representations at the semiotic level, there is the implication that madness itself is contested, chaotic, unpredictable and impossible to stabilise in terms of our familiar world.

Narrative structures also exhibit this tension between the coherent, familiar tale and the formless, chaotic story that reaches no closure. In the case of the latter type, the content and the structure, or lack of it, seem to feed off one another in producing these representations where it is impossible to make the unfamiliar more familiar. In some stories, such meanings were intensified by the use of supra-verbal elements such as filming in shadow and background haunting music.

A word of caution should be entered here. It might be argued that the drama transcript, of all the genres, would be *expected* to show a diversity of meanings because it includes such different programme types. However, here we can use the 'problem' of *Casualty*'s over-representation in the data to provide a partial answer to this difficulty. For within a single programme, that is *Casualty*, there are many different representations of madness. There is the violent maniac ('Running amok in the waiting room'), the self-mutilator who is also dangerous ('Self-inflicted cigarette burns'), the self-injurer who is in no way dangerous but is distressed ('The bulimic dancer'), the mildly odd ('Wandering about in the waiting room') and the possibly miraculous ('Hysterical blindness'). This diversity of representations (as well as the diversity within each of these representations) occur within a single programme, and this makes it unlikely that the dispersal of meanings found in the drama stories is an artefact of the structure of the data set or the method of data collection. Rather, it suggests that the matrix and structures of meanings found here are intrinsic to the representation of madness on British television.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis opened with a discussion of the policy of community care and an argument that television could influence the success of that policy. After concentration on theoretical and empirical matters that has taken tens of thousands of words, it is apposite to remind ourselves of the practical context of the work. Within the policy of community care, people with a psychiatric history are enmeshed in an interpersonal and a symbolic environment. These two are not separate - the world of symbols is fully part of the interpersonal world. If that world is hostile or fearful when it comes to mental illness then psychiatric patients will be failed by the policy of community care.

Television is part of the symbolic environment. It has been seen that a few pieces of work exist which suggest that television is a powerful shaper of attitudes and actions towards people with a serious mental illness (GUMG, 1994b; Wahl, 1992; Lopez, 1991), and that the effects of this are far from benign. Fear of people with schizophrenia, and a belief in their differentness, has been demonstrated by Levey and Howells (1995). A MIND (The National Association for Mental Health, 1994) survey of 1,000 people showed that the public feared people with mental health problems. Levey and Howells (1995) demonstrated that television is complicit in this. Heavy viewers of fictional television were more likely to believe that people with a mental health problem were unpredictable and these heavy viewers accounted for nearly half the sample. And as the Glasgow University Media Group (1994b) also showed, information and images from television can be more important than personal experience in influencing attitudes towards people with

a serious mental illness. The most prevalent of these attitudes entailed a belief in the dangerousness of people with mental health problems.

These findings and arguments raise an obvious question - 'what is to be done?'. This is the subject of the postscript which follows and will also be touched upon in this Chapter.

To turn to the central points of this discussion. One of the main objectives of this thesis has been to provide a description of representations of madness on British television that would be more detailed and more sensitive to meaning than what has gone before. A discussion of the findings of the thesis will show whether this has been achieved. However, as has been said repeatedly, the findings could not have been delineated without the intervention of theory via the instrument of the coding frame. No data speaks for itself either at the moment of collection or the moment of the analysis of results.

Theory has two positions in this work. First, we can assess the theories used in terms of the data collected and analysed. The principal conceptual framework used is the theory of social representations, together with the developments I proposed in Chapter 3. There is also the work from media studies which has had an important influence (see Chapter 4). We need to consider whether or not the analysis of the data supports the various theoretical propositions.

There is a further theoretical issue here. This is the question of the possible integration of work from media studies and work from social psychology. In the light of what has gone before, the question can be posed as to whether it is possible to produce a synthesis of these two theoretical approaches in order better to analyse the media.

In between theory and data comes method. Method is shaped by theory and regulates data, although not in any inflexible way. The methods used in this thesis have not been entirely orthodox. Quantitative content analysis has been an important part of the technique. However, tables of numbers always need to be interpreted and in our case the interpretation was supplemented by qualitative illustrative quotations from the data. The ramifications of this will be discussed in this chapter. The important point to make here is that theory, data and method are inter-connected in the research process.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the empirical findings and then move on to assess these findings against the two main theoretical approaches used. The issue of integrating social psychology and media studies will then be addressed, and attention will be paid to possible problems in such an endeavour. Methodological issues arising from the thesis will then be considered and I shall conclude with some pointers towards future research. Throughout the discussion possible objections to the arguments in the thesis will be dealt with.

### **THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

Both Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 suggested that there would be a tension in representations of madness on television between portrayals which ascribe a fixed, familiar meaning to madness and representations where the meaning of madness would be dangerous as well as mobile and contradictory. This tension was captured in the coding frame which contained both familiar and unfamiliar meanings, dangerous meanings and safe meanings and a multiplicity of categories. The focus on narrative structure, and particularly narrative closure, allowed a further exploration of the structure and content of the semantic field of madness on British television.

It has been seen that the tension between safe and diversely dangerous meanings tends towards an emphasis on variety, multiplicity and danger. Meanings vary both across genres - the meaning of madness in the news is quite different to that in *Coronation Street* - and within genres - there is no single meaning in the news, the soap opera or drama. Madness is a contested social object at the representational level of television.

Nonetheless, there are recurrent themes and I intend to discuss these before coming back to the issue of multiplicity and contradiction. These themes are: violence; negativity; lack of explanation and the peculiar position of mental health professionals; the form of stories and a style of photography which marks the mad person as different. Henceforth I shall call this differentiating photography.

### **Violence and Crime**

Danger, violence and violent crime are the dominant meanings of madness on television for both the news and drama (leaving aside the ambiguous position of comedy). By contrast, crime and law and order are absent in Mrs Bishop's story on *Coronation Street*. This still leaves danger as the dominant meaning of madness for the transcript as a whole. It was seen in the analysis of the news that 60% of people designated mentally ill were portrayed as violent and that this is a massive overestimation of the level of violence amongst psychiatric patients (cf. Monahan, 1992). For drama, out of the twelve stories, two people killed (one three times), three caused serious physical harm, one person was highly threatening and carried out violence towards property and one group of psychiatric patients was portrayed in a menacing fashion. The representations of madness as dangerous could cross usual contextual boundaries as when violence was shown in a hospital setting.



It was possible to show, for the news as a whole, that the gross over-representation of violence amongst people designated mentally ill is not because television in general focuses on spectacular violent crime. Figures showed that this is not the case and that the extent of these representations is specific to madness. In other words, violent crime on the news is far more likely to implicate people with a mental health problem than those without and this is in contrast to the evidence which shows that the incidence of violent crime is only slightly higher amongst mentally ill people (Monahan, 1992).

*It is impossible to overestimate the very strong association which British television proposes between madness and violent crime.* From murder (often multiple or involving children) to manslaughter to rape to threatening with a shotgun to grievous bodily harm or violence to property, mentally ill people are implicated in violence, and this is the case on *both* factual *and* fictional television.

This commonality between fact and fiction should not surprise us. It has been seen that factual television uses conventions of drama especially in crime reconstruction. It has also been argued that generic boundaries in television are breaking down (Feuer, 1992). In Chapter 4, arguments about intertextuality were considered: amongst other things, this concept speaks to the borrowing of themes and conventions between different genres.

Two of the individuals who were portrayed as violent were women. There are many arguments in the literature about the relations of gender and madness, gender and crime and the psychiatric treatment of female offenders (eg. Chessler, 1974; Allen, 1987). One, on the news, was said to be a compulsive arsonist and had set fire to a house, thereby killing two children. She then pretended to have tried to save them and there is library footage of her in distress before indictment for the crime. This story has a striking

resemblance to one in the pilot study where a woman did exactly the same thing, strangling rather than burning the children, but also appearing on television pleading for them before her arrest. This figure of the mad woman child killer is especially threatening because she purports to care. It juxtaposes evil with the expectation that woman is protector, carer and supporter of the child. When she is designated mad the representations of madness and evil coalesce into an especially frightening and Other figure.

The other violent woman is the central figure of the *Casualty* story 'Self-inflicted cigarette burns'. She steals a bottle of poison from the hospital and gives it to her violent husband in his coffee. He is extremely ill as a result. Hers is the figure of the mentally distressed woman driven to violence by a violent relationship. She may also be positioned as driven mad by violence, a point that will be returned to below when looking at the narrative element of explanation.

This last example shows that the violent world of mental illness does not stop at violence by psychiatric patients themselves. The woman with self-inflicted cigarette burns is shown as terrified and physically injured by her husband's violence. On the news, a psychiatric nurse is charged with multiple rapes of women with learning disabilities. In the prison stories, mentally disordered offenders are driven to self-injury and suicide attempts by the violent world of the prison or Young Offenders Institution. For television, then, both factual and fictional, mad people live in a world of violence as well as being violent themselves. Even their supposed carers may attack.

This, then, is the first point to make about the representation of madness on British television. These representations are filled with violence, danger and threat. Despite the

fact that the data very definitely contain multiple meanings, the theme of violence and menace is predominant in two of the three genres. This finding is consistent with work described in Chapter 2 (GUMG, 1994a; Signorelli, 1989; Wahl, 1992) and adds to the North American research by considering factual as well as fictional images. In the next chapter (the Postscript) I shall consider the implications of this for the social effects of television.

### **Negative Representations**

In the previous three chapters, Tables 6.5, 7.1 and 8.1 described the content analyses at the most detailed level of the coding frame. These tables show that positive representations of mental illness are conspicuous by their absence. The exception is the network of help that surrounds Emily Bishop. Throughout this thesis it has been stressed that what is absent in a representation is as important as what is present. Thus the fact that positive meanings hardly ever occur may be just as significant in shaping the meanings of mental distress as the actual representations themselves. The semantic field of madness on television is one of danger, strangeness, the maniac, distress, sickness and so on but not success or ability to cope. The low percentage in the coding frame's categories of 'miscellaneous', the dustbin classifications, makes it unlikely that positive categories are hidden here.

Previous work (eg. Signorelli, 1989) showed how people with mental illness are represented as failures far more often than as successes. Failure was a category for the coding of the resolution of narratives and here too it was seen that failure was more common than success at the close of stories involving mental illness. Such success as did occur was infrequently ascribed to a person designated mentally ill. The resolution categories show that mad people remain failures, sick, neglected and a problem for law

and order. They are not healthy, supported, successful and on the side of justice. Where these positive resolutions to stories occur, it is usually other people and not the mad to whom they are attributed.

