

THESIS

PRISON RIOTS: HOW DO THE MEDIA PORTRAY THEM

by

PETER DONALD BRIAN SAWATZKY

A thesis  
presented to the University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS  
in  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the media and how it portrays prison riots in Canada. The riots included in the study took place in Canadian Federal Institutions during the years 1932 - 1982. The study is interested in determining whether Hall's (1979) assessment of the media's role in the production of news is applicable to how Canadian prison riots are portrayed. Particularly, in trying to establish who the primary definers are, and what role they play in the negotiation of the consensus with regards to how prison riots are understood by the public.

The most significant conclusions concerning the portrayal of prison riots are: 1) There is a great deal of homogeneity in the reporting of prison riots; 2) correctional authorities are the primary definers of prison riots; 3) the majority of the articles fail to place the riot into a context, either historical or within the larger merits of incarceration; and 4) the majority of the articles fail to cite a cause of the riot.

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In Dedication

To my Parents

Marge & Peter Sawatzky

For their constant love and support



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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Public opinion is a compound of folly, weakness, prejudice, wrong feeling, right feeling, obstinacy, and newspaper paragraphs.

-Sir Robert Peel

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Sir Robert Peel 'newspaper paragraphs', or to bring it into the 1980's, mass media<sup>1</sup> play an important role in creating public opinion. What is public opinion exactly? To put it simply, it is the values or ideas of the majority of the society, (i.e. the consensus of the common people, the general public) on a particular issue or event. Therefore, one could paraphrase Peel, by stating that the mass media play an important role in creating the values or ideas held by the majority of society on particular issues or events. The significance of this statement is enhanced when one remembers that much, if not most, of the time the media are presenting information about events which occur outside the direct experience of the majority of the society. In these instances especially, the media represent the primary, and often the only source of information from which the public can form an opinion.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this thesis the definition of mass media which will be used does not refer to mass media in its broadest sense, rather it denotes only the three media through which the general public receives most of its daily news, namely, television, radio, and printed media (i.e., newspapers and magazines).

Crime, prisons and more specifically prison riots are all events which fall outside the direct experience of the majority of the public. They are, therefore, events for which the public relies on the media for information. Indeed, as noted by Ditton and Duffy (1983), the near monopoly of the daily press as a source of crime news makes it an important influence on public opinion on the subject of crime. The purpose of this thesis is not to ask if the media are presenting a biased account of prison riots or to decide how the media should be reporting them. Rather, the questions which will be viewed as important, and therefore will be the focus of this thesis, are how do the media portray prison riots, and what can be said concerning why they report them in this fashion?

For organizational purposes this chapter has been divided into three general sections: The first section deals with general research on prison riots, (looking at the historical trends and possible theories of causation); the second section deals with the media, (focusing on research in the area of mass communications and how the media relate to crime in general); the third section will be primarily an attempt to synthesize the material and to outline a research project which will lead to a better understanding of how the media portray prison riots.

## 1.2 RESEARCH ON PRISON RIOTS

Before moving on to the task at hand, it is important to have a common understanding of what constitutes a prison riot. According to Vernon Fox (1956), historical examination reveals that prisons are subject to at least four general types of disturbances in which the role of violence varies significantly. The following categories should not be seen as mutually exclusive, and one must be cautious of Fox's psychologizing of a single motive. Prison strikes, fashioned along the lines of Ghandi's idea of non-cooperation is the first type, and is characterized by low levels of violence. This, Fox argues, is an attempt to compromise between aggression against the prison administration and the desire to remain in a relatively safe position. The second type of disturbance is self-slashings or mutilations. In situations so oppressive that men do not dare to express hostility outwardly, the individual or group is able to thwart the captor's exploitation by this inward expression of hostility. The third type of disturbance, where violence sometimes emerges, is escapes. Here, however, inmates usually wish to avoid direct conflict with authorities using a minimum of violence to effect their escape. The fourth and final type of disturbance involves direct and violent aggression. In this category one finds full-fledged riots or mutinies in which weapons and threats are used by inmates who are in direct collective conflict with prison authorities.

Flynn (1980) uses three criteria, which will be adopted for this thesis, to define the concept of collective violence.<sup>2</sup> These are: 1)

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that in keeping with the literature in the area the

Seizure by inmates through force or violence of some prison territory where inmates have free access but the staff does not; 2) willful destruction of state property; 3) the presentation of collective demands by inmates to correctional authorities for the purpose of negotiating some change. It is this last form of disturbance involving collective violence which will be the primary focus of this thesis.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.2.1 The History and the Reporting of Riots

It is important to realize that collective violence in prisons is not a new or recent phenomenon. While logic necessitates that prisons came first, it was not long after that prison riots followed. The earliest prison riot found in the literature occurred in Connecticut in 1774 (Fox, 1956). Extensive global research by Fox revealed just over 240 riots and just under 30 other instances of prison disturbances in the century 1855 - 1955. These figures are not, as Fox himself admits, complete or exhaustive, for not only are riots hard to locate, but many are also not reported. This should not, however, be seen solely as the fault of capricious media; in most cases it is not to the advantage of the prison administration to let it be known that a riot has occurred. This is

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terms collective violence and prison riot will be used interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> While all of the disturbances included in the data-set were classified as riots and contained all three criteria, characteristics of each of the other three types of disturbances were also found in some of the riots. That is, the data provided evidence which indicated that in some of the riots beginnings lay in non-violent prison strikes, inmates used self-slashing and self-mutilation as a means of removing themselves (temporarily) from the tension filled post-riot environment, and there were those who used the riot as a diversion for escape.

especially true in the United States where prison policy and a warden's tenure are often closely tied to State politics. Furthermore, the media are often only notified of a riot when it is either very large and /or of such intensity that information would leak out anyway (Fox, 1956).

A close examination of prison riots reveals a steady increase not only in the frequency of occurrence, but in terms of their seriousness with regard to size, injury and damage to property.<sup>4</sup> The 1917 June riot in Joliet, Illinois was the largest riot of its day involving approximately 1000 inmates. However, 10 years later in November, 1927 this record was surpassed when between 1,200 and 2,000 inmates fought with National Guardsmen at Folsom Prison in California, leaving 9 inmates dead, and 31 wounded. Probably the greatest loss of life occurred in April, 1930 at the Ohio Penitentiary when guards refused to open cells near (or in) the burning buildings which rioting inmates had set ablaze. Before they were finally opened, 317 inmates were reported to have died. In October, 1952, 1,200 men rioted at the Ohio State Penitentiary burning 8 buildings and causing damage in excess of one million dollars. In the same year, inmates in Southern Michigan created a new high, destroying over 2.5 million dollars worth of State property (Fox, 1956). Attica, September, 1971 was perhaps the most publicized prison riot ever recorded, 43 people were killed and over 80 others were wounded by gunfire (The Official Report of the New York State Special Commission on Attica, 1972). The latest in the long line of record holders is the February, 1980, riot at the New Mexico State

<sup>4</sup> One notable exception to this steady rise is the period between the mid-1950's until 1969. During this time, the actual number of outbreaks did decline. However, since 1969 the violence and severity has increased with each consecutive year (Flynn, 1980).

Penitentiary, which currently remains unsurpassed in violence and brutality. During the riot 33 inmates were killed by other inmates, 12 of whom were first tortured and mutilated; as many as 200 inmates were beaten and raped; at least 90 inmates were treated at hospitals for drug overdoses and other injuries; and 7 of the 12 hostages were beaten, stabbed or sodomized though none were killed (Colvin, 1982).

Canadian prisons have also seen this type of increase, albeit on a lesser scale. In the period 1970 - 1975 there were 29 hostage-taking incidents in Canadian Federal Penitentiaries, involving 68 inmates. In the following year (1976) alone there were 28 reported incidents of hostage-takings involving 93 inmates, showing not only an increase in frequency but also in the degree of inmate involvement (Brickey & Kueneman, 1978).

From this brief historical review, it should be clear that prison riots are not a recent phenomenon, but have been a constant companion of penal institutions since their inception. Perhaps more disturbing is the direct relationship that history seems to document between the development of prisons in terms of numbers, size and cost, and the steady increase in frequency, cost and the brutality of prison riots.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> With better news reporting, and other advancements the media have made in the area of communication, one can argue that fewer such disturbances escape media attention. In my opinion, this does not, however, nullify the relationship being proposed.



### 1.2.2 Theories of Causation

While preliminary sociological investigation has revealed certain historical trends and common patterns within prison riots (Desroches, 1974b), it has not as yet provided a definitive statement as to their causation. In light of the variety of proposed explanations, the following section will discuss a number of the more popular theories. However, before moving on it should be noted that there is a misconception that prison riots are started by inmates who wish to use them as a cover or diversion for their escape. While prison authorities use this excuse to sometimes justify the mobilization of vast amounts of men and fire-power, the facts do not support this idea. None of the riots described in the reviewed literature involved any attempt to escape.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, as noted earlier, riots and escapes are conceptually different types of prison disturbances.

Prison administrations and correctional authorities tend to pay homage to the belief that it is inherent in the nature of the people incarcerated in penal institutions to cause disturbances. As Brickey and Kueneman (1978) suggest, this idea is intimately linked to the notion that all prisoners are immature, undersocialized, represent the worst segment of society, and must be strictly controlled. Therefore, the 'bottom line' logically deduced or otherwise, states that riots are the result of security problems stemming from either poor design or

<sup>6</sup> Part of the confusion may lie in the fact that mass escapes, when thwarted, may develop into hostage-takings, as for example at Archambault in 1982. Although obviously a prison disturbance, this situation should not be considered a riot simply because hostages are involved. Our definition is not that simplistic. Furthermore, one should remember that this was an atypical situation, from which generalizations on cause should not be drawn.

improper execution of procedure. Henry Propp, the chief of security for the Canadian Penitentiary Services stated in a 1975 closed-door meeting that the major cause in 50% of the cases was staff related; another 40% was caused by administrative failure; while in the final 10%, through no fault of anyone, the inmates had simply managed to overcome or circumvent the established methods of control.<sup>7</sup> In summary then, prison riots are viewed simply as breakdowns by staff and administrative personnel in the safe handling and management of a dangerous and violent breed of people.

One of the initial attempts to move away from a focus on the psychological make-up of the inmate to a more systemic explanation of riots has come to be known as the 'powder keg theory'. Briefly, this theory contends that the unfortunate conditions in prison, such as prison size, overcrowding, excessive idleness, poor segregation, and insufficient personnel who are undertrained and underpaid, are the keys to understanding prison riots. It assumes that these factors combine to create frustration, stress, tension and general unrest amongst the inmate population which eventually explodes into a riot. Usually, the explosion is seen to be triggered by a 'spark' such as bad food, or rumour of a beating. In essence, this theory requires two elements to explain prison riots; "a foundation of dissatisfaction and an incident that sparks dissatisfaction into rebellion" (Desroches, 1974b:341).

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<sup>7</sup> Taken from an interview on W5, February 13, 1977, which is cited by Brickey and Kueneman, 1978.

Another dominant theory, especially among those who are interested in prison reform, states that inmates initiate riots because they have certain demands or grievances they wish to make public. Proponents of this theory tend to argue that current patterns in prison management tend to make this type of behavior one of the few successful means of airing grievances available to the inmate population (Brickey & Kueneman, 1978). There seems to be some evidence to support this theory. First of all, when a riot occurs it is common for prisoners to present a list of grievances, and to begin negotiating for concessions and reforms. As well, frequently the inmates will demand publicity, both for their situation and the demands. At times during the negotiations inmates have demanded press conferences, as they did at Kingston; at Attica, inmates used a group of outside individuals known collectively as the 'observers'. The involvement of the public can be seen as serving two purposes for the inmates: 1) they want the strength and support of public opinion to gain reforms; and 2) public awareness acts as an insurance policy against an internal administrative after-the-fact coverup or a denial of negotiated concessions.

Using a conflict perspective, Brickey and Kueneman (1978) attack the problem of causation from a slightly different angle. They still see riots as a form of inmate protest, however, they focus on the idea of the inmates' perceived legitimacy of the authorities. They argue that to a large extent inmates withhold legitimacy from those in power: "From the standpoint of the subordinate inmate those in power do not have the 'right' to make decisions affecting the subordinates' lives" (Brickey & Kueneman, 1978:161). This precondition, together with a situation where

there are no other effective means of redressing grievances combine to create a situation where riots are more likely to occur. Riots therefore, are primarily to be seen as insurrections against the power of the staff and administration, a power which inmates view as both illegitimate and unjust.

Some sociologists have attempted to explain riots by looking at the relationships inmates have both with each other and with the staff. Gresham Sykes (1956), Hartung and Flock (1956), and Richard Cloward (1969) (as noted in Desroches, 1974b) have all developed very similar positions. Their theories are based on the perceived existence of an informal inmate society or social structure, which functions either semi-officially or unofficially depending on whose theory one uses. Within this social structure, certain inmates become leaders and an elite group is formed which exerts a degree of control over the others. The most blatant example of this can be found in Arkansas, where the inmate elite are called 'trusties' and are armed and used as guards (Murton, 1972). Riots occur, according to this theory, when the inmate social order is disrupted or threatened with disruption. This can occur when a new administration takes over and attempts to disregard the existing power structure, or if the old administration attempts to 'tighten up' by reducing the system of illicit privileges and preferential treatment (Desroches, 1974b). Insurrection may also occur when inmates try to join the elite but find their way blocked, at which point they may become violent and rebellious (Colvin, 1982).

In summary, research into the area of prison riots has revealed a number of points: 1) Prison riots are not a new phenomenon, they have a

long history and are intimately related to the development of prisons in the criminal justice system. 2) Prison administration and correctional authorities prefer to explain prison riots from a psychological perspective, viewing inmates in general as being undersocialized and predisposed to violent outbursts. 3) Sociological investigation has realized the historical relationship between prisons and prison riots and therefore focused on systemic explanations positing three important determinants:

- i) those in power lack legitimacy in the eyes of the prisoners;
- ii) the physical and social conditions which produce strain or tension; and
- iii) a lack of effective alternatives for redressing grievances.

Given the diversity of the dominant causal theories, the question which needs to be asked is, do the media in their coverage of riots take into account the competing explanations or do they continually favour one explanation, and if so why? To try and answer this question requires that one looks at how the media operate and report news.

### 1.3    MASS MEDIA

Before focusing on the role the media play in the reporting of prison riots, it is important to have some understanding of mass media in general; their role in providing information; their methods of reporting news; and crime as a special type of news.

### 1.3.1 Early Research on Mass Media

The early research into the area of mass media came about in response to a number of related pressures: 1) The operating needs of the new media; 2) the special interests of governments, advertisers and would-be propagandists; 3) the natural public curiosity about the new media and the more narcissistic interests of those involved in operating the mass media (Mcquail, 1969). Pioneering the work in the area were four men, Paul Lazarsfeld, Kurt Lewin, Harold Lasswell, and Carl Hovland, (Schramm, 1963) each of whom influenced a particular trend in communication research. Lazarsfeld's interests lay in the audiences and the effects of mass communications, using audience measurements to study not only the medium but the audience itself. Lewin's central interest was the communication in groups, and the effect of group pressures, group norms, and group roles on the behavior and attitudes of their members. Lasswell's focus was in the area of propaganda, in the larger systemic examination of communication in nations and societies, and in the study of political communicators. Hovland's interest was primarily in the area of communication and attitude change (Schramm, 1963). While these four strands of influence are still noticeable in communication research, they have tended to merge.

### 1.3.2 Media and News

One of the oldest adages of journalism states: The news columns belong to the reader; the editorial columns belong to the editor (Rivers & Schramm, 1969). What this means is that the public should be able to

demand that news is as fair and impartial as human judgement can make it, and that editorializing and interpreting of the news should be reserved for the editorial and syndicated columns. If, as was stated in the introduction, most of the time the media are presenting information about events which occur outside the direct experience of the majority of the general public, then the degree to which this adage is followed has important implications for how accurately informed public opinion is, not only in terms of how events are reported, but whether they get reported at all. Let us look at the latter of the two concerns first.

One of the first studies to investigate how information moves through the network and eventually becomes news was conducted by Kurt Lewin. Coining the term 'gatekeeper', he stated that the passage of an item of information through the communication network was dependent on certain areas within these channels which functioned as 'gates'. These gate sections are governed either by impartial rulers or by 'gatekeepers'. In the latter case, an individual or group is in a position of power for making the decision whether the information continues along the network, and ultimately, whether or not it becomes news (White, 1964). The term gatekeeper does not refer to any one particular position in the media, it is more a role which operates at a number of different levels. Reporters, those individuals who put stories on the wire service, the different section editors, and the general editors all function as gatekeepers when they use their discretion to determine what and how different stories get reported to the public. Gieber (1964) and White (1964) in their studies of gatekeepers have found the individuals' subjective values and biases do affect their judgements as to which

information gets used. Perhaps more revealing was Gieber's observation that gatekeepers at all levels saw themselves as employees of a news gathering bureaucracy where "any communication reaching the public had to be cleaned of any information that might upset the community consensus. All communications had to enhance the consensus" (Gieber, 1964:179). The consensus referred to here is an ideological consensus which may operate at either the local, national or international level depending upon the frame of reference of the story. Chomsky and Herman's (1979) The Political Economy of Human Rights: Volumes I & II provide well-documented evidence of how the media, through suppression of information and self-censorship, report back to the United States about American satellite countries so as to uphold western ideology and the consensus of American neutrality and goodness. They conclude:

Mass media everywhere tend to serve the important interests that dominate the state and suppress facts so as to convey the impression that national policy is well-intentioned and justified.

(Chomsky & Herman, 1979:23).

Despite the importance of gatekeepers and media self-censorship in the production of news, the media cannot have any influence over information they do not have. Governments at all levels are social institutions which produce and process important information; however, much of this information is kept secret, especially at the national level. Rivers and Schramm (1969) argue that there is nothing novel about the idea of the government controlling the news by withholding information. The debate has long existed between the media and government. The government feels it must keep from the press,

such transactions as relate to military operations or affairs of consequence, the immediate promulgation of which might defeat the interests of the community. The press must prevent



officials from covering with the veil of secrecy the common routine of business, for the liberties of the people were, or never will be, secure when the transactions of their rulers may be concealed from them.

(Rivers & Schramm, 1969:23).

Not unlike the gatekeeper's concern for consensus, the key question one needs to ask here is what or which affairs might "defeat the interests of the community"? In summary, whether information ever becomes news (i.e., becomes reported) depends not only on the media's awareness thereof, but the perceived impact it will have on the desired ideological consensus.

How the media present news is just as important as what gets reported. In their reporting of the news, the media often also offer interpretations of how to understand these events. At times this is done overtly, as when 'experts' gather prior to a politician's speech to tell the public what they should expect to hear, and again after the speech to inform them of what in fact the politician said. However, most of the time the process is much more subtle, through the choice of headlines, the 'experts' they choose to quote, the focus (angle) of the story, the use of pictures, etc. Eleanor Maclean in her work Between The Lines (1981), has argued that the media use numerous techniques to bias the presentation of information. The techniques fall into four general categories: Faulty construction (i.e., illogical or unsound ways of arguing); intentional distortions; cheap gadgetry; and abuses of language. Therefore, she concludes, to detect bias in the media, and particularly news, one needs to analyse four areas: 1) The mode of analysis used (i.e., the language used and rationality of the argument); 2) the context in which the story is placed (i.e., is it part of a

larger group of stories on a particular event; if not, what type of stories surround it); 3) its form (i.e., do they use color, pictures, statistics, as well as the length or degree of coverage); and 4) the overall content (i.e., how the presentation of the message combines with form, context and interpretation to create the desired impression).

One can then see, as Hall states:

The media thus help to reproduce and sustain the definitions of the situation which favour the powerful, not only by actively recruiting the powerful in the initial stages where topics are structured, but by favouring certain ways of setting up topics, and maintaining strategic areas of silence. Many of these structured forms of communication are so common, so natural, so taken for granted, so deeply embedded in the very communication forms which are employed, that they are hardly visible at all, as ideological constructs, unless we deliberately set out to ask, 'What, other than what has been said about this topic could be said?' 'Why do the questions - which always presuppose answers of a particular kind - so often reoccur in this form?' 'Why do other questions never appear?' (Emphasis in original)

(Hall, 1978:65).

This is not to imply that the media simply create the news, nor that they simply transmit the ideology of the powerful in a conspiratorial fashion. Rather, as the primary source of information about particular events, they command the passage between those who are 'in the know' and the ignorance of the general public. Then, as Hall has also suggested:

In a critical sense, the media are frequently not the primary definers of news events at all; but their structured relationship to power has the effect of making them play a crucial but secondary role in reproducing the definitions of those who have privileged access, as of right, to the media as 'accredited sources'. (Emphasis in original)

(Hall, 1978:59).

