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DEDICATION

To the families and activists, who have fought relentlessly for justice for the 96:

You’ll Never Walk Alone
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ABSTRACT


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This study examines how the political elite shape the news coverage of the media by analyzing the two newspapers, the Daily Express and The Guardian’s, coverage of the 1989 Hillsborough Disaster – a disaster which claimed the lives of 96 Liverpool FC fans and which remains the worst football stadium-related disaster in British history. Through use of media hegemony and framing, along with key theoretical concepts, several imprints of the power elite’s hegemonic dominance were found. The Daily Express and The Guardian blamed a variety of actors, including the football fans, for the disaster in their 1989 to 1990 coverage due to conflicting opinions between the elites. However, from 2012 to 2013, the coverage changed to blame mainly the police, thereby reflecting the consensus reached by the elites on who were to blame for the disaster. This shaping of discourse is the result of routinization. The study hypothesized that there would be a change in sources, from elite to community sources, in the 2012 to 2013 period because of the release of the independent report, which exonerated the fans. Instead, the study concludes that the two newspapers predominantly used elite sources in both time periods and that routinization is so engrained in British journalism that despite the revelation of...
failures by the authorities, these were still the main sources sought for information.

Finally, the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* not only predominantly quoted elite sources but also afforded them space to defend themselves in the very same stories where they were criticized. This was an advantage that was not afforded to the football fans when they were criticized.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On April 15, 1989, ninety-six people died at the Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield while watching their team, Liverpool Football Club, play against Nottingham Forest. Police negligence caused over crowding in one of the terraces at the stadium and as a result, nine-six people died and hundreds of supporters were injured (Scraton, 2007). In the aftermath of what would be known as the Hillsborough Disaster, the happenings of the day were framed as being the fault of the victims and supporters by the police and subsequently the British mainstream media. The only exception to the hooliganism narrative offered by the mainstream media, were the local newspapers in the city of Liverpool that gave voice to the families of the victims and the survivors.

It was not until the appointment of the Hillsborough Independent Panel by the British government that the disaster was thoroughly investigated. On September 12, 2012, the panel published a report, which concluded that Liverpool FC supporters were not responsible for the disaster in any way, and that it was due to lack of control by the police. Following these revelations, new inquests were started which are still ongoing at the time of this thesis in 2015.

The social control exercised by authorities and the state through the mainstream media is not unique to the Hillsborough Disaster or to England. Social control is a mechanism used in many different media outlets in many countries, including other democratic countries. What separates Britain and in particular the British print press from other liberal countries, is that national newspapers are more politicized, the market structure allows segmentation by class, and that the tabloids dominate in popularity. The
consequences of these elements on news-making are rarely transparent. In order to shed light on them, thorough research and analysis is required. Specifically, methods of mass communication will be used to unveil patterns of institutional compliance by the British national media with the consensus determined by the political elite.


**Research Question**

How does the political elite shape the media’s coverage of the disaster? In what ways does the political elite influence the media narratives as published in a quality newspaper compared to a tabloid newspaper?

- Did the media portrayal of the Hillsborough Disaster change in the British national media over the two periods, 1989 to 1990 and 2012 to 2013?
- Whom did the newspapers use as primary sources in the two time periods?
- How do the media characterize the fans involved in the Hillsborough Disaster?

**Contribution**

This study makes important contributions to mass communications theory in two areas. First, the study shows the influence of elite sourcing on the media’s coverage of disasters and other complex issues. Second, the analysis provides insights of value to the ongoing search for truth and justice by the bereaved families. The primary findings of the study are that the Daily Express and The Guardian used mainly official sources in their
reporting and when the officials changed their discourse about the Hillsborough Disaster, the media changed their news coverage too. In a broader perspective, the thesis uncovers latent power in the relationship between the elites and the media. It thereby contributes a modern case study to Stuart Hall’s (1982) theory that the media become “part and parcel of that dialectical process of the ‘production of consent’ – shaping the consent while reflecting it – which orientates the media within the field of force of the dominant social interests represented within the state” (p. 87).

Already in 1990, the Hillsborough Independent Panel made it clear that “all issues relating to disasters and their aftermath are under-researched. There is an urgent need to respond to the full range of concerns raised by this Report” (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990, p. xvi). This study responds to the panel’s appeal. It adds to shared knowledge of mass communications about disasters. For most citizens, the media is their main source of information, especially when it comes to more complex issues such as warfare and disasters. If the media portray information incorrectly and misinform citizens, it is a serious reason for concern and an important topic to be explored.

Looking specifically at the circumstances of the Hillsborough Disaster, the 2012 independent report showed how extreme the degree of the cover-up of one of Britain’s worst disasters was. As this thesis comes to its completion, the investigation into police behavior and the new inquests are still ongoing. Twenty-three years went by before the real circumstances of the disaster were revealed. Even more time will pass before those responsible are prosecuted and the cases are fully processed. Scholars of mass communications, as neutral third parties, are able to investigate the disaster as well in
order to uncover the latent power imprints that police and law may not be able to uncover.

Furthermore, while investigations and inquests will be able to put police officers, football bodies and others involved on trial, there are larger social influences that are not addressed in legal proceedings. The courts are not tasked with unraveling hegemony’s power over cultural institutions such as the media: “One logic of the judicial field is that frameworks for decisions tend to cast blame on one of the parties, instead of acknowledging the complexity of collective behaviors” (Martinez, 2012, p. 71).

The media played an important role in the aftermath of the Hillsborough Disaster and should also be held responsible. This study seeks to do just that by providing a theoretical and empirical framework for further research into, not only this case, but also other disasters.

Finally, the study recognizes that an injustice has been done and tries to shed light on it by giving voice to a group of people who were without it for decades. In the words of Phil Scraton: “It is part of our responsibility as social scientists, as academics, right across the board, to speak truth to power. That’s where change will come” (QUB School of Law, 2013).

**Epistemological Position**

This research is informed and shaped by a phenomenological perspective and the hermeneutic theory of text interpretation.

The founding father of phenomenology is Edmund Husserl; philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger build on Husserl’s philosophical method and
introduced hermeneutic phenomenology (Zahavi, 2008). Husserl concerned himself mainly with the thought of consciousness, believing that experiences can be described without theory, and introduced the concept of “bracketing,” or, engaging in epoché (Klein & Westcott, 1994). When the researcher approaches an object, he or she should, according to Husserl, bracket it (suspend belief in it) and treat it as subjective, thereby reducing the object to a phenomenon that can be observed (Klein & Westcott, 1994). Briefly described, a phenomenon is what shows itself to the observer from a first-person perspective (Zahavi, 2008). Parts of Husserl’s phenomenology has been contested by succeeding phenomenologists but his main pursuit still stands: A researcher must be aware of individual biases when studying a phenomenon.

Here the phenomenon being studied is the narrative of the British national newspapers, specifically the narrative of the Hillsborough Disaster. One of the reasons that I chose to study this phenomenon is because I am a long-time supporter of Liverpool FC, and therefore learned about the disaster. By identifying my personal bias and other prejudices I may have, I aim to set them aside to understand the phenomenon itself and not what it appears to be.

If phenomenology is a tree in the field of philosophical methodology then hermeneutic phenomenology is one of its branches. Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur are the front-runners of the movement of hermeneutic phenomenology. Hans-Georg Gadamer’s central idea is that it is not suitable to claim objectivism when trying to understand a text or a phenomenon because there is no one true interpretation (Weberman, 2000). Instead, reading and understanding is a process that leads to a multitude of interpretations based not only on the text or phenomenon.
being read, but also the researcher’s cultural traditions and experiences (Weberman, 2000).

Another way of speaking of the interpretation and understanding of texts is by using the metaphor of the hermeneutic circle. This process both illustrates my undertaking of the literature review and the content analysis of the newspaper articles from the Daily Express and The Guardian. A person’s understanding of a text is never isolated but rather interpreted within a context of other literature. In the case of my literature review, this means that my understanding of an individual text is dependent on the whole bulk of literature and vice versa. In analyzing newspaper articles to answer my research question, each individual analysis adds to my understanding and interpretation of the whole body of articles and in turn, understanding the broader picture of the press in Britain.

The Hillsborough Disaster

Great Britain has a history of infamous and tragic football stadium disasters, but there is one catastrophe that stands apart from the rest, not just because of the actual events that occurred in April of 1989, but also because of the mishandlings and injustices that followed and continued to haunt the bereaved families and survivors for decades. Twenty-six years have passed since the Hillsborough Disaster of 1989, yet it is still ever near in mind of the British public, especially the citizens of Liverpool (Scraton, 2013).

On April 15, 1989, thousands of Liverpool FC supporters traveled to the Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield to attend the Football Association (FA) Cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest. The match was sold out, and in order to
separate the fans, Liverpool fans were placed in one end of the stadium. A total of 24,256 Liverpool supporters entered through twenty-three malfunctioning turnstiles that led them into two stands and one terrace of the century-old stadium (Scraton, 2007). Delays in traffic and police searches led to late arrivals for many of the Hillsborough-bound spectators and most did not reach the stadium until 2.30 p.m., only half an hour before kickoff (Scraton, 2007). What happened next was the result of a lack of oversight and planning by the police (Scraton, 2007).