It is worth considering such positive stories as do exist. There were two on the news and one ambiguous one. Firstly, a young man who had been a patient in an adolescent psychotherapy unit is shown campaigning against the unit's closure. He has by this time made a success of his life and this is credited to the institution. Secondly, a depressed man is shown in employment having availed himself of the services of a charity which helps people with a psychiatric history get back to work. The item marks a campaign by MIND (the National Association for Mental Health) to improve employment opportunities for people with mental health problems.

Both these items have positive features but, at the same time, they dwell at length on the problems the two men have had. In the case of the campaigner these problems include violence. These items do not undermine the idea of mental illness as a 'master status' (Scheff, 1966) because they focus on the nature of the men's psychological problems. At the same time, out of the 43 news stories they are the most positive. This means that 5% of stories on the news are not entirely negative when it comes to mental health.

There is a point here to make about representations of employment. The two characters just described are the only ones in the data set portrayed as employed. No other mentally ill character is represented as employed and this again accords with Signorelli (1989) and other work by the Gerbner team. Again, we can suggest that this is a misrepresentation. Despite stigma and other handicaps, a good proportion of those with psychiatric histories live lives not so different from those without. The representation of lack of employment,

like other aspects of these negative representations, accentuates a difference that is a problem into a category of absolute Other. The mad person lives on the margins.

In respect of positive items, the story of the man who shot the lorry driver who killed his son is more complex. There was no doubt that he illegally obtained a shotgun and seriously wounded the lorry driver with it. There is no doubt about the violence and, again, the context of violence in which the story unfolds. However, the reporting and the ultimate verdict by the jury - acquittal on all charges - suggests that his actions were understandable. Anybody could be driven mad by this experience and - and - mad people *are* violent. The story does not break the link between madness and violence, but it does portray the *madness* as understandable. Interestingly, this is the one story where a psychiatric expert offers an explanation for the man's violence.

The other story in the data which has its positive side is that of Mrs Bishop's breakdown in *Coronation Street*. This is positive because of the predominance of help by others in the Street, especially Mr Sugden. She is not shunned or excluded, she is assisted when her behaviour gets out of hand. But this is not unambiguous. In the first place, Mrs Bishop's character during her breakdown is the reverse of her normal self, where she is well organised, efficient, successful and helpful towards others. She retains nothing positive in her character as she experiences her depression. Secondly, Mr Sugden's 'help' is viewed with caution by the rest of the Street and they rather see it as interfering and controlling. Finally, the filming of Mrs Bishop was seen to intensify her strangeness by marking her off as different from and Other to everybody else. The dialogue of Mrs Bishop's story may have been a relatively benign representation of an episode of madness but the photography showed visual tropes of isolation and dislocation. This will be discussed again presently.

If the news has 5% 'positive' stories, the drama transcript has none. Table 8.1 shows very few units for the positive categories of help, success and cope and Table 8.3 shows little restoration of social harmony. There is nothing here to lighten up the litany of danger, sickness, mania, strangeness and distress. (There is, of course, the comedy story but that will be treated later and it is not self-evidently a light-hearted look at psychiatry.)

The conclusion must be that representations of madness on British television are overwhelmingly negative. Mentally ill people have hardly any redeeming features and are identified only in terms of their madness and its violent context. Television can participate in the creation and maintenance of stigma and here it does so.

### **Explanation and the Role of Expertise**

One of the truly surprising things about the findings presented in the last three chapters is the tiny role given to explanations of madness. When units were coded, less than 5% were given over to explanation of mental ill health and some 'explanation' units were about physical sickness. Even allowing for the rather tight definition of the category of explanation, we have to conclude that British television describes, dwells on, elaborates, and watches madness, but makes little attempt to explain it. Had a documentary been included in the data, this might have been different. But the absence of any documentary material in the two months of data collection is itself telling. Several documentary-style programmes with a feature format were watched but nothing at all on mental health was screened during this time.

It is not the case that television *never* attempts to account for madness. However, it would seem that reasoning about psychiatry and explanation of mental ill health are confined to special 'seasons'. Jonathan Miller presented a season on madness on BBC2 in 1991 and

in 1995 BBC2 screened a special season called *States of Mind*. These special seasons include a great deal of explanation and accounting for madness quite unlike the data used in this study. It is interesting that explanation is concentrated in special programmes, broadcast on a minority channel, but that routine airtime contains a significant proportion of mental health stories that are almost completely without representations of mental health experts or any attempt to account for actions, thoughts or feelings when someone is designated mad.

We can try to understand this phenomenon further by looking at the role of mental health professionals in the data, since they might be expected to adopt an explanatory role. In the first place, their number is low - there are only four. Three appear on the news and one in the story of Emily Bishop. The medical series *Casualty* shows no psychiatrists in six stories ostensibly about mental health. Three times they are referred to but they never actually appear. The low number of mental health professionals is quite consistent with the small proportion of units coded 'explanation', as experts are the ones who usually are accorded an explanatory function. Again it suggests that television takes a voyeuristic role with respect to poor mental health, dwelling on madness without the intervention of psychiatric expertise. Still less will it feature patients themselves reflecting on their breakdowns and how these relate to the rest of their lives.

What of the position of the four that do appear? A psychologist is presented on the news to explain the behaviour of the man who shot the lorry driver who killed his son. This psychologist is the *only* mental health professional with a definite explanatory function in the whole data set. The other two mental health professionals on the news have actually *broken* the law. A psychiatric nurse is arrested for the rapes of women with learning difficulties and the probable murder of one of them. Again we see the violent context in

which mental health is represented. Secondly, in the overturning of a verdict in a terrorism conviction, a psychiatrist is accused of misleading the courts at the original trial. Turning to *Coronation Street*, the representation of Mrs Bishop's hospitalisation includes a chat with a psychiatrist. This doctor is not given an explanatory role but offers art therapy and a cup of tea. There is no mention of medication, tests or examination. She does not appear in the usual role of medical professional. The representation of this psychiatrist could of course be seen as a modern portrayal of social psychiatry and this is consistent with the way in which Mrs Bishop is helped by those around her. The point for present purposes, however, is that this psychiatrist offers no explanation for Mrs Bishop's condition.

In fact, the most extended representation of 'psychiatry' in the data is humorous. In 'Psychiatry as comedy', Denis Tontine the ne'er do well is dragooned into impersonating a psychiatrist by his brothel-owning friend. Charged with the care of her straitlaced parents, and impersonating her husband whom she has said is the psychiatrist, he cures their repressions and they fall in love again. The story is played out with the maximum amount of banter and hilarity whose net effect is to discredit psychiatry. The way 'psychiatry' is described by Denis adds to this - he goes with his patients for a couple of 'tinnies' (cans of lager) and allows them to 'let it all hang out'. He analyses the mother's dreams in a non-psychoanalytic way by saying that a naked male gorilla represents the teddy bear she always wanted. But the 'interpretation' of the dream is successful in lifting sexual repression. If Denis can be a successful 'psychiatrist' then surely the real thing is an extended joke.

The location of psychiatry in a humorous context is not unique to this story. Comic representations were found by the Glasgow University Media Group (1994a) and one of



the films screened during the data collection period was also a look at psychiatry from the point of view of comedy. Freud (1905) said that which makes us laugh contains an element of disquiet.

One sole expert; two mental health professionals who break the law, one extremely violently; an anodyne psychiatrist; a long dose of discrediting humour. This exemplifies the representation of psychiatry on British television in a period of eight weeks. What are we to make of it? Television seems to describe and elaborate a contradictory range of meanings of madness. It watches madness in both the visual and verbal dimensions. Visually it could be said to be voyeuristic. It dwells on danger and distress and refuses to resolve them. In this context, explanation and expertise has no place or has a place inflected by the representations of the mad person as such. Mad people are criminal - so are some mental health professionals. Denis Tontine is touched with a sense of bizarreness just as are mentally ill people. The low incidence of explanation and expertise but their inflection with the world of madness when they do appear are consonant with a representational field which dwells on difference and eschews rational argument. Psychiatrists could be expected to reason about madness but in these representations such reasoning has no place.

A linked point concerns the position of medicine in the data. Social scientists (eg. Sedgwick, 1982) tend to argue that the medical model dominates the explanation, diagnosis and treatment of madness in our society. But this is not so in these data. Indeed, medicine has only a loose association with madness. It was seen in the drama data that medical personnel focused on the *physical* condition of those designated mentally unwell and that medical psychiatric discourse had little purchase on the events depicted. Whilst this was slightly less true of the news, it remains the case that medical discourse has a

very uneasy relation to mental ill health in the data. This, I would argue, is consistent with the lack of explanation and the curious role given to mental health experts. And this in turn is compatible with the descriptive, sensationalist and voyeuristic dimensions of this text on madness.

I do not mean to argue that there are media producers who 'intend' to preclude explanation and expertise. It would appear to be the result of the nature of the representational field that this happens. That is, its focus on description, elaboration and, to a degree, voyeurism. The *consequence*, for the representations and their effects, is that madness remains bizarre and confusing, not made familiar by explanation and not assisted or ameliorated by experts.

### **Narrative Form**

The analysis in the last three chapters showed that there is a great variety of narrative sequences in the data and a predominant lack of narrative closure. Nevertheless, there is a tension between some stories, in all genres, which take the classical narrative form (Todorov, 1977) and those which depart from it and, especially, eschew closure.

It was said in previous chapters that there is a problem in interpreting these results. It could be that viewers are familiar with all the narrative sequences that were discovered and, moreover, that this variety is not specific to madness. These are not issues which can be finally resolved here. It can be suggested, however, that madness is one social object where the classical narrative structure appears only infrequently. In particular, the common lack of narrative closure is consistent with what has been said in the last section about explanation and expertise. Madness is infrequently given a neat and tidy resolution. Stories end in problems for law and order, failure, sickness, neglect and many other

troubling meanings. This is not the classical form of narrative sequence or structure and the classical form has been found on television by other authors (eg Silverstone, 1981; 1985).

The lack of classical narrative sequence in the stories can also be set against the empirical findings of Livingstone (1990; 1991) and Graber (1988). These authors showed that narrative and fixed schemata have a psychological reality for viewers. It can then be said that madness disturbs these psychological structures. The role of narrative will be discussed again shortly.