### 1.3.3 Crime as News

Hall's concepts of primary and secondary definers is particularly helpful in analyzing how the media report crime. To begin with, despite the media's role in helping to shape public opinion, they do not institute the laws. Secondly, unlike the 'eye-witness' reports one gets from war correspondents, news about crime rarely involves first-hand accounts of the crime itself.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Hall's concepts of primary and secondary definers can be seen at work both at a micro and a macro-level. At the micro-level, they reflect the day to day working relationship between the media and the police. While the media could theoretically use perpetrators of crime as a source of information, news workers rarely learn of crimes directly from offenders. The primary source of information is law enforcement agencies (Fishman, 1978). More specifically, the journalists typically learn of local crimes either through the 'police wire' or through the police radios. The 'police wire' is a teletype system whereby the police can issue a daily summary of the criminal activity in the area to the media. In this way, the police act as the primary

<sup>8</sup> This is not to imply that war news is any more accurate or less biased than other news: 1) Most of what the media report about the front is taken from briefings where military personnel inform the media as to the 'actual' situation. 2) Most of the more sensitive material which is given to and reported by the media is in a code referred to as 'newspeak' (Maclean, 1981). This is a language that distorts, confuses or attempts to make an issue or event more palatable. For example, if someone has lied it is referred to as having 'misspoke'; issuing an operative statement infers that anything and everything said before should be disregarded and considered as false; bombing becomes known as accelerated pacification or air support; killing becomes neutralizing; and payment to the family of a civilian killed by mistake is known as a condolence award. 3) The media's self-censorship ensures that the information reported does not seriously threaten the ideological consensus.

definers of criminal news, specifying not only which types of crimes come to the media's attention and thereby forcing the media into a secondary role of reproducing these definitions, but also by controlling the amount of detail the media receive.

At a more macro-level, this has implications for the understanding of crime waves and law-and-order campaigns. Both Becker (1963) and Dickerson (1968) (as noted in Taylor, 1982), using the Marijuana Tax Act, illustrate how the Federal Bureau of Narcotics defined not only the problem but also the extent thereof, and used the media to generate and move public opinion in a direction which was in the Bureau's best interest. As the primary definers the organization attempted to persuade the public that they were facing a major drug problem and that they, the Bureau, were the ones to handle this threat to America. They were able, through a large scale publicity campaign, to touch on the nerve centers of American morality and culture (Taylor, 1982). Through newspaper articles, advertisements and films they were able to convince the public that the drug would reduce an individual's capacity for self-control and that it was taken not to aid work or reduce pain, but to achieve states of ecstasy. Due to its position of authority, the Bureau was able to define the situation in such a fashion that the media, in reproducing these definitions, served the Bureau's interests.

It would be a mistake however, to view the prominence of the primary definers in the reporting of crime as exclusively a function of their especially authoritative status. It also has to do, as Hall states, with the fact that crime is less open than most public issues to competing and alternative definitions.

A police statement on crime is rarely 'balanced' by one from a professional criminal, though the latter probably possess more expertise on crime. But as an opposition, criminals are neither 'legitimate' nor organized. By virtue of being criminals, they have forfeited the right to take part in the negotiation of consensus about crime. In the absence of an alternative definition powerfully and articulately proposed, the scope of any reinterpretation of crime by the public as an issue of public concern is extremely limited.

(Hall, 1978:69).

#### 1.4 PRISON RIOTS IN THE NEWS

Social scientists for the most part have not explored the relationship between mass media and prisons, more specifically prison riots. In the only study found focusing on the media and prison news, Jacobs and Brooks (1983) set out to test two assumptions: 1) That the public is thoroughly ignorant of what goes on inside prisons; and 2) that the only kind of information, which comes to the public's attention concerns riots and other sordid violence. Their analysis of prison news coverage in the media for a single year (1976) in the New York area, showed these assumptions to be false. Prisons', as compared to the coverage given mental health, welfare and nursing homes did not appear to be slighted, neither did there appear to be a singular focus on riots and violence. Unfortunately their study said nothing as to "whether prison news is objective, accurate, and comprehensive" (Jacobs & Brooks, 1983:114), questions which are of particular interest to this thesis. A second problem with this study is the assumption that because the information is being presented it is also being read and digested by the public. Third, one should be aware that their sample included the New York Times, a newspaper which has an excellent and somewhat atypical

history of doing indepth investigative journalism. Finally, the study did not address the importance of the relationship between the media and the primary definers (i.e., in this case, the correctional authorities).

### 1.5 CONCLUSION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Returning now to the question raised earlier in the thesis, of whether the media in their coverage of riots take into account the competing explanations or continually favour one explanation, and if so why? If one accepts as accurate Hall's assessment of the media's role there should be a great deal of homogeneity in the reporting of prison riots. Briefly restated, Hall's argument is that the media play the role of secondary definers who reproduce the definitions of the primary definers. Therefore, the media should portray prison riots in a fashion consistent with the definition of the correctional authorities. That is, the media will tend to adopt and present information to the public which is consistent with and augments the definition which the correctional authorities have of the event. Since the correctional authorities are defining the event, expectations are that the media will present the view that the riots were primarily the inmates' fault. More specifically, reporting would be expected to focus on the damage done, and the irrational and subhuman nature of the inmates as the primary cause. It would also be consistent with this type of definition to downplay any violence perpetrated by the guards against the inmates once the prison has been retaken, since the inmates are already viewed as animals which need to be caged. Finally, if the reporting of riots

tends to focus on the inmates and their under-socialized nature, there would not be any need to place the riot in an historical context, (by, for example, reporting the events leading up to the riot), or place the riot in the larger context of the merits of incarceration. The purpose of this thesis therefore, is to test Hall's argument as it applies to the Canadian media and how they report prison riots.

## Chapter II

### METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

As was illustrated in the previous chapter, while there has been considerable research and writing in both the areas of prison riots and mass media, there has not been a significant merging of the two areas. The problem then is to develop a research design which is both exploratory in terms of gathering information on how the media report prison riots, but also focused enough that it allows specific hypotheses generated from Hall's thesis on the media's role in the production of the news to be tested.

To aid in the focusing of the research it is important to understand how the media, in their role as secondary definers, present information to the public which is consistent with the definition which the primary definers have of the riot. The media tend to accomplish this in a number of ways (Maclean, 1981): 1) Through the use of bold and directive headlines the media can capture the audience's attention with statements or ideas which are only peripherally related to the facts of the story. Headlines which emphasize the sensationalistic elements of riots, such as the inmates' violence and the destruction of state property, or which psychologize motives (as in 'INMATES GONE WILD'), all serve to discredit the inmates and the riot as a form of protest. They portray the inmates



as a wild bunch of animals that need to be caged up. 2) The media also use pictures<sup>9</sup> which focus on the damage the inmates have done. The pictures either focus on individuals who are injured in the riot or on State property which has been damaged. While both may be offensive to the audience, the latter may also arouse anger since it is primarily tax dollars which paid for the institution, and which will be used to repair and replace the damaged property. 3) Due to the fact that the riots occur in a closed institution which is highly security orientated, the media do not have free access to interview whom it wishes. The correctional authorities control who the media are allowed to interview, not only in the obvious sense of whether they are allowed to talk to inmates (typically they are not), but which staff are allowed to make 'official' statements. 4) In conjunction with the headlines and pictures, the media also tend to focus or highlight any and all incidents of violence which occur during the riot in the body of the article. Frequent references to damage or sordid violence all serve to portray the inmate as less than human. 5) Correctional authorities also give other information to the media which helps to characterize the inmate as a habitually bad and incurable criminal. In this vein, one will sometimes see information such as an inmate's prior record (especially if it includes a violent offense), information which is unrelated to the riot, but serves to stigmatize the inmate in the public's eye. 6) Due to the nature of how the media report most events, prison riots are not typically placed in any historical context. While

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<sup>9</sup> To add to the impact these pictures have, and to denote them as important, they may appear in the paper in color. However, since this thesis is using micro-film as its main source of data, this is a distinction which will not be made.

this is a problem with media everywhere, it is particularly so in Canada where investigative journalism has not been as widely developed. 7) Related to the last point, one does not find that the media tend to question the larger system. In their role as secondary definers they appear to be content with reproducing the definitions of the correctional authorities; definitions which do not even challenge the status quo in terms of prison reform, let alone address the issue of prison abolition.

## 2.2 HYPOTHESES

As stated earlier, while this project is primarily exploratory, the study also proposes to test some specific hypotheses. In trying to apply Hall's argument to Canadian media and how they portray prison riots to the Canadian public, this research project will be testing two hypotheses:

Ha: #1

In the reporting of Canadian prison riots, the media will portray riots in a homogeneous fashion in terms of the causation and nature thereof.

In testing this hypothesis the concept 'homogeneity' will be operationalized using four indicators: The first indicator is the frequency with which certain stated causes appear, (i.e., will the reported causes primarily focus on the inmates' nature rather than systemic causes). The second indicator is the degree to which the violence which guards direct towards the inmates once the prison is retaken, is reported. The third indicator is the degree to which the riot is placed into some sort of context, whether this be a) historical, (i.e., information about events directly leading up to the riot) or b)



for the purpose of understanding communication processes or for discerning information about the originators of the communication (Babbie, 1975, see also Budd, 1967). "What content analysis as such does is to provide a more or less precise description of the content in terms meaningful for the problem at hand" (Berelson, 1954:516). There is general agreement that in doing content analysis three essential requirements must be met: 1) One must have objectivity (i.e., each step must be carried out on the basis of explicitly formulated rules and procedures); 2) one must be specific (i.e., the inclusion or exclusion of content must be done according to consistently applied rules); and 3) one must have generality (i.e., one's findings must have some theoretical relevance).

Like most methodologies, content analysis has both advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages of content analysis is that it is unobtrusive and non-reactive. That is, the content analyst seldom has any effect on that which s/he is studying (Babbie, 1975), something which cannot be said for all research methods. A second advantage is that it is economical. As long as one has access to the material to be coded, no large research staff or special equipment is required. A further strength is that content analysis allows one to make comparisons over time. Through the use of historical artifacts content analysis allows one to make comparisons between different time periods. Finally, content analysis also has a built-in safety feature; because it is unobtrusive, economical and deals with recorded artifacts, errors can often be remedied either by redoing only a portion of the study or recoding some of the data. Errors in other forms of research can often

be remedied only at great expense in terms of time and resources. Unfortunately, content analysis also has its disadvantages, one of which is that it is restricted to recorded artifacts. But the major problem is one of validity. "One may have difficulty developing counting and coding methods that represent [one's] theoretical concepts" (Babbie, 1975:234). This problem will be discussed more fully in a later section.

Sampling procedures in content analysis are no different than in any other research method. Standard sampling techniques such as random, systematic, stratified and cluster samples are equally appropriate for content analysis. However, despite the accepted superiority of probability sampling methods, in setting up this research project there has been a conscious choice to use a purposive sample both in setting the boundaries of the study and in choosing the units of analysis.

To begin with, this research will focus only on one medium of mass communication, namely the printed press. This is being done for both methodological and pragmatic reasons. First of all, if any of the three possible media will have more indepth coverage it is likely to be the press since it is not as limited in terms of time as are radio and television. Secondly, the printed media tend to be one of the sources television and radio use to select the news events they report. Thirdly, in terms of doing any historical analysis the printed media are easier to get access to and to deal with. Finally, there is also a minimal expense in retrieving the information, and in methods required for its analysis.

Having chosen to work with the printed press, further specification is required since within Canada the total amount of print would be overwhelming. Therefore, the focus will be primarily on daily newspapers with the inclusion of a national magazine. The sample itself will include 12 newspapers, 2 from each of the 6 provinces which have Federal Correctional Institutions,<sup>10</sup> where riots occurred and one national magazine. The newspapers will be chosen primarily on the basis of the highest circulation figures, with an attempt to ensure that they cover the time parameters of the study. Macleans has been chosen as the national magazine for several reasons: 1) Its wide circulation; 2) the fact that it has been in publication throughout the time period of the study; and 3) because it is available to be analyzed.

The next step involves defining the project's boundaries both in terms of the historical period it will cover and the number of incidents it will include. The problem of selecting an appropriate time frame for the project involves several issues: 1) The time frame must be long enough to allow for any change to occur; 2) it must be long enough to include sufficient incidents so that one can make comparisons between incidents, as well as, generalizations from incidents; and 3) it must be short enough that the project remains 'doable' in a reasonable period of time. Having weighed these concerns in conjunction with the information the Correctional Services of Canada (C.S.C.) has provided on the number and frequency of prison riots, a sample period of fifty years, 1932 - 1982, has been chosen for this project. During this period, C.S.C.

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<sup>10</sup> As of 1978 there were no Federal Institutions in Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories (Griffiths et.al, 1980:205).

records indicate a total of 54 major disturbances (see Appendix A). The problem now becomes one of identification, which of the incidents are riots (as previously defined) and which are some other form of disturbance. For as Cathy J. Gillis (Research Assistant, Strategic Planning Committee, C.S.C.) has stated, "...in the last decade the term 'major disturbance' has been used sometimes interchangeably with the word 'riot'. [Therefore], the actual number of 'riots' is then difficult to determine" (taken from a footnote in Appendix A). Of the 54 incidents listed C.S.C. designated 25 of them as 'riots' and 10 of them as 'mini riots'. Further information gleaned from C.S.C. security branch information sheets (also gained through Ms. C. J. Gillis) has helped to locate one additional riot not listed in Appendix A, which occurred November 20, 1977 at the Millhaven institution. This then brings the number of riots to 26. Since this number of riots is of a manageable size the research will cover the entire population in the study rather than some sample thereof.

In doing content analysis, as with other forms of research, one tries to incorporate as much reliability, validity and precision into the research design as possible. Despite the fact that these three criteria are intimately related within the design, it is important to give each of them independent consideration. Reliability is that quality of a measurement method which gives confidence that the same data would have been collected each time in repeated observations of the same phenomenon (Babbie, 1975). In reference to content analysis, reliability is a function of the coder's skill, the clarity of categories, the rules which govern their use and the degree of ambiguity in the data (Holsti,

1969). Intercoder reliability is not something which should pose any problem, as the researcher will be doing all the coding himself. Having one person do all the coding, however, presents problems in checking category reliability. Since it will not be possible to compare different coders' use of the classificatory scheme, it will be important to pay particular attention in formulating the categories so that it is clear in which category the evidence belongs. To enhance the projects' reliability three steps will be taken: 1) A test-retest procedure will be conducted where the first several articles will be redone after the last articles have been coded; 2) a graduate student trained in the use of the classificatory scheme will be asked to regather information from several articles which will allow a check on the intercollector reliability; and 3) a student trained in using the coding scheme will be asked to code several articles which will allow a check on intercoder reliability.

Validity is a descriptive term used to describe a measure that accurately reflects the concept that it is intended to measure (Babbie, 1975). In content analysis the ability to make valid inferences is either enhanced or diminished by the choice of categories and content units. As Tukey (1962) stated: "right question, which is vague, than an exact answer to the wrong question, which can always be made precise..." (emphases in original) (Holsti, 1969:12). Content analysis relies heavily on content (or face) validity, and is established through the informed judgement of the researcher (Holsti, 1969). This is to say that the categories must be logically deduced and related to the information which is to be



gathered. Further, when operationalizing the categories one must also be able to clearly see the logical relation to the inferences which will be made.

Precision is the last of the three criteria, but this in no way reflects a lack of importance. Precision is that quality of measurement which refers to how accurately one is going to count, (i.e., the degree of gradation used in setting up the categories). In research common sense would indicate that precise measurements are superior to those which are imprecise. However, different research goals require different levels of precision. For example, hypothetically in research conducted on hair color it may be sufficient to classify respondents' hair color as either blond or other. If this fulfills the researchers' needs, further precision would be a waste of resources. As with validity and reliability, precision in content analysis is a direct function of the categories. Therefore, in setting up categories it is important to know the degree of precision needed to reach the desired conclusions. While one does not want to waste resources being overly precise, if the level of precision needed is not clear it is advisable to strive for greater precision; it is always possible to collapse categories later.

In setting up the categories, they "should reflect the purposes of the research, be exhaustive, be mutually exclusive, independent, and be derived from a single classification principle" (emphases in original) (Holsti, 1969, p.95). These are criteria which are common to most classificatory schemes in the social sciences. According to Holsti (1969), the most important requirement is that the categories adequately

reflect the purposes of the research. The purpose of this research is to determine how the media report prison riots; more specifically, do Hall's concepts of primary and secondary definers adequately explain how they are reported? As such, the research is primarily descriptive and hence the categories are broad. They are geared toward providing information relevant to the testing of the hypotheses. They are exhaustive, mutually exclusive and independent (in that the assignment of one datum into a category in no way affects the classification of others). Furthermore, conceptually different levels of analysis will be kept separate, satisfying the single classificatory principle.

### 2.3.1 Categories

In setting up the categories for this project a choice has been made to use some of the spacial-time measures traditional to newspaper analysis along with thematic, source and word analysis. As an organizational aid the categories have been grouped under four headings: 1) Information provided; 2) Message; 3) Sources; and 4) Form.

Under the first heading (information provided) there are six categories which are designed to determine what information is provided in the article(s). The first category is concerned with whether the article(s) answers the four W's (who, what, where, and when). With this information one will be able to determine if any patterns exist in the nonreporting of information. The second category is the fifth W (why). Here the interest is in the stated causes of the riot. Furthermore, it will also be important to record if any alternative explanations are discussed and how they are treated. The third category consists of

recording the presence or absence of information which places the riot into some larger context, either in terms of events directly leading up to the riot and/or the larger problem of prison disturbances in general. The fourth category will record the presence or absence of information on whether the guards have retaliated against the inmates once the prison has been retaken. The fifth category is concerned with whether or not there are other related articles, such as human interest stories, and how they portray the riot and its effects. The sixth category will record whether the article reports the demands, views and/or interpretation(s) of the inmates.

Under the second heading (message) there are three categories which focus on the message of the article(s). The first category here deals with the slant (angle) of the story (i.e., what aspect is being played up in the article). The second category will try to determine what the implicit reasoning of the article is. Is it a) rational, (i.e., is it logical, conscious and well defined) or b) non-rational, (i.e., is it based on feelings, intuition, wonder, repugnance and therefore, elusive and difficult to identify). The third category will code any devices, such as gadgetry, distortions abuses of language, etc. which serve to enhance or detract from individuals or events.

Under the third heading (sources) there are four categories which focus on the sources of the story and those quoted within. The first category deals with who is the source, not only in the sense of who wrote the story, but how did s/he get the information. The second category will code who is quoted (name, position, title). The third category will record the nature of the quote and how it is used. The

final category will record any devices or qualifiers attached to the quote which detracts from or enhances it, or the speaker.

Under the final heading (form) there are three categories designed to assess the article(s). form. The first category will record the nature of the headline (i.e., its slant or angle). A second will record how it compares to the other headlines, in terms of size of print and location. The third category will code the presence or absence of pictures from the riot. If they are present the following information will also be recorded: i) What do they depict; ii) are there leading captions; and iii) what is the percentage relation to article space<sup>11</sup> (Cohen & Young, 1973).

### 2.3.2 Analysis

The question now becomes one of relating the information gleaned from the categories to the hypotheses. The first hypothesis deals with whether or not the Canadian media report prison riots in a homogeneous fashion. As stated earlier, four indicators will be used to determine this: 1) The frequency of reported explanations; 2) whether the guards' retaliation is reported; 3) whether the riot is placed in some sort of context; and 4) the overall slant or angle of the story. Information for these indicators will come from the different categories. Information for the first indicator will be gained through the category recording the stated causes. Information for the second and third

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that in doing content analysis one needs to realize that once one has begun coding the data one must sometimes change or add categories. For this reason it is quite possible that the final categories may look slightly different than what has just been described.

indicators will come from categories set up to record either the presence or absence of that particular information. Information for the final indicator will come from categories recording the implicit reasoning of the article, headlines, are the inmates quoted and the nature of the quotes, are the demands printed, how does the paper use photographs, and the focus of the story.

The second hypothesis focuses on the concept of primary definers, predicting that the correctional authorities will for the most part act as the primary definers of the event. Conclusions concerning the accuracy of this hypothesis will be based on the indicators mentioned earlier, namely: The frequency with which different types of individuals are quoted; how quotes are used within the story; and the correlation between reported causes and the correctional authorities' position. Conclusions concerning the first indicator will be based on information from the categories which record the frequency and nature of the quotes within the story. In reference to the second indicator, categories have also been set up to collect information on how quotes are used within articles, paying particular attention to the prominence they receive, as well as any attempts to enhance or detract from them, or the speaker. The final indicator involves comparing the degree to which the reported causes of the riot correspond to the position the correctional authorities have of the riot.