Congestion near the turnstiles caused Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield to order the opening of an exit gate, thereby leading masses of unsupervised fans onto another section of the stadium. Caught between fences to the sides and front, two thousand fans, more than double the maximum capacity of people, were trapped helplessly in the pens with no way out (Scraton, 2007). Some were trampled, others smothered against the front of the fence, and even more perished as the barrier eventually collapsed. Despite camera surveillance of the area, Duckenfield did not recognize how serious the situation had become, specifically ordering officers on the scene not to unlock the fence gates that could have relieved the pressure. As a result of this, ninety-six men, women and children died, hundreds were injured and thousands were traumatized (Scraton, 2007).

Duckenfield informed his superior and two FA senior officials that the catastrophe happened as a result of drunken and ticketless Liverpool FC fans who forced their way inside the terraces. Soon this version of the events was repeated to the media who broadcast it worldwide (Scraton, 2007). The decades of ensuing media coverage of the disaster and subsequent attempts by bereaved families to get justice, created what Phil
Scraton (2007) describes as, “two distinct but closely related themes: consolidation of the myths surrounding the disaster and Merseyside’s ascribed negative reputation” (p. 73). The two themes must be understood in the context of this period in British history: Liverpool, which is a part of Merseyside county, already had a bad reputation and football “hooliganism” was deemed the cause of public panic.

**Hooliganism: The English “Disease”**

Many factors influence hooliganism, ranging from history and religion to economy and culture. In the case of England, which is largely the country that has been connected with this “disease” over the years, social class has been a significant factor (Frosdick & Marsh, 2005). Violent supporter behavior on the stadium grounds was first labelled “football hooliganism,” however, over the years it has changed to also encompass violent behavior that takes place away from the stadia (Frosdick & Marsh, 2005).

Hooliganism has since the 1960s been held to blame as the main cause of football disasters. Research shows evidence of “at least 44 UK-related incidents involving deaths and multiple injuries, 41 of which took place in UK football grounds” (Frosdick & Marsh, 2005, p. 23). It is then easy to assume that disaster and disorder are closely related. However, research further shows that “crowd pressure – either direct or leading to structural collapses – was the immediate cause of all except three of the 44 tragedies” (Frosdick & Marsh, 2005, p. 23). Thus it is a common misconception that hooliganism is to blame for football related tragedies.
What shaped the discourse of hooliganism and fanned public fear can be explained through historical and political contexts of issue selection and action in Britain. According to Richard Giulianotti (1994), fan disorder has passed through six complex phases: 1968-70, 1971-80, 1979-84, 1985, 1986-April 1989, and May 1989-present. From 1968-70, hooliganism was no longer dubbed an irregular disturbance but was labeled a social policy area by parliamentarians and academics (Giulianotti, 1994). The very first commission of inquiries was held through the Harrington report; a report that pointed to “the lower-working-class background of football-related offenders already arrested and convicted” (Giulianotti, 1994, p. 14).

In the next period, from 1971-80, the issue became entrenched into the national and governmental consciousness, and studies in the period deemed that public concern with the hooligan was created by tabloid sensationalism (Giulianotti, 1994). Later, from 1979-84, sociological researchers produced findings that showed that the hooligan subcultures consisted of lower-working classes. Politically, the issue was inflated to international magnitude and was no longer just a British problem (Giulianotti, 1994).

Moving on to 1985, the political climate changed with the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister. Determined to fight the “enemy within,” Thatcher and her cabinet attacked what they thought was poor crowd control, and thereby neglected the environmental safety inside the football grounds (Giulianotti, 1994). In academics, Ian Taylor argued that the football hooligan no longer fit into the old mold due to Thatcher’s social neglect and now should be described as a young unemployed man who had experienced social depriviation (Giulianotti, 1994). During 1986-April 1989, the national
membership scheme became mandatory, forcing football supporters to register in order to see matches.

Meanwhile laws became increasingly stricter and academic commentators concluded that without “long-term strategies aimed at tackling basic social divisions, football hooliganism would continue” (Giulianotti, 1994, p. 23). Finally, in post-period of the Hillsborough disaster, from April 1989 to present times, the issue has been exhausted politically and pushed into a parliamentary recess. In the beginning of the 1990s, more supporter-friendly reports have been released which state that hooliganism is not an essential feature in football (Giulianotti, 1994).

**Setting the Historical Context**

In 1989, Margaret Thatcher was in her third and final term of her tenure as the prime minister of Great Britain. In her prime ministership, Thatcher broke with the post-war consensus and introduced a regime of markets and monetarism (Kavanagh, 1990). Throughout her tenure, she led politics that would later be coined under the term Thatcherism. The policies focused on producing a strong state and a free economy by cutting state spending and pushing privatization (Kavanagh, 1990). As a result of moving away from socialism, Britain endured many years of unemployment, loss of manufacturing capacity and the reduction of power of the trade unions. The spending cuts especially hit industry-heavy cities such as Liverpool and set off large anti-government demonstrations. This resulted in “diminishing life chances for those members of the labor force who failed to adapt to a more individualistic, competitive market place” (Melnick, 1986, p. 6). Melnick (1986) further elaborates that a parallel can be drawn between this labor force and the people that the campaign against football hooliganism targeted.
John Hughson and Ramon Spaaij (2011) detail the tired stereotype of the English football hooligan, which “marginalizes an imagined rough, white, working-class male as deviant, symbolically guilty until proven otherwise” (p. 286). This ties together with another myth of hooliganism that Melnick (1986) presents: “Unemployed, working class male youth are responsible for much if not all of the football hooliganism” (p. 12). In response to this myth, it was concluded years before the tragedy of 1989 that the new hooligan did not fit into the “rough working class mold,” but that there were a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds they belonged to (Melnick, 1986, p. 13). Inevitably, the preconceived myths surrounding hooliganism had a big part in shaping society’s reaction to Hillsborough and the stereotype which was implied for fans of Liverpool FC (Hughson & Spaaij, 2011). The reason the stereotype had a relevance to Liverpool was, according to Hughson and Spaaij (2011), because of Liverpool’s social history of poverty and Irish ethnicity. In the eighties, poverty was still an issue as the city of Liverpool had problems with structural unemployment “caused by a declining dock industry and manufacturing base, and demographic changes resulting in an increasingly ‘dependent’ population” (Jemphrey & Berrington, 2000, p. 472). These problems were not mentioned when the mainstream British media covered the problems of the city, so even before the Hillsborough Disaster, the people of Liverpool had received a lot of “bad press.” The press largely reported on the inner-city uprisings earlier in the decade, political struggles against the government, and pointed to the Heysel football disaster of 1985 (Jemphrey & Berrington, 2000).

The Heysel football disaster, which also involved Liverpool FC, came to function as a guilt precedent by which Hillsborough was judged and was also the event that made
Margaret Thatcher take an active part in striking down the perceived hooliganism. On May 29, 1985, Liverpool FC played against Juventus in the European Cup final, which took place in the Heysel stadium in Brussels, Belgium. Liverpool FC faithful had forced their way into a perceived “neutral” area of the stadium, which seated mainly Juventus fans, and in order to get away from them, the Juventus supporters scaled a perimeter wall. The wall collapsed and thirty-nine people died – the majority being fans of the Italian club (Hughson & Spaaij, 2011). Liverpool FC supporters were blamed and both the European officiating football body, UEFA, and Margaret Thatcher pressured the FA to punish English clubs (Hughson & Spaaij, 2011). It was decided that English clubs would not be allowed to play in European matches for five years, with Liverpool FC receiving a harsher penalty of eight years (Hughson & Spaaij, 2011).

On the April 16, 1989, the day after the Hillsborough tragedy, Prime Minister Thatcher visited the site and was directly told by the police that Hillsborough’s disaster would not have occurred had a drunk mob not tried to force their way into the stadium (Scraton, 2007). This information was spread to the media and even to the highest political level in the country. Phil Scraton (2013) spoke with effected families on the twentieth anniversary of the tragedy and one father noted that he met with the Prime Minister who “tried to reassure us by saying there would be no cover-up, no whitewash” (p. 16). This would turn out to be far from the truth, and it was the media who played a large part in hindering the fight for justice.

**Hillsborough Independent Panel Findings**

In December 2009, the Hillsborough Family Support Group’s persistent campaign for justice made Home Secretary Alan Johnson appoint the Bishop of Liverpool, James
Jones, to be a chair on the Hillsborough Independent Panel (HIP) (Scraton, 2013). HIP’s principle was to put “families first” and commit to “maximum public disclosure” of all documents (Scraton, 2013, p. 18). This resulted in the publishing of a “comprehensive report demonstrating how the disclosed material adds to public understanding of the disaster, its context and aftermath” (Scraton, 2013, p. 18). After receiving documents from over eighty organizations and many individuals, the panel set an agenda of what material would be prioritized. This included: “the decade prior to the disaster, specifically the structural condition of the stadium, crowd safety and crowd management; the circumstances prior to the 1989 semi-final including debriefings from 1987 and 1988; the ‘moment’ of the disaster; the immediate aftermath; and the investigation and inquiries that followed” (Scraton, 2013, p. 18).