### **Differentiating Photography**

It was seen in all three genres that were empirically analysed that people designated mentally ill on television are filmed differently to all other characters that appear. They are routinely photographed with the scrutinising, voyeuristic shots of the close-up and the extreme close-up. Other characters are more often filmed with medium close-up and medium wide shots. These are the neutral and even authoritative shots typical of the news presenter and the expert but also the shots of sociality where groups of people are shown. Mad people are more often denied the shots of neutrality and sociality and are filmed alone in a way that isolates and even dislocates them from social life.

A very detailed analysis of visual images was possible for the soap opera story in *Coronation Street*. It was seen that Emily Bishop was filmed alone and in close-up and extreme close-up far more frequently than either the other main character, Mr Sugden, or other characters in the Street. It was also seen that the filming techniques marked Mrs Bishop's difference more starkly than was the case for the dialogue. They augmented the meaning of strangeness that was found in the content analysis. On the other hand, Mr

Sugden, who in the content analysis was very involved with Emily Bishop, was visually presented as totally neutral. Her difference was exaggerated but his involvement was played down. The visual mode in this soap opera is a potent bearer of meanings.

Mrs Bishop's story also allows us to deal with one possible objection to the visual analyses. It might be said that mad people are filmed alone and in close-up because they are the principal characters in the stories. In fact, this is not always the case but still the objection must be dealt with. It was seen in the visual analysis of *Coronation Street* that there were differences in the filming of Mrs Bishop as between the period leading up to her hospitalisation and the period after her discharge. Although in the second period her story begins to intertwine with other stories in the Street, she is still the principal character in all the images that were analysed. The filming techniques, however, position her like everyone else. There is a predominance of social shots. These shots bear meaning - they signify her recovery and attempt to get back to her normal self. It is because she is mentally ill in the period leading up to her hospitalisation that she is visually marked as different, not because she is the principal character. And it is because she is recovering in the period after her discharge that she is visually integrated with other characters, not because she is no longer the principal character.

It can be argued that the visual image of mad people on television is a potent conveyer of meaning. Close-up shots can signify danger or emotionality, distress or strangeness depending on the context. But they do not signify neutrality, sociality, success still less authority. In the visual mode, television marks the mad person off as different. Of course, other characters on television are filmed with these shots. It can be suggested that they always focus on emotionality but that, in terms of most characters, this emotionality is explicable in terms of *external* events which cause joy, grief, fear and so on. For the

mad person there are no external causes, the scrutinising shots are focusing on internal, often inexplicable, events.

### **Diversity and Multiple Meanings**

Diversity of meanings and multiple meanings exist in this data set between genres, within genres, within stories and strands and within camera frames. There is no single fixed meaning of madness, no robust anchor that can be put down. Rather there is a mobile and often contradictory set of meanings. This can easily be seen by inspecting Tables 6.5, 7.1 and 8.1 where the pattern of meanings varies across the three tables and where there is also a diversity of significations within each of the tables. Despite the consistent themes just discussed, the representational field that constructs madness is various, contested and contradictory. This is consonant with what has already been said about explanation and expertise.

The question of diversity will be treated at greater length in the next section of this chapter. For the moment one particular argument can be considered. It might be suggested that although meanings are diverse they combine to tell coherent stories. This form of combination does occur. It is true of 'Menacing phone calls' in the drama data where a 'maniac' threatens and the police are called. Here three meanings are combined in a settled way, although there is still plenty of danger and suspense in the drama, augmented by supra verbal elements such as haunting music.

Another way in which meanings can combine is in the form of competing for control of the narrative. This is what happens when the story is structured as a mystery or enigma, as was the case with Mrs Bishop in *Coronation Street*. Both internal to the drama and in the conversations that surrounded it, there were competing accounts of what was wrong

with Emily. Here multiple meanings vie for dominance of the story. This is not so settled a representation, at least not until the nature of her distress becomes evident. Of course, many stories on television are structured as enigmas but here we have a form of this that represents madness as a break down of the familiar behaviour of a familiar character and the construction of her strangeness through a range of possible significations.

The final way in which diverse meanings can combine is through frank juxtaposition of contradiction. In 'Running amok in the waiting room', or 'The visit to the mental hospital' or some of the stories on the news from which illustrative quotations were given in Chapter 6, meanings collide rather than combine to tell a coherent tale. There is a transgression of narrative norms and the representations construct chaos, unpredictability and danger. Violence enters the medical space or weakness and distress are evident in the murder enquiry. Here madness is represented as a world cast free of anchors.

Diversity and multiple meanings result in yet another dimension of signification when it comes to madness. This is the representation of mad people as *unpredictable*. As meanings supplant each other, vie for control of the story or even result in chaos, the viewer does not know what the person designated mad is going to do next. As soon as madness is pinned down to one category of meaning, that category is lost and a new one, equally fragile, appears. Levey and Howells (1995) most recently showed unpredictability to be significant in the public's view of schizophrenia although they were not the first to do so (Nunnally, 1961). They also showed a belief in unpredictability to be associated with rejection and avoidance. Here we can say that the very form of the television text on madness, its contests between diverse significations and its absence of solid anchors, produces a representation where unpredictability is a central dimension.

Danger, distress, strangeness, mania, neglect, sickness, comedy, victims, failure, lack of capacity and so on. These are the diverse meanings through which madness is represented on British television. The question can be asked - do other social objects partake of such multiplicity? That is a matter for empirical investigation. However, two points can be made. Firstly, it was seen in the News that three stories about *physical* illness were internally consistent as to their meanings and also offered the positive dimension of self-help. Secondly, both social and cognitive psychology as well as narrative theory would lead us to expect that representations would be more settled, fixed and anchored than has been found here. These theories have empirical backing and this supports the argument that the representation of madness on television is different to other areas of social life. This would seem a good point to turn to the first consideration of theory.

## **THEORY AND DATA**

### **The theory of social representations - making the unfamiliar more familiar**

The theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1984a; 1984b; 1993) leads us to expect that novel or unfamiliar social objects will be brought into the representational fold and given an anchor and an image. Madness is not a novel social object but Community Care is. Community Care has produced a contested field with different experts saying different things about madness and different authorities having different ideas and practices concerning care. In this situation, the theory of social representations would suppose that in everyday life and in the media these contradictions would be subdued and anchored in the field of the already familiar. Narrative theory, to a degree, would concur with this.

In Chapter 3, I suggested that madness is distinct and that it is unlikely to be made familiar in the way usually proposed. The unfamiliar will be kept unfamiliar and the reason for this is fear. This collective fear may stem from the days of incarceration - if

people are locked up behind barred windows, they must be dangerous. We have found strong evidence of danger in the television representations. However, this cannot be the only reason. For at least five hundred years the mad have been feared and cast out and the theories considered in Chapter 3 concerning Otherness have offered some explanations for this. *They will be returned to shortly.*

It was proposed in Chapters 3 and 4 that there would be a tension in representations of madness on British television. On the one hand, madness would be anchored in terms of familiar categories and, on the other, the anchoring process would fail. Both these have been found. Madness is anchored in terms of the familiar but this familiarity is dangerous and negative. The clearest way in which the meaning of madness is fixed on British television is through the category of danger. The other consistent theme is negativity. These anchors do not provide a psychologically settled world. They are reminiscent of the work of Jodelet (1991) where villagers continued to fear at least some of their lodgers, and this fear was also manifest in their everyday behaviours.

Denied the possibility of fixity, madness seems to lack anchors. In a sense, madness *is* lack of fixity, this is what it represents. The portrayals of madness on British television construct it as mobile and contested in meaning, as confused and confusing. Multiple meanings move between genres, within genres, within stories and within camera shots - it is within this contested representational field that madness takes its place. The centrality of danger, unpredictability and the multiplicity of meanings found in this research supports the proposition put forward in Chapter 3 that madness resists safe classification. And if representing involves classification, as social and cognitive psychologists have taught us, then madness fails the criteria of representability.



It was also argued in Chapter 3 that the resistance to safe classification produces a special kind of Otherness. The mad person occupies the position of Other through the instability of the meanings which surround him or her. This Other cannot be kept at a safe distance because each meaning that we accord it is immediately supplanted by another. Otherness appears in the gaps between multiple meanings and in the ever-present threat of danger. This argument is consistent with that of Gilman discussed in Chapter 4. Gilman's (1985, 1988) is largely a social-psychoanalytic analysis of Otherness but he makes the important point that culture, including the media, provides the stereotypes that psychic processes use to try and keep the Other at a distance. In arguing that stereotypes are protean and in flux he captures the mobile, temporary and fear-inducing nature of modern representations of Otherness. I would take this argument further and say that it is exactly in the shifting and fearful sands of cultural representations of madness that Otherness appears. This will have psychological correlates that are outside the scope of this thesis to discuss.

The absence of explanation and expertise is consistent with this. Moscovici argues that social representations have an explanatory function. But here we find a dearth of explanation or expertise. Explanation and expertise are a form of anchoring and the representations of madness lack this form of anchoring just as they do others. However, as discussed earlier, there are representations with an explanatory function at other times on television although these are largely confined to special seasons and infrequently appear on popular programming.

### **Narrative theory**

Chapter 4 suggested a possible integration of social psychology with media studies around the concept of narrative. This will be returned to in the next section. Here it can be said that narrative theory too proposes a common structure to representations. The concept of

narrative sequence or structure has been used in this thesis, based largely on Todorov (1977). It is suggested that all stories share a structure going back to the folk tale and that the most important aspect of this structure is the presence of narrative closure.

The findings regarding narrative sequence in the data have already been discussed and the problems with the empirical work have been noted. It remains to say here that the data do not bear out the theoretical arguments put forward by most writers on narrative. Some analysts (Silverstone, 1981; Kozloff, 1992) do find empirical support for the propositions of narrative theory although their analyses are more detailed than that presented here. In so far as they do, however, this strengthens the claim that there is something specific to madness in the diversity of narrative forms which construct it. If classical narrative structure is a familiar form or type of anchor, madness resists this as well.

However, as was noted in Chapter 4, Silverstone (1981) argues that some areas of social experience occupy a realm of 'non-knowledge'. This realm cannot be combined with commonsense to produce social myths. It cannot be narrativised. If we think of madness as a part of this realm, and it was argued in Chapter 4 that we can do this, then it is not surprising that the narratives of madness are fluid and multiple. The contested, conflicted and dangerous terrain of madness is not anchored in terms of narrative structure because it occupies the realm of non-knowledge. It is difficult to think.