**Chapter III**  
**PRESENTATION OF DATA**

**3.1    GENERAL INFORMATION**

In the initial stages of data collection several discoveries were made which altered the size and shape of the project. First of all, four of the incidents which were to be investigated were dropped from the list of twenty-six, bringing the number of riots to be investigated to twenty-two. The initial disturbance to be deleted (Stony Mountain Penitentiary, 1932), was not included because it failed to meet the requirements set out in Chapter 1. It turned out to be a relatively small disturbance involving the attack of two inmates on two guards while they were in the yard. The other three incidents (St. Vincent de Paul, 1956, Kingston Penitentiary, 1967, and Prince Albert Penitentiary, 1973) were eventually dropped after an extensive search was unable to turn up any coverage in the designated newspapers. While few details are known of the earlier two disturbances, this does not apply to the 1973, Prince Albert riot. Information gained through the C.S.C. clearly shows that a riot did occur, and involved approximately 200 inmates in the 'A'-landing and central dome area, lasting for several hours. Therefore, while size may have played a role in the non-reporting of the former two, it would not explain why the latter riot was not covered. One possible explanation, though merely conjectural, is that the correctional authorities were able to keep the news of the riot from

leaking out to the media. This explanation gains credence when one realizes that The Regina Leader Post, one of the papers involved in the study, ran two articles on successive days following the riot, one praising the educational facilities at the prison which allowed guards and inmates to take courses together, and the other outlining the novel attempt at Prince Albert to serve convicts their food cafeteria-style. One can only presume that if the editor had knowledge of the 200-man riot at the same institution, it would have been at least as likely to have received coverage as either of the two other events which were reported.

The second change the data demanded was the exclusion of information from a national magazine. Neither Maclean's (the magazine the project had proposed using), Time, nor Newsweek provided coverage of prison riots. The only information relating to prison disturbances found in Maclean' occurred in the fall of 1976, after four of Canada's larger institutions experienced trouble in the span of less than a month. The article was a general critique of the Canadian penal system and did not focus on any of the institutions or riots in particular.

### **3.2 RELIABILITY**

As was stated in Chapter 2, several tests of reliability were to be conducted to ensure that the results would be reproducible. In all, three tests were conducted. The first was of a test - retest nature, the second was an inter-collector test, while the third was a test of inter-coder reliability. The test - retest was conducted primarily to

check the consistency of the data which I, as the sole researcher, collected. By recollecting and reinterpreting a certain portion of the data which had been collected earlier, one is able to test how reliable the researcher is. In this case the test - retest procedure indicated that there was a very high degree of consistency, with 99.5% agreement between test and retest. The second, inter-collector reliability test, involved familiarizing another individual with the instrument and comparing his findings to the data-set. This procedure also resulted in a very high level of agreement, specifically, 97.5%. It should also be noted that in each of the articles included in these tests the difference could be attributed, (at least 50% of the time) to a difference of one degree in the frequency recorded. What this means is that the difference was not such that one collector recorded 'X' and the other recorded 'Y', but rather that one recorded the occurrence of 'X' as 3 while the other recorded it as 4. The last test was designed to check the reliability of the coding procedure. This was done by having another individual recode some of the data in the study and then comparing the two sets of codings. This test also showed that the data was reliable producing an inter-coder reliability of 99.8%. In summary, these three tests indicated that there was a high degree of consistency in the method of data collection and coding. This allows one to say, with some degree of confidence, that replication of this study by another researcher would result in very similar findings.



### **3.3 NATURE OF DATA**

Before testing of the two hypotheses which have been proposed can begin it is important that the reader gain at least a general familiarity with the nature of the data-set.

#### **3.3.1 Coverage**

As already stated, the data-set contained information about 22 riots which was gained from 12 newspapers. These newspapers produced a total of 602 stories, or a mean of just over 27 stories per riot. The range was from a low of 1 (0.2%) story reporting the 1972 riot at Stony Mountain Penitentiary, to 116 (19.3%) stories covering the 1932 riot at Kingston Penitentiary (for a complete breakdown see Appendix B). If one breaks the data-set down by individual paper, The Regina Leader Post, which produced 13 stories (2.2% of the total) in covering 3 riots, had the lowest ratio of stories per riot (4.3). The Vancouver Sun, on the other hand, had the highest ratio (27), having produced 108 articles (17.9% of the total) in the reporting of 4 riots (Appendix C provides a full breakdown).

#### **3.3.2 Duration of Coverage**

The data also reveal that for the most part prison riots do not stay in the news, or remain newsworthy for a long time. One hundred and forty three articles, (23.8%) appeared on the first day of coverage after the riot. Three hundred and six (50.7%) of the stories appeared within the first three days after the riot; 465 (77.1%) after the first

six; and finally, 550 (91.2%) appeared within the first ten days of coverage. The most notable exception to this is the 1976 riot at the British Columbia Penitentiary which received coverage for a period of 36 days. This anomaly can be explained by a number of interrelated factors: 1) The riot itself was one of the longest of those covered; 2) the degree of damage was one of the highest; 3) it was one of a series of four major disturbances at Canadian institutions across Canada within a span of four weeks; 4) the damage to the facility combined with lack of space elsewhere created an on going problem of housing inmates; and 5) the Public Service Alliance of Canada, the union which represents the guards, became very vocal, calling for the investigation of an alleged nationally organized conspiracy to destroy Federal Penitentiaries. The union threatened to call a national strike, and threatened legal action if the pact which had secured the release of the hostage was upheld by prison authorities (for a complete breakdown of duration of coverage see Appendix D).

It is also important to realize that the 602 articles were collected from only 231 papers. Ninety-six (41.6%) of the papers contained only a single story relating to the prison riot, while 210 (90.9%) of the papers had five stories or less. The maximum number of articles relating to a riot that any of the papers had was 13, this occurred twice. Hence, in just over one-half (58.4%) of the newspaper issues there were multiple stories on a given day (for a complete breakdown see Appendix E).

### **3.3.3 Location in Paper**

If the 'newsworthiness' of a particular story is at all determined by the page on which it is found, then stories on penitentiary riots are very 'newsworthy' in that 44.4% (267) of the stories were found on page one, and 54.1% (325) on the first two pages. Further, the data show that within the first three pages 67.2% (404) of the articles can be accounted for, and within the first ten pages 80.7% (485) of the stories are found (for a complete breakdown of the pages on which articles were found on see Appendix F). The data also indicate that 26.2% (158) of the stories were continued on more than one page. Information was also collected on how the stories on page one ranked in prominence. The results indicate that of the 267 articles on page one, 27.7% (74) are the lead story of the day, while another 13.9% (37) of the stories rank as the second most prominent story of the day. Overall, a total of 44.9% (120) of the articles rank fifth or higher (for a complete breakdown see Appendix G).

### **3.3.4 Subject of Story**

The stories were also broken down by their general content/ subject into six categories. The results show that not all of the stories written at the time of a prison riot focus specifically on the riot itself. Analysis indicates that 60.3% (363) of the stories focus exclusively on the riot, while another 10.8% (65) deal with the effect on, reaction of, or action taken by, authorities in Ottawa. Seventy five (12.5%) of the stories reported disturbances at other correctional institutions. Another 7.5% (45) of the articles were classified as

human interest. These consisted of stories about a particular inmate's past, a guard missing his son's birthday party, and the efforts of the Salvation Army, etc. The explanation, announcement, or expected effect, of existing or new penal policy accounted for 6.0% (36) of the stories. Finally, 3.0% (18) of the stories focused on the penitentiary, but did not relate to the riot or its effects.

### 3.3.5 Authorship

The data also reveal some interesting information about who it is that reports the stories. In 31.4% (189) of the stories there is no indication of who wrote the story or its source. In 25.3% (152) of the stories authorship was revealed. The wire services were the source of the largest group of stories, accounting in whole or in part for 40.2% (242) of the articles. Of these, the Canadian Press wire service claimed, or shared, the byline in 31.3% (188) of the stories. The rest of the bylines identified sources as only 'staff writer', the paper's Bureau from another city, the paper the story originally appeared in, or some combination thereof (see Appendix H). The evidence indicates that for the majority of the stories, the reader does not know who wrote a particular article. This can be interpreted in several ways: At its most trivial, it is information the press feel is a poor use of space and/or non-important information; at its worst, it is a means whereby the newspaper deliberately misleads by withholding the information (i.e., it allows for the creation of the illusion of diversity of authorship). As Schiller (1973) argues:

Choice and diversity, though separate concepts, are in fact inseparable; choice is unattainable in any real sense without diversity. If real options are nonexisent, choosing is either

meaningless or manipulative. It is manipulative when accompanied by the illusion that the choice is meaningful. ... The illusion is sustained by a willingness, deliberately maintained by information controllers, to mistake abundance of media for diversity of content. (Emphasis in original)  
(Schiller, 1973:19)

### 3.3.6 Origin of Story

Along with the information on the source of a story, information was also collected regarding the origin of the story (i.e., where was the story based). The origin of the story was clearly stated in either the headline or byline in only 54.2% (326) of the stories. While it may be argued that this is a useless piece of information, or that it is self-evident that these stories originated at the site of the riot, this is not necessarily accurate. Of those stories where the origin was given, 56.8% (185) did not originate from the location of the riot. Where the origin of the story was noted, 31.3% (102) originated from Ottawa, another 13.5% (44) from disturbances occurring simultaneously at another institution, and 12.0% (39) from other places. Only 42.0% (137) of the stories originated from the location of the riot. The fact that many of the stories' origins are unidentified certainly has implications as to how one interprets them and the credence one places in the reports. For example, many times it is difficult to establish whether the individuals reporting the information are actually present at the institution or are they elsewhere, and hence, merely reporting second hand information.

### 3.3.7 The 4 W's

It is important to note how well the press reported the who's, what's, where's and when's in the articles. First of all, the press must receive full credit for providing answers to the question 'what'. In all 602 articles information was provided on what was said, what happened when, and what occurred where. This should not, however, be seen as more than it is. In reporting the details or the effects of events such as riots, answering the question 'what' is perhaps the easiest of the four.

With regard to the questions 'who' and 'where', again the data indicate that the press provided information on these questions almost all of the time, 98.7% and 97.3% respectively. With respect to the question of 'who', the press provided varying degrees of identification. Sometimes the reference was vague or general, such as: Inmates, staff, hostages, correctional authorities. At other times it was specific giving information about the individual being referred to, such as: Name, status, past credits/ transgressions, etc.

The question of 'where' was also answered with varying degrees of detail. Some of the articles simply refer to the institution and its location, while others provide information on where inside the facility the disturbance started and where other specific events took place. Sometimes these articles are accompanied by illustrations with labels so the readers can get a spatial perspective of the different places.

In its reporting of riots the press did not address the question of 'when' nearly as often as it did the other three questions. In less

than two-thirds (59.1%) of the articles did the press provide the public with answers to the question 'when'. The argument may be made that the date is already indicated at the top of each page. This argument, however, somewhat misses the mark. At its best, the information presented occurred the day before the paper went to press. In the case of Mondays the time frame frequently has to be expanded to include everything that happened Friday night after the Saturday paper went to press. This is potentially important information not only to place the actual event, but to get a proper time perspective on the sequence of events, and to ensure that the quotes used are not from another time or different context.

### **3.3.8 Pictures**

Finally, information was also collected concerning the presence of pictures in the reporting of prison riots. To begin with, of the 231 newspapers analyzed, 38.9% (90) contained pictures which related to the coverage of the riot, and 24.2% (56) had pictures on the front page. The space these papers allotted for pictures (in comparison to the print), was by no means trivial. Of the 56 papers with picture(s) on the front page, 37.5% (21) of the papers had between 51% - 70% of their riot coverage made up by pictures, 17% (10) had between 71% - 80%, while 14.3% (8) had over 80% of their front page coverage made up by pictures. Four of the 56 papers had only pictures relating to the riot with no printed story on the front page. Therefore, of these 56 papers more than 70% used more front page space for riot related pictures than print. Nevertheless examination of the paper's overall coverage (i.e.,

not only the front page), reveals that print space still exceeds the picture space. Of the 90 papers with pictures 27.7% (25) has pictures accounting for between 51% - 70% and in only 11.1% (10) of these papers did pictures comprise more than 70% of the total riot coverage. That is, in only two-fifths (38.9%) of the papers was there more space devoted to pictures

(see Appendices I & J for the complete breakdown). It should also be noted that while there was a wide range in the number of pictures found in each of the 90 papers, with the maximum being 23, 73 (81.1%) of the papers had four or less pictures (see Appendix K for details).

#### **3.4 HYPOTHESIS ONE**

Ha #1:

In the reporting of Canadian prison riots, the media will portray riots in a homogeneous fashion in terms of the causation and nature thereof.

As stated earlier homogeneity will be analyzed through a combination of the following variables: 1) The stated causes; 2) references to guard brutality and violence after the riot; 3) whether the riots were placed into any context; and 4) the overall slant of the total article. This last variable would include not only the story's slant, but also headlines, the inmates' views, the focus and implicit reasoning of the articles, whose quotes are used, and the nature of the photographs. When analyzing these variables the results will be considered supportive of the hypothesis (i.e., the causes will be seen as being homogeneous), if a majority (at least 51%) of the data show commonality in the reporting of that variable.



### **3.4.1 Stated Causes**

Some interesting patterns emerged from the analysis of causes. In 59.5% (359) of the articles, no reason or cause for the riot was given at all (i.e., approximately 60% of the time the press have failed to answer the question 'why' in their reporting of the event). This is a very significant finding. It means that many times the public is left on its own to decide why the inmates rioted. In addition, 2.5% (15) of the articles reported that the cause was a mystery and not discernible, and 2.0% (12) reported there was no justifiable cause. With respect to the 35.9% (216) of the articles which did address the question 'why', the following conclusions emerged. No cause appeared as the sole cause in more than 5% of the articles. One-third, (72 articles), attributed the riot to more than one cause, stating that a set of conditions/grievances/ events combined to bring about the riot. Table 1 places the causes into four larger groups: A) Poor conditions; B) inmates acting out; C) desire for extra privileges; and D) security and staff quality and/or actions.

The causes found in Group 'A' (conditions) represent more of the basic or essential needs for an individual's survival whether he be an inmate or not, including housing, food, water, medicine and individual space. Table 1 indicates that in 5.0% (30) of the articles one of these causes was the only reported cause given. However, the number of articles increases to 13.7% (84) with the inclusion of those which list one of these in combination with another cause. Group 'B' reflects those causes which focus on the nature of inmates either as a group or as individuals who are inherently 'bad' (i.e., always trying to escape

Table 1  
The Reported Causes of Riots<sup>1</sup>

	Articles which mention only one cause		Total articles which list it as cause	
	%	(n)	%	(n)
<b>Group A: Conditions</b>				
Inhumane/ Medieval conditions [2] <sup>2</sup>	2.2	13	4.3	26
Food/ Water [4]	0.0	0	4.0	24
Fear of New Facility [13]	1.3	8	1.7	10
Medical Treatment [14]	0.0	0	1.7	10
Over-crowding & its Problems [18]	0.8	5	1.0	6
Other	0.7	4	1.0	6
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	5.0	30	13.7 <sup>3</sup>	84
<b>Group B: Inmates Acting Out</b>				
Escape [5]	2.0	12	3.5	21
A few troublemakers [9]	1.9	11	2.0	12
Related to trouble elsewhere [10]	1.7	10	2.0	12
Transfer out [12]	1.2	7	1.8	11
On drugs/ liquor [16]	0.8	5	1.5	9
Psycopathic [17]	0.7	4	1.5	9
Other	2.8	17	3.2	19
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	11.0	66	15.8	95
<b>Group C: Privileges</b>				
Tobacco rations/ products [1]	0.3	2	4.7	28
Recreation privileges [3]	0.2	1	4.0	24
Tensions built up over time [8]	0.8	5	2.1	13
Change in wage & work system [15]	1.3	8	1.5	9
Other	0.2	1	0.2	1
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	2.8	17	12.5	75
<b>Group D: Security &amp; Staff Quality and Actions</b>				
Quality of security suspect [6]	1.5	9	3.2	21
Favoritism/ preferred status [7]	0.2	2	2.3	14
Nature of in-house punishment [11]	1.2	7	2.0	12
Other	2.3	14	2.5	15
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	5.1	31	10.0	60

<sup>1</sup> This table only includes those causes which appeared in at least 1% (6) of the articles, the rest are combined in the category of 'other'.

<sup>2</sup> This number indicates the overall ranking of each specific cause.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that due to the fact that some of the articles suggest multiple-causes, the total of this column exceeds the total number of articles.

both physically and/or psychologically through drugs and liquor, and cause trouble). It is significant to note that this type of explanation is the most frequently invoked in both single (11%) and multiple-cause (15.8%) articles.

The causes listed in Group 'C' (privileges), include items that inmates want or feel they need to reduce the strain and boredom of living in a penitentiary; they are not, however, essential for survival. Rather they make 'doing time' easier or a little more bearable. As Table 1 indicates, Group 'C' causes are relatively seldom reported as the sole cause, but they did appear in 12.5% of the multiple-cause articles. It is important to realize with this Group of causes, that while a cause is being reported, it is frequently not one the reader can easily identify with. For example, if the reader had purchased a package of cigarettes and the tobacco was dry, or if the store had discontinued his brand of rolling papers, more than likely he would not seriously consider burning and looting the store. It is simply not a rational response to the situation. However, in reading the article, this is the response the inmates chose in what appears to be a similar situation. Nowhere is the reader informed of the value of these scarce resources, nor the role they play in inmate society. Similarly, to riot over the lack of recreational privileges or the cancellation of a movie seems senseless, unless explained in the context of a life in a total institution where these mean more time is spent in lock-up. Therefore, as reported causes this Group often serves to enhance the portrayal of inmates as sub-human, incapable of rationally working out life's 'little' problems.

Finally, Group 'D' contains those reported causes which place responsibility for the riot on the security staff and/or the system's quality or actions. This Group was reported as the sole cause in 5.1% (31) of the single-cause articles, and 10% of the multiple-cause articles.

In summary, four points are noteworthy. First, nearly two-thirds of the articles did not report a cause to the reader. Second, no single explanation appeared individually or in combination with others in more than 5% of the articles. Third, Group 'B' causes are cited significantly more often in single-cause articles than do other types of causes. Fourth, a large majority of the articles which mention a cause cite multiple-causes. Therefore, it can be concluded that homogeneity does exist in the reporting of the stated causes, as nearly two-thirds of the articles failed to report a cause.

#### **3.4.2 Guard brutality and violence**

The second variable used to assess hypothesis #1 was the extent to which guard brutality after the riot was reported (i.e., those incidents of violence perpetrated on inmates which occur after control has already been re-established). The data indicate that only four articles made reference to the occurrence or the possibility of such incidents having taken place. Three of these articles were written in Ontario newspapers in their coverage of the 1971 riot at Kingston Penitentiary, two of which were in The Toronto Star and the other in the Globe and Mail. The fourth article appeared in the Vancouver Sun in its reporting of the 1976 riot at the penitentiary in New Westminster. Initially, it

was proposed that additional records of the riots, such as Royal Commissions and Inquiry reports, would be scrutinized and compared to the newspaper accounts in order to check for discrepancies in the reporting of such behavior. This was not possible. Unfortunately only one such additional record could be located (The Royal Commission report on the April 1971, riot) and therefore analysis is limited to the four newspaper articles.

First, in both events the 'inappropriate' actions of the guards are documented by another source which did not rely on the media to supply them with the information. In the case of the Kingston riot, the Royal Commission found that the inmates upon their arrival at Millhaven, were forced to run through a gauntlet of guards who beat them with clubs. Clare Culhane, a private citizen, in her book, Barred From Prison, wrote about her experiences as a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee during the 1976 riot at New Westminster. She described a situation where guards in the Super Maximum Unit (S.M.U.) used high pressure hoses upon inmates who were in their proper cells, soaking bedding, clothing, and personal effects. The guards then left them in the cells with only their wet underwear for several days. These are events where the information available supports the belief that something indeed happened. It is of interest to note that none of the four articles reported the information completely (i.e., the stories never went past the point of allegations). For example, the story in the Globe and Mail made reference to the beatings 11 times, however, each reference was prefaced with the word 'alleged'. The other articles also were very careful in their reporting, using terms like 'claimed to have been' or

'the supposed actions of'. While this may be responsible journalism, it should be emphasized that the press failed to inform its public as to whether these allegations were proven to be accurate. It appears the reporting ended too soon. In the case of the Globe and Mail, the article appeared on the last day of coverage of the riot. In the Toronto Star, one article appeared on the second last day and the other on the last day of coverage. Both of the articles in the Star were less than prominent. The first appeared on page 16, a single column story beside a hardware advertisement which covered the rest of the page, while the article on the last day of riot coverage was on page 12. This is not to imply that there is a conspiracy, where the press is working together with government. It is more probable that the explanation lies within the medium itself. The duration for which a story remains newsworthy is relatively short, and while it may be a slightly longer period for the press than for television or radio, it is seldom long enough to cover all the implications and residual effects. As this data-set indicated, over three-quarters, (77.1%), of the articles appeared within the first six days of coverage.