The 395-page report, which contained 153 key findings, was presented first to the families in September 2012 before being released to the public (Scraton, 2013). The key findings surrounding crowd safety pinpointed that the safety of the crowd had been neglected and that the risks of the stadium were known due to a near disaster on the same terraces in 1981 (Scraton, 2013). In the question of the circumstances prior to 1989, it was concluded that there was tension between the local police and club’s management about who had the responsibility of the crowd, and that there already had been crushing at the turnstiles in 1987 and 1988 (Scraton, 2013). When it came to the moment of the disaster, the findings showed that the emergency services “failed to instigate the agreed major incident plan” and that had the response been better it could potentially have saved lives (Scraton, 2013, p. 20).
To investigate the immediate aftermath of the disaster, the panel reassessed all ninety-six post mortem reports. After analysis, they concluded that in “forty-one of the deceased the asphyxia was potentially reversible” and also that despite the coroner’s claim that the supporters had been drinking after his controversial decision to check the blood alcohol levels of the deceased, the “alcohol levels among those who died were unremarkable and the suggested correlation was inappropriate and misleading” (Scraton, 2013, p. 20). Finally, looking into the investigation and inquiries that followed, the families’ “concerns regarding insufficiency of inquiry were justified” as the “the inquests were used as a vehicle to revive the spectre of fans’ extreme behavior” (Scraton, 2013, p. 21). Furthermore, in establishing the context, the panel also found that the Chief Constable allowed his officers to engage with the media, which led to the nationwide publishing of the allegations against the fans (Scraton, 2013). The final conclusion of the 395-page report was there was “no evidence among the vast number of disclosed documents and supporting material to verify the serious allegations of exceptional levels of drunkenness, ticketlessness or violence among Liverpool fans” (Scraton, 2013, p. 22).

After the report was released to the public, the bereaved families and survivors were overwhelmed by the full disclosure:

We have campaigned for 23 years for this but we never thought it would happen. It’s unbelievable – not the findings – but that it was all there and is now made public. All along we’ve been lied to, even our own lawyers let us down, but now it’s there for all to see (Scraton, 2013, p. 22).

Prime Minister David Cameron spoke in front of the House of Commons and made a “proper apology to the families of the 96 for all they have suffered over the past 23 years for they had suffered a double injustice. The first was injustice of the appalling
events – the failure of the state to protect their loved ones and the indefensible wait to get to the truth” (Scraton, 2013, p. 23).

Soon after Cameron’s speech, the Attorney General sought to “quash” the verdicts so that new inquests could be held, and the Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt, initiated a review of the procedures pertaining to emergency response to disasters (Scraton, 2013).
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this literature review is to provide a theoretical perspective on the thesis and furthermore how the media work, specifically the British national media. First, the media’s role as a powerful cultural institution in society is discussed using Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model and Stuart Hall’s theory of media hegemony. Second, media framing is presented as a synthesizer between the theoretical concepts of framing and hegemony and the method of content analysis. Also, framing is described in the terms of routinization of journalistic practices. Third, the structure of the British newspaper system is shown as well as the 24-hour news-cycle that is prevalent. Fourth, the portrayal of football hooliganism in British national newspapers will be scrutinized. Fifth, the Hillsborough Independent Panel’s analysis of media coverage will address the research already conducted on the Hillsborough Disaster. It will also highlight the gaps of research this study attempts to fill. Lastly, myths about crowd behavior will clarified.

The Political Economy of the Media

Since the commercialization of the media began, first in the United States with the penny press in the 1830s, and later in Britain in the 1850s, its implications on democracy have been a major topic of discussion and research for media scholars (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Because newspapers became highly profitable, their political role changed. Some media scholars interpreted this positively, saying that the increased profits meant that newspapers could separate themselves from government control, while other scholars
criticized this view by claiming that the commercialization was taking a toll on democracy and tying them closer to businesses (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Not only media scholars have contributed to the ongoing debate about the media’s position in society and who controls it. In 1988, economist Edward Herman and linguist Noam Chomsky put forward the media critical thesis that mainstream media serves the interests of society’s elite groups. While their analysis focuses on American media, Herman and Chomsky still achieve two main things: 1) they establish a framework, which media ideology and ownership can be understood within and it 2) show how to analyze specific events of media bias and distortion of news within the framework. The study also introduces the concept of political economy in a media context, giving researchers a way of identifying power structures in society to this day. While not directly suggesting a methodological framework to go by, Herman and Chomsky (1988) themselves use five major news stories as case studies. They furthermore lay out the steps required by other researcher to see the filters at work: “a macro, alongside a micro-(story-by-story), view of media operations, to see the pattern of manipulation and systematic bias” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. 2). This view is achieved through their propaganda model.

The propaganda model consists of five filters. These are: 1) ownership, owner wealth and size, 2) advertising as primary income 3) reliance on information by experts, government or business, 4) flak, 5) and anticommunism (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). In theory, news pass through each of the five filters and what comes out on the other side is the news that is actually printed. This classifies news as propaganda because the very
premise is decided by the owners of the media, its advertisers, influential businesses and the government.

While the first four filters are applicable beyond the borders of America, anticommunism does not apply to Britain and is also outdated nowadays when terrorism has become the new threat. It is worth considering, had Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky written the book about Britain and its mass media instead, what might have been the fifth filter in 1988. Herman and Chomsky (1998) describe the ideology of anticommunism as a “national religion and control mechanism” (p. 2) that brings together the public against a common enemy. Given the elevation of hooliganism to the national political agenda in the late eighties, the public panic surrounding the phenomenon and the amount of coverage it received in the press, it is a plausible filter in that period of Britain’s history.

Herman and Chomsky’s model came at a time when mass communication research had entered its third phase, the critical paradigm, and was thus an approach ripe for academic research. However, before this paradigm change, during the first and second phase, media was perceived as having the power to directly change the behavior of individuals. This change was believed to be empirically measured and reflective of the existing consensus in society (Stuart Hall, 1982). Society itself was organized around norms and disregarded such concepts as institutional relationships of power, economic processes, class formations and the political economy of the media (Hall, 1982). Only later were the theoretical “truths” (as they were perceived) questioned and mass communication studies moved towards the critical paradigm wherein ideology plays a central role.
Inherently critical of mass communications tendency not to the examine power structures in studies about media effects (Carragee & Roefs, 2004), cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall has accomplished a lot of theoretical footwork himself. First, he disagrees with the notion that media simply reinforces the values and norms that are already in place and promoted by the powerful institutions in society (Hall, 1982). Instead, the media shape the ideological environment as, not only producers of signification, but the dominant social producers in society. Hall defines *ideology* as:

> the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works (Hall, 1986, p. 29).

Thus, media is conceived as a field of ideological struggle over meaning where social interests and forces compete to articulate a dominant meaning-system (Hall, 1982). However, access to media is not equally accessible to everyone. Those who have authority in society, i.e. experts, public officials, big businesses, have privileged access to public discourse and operate within the established framework, while ordinary citizens, marginalized social movements and others have to struggle to gain access, much less challenge the framework (Hall, 1982).

Hall (1982) uses the example of black immigrants to show how there was a privileged definition of the problem in the media discourse (too many black people in Britain) and how this became “common sense.” Since these frameworks come from somewhere and have somehow become common sense, it raises the question of how dominant frameworks come to be and why they are accepted.
Hall (1982) points to the concept of hegemony and thus explicitly provides a theory as to why the media carries out state-supported propaganda, to put it in the words of Herman and Chomsky, while placing it within a media paradigm. This balances some of the weaknesses inherit in Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model: Such as their lack of definition of ideology, their casual analysis which is not fully explained or demonstrated methodologically, and their missing identification of which academic paradigm and/or academic context they’re working within when they’re analyzing mass media power structures.

The theory of hegemony in part provides the means to answer the question of how the powerful actors in liberal societies, such as Britain and the US, obtain the consent of the relatively powerless groups in society without exercising force or ideological compulsion. Extending the theory to media, it also provides the means to answer how the media produces definitions that favors the hegemony of the political elite. Hall (1982) briefly sums up the general mechanisms. In capitalist societies, the dominant classes get their legitimacy of leadership from elections: They submit themselves to the scrutiny of the public once every few years and if certain power blocs can align their interests with those of the majority, they are elected (Hall, 1982). Once elected, the interests of the leaders and the will of the people are in alignment because the election process fits within the consensus, which in turn is agreed upon by both sides. But the consensus is not “natural.” Rather, it is a socially constructed by shaping and educating the consent of the majority to align with the elite. Thus, Hall (1982) argues that media institutions are occupying a dual role in society: Not only are they doing the shaping and educating but they also operate within the consensus themselves.
This duality is one the media institutions and its employees are unaware of. Both Hall (1982) and Herman and Chomsky (1988) stress that the biases and self-censorship that can be determined through analysis of news media happen on an unconscious level. Journalists and editors think that they are acting independently and reporting objectively because the filters are so engrained into the system that they seem natural.

While the shift into the critical paradigm has enabled media studies to focus on power structures and ideology, it does not mean that the paradigm is fully developed or that it does not have fallacies. Where Herman and Chomsky lack a theoretical context, and Stuart Hall describes rather than discusses the critical paradigm, David Altheide offers a critique of media hegemony. Arguing that media hegemony has been used too uncritically in mass communication studies, Altheide (1984) goes over each of three assumptions made by the theory: Journalists procedures and routines are saturated with the ideology of those in power; as a result of this, journalists cover topics that support the status quo; and journalists present positive coverage of their own country, while giving negative coverage of foreign nations. Altheide (1984) holds these claims up against a series of well-documented studies from the ‘70s and ‘80s about journalistic practices that contrast hegemony’s empirical shortcomings.