### **The theory of social representations - Objectification**

I would like to turn now to Moscovici's concept of objectification. As was argued in Chapter 3, this concept can usefully be applied to the visual dimension of television. Visual or iconic images do not exhaust the concept of objectification but they do have an affinity with it. It has been seen that people designated mentally ill on television are

photographed in a way that differentiates them from others in the medium. They are often filmed in an isolated, dislocated, scrutinising fashion. This difference was true for all genres and was analysed in detail in the case of *Coronation Street*. Mrs Bishop, not floridly mad and assisted by those around her, was nevertheless filmed voyeuristically and marked off as different more strongly in the visual than in the verbal mode. Let us stay with Mrs Bishop for a moment.

It can be suggested that the type of shot and camera angle analyses show that Mrs Bishop and her madness are objectified in two senses. According to Moscovici's (1984b) analysis, objectification occurs when an abstract concept is made tangible and palpable, when it is rendered almost 'thing-like'. The visual dimension of television is ideal for rendering the abstract concrete. It has an affinity with the proposed iconic dimension of objectification. Because it is visual and plastic it is almost by definition less abstract (some postmodernists would disagree with this). The visual isolation and dislocation of Mrs Bishop on the television screen, and the tendency of the camera to use shots which study and scrutinise emotion, lends these meanings to madness as such. The mad person is outside the rest of society, on her own and someone to be watched. She is to be observed in her isolation and in her dislocation from the rest of the community even while, as the content analysis described, that televisual community includes some very concerned and caring people.

Mrs Bishop is objectified in a stronger sense. She is turned into an object of the camera to be studied and watched and cut off from social contact. She is the object of the camera's gaze, she is not a subject looking. This is relative, of course, as sometimes she appears in two-shots and group-shots with others who are worried for her welfare. But compared to the other characters in this sample from *Coronation Street* she both objectifies

the abstract category 'madness' and is herself objectified by camera technique.

Perhaps most strikingly, when her madness recedes the styles of filming her changes and there is little difference between her and others. Greater use of two-shots and group-shots and less isolating techniques in single shots serve to signify her reintegration into the community. The most important point here is that the isolating, scrutinising, dislocating style of filming *only* occur when she is 'mad' and *only* occur with her. In other words, the *differences* in style of filming occur only for Mrs Bishop and not for the other characters who are filmed consistently throughout the story. What is revealed here is an element of a specific television genre for 'representing madness'.

The visual analyses of the other two genres is completely consistent with this when it comes to camera angle. People designated mentally unwell are scrutinised and watched and the faces that we see carry menace as well as distress. Close-up photographs of killers or library film of them in close-up touch, as Gerbner (1985) has said, the mad person with a sense of evil.

I would argue, then, that Moscovici's concept of objectification has been found to be fruitful in analysing the visual dimension of representations of madness on television.

### **Stigma and out-groups**

In Chapter 3 some theoretical work from social psychology was considered that is outside the domain of the theory of social representations. This is work on stigmatisation and out-groups. It was suggested that stigmatisation would involve negative and dangerous meanings and stereotypes. This has been found, as discussed above. The frequent references to the media as a causal factor or a reinforcing factor in the literature on stigma

have been substantiated here. Hitherto, writers on stigma have mentioned the media but have not analysed it. On the basis of this study, it can be said firmly that the media complies in the perpetuation of stereotypes and stigma of madness. However, as was argued in Chapter 3, to fully grasp the processes at work here, the notion of stereotypes should be replaced with that of social representation.

Theories of stigma (Goffman, 1963; Scheff, 1966) have proposed the concepts of engulfment and master status to account for stigma. These have not been analysed in depth but the overwhelmingly negative nature of the meanings of madness on television suggest that mentally ill people are portrayed solely in terms of their mental illness. For instance, Mrs Bishop lost all her familiar attributes and there were no portrayals of her that did not carry forward the narrative of her mental distress. For the period of her breakdown, she was wholly defined by her madness. Other characters, on the news and in drama, share this fate.

Tajfel's (1982, 1984) work is consistent with these ideas. It was suggested that mad people are a special kind of out-group, that they constitute the Other. In the representation of mental illness as negative, differentiation is taking place on television which places the person with poor mental health in the role of a dangerous Other. As we have seen, this differentiation takes place visually as well as verbally. The Other is not made safe, however, not kept in a category of its own. The mobile slippage of meanings mean Otherness has to be cast out with each new representation and the portrayals dwell upon a difference that always threatens to return. In this respect, television behaves like Jodelet's (1991) villagers.

When it comes to madness, the out-group or the Other is not placed at a once-for-all

distance either socially or psychologically. The Otherness of madness resists safe classification in this second but linked sense as well. Gilman (1985; 1988), too, has a tendency to argue that the Other is banished for good in the psychic economy, but the argument here is that cultural, especially televisual, representations double the resistance to safe classification. The content of the representations is mobile, dangerous and multiple with new meanings constantly appearing to supplant old ones. In the gaps between these multiple and dangerous meanings Otherness appears. But this is corollary because at the same time the Other cannot be kept in a safe place, is not banished and held finally at a distance, but keeps on returning to threaten both actual and semiotic danger. This double movement is the current definition of Otherness.

### **Dramatic Requirements**

In Chapter 2 it was noted that many authors who have already examined representations of madness on television point to the dramatic requirements of the medium as a reason for sensationalist programming around madness. In Chapter 4 this was supported theoretically with the concepts of cardinal news value (Hall et al 1978) and scandalous category (Hartley, 1992). In terms of all these ideas, the representations found in this study concur with their arguments. This is especially true of News with its borrowing of fictional conventions, and of drama with its representations of threat and violence. Sensationalism, drama and scandal are also evident in the visual mode. It could be said that Hall's notion of cardinal *news* value goes beyond the news in that drama too seeks the out of the ordinary and the unusual.

Is there a natural affinity between madness and the scandalous? Is madness the ideal vehicle for drama, sensation and thrills? It was seen earlier that madness seems to be a special case when it comes to news reporting of violent crime in that it is overrepresented

in a type of news programming that is not, despite what some say, especially focused on violent crime. It could then be argued that madness fulfils the criterion of the cardinal news value.

However, care is needed in proposing an argument that madness is *intrinsically* suited to the thrilling, the sensational and the scandalous. Twenty years ago, at the height of the 'mugging' scare (Hall et al, 1978), young black men were presented in the media in a way that focused on their colour and painted lurid pictures of their supposed aggression and propensity towards criminal acts. This no longer happens. Campaigns by anti-racists persuaded at least the televisual media that their presentations were prejudiced and so television now takes care in its representations of this group. This is done through the control of programmes by guidelines as to language and through 'consciousness raising' of media workers (indeed, perhaps, television here has now adopted an explicitly pedagogic anti-racist role).

There was no natural affinity between young black men and the scandalous - the affinity was a constructed one. This could also be true of madness. We have seen that, when it comes to violent crime, television portrayals are a massive departure from reality. It might be possible to persuade the media about their stigmatisation of mental health just as was done in the anti-racist campaigns. But at the moment the representations go unremarked - it is 'obvious' that mad people are like this. But this 'obvious' is a constructed one and it is a matter of representations feeding off representations. The televisual world finds material in other cultural and everyday representations and then in turn feeds back to these.

Hartley's (1992) concept of a scandalous category is more sophisticated than I have

presented it thus far. It has similarities with the idea of resisting safe classification and this will be taken up in the next section.

#### **Summary of theories in the light of the data**

The representations of madness on British television which were summarised earlier are in accord with many aspects of social psychological and media theory. At the same time, theory often had to be modified to deal with madness. For the theory of social representations, it was proposed that madness is a special case, that it is not easily anchored but resists safe classification. This concept has been found to be justified. When it comes to the plastic, iconic visual dimension of television, however, the concept of objectification appears both fruitful and defensible.

In terms of other social psychological work, it has been argued that the concepts of stigma and out-group have been supported by the empirical research although again they need to be developed to embrace the idea of Otherness.

Two features of media theory have been examined. The concept of narrative enabled the structure of stories to be investigated. There is little current theory in social psychology that would have allowed story sequence to be examined, although Gergen and Gergen (1988) have looked at narrative in the construction of identity. At the same time, it was found that stories involving madness on television did not often comply with the classical structure proposed by narrative theory. Whether this is specific to madness, or includes other topics, also has been discussed. In particular, the idea that madness may occupy Silverstone's realm of 'non-knowledge' makes it possible that variety in narrative structure is a consequence of this.



The other set of concepts examined from media theory have been sensationalism, the cardinal news value and scandalous categories. As with previous work (see Chapter 2) evidence for these features of television have been found but it has been cautioned that madness should not be thought of as the perfect and natural vehicle for television sensationalism and excitement.

Having looked at how different theories can be assessed in respect of the empirical data, it is now time to turn and examine them on their own terms. In particular, we can address the question of whether social psychology and media studies can be usefully integrated both theoretically and as a new tool to analyse the media and especially television.

### **SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND MEDIA THEORY - AN INTEGRATION?**

#### **Media and Social Psychology**

It was argued in Chapter 4 that of all theories in social psychology the theory of social representations is best equipped to analyse the media. Since it relies neither on a model of the isolated individual nor on a theory of dialogue or conversation, it can grasp the fully social nature of media productions. Television production is collective and can be reduced neither to individual minds nor dialogic processes. Even if this were possible in the quest to understand production, the *text* is a new phenomenon and is irreducible to the process which gave rise to it. It is a social representation with its own patterns and textures and it constitutes a symbolic environment (Moscovici, 1984a).

We can try to elaborate this with reference to the present data. The news, for example, is not produced by an author in relation to whose 'intentions', 'beliefs' or 'subjectivity' it could be interpreted (cf Foucault, 1984). Neither does it take a dialogic form. The news is largely snippets of monologue woven together into the special form of the news

story. Dialogue and conversation appear in drama, of course, but they are underpinned by certain conventions. Dialogue in soap opera may appear 'realistic' but any transcription will show that the conversation is quite different to that which takes place in the everyday course of events. One only has to look at drama produced in earlier times to see how 'stilted' it appears and to recognise that it follows certain representational conventions which have a history. Current drama follows conventions also and it is only because we are socialised by television that they have the appearance of 'naturalness'.