A second finding is that the second paper which was used for the British Columbia riots (the Victoria Daily Colonist), failed to mention the incidents at the S.M.U. in 1976. Since the number of riots where such actions by guards were reported was so small, it was impossible to tell if this was an isolated case of non-reporting or part of a larger pattern of ignoring the inappropriate actions of federal correctional staff.

A third important item is that the information for the stories in all three articles was provided by sources which excluded federal or institutional employees. At Kingston in 1971, the stories broke when Professor Morton, head of the Citizen's Committee, decided to hold a press conference after he had encountered numerous obstacles from correctional staff while attempting to investigate two letters he had received from inmates claiming to have been beaten by guards. The Ontario articles tended to focus more on the possibility of a federal cover-up than the possibility that inmates were being mistreated. Thus, most of the articles centered on the obstacles Morton encountered in trying to investigate; the suggestion that Ontario Provincial Police be called in to do the investigation (as opposed to a federal in-house inquiry); Solicitor General Goyer's statement that the situation was being investigated, but that the results would not be made public; and that Goyer had ordered the visits of several Ministers of Parliament to Millhaven to be cut short. The article in the Vancouver Sun was less sensationalistic. It amounted to a short announcement that a few inmates were trying to take several guards to court over the events in the S.M.U. The story was made available to the press by the C.A.C., not the federal or correctional authorities. The story also included only the barest of details concerning the event.

In summary, there are the beginnings of several possible patterns with regard to how the press reports guard brutality after control has been reestablished. First, this subject does not appear to rate highly as one which is investigated until its conclusion. Second, if the press is to learn of such events, they are not likely to learn about them from

the correctional authorities. Third, in the reporting of such events, the event itself may take a back seat to the reporting of the possibility of a cover-up attempt by correctional and/or federal authorities. Before any one of these can be stated more definitively it would be necessary to have a much larger sample size. Unfortunately, the limited sample size also makes it impossible for this researcher to address the question of homogeneity adequately. Not only is a sample size of four too small to make inferences to the population, but in this case there is no way of determining what the population size is.

### 3.4.3 Context

The third variable which is used to evaluate the first hypothesis is whether the articles are placed in any type of context, either historical or in terms of the merits of incarceration generally. The data indicate that the vast majority of the articles, 81% (487), did not place the riot in any type of context. Of those which did place the information in a context, the articles tended to fall approximately 50 - 50 into the two Categories mentioned, with several falling into both. The data also indicate that this variable was not equally distributed over time (i.e., the more recent riots tended to have more articles which try to place the information into a larger or historical context). Approximately one-half of the articles with some form of context appeared during the period 1970 to 1982. Even more revealing is that over 40% of them could be found in the time frame 1976 - 1982.

This result demands an explanation. Why this sudden change in how Canadian journalists report riots? Perhaps the answer lies in a



combination of three factors which were present at the same time: 1) In 1976, Canada experienced within the space of less than one month a nation-wide upheaval in its correctional institutions. Three penitentiaries had major riots, with several others having more minor disturbances, and provincial institutions were also experiencing riots and hostage-takings. 2) The seventies was also the time when the debate between rehabilitation and custody was loudly heard. 3) The correctional staff, supported by a strong union (the Public Service Alliance of Canada), began to speak out and give their opinions. Not surprisingly they came out heavily in favour of the custody argument, claiming that the inmates had it too soft and that there was insufficient security. Therefore, all the ingredients necessary were present; a rash of events, an already brewing debate over correctional policy, and a large group of involved actors, powerfully supported by their union, who were willing to tell their story. All of these combined to produce many more articles which had a historical context, and/or assessed the system, usually viewing it as too soft on the inmates.

In summary, the major finding is that most (81%) failed to place the articles in some sort of context. This result indicates that there is a high degree of commonality with regard to the variable 'context', and therefore this indicator is found to be supportive of the hypothesis of homogeneity. The second finding which impinges upon the first, is that approximately 40% (46) of those articles which did place the information into some sort of context, were found amongst the articles reporting the riots 1976 - 1982. Only further research can conclude whether this is indicative of a change in style of journalists, or is merely the temporary result of the combination of the aforementioned factors.

### **3.4.4 Overall Slant of Articles**

The fourth and final variable which was considered in the evaluation of the first hypothesis was the overall slant of the articles. This is a multifaceted variable made up of a combination of: 1) The focus of the headlines; 2) the presence or absence, and nature of, inmates' views; 3) the focus and implicit reasoning of the article; 4) who is quoted in the article; and 5) the nature of the photographs.

#### **3.4.4.1 Focus of Headlines**

With the vast array of headlines it became apparent that it would become necessary to place them into larger groupings. It was finally decided that the nine Categories shown in Table 2 most adequately suited the purpose of grouping data without misrepresenting the findings. In Table 2, 81.7% (492) of the articles' headlines focused exclusively on one of the nine Categories, while the remainder, (18.3%), had multiple-focus headlines.

As shown in Table 2, the largest Category of headlines tended to focus on the statements and actions of authorities, both those at the penitentiary and in Ottawa. It is significant to note that this Category of headlines is the most frequently found in both single (24.4%) and multiple-focus (33.4%) headlines. Category 'B' contains those headlines which focused on the effects of the riot, including, damage, injuries, escapes, spatial problems, punishments, etc. Ninety-eight (16.3%) of the articles have headlines which focused exclusively on the riots' effects, and with the inclusion of headlines

Table 2  
The Focus of the Headlines

	When sole focus of headline		Total of sole & multiple focus headlines	
	%	n	%	n
A) Statements and actions of the authorities both local and in Ottawa	24.4	147	33.4	201
B) Effects of the riot	16.3	98	25.1	156
C) Those decribing the inmates	13.5	81	19.8	119
D) The process of negotiation	7.0	42	10.0	60
E) Causes	7.1	43	8.5	51
F) Assessing rumours, and the possibility of more trouble	5.3	32	7.5	45
G) Historical aspects	3.3	20	3.8	23
H) Conflict between press and authorities	2.7	16	3.0	18
I) Outside opinions	2.2	13	2.2	13
	81.7	492		

with multiple-foci the total number becomes 25.9% (156). Category 'C' includes those headlines which focused on the inmates and their situation inside, such as, announcing they have rioted, describing their mood/ actions, who their leaders are, the extent and nature of their organization, etc. Eighty-one (13.5%) of the articles fall exclusively into this Category, while 19.8% (119) had headlines which either in whole or in part focused on the inmates.

The remaining Categories in Table 2, do not comprise a large percentage of the headlines. Even with multiple-focus headlines included, no single Category accounts for more than 10% of the articles.

Headlines tend to focus on one of the first three Categories a minimum of 54% to a maximum of 79% of the time. The domination of these three Categories is demonstrated in Table 3, which reports the frequencies of the top 21 themes,<sup>12</sup> (i.e., those more specific focuses which are used to form the different Categories found in Table 2).

In Table 3, themes which make up Categories 'A' through 'C' are most prominent. Five of the 10 most frequently found themes belonged in Category 'A' (i.e., those which focused on statements and actions of authorities), and there are 6 listed in the top 21. Themes which fall into Category 'B' (i.e., those which focus on the effect of the riot), are also prevalent with 2 in the top 10, and 7 in the first 21. Category 'B' also has the most frequently appearing theme, that of the damage done during the riot. This theme appears in some 11% (66) of the articles' headlines. Themes which are part of Category 'C' (i.e., those which focus on describing the inmates), are slightly less prominent, with only 1 in the top 10, and 4 in the top 21. In regard to the question of homogeneity in the reporting, no single Category accounted for more than one-third of the headlines. However, the data do indicate that the vast majority (between 54% and 79% of the headlines), are from Category 'A', 'B', 'C' or some combination thereof.

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<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that it is not a random choice to stop after listing the first 21 themes. Those listed in Table 3, represent all those themes which appeared in at least 2.0% of the headlines. Another 7 themes are found in between 1.0% and 1.8% of the headlines while the rest are found in less than 1% of the headlines.

Table 3  
Themes Reported in Headlines

	When it is the only focus		Total # of sole and combination	
	%	n	%	n
1) Damage [b] <sup>1</sup>	4.0	24	11.0	66
2) Ottawa have been informed/ is in charge [a]	5.0	30	7.1	43
3) Hostages [d]	3.3	20	7.1	43
4) Inquiry/ probe [a]	4.0	24	6.1	37
5) Return of control to authorities [a]	0.5	3	5.0	30
6) Authorities use of force [a]	1.2	7	4.8	29
7) Authorities use of outside/ extra manpower [a]	1.0	6	4.2	25
8) Cause of the riot [e]	2.8	17	4.0	24
9) Announcement of riots occurrence [c]	2.5	15	3.9	23
10) Housing of inmates [b]	2.8	17	3.7	22
11) Inmates injury [b]	0.3	2	3.7	22
12) Situation is calm & quiet [c]	2.3	14	3.5	21
13) Rumor of more trouble [f]	2.3	14	3.2	19
14) Escape or lack of [b]	1.2	7	3.2	19
15) Inmate human interest [c]	2.3	14	3.0	18
16) Guard's views/ actions [a]	1.8	11	2.7	16
17) Effect of the riot [b]	2.2	13	2.7	16
18) Punishment [b]	1.7	10	2.7	16
19) Negative referrences to inmates mood or actions [c]	0.7	4	2.3	14
20) Negative features of the penitentiary [e]	2.2	13	2.2	13
21) Possible improvements [b]	1.0	6	2.0	6

<sup>1</sup> These letters represent the larger groups, those used in Table 2, to which these different headline themes belong to.

#### 3.4.4.2 Inmates' Demands or Views

The second aspect which is considered in determining the articles slant is whether the inmates' demands and/or views are reported, and how they are reported. With respect to these two questions the data are

very clear; in the vast majority of the cases the inmates demands or views were not reported. Table 4 indicates that in 71.8% (432) of the articles the inmates' views or demands are not reported. In another 16.3% (98) of the articles, information is given supposedly reflecting the concerns of the inmates. This, however, was at best a regurgitation of second hand information, or at worst, pure speculation on the inmates' frame of mind. Since there is no practical way to determine where on the continuum between the two extremes each bit of information belongs, all information reported second hand is placed in this grouping. Table 4 indicates the largest number of these statements were made by people with authority within the correctional system. If this group is combined with the articles where the inmates' views were not reported at all, (71.8%), then in approximately 88% of the articles one of the major groups of actors (the inmates), were not used as sources of information. Clearly this is evidence which is supportive of the concept of homogeneity.

#### **3.4.4.3 Focus and Implicit Reasoning**

The third aspect which is considered here is the focus and implicit reasoning of the articles. Using the same Categories 'A' through 'I' which were used when analyzing the foci of headlines, the data presented in Table 5 are the results of grouping the main foci of the articles. As with headlines, some of the articles had multiple foci, but most (86.5% 520 of the articles) had a single-focus.

In Table 5, the largest number of articles falls into the first Category. One-third (32.6%) of the articles have as their focus, the

Table 4  
Frequency of Articles When Inmates Demands or Views Are Presented

	When it is the only one given		Total # of solo & combination	
	%	n	%	n
Inmates Demands/ Views				
Not given	71.8	432	71.8	432
Given by someone other than inmates (total)	16.1	97	16.3	98
By authority figure	9.8	59	10.0	60
By ex-convict	4.0	24	4.2	25
By private citizen	1.2	7	1.2	7
By C.A.C. member/ negotiator	0.8	5	0.8	5
By a commission	0.2	1	0.2	1
By rumour/ hearsay	0.2	1	0.2	1
Given by inmates (total)	5.5	33	11.9	72
Transfers	1.2	7	4.2	25
More/ better food	0.2	1	2.0	12
Bring publicity to penitentiary	0.2	1	2.0	12
Medical help	0.0	0	1.7	10
More recreation	0.0	0	1.5	9
No physical reprisals/ double jeopardy	0.0	0	1.5	9
Place is rotten	0.3	2	1.3	8
Want permanent inmate committee	0.0	0	1.2	7
Want R.C.M.P. to monitor clean up	0.0	0	1.0	6
	93.4	562		

statements and/or actions of authority figures, with another 8% of the articles having this Category as one of a multiple of foci. Categories 'B' and 'C' both claim approximately 13% of the single-focus articles, with the inclusion of multiple-focus articles they increase by 8% and 3.6% respectively. As with the focus of headlines, Category 'B' also contained the single most frequently found focus among articles. The

damage and destruction done at the institution was the sole focus of 4.3% (26) of the articles, and was one of the foci in a total of 11% (66) of the articles. In 53.2% (320) of the articles there was at least one paragraph which contained a reference to the damage done. While 25.9% (83) of these articles contained only a single paragraph, 10.6%

Table 5  
The Focus of the Articles

	When sole focus of article		Total of sole & multiple focus articles	
	%	n	%	n
A) Statements and actions of the authorities both local and in Ottawa	32.6	196	40.5	244
B) Effects of the riot	13.0	78	21.1	127
C) Those describing the inmates	12.8	77	16.5	99
D) The process of negotiation	7.0	42	9.6	58
E) Causes	7.8	47	10.1	61
F) Assessing rumours, and the possibility of more trouble	4.8	29	6.2	32
G) Historical aspects	3.0	18	4.0	24
H) Conflict between press and authorities	3.7	22	3.7	22
I) Outside opinions	1.8	11	2.3	14
	86.4	520		

(34) of them included ten or more, with one article having twenty-five. Table 5 also indicates that less than 10% of the articles have a focus/foci which fall into one of the Categories 'D' through 'I'. This is not surprising as these Categories also do not have a large percentage of articles when the focus of their headlines is analyzed.



The implicit reasoning of the articles was divided into two Categories, rational and irrational. The former Category contained all articles which were deemed to be clear, straightforward and logical in their presentation of the information. The latter Category contained all those which did not fall into the first. As Table 6 indicates, the majority (61%) of the articles presented the event and their information in a complete, uncomplicated, and consistent manner, while the other 39% of the articles did not.

Table 6  
The Implicit Reasoning of Articles

	%	n
Rational	60.8	366
Irrational	.39.2	236
	100.0	602

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There were a number of criteria used to assess the presence of irrational reasoning in an article, the major ones being: The reliance upon rumours<sup>13</sup> or unconfirmed reports; the use of stereotypes to

<sup>13</sup> Both rumours and unconfirmed reports are labelled as irrational for a number of reasons: 1) It is not possible to determine who the source of the rumour is from the information provided. 2) Similarly, there is no means for determining at the time of the story the accuracy of the information. 3) The majority of instances involved what proved later to be gross overstatements in terms of the degree and cost of damages, the abuse of hostages, the number and extent of injuries, the number of escapees, etc. These reflect an exaggerated negative

describe individuals; gearing the story towards or playing upon, the readers emotions, such as fear, hatred, etc.; the addition of editorial comment and/or subjective interpretation which slants the information provided; problems with the nature of the argument itself; and the presentation or description of the inmates' actions so as to reflect poorly upon the inmates themselves.

The following are examples of articles which were classified as irrational: 1) An article entitled "Everything Wrecked" appeared in the Saskatoon Star-Pheonix on July 14, 1955. The article was a detailed description of the extensive damage the inmates had done to the institution as well as their own personal property. The article not only failed to report a cause, it made several references to the fact that the staff was unable to explain the inmates' behavior. One shop instructor was quoted as saying, "It is hard to understand." The extensive damage report combined with the lack of an explanation and the amazement the staff felt, portrayed the inmates as totally irrational (destroying their own possessions). 2) On December 3, 1970 the Star-Pheonix ran an article: "Pen officials suspended". The first one-half of the article was an announcement that six staff members were being suspended by the Solicitor General's office. The latter portion of the article talked about the recent riot at the Prince Albert Penitentiary. While it was never stated, it was implied that the suspensions were somehow related to the events surrounding the riot. However, a story on December 10, in the same paper, revealed that the suspensions were related not to the riot but to escapes that occurred

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image of the inmates and were therefore, labelled irrational.

several months prior to the riot. 3) The Toronto Star on April 19, 1971 ran a story: "40 demonstrators ask negotiations with rioters". The article concerned itself with reporting the actions of a pro-inmate demonstration in Toronto which supported the recent riot at Kingston. The article was full of value judgements; it equated being pro-inmate with being a revolutionary, and being young with being idealist and not practical. It also stated that many (but not how many), of the protesters were part of the group known as Red Morning, a group known for its affiliation with Communism. 4) Two more extreme examples were the articles on the "Giant Negro" who took part in the Dorchester riot, 1933. On January 10, the Telegraph-Journal ran two articles: "Dorchester Prison Condition Returns to Normal" and "Giant Negro Had An Active Part in Rebellion". The pieces were supposed attempts to review the events surrounding the resolution of the riot but were in fact nothing more than an excuse to praise the correctional staff and espouse racist and anti-inmate ideology. References such as "this wild man of African strain", comparisons of his arms to a train's connecting rods, and his temperament to that of a raging bull appeared throughout the story. Upon his capture he was described as "an altogether repulsive figure - like a snake with his poison fangs removed. There was nothing heroic about this negro. At heart he was yellow, like the rest of the criminal breed". The actual battle was compared to Dante's Inferno, with

scores of desperate, wild-eyed, hot-tempered criminals, shrieking at the top of their voices in the blackness throwing down on the guards everything they could tear loose, and above the bedlam and sharp reports of revolvers, rifles and riot-guns - spurts of flame cutting menacingly through the gloom.

While 61% is clearly a majority of the cases, the fact that approximately two-fifths of the articles are considered to have problems in the structure of their presentation is surely noteworthy. Particularly, when in almost all the cases these problems serve, either directly or by implication, to present the inmates as people who at best, are incompetent and act irrationally, or at worst, as people who need to be feared and are a threat to public safety.

In analyzing the focus and implicit reasoning of the articles several findings are of note: 1) 32.6% of the articles had as their sole focus the statements and actions of people in authority, while another 8% of them had this Category as part of a multiple focus. 2) When one considers Category 'A' with Category 'B', the effects of the riot, and Category 'C' describing the inmates, one can account for a minimum of 58.3% to a maximum of 78.1% of the articles, with no other Category accounting for more than 10% of the cases. 3) Most of the articles, (60.8%), were found to have implicit reasoning which was rational in nature. With regard to the question of homogeneity the evidence is divided. While no single Category accounted for more than 40.5% of the articles, the combination of Categories 'A', 'B', and 'C' do comprise a large share of the articles (between 54% and 79%), with the other Categories having a much smaller percentage. The evidence on the articles' implicit reasoning is clearly supportive of the hypothesis with the majority (60.8%) being classified as rational.

#### 3.4.4.4 Who is Quoted

The fourth aspect which is considered in the determination of the stories' slant is who was quoted. While not necessarily a fail safe method of determining an article's slant, quotes, particularly if used as an authoritative source, can serve as a useful indicator. The quotes were placed into 12 Categories, each of which represented a different position which could be held by either an individual or a group (they are listed in Table 7). By categorizing the quotes by an individual's position it was hoped that a pattern would be discovered revealing who was the most frequently cited as sources. It is important to realize that not all of the 602 articles had quotes. 108 of the stories did not contain a single quote.<sup>14</sup> When the riots were grouped into decades the results show that this tendency is slightly skewed towards the earlier riots (i.e., not only did the data indicate that coverage of an earlier riot was more likely to contain articles without quotes, but also that the percentage of articles without quotes would be higher).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The definition of a quote used here is somewhat broader than only that which is denoted by the standard quotation marks. It also contains part of what is usually referred to as paraphrasing. These data also contain that information which is directly attributed to an individual or group, but is not within quotation marks, such as; Mister X said,... , or Mister X stated, ... For the purposes of this study these distinctions were not made.