First, he argues that while journalists do share some ideals and basic values, they are not “molded into an uniform ideological shape, but rather, they play a major role in adapting their reportage to preprofessional, personal, and organizational experiences” (Altheide, 1984, p. 480-481). Second, there is evidence that the work of journalists have created social change and challenged the legitimacy of institutions and individuals (Altheide, 1984). Third, journalists are more likely to sympathize with Third World
countries, and thus do not take the stance of business leaders who are less likely to be supportive of foreign nations.

As David Altheide argues, the critical paradigm needs more extensive empirical studies to establish terms and develop its theoretical stance. One way of meeting the shortcomings of the paradigm and the theory of hegemony, is by doing a triangulation of theories and methods. In the case of this study, that triangulation will be between hegemony, framing and content analysis. Where media hegemony functions on a macro-level by providing an understanding of domination and placing media institutions within a broader context, the theory of framing operates on a meso-level where the researcher looks closely at how the media present certain events in articles and draws on an existing field of meaning. Content analysis provides techniques to analyze and interpret meaning from the data.

**The guard dog perspective.** Another mass communication perspective that supports the notion that media is a part of the system and produce the hegemonic values of the elite, is the guard dog perspective. Donohue, Tichenor and Olien (1995) suggest the guard dog metaphor as an alternative way of explaining the functioning of the mass media in the social system as opposed to the traditional views of the media as a watch dog, lapdog or as part of a power oligarchy. What this alternative perspective offers to the theory of hegemony and the propaganda model is a closer look at the complex relationship between the media and the dominant powers and an explanation of why the media both protects the power structures yet sometimes takes on a conflict role where it reports critically on the power blocs.
The role of the guard dog media is to maintain power structures. Power structures are defined as “a configuration of roles and groups that has the capacity to make decisions on a community, regional or societal level” (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1995, p. 119). These groups are specifically the authorities and power blocs and stand in contrast to marginalized individuals and groups who, without funds or influence, only receive attention from the guard dog when they threaten those in power (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1995).

While the dog metaphors do share some similarities, it is important to keep their differences in mind. Especially, the lapdog and the guard dog seem alike due to the nature of their relationship with the authorities. However, where the lapdog is outright submissive to authority, the guard dog is deferent. What this difference emphasizes is the guard dog’s ability to actively report on conflict among the authorities, insofar it is an internal dispute between power blocs (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1995). If the conflict leads to destabilization and lack of a clear leading authority, the guard dog will raise an alarm “in the interest of restoring stability” (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1995, p. 123).

When the media does cover marginalized groups, which often come in the shape of protest groups, it does not happen on equal terms with the power blocs. Social control mechanisms are employed to control the protest group’s messages and can take different forms; from story framing to delegitimization, noncoverage and so on (McLeod & Hertog, 1999). Since a protest group cannot garner sympathy and support without spreading their message and since the media is responsible for this due to its massive outreach in society, a protest group is unsuccessful if it does not obtain media coverage. Protest groups are also at times forced to limit their demands and soften their message
because the more extreme their views or tactics are in the eyes of the system, the harsher is the social control which will be enforced (McLeod & Hertog, 1999).

Protest groups are not the only ones that are criticized by the media and delegitimized. A distinctive feature of the guard dog is that it is more likely to attack powerful individuals rather than the power structure itself (Donohue, Tichenor and Olien, 1995). This tendency derives from a concept called the “Great Person” orientation where the media highlight great individuals: Both when these people experience consensus and when the structure is divided (Donohue, Tichenor and Olien, 1995). No matter how highly placed the individual is in the hierarchy, if “the general welfare of the system is threatened, the welfare of the individual is at risk and there is little question that in that case the individual will be sacrificed” (Donohue, Tichenor and Olien, 1995, p. 126).

**Media Frames and Power**

The discipline of mass communication finds itself in a new paradigm and has been under heavy criticism for not having a strong theoretical foundation nor a core of strong empirical studies. Many scholars within the field and from other disciplines have proposed ways to strengthen this core and open up for future studies that can make significant contributions towards the understanding of media. Communication scholar Robert Entman (1993) proposes that the discipline acts as a synthesizer of fractured theories and concepts from other disciplines, thereby giving communication a status as a master discipline. His example of just such a fractured theory is framing.

Framing is defined as a “central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion,
and elaboration” (Werner Severin & James Tankard, 2001, p. 277). When applied to news coverage, frames have four functions: they define the problem, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies (Entman, 1993). One of the main ways frames fulfill these functions is by building salience. Salience refers to how much more noticeable or memorable a piece of information is compared to others (Entman, 1993). Making a specific bit of a text more noticeable than other parts can be achieved through several different methods, from selective description to omission and visually highlighting something. This latter device includes using pictures, pull quotes, headlines, leads and so on (Severin & Tankard, 2001).

Reflecting on the parts of mass communication studies that would benefit from understanding the theory of framing, Robert Entman (1993) suggests content analysis. In using the method of content analysis, the researcher will be prone to treating all messages as equally positive or negative and concluding the overall meaning of the text based on these readings. This can lead to misrepresentations and oversimplification. Indeed, some of the weaknesses of content analysis and specifically qualitative content analysis are the disregard of context and presenting that which is complicated in an oversimplified manner. By pairing content analysis with the theory of framing, the researcher will be able to not only investigate words and contexts within a media text but also the salience of these words.

Kevin Carragee and Wim Roefs (2004), argue that recent framing research has neglected to account for frames within the political and social context. In order to account for the different actor’s that influence media, they introduce the concept of frame sponsorships. Frame sponsorships refer to efforts by social actors (elites, social
movements, the public) to construct their preferred frames, thus echoing Hall’s earlier point that the media is a field of ideological struggle where the “winner” gets to construct the perceived reality (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). By being aware of sponsorships, researchers can recognize that everyone’s access to the news media is not equal in liberal countries and that frames are therefore skewed a certain way. Thereby, the task of framing theory does not only entail analyzing the frames but also identifying “imprints of power” that will lead to discovering who the sponsors are (Entman, 1993, p. 53).

**Routinization of the journalistic process.** Framing can also be discussed on a micro-level by looking into the newsroom and how journalists’ routines are cultivated to favor the hegemonic elite. When journalists in the Anglo world learn what is newsworthy, they are trained to ask certain question and use a certain formula: The most common ones are the inverted pyramid and the WWWWH-questions (Louw, 2001). These are meant to make journalists jobs more effective by giving them a standard formula, however, when reporting on more complex issues, the formulas instead become a weakness (Louw, 2001). Another part of the routinization of journalistic habits is the choosing of contacts or sources. These are the people journalists go to when they need a quote or information, and they are also the kind of people that new journalists learn are “appropriate” sources (Louw, 2001). Here the concept of newsworthiness comes into play again as the hegemonic elites are considered to be newsworthy, and thus are favored as sources (Louw, 2001).

It is effectively through all of these established routines that frames are developed. It strengthens both Herman, Chomsky and Hall’s argument that journalists do not consciously skew news – rather the practices and routines become so naturalized that
journalists accept them as common-sense (Louw, 2001). This naturalization of practices and routines did not come to be out of nowhere but is the result of hegemonic dominance by the ruling elites (Louw, 2001).

**British Newspapers**

Hall argues that newspapers can be the “primary definers of a problem” or “they can contribute to the public definition of a social problem by quoting and headlining the definition of others” (Hall, 1978, p. 16). Newspapers in the United Kingdom do not historically have the same rules about impartiality that television and radio have because they are sponsored by commercial means; especially the tabloids (Hall, 1978). Furthermore, there has been a shift toward tabloid style journalism (Hillsborough Independent Report, 1990). In 2013, 2014 and 2015, tabloids have consistently been ranked the most popular in the United Kingdom; *The Sun* in 2013, *Mail* titles in 2014 and the *Daily Mail* in 2015 (Press Gazette, 2013; Press Gazette, 2014; Press Gazette, 2015). This is the result of the increasing monopolization of newspapers by few people.

In the ’80s and ’90s, 90 percent of the British press was controlled by five men (Hillsborough Independent Report, 1990). This trend has been stable over the years. In 2013, 70 percent of the national daily circulation in the United Kingdom was ruled by the top three publishers: News UK, DMGT and Trinity Mirror (Media Reform Coalition, 2014).

Since different types of newspapers with different editorial policies exist in Britain and this has a bearing on the coverage of hooliganism, a rough distinction needs to be made. Hall (1978) suggests two categories: Highbrow and popular press. In
highbrow newspapers, there are advertisements and displays that separate the front of the paper from the back, where sport resides (Hall, 1978). In the populars, this also goes but on a more extreme level. Here, there are two front pages: The reader can start on either pages and work his way through the paper, depending on whether he wants to start with home and foreign news or sports (Hall, 1978). Among tabloids, there is such high a degree of rivalry that the publications respond more to their competitors stories than real events (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990).