It follows that the attempts by some discourse analysts to investigate television and other media on the model of conversation is misplaced (Potter and Reicher, 1987; Potter and Wetherall, 1987). So, for instance, they present the combination of discourses in the St Paul's riot in Bristol as if it were an argument between two people or two groups. Again, Wearing's (1993) analysis of reporting of a psychiatrically disturbed mass murderer assumes that the explanation which evolved is a combination of journalistic and psychiatric discourse. Two groups argue and converse to produce a new discourse. There is no reference here to the specific structures of the media such as narrative. It can be argued against discourse analysis that television constructs its own reality, following specific codes and conventions, and fitting the discourses of outside groups into these conventions and structures. We have seen in this data that professional discourse is conspicuous by its absence. This does not prevent television from producing its own, often conflicted, meanings of madness from within the overall texture of televisual symbolic systems. The theory of social representations seems better able to deal with the structured and systematic character of television. To this extent the theory of social representations has an affinity with ideas from media studies and can be proposed as the theory in social psychology best equipped to analyse the media. Analysis of processes of objectification strengthens this argument and will be discussed now.

### **The concept of objectification**

The concept of objectification has proved very useful in this study where I have been concerned to pay attention to visual images. This is another dimension on which the theory of social representation is both better suited than discourse analysis and closer to media studies for research into the media. Neither the study of the St Paul's riot (Potter and Reicher, 1987) nor Wearing's (1993) study in Sydney took account of the visual layout of, or the pictorial representations in, the press. But we have seen here that visual images are a potent conveyor of meanings of madness at least. The Glasgow University Media Group (1976) pointed this out in respect of the filming of managers and trades unionists nearly twenty years ago.

De Rosa (1987) has analysed visual depictions of madness and has affirmed the visual dimension of social representations. Gilman (1982), too, from another perspective, has analysed visual depictions of the mad and has done so historically. Gilman (1985) has further argued that we should analyse texts and he clearly means that visual images are part of such texts. This is in accord with media analysts' concentration on the camera angle as a bearer of meaning. The concept of objectification, though it is not exhausted by plastic, iconic images, fits precisely with these concerns. The theory of social representations is the only theory in social psychology to propose such an analysis of the 'palpable, 'thing-like' quality of representations and as such it is the most consistent with ideas from media studies.

### **Narrative**

The concept of narrative as deployed by writers like Roger Silverstone (1981, 1985) identifies a structure which may be useful to social representations theorists when analysing the media. Clearly, narrative forms are found in domains beyond the media.

As we have seen, Livingstone (1991) shows that narrative form has a psychological reality from the point of view of media *reception*. Again, writers such as Gergen and Gergen (1988) have used the concept in a slightly different way when discussing how human subjects construct biographies in the form of stories. These stories, however, are not analysed in terms of the classic narrative structure that has been applied to mass media productions.

Silverstone's use of the concept is doubly useful. Firstly, he makes it quite explicit that narrative structure is a way in which the unfamiliar is made more familiar on television. By being placed in a familiar sequence, an unknown social object is made more psychologically comfortable and more familiar. Character is an aspect of narrative and so the shock of madness is defused somewhat by being tied to a character that has the habitual form of being ordinary. This could be argued to have happened in the present data with Emily Bishop in *Coronation Street*. Madness was also domesticated in the case of the man who shot the lorry driver who killed his son. Here the narrative card of identification was played and familiarity was further enhanced by the explanations that were proffered.

In analysing the media, theorists of social representations could integrate the concept of narrative into their work better to understand the structure of media events. It cannot be assumed that all social contexts are functionally equivalent and I would argue that the media has features which are specific to them alone. Equally, media theorists could learn from the theory of social representations as it provides an analysis of other ways in which the unfamiliar is made more familiar.

We have seen, nonetheless, that narrative theory does not account for all the news items

and dramatic stories in the data. And here we come to Silverstone's (1981) second point. He argues that some social objects escape narrativisation because they cannot be familiarised. These are those dimensions of social life that exist in the realm of 'non-knowledge'. This realm contains aspects of social experience that are refractory to the usual forms of sense and myth-making. They are epistemologically unruly *and* emotionally unruly in that they contain elements of dread and fear. The text is messy and unsafe. As stated in Chapter 4, madness seems to fit this description. The findings of various narrative structures in the data are in accord with this theoretical view that non-knowledge escapes narrativisation.

Is it possible to integrate social psychology and media theory at this point? If social representations theorists were to accept that there are domains of social life where the unfamiliar remains unfamiliar and where there is resistance to safe classification, then this would correspond well with Silverstone's notion of non-knowledge. From the point of view of analysis of media texts, there would be an integrated theory through which to investigate the narrative structure of media presentations of epistemologically and emotionally difficult social objects.

### **Scandalous categories**

A form of this argument can be applied to Hartley's (1992) notion of scandalous categories. Resisting safe classification is one way in which a category can be scandalous. Hartley himself takes the example of youth and shows how this category transgresses a whole list of binaries. It is important that he propose a *list* of binaries as this is not structuralism. That is, it avoids simple grids of opposition in the manner of Levi-Strauss (1968) or Mary Douglas (1966). It would have been possible for me to set up a list of binaries, but it is not too far away from Hartley's concept to posit a range of meanings

that combine and integrate or conflict and collide. In both cases, it is suggested that certain social objects are semantically troublesome and will not be fixed by media content and form. It is also suggested that these troublesome dimensions of experience are particularly attractive to television (but see the section on 'dramatic requirements' above). However, for this commonality to be accepted, social representations theorists would have to agree that some social objects, such as madness, lie outside the usual laws of social representations, that they do not move from the realm of the unfamiliar to that of the familiar. Rather, they resist safe classification and move from the realm of the unfamiliar into the realm of Otherness. Instead of civilised representations we find threatening disruption of the semiotic space.

### **Postmodernism and Social Psychology**

Now we come to the point where integration probably is not possible and, moreover, where, if some contemporary media theorists are right, my results are entirely predictable. This concerns the writings of postmodernist media analysts who argue that *all* media representations are multiple, mobile, permeable and conflicted. This is the postmodern condition - a world where images are more important than reality and where they circulate like a child's kaleidoscope. Nowhere is this point of view more clearly put than in John Fiske's (quoted in Morley, 1991) plea for the rights of the reader. He believes that the media text is so open, multiple and polysemic that just about any reading can be drawn from it and that this process of active reading from the plurivocal text is what is productive of the pleasure of the media. It must be said, however, that Fiske always pays attention to the dimension of power and sees this dimension as the main way of locating his readers.

If writers such as Fiske are correct and the postmodern text with its polyvalence and multiplicity corresponds to a postmodern consciousness of fragmentation and division, what of social psychology? In both cognitive and social psychology we find an emphasis on *assimilating* the novel to existing cognitive structures, of the search after psychological and representational *stability* and of seeking out the *familiar*.

The two theoretical approaches would seem to be at odds. It can be said that social psychology has a much longer history and a wealth of empirical data to support its arguments. As pointed out earlier, the psychological reality of structures such as narrative (Livingstone, 1991) and schemata (Graber, 1988) have been found by those working on the media. The empirical backing for the claims of postmodernism concerning fragmentation is weak (see Chapter 4) and it also opposes other work in media studies such as that on narrative just discussed. Still, if the argument from postmodernism is correct, my findings are entirely unsurprising because exactly the same lack of coherent structure would be found whatever the content under analysis. A possible exception to this is the strong association discovered between madness and violence.

This is not the place to go into a long disquisition on postmodernism which, in any case, is not a coherent body of theories and arguments (how could it be?). I want to make my position plain, however. My argument is that social psychology, and especially the theory of social representations, is substantively correct about the nature and structure of representations, and that *madness is a special case*. I am not arguing that all social objects resist safe classification only that madness, and perhaps some others, do so. The fact that I have found myself using a language to describe representations of madness on television that has something in common with the languages used by postmodernists is testament only to the fact that we live in a world of social representations, are obliged to use them

and are not the authors of our own texts.

One final point remains to be made and it was touched upon in Chapter 4. What would we expect of the social representations surrounding a new social object as it appeared in our social world? Madness is not a new object but the policy of Community Care is - particularly with respect to the intensity with which it has been pursued in recent years. Here some postmodernists seem to concur with some social representations theory. On the question of identity, celebrated for its fragmentation by postmodern media theorists, Lash (1990) argues that a time of turmoil will produce a search for stability in one's individual and group identity. From the social representations side, Joffe (in press) makes the same point and Wagner (1994) found that novel dimensions of social experience had *more* internal coherence than familiar ones. And this of course, concurs with what Moscovici has been saying since his study of psychoanalysis in 1976.

From both sides, then, we would expect the policy of Community Care, new and contested as it is, to be made familiar in our living rooms by the work of representation on television. This is not what happens, as we have seen. This suggests that madness is a special dimension of human experience, that it is unusual in being represented in a multiple, contested, violent, negative and unfamiliar way. In other words, the mad person is marked off as Other. Perhaps we could even say that madness is precisely that which cannot be made familiar - it is the one dimension of human experience which persistently resists safe classification.

Theory and the data taken together provide a firm foundation for the argument that madness, unusually, resists safe classification - the unfamiliar is kept unfamiliar. We can add one more argument to this by considering a historical dimension to the news data.



The data for the pilot study were collected in 1986. Here both violence and community care featured but they were kept apart and appeared in different sorts of news item. The data for the main study were collected in 1992. Here violence predominated and the failure of community care was evident in the parlous conditions of mentally ill people in prisons. One year after this, a number of scandals broke. One young man climbed into the lions' den in London Zoo and another, in a celebrated case, stabbed a stranger to death while waiting for a train. After this, for about six months, there were numerous news stories about violent mental patients where it was argued that community care was faltering. The two representations of violence and community care were combined in the message that the policy had failed. Failed whom? The patients, of course. But also the public who were being put at risk by violent mental patients roaming the street. Violence was positioned as a consequence of the failure of the policy and as a reason to be concerned about, if not opposed to, it.

The main data did not contain the type of scandal that surfaced a year later. But the different kinds of representation over a ten year period show the media unable to grasp madness in a way that would make it more familiar to ordinary people. Even on the News, the representations shift, combine different elements in different ways and lace the whole structure with prodigious amounts of violence. Unlike the postmodernists referred to earlier I do not think this is just an example of a general phenomenon that would be found in most other aspects of social life.