<sup>15</sup> Of the 5 riots in the 1930's, 4 had articles without quotes, and the mean number of quoteless articles for those 4 riots was 35.9%. Of those in the 1950's, 2 of the 5 riots investigated were without quotes, and their mean number of quoteless articles was 18.8%. Of the riots in the 1960's, all 3 had some articles which did not have any quotes and the mean number for these 3 was 19.3%. In the 1970's, 5 of the 8 riots investigated had articles without quotes, and the mean was 14.6%. Finally from the sole riot included from the 1980's, 3.9% of its articles were without quotes. While this relationship is not direct, it is noteworthy that this tendency, however slight, does exist.

The first item that should be noted in Table 7 is that it presents two different pieces of information. The first column of numbers represents the number of stories in which quotes from a particular Category appeared, while the second column presents information on the relationship between Categories, in terms of each Category's share of the number of quotes. Table 7 reveals that in Categories 'C' and 'D' individuals (both figures of authority in terms of corrections) are not only quoted in a much larger percentage of the articles, but they also tend to make up larger share of the total number of the quotes. The warden and his officials at the penitentiary (Category 'C') are quoted in over one-third (34.6%) of the articles, and comprise almost one-quarter (23.3%) of the total number of quotes. When one assesses the individual riots, the results indicate that the prominence of Category 'C' quotes is fairly evenly distributed. Only in the coverage of 1 riot is a Category 'C' quote not found<sup>16</sup> and in only 3 of the riots does group 'C' account for less than 25% of the quotes, while in 4 other riots they represent over 80% of the quotes used, with a mean of 46.3% or almost one-half of the quotes in a riots' coverage (see Appendix L for a complete breakdown of each Categories quotes per riot).

Category 'D' quotes, those by correction-related government officials (i.e., basically authority figures one step or more above the warden), are also very prominent, appearing in 29.6% (178) of the articles and accounting for 20.6% (741) of the total number of quotes. Again, assessing the individual riots, Category 'D' quotes are found in all but

<sup>16</sup> This riot had only two articles covering it, one from each of the two papers. Both of the articles did have a quote from a prison spokesman, (group 'F'), who had been designated to deal with the media and the public on the authorities' behalf.

Table 7  
A Breakdown of Who is Quoted

	# of stories with 1 or more quotes from group		Total # of group quotes	
	# of stories (%)	n	total # of quotes (%)	n
A) Extra Help <sup>1</sup>	6.1	37	1.5	54
B) Inmates	10.8	65	8.5	306
C) Wardens & his assistants	34.6	208	23.3	839
D) Government officials who are related to corrections <sup>2</sup>	29.6	178	20.6	741
E) Guards & Staff	14.1	85	10.3	372
F) Prison spokesmen	10.5	64	7.7	277
G) C.A.C./ Negotiators	6.3	38	5.8	207
H) Firemen, Doctors, Chaplains <sup>3</sup>	3.8	23	1.9	67
I) Government officials who are non-correction related <sup>4</sup>	8.8	53	5.6	200
J) Ex-convicts	5.3	31	5.3	192
K) Outside Experts	2.3	13	2.5	89
L) Others <sup>5</sup>	13.3	81	7.0	250
			100.0	3594

<sup>1</sup> This category includes any military, R.C.M.P., or police who were at the penitentiary to provide extra security.

<sup>2</sup> This category includes people from the Department of Corrections, the Solicitor General's office and the Minister of Justice's offices.

<sup>3</sup> These were grouped together because they shared special access to areas and inmates, others did not.

<sup>4</sup> This Category covers all other governmental positions including local officials, such as mayors. However, most of the quotes in this category were from Members of Parliament.

<sup>5</sup> This Category includes all others, from the public, to wives of convicts, as well as the press.

3 of the riots. However, their frequency compared to Category 'C' is much lower. In 11 of the riots they accounted for less than 25% of the total number of quotes, and their highest is only 77.8%. Over all the riots their mean frequency is only 24.3%.

The third largest Category of quotes are those attributed to the guards and staff of the institution. They can be found in 14.1% of the articles, and they comprise 10.4% of the total number of quotes. While this Category is the third largest, there is already quite a gap in terms of its prominence compared to Categories 'C' and 'D'. Similarly Category 'E's total share of the quotes (10.3%) is only one-half of Category 'D's 20.6% total. Further, the results show that more riots have no Category 'E' quotes at all (a total of 5). In 20 of the 22 riots this Category comprises less than 20% of the quotes, with the largest single share being 46.3%, and with a mean per riot of 11.7%. This information supports the idea that Categories 'C' and 'D' are not only the most prevalent types of quotes in all three areas (percentage of stories, percentage of total quotes, and the mean number of quotes per riot) but that they are also substantially more prominent as sources of information than other groups which were quoted.

Table 7 also illustrates some other interesting points. Category 'A' quotes (those attributed to non-penitentiary security forces), appear in 6.1% of the articles, yet they only comprise 1.5% of the total number of quotes. This means that the number of quotes found in those articles with Category 'A' quotes would average between 1 and 2. Category 'B' (those attributed to inmates), is the fourth largest Category having quotes in 10.8% of the articles, while comprising 8.5% of the total number of quotes. While 9 of the riots have no quotes from inmates, the data do not indicate that earlier riots were less likely to include inmates as sources. Riots in the 1930's, 50's, early 70's and late 70's were all among those excluding inmate quotes. Conversely, both



Categories 'F' and 'G' quotes were skewed in favour of the more recent riots (i.e., while they never appeared in the earlier riots, in more recent riots, depending upon the size and nature of the riot, both of these Categories are more likely to be used as sources, and therefore quoted).

Prison spokesmen were not being quoted in the earlier riots because such positions did not exist. Over time, correction officials have found it convenient to have an individual whose position it is to deal with the media. Similarly, C.A.C. members or other outside negotiators are only found to be quoted in more recent riots because previously any negotiating was done by corrections personnel. As inmates, often as part of their demands, have insisted that outside negotiators be involved, these individuals are more frequently quoted. Category 'H' quotes tend to be skewed the other way, appearing more often in the coverage of earlier riots. However, they never make up a significant portion of the quotes in any of the riots. Group 'I' quotes, those of non-correction related government officials, do not appear to be affected by the variable of time.

The use of Category 'I' quotes seems best explained by a different factor. They are most often found when the government (i.e., those people in control or responsible for corrections) is being criticized by the opposition. Logically, one would expect this type of criticism and calls for commissions of inquiry to be the greatest after a particularly large riot or after several occur in quick succession. The data support this explanation, indicating that this is indeed when Category 'I' quotes were most frequently found.

Group 'J', those quoting ex-convicts, appear infrequently and occur most often when a convict was released shortly before the riot and is interviewed as someone who may know something about the inside situation. The other occurrence of ex-convicts being quoted happens when a 'success' story is related to the public. Since success is defined as being rehabilitated and going straight, usually these individuals have nothing but praise for the system, serving to discredit the idea that the inmates who are revolting are doing so because of the poor quality of conditions at the institution.

Category 'K' (outside experts), are quoted infrequently. They are found in only 2.3% of the articles, with 16 of the 22 riots failing to contain a single quote from this group. Finally, Category 'L' consists of all the other individuals who were quoted. One finds that 13.3% of the articles had a quote from someone who did not fit into any of the previous groups and was placed into Category 'L'. As a miscellaneous Category, it constitutes 7% of the total number of quotes, and only 7 of the 22 riots do not have at least one quote from this group.

In review, the data indicate that individuals falling into Categories 'C' and 'D' are clearly the most often quoted, combining to account for approximately 44% of the quotes. If one includes Category 'F' (prison spokesmen), thereby creating the Category 'correctional authority', the figure increases to over 51% of the quotes. If as has been suggested, those who are quoted play a major role in determining the slant of an article, then the data indicate that the slant in a majority of articles would be in accordance with the views of the correctional authorities. Therefore, the results indicate that the data support the hypothesis of

homogeneity, with the majority of the quotes being from the correctional authorities.

#### 3.4.4.5 Pictures

The final aspect of the articles' slant to be considered is the nature of the pictures that accompany them. The data on pictures are primarily concerned with what the focus of the pictures was. While 90% (256) of the 288 pictures were classified as having a single-focus, there were also some multiple-focus pictures and hence Table 8 has two columns of information. Table 8 indicates that many of the pictures present visual images which portray the seriousness, as well as the conflictual nature, of the riot. The single most frequent illustration of this (23.6% of the pictures), is the photographs of damage done by inmates. This is damage to state property, property which was not only built with public funds, but which will now have to be repaired or replaced with money from the public. The second largest group of pictures (16.7%) are those which focus on the extra help which is present at the institution. Pictures of military forces, R.C.M.P., local police, fire-fighters and a large medical corps all serve to enhance this image of seriousness. They serve to create in the eye and therefore, the mind, of the public the conflictual nature of the riot (i.e., we vs they). For the most part, the aforementioned groups are supported by the public and held in some esteem. Furthermore, the nature of their service is to protect the public from things or people which are a threat to the public as a whole or its various members.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The military are involved in international and large scale national problems where the outcome has ramifications for society; on a

Table 8  
The Focus of the Pictures

	When sole focus of a picture		Total of sole & multiple focus pictures	
	%	n	%	n
Damage	19.4	56	23.6	68
Extra Help	12.8	37	16.7	48
Correctional authority figure	10.8	31	11.8	34
Non-damaged penitentiary buildings	8.7	25	9.0	26
Inmates being moved, guarded or frisked	6.3	18	7.6	22
Hostages	6.3	18	6.9	20
Inmate spokesmen	3.8	11	4.5	13
Map/ photo showing progression of riot	3.1	9	3.8	11
Guards	2.4	7	3.1	9
C.A.C./ Negotiators	2.1	6	2.4	7
	75.7	218 <sup>1</sup>		

<sup>1</sup> The other 41 pictures which had a single focus had 19 different foci, none of which accounted for more than 2.0% of the total number of pictures. These included historical pictures of inmate labour gangs constructing the penitentiary, mug shots of notorious criminals who had stayed there at some time, the crowds gathering outside to watch, members of particular inmates' family, and the weapons the inmates used.

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Photographs of these various groups in action serve not only to portray the seriousness of the situation, but also to sharpen the lines of conflict between us (the public) and them (the inmates).

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provincial and local scale the police and R.C.M.P. are involved in the problem of protecting the public from those who break the law; firemen fight fires thereby protecting the property of the concerned individual; and medical people are involved in trying to save lives.

The other types of photos also serve this dual purpose. Pictures of the warden or his superiors are good indications that this particular disturbance is of a serious nature, or why would there be so many high ranking officials around the institution? Pictures of inmates being moved, frisked, or guarded, show the public not only that the inmates are different, but that this is a state of alert where all precautions must be taken. Pictures of hostages, inmate spokesmen, guards, and negotiators, all tend to reveal both the seriousness and the conflict which are present in a prison riot.

It may be noted that no mention has yet been made of the fourth largest group of pictures, those which focus on the penitentiary buildings which are not damaged. How do these photos fit into the motif of seriousness and conflict? Before discussing them, a more exact description of their nature should be given. Many of these were the first pictures released while a riot was still in progress or shortly after it had occurred, and photographers were not allowed inside. Therefore, these photographs show items like the front gate, tops of various buildings, or an aerial shot giving the layout of the penitentiary. In these cases damage was seldom visible but it was the best a photographer could do with the restrictions the authorities had imposed. In fact, on several occasions photographic equipment was confiscated and the individuals interrogated, while trying to record events on film. Therefore, while these photographs did serve to locate an event at a particular place, the main reason for their prominence is the fact that the authorities do not usually allow immediate access to the press. Supportive of this position is the fact that many of these

photographs have 'leading' captions attached such as: "Despite the calm exterior...", "Behind these grim grey walls...", or "Despite apparent order, this was the scene...". These are captions which tell the viewer not to believe what s/he sees. They try to lead the individual to a deeper, more 'accurate' understanding not only of the picture but the entire event. This group of pictures is not the only one with this occurrence of leading captions. While almost all (93.1%) of the pictures had some sort of caption, 43.4% of the pictures had captions which were considered leading (i.e., presented information which was not in the picture, or offered an interpretation of the photo). Clearly if the philosopher was right and a picture is worth a thousand words, the press wants to ensure its readers get the 'correct' thousand words.

In review, the data show that while the subjects in the pictures change, there are similar themes being presented. While nearly one-quarter of the pictures reflect the damage done to the institution, a clear indication of the seriousness and conflict, these two themes are present in the nature of almost all of the pictures. Even with the deletion of the Category of non-damaged penitentiary buildings, the total using only the single-focus pictures, (67%), still exceeds the criteria set out earlier. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of the pictures are supportive of the hypothesis, combining to present the themes of seriousness and conflict.

#### 3.4.4.6 Summary

Having considered each of the five aspects individually, are there any patterns present and do these support the hypothesis? First of all, these indicators suggest that the largest single group of stories have as their slant the actions and statements of figures in authority. Over one-third (33.9%) of the headlines and two-fifths (40.5%) of the stories fall into this group. Furthermore, over one-third (34.6%) of the stories contain quotes by a warden or his assistants, while an additional one-third (29.6%) of the articles also have quotes from the warden's superiors. The data also reveal that over 51% of the total number of quotes were from those designated as correctional authorities.

Secondly, the indicators illustrate that there is a second group of stories that focus on the effects on the riot. One-quarter (25.1%) of the headlines and one-fifth (21.1%) of the articles had this as their major focus. The effect which received the most coverage was the damage which was done by inmates. In fact, this was the most dominant specific focus of them all. Damage was the focus of over one-tenth (11%) of the headlines and articles and accounted for nearly one-quarter of the pictures.

Thirdly, the data also support the claim that the inmates' side of the conflict was not frequently reported. Slightly less than one-fifth of the headlines (19.8%) and articles (16.5%) had as their focus the description of inmates, while 88% of the articles did not consult the inmates in reporting the inmates' views. Further, in more than one-half of the articles where an inmate expressed his views, someone else,

usually an authority figure, gave his understanding of what the inmates' views and concerns were. Add to this the fact that inmates were quoted in only slightly more than one-tenth (10.8%) of the articles, and the conclusion must be that inmates receive substantially less coverage than the authority figures.

Finally, with respect to the implicit reasoning of the articles, the data reveal approximately two-fifths (39.2%) of the articles were considered to have problems in the structure of their presentation. Similarly, two-fifths (43.4%) of the pictures were considered to have captions which were leading in nature. It is certainly significant that in both cases (the articles and the picture captions), there was a substantial portion of the data which had to be classified as incomplete, complicated, inconsistent, and speculative in nature.

In general, the indicators used to determine the slant of the articles provided results which are supportive of the hypothesis. While there is not a single narrow focus which reoccurs in the majority of the articles, there are patterns which run through the reporting of all 22 riots. As has just been summarized, these patterns are supported by the various indicators used.

#### **3.4.5 Conclusions on Hypothesis #1**

Having looked at each of the four indicators: 1) Stated causes; 2) the reporting of guard brutality; 3) the placing of the story into a historical or larger context; and 4) the overall slant of the article, what can be concluded about the first hypothesis? Do the data support



the claim that in the reporting of Canadian prison riots the media will portray riots in a homogeneous fashion in terms of the causation and nature thereof? Using the criteria set out earlier, whereby results which show commonality in over 51% of the cases will be considered supportive of the hypothesis, the answer must clearly be yes. Most of the indicators investigated provided some evidence which supported the hypothesis. One found that two-thirds of the articles failed to give the reader an explanation of why the inmates were rioting. While certainly an unexpected finding, the prominence of not reporting a cause supports the hypothesis. Of the remaining articles where a cause was given, one quarter of them, or 11% of the total number of articles, listed the cause exclusively under the Category of inmates acting out, another 4.8% of the articles listed this type of explanation as a partial cause. While the total number of articles where this type of explanation was given is only somewhat larger than the total number stating conditions or privileges as part of the cause, the fact that these explanations appear less than one-half as often as the only stated cause, is significant.

Unfortunately, the variable looking at guard brutality did not contain sufficient cases to allow for the testing of homogeneity. However, the four articles which were found did possess some similarity in how each reported the brutality: 1) The articles dealt with the subject exclusively at the level of allegations; 2) the focus of each was the possibility of a cover-up by the authorities; and 3) the source of the information was never the correctional authorities.

The data on the presence or absence of context also supported the hypothesis, more than four-fifths (81%) of the articles failed to do either. The fact that the dominant attribute is the absence of the information in no way diminishes the support it gives the hypothesis.

The final indicator, that of the articles' overall slant also provided some support for the hypothesis. In one dimension of the indicator (the focus of headlines and articles), support was not found for the hypothesis as no single Category comprised over 51% of the stories. However, the data did show that three Categories (the actions and statements of authorities, the effects of the riot, and the description of inmates), were substantially more prominent in both headlines and articles, than any other group. In combination these three comprised 67.8% of the single-focus headlines and 67.5% of the single-focus articles. This is a good indication that there is commonality in the focus of headlines and articles. The dimension investigating the presence or absence of inmates' views is supportive of the hypothesis of homogeneity. While approximately one-fifth of the headlines and articles focus on describing the inmates, many of these articles are not autobiographical, 88% of the articles do not have an inmate presenting the inmate story, and only 10% of the articles have inmate quotes. The information collected on quotes shows that in 34.6% of the articles, one found quotes by wardens, with 29.6% containing quotes by correction-related government officials, and 10.1% containing those of prison spokesmen. Further, the Category of correctional authorities comprised over 51% of the total quotes. Hence, it is not surprising to find that 'inmates acting out' was the Category most often

found as the only stated cause. It is after all consistent with the corectional authorities' views on the nature of inmates to be inherently trouble makers. It appears, therefore, that the data on who is quoted is also supportive of the hypothesis. When assessing the photographs, the finding that 67% of the single-focus pictures clearly focus on the seriousness and conflictual nature of the riot is very supportive of the idea of commonality in the reporting of prison riots.

In summary, the combination of the indicators must be viewed as supportive of the hypothesis, as most of the data provided indicated strong support for the existence of commonality in the reporting. In the reporting of Canadian prison riots, the media do portray riots in a homogeneous fashion in terms of their causation and nature.

### 3.5 HYPOTHESIS TWO

Ha: #2

In the reporting of Canadian prison riots, the correctional authorities will act as the primary definers of the situation.

For this hypothesis the concept of primary definers is operationalized in three ways. First, the frequency with which different types of individuals are quoted and used to help define the event. This indicator will be considered supportive of the hypothesis if over 51% of the articles contain quotes from correctional authorities, and if they comprise over 51% of the total number of quotes. Secondly, how these quotes are used within the article (i.e., are there gadgets or devices attached which enhance, detract or misrepresent what is said, or the speaker). This indicator will be

viewed as supportive if the groups which comprise the correctional authorities contain less gadgetry, and if the data show a qualitative difference in the nature of the gadgetry (i.e., being supportive of and enhancing the correctional authorities' quotes). Finally, the relationship between the reported causes and the position the correctional authorities have of the situation will be examined. This indicator will be considered supportive if the correctional authorities' quotes contain the highest percentage of reported causes, and the majority (51%) of the single-cause articles report a cause which is compatible with the views of the correctional authorities.

### 3.5.1 Quotes

The first variable is, who are the people who are most frequently quoted in terms of: The percentage of articles in which their quotes appear; their percentage of the total number of quotes; and also the mean percentage they represent in each of the riot's quotes. It was explained earlier that the data on quotes are categorized into 12 Categories (these are laid out in Table 9, as are most of the data which will be discussed below). Each of these 12 Categories represents more than one individual. They represent the position, rank, or status individuals have, which is most relevant within the context of the riot. It is important to reiterate that 18% (108) of the articles did not have any quotes, and therefore, the maximum number of articles any Category could appear in is 82% (492). Further, this tendency is slightly skewed towards the earlier riots, with the data indicating that not only is the coverage of an earlier riot less likely to contain quotes, but that their percentage of articles without quotes will be higher.

Table 9  
A Breakdown of Who is Quoted

	# of stories with 1 or more quotes from group		Total # of group quotes	
	# of stories (602) %	n	total # of quotes (3594) %	n
Wardens and his assistants	34.6	208	23.3	839
Government officials related to corrections	29.6	178	20.6	741
Prison Spokesmen (Correctional authorities) <sup>1</sup>	10.5 (57.5)	64 (346)	7.7 (51.6)	277 (1857)
Guards & Staff	14.1	85	10.3	372
Inmates	10.8	65	8.5	306
Government officials who are non-correction related	8.8	53	5.6	200
C.A.C./ Negotiators	6.3	38	5.8	207
Extra Help	6.1	37	1.5	54
Ex-convicts	5.3	31	5.3	192
Firemen, Doctors, Chaplains	3.8	23	1.9	67
Outside Experts	2.3	13	2.5	89
Others	13.3	81	7.0	250
			100.0	3594

<sup>1</sup> This Category represents an amalgamation of the three above Categories.