There are two main things that the two types of newspapers share. The first is the “tendency to pull out and highlight the most news-worthy angle in any story” (Hall, 1978, p. 23). The second is the tradition of British journalism to prefer “reporting ‘action’ stories” instead of “the much harder task of digging into the background of situations for their implications” (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990, p. 95). Also, stories that focus on elite groups (especially celebrities), stories that fit within the newspaper’s editorial agenda, stories with entertainment aspects and follow-ups.

Whether journalists work for highbrow newspapers or populars, they have news values that they base their writing, editing and selection on. Warren Breed (1955) tried to dissect these values and like Hall (1978), he too concludes that they are a part of the journalist’s skills, and that they are learned informally by being in the newsroom. Breed (1955) delves deeper into the social dynamics and hierarchy, while Hall (1978) on the other hand explains choices in language and labeling.

Hall (1978) too states that hooliganism is not a feature of every major game. Yet, the dramatic language of the press and the usage of war and fighting metaphors escalate events that happen both on the pitch with players and off the pitch with supporters (Hall,
The language and metaphors are a result of sensationalizing and isolating the issue from its social context (Hall, 1978). The aspect of sensationalization is not unique to the portrayal of hooliganism or even British newspapers as journalism has always been sensational (Stevens, 1985).

Other than above mentioned metaphors, supporters are labeled as “hooligans,” “thugs” and “animals,” effectively reducing their worth as human beings and members of society (Hall, 1978). Phil Scraton (2007) refers to this as a “vacuum of decontextualisation” where democratic states label communities, individuals and lifestyles as “outsiders” (p. 78). He goes onto explain the process of the dehumanization as being central to the use of a state’s power. Hall (1978) meanwhile addresses the issue of viewing the behavior of supporters as irrational; it “suggests that there cannot possibly be any human rationale for or reason behind the actions” and that “it must be the result of an entirely irrational collective spasm” (p. 28).

**Hooliganism as Portrayed in British Mass Media**

In the seventies and early eighties, hooliganism in the UK had become fixed into the national consciousness and achieved status as a government policy area. Media coverage in the United Kingdom played greatly into this. While not claiming that the press is the direct cause of football hooliganism, Hall (1978) does argue that it shares some of the responsibility for sensationalizing and exaggerating it. Highlighting why he chooses to make it a subject of study, Hall (1978) explains that it is a phenomenon which has received a lot of press coverage, and this has made the phenomenon more of a problem than it is in reality. Many people have not experienced hooliganism or riots first hand, but receive their information on the topic from the media (Hall, 1978).
Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) propose an argument similar to Hall’s in their Chapel Hill study. They claim that most people only get their knowledge about politics and political candidates through the mass media and not firsthand. This concept is more widely known as the agenda-setting function of the media and “refers to the media’s capability, through repeated news coverage, of raising the importance of an issue in the public’s mind” (Severin & Tankard, 2001, p. 219). However, the important question of who influences who arises when using the concept of agenda setting. If the media sets the public agenda then who sets the media’s agenda? McCombs (2004) attempts to answer this question by proposing the following three areas that influences media content: “major sources who provide information for news stories, other news organizations, and journalism’s norms and traditions” (p. 117). These factors supplement Herman and Chomsky’s five filters in the propaganda model. Furthermore, the agenda-setting theory also fills out some of the blanks left by the propaganda model by providing empirical data that shows that the media does influence the public’s perception, e.g. the Chapel Hill study and the Charlotte Study by McCombs and Shaw (Severin and Tankard, 2001).

Because the public receives most of their information via the press, public panic and concern are based off of media definitions and explanations. These can either be the press’ own impressions, definitions and explanations or they can generate an angle by whomever they choose to quote (Hall, 1978). Choosing one angle rather than another, is what Hall (1982) described as constructing “this rather than that account” by making a “specific choice of certain means (selection) and their articulation together through the practice of meaning production (combination)” (p. 68). News stories are not a direct
reflection of what happens inside a football stadium – they go through processes of selection and presentation (Hall, 1978). Every choice, from the quote chosen to the typography and headline, is an active one made by the journalists.

Another element is the layout and hierarchy of newspapers content. In general, news about football is kept separate from general news – often you find it in the back of the newspaper or it has its own separate section. As Hall (1978) points out, sports does not rank highly in the hierarchy of news. Nevertheless, sometimes sports news breaks out of its “segregation” and makes it to the front page. In such cases, sports is linked with general news because of a dramatic event that is of great importance to not just sports fans but the public.

Over the course of time, depiction of hooliganism in the British mainstream media has changed in numerous ways. Using the terms *emic* (insider) and *etic* (outsider), Ramon Spaaij (2011) analyses the representations of football crowd violence in mainstream, alternative, and online media in contemporary times. *Emic* refers to the perspective of someone who has had personal experience of a particular event or setting, such as a football supporter (Spaaij, 2011). Meanwhile, *etic* refers to the opposite, someone who is viewing an event or setting from the outside, like mainstream media and much of society. One take on the issue of hooliganism and media in recent research, is that of moral panic theory, which concludes that mainstream media has a role in shaping social problems (Spaaij, 2011).

Moral panic began its conceptualization in the 1950s and 1960s when Joseph Gusfield studied moral crusades during the Temperance Movement (Ditmore, 2006; Gusfield, 1955). Stanley Cohen used the idea of moral crusades to create the framework
for his theory of moral panic (Ditmore, 2006). Cohen defines moral panic as when a “condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests” (Johansson, 2000, p. 22). The people who deem something a threat are “editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people” (Johansson, 2000, p. 22). Cohen proposes four phases to identity a moral panic: Warning, impact, inventory and reaction (Johansson, 2000). It is in the inventory phase that the mass media plays its main role by framing certain people and events (Johansson, 2000). Through the framing, the media greatly exaggerates the seriousness of phenomena (Johansson, 2000).

Cohen’s model has been criticized since its introduction in 1972 and new ways have been sought to understand the phenomenon of moral panic in the age of new media (Johansson, 2000). In his analysis, Spaaij (2011) seeks to move beyond this research, because it solely focuses on external meanings and reactions, and instead cover the perspective of those inside football violence – the victims and perpetrators.

Spaaij (2011) makes three separate conclusions for each of the media outlets mentioned (mainstream, alternative, and online). When it comes to British mainstream media, classified as daily newspapers, television and radio with a nationwide audience, he finds that there are three tendencies. The first is the predominance of stressing the irrationality of supporters by using stigmatizing terms (Spaaij, 2011). The second is to present a law and order perspective where football supporters are portrayed as a threat to society, and the reporting focuses on details of injuries, intimidating, and looting. The media will also make comments on which actions should be taken to decrease violence (Spaaij, 2011). The third and last tendency of British mainstream media is “the convergence of two or more activities that are implicitly or explicitly linked, leading to
the possible amplification of the perception of latent disorder” (Spaaij, 2011, p. 129). Examples would be connecting hooliganism to drinking, drugs or racism.

Next, in the case of the portrayal of football violence in alternative media, Spaaij (2011) finds that alternative media both offers critique of the mainstream media’s discourse and also offers alternative explanations. Alternative media is here described as either literature, visual media and online media; the latter being the most prevalent in Spaaij’s study. Where authorities, police and “experts” are the primary sources in the mainstream media, alternative media gives those without voice, the “natives” a forum to speak from (Spaaij, 2011).

**Hillsborough Independent Panel’s First Report**

When the Hillsborough Independent Panel published its first report in 1990, the panel dedicated a chapter to analyzing the media’s performance immediately after the disaster. In the sense of scope, the 1990 report reaches much wider than this study for several reasons. The media analyzed are both quality newspapers, tabloids, television and radio on a local and national level, while the data being analyzed here derives from two national newspapers (tabloid and quality). Also, the 1990 report not only provides a content analysis of media coverage after the disaster but also an evaluation of the impact of this coverage on Merseyside and its people. As a comparison, the research executed in this study is focused on the media’s relationship with power elites and does not attempt any independent interpretations of impact or reactions.

While the 1990 report does discuss the media’s role in society and relationship with the power structure, its focus is mainly on, as the title states, “The Liverpool
Experience” (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). This study will take a broader perspective. The findings will be applicable to examine and compare the media hegemony of other events and disaster over a period of time.

The most obvious gap in research that the research conducted now will cover is the time aspect. The 1990 report only deals with the coverage of the disaster in the immediate aftermath and could not predict that there would be an additional two decades of media content to analyze. It however lays a strong empirical foundation that this and other studies dealing with the mass communications aspect of the Hillsborough Disaster can expand on. Part of this empirical foundation will now be looked at.

The report found specific news themes to be prevailing: The cause of the disaster, human interest, conspiracy, hooligan hysteria, and the “Heysel factor” (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990).

The cause of the disaster is deemed the most prominent theme. Instead of investigating and discussing the possible reasons for the disaster, the majority of national newspapers tried to place blame (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). Who or what were blamed differed from week to week as fresh angles were consistently sought. The “guilty party” changed from being the fan’s behavior and the failure of the police to the perimeter fencing and ground safety (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). The early coverage switched angles so often that when asked who or what they thought were mostly to blame for the disaster in a poll, 27 percent of people answered “Don’t know,” 25 percent answered “The fans themselves,” 22 percent answered “The police,” 9 percent answered “The Hillsborough Management.,” 8 percent answered “The F.A.” and 9 percent answered “None of these” (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990, p. 172).
The human interest theme deals with how survivors and bereaved families were treated as stories of “human interest” rather than eyewitnesses of the disasters who could give informed opinions about the disaster (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). In the national media, the grief of the bereaved was presented as just an element to a story and any criticism they had of the handling of the case was marginalized by the focus on statements from experts and officials (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990).