## **THE ROLE OF METHOD**

### **Theory**

In Chapter 5 I argued that theory is crucial to the analysis of data. The results reported here could not have been revealed without the theoretical moment of the coding frame. Theory guided category construction and this enabled the delineation of the different representations of madness on British television. This theory came from both social psychology and media studies and it could be said that, in the instrument of the coding frame, we have demonstrated another way in which these two disciplines can be combined.

To elaborate the above point, it can be said that the coding frame has two facets - theory and data. The first facet represents the way in which a theoretical argument is translated into a coding instrument which becomes an analytic or language of description. There is no need to repeat here all the ways in which this was done. One can mention simply the concept of fear and dangerous categories, the theory of resistance to classification and diverse categories and the theory of narrative structure and the narrative elements at the top level of the coding frame. These provided the grid through which it was possible to delineate the meanings of madness on British television and their structure.

The second facet of the coding frame is that which comes from the data. The most telling example of the importance of provisional testing of the coding frame, and its modification in the light of the data, came in this research with the category of comedy. That there would be comic representations was not part of the theoretical framework. But the humorous portrayal of a fraudulent psychiatrist turned out to be vital to the analysis when it was realised that there were so few representations of mental health professionals and that the most extended one was a joke. At the same time, the addition of 'comedy' was consistent with theory because it added another meaning to an already diverse set.

## Counting meanings

In Chapter 5, the debate between traditional content analysis and semiotics was discussed. It was seen that semioticians do not believe that the counting of meanings is a valid enterprise because they do not believe that the salience of a meaning can be measured by its frequency. And indeed, the research described in Chapter 2 counted aspects of the life of mentally distressed people, such as employment and marital status, as much as they counted meanings.

I hope I have shown that it is possible to quantify meanings but that any such quantification must be supplemented by qualitative analysis. This qualitative analysis takes the form of illustrative quotations from the data set and, sometimes, of a reinterpretation of the quantitative results. This, for example, occurred with the category of 'maniac' in the drama data.

The process of *interpreting* quantitative results is the key. Just as the data do not speak for themselves, neither do the raw figures of the analysis. Sometimes the process of interpretation can be itself quantitative, as with the visual analysis of *Coronation Street*. But mostly, with textual data, the interpretation must be qualitative. Figures say which meanings are dominant in a text and which are absent or nearly so. They can tell us about concordances. Figures can also tell us about the combination of meanings and the types of narrative structure. But only extracts will show how these merge to produce a particular symbolic or representational event.

The presentation of extracts or illustrations has always been beset by the problem of representativeness. Why were these and not others selected? The advantage of combining quantitative and qualitative analysis is that any extract can be checked against the

quantitative data, as well as being significant in its own right.

The question of absent meanings is also important. Semiotics stresses the importance of absent meanings. It can be argued that to have a cell in a quantitative table which is zero or nearly so is one of the best ways of demonstrating the absence of certain meanings. Interpretation gives us the importance of that absence. This was evident in the present data with the near absence of positive meanings.

*The issue of interpretation of quantitative results should not be thought to be specific to textual analysis. Inferential statistics must be interpreted by the researcher. But because the rules for doing so are universally accepted, the process of interpretation is, if not hidden, then non-controversial. Just as it was argued in Chapter 5 that quantitative methods in social psychology have their own theoretical bases, so it must be stressed that they have their own rules for analysis. Textual and other more qualitative forms of analysis may be more open than traditional ones in this respect.*

It will be noted that this proposal that quantitative analysis should be followed by qualitative analysis reverses the usual procedure in social psychology. Here, for example in the drawing up of questionnaires, qualitative analysis comes first and then is refined so that responses can be quantified. But with textual data, a process of reduction is necessary in the first instance because the transcripts are so voluminous. It therefore seems appropriate to begin with quantitative analyses and then follow a qualitative procedure in order that the full contours of the text, and its incoherences, can be explicated.

### **The surface of the text**

This analysis has not sought the 'deep' meaning of madness on British television. I have not looked for a definitive underlying structure as structuralists do or a clear governing binary as semioticians do. Neither have I sought inferences to intentions as content analysts counselled in the 1970s. Rather I have stayed with the surface of the text and this has been important. At the same time, I have argued that the concept of 'manifest content' must be rejected because theory always conditions a coding instrument.

The search for deep meanings usually tries to systematise a complex, untidy text. It seeks to reduce that untidiness to a few simple categories or laws. But I have argued that the complexity and messiness of the text on madness is crucial to understanding its representation on television. It is precisely the conflicted, contested, dangerous, unexplained and unresolved nature of these representations that gives them their significance. To try to reduce these representations of madness to a simpler set of categories would lose much of their import. It is only by staying at this surface level of the text that the true complexity and diversity of the representations of madness on television can be delineated.

It must be said again that it was theory that allowed us to construct a coding frame which would respect the multiplicity and dangerousness of the textual meanings. Staying at the surface of the text is not an empiricist exercise (if such were possible). The theoretically derived coding frame guided the analysis but that coding frame contained no suppositions about deep or underlying structure. By focusing attention on the surface of the text, by taking the form of an analytic of description, it allowed the delineation of the full complexity of the meanings of madness on British television. At the same time, the coding instrument would have allowed singularity or simplicity of meaning to emerge had

these been the properties of the social object madness. Simply, most of the meanings would have been concentrated in only a few categories.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Although it is somewhat crude, a model can be proposed of the communicative process.

producers ----- text ----- receivers

This model is crude because the connecting lines are neither simple nor one way; both producers and receivers exist in a social context and the text itself has many interconnections with other texts which need to be appreciated if analysis is to be complete. Thus it has been proposed in this thesis that the relation of producers to texts is both complex and non-reductive. Similarly, research has shown that the relation of audiences to texts is not that of a 'hypodermic syringe'.

Acknowledging these arguments, it can be said that the present study has focused on the complexity of the text. Future research in the area of madness could look at producers and audiences. Building upon the work of the GUMG (1994b) and Wahl and Lefkowitz (1989), future work could pay attention to the complexity of the text as revealed here and study audience responses in terms of the elements of the television text on madness as described in this thesis. Do audiences find the television text on madness confusing and unpredictable, do they seek more explanation, what do they think of mental health experts, are they afraid, do they represent the mad person as Other? In addition, and as existing work has done, a comparison of media influence with other influences on attitudes towards poor mental health is also of paramount importance. The clear candidate here for more

detailed research is the role of personal experience of those with serious mental health problems. Do those who have intimate knowledge of a seriously mentally ill person view the television text on madness any differently to those who do not? The evidence to date suggests not, but further work is required.

We can also ask about people who have first-hand experience of mental health problems. These people recognise the importance of the media in shaping attitudes. As part of another project (Rose, in progress), I have interviewed 76 people who are long term users of mental health services. When asked whether the general public are sympathetic or unsympathetic towards people with mental illness, 90% say they are unsympathetic. When asked if the public are fearful, the same number answer affirmatively. Asked *the reasons* for this, many respondents spontaneously mention the media. And finally, the media is given more frequently than anything else as an answer when interviewees are asked what could improve public attitudes towards poor mental health. People who use psychiatric services are themselves part of the television audience, they watch it with a critical eye, and they find it responsible for the hostility they experience in everyday life.

The 'producer' side of the equation should also be examined. Although I have stressed elsewhere in this thesis that no single person is responsible for the television text and, also, that it is futile to search for conscious, determining intentions, those who produce television texts can become the subjects of research. This research would investigate both implicit assumptions about mental health, explicit use of experts (if any) and the technologies that are used to put the television text together for assumed particular effects.

Having analysed the television text, action research may also be appropriate when it comes to producers. That is, to explain to them the analyses to date, find out their responses to

such analyses and discuss the barriers to change. We need not assume that the analyses will constitute the 'obvious' for them. Research may delineate aspects of television representations of madness which are quite outside anything they intended to bring about. Discussion of the products of research may bring to light implicit assumptions or the results of technologies which could, at the most optimistic, result in changes to texts. Indeed, some of the research from North America described in Chapter 2 has begun to have such an impact.

Finally, the research reported here may have some implications for work within the framework of the theory of social representations. It can be suggested that the present research complements both Jodelet's (1991) work on social representations of madness and that of de Rosa (1987). The addition of a media dimension furthers the elaboration of the representation of madness in modern times. In Ainay-le-Chateau Community Care had reached a more advanced stage than it has yet to do in Britain. But there is enough complementarity between the different studies to suggest that the media research described here both fleshes out the picture and adds some new information. For example, the ways in which mad people are marked off as different on television has specific features not shared with everyday knowledge. It is therefore proposed that research using the theory of social representations can profitably analyse the media as part of its attempt to describe and delineate specific social representations.



## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The next chapter, or Postscript, will look at the practicalities of making the role of television in relation to people with mental distress more constructive, although this has already been touched on above. Here we can conclude by saying that the thesis has succeeded in the first step towards understanding representations of madness on British television and their effects. The texture of these representations has been delineated in a more detailed and systematic manner than has been done hitherto. Making this possible were two bodies of theoretical work - social representations theory and media studies. Without these theories, the empirical analysis would not have been possible. I have considered how they may be brought together in a more organised way as well as some of the problems with this. The importance of their link to the coding frame, and of the coding frame's relation to the data, has also been stressed.

No thesis is without its flaws. I have considered a potential debate between the theory of social representations and postmodernism and argued that this cannot be concluded once and for all in this thesis. In relation to this, I have considered at several points objections that there are insufficient controls in the data. By looking at the controls which do exist - item type in the news or the filming of Mrs Bishop - and by drawing upon other work in both social psychology and media studies, I have endeavoured to show that madness is, if not unique, one of a small class of social objects which breaches the boundaries of representational practices on television and is thereby constructed as dangerous, negative, confused, confusing, inexplicable, irresolvable and Other. This Other is put together by television in a way that means it does not obey the laws which social psychology teaches us govern society's symbolic environment and its representational practices.

The mad person on television is not like 'us'. He or she transgresses symbolic boundaries, is outside normal social and psychological limits and must be kept at a distance. But television tells us that this is difficult, that danger and negativity constantly recur and recur in the figure of one who is unpredictable, who cannot be understood and must be feared. There is not a great deal of evidence that television has effects in this field but what there is holds importance because the effects of television seem to be so powerful and even to override personal experience. These representations can be personally destructive. Philo (1995) quotes a young man with a new diagnosis of schizophrenia and no history of violence. He was terrified he would harm someone because he had seen on television that schizophrenics are violent. This is television at its most powerful. The representations are playing a constitutive role in the subjectivities of those they 'represent'.