The data presented in Table 9 show that two of the Categories were considerably more prominent than the others. Quotes which are attributed to wardens or their assistants are found in 34.6% of the articles, comprising 23.3% of the total number of quotes, with a mean of 46.3% of the quotes per individual riot. Quotes from government officials who are related to corrections are the second largest Category. They are found in 29.6% of the articles, comprise 20.6% of the total number of quotes, and have a mean of 24.3% of the quotes per riot.

The prominence of these first two Categories is best indicated when one considers the frequencies of the third largest, those attributed to guards and staff. This Category is quoted in only 14.1% of the articles, comprises 10.3% of the total number of quotes, and have a mean of 11.7% of the quotes per riot. Table 9 also shows that inmates (the Category perhaps most likely to have a different interpretation of the event than the correctional authorities) are quoted in only 10.8% of the articles. Similarly, of those Categories which may have different definitions of the situation from the correctional authorities, all are quoted relatively infrequently: C.A.C. members in 6.3%; ex-convicts in 5.3%; and outside experts in only 2.3% of the articles. It does appear that the press did not seek out, or at least did not choose, to quote these Categories.

The question may be raised that evidence has been offered on the 12 Categories but none of these Categories is entitled 'correctional authorities'. Who then are the correctional authorities? The definition which has been chosen is somewhat conservative: Correctional authorities for the purpose of this thesis includes those individuals who are involved in the administration of correctional policy or represent the administration to the public. Therefore, in relation to the 12 Categories, correctional authorities include those government officials who are related to corrections, the warden and his assistants and the prison spokesmen. While it is recognized that the guards and staff are an important part of any institution's personnel, they will not be considered as part of the correctional authorities. Using this definition, the prominence of the correctional authorities is easy to

document. Table 9 clearly shows the prominence of the quotes from correctional authorities. Well over one-half (57.5%) of the articles contain quotes from the correctional authorities, over 4 times as many as those which quote guards and other staff. Correctional authorities also make up over one-half (51.6%) of the total number of quotes, over 5 times as many as the next group. Correctional authorities also have a mean of 83.9% of the quotes per riot. The data also indicate that inmates were quoted less than one-sixth as often. Further analysis of those articles quoting inmates reveals that in over two-thirds (67.7%) of them, there are also quotes from correctional authorities. Hence, there is strong evidence that this indicator supports the hypothesis. In as much as the correctional authorities are quoted in the majority of the articles and comprise over 51% of the quotes, they serve as the primary definers of the situation.

### **3.5.2 Gadgetry and Devices**

The second variable to be considered is how the quotes are used in articles. This involves recording any gadgets or devices which are attached to the quotes, which enhance, detract or misrepresent the speaker, or what they say. The first device to be considered, (shown in Table 10), is whether there is a name given to which the readers can attach the quote.

In Table 10 it appears that the numbers in the first column do not support the hypothesis. While the percentages are high for 'ex-convicts' and 'inmates', so too are those for the Categories of 'extra help', 'guards and staff', and 'other'. Even the 18% of the warden's quotes,

Table 10  
A Breakdown of Gadgetry in Quotes

	% of quotes which are unidentified	% of articles with quotes with gadgets
A) Extra Help	44.4	10.8
B) Inmates	34.9	43.1
C) Wardens & his assistants	18.0	18.8
D) Government officials who are related to corrections	3.0	21.9
E) Guards & Staff	29.0	38.8
F) Prison spokesmen	14.1	14.1
G) C.A.C./ Negotiators	6.8	42.1
H) Firemen, Doctors, Chaplains	5.9	30.4
I) Government officials who are non-correction related	2.0	34.0
J) Ex-convicts	74.0	38.7
K) Outside Experts	10.1	38.5
L) Others	34.4	23.5

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which are unidentified, seems high compared to the 2% of the non-correction related government officials. Since the quotes from wardens and prison spokesmen are a part of those which have been designated as correctional authorities, the expectation was for them not to have large percentages of their quotes unidentified. Perhaps a more detailed examination of the Categories will explain why this apparent anomaly occurred. As the Table indicates, the Category identified as 'ex-convicts' has the highest percentage of unidentified quotes, (74%). Because logic would dictate that these individuals wish to maintain their anonymity this result is not surprising. The status of being an



ex-convict is not one an individual usually wishes to broadcast. Due to this status, they and their families encounter enough obstacles in terms of employment and social stigma that they do not need to advertise it. Their desire for anonymity can best be understood as an attempt to ensure that their life, and the lives of their families, do not suffer any more because they are ex-convicts.

It is also surprising that the Category 'extra help' has the second largest percentage (44.4%) of unidentified quotes. This also applies to the Category 'guards and staff', which has the fourth largest percentage (29%). Surely if placed on a continuum one would expect that the views these two groups have of the situation would be closer to that of the correctional authorities than those held by the inmates, yet there is this large number of unidentified quotes.

The explanation which perhaps best explains this phenomenon also rests with a desire for anonymity on the part of the speaker. In a number of the riots there are statements which referred to the existence of a policy forbidding the respective superiors of the guards and military men to talk with the press. However, these men who have been on the inside are, in many cases, the exact men the press wants to talk to. Therefore, the guards and some of the military are willing to talk to the press about their experiences but do so at the insistence that their names not be used. The press then attaches loose designations to the quotes, such as; "a guard on duty when...said"; or "a veteran of numerous battles is of the opinion that".

While this helps to clarify part of the table, what about the Categories of the warden and prison spokesmen? Certainly they are not restricted by policy or fear of sanctions from identifying themselves, yet they also appear somewhat higher than the other groups. The only explanation which can be offered here rests with the nature of the data (i.e., the distinction between unidentified and identified). The major distinction is whether or not the quote is attached to an individual's name, the identification of an individual merely by position is not sufficient. Therefore, when a quote is attributed simply to the prison spokesman, the warden, the warden's assistant, or the office of the warden, it is classified as unidentified. While the data collected do not allow the production of quantitative figures to support or oppose this explanation, the author's familiarity with the original articles and recollections of trying to establish a consistent coding pattern, support this as a possible explanation. The following are some of the frequently found 'partially identified' individuals to whom quotes were attributed: An army source said...; An R.C.M.P. officer informed...; A prison official said...; A Canadian Penitentiary Spokesman stated...; A senior corrections officer replied...; Authorities believe...; A guard coming off duty said... While all of these do to a varying extent identify the speaker, they were all classified as unidentified because a reader could not determine exactly who it was that was being quoted.

This leaves the Category of inmate quotes. As the hypothesis would suggest, the inmates whose definition of the situation differs from the correctional authorities; have a large share of their quotes unidentified. The question then is whether this is by their choice or

not. Unlike those extra help and guards which are quoted, the articles do not contain any hint that there is a formal policy forbidding inmates to talk with the press, this despite the fact that the opposite is true. The argument may be made that like the ex-convicts, they desire to maintain their anonymity so as not to make life any harder on themselves or their families. Consistent with this view is the possibility that while they were willing to participate in the collective actions of the inmates, they still had a strong desire to maintain personal anonymity.

Another fact which needs to be considered is the type of inmate quote which is unidentified. Those inmate quotes which are given at a formal press conference are not usually the ones which are unidentified. Typically, it is those gained from brief encounters and chance meetings with the press which are not fully identified. In some cases one of the conditions of a press tour of the institution is that there are no questions and no talking to the inmates. Any contact with the inmates is risky and therefore brief. The quotes are often not of the traditional interview style. Not only are formal introductions foregone, the information is screamed or shouted at the press as a group, not given to individual reporters as a response to specific questions. In these situations the correctional authorities wish to separate inmates from the press, and it is plausible that this contributes to the large number of unidentified quotes. Therefore, while these data do not support the hypothesis, the argument has been made that this is primarily due to the nature of the indicator.

The second column in Table 10 provides information which tends to support the hypothesis. The three groups which are designated as

correctional authorities are among the lowest in terms of articles whose quotes have gadgets and devices, and inmates are the Category with the highest percentage. The one noticeable exception to this is that the lowest percentage (10.8%) belongs to the Category of "extra help", not part of those designated as correctional authorities. One possible explanation for this lack of attached gadgetry is the fact that 70% of their quotes revolved around the reporting of two rather straight forward pieces of information: 1) What their official role is to be; and 2) who and how many of them are there. While this information relates to the event, it is interesting that it is principally information about the extra help, not the institution or the riot itself.

The data also suggest that there are qualitative differences in the nature of the gadgetry. The quotes of inmates are more likely to have gadgets attached which detract and misrepresent, whereas those attached to correctional authorities are more likely to enhance or be supportive in nature. The following are a few examples of the devices attached to inmate quotes which detract from their credibility: 1) In the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix July 12, 1955 an article appeared which reported several of the comments inmates had shouted at the press as they toured the institution at Prince Albert. After the last comment was reported it was stated that these were the lighter remarks and that others had been made which were not fit to be printed. 2) The Montreal Gazette on October 1, 1971 ran an article which contained an interview with an inmate, Paul Rose. Prior to the interview and sprinkled throughout was the information that Mr. Rose was in prison, in isolation, for the kidnapping and murder of Pierre Laporte. 3) The Montreal Star on

October 1, 1976 recorded an inmate's views that the inmates had all intentions of remaining peaceful during their protest until they were forced by the correctional authorities. However, directly following was a postscript that this view was in direct opposition to the view held by the warden.

By way of comparison the following are examples of devices attached to correctional authorities quotes which were viewed as supportive: 1) The Montreal Gazette on August 16, 1954 contained this quote which, while not embellished, does contain additional information which supports his claim. "One official with 30 years experience said that he had expected trouble for the last month." 2) The Toronto Globe & Mail on August 17, 1954 reinforced what a prison official had stated concerning the cause of a fire by following it up with a supportive quote by the fire marshal. 3) The Toronto Star in an article on April 19, 1971 prefaced a quote from the assistant warden with, "Ass. Warden Babcock a crew-cut scoutmaster after long hours at the penitentiary with little sleep when asked his plans..."

Of the gadgets attached to inmate quotes, 32.4% serve to discredit either the information being presented or the speaker, compared to 0% of such gadgets found with the quotes of the correctional authorities. Conversely, only 11% of the gadgetry attached to inmates quotes qualifies as supportive of either the information being presented or the speaker, while 26.3% attached to the correctional authorities quotes is so classified. It is important to note that the 32.4% of negative gadgetry attached to inmate quotes is the highest percentage of any group. The second largest percentage belongs to the quotes of

ex-convicts (16%), all the other groups have less than 6% negative gadgetry.

In reviewing the information on the gadgetry, the evidence is not extremely clear. As explained, with regard to the degree to which quotes are unidentified, the evidence is somewhat unclear. While the results show that the Categories which were expected to, do have large numbers of unidentified quotes, nevertheless some of the Categories not expected to, also have large percentages. This phenomenon can best be explained by the fact that there is an intervening variable (i.e., the fact that the guards and many of the military personnel are in subordinate positions). While this is clearly an indication of the correctional authorities attempting to control the flow of information to the media, this variable does not distinguish the correctional authorities from the other Categories of quotes.

With reference to the quality of the gadgetry, the evidence is more supportive of the hypothesis. Not only do correctional authorities tend to have less gadgetry, they have very little negative gadgetry. Conversely, inmate quotes have the largest percentage of gadgetry, and over one-third of it is negative. The quantity and the nature of the gadgetry and devices attached to the different groups of quotes, as an indicator, can be summarized as partially supportive of the hypothesis that correctional authorities are the primary definers.

### 3.5.3 Comparison of Reported Causes and Correctional Authorities' Views

The final indicator to be considered is the relationship between the reported causes and the position of the correctional authorities. To briefly restate the position of the correctional authorities, it is expected that their view of the riots' causes will tend to focus the responsibility upon the inmates' nature, viewing them inherently as problematic, unpredictable, looking for trouble, and acting in an unjustifiable manner. The question then becomes twofold: 1) Are the correctional authorities the most frequent source of reported causes; and 2) are the most frequently reported causes those which are compatible with the correction authorities' definition of the situation?

Table 11  
The Reported Causes Contained in Quotes

	%	n
Correctional authorities	29.9	176
Ex-convicts	21.4	126
Inmates	17.7	104
Government officials who are non-correction related	13.9	82
Guards & Staff	6.1	36
Outside Experts	5.1	30
C.A.C./ Negotiators	0.8	5
Extra Help	0.0	0
Firemen, Doctors, Chaplains	0.0	0
Others	5.1	30
	100.0	589

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In trying to establish who is the most frequently used source of reported causes, a slight problem was encountered in that not all of the reported causes are directly attributed to any one individual or group. Therefore, it was decided that since identification of the source is primary, the analysis would be conducted on those reported causes contained in quotes. Table 11 shows 589 of the quotes contained a reported cause, of which the largest portion 29.9% (176) are found in the quotes of the correctional authorities. Ex-convicts have the second largest group of reported causes, 21.4% (126), while inmates provided 17.7% (104), the third largest percentage. The non-correction related government officials contributed the fourth largest share 13.9% (82), with the rest of the Categories each containing less than 7% of the reported causes found in the quotes. Therefore, in answer to the first question (who is the most frequent source of the reported causes?) the evidence indicates that the correctional authorities are the most frequently quoted source on the causation of the riot.

In considering the second question, it is important to recall that well over one-half (59.6%) of the articles contained no reported causes. Also some 2.5% (15) simply stated the cause as mysterious and undiscernible, while another 2% (12) stated that there is no justifiable cause. The causes were divided into four Groups: A) Conditions; B) inmates acting out; C) privileges; and D) security and staffs quality and actions. Those designated as Group 'B' are defined as causes which focus on the nature of the inmates either as a group or as individuals who are inherently 'bad' (i.e., those who are always trying to escape physically and/or psychologically through drugs and liquor, and cause



trouble). This definition is similar to that which one would expect the correctional authorities to have. As Table 1 illustrates, in articles where only a single cause is listed, this group appeared most frequently, in a total of 11% of the articles (or 45.8% of those articles with a single reported cause). This percentage is more than double the 5.1% of single-cause articles which listed Group 'D'. Group 'B' causes are also the most frequently reported in terms of the total number of articles in which they appeared 15.8% (or 44% of those articles with a reported cause).

While these data tend to support the hypothesis, in that the causes that appear most frequently are also the causes which most closely parallel the views held by the correctional authorities, the case can be made even stronger. When those articles which report the cause as either a) mysterious and non-discernible, or b) that the inmates had no justifiable cause (both of which are congruous with the interpretation of the events that the correctional authorities have) are included, the argument becomes even stronger. A reference to the cause is found in 243 of the articles, of which 144 are single-cause articles. Of these, 64.6% (93) of them only report causal statements which are in agreement with the definitions correctional authorities have of the situation.

It is now possible to answer the two questions raised earlier. First, are the correctional authorities the most frequent source of reported causes? Using only the reported causes which are provided in article quotes (those easily and accurately identifiable), the answer must be yes. Nearly one-third (29.9%) of the reported causes found in the quotes belonged to the correctional authorities. Ex-convicts and

inmate quotes are the next two largest groupings, accounting for 21.4% and 17.7% respectively.

Second, are the most frequently reported causes those which coincide with the correctional authorities definition of the riot? Again the answer must be yes: 64.6% of the single-cause articles express views which are consistent with those held by correctional authorities. With the quotes of the correctional authorities containing the largest percentage (29.9%) reported causes, and the majority (64.6%) of the single-cause articles reporting causes consistent with the position of the correctional authorities, the evidence is highly supportive of the hypothesis.

#### **3.5.4 Conclusions on Hypothesis #2**

Having examined each of the three indicators individually are the correctional authorities the primary definers in the reporting of Canadian prison riots? As with the first hypothesis, the answer appears to be yes. Each of the three indicators provided evidence which is supportive of the hypothesis. The first indicator revealed that the correctional authorities are quoted in well over one-half (57.5%) of the articles, three times as many as the next largest group, and they also comprised over one-half (51.6%) of the total number of quotes, more than five times as many as the next largest group. The second indicator also provided some support for the hypothesis. While the evidence relating to the quantity of gadgetry is only somewhat supportive, the information on the qualitative nature of the gadgetry is very supportive. Nearly one-third of the gadgetry attached to inmate quotes is negative in

nature, detracting either from the credibility of the speaker or the information provided or both. Whereas, there is 0% of such gadgetry attached to correctional authorities' quotes. Conversely, over one-quarter (26.3%) of the gadgetry of the correctional authorities is positive, in that it enhances or is supportive. However, only one tenth (11%) of the inmates' gadgetry is so classified. Finally, there is a positive relationship between the reported causes and the viewpoint held by the correctional authorities. The data indicate that the correctional authorities are the Category to which reported causes could most frequently be attributed. The data also indicate that the most frequently reported causes are those which are congruent with the definition held by the correctional authorities. Therefore, these data collected on Canadian prison riots between 1932 - 1982 support the hypothesis that the correctional authorities act as the primary definers of the situation.

## Chapter IV

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Having presented the data primarily in relation to specific hypothesis testing, it is appropriate that this final chapter attempt to assess the data in terms of their implications with regard to Hall's theory, as well as providing some indications of where further research needs to be done.

#### 4.2 THE FINDINGS AND HALL'S THEORY

##### 4.2.1 The Social Production of News

One of the major themes that Hall investigates in his study is the role of the media in reporting and sustaining the moral panic surrounding the crime of mugging in Britain during the 1970's. Hall begins his explanation of the role of the media by stating that news is socially produced in three aspects. The first is the bureaucratic organization of the media which produces news in specific types and categories. That is, the media report and separate the news within set categories and types (e.g., the British did not find the stories reporting the muggings in the fashion section and the Canadian media do not place news of prison riots in with the sports reports).

The second aspect is the structure of the news values which orders these types and ranks stories within them. Therefore, while political stories typically tend to be ranked as more important than sports or fashion, there is also an internal ranking within each type (i.e., stories which are deemed more newsworthy, are more prominent, and receive more coverage). In this regard, the present study found that pictures and articles which focused on prison riots had a high internal ranking. Of the 231 newspapers which were examined, 24.7% (54) contained pictures on the front page. Two hundred and sixty-seven (44.4%) of the articles were found on page one. Of those articles on page one, 24.7% (74) ranked as the lead story of the day, with 52.8% (141) of the page one articles ranking fourth or higher.

The third aspect is the 'moment of construction' of a news story. While the present study gathered data on all three aspects of the social production of news it was this latter aspect which commanded the greatest attention. To fully understand why this is important one must recall which events are considered highly newsworthy; it is those stories which involve the unexpected, the dramatic, human tragedy, the powerful, have important consequences or have national implications.

If the world is not to be represented as a jumble of random and chaotic events, then they must be identified (i.e., named, defined, related to other events known to the audience), and assigned a social context (i.e., placed within a frame of meanings familiar to the audience).

(Hall, 1978:54)

Through this process of identification and contextualization the media both assume and help to construct a 'signification' of the event (i.e., it gives the event social meaning). This process of signification is the method by which events are taken from the limbo of the random and chaotic and placed within the realm of the 'meaningful'.

In placing the event within the range of known social and cultural meanings, reporters rely on the existing cultural 'maps' of the social world. Hall argues, "as members of one society ... we share a common stock of cultural knowledge with our fellow man: we have access to the same 'maps of meanings' (Hall, 1978:55). The key assumption of this argument is that society is primarily consensual in nature. There are fundamental interests, values and concerns which are shared, which these maps reflect and embody. Through social identification, classification, and contextualization, events which are random and chaotic are manipulated to fit these cultural 'maps' and hence, made intelligible to the public. As Hall states:

[T]he media's mapping of problematic events within the conventional understandings of society is crucial in two ways. The media define for the majority of the population what significant events are taking place, but, also, they offer powerful interpretations of how to understand these events. Implicit in those interpretations are orientations towards the events and the people or groups involved in them. (emphasis in original)

(Hall, 1978:57)

#### 4.2.1.1 Primary Definers

Having proposed an explanation of how problematic events which confront society's expectations of consensus are manipulated to fit into the established 'maps of meanings', Hall next addresses the dovetailing which occurs between the ideas of the powerful and the ideologies espoused by the media. To help explain how the media, in their process of signification come to reproduce the definitions of the powerful, Hall introduces the concepts of primary and secondary definers. Hall argues that while the media are in part helping to construct these definitions,

in many cases the media are not the primary definers of the event. In this process of signification the media, largely due to structural limitations,<sup>18</sup> are forced into a secondary role whereby they reproduce the definitions of others. Hall refers to these others as the 'primary definers', those who are accredited because of institutional power, position, 'representative' status, or expertise. Using Beckers' concept of a 'hierarchy of credibility' Hall states that there is

the likelihood that those in powerful or high-status positions in society who offer opinions about controversial topics will have their definitions accepted, because such spokesmen are understood to have access to more accurate or more specialized information on particular topics than the majority of the population.