As so, most of the coverage of the victims was descriptions of injuries, experiences and sorrow. When the Liverpool FC supporters did get asked to comment on the disaster, they would get the most space by local newspapers and very little space in the paper by national newspapers (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). Since the general public does not have easy access to local Liverpool papers and since the majority reads the accounts given by national newspapers, this essentially means that they had no chance of obtaining a wider understanding of the causes of the disaster. The issue of local versus national coverage is important not only for the Hillsborough disaster, but for other disasters and issues covered in the future, especially with the overall decline in local reporting.

The conspiracy theme focuses on Liverpool supporters’ behavior. When a disaster occurs, there is a clear hierarchy of sources that the journalists seek out to get their information and the police is number one (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). Therefore, when the police constructed their initial explanations for the cause of the disaster and said the fans’ behavior was to blame, this was the information that was given to the media. Following these early explanations, the media theorized that supporters were upset by the allocation of tickets and therefore decided to force their way into the
game (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). Even later on, when different causes for the disaster were explored and the police’s claims were challenged, the “blaming the fans” narrative persisted.

The theme of hooligan hysteria is closely related to the blaming of the fans. Accusations of violence grew from the initial conspiracy of the ticketless fans: The Liverpool supporters had been drinking, they caused overcrowding, they were uncontrollable and forced their way inside the stadium (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). Since there already existed public panic concerning hooliganism, and the particular issue was already on the public agenda, this was an easy theme for the media to pick up on. The Hillsborough Disaster was thus elevated to being a problem of football and football supporters in general. The Hillsborough Independent Panel (1990) outlines the categories of the “London” coverage (i.e. the national news media) as focused on:

‘the political response’ to the Disaster and the implications nationally and internationally for ‘the game’ of football. The repercussions on the football industry were evaluated by ‘experts’ from sport and politics who gave interviews on the ‘crisis’ facing English soccer in terms of ‘hooliganism’ and its future in Europe (p. 104).

The report further comments that the sensationalism surrounding the disaster and the hooliganism theme is not exclusive to tabloid papers as it might be expected. It found that the traits of the tabloids were adopted by even the quality newspapers (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990).

Finally, the “Heysel factor” is another important theme studied in the report. As a result of the consolidation of the hooliganism theme, the Hillsborough Disaster became linked with the 1985 Heysel Stadium disaster (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). Bailey and Leaman (1986) analyzes media coverage of Heysel and find two distinct
patterns. Firstly, the commentary of Heysel was emotionally charged, calling for the punishment of the guilty, and secondly, it perpetuated the myth that the scale of hooliganism in England had reach unprecedented heights (Bailey & Leaman, 1986). These myths extended onto the Hillsborough Disaster and as a result the negative image of Merseyside continued to preside.

Myths of Crowd Behavior

Over the course of time, the word crowd has come to connote danger, irrationality and violence – whether it be a crowd of peaceful demonstrators at a Democratic National Convention, a crowd of people at a Love Parade disaster, or a crowd of football supporters at a game. Clark McPhail (1991) challenges the variety of myths that have surrounded the behavior of crowds for decades.

The myths started in scholarly circles where academics within different field of studies created hypothesis’ about the “mad” crowd and from there on, it spread throughout police crowd manuals and popular thoughts (McPhail, 1991). The proposed explanations for the crowd ranged from the individuals being transformed and losing their ability to be rational, to individuals being brought together due to similar predispositions, and the individual’s behavior became driven by panic (McPhail, 1991). McPhail (1991) emphasizes that the main trend when analyzing crowds has been to disregard scientific method. Instead of observing and describing the phenomenon first, the theorists make assumptions about the behavior they seek to explain based on the literature of previous theorists that have made the same mistake (McPhail, 1991). In his own studies, McPhail (1991) went out in the field and observed crowds, gathering empirical data to be analyzed. Any theorists, analyst or “expert” on the subject of crowd
behavior would be “expected to treat with respect the contradictions between different accounts of trouble, taking account of the different points of view and the essentially contested nature of the explanation of the event” (Bailey & Leaman, 1986, p. 19).

One of the main points that he makes is that heterogeneity among people is the rule, while homogeneity is the exception (McPhail, 1991). People do not lose their ability to think for themselves when they gather with others, nor do they begin displaying irrational behavior. In fact, there are alternating groups within the crowd consisting of friends and family and also alternating individual and collective action (McPhail, 1991). Furthermore, he highlights that crowds are not extraordinarily emotional in any shape or form, and that there exists no tendencies for them to be violent. Finally, the myth is stricken down that crowds are composed of lower-class people; this is instead an attempt of framing by the authorities (McPhail, 1991). The myth and the damage done to the reputation of lower-class people is explored more in depth by Johan Galtung who coined the term *structural violence*. He defines it as “an injury that is not immediately attributable to an acting subject, but is built into the structure and manifests itself as inequality of power, resources and life opportunities” (Winter, 2012, p. 195). While there are many fallacies within his theory, Galtung does open up to a critical discussion of society’s role in the marginalization and subordination of communities that supplements Stuart Hall’s depiction of the media as supporting dominant ideologies.

**Conclusion**

From reviewing the literature, I have drawn several conclusions which will now be discussed. When searching for literature dealing specifically with the Hillsborough Disaster, there is not a large body available. Criminologist Phil Scraton has
been the main contributor of a variety of studies. Other authors, have examined media ethics, political policies, and stereotypes about hooligans. What all of these studies have in common is taking known facts about the disaster from official reports, interviews and news stories and combining them with theories from a variety of disciplines to reflect on the legacy of the Hillsborough Disaster. It is here that I have found a void, which I seek to fulfill.

The Hillsborough Disaster has been analyzed in the field of mass communication by the Hillsborough Independent Panel but only in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. The media’s coverage of the disaster after the release of the 2012 independent report has not received the same kind of in-depth treatment. By employing the theory of hegemony, and using the hooliganism “fever” of the ‘70s and ‘80s as context, I seek to find out if the media has changed its coverage of the Hillsborough Disaster and whether this is due to social control by the hegemonic elite. Furthermore, there is also a gap in the area of research about the media coverage of sports disaster and tragedies.

Finally, little is generally said about the aftermath of the findings of the Hillsborough Independent Panel in 2012. Since the new inquests are still ongoing in 2015, it is highly relevant to continue to examine the tragedy. Looking more broadly at the niche area of sports disasters in academia, my research supplies a theoretical framework which can benefit future researchers interested in similar topics.

Expected Finding
After the Hillsborough Disaster, in the specified time periods from 1989 to 1990 and from 2012 to 2013, the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian*’s coverage of the disaster changes based on the hegemonic values of the elites.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In the following chapter, the methodological approach to the thesis will be defined. The methodology shows how the research question is answered. The study poses the following research question: Does the political elite control the media’s coverage of the disaster? If yes, how does the political elite shape the media narratives as published in a quality newspaper compared to a tabloid newspaper?

First, the method used to answer the research question is described. Second, the process of sampling and data collection is explained. Third, key theoretical concepts are synthesized into an overall framework used to guide the analysis. Finally, the process of data analysis is illustrated.

**Qualitative Content Analysis**

Content analysis is a research technique, which is used to determine the presence of words and concepts within media texts. David Altheide (1996) combines the traditional form of content analysis with participant observation, creating an alternative method, which he labels as ethnographic content analysis – also called qualitative content analysis. As with the traditional form of analysis, the researcher moves the analysis outside the data to place phenomena in context. Where qualitative content analysis differs is in its study of documents.
Documents are defined by Altheide (1996) as “any symbolic representation that can be recorded or retrieved for analysis” and can be everything from newspapers to television newscasts and diaries (p. 2). They enable the researcher to first of all, contextualize symbolic meanings. The researcher becomes aware of these symbolic meanings by studying and comparing documents over time, thus seeing patterns of meaning emerge. Secondly, the process and influence of the document can be traced to allow further insight into the different environments of the times (Altheide, 1996).

The process of qualitative content analysis has twelve steps, according to Altheide (1996), which are grouped into five stages: Choice of documents (e.g. newspaper), development of protocol and data collection, coding of data and organization, analysis of the data and finally, reports. After choosing a unit of analysis, newspaper articles in the case of this study, the protocol must be constructed.

A protocol is simply put a way to ask questions that will be answered by the document (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). First, several categories are listed to guide the process of collecting the data and drafting the protocol. Next, the protocol is taken on a test run by collecting data from documents. Finally, the protocol is revised and refined; it usually takes several drafts before it is complete. Altheide and Schneider (2013) state some rules of thumb when starting the protocol: Keep categories to a minimum, all items in the protocol should be relevant and make room for reflective segments by the researcher.

Once the data is collected, the analysis begins. This is done by dividing the raw data into themes, patterns and processes, allowing the researcher to logically make sense of and identify the frameworks within which the concepts are present. Analysis is a
constant moving back and forth between the steps, adjusting the code sheet and one’s understanding as the findings emerge.