It is time to focus on what can be done and this is the subject which will be treated, albeit not in depth, in the Postscript to follow.

## **POSTSCRIPT**

### **WHAT IS TO BE DONE?**

The body of this thesis has been concerned with an attempt at a systematic and theoretically informed delineation of representations of madness on British television. With a few remaining difficulties, this has been achieved. In this postscript I want to return to some arguments that can be found throughout the text. These revolve around community care, the invisibility of people with a serious mental illness and the findings that television representations can affect what ordinary people think about those who are labelled mentally ill.

I cannot be sure what audiences made of the material I videotaped. But I can speculate in a way that is informed by other work. The litany of madness and violence, for instance, suggests that television cultivates a symbolic world (Gerbner et al, 1980) where the violent madman (or woman) stalks. If Gerbner is correct, this will provoke fear of people with a mental health problem. The fear of the mad axeman is an ancient one and will not easily be dispersed. But there is little doubt that it is sustained by television. The link between madness and violence and its effect on audiences has been made too often now to be ignored (GUMG, 1994b; Wahl and Lefkowitz, 1989; Lopez, 1991; Levey and Howells, 1995).

This symbolic world is also a place where pleasant things rarely happen, there is no success or mutual assistance, no sociality nor even coping through adversity. Madness is associated with negativity and may be cast to one side because of this. It is outside our acceptable social and psychological boundaries. Little hard data exists in this arena to tell us whether there is a positive side to mental distress. Hill's research (personal

communication) suggests that people with manic depression feel that their condition has been good for their family relationships. And we can point also to the growing movement of psychiatric service users who seek to reclaim their rights in creative fields as well as political ones. But the voice of such patients and their stake in a positive life is not heard on television.

The lack of explanation and expertise in the representations was not expected. The symbolic world here cultivated is one where madness is so much of a puzzle that explanation is simply not attempted. This feeds into the idea that madness is unpredictable, even unknowable. Perhaps worse, it tells us that mad people are not understandable. People avoid that which they cannot understand, both in the sense of 'know about' and in the sense of 'empathise with'.

One could go on. The point is that these representations of madness on British television which I have described are most unlikely to have positive effects on viewers and, as indicated already, there is indeed evidence that television representations have negative and deleterious effects. This evidence, however, was based on much simpler content analyses and I submit that the more detailed one presented here gives us a good idea of where to start to make things more constructive.

Making things more constructive would, on the basis of the arguments put forward in Chapter 1, improve the chances of success for the policy of Community Care. We could dilute the association between madness and violence, promote positive images and allow a range of voices, including mentally ill people themselves, to explain the experience of being mad and its consequences. This is taken seriously in some countries. Australia currently has a federal budget of \$8 million for public education on mental health. This

includes television advertisements which seek to present mentally ill people as more than their illness and as leading a life which has its own successes. These advertisements and short stories are explicitly designed to improve public awareness so that Community Care can be a better experience for those who would previously have been locked up in asylums.

Britain has no plan like that of Australia. As I write, the Royal College of Psychiatrists has cancelled a press conference on stigmatisation of mental illness in the media because, amongst other things, it does not want to upset the press. Recognising that media representations stigmatise people labelled mentally ill, the Royal College is not in an environment, political or symbolic, where it can follow through the implications of this.

At the same time, a season has just finished, mainly on Radio 4 but with some television coverage on BBC2, on mental health. The season was launched with a programme on Radio 4 on how the media treat mental health issues. The focus was the link between madness and violence and the journalists had no answer to the arguments of the promoters of less stigmatising media coverage of mental health. Positive images were also discussed although this was a weaker theme. Unhappily, the BBC2 part of the season started with a film detailing the violence of some schizophrenics in a most sensationalist fashion.

On the issue of violence, Shain and Phillips (1991), in North America, conclude their examination of mental illness coverage in the news press with some recommendations. First amongst these is that a person's psychiatric history should not be mentioned in a news story unless it is directly relevant to that story. So, if someone has committed a crime, the fact that they were in a psychiatric hospital ten years before is irrelevant. Such a rule would considerably weaken the link between madness and violent crime in the

media.

It has been seen in this research that although the issue of violence is critical, there are other dimensions. Lessons could be learned from dramatic coverage of other disabilities. For instance, to have a mentally ill person in a soap opera or continuing series would humanise the illness and let viewers become familiar with the character. The continuing character would sometimes be ill, sometimes not. His or her illness would become routine and not the only feature of their personality worth noting. Viewers would become familiar with the character and, through this, familiar with his or her periods of breakdown. There is a character with a learning disability in an American legal drama who is portrayed in this way.

But here we must stop. Even a Postscript to an academic thesis cannot be a campaign statement. I have rehearsed often enough the argument that television is an important part of the symbolic environment when it comes to people with mental health problems and their care in the community. I have shown in this thesis that representations of madness on television mean that this symbolic environment is woven of danger, negativity, confusion and Otherness. The success of the policy of Community Care, via the community itself, is adversely affected by this. The next step is to do something about it. Some pointers have been given here, but part of this next step is to persuade the broadcasting institutions that change is necessary. This is beginning in Britain in a very small way. To develop, or even to document, further strategies in this area takes us outside the bounds of this thesis. But the process is in hand.

## **APPENDIX ONE**

### **THE PILOT STUDY OF THE NEWS**

This Appendix describes the findings of the pilot study which looked only at the news. This pilot study is used for purposes of comparison with the main sample in Chapter 6 and takes the form of a preliminary enquiry into one genre.

#### **THE SAMPLE**

Six weeks each of BBC's *The Six O'Clock News*, *London Plus* (a regional magazine) and *The Nine O'Clock News* and ITV's *The News at 5.45*, *Thames News* (a regional magazine) and *News at Ten*, were taped off air. This gave 61 hours and 15 minutes of data, with a 10% loss due to programme rescheduling and faulty equipment.

The whole sample was viewed and news items were selected as examples of mental health portrayals if they contained the verbal items 'psychiatry', 'mental illness', a specific mental illness category, or a lay or slang word used to designate people with mental health problems such as 'mad' or 'crazy'.

In all, 53 items met these criteria. They will be referred to henceforth as the 'mental illness sample'. The mental health news sample comprises 3.45% of the total news time and this is consistent with previous work.

Fifteen of the items constituted a continuing, and complex, story which requires separate analysis. This story is therefore only included in the first analysis. Thirty eight items were therefore transcribed. The visual aspect of the news was briefly noted and the

language transcribed verbatim.

## **ANALYSIS 1 - ITEM CONTEXTS**

### **Method**

The purpose of the first analysis is to find out with what kinds of news items mental illness tends to be situated. The item types provide the first level of meaning of mental illness on the news.

One half of the total news sample was classified using categories devised by the Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1980). These are categories such as 'politics', 'international news', 'crime', 'human interest' and so on. The 53 mental illness items were then similarly categorised and the results compared. Separate analyses were carried out for national news and regional news. The comparisons can be found in Table AP1.1.

### **Results**

It is evident from Table AP1.1 that the category of crime is overrepresented in the mental illness sample when compared with the rest of the news. The types of crimes involved in the stories which feature mental health problems are notable. With one exception (a drugs conviction), the crimes are violent and usually involve multiple offences. Between them, thirteen protagonists were suspected, or convicted, of committing sixteen murders, one attempted murder, one wounding, six rapes, numerous sexual assaults and an incident of kidnapping followed by hanging the victim upside down from a light fitting in a prison cell. In addition, in two items, a total of sixteen further murders were mentioned as background information.



Category	National News %	Regional News %	Mental Illness on Nat. News %	Mental Illness on Reg. News %
Politics	15.0	4.1	00.0	00.0
Terrorism	6.5	0.3	11.8	5.3
Industrial	9.3	7.7	00.0	5.3
Foreign	22.1	0.3	00.0	00.0
Economic	6.9	3.1	00.0	00.0
Crime	8.7	18.0	70.6	47.4
Home Affairs	5.3	41.0	14.7	26.3
Sport	7.1	7.2	00.0	00.0
Hum.Interest	3.6	11.9	2.9	15.8
Disasters	5.3	5.9	00.0	00.0
Science	1.2	0.5	00.0	00.0
Total N	506	388	34	19

*Table AP1.1: Comparison of distribution of item types in total sample and mental illness sample for national and regional news programmes in the pilot data.*

Violent crime also featured as a sub-theme in several other stories where the main theme was not crime. *The clear result of this analysis is that in television news there is a very strong association between mental disturbance and violent crime.*

The second most frequent category of story where mental illness appears is 'home affairs'. The category seems to be somewhat over-represented on national news and under-represented on regional news. However, the Glasgow Media Group's (1976) classification 'home affairs' has a number of sub-divisions and all of the mental illness items fall in just one of these - 'quality of life'. Three of the items are medical stories, three concern inner city deprivation, housing and homelessness, and two are about the failure of the Government's policy of Community Care for mentally distressed people. A further item concerns strike action at a government welfare office and the effects of this on claimants.

The 'home affairs' stories, then, are of a quite particular sort. They are not about consumers, leisure, education, local government or other sub-categories in the Glasgow Media Group's scheme. *Their concern is with society's social problem people.* Henceforth this category will be called 'quality of life' stories or simply 'social problem' stories.

## **ANALYSIS 2 - SEMANTIC FIELDS**

### **Method**

This part of the study aims to uncover the dominant semantic themes which structure the mental illness stories. This enables us to describe the meanings that are given to mentally ill people and their world on television news.

In order to make the analysis manageable, the two most prominent categories of story are

examined - 'crime' and 'quality of life'. The complex crime story referred to earlier is excluded, leaving 18 'crime' stories and 10 'quality of life' stories. The crime stories include several 'studio shorts', that is, very brief items consisting only of studio presentations and perhaps photographs. The 'quality of life' stories, on the other hand, include an eleven minute item on Community Care. This difference in the length of the items means that the total time in each category is virtually the same - 30 minutes for 'crime' and 30 minutes and 43 seconds for 'quality of life'. This chance equivalence makes for easier comparison.

The semantic themes in this 28 item sample were investigated, using a keyword search drawing upon 'WordPerfect' word processing software - the thesaurus and the search facility.