(Hall, 1978:58)

In his study of mugging Hall found that the media relied heavily on the State's central agencies of social control (the police and the courts). Similarly, in their reporting of Canadian prison riots the media relied on the information and definitions presented by the correctional authorities. Thus, the correctional authorities' quotes appeared in the largest percentage of stories (57.5%), comprised the most frequently quoted Category (51.6%), and contained the largest share of reported causes (29.9%).

In large part, Hall felt that the primary role that the police played in defining the mugging drama was a result of their unique double-expertise, a situation which closely parallels the role of the correctional authorities. Due to their professional expertise and

<sup>18</sup> The structural limitations referred to here are the conflicts the media experience between their professional demands of impartiality, balance, and objectivity and the daily demand of having stories ready. These combine to produce a system whereby the media rely heavily on those people in powerful positions or have privileged access to information.

personal experience, a double-expertise is formed which gives these groups an especially authoritative status. Hall argues that while many professional groups have contact with crime and criminals, the police seem to be the only, or the primary, definers of information. The present research on Canadian prison riots tends to be supportive of this concept of a double-expertise. In penitentiaries the correctional authorities are the group which possesses the personal and professional expertise and like the police, they are the major group defining the event. The correctional authorities, like the police (only at a later stage), are invested with the ultimate political and administrative responsibility for those who have chosen to challenge the established social order. In addition, the correctional authorities, because of the closed nature of the prison, are able to control the information the media have access to. This concept of limited access is one which Hall mentions but does not deal with in detail since the day to day workings of the police tend to be more in the public eye than the happenings inside prisons. (This will be discussed more fully in a later section on opposing definitions.)

It appears that the correctional authorities offer an almost archetypal illustration of Hall's concept of primary definers: They are the representatives of the state; they are in positions of power; they possess professional and personal expertise; and they control information through right of access. Having found evidence to support Hall's contention that primary definers do exist, how do they affect how the news is reported?



Hall states:

The mass media are not the only, but they are among the most powerful, forces in the shaping of public consciousness about topical and controversial issues. The signification of events in the media thus provides one key terrain where 'consent' is won or lost." (Emphasis in original)

(Hall, 1978:220)

The role of the primary definers is to ensure that this process of signification is supportive of the desired consensus of the state and the ruling class. The initial and perhaps most important step taken by the primary definers to achieve this goal revolves around how the topic is labelled and the social context it is given. By permitting the primary definers to establish the initial definition or interpretation of the topic (i.e., set the terms of reference) a situation is created where they have a very decisive advantage. Any arguments in opposition to this definition are forced to first address the primary definers and challenge the predominant definition of what is the issue. As Hall points out, any contributions which stray from this established framework are open to the charge that they are not addressing the problem.

In the reporting of prison riots the correctional authorities have a number of additional advantages which help to ensure that their definition of the situation is not only the primary, but often the only interpretation given. To begin with, they operate within a total institution largely outside the realm of the public's experience. The prison is also a closed institution, where the correctional authorities are the initial 'gatekeepers' (both metaphorically and literally) of information concerning the event. They control not only the information they give the media, but also the access the media has to inmates and to a degree even the correctional staff.

The effect of this primary reliance on the correctional authorities can clearly be seen in how the articles are set up. The statements and actions of the authorities were the focus of 33.4% of the headlines, and 40.5% of the articles. Of the 56 papers with a picture(s) on the front page, over 70% used more space for riot-related pictures than print. The data also show that the quotes of the correctional authorities seldom have gadgetry attached which is negative, while positive gadgetry is common. The opposite is true for the quotes of inmates.

An example of the advantage which can be gained by setting the terms of reference occurred during the rash of riots in 1976. The Public Service Alliance of Canada, representing the correctional staff as able to define as one of the key issues the 'existence' of a nation wide conspiracy between inmates and members of the different Citizen Advisory Committees to destroy all federal correctional institutions. The possibility of such a conspiracy not only drew a lot of initial media attention, but in subsequent articles the correctional authorities, Members of Parliament, inmates, and C.A.C. members, due to the seriousness of the charge, were forced to address this problem which now was defined as a key issue. In so doing, the attention was removed from the inmates' concern over conditions, privileges and unfair treatment by staff, and turned towards the 'threat' these people posed to the existing social order.

#### **4.2.1.2 Counter-definitions**

In trying to gain a better grasp of what constitutes a primary definer and why they are successful in having their views reproduced by

the media, it may be helpful to consider why other definitions fail to be reproduced. Clearly the correctional authorities are not the only group which possesses expertise in the area of dealing with criminals. There are agencies such as The John Howard Society and The Salvation Army who have experience dealing with convicts. There are also institutes of Criminology across Canada where individuals work and study in the area of Criminology. However, these individuals and their expertise are seldom, if ever, used to either corroborate or challenge the views of the correctional authorities. While in part this may be due to Hall's previously discussed concept of double-expertise, it in no way explains why the media fail to represent others physically present and involved in the event. If in fact their physical presence is part of what makes correctional authorities the primary definers, why are the inmates not the primary definers or at least challenging the definitions presented by the correctional authorities?

The answer is threefold: 1) In most cases the inmates are not in positions to determine who they see or talk to. Even in situations where they control a large portion of the institution, the correctional authorities have ultimate control over access to the media. 2) The generation of counter-definitions depends heavily on the existence of organized and articulate sources. In those riots where the inmates were able to gain some leverage (usually a hostage), and presented themselves as an organized group, they were usually more successful in using the media to air their grievances. As Hall states: "In the absence of an alternate definition, powerfully and articulately proposed, the scope for any reinterpretation of crime by the public as an issue of concern

is extremely limited" (Hall, 1978:69). 3) Prison riots (and crime in general) are less open than other issues to competing and alternate definitions. Not only are convicts typically not organized, they are not viewed as 'legitimate' by society.

By virtue of being criminals they have forfeited the right to take part in the negotiation of the consensus about crime... By and large, the criminal, by his actions, is assumed to have forfeited, along with other citizenship rights, his 'right to reply' ...

(Hall, 1978:69)

Unlike the negotiation of consensus that is found between union workers and management, or the opposing sides of an important issue before city hall, in the reporting of prison riots the primary definers offer an interpretation which is consistent with the consensus and little if any reinterpretation occurs. The primary definers are seldom challenged because their definition is consistent with the established consensus, and inmates fail to act as definers because they lack power and legitimacy.

#### 4.2.1.3 The Role of Violence

Another concept which Hall investigates is the role that violence plays in the reporting of events which challenge the social order. In as much as crime is news because its treatment marks a major boundary of society (i.e., it demarcates what society views as legitimate and institutionalized means of action), violence is reported because it represents a fundamental rupturing of the social order. "The use of violence marks the distinction between those who are fundamentally of society and those who are outside it. It is coterminous with the boundary of 'society' itself" (emphasis in original) (Hall, 1978:68).

In the process of signification, Hall argues that there are several boundaries or thresholds which symbolically mark out the limit of societal tolerance. The higher an event ranks in the hierarchy of thresholds the greater is the response which can be expected because of the perceived threat to the social order. The lowest level is the threshold of 'permissiveness', this involves events which contravene traditional moral norms. The next level of events are those which break the 'legal' threshold of society. This boundary marks the blurred areas of moral disapproval and distinguishes the illegal from that which is morally disapproved of. The threshold of 'violence' is the final boundary. It is the outer limit of societal tolerance as these acts (e.g., terrorism, murder, treason, robbery with violence, etc.) pose a threat to the fundamental basis of social order.<sup>19</sup>

Prison riots are clearly events which have been signified as having crossed this threshold of violence. Therefore, it is not surprising that 53.2% (320) of the articles have at least one paragraph which describes the damage done by the inmates during the riot. Further, the concept of violence manifested through themes such as the damage done, the possibility of escape, the threat to hostages, injuries, and the need for extra security are also the themes which are most prominent in the headlines, articles and pictures.

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<sup>19</sup> Hall argues that while many of these acts are violent by any definition, one also needs to include the whole range of "political acts which do not necessarily espouse or lead to violence, but which are thought of as 'violent' because of the fundamental nature of the challenge they make to the state. Such acts are almost always signified in terms of their potential for social violence (violence here being almost a synonym for extremism)" (Emphasis in original) (Hall, 1978:224).

The primary definers are very successful in portraying rioting inmates as having crossed the threshold of violence and hence as a threat to the fabric of society. This is not exclusively a function of the fact that the correctional authorities are the primary definers. It is also because the state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.<sup>20</sup> So critical is the defence of this threshold that the state, through its agencies of social control, is permitted the use of force to protect society from the illegitimate users of violence. Therefore, while prisoners in the act of rioting are seen as a threat and an expense to society and are condemned for using illegitimate means and acting outside the interests of society, the force the authorities use on the inmates is viewed as a legitimate response to the situation and is only questioned in the most extreme cases.

In the transgression of this threshold there also exists a 'rational calculus'. In those situations where there is an equitable balance between the end and the violence required there is an increased chance that this violence may be viewed by some portions of society as rational and legitimate. This situation is heavily dependent on the organization of the group committing the violence and the strength of the consensus on that issue. Unfortunately for the inmates, they are typically poorly organized and the consensus they are fighting is unusually pervasive. In their situation the opposite effect occurs, the relationship between the violence and the gains appears to society to be vastly

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<sup>20</sup> To aid in the distinction between those who have crossed the threshold of violence and the protecting authorities, an important semantic change occurs. The term violence is seldom linked to the actions of legitimate authorities, rather their legitimacy is denoted by substituting the term force for violence.

disproportionate, and hence their actions are labelled as irrational. After all, who trashes their house over dry cigarettes or takes a hostage because of reduced library privileges?

In summary, inmates do not have an active role in defining the situation for both structural and systemic reasons. Structurally they lack power: They are physically restricted from contacting the media; and they are also typically poorly organized. Systemically they lack legitimacy: As a group they are inarticulate; they are on the outside of society; and through the act of rioting they have crossed a critical boundary which society uses to define itself. Through the use of violence they have opened themselves up to the charge that they are a threat to society, capable of only irrational actions.

#### **4.2.2 Areas of Controversy**

##### **4.2.2.1 The Role of Experts**

In trying to assess the adequacy of Hall's theory of how the media report prison riots in Canada there were also findings which ran contrary to Hall and those which raised further questions he failed to address. An initial area of uncertainty revolves around Hall's designation of the role of 'experts' as definers. In addition to accredited representatives of major social institutions (those who represent the people, or organized interest groups), Hall states that another "'accredited source' is 'the expert': his calling - the 'disinterested' pursuit of knowledge - not his position or his representativeness, confers on his statement 'objectivity' and 'authority'" (Hall, 1978:58). However, in the discussion of crime news

it is stated that due to the 'double expertise' and closed nature of the topic, police spokesmen have a near monopoly on defining the event. Similarly, the research on prison riots found that the correctional authorities are the primary definers. A significant finding which parallels Hall's work is that 'experts' do not play an important role in defining prison riots. Only 2.2% (13) of the articles contained quotes from outside experts in the area and as a group they comprised only 2.5% (89) of the total number of quotes. The question then arises, why do experts play such a minimal role in defining news in the area of crime if they are used as primary definers in other areas?

Hall touches on this only briefly as an addendum to his discussion on why criminals are not used as primary definers. While the agencies of social control are the primary definers partly because of their especially authoritative status, it is also due to the fact that crime is less open to competing definitions. Hall is arguing that counter-definitions, whether articulated by criminals or experts, are almost totally absent because there already exists a very strong consensus. If this argument is elaborated one would expect that on those public issues where a consensus was weak or still in the process of negotiation, the role of experts would be greatly enhanced. However, in situations where a consensus already exists, such as in the understanding of prison riots, experts play a minimal role (a contention the data support). Even those experts who are supportive of the existing consensus receive minimum coverage as the consensus is so well established that the media seldom have need of multiple references. The implication of Hall's statement is that the role experts play as primary



definers depends heavily on the existence/non-existence of an established consensus. Therefore, in situations where a strong consensus exists and dominant definitions command the field of signification relatively unchallenged, and counter-definitions are almost absent, expectations would be that the role of experts would be minimal. Further, those experts that do contribute will be forced to operate within the terms of reference set by the primary definers.

#### 4.2.2.2 Duration of Coverage

In Policing The Crises it is stated that the study of mugging in Britain validates Galtung and Ruge's (in Cohen & Young, 1973:65) hypothesis that "once something has hit the headlines and been defined as 'news', then it will continue to be defined as news for some time" (Hall, 1978:72). The initial problem with this hypothesis is that the variable 'some time' has not been operationalized. Neither Galtung and Ruge nor Hall operationalize the duration of time they are referring to. One can speculate, however, that Hall's concept of 'some time' was an extended period because he refers to both the initial incident of mugging through to and including the trial. This is a time frame which is much longer than the present study on prison riots would support. Data collected on the duration of coverage indicates that the newsworthiness of these events is relatively short, with 50.7% (306) of the articles occurring within the first three days of coverage and 91.2% (550) in the first ten.

Perhaps the key to understanding this disparity revolves around the distinction between agencies which are highly visible and have frequent

public contact, and those which are outside the public eye and have limited contact. Police departments, unlike penitentiaries, have a well established system for dispersing information to the media. A police wire provides the media with easy access to a daily allotment of information of transgressions of the law which have occurred in the public domain. The media do not by way of contrast, produce daily information of what transpires at the local penitentiary. Penitentiaries become newsworthy when something unusual happens, and usually that something involves violence. In these situations the media flock to the institution only to find their access to information severely restricted. The correctional authorities control who the media talk to, and what is talked about. It should be remembered that for the correctional authorities this is a time of crisis and regaining control and reestablishing order are priorities which rank higher than giving the media a story.

Another factor of this which may play a part in the matter of a story's duration revolves around the fact that the crimes that police handle occur within the public's everyday world. A mugging or robbery may occur in a park or store in an area close to home or a place that people are familiar with. There is also an innocent victim, an element not typically present in a prison riot. A victim is not only someone who the public can feel sympathy for, s/he is also the recipient of empathy. From the perception of the public, it could have been themselves who were the victims.

A final, more critical, explanation lies in the fact that Hall was interested in a law-and-order campaign which was fueling the crime wave

known as mugging. The key point here is that Hall was studying a particular set of events which is not the norm. There is a discrepancy in the findings on duration because he is attempting to generalize from a particular pattern which is unique. The muggings Hall was studying were not seen as isolated separate incidents of crime, rather they were seen as part of the larger growing problem, that of the increasing numbers of idle and potentially violent youths from non-white backgrounds. In such a situation it is logical to assume that the perceived existence of a mugging epidemic would result in a situation where the duration of coverage is extended.

However, this should not be seen as the norm, most crimes do not stay in the news for more than a few days, they are quickly and easily explained within the established cultural 'maps'. The robbery of a 7-Eleven or the knifing outside a bar have occurred frequently enough that there exists a shared understanding of what occurred. Unless these events contain something which is so out of the ordinary that they cannot be placed within the established 'maps of meanings', or 'normalized' (Sudnow, 1965), the coverage they will receive will be relatively short.

#### **4.2.2.3 The Issue of Balance**

Another aspect of Hall's theory which does not appear to be congruent with the present study revolves around the notion of balanced reporting by the media. He argues that there are three professional rules which help to guide the production of news, these are 'impartiality', 'objectivity', and 'balance'. The requirement of balance ensures that

"alternative definitions do get a hearing: each 'side' is allowed to present its case" (emphasis in original) (Hall, 1978:58). Even though this statement is immediately qualified by the disclaimer that the structural relationship that exists between the media and the primary definers allows the latter to set the terms of reference in which the debate takes place, the accuracy of the statement needs to be questioned. The data do not support the notion of balanced reporting. Correctional authorities form the most dominant Category, being quoted in 57.5% (346) of the articles and comprising 51.6% (1857) of the total number of quotes. By comparison, inmates were quoted in only 10.8% (65) of the articles and formed 8.5% (306) of the total number of quotes. Outside experts, another Category which may be the source of counter-definitions, was quoted in only 2.3% (13) of the articles and formed 2.5% (89) of the total number of quotes. The data also indicated that there was a difference in the qualitative nature of the gadgetry that was attached to the different Categories of quotes, with correctional authorities receiving a large degree of positive supportive gadgetry (26.3%), while almost a third (32.4%) of the inmates' gadgetry served to discredit the information being presented. Therefore, the data do not support Hall's concept of balance in either a quantitative or qualitative sense.

Perhaps more important is how Hall defines balanced reporting. By adding the disclaimer the definition is reduced from a situation where supposedly "each side is allowed to present its case" to one where only those operating within the initial framework are heard. "Contributions which stray from this framework are exposed to the charge that they are

'not addressing the problem'" (Hall, 1978:59). Within this definition of balance there is only room for very narrow debates, those which focus on degree, not on definition. Here one finds the media covering both correctional authorities and disgruntled guards as they debate the necessity of extra or stronger security measures. There are reprints of parliamentary debates which centre on whether inmates have it better than some people on welfare, or if they should be forced to live with the consequences of their actions. Occasionally, one finds a debate over which mono-causal explanation is really why the inmates rioted.

What is not found are arguments which look past mono-causal explanations, trying to connect the facts of the situation to the many theories which exist, articles which are critical of the existing system and focus on the systemic problems, radical reformation or even abolition of the existing system. These are areas where silence is maintained, these are the questions which are not asked because they fall outside the established frame of reference, for to ask these questions is to be labelled extremist and impractical, because these are the questions which challenge the consensus. As Chomsky and Herman (1979) have shown, the media (through suppression of information and self-censorship) play an important role in maintaining the dominant consensus. Further, they also suggest that the application of the 'balance' approach is not in essence designed to encourage the free flow of ideas, rather it exists as a means of refusing to permit the distribution of views which challenge the established consensus. Similarly, Davidson (1986) found in his study of Canadian high school textbooks that controversial issues such as prisons and the treatment of

prisoners are not presented in a balanced fashion. "Typically the contentious issues are ignored or trivialized" (Davidson, 1986:3).

It appears, therefore, that in situations where a strong consensus already exists the notion of a balanced reporting is somewhat of a myth, and as a means of ensuring that counter-definitions are heard it is a dismal failure. Whether this evaluation holds true in situations where a strong consensus has not been established, one can only speculate. Expectations, however, would be that in a situation where no single definition dominated and the role of experts was increased one would find a greater degree of balance in the reporting.

#### **4.2.2.4 Findings on Social Context**

Analysis of the reporting of prison riots in Canada indicates that for the most part the media do not place the event in context. One example of how they report events in an ahistorical manner can be found in The Toronto Star, October, 1976. On October 2nd, 4th, 5th, and 6th the paper ran a set of feature articles which took an indepth look at the broader Canadian penitentiary scene. These articles were written by Sydney Katz under the general title "The Crises in Canada's Prisons", with each day's feature looking at different problems. The four main topics which were discussed were: The question of the prisons' ability to rehabilitate; the role and life of the guard; the prisoner's views of the system and possible areas of change; and a discussion of the actual purpose of prisons. On October 5th, 1976 Millhaven penitentiary experienced a riot which was first reported in the press on October 7th. In the subsequent articles on the riot no reference was made to the

information or views presented in the feature articles that they themselves had just run. The riot was presented as an isolated incident with no attempt to place it into the larger picture of the crises in Canadian prisons. The vast majority of the articles examined in this study, (81%) did not place the riot in an historical context or within a discussion of the merits of incarceration. While this is a significant finding it does appear to be incongruous with Hall's notion of signification. The process of signification involves identification and contextualization, the latter being defined as the assigning of a social context, or the placing of the article within a frame of reference which is familiar to the audience (Hall, 1978). However, the analysis of the articles on prison riots indicates that there is generally a lack of context.

To understand the apparent contradiction it is essential to understand Hall's definition of social context. Hall uses the concept as the media do, an article is assigned to a social context in that it is placed within a frame of meanings familiar to the audience. Therefore, in as much as the unusual, unexpected, or unpredicted are placed within the range of known social or cultural identifications, they have been assigned a social context. What Hall fails to state is that with this definition the 'known social or cultural identifications' are in situations of a strong consensus synonymous with the definitions of the primary definers. This contention is supportive of Gieber's (1964) findings on the media's maintenance of consensus. The appropriate mapping of an event is a major means by which the media ensure that information which might upset the community consensus does

not reach the public. That is, the 'context' in which an article is placed becomes an important and successful means of reaffirming the consensus.