Thus, qualitative content analysis is not a rigid linear process but requires the researcher to constantly reassess findings in light of the context and the research question. The researcher moves back and forth between the process of sampling, collecting and coding, and the process of analyzing and interpretation. The philosophic basis for the method is hermeneutics, which is discussed in Chapter 1. Before reading a text, the researcher will have prejudices that, as the reading precedes, will be challenged. Understanding of a text can only be achieved by giving up the notion of having an objective perspective and instead immersing oneself in the text (Koskinen & Lindström, 2013).

As with any method, there are advantages and disadvantages that need to be recognized. One of the main advantages, and why the method is used in this thesis, is because it allows the researcher to study processes that have occurred over a longer stretch of time, and it can also reflect societal trends (Bruce Berg, 2009). A weakness, on the other hand, is that content analysis can disregard the context, which the text is produced in, and also present complex texts in a simplified manner.

Sampling and Data Collection

The articles to be analyzed were chosen from two nationally distributed British newspapers: The Guardian and the tabloid, the Daily Express. In accordance with Stuart Hall’s labeling of the press as either “highbrow” or “popular” with little in between those
two extremes, The Guardian and the Daily Express have been chosen to represent each end of the spectrum.

**The Guardian.** The Guardian was originally named The Manchester Guardian and was founded in 1821 by John Edward Taylor to, among other things, promote liberal interests (Guardian, 2002). Along with The Times, The Telegraph and The Independent, it was considered one of Britain’s quality newspapers (Guardian, 2002). In 1907, the paper was bought by the editor, CP Scott, and since then it would remain in the hands of the Scott Trust – later The Scott Trust Unlimited (Guardian, 2002). The current name, The Guardian, came to be in 1959 when the newspaper removed “Manchester” in order to reflect its more national reach (Guardian Media Group). In 2011, the newspaper famously partnered with WikiLeaks and won the title of Newspaper of the Year at the Press Awards (Guardian, 2002). As was originally stated by its founder in 1821, The Guardian is a “quality national newspaper without party affiliation, remaining faithful to its liberal tradition” (Guardian, 2008).

The Guardian is a daily newspaper and also has two sister papers: The Observer, published on Sundays, and The Guardian Weekly, a weekly edition. However, since The Observer was only acquired by The Guardian Media Group Limited in 1993, four years after the disaster, the paper is not included in the study. (Guardian, 2002b). Also, The Guardian Weekly is not included in the study either due to the fact that it largely summarizes the week’s events found in The Guardian in a more compact form.

The Guardian does no longer exist solely in a printed version but has also expanded digitally. The expansion began in 1994-95 and by March 2001, the newspaper became the United Kingdom’s most popular newspaper website (Guardian, 2002).
The Guardian is chosen as one of the newspapers to be analyzed due to several reasons:

1) The Guardian published articles that were accusatory towards the supporters and victims. One of them compared the disaster to the murder of James Bulger in 1993: “HEYSEL, HILLSBOROUGH AND NOW THIS” (Scraton, 2007, p. 76). Another headlined “Police helpless as fans died” and described how supporters created problems for the police by being disorderly (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990, p. 125).

2) The Press Council, following the convention of the Royal Commission, labeled The Guardian as a one of the “qualities,” meaning a quality newspaper as opposed to populars (Monopolies and Mergers Commission, 1985).

3) In their 1985 report, The Press Council also had The Guardian listed as having the second highest circulation of the “qualities” in 1980 and 1984, only behind The Daily Telegraph (Monopolies and Mergers Commission, 1985). The next available figures are in 1987 and 1992 where The Guardian remained ranked as having the second highest circulation of the qualities (Benyon, Denver & Fisher, 2002; Crewe & Gosschalk, 1995; Cole & Harcup 2010). In 2012, when the Hillsborough Independent report was published, The Guardian had gone down to fourth place circulation-wise among the qualities and down to tenth overall for national dailies (Guardian, 2012).

4) Data collected for websites in the United Kingdom up to April 2012, shows that guardian.co.uk had the highest amount of online readers of qualities (Guardian,
2012b). Also, The Guardian had 30.4 million readers in June 2012, making it the third most read newspaper website worldwide (Guardian, 2012c).

Overall, the print circulation and the online readership in 1989 and in 2012 show that The Guardian is a prominent newspaper, not only in Britain, but worldwide, and that their coverage of the disaster thus reached many people.

**The Daily Express.** The Daily Express was founded in 1900 by Sir Arthur Pearson (Robbins, 1994). In 1916, Max Aitken, later Lord Beaverbrook, took over control of the newspaper and started introducing features such as sports, social pages and gossip columns (BBC, 2001). Due to the introduction of tabloid elements, The Daily Express quickly became a success and by 1936 its circulation was larger than any other newspaper in the world (BBC, 2001). In 1977, The Daily Express switched from broadsheet to tabloid size and then in 1985, the newspaper was purchased by United Newspapers (BBC, 2001). United Newspapers sold the tabloid to Richard Desmond in 2000, whose hands it still remains in (BBC, 2000). Desmond was considered controversial due to his ownership of pornographic magazines, and later an editor of the Sunday Express complained that he had been forced to suppress stories by management because some could be commercially harmful to Desmond (Tambini & Cowling, 2002).

Where The Guardian has liberal roots, the Daily Express has a history of being conservative. A 1994 study found that the “Conservatism of the members is reflected in their newspaper-reading habits” (Whiteley, Seyd & Richardson, 1994, p. 49). It found that most read one of the two tabloids, the Daily Mail (17 percent) or the Daily Express (14 percent), or alternatively the quality newspaper the Daily Telegraph (28 percent) (Whiteley, Seyd, & Richardson, 1994). Another study showed that the Daily Express had

The *Daily Express* has a Sunday edition called the *Sunday Express*, and two sister papers called the *Daily Star* and the *Daily Star Sunday*. The *Sunday Express* and the *Daily Star* are not included in the study because a sufficient amount of data was drawn from the *Daily Express*. Also, the *Daily Star* is an independently running daily tabloid.

The *Daily Express* is chosen as one of the newspapers to be analyzed due to several reasons:

1) After the Hillsborough Disaster, the *Daily Express* headlined allegations against supporters and victims. One such is: “Police Accuse Drunken Fans: Police saw ‘sick spectacle of pilfering from the dying’” (Scranton, 2013). Another example is an editorial stating that “The fans are not blameless” (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990, p. 141).

2) The Press Council categorized the *Daily Express* as a popular along with other newspapers such as *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* (Monopolies and Mergers Commission, 1985).

3) The *Daily Express* had the third highest circulation among tabloids in the early 1980s, fourth highest in the late ‘80s and throughout the ‘90s, and the fifth highest in 2012 (Monopolies and Mergers Commission, 1985; Benyon, Denver & Fisher, 2002; Crewe & Gosschalk, 1995; PressGazette, 2012).

4) When it comes to online readership in 2012, express.co.uk ranked fifth out of the six national tabloids (Guardian, 2012b).
Despite not being ranked as the most read tabloid in the United Kingdom in 89-90 and 2012-13, the *Daily Express* is still a national tabloid read by hundreds of thousands of Brits every day, and therefore their coverage of the disaster would have been widespread.

**The sampling process.** The following four databases were utilized to find data from the two newspapers, *The Guardian* and the *Daily Express*: ukpressonline.co.uk, LexisNexis, ProQuest Newsstand and express.co.uk. Since the thesis focuses on the media’s portrayal of the victims immediately after the disaster in 1989 and then after the release of the independent report in September 2012, a time frame was created to narrow down the search. The time periods extend from April 15, 1989, to April 30, 1990, and then from September 12, 2012, to September 30, 2013. These periods are chosen to focus the scope of the research on vital periods in the timeline of the Hillsborough Disaster: The disaster itself when the victims and supporters were blamed, and the release of the independent report when the victims and supporters were exonerated.

The search terms vary from database to database due to their different algorithms. Listed below are the respective databases, which newspaper was specified as the source, the time period searched, the search terms themselves and how many articles the searches resulted in:

**Database:** UKpressonline.co.uk  
**Source:** The Daily Express  
**Time period:** 15/04/1989 to 30/04/1990 and 12/09/2012 to 30/09/2013  
**Search terms:** Hillsborough AND ANY WORD disaster tragedy death catastrophe failure collapse crash calamity emergency woe liverpool court legal lawsuit police family accident fault hooligan hooliganism blame alcohol report independent merseyside mishap
The total number of articles found after the searches was 758. The sampling frame consists of all the articles put in chronological order, oldest to newest, and narrowed down by means of a representative and random sample. Every fifth article of the 746 is sampled and numbered from one to 151 (758 / 5 = 151.6). If there is more than one complete article on one page, all of the articles are coded additionally by letters: e.g., article 141A and 141B. This organizational method is used in order to avoid changing the sampling system and having to pick one article to code, thus possibly creating a selection
bias. The total number of articles sampled (including the articles coded with letters) is 161.

**Key Theoretical Concepts**

A variety of theories have been discussed in the literature review. The main theory, which informs the whole study, is hegemony. Hegemony is the larger framework that all the other theories and concepts are understood within. Chart 1 is a visualization of the framework and each component will be detailed.