Initially, 40 words were taken from the transcript and their synonyms found using the 'WordPerfect' thesaurus. The 40 words I will call 'headwords' and the words plus their synonyms constitute the group of keywords. The headwords and their synonyms were then cross-referenced. If two headwords shared more than a third of their synonyms in common, they were allocated to the same category. Antonyms were included in this procedure. This resulted in 10 groups. Each group was labelled by one of the headwords as follows:

1. **Maniac:** these are lay, and usually derogatory, words for people designated mentally ill, such as 'madman', 'maniac' and 'crazy'.
2. **Strange:** emphasising the strangeness of people, acts or motives and includes the terms 'bizarre', 'abnormal' and 'strange'.

3. **Obsession:** consisting of words indicating extreme and abnormal emotions and includes 'obsession', 'addiction' and 'haunted'.
4. **Depression:** designating sad and unhappy people or states of affairs and include 'depression', 'sad' and 'lonely'.
5. **Damage:** concerning damaging or damaged people, actions or situations and its headwords are 'damage', 'harm', 'devastate' and 'dangerous'. This category turned out to need additional analysis.
6. **Violence:** this category too is complex and probably the one where the 'Wordperfect' method was least satisfactory as an analogue to media or natural language. The concern is with violent acts or emotions and the terms include 'violence', 'aggression', 'fear' and 'resentment'. 'Trust' is included as an antonym.
7. **Respect:** the first of the positive categories, this denotes respect and esteem for people or actions and consists of the headwords 'respect', 'admire' and 'dignity'.
8. **Success:** this category contains the pair of terms 'success' and 'achievement'.
9. **Care:** these words focus on caring for and helping others and these are the two headwords.
10. **Cope:** the stress here is on managing on one's own and the headwords are 'cope' and 'independence'.

## Results

The results of the semantic analysis by programme category are shown in Table AP1.2. The first thing to note about this table is that the pattern of results for the two categories of story is not the same. The findings, then, support the argument made earlier that stereotypes of mental illness, or the dominant semantic themes used in its representation,

would be diverse. However, this does not mean that there is no overlap between 'crime' and 'social problems'.

A striking difference between the two categories is that words indicating mania, strangeness and obsession are concentrated in the 'crime' category. These words and phrases can be said to signify Difference in the strong sense. It is *not* the case in this sample that the attribution of mental illness excuses crime or diminishes its severity. No plea of diminished responsibility was accepted in this sample. It seems that the 'madman' label functions to intensify the representation of the individual as less than human.

In contrast, 'depression' words show an even spread across 'crime' and 'quality of life'. This is not because criminals are viewed as making others depressed. Rather, depression, sadness and hopelessness are attributed equally to individuals and situations in the two categories. Here a stereotypical dimension is ascribed in parallel to categories of mentally ill people who are differentiated on other dimensions.

Respect, success and coping, the most positive word groups in the analysis, have a low incidence in these stories. That incidence is concentrated in the antonymic words - terms like disdain and contempt which feature in the 'crime' stories, and failure which is found in the 'social problem' stories. These words were included in the analysis because the terms 'respect' and 'success' appeared in two human interest items concerning a police hero who had tackled armed robbers and been disabled in the action; subsequently, he committed suicide. The reporting of his death described his bravery and the admiration he had commanded. Even here, however, references to depression, damage and violence of mood outnumbered the positive significations. Such positive significations are virtually absent from the depiction of people with mental health problems on television news.

	CRIME	CRIME	CRIME	SOC. PROBS.	SOC. PROBS.	SOC. PROBS.
<b>Keyword Group</b>	<b>Words</b>	<b>Anton- yms</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Words</b>	<b>Anton- yms</b>	<b>Total</b>
Maniac	16	0	16	3	1	4
Strange	20	0	20	3	4	7
Obsessed	20	0	20	1	0	1
Depressed	11	2	13	10	4	14
Damage	18	0	18	35	2	37
Violence	34	1	35	12	3	15
Respect	1	6	7	1	2	3
Success	1	0	1	2	5	7
Care	5	7	12	13	39	52
Cope	0	1	1	2	5	7
<b>Total</b>			<b>143</b>			<b>151</b>

*Table AP1 2: Results of the keyword search for the pilot news data.*

The category of care is more evident in the 'social problem' stories where care and help are conspicuous by their lack. There are four items where this is particularly apparent. Two concern proposed Government cuts to a leading psychiatric hospital and two concern the failure of the policy of closing large hospitals and moving their residents into the

community. The agent who doesn't care, here, is the Government; the agents who do are represented as hospitals and charities and it is their spokespeople who hold the Government to account. There are at least two sub-themes at work here. One is that hospitals are the best places for mentally ill people. This reinforces the 'medical model' (Sedgwick, 1982) and in terms of social psychological theory provides the most obvious way in which 'the unfamiliar is made familiar' (Moscovici, 1984b). Secondly, there is the supposition that people deemed mentally ill are so problematically vulnerable that they pose the issue of *needing care* powerfully enough to make it a political matter. This can amount to a paternalistic position with mentally ill people represented as pathetic, vulnerable and totally unable to cope. Such depiction removes mentally distressed people from the pitiable *in general* and again puts them in a special 'Other' place.

More than one third of the total keyword instances fall in the categories of violence and damage. The proportion of references is approximately equal for 'crime' and 'social problem' items, but the former has about twice as many 'violence' references, whereas the latter shows more than twice as many instances of 'damage'. The keywords are used to describe villains and victims, behaviour and emotions and the physical environment. The preponderance of a semantic field of violence and damage means that the world of mental illness is here represented as one where people attack, assault and terrorise each other, where individuals are harmed by other individuals or statutory agencies, where children are at risk, where emotions are dominated by either vehemence and destructiveness, or by fear and terror, and where the physical environment too is typified by devastation, destruction and appalling conditions. It is the image of bedlam.

However, the categories of 'violence' and 'damage' were found to be too broad and would require further analysis if space permitted.

### ANALYSIS 3 - VISUAL DIFFERENCES

#### Method

Fiske (1987) argues that type of shot carries meaning. He suggests that extreme close-up shots connote villainy. Others have commented that the extreme close-up allows the camera to scrutinise and focus on emotion. By contrast, the medium close-up and medium wide shots suggest neutrality. This is particularly relevant to examination of the news since newscasters are typically filmed in medium close-up or medium wide. In the context of news, then, these shots may evoke not only neutrality but *authority*. It can also be argued that a steady shot carries such a meaning in the context of news. Moving shots, where someone is filmed moving or the camera tracks a person stand in contrast to steady shots; they are typical of actuality film and suggest again that the camera is 'watching' the person.

The objective of this analysis is to see whether there are differences between visually featured experts and people designated mentally ill. An analysis will also be made of the practice of filming in shadow or gloomy light. Filming someone in shadow rather than natural or studio light suggests something mysterious and strange, or something and someone that should be hidden.

#### Results

The results of the type-of-shot analysis are given in Table AP1.3. It can be seen that mentally ill people tend to be filmed in extreme close-up or in close up more often than medium close-up or medium wide. The opposite is true for the experts. There is also a far greater likelihood of mentally ill people being filmed with moving shots (including the



Type of Shot	People with Mental Health Problems	Experts
Extreme Close Up	3	0
ECU/Zoom	3	0
Close Up	12	6
CU/Zoom	5	1
Medium Close Up	7	18
Medium Wide	5	15
Moving	29	9
Total	64	49

*Table AP1.3: Camera angle by category of person for the pilot news data.*

use of zoom). This is accounted for partly by the heavy use of actuality film in some of the 'social problem' stories where the camera films and tracks people as they go about their business - usually on the streets or in "squalid" boarding houses.

Medium close-up and medium wide shots also allow background to be shown. This background often reinforces the expertise - a shelf of books for a doctor, laboratory equipment for a scientist, a desk and files for a charity director and the outside of a court for a detective. What is striking here is the *contrast* in the filming conventions used for different kinds of people. These contrasts produce the impression that we are *watching* the people with mental health problems but *listening to* the experts.

There are seventeen shots of people or places filmed in shadow. Thirteen of these are live shots of mentally ill people. Filming in shadow is concentrated in the Community Care stories. If this lighting convention does connote something shameful that should be hidden, this supports the contention made earlier that mentally ill people are represented as living 'in the shadows' or on the margins of society.

#### **ANALYSIS 4 - NARRATIVE STRUCTURE**

Fiske and Hartley (eg Fiske and Hartley, 1978; Hartley, 1982; Fiske, 1987) have argued that the news has a story-telling function and that in its narrative structure it often employs formal elements from fictional genres. Most of the work on this issue has used the example of how the reporting of crime and terrorism employs dramatic conventions borrowed from the crime-thriller fictional genre. The presence of this narrative structure in the present sample will be illustrated here using a qualitative analysis.

#### **Results**

The story at issue involves the reconstruction of the actions of a 'psychopath' convicted of murder and multiple rape. The use of reconstruction is pervasive in crime reporting and it lends itself to the intertwining of fictional and factual forms. A reconstruction is presented of the man's use of steroid drugs; the report later moves to a reconstruction of his preparations for a rape and a murder and then reconstructs both these events.

The narrative conventions of the crime-thriller are woven into the reconstruction of the psychopath's actions in large part through the *visual* construction of the story. It is fast moving in the sense that the frames change at great speed, and in the sense that each frame

is action filled. This is typical of fictional television but not of the whole of the news. There are several shots from inside a moving car and these are especially evocative of the crime-thriller genre - the camera is placed first in the position of the villain and then, for her last minutes alive, adopts the point-of-view of the victim. The story also displays many of the symbolic trappings of the crime-thriller genre - muscular men, guns, knives, handcuffs and flashy cars. The reconstruction of the man being given a steroid injection by his girlfriend lends the story an extra dimension of the strange and bizarre.

In this news story, and in many others in the sample, the use of narrative codes and conventions belonging to fictional genres is evident.

## **CONCLUSION**

This Appendix has made a systematic study of television news and how it represents people with poor mental health. It finds a strong link between violence and madness, a predominance of negative representations, a form of photography which marks the mad person off as different and a particular form of narrative sequence which intertwines factual and fictional conventions. These signifying elements constitute the mad person as Other.

In the body of the thesis more detailed analysis of the News takes place and it is compared with other genres. The material in the main part of the thesis is also more up to date, having been collected six years later, in 1992.

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