Chomsky and Herman (1979) illustrate this in their examination of how the media help to maintain the pretense of the United States as an innocent bystander, rather than a sponsor and supporter of terrorism in third world countries.

It is convenient to pretend that Guatemala, South Korea and the Phillipines are "independent" in contrast to Rumania, Poland, and Hungry which are puppets of the Soviet Union. In this manner U.S. responsibility for terror in its sphere can be dismissed, while the Soviet Union's imposition of tyranny and crushing of freedom in its sphere can be sanctimoniously deplored. Given our role in creating and sustaining our terror-prone clients, our training and supply programs, our continued support for them on all fundamentals, their relative homogeneity and role in the U.S.-dominated global economy, their alleged independence and our posture of innocent and concerned bystander must be taken simply as principles of state propaganda.

(Chomsky & Herman, 1979:17)

By placing the articles in the known contexts of 'free' versus 'satellite' countries, U.S.A. versus U.S.S.R. or 'police action' versus 'terrorism' the consensus of American neutrality is supported. If, as in this project, Hall had defined social context in terms of an article's comprehensiveness (i.e., did the article investigate any events which occurred prior to the riot which may have been contributing factors), scope (i.e., did the article present any discussion on the merits of incarceration), counter-definitions (i.e., did the article attempt to make sense of the riot in light of the varied theories available), then the concept could have been used as an indicator of the degree of consensus and the relative strength of various groups of definers. In those areas where the articles were typically superficial



in their coverage, left large gaps in what they explained, and failed to entertain alternative definitions, one might suspect that a relatively strong consensus existed. However, if the articles contained the opposite - a highly comprehensive, detailed, critical evaluation, and presented various definitions - one would suspect that a consensus on that issue had not been established and various groups were vying for the role of primary definers.

#### 4.2.2.5 The Nature of Explanations Given

The final area to be discussed revolves around Hall's understanding of how events are explained in the media. Given the diversity of theories discussed in chapter one, the question was asked: Do the media in their coverage of riots take into account the competing explanations or do they continually favour only one? In the discussion of how crime is commonly explained Hall suggests that the focus is not on the "fully coherent and adequately theorised explanations of crime" (Hall, 1978:65). Rather the focus is on the the more fragmentary, incoherent and contradictory forms of explanations, for

when the journalist, or the judge, or the members of the ordinary public have to respond to, or explain, troubling events, like 'mugging', they tend to draw, often in a piecemeal and unreflexive manner, on social images, the 'ideas of society', the sources of moral anxiety, the scattered meanings which frame their everyday experience in order to construct, out of them, social accounts which carry credibility.

(Hall, 1978:165-166)

It is important to understand that each individual does not construct these afresh or in isolation. Rather, they draw on the 'vocabulary of motives' (Mills.1967) which is already in existence as part of the common language.

The present study offers some support for this conceptualization of how the media provides explanations. In their reporting of prison riots the media do not tend to present complex explanations, nor do they rely on the many theories social scientists have developed. Rather, when a cause is given it is often, as Hall states, fragmentary, incoherent, and contradictory. Therefore, the causes which are commonly found are simplistic and rely on preconstructed images the public has of prisons and inmates, such as: Just a few trouble makers acting out; the riot was a cover up for an escape; problems relating to tobacco products; the poor quality of conditions; inmates want more privileges; etc. While some of these may be significant factors in why the inmates chose to riot, without placing them into their larger context (an issue discussed earlier) they tend to support and reinforce the negative images of inmates the public holds.

The study of how the media explain prison riots did, however, produce a significant finding which a reading of Hall's work did not suggest. While those articles which did offer an explanation conformed to Hall's assessment of how the media explain crime, in the majority of the articles (64.1%) no attempt was made to establish a cause or else it was stated that there was no discernible or justifiable cause. In these situations the public is left on its own to decide why the inmates rioted. The reader who is basically ignorant of the correctional system is forced to rely on other information present in the article, and any preconceptions or stereotypes s/he has about the nature of inmates. Though speculative, it is difficult to imagine how an ignorance of the situation combined with a perponderance of social and psychological

misconceptions about the nature of inmates could result in an explanation which reflects favorably upon the inmates.

The question may be asked, how is this possible, or why is it tolerated? After all, is it not part of the media's job to answer all five "W's"? The answer perhaps lies in the distinction between issues where a strong consensus exists and those still in the process of negotiation. As has been argued, in the area of prison riots there are few problems of consensus. Those who are the most likely to offer counter-definitions lack the power to articulate them to the public as they are typically poorly organized and lack legitimacy. If the counter-definitions were strong and challenged the established consensus one would expect that the media would then respond by answering the question why, supporting the established consensus until such time as the issue became one of public debate and a new consensus was established. However, this is not the case as far as prison riots are concerned. Here a strong consensus exists as evidenced by the lack of outrage over the media not answering the question why. It is so well established that the question why does not even need to be addressed; after all, the public is fully aware that it snows in Winnipeg, that dogs bite, and prisoners riot; no explanation is required, it is the nature of the beast.

For those agencies or individuals interested in prison reform this has important implications. Before change can occur an awareness has to be created, and for this to occur an issue has to become part of the public's discourse. By not articulating an explanation of the event, the primary definers have not opened themselves up for attack by those

espousing counter-definitions. In remaining silent, not only has the consensus been reaffirmed, the primary definers have also put the onus on others to make this an issue which needs to be evaluated and a new definition established. However, as long as the question remains so mundane that it does not even need to be asked, the possibility of change is very minute.

Further, the existence of a strong consensus also has an effect in terms of the direction that penal policy takes and where the money from budgets is directed. A consensus which views prisoners as inherently bad and uncontrollable is not likely to focus on major reforms. The policy is likely to be one which moves towards stronger security and is more custodial in nature. Budgets are less likely to fund rehabilitation programs and inmate recreation facilities; rather the expectation would be that the money would be directed at increasing security devices, building bigger stronger prisons and increasing staff manpower. One can only conclude that in the face of such a pervasive consensus the chance for large scale prison reform or a reinterpretation of prison riots is extremely small. Further, the first step to any such change is to get the public to talk about it. If the questions remain so mundane that they are never asked except in academic circles, the possibility of changing the established consensus moves from extremely small to nonexistent.

### 4.3 FURTHER RESEARCH

Having found a high level of support for Hall's theory, there are still more questions which need to be explored through further research. To begin with, one methodological change which might be considered would involve moving from archival research to a case study of a prison riot, like Colvin (1982) was able to do after the 1980 New Mexico prison riot. Realizing that this approach is considerably more difficult (due to problems of accessing areas of information), it would nevertheless be an interesting test of Hall's theory to witness first hand through observation and interview the working relationship between correctional authorities, media and inmates during and after a prison riot.

Several theoretical questions still remain and should be the subject of future research. First, while Hall's theory appears to a good explanation of how various types of crime are reported in newspapers, the question remains whether it is applicable to other media. Is there a different set of dynamics operating in the electronic media? Does one find an even stronger reliance on the primary definers due to television's and radio's restrictions of time? With television's emphasis on visual images, would there be a greater concentration on the violence done by inmates? Is the degree of information gained from the inmates even less than in the print medium?

Second, it was noted earlier that mugging was reported differently than prison riots. The present study found discrepancies in the areas of balanced reporting, lack of context, duration of coverage and the role of experts. The argument which was presented suggested that the

differences lay in a consensus which was constructed as opposed to one which was in the process of negotiation. The validity of this argument needs to be tested. With regard to the aforementioned areas do the media report social issues such as, abortion, wife abuse, child abuse, or mosquito fogging differently because a consensus is still being negotiated? Do trials for crimes which clearly challenge the social order and, therefore, the established consensus (such as mass murders, treason, terrorism, etc.) get reported in a different manner?

Finally, the question also needs to be asked, does the extent to which a consensus exists affect the role of the primary definers? Does this concept change significantly in areas where consensus is weak or has not been established? Further, what type of dynamics are necessary for primary definers to lose their positions of power, thereby allowing for a change in the established consensus? These are all questions which seek to clarify the role of the media in negotiating and maintaining consensus, and while Hall has begun the discussion and provided useful concepts, further investigation is required.

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## Appendix A

### Prison Riots and Major Disturbances in Canadian Penitentiaries<sup>1</sup>

#### Federal Penitentiaries

Year	Institution	Date
1932	* Manitoba Penitentiary <sup>2</sup>	April 15
	* Kingston Penitentiary (K.P.)	October 17
	* St. Vincent de Paul <sup>3</sup>	November 4
1933	* Dorchester	January 7
1934	* British Columbia Penitentiary(B.C.P.) <sup>4</sup>	Sept. 10-13
	K.P.	May 3
1935	* Manitoba Penitentiary	April 27
1936	K.P.	March 21
	Saskatchewan Penitentiary <sup>5</sup>	November 23
1954	* K.P.	August
	* Federal Training Centre	August
1955	* Saskatchewan Penitentiary	N/A
1956	* St. Vincent de Paul	N/A
1958	* Collins Bay	August
	* K.P.	October
1960	* Stony Mountain	August
1962	* St. Vincent de Paul	June
1963	* B.C.P.	N/A
1966	Dorchester	Sept. 24, 28
1967	Matsqui (Womem's Unit)	June 14
	* K.P.	October 11
1970	* Saskatchewan Penitentiary	November 28
1971	* K.P.	April 14-18
	* Dorchester	May 19
	Saskatchewan Penitentiary	August 22

1972	Millhaven * Stony Mountain	May 3 July 18
1973	* Saskatchewan Penitentiary Millhaven Beaver Creek Correctional Camp Dorchester	March 2 February 26 April 21 May 5
1976	* Millhaven * Laval * B.C.P.  Laval B.C.P.	October 5 Sept. 24 - 27 Sept. 25 - Oct. 1 March 30 November 22
1977	Millhaven Springhill Dorchester	October 27 April 10 September 4
1978	Millhaven	August 20
1979	B.C.P. Dorchester B.C.P. Kent	January 7 January 24 April 27 October 29
1980	Saskatchewan Penitentiary Kent Dorchester	April 14 November 28 June 27
1981	* Matsqui Kent	June 2 June 7
1982	Collins Bay Archambault Laval Drumheller	May 30 July 25 August 13 September 27
1983	Millhaven	December 3

<sup>1</sup> Incidents marked (\*) have been termed 'riots', all other incidents are termed major disturbances which is defined as 'incidents which upset the normal routine of the institution' i.e., hunger strikes, sit-ins, not hostage takings.

<sup>2</sup> Now called Stony Mountain Penitentiary.

<sup>3</sup> Closed in 1972, reopened as Laval Institution in 1973.

<sup>4</sup> Closed in 1981.

<sup>5</sup> At Prince Albert.

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Strategic Planning Committee  
September 26, 1984

## Appendix B

### Breakdown of The Amount of Coverage Each Riot Recieved

<u>Riot</u>	<u># of Articles</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
October 17, 1932 Kingston Penitentiary	116	19.3
November 4, 1932 St. Vincent de Paul	31	5.2
January 7, 1933 Dorchester Penitentiary	28	4.7
September 10 - 13, 1934 British Columbia Penitentiary (B.C.P.)	5	0.8
April 27, 1935 Stony Mountain Penitentiary	23	3.8
August 13, 1954 Kingston Penitentiary	30	5.0
August 16, 1954 Federal Training Centre	10	1.7
July 13, 1955 Saskatchewan Penitentiary	16	2.7
August 14, 1958 Collins Bay	12	2.0
October 19, 1958 Kingston Penitentiary	8	1.3
August 14, 1960 Stony Mountain Penitentiary	14	2.3
June 18, 1962 St. Vincent de Paul	30	5.0
April 19, 1963 B.C.P.	21	3.4
November 28, 1970 Saskatchewan Penitentiary	18	3.0
April 14 - 18, 1971 Kingston Penitentiary	53	8.8
May 19, 1971 Dorchester Penitentiary	9	1.5
July 18, 1972 Stony Mountain Penitentiary	1	0.2
September 24 - 27, 1976 Laval Penitentiary	41	6.8
September 25 - October 1, 1976 B.C.P.	103	17.1
October 5, 1976 Millhaven Penitentiary	5	0.8
November 20, 1977 Millhaven Penitentiary	2	0.3
June 2, 1981 Matsqui Penitentiary	26	4.3
	602	100.0

## Appendix C

### Breakdown of The Extent of Coverage by Each Newspaper

<u>Newspaper</u>	<u># of Articles</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Toronto Globe & Mail	101	16.8
Toronto Star	125	20.5
Montreal Gazette	48	8.0
Montreal Star	64	10.6
Moncton Transcript	18	3.0
ST. John's Telegraph - Journal	19	3.2
Vancouver Sun	108	17.9
Victoria Daily Colonist	47	7.8
Winnipeg Free Press	19	3.2
Winnipeg Tribune	19	3.2
Regina Leader Post	13	2.2
Saskatoon Star-Pheonix	21	3.5
	<hr/> 602	<hr/> 100.0

## Appendix D

### Breakdown of The Length of Coverage in Terms of Days

<u># of Days</u>	<u># of Articles</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1	143	24.0
2	107	17.8
3	54	9.0
4	68	11.3
5	57	9.5
6	34	5.6
7	24	4.0
8	25	4.2
9	24	4.0
10	12	2.0
11	5	0.8
12	8	1.3
13	5	0.8
14	2	0.3
15	1	0.2
17	2	0.3
18	4	0.7
19	2	0.3
20	2	0.3
21	1	0.2
22	1	0.2
23	1	0.2
24	1	0.2
25	2	0.3
26	2	0.3
27	1	0.3
28	3	0.5
30	1	0.2
32	2	0.3
33	2	0.3
34	2	0.3
35	2	0.3
36	1	0.2
	<hr/> 602	<hr/> 100.0

## Appendix E

Frequency of The Number of Articles in a Newspaper on a Given Day

<u># of Articles</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1	232	38.5
2	138	22.9
3	71	11.8
4	50	8.3
5	34	5.6
6	22	3.7
7	16	2.7
8	14	2.3
9	8	1.3
10	6	1.0
11	6	1.0
12	3	0.5
13	2	0.3
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	602	100.0

## Appendix F

### Breakdown of The Number of Articles on a Given Page

<u>Page #</u>	<u>Articles Found on</u>	<u># of Articles</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1		267	44.4
2		58	9.6
3		79	13.1
4		11	1.8
5		16	2.7
6		5	0.8
7		9	1.5
8		18	3.0
9		8	1.3
10		14	2.3
11		4	0.7
12		6	1.0
13		3	0.5
14		3	0.5
15		3	0.5
16		3	0.5
17		11	1.8
18		4	0.7
19		9	1.5
20		6	1.0
21		14	2.3
22		5	0.8
23		14	2.3
24		4	0.7
25		2	0.3
27		5	0.8
28		1	0.2
29		1	0.2
31		2	0.3
35		1	0.2
38		1	0.2
39		2	0.3
41		2	0.3
49		1	0.2
50		2	0.3
60		2	0.3
63		2	0.3
73		1	0.2
91		1	0.2
93		1	0.2
1 missing case		1	0.2
		602	100.0



## Appendix G

### Breakdown of The Ranking of Articles on Page One

<u>Rank of Articles</u>	<u># of Articles</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Not on page one	335	55.6
Lead story on page one	74	12.3
# two story on page one	37	6.1
# three story on page one	19	3.2
# four story on page one	11	1.8
# five or greater	126	21.0
	<hr/> 602	<hr/> 100.0

## Appendix H

### Breakdown of The Sources of The Articles

<u>Sources of The Articles</u>	<u># of Articles</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
None given	189	31.4
Author /writer's name	60	10.0
Canadian press	166	27.6
Special or Special dispatch	50	8.3
Staff correspondent, or Out of town bureau	28	4.7
Writer's name and Wire service	8	1.3
Another paper, or U.P.I. service	7	1.2
Writer's name or Staff correspondent, and a wire service	4	0.7
Writer's name and Staff correspondent	80	13.3
Canadian press and Special	10	1.7
	<hr/> 602	<hr/> 100.0

## Appendix I

### Breakdown of The % of Riot Coverage by Pictures on Page One

<u>% of Page One Riot Coverage Space Which is Taken up by Pictures</u>	<u># of Newspapers</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0	174	75.3
1 - 5	0	0.0
6 - 10	2	0.9
11 - 15	2	0.9
16 - 20	2	0.9
21 - 25	0	0.0
26 - 30	0	0.0
31 - 35	4	1.7
36 - 40	2	0.9
41 - 45	1	0.4
46 - 50	4	1.7
51 - 55	5	2.2
56 - 60	1	0.4
61 - 65	5	2.2
66 - 70	10	4.3
71 - 75	7	3.0
76 - 80	3	1.4
81 - 85	3	1.4
86 - 90	1	0.4
91 - 95	0	0.0
96 - 100	4	1.7
Missing case	1	0.4
	231	100.1 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The extent to which the total equals over 100% is solely a result of the rounding.

## Appendix J

### Breakdown of The % of Total Riot Coverage by Pictures

<u>% of Total Riot Coverage Space Which is Taken up by Pictures</u>	<u># of Newspapers</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0	141	61.0
1 - 5	2	0.9
6 - 10	3	1.4
11 - 15	2	0.9
16 - 20	7	3.0
21 - 25	8	3.8
26 - 30	4	1.7
31 - 35	6	2.6
36 - 40	9	3.9
41 - 45	7	3.0
46 - 50	6	2.6
51 - 55	7	3.0
56 - 60	6	2.6
61 - 65	5	2.2
66 - 70	7	3.0
71 - 75	3	1.4
76 - 80	4	1.7
81 - 85	1	0.4
86 - 90	1	0.4
91 - 95	1	0.4
96 - 100	0	0.0
	231	100.5 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The extent to which the total equals over 100% is solely a result of the rounding.

## Appendix K

### Breakdown of The Number of Pictures in Individual Papers

<u>The Number of Pictures in an Issue</u>	<u># of Newspapers</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0	141	61.0
1	33	14.3
2	18	7.8
3	11	4.8
4	11	4.8
5	5	2.2
6	3	1.3
7	1	0.4
8	4	1.7
9	1	0.4
10	1	0.4
18	1	0.4
23	1	0.4
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	231	100.0

Appendix L

Breakdown of The Extent of Each Groups' Quotes per Riot

CATEGORIES

RIOT	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	% of Stories with one or more quotes from each category											
1932 Kingston	2.6	3.4	13.8	23.3	4.3	0.0	0.0	2.6	8.6	14.7	1.7	20.7
1932 St. Vincent	3.2	6.5	35.5	25.8	3.2	0.0	0.0	3.2	3.2	0.0	3.2	22.6
1933 Dorchester	3.6	0.0	28.6	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	0.0	7.1	0.0	17.9
1934 B.C.P.	0.0	0.0	80.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1935 Stony Mt.	0.0	4.3	26.1	4.3	8.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.1	17.4	0.0	21.7
1954 Kingston	0.0	20.0	53.3	30.0	23.3	0.0	0.0	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.7
1954 F.T. Centre	0.0	10.0	80.0	20.0	20.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0
1955 P.A. Sask.	0.0	18.7	43.7	37.5	12.5	0.0	0.0	6.3	25.0	12.5	0.0	6.3
1958 Collins Bay	8.3	0.0	41.7	25.0	8.3	0.0	0.0	16.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1958 Kingston	0.0	0.0	87.5	12.5	12.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1960 Stony Mt.	7.1	7.1	64.3	0.0	7.1	7.1	0.0	7.1	7.1	0.0	0.0	42.9
1962 St. Vincent	6.7	3.3	26.7	46.7	10.0	0.0	0.0	6.7	10.0	0.0	3.3	10.0
1963 B.C.P.	4.8	14.3	52.4	9.5	28.6	0.0	23.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	19.0
1970 P.A. Sask.	0.0	0.0	33.7	22.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.6	5.6	5.6	0.0	16.7
1971 Kingston	11.3	11.3	30.2	35.8	13.2	9.4	18.9	15.1	9.4	3.8	3.8	17.0
1971 Dorchester	11.1	0.0	22.2	77.8	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.2	0.0	0.0	11.1
1972 Stony Mt.	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.4	7.3	0.0	0.0	2.4
1976 Laval	22.0	34.1	51.2	46.3	46.3	22.0	12.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1976 B.C.P.	8.7	18.4	26.2	42.7	24.3	24.3	17.5	0.0	13.6	2.0	3.9	5.8
1976 Millhaven	0.0	0.0	60.0	60.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1977 Millhaven	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1981 Matsqui	7.7	15.4	61.5	34.6	3.8	69.2	0.0	0.0	11.5	3.8	7.7	25.4