Chart 1. Conceptual map

In this study, the fundamental perception of society is one of dominance: The relatively powerless majority of people are “educated” to consent to being ruled by the elites (Hall, 1982). The media is the dominant social “educator” of the people but operate
within the consensus at the same time (Hall, 1982). This latent and complex relationship between the hegemonic elites and the media is the phenomenon being studied. In order to uncover actual power imprints and narrow the scope of the research, a case study is chosen. The case study of this particular thesis is the Hillsborough Disaster. Within the framework are also listed four other theories, in no specific order: Media framing, media hegemony, agenda setting and the propaganda model. These theories are connected and supplement each other (as is indicated by the stippled line). They each uncover different parts of hegemony.

In order to operationalize hegemony, key theoretical concepts from the theories will be briefly summarized. This will serve to make sense of the data that flow from the research question and work as a reference point for the discussion of literature, methodology and findings. Also, the concepts connection to the questions in the coding sheet are highlighted.

- Frame sponsorships: Efforts by actors to construct their preferred frame in the media. These actors can be elites, social movements and the public. The elites are often more successful in constructing their frames because they have economic and cultural assets (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). (Coding sheet, Questions 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12. See Appendix A).

- Power imprints: When an actor’s frame becomes part of news discourse, it leaves a power imprint that identifies the actor’s identity (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). This in turn reveals how journalistic discourse is formed by sources. (Coding sheet, Questions 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12. See Appendix A).
• Four functions of frames: They define the problem, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest solutions. These functions are mainly achieved by building salience (Entman, 1993). (Coding sheet, Questions 5, 6, 10, 11 and 12. See Appendix A).

• Salience: Refers to how much more noticeable something (e.g. a piece of text) is compared to other things. It can be achieved by the use of omission, pictures, headlines and many other techniques (Entman, 1993). (Coding sheet, Questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. See Appendix A).

• Guard dog metaphor: A metaphor that explains how the mass media can both act as a guard for the system and the elites that control the system, and at the same time have occasions when it criticizes them (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1995). (Coding sheet, Questions 3, 4, 7, 8, 11 and 12. See Appendix A).

• The “Great Person”: The media replicates society’s tendency to focus on great personalities. In times of consensus between elites, the “Great Person” is portrayed favorably while in times of disagreement, the person is attacked. If it comes down to the safety of the system as a whole, the “Great Person” will be sacrificed to protect it (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1995). (Coding sheet, Questions 3, 4, 7, 8, 11 and 12. See Appendix A).

• Three tendencies of hooliganism news coverage: First, using stigmatizing terms to emphasize the supporter’s irrationality (also, war and fighting metaphors). Second, portraying supporters as a threat to law and order. Third, linking hooliganism with other issues such as drinking, drugs and violence.
These tendencies pertain to the British national media (Hall, 1978; Spaaij, 2011). (Coding sheet, Questions 5, 6 and 10. See Appendix A).

- Routinization: Covers journalists’ routines and how they are cultivated to benefit the hegemonic elite. These routines range from the inverted pyramid to choosing “newsworthy” sources and following the newspaper’s editorial values (Breed, 1955; Louw, 2001). (Coding sheet, Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12. See Appendix A).

Data Analysis

The five steps of content analysis, suggested by Altheide (1996), were undertaken. First, a coding sheet was created. The questions and categories in the coding sheet were founded in the main theories and targeted to answering the research question. See Appendix A for the final version of the coding sheet. Next, a coding manual was put together. The coding manual has several purposes: It guides the coding process, defines terms and clarifies to the reader how different articles were coded. All 161 articles were coded three times to ensure that the coding questions were relevant to the research question and to avoid any confusing formulations. The coding manual was also revisited and edited for clarity. See Appendix B for the final version of the coding manual.

During coding, any patterns or themes that caught the coder’s attention were written down. After coding, the data was organized into tables and charts based on the time period, publication and question categories. Tables and charts were chosen due to the fact that they present data effectively and for their ability to make comparisons and demonstrate trends.
After the organization of data comes analysis. Data analysis is divided into two sections. First, the tables and charts were described analyzed using the key theoretical concepts. The analysis was supplemented with rich data examples from the articles and finally interpreted in relation to the research question. Short partial summaries were written to create coherence in the analysis and give the reader an overview before moving on to the next part of the analysis.

The second section of the analysis focused on overall themes gathered from reading and coding the articles from the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian*. These themes were organized based on their connection with the theories and pulled textual examples from the articles. Next, the themes were analyzed using the theory of framing and the key theoretical concepts. Framing supplemented content analysis by looking at words and contexts in a story and paying special attention to salience. Using framing meant being able to include theoretically interesting themes that did not fit within the more narrow scope of tables and charts.
CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the descriptive findings and analysis of the data will be presented in the form of frequency tables and charts. This data are interpreted according to the theories of hegemonic media presented in the literature review. Five themes with examples pulled from the data will be presented and analyzed using key theoretical concepts and the framing theory.

Hierarchy of Newspaper Content

When looking across the two time periods in Table 1, “News” is the type of article most frequently coded in both the Daily Express and The Guardian (24.6 percent) while “Sports” is the second most frequently coded (14.4 percent) over both time periods. Despite the disaster taking place at a football game, the story is considered important enough to break out of the sports section and be considered general news. This means that a broader demographic than just those interested in sports will be able to read about the disaster. Since the majority of readers will not have experienced disasters, riots and hooliganism first hand and thus get their information from the media, and since the media has a tendency to exaggerate and elevate phenomena, the promoted issue becomes more important to the public. In other words, salience is transferred from the news agenda to the public agenda (Severin & Tankard, 2001).
Table 1. Type of article

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>137</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data from Question 1 (see Appendix A).

**Summary finding: newspaper content.** Many people get information about football riots, hooliganism and the Hillsborough Disaster through the media. The media have a tendency to focus on the irrationality of supporters by depicting supporters as a threat to society and by linking hooliganism to other problems such as drinking. Therefore, football’s reputation will be inherently negative.

**Elite Sourcing**

Newspapers influence the public’s view on which issues are important through the news agenda. In turn, newspapers are influenced by each other. As can be seen in Table 2 and Table 3, media sourcing is not equal for all members of society. Both *The Guardian* and the *Daily Express* predominantly quote elite sources.

Table 2. First source quoted

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<tr>
<td>Community source</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite source</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>158</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Note.* Data from Question 3 (see Appendix A).
Hypothesis 1. It was hypothesized that this imbalance of sources would even itself out after August 1989 due to the release of Lord Justice Taylor’s interim report.

When looking at Chart 2 and comparing it with the Hillsborough timeline in Appendix C, there is no correspondence between the frequency of The Guardian’s use of community sources and the release of the report.

Chart 2. Timeline showing the use of community sources from 1989 to 1990

Note. Data from Questions 3 and 4 (see Appendix A).

The Daily Express on the other hand, did use more community sources after August 1989 (2 sources) and in January 1989 (1 source) but still had a predominant use of elite and
“None” sources as seen in Table 2 and Table 3. This hypothesis is neither established nor falsified. More data is needed to come to a certain conclusion.

**Hypothesis 2.** Another hypothesis was that the imbalanced use of sources would become more balanced in the 2012-13 period because of the release of the independent report. This is due to two reasons.

Firstly, it was the bereaved families that had been campaigning for justice for 23 years and their families that the report cleared. It might then be expected that the two newspapers would want to interview family members. Secondly, the ruling elites echoed the conclusion of the report and gave their support to the families. The two newspapers would be expected to produce new definitions as well.

Chart 3. Timeline showing the use of community sources from 2012 to 2013

![Chart 3. Timeline showing the use of community sources from 2012 to 2013](image)

*Note.* Data from Questions 3 and 4 (see Appendix A).

A comparison between Chart 3 and Appendix C again shows that there is no logical pattern to be found between *The Guardian*’s use of community sources and the
timeline. Rather, the four community sources that are quoted are evenly spread out over the course of a year. As was the case in the first hypothesis, there is a correspondence between the release of the independent report and the change of discourse by politicians, and the *Daily Express*’s usage of more community sources. The *Daily Express* quotes a total of eight community members in September, immediately after the report, which is considerably more than in 1989-90. After September, the frequency is lower, but there is still a somewhat consistent use of this type of source. Again it should be stressed that although the *Daily Express* increases its use of community sources, it still uses three times as many elite sources in the same period.

**Summary finding: Elite sourcing.** The predominant use of elite sources in both time periods by the two newspapers is due to journalists’ reliance on information by officials and elite actors. The established framework of 1989 was one of moral panic. Moral panic refers to when a group of people become a threat to societal values (Johansson, 2000). This was the case for hooliganism. Furthermore, the people quoted, politicians and “experts,” were within this moral panic framework. The people outside of the framework were the football supporters, who also were the supposed “hooligans,” and thus did not get access to the media. In 2012, the framework has supposedly moved to a vindication narrative of the supporters yet it is still elites mainly being used as sources.

**Characterization and Representation of Supporters/Victims**

Football hooliganism was considered a big societal problem in Britain in the ‘80s. Therefore, it was often on the politicians agenda. The content of the media is mainly influenced by major sources, which are elite, and journalistic norms, which are cultivated by the elite forces (Louw, 2001; McCombs, 2004). It would thus be the expected
outcome that the Daily Express and The Guardian use the word hooligan to a large degree.

**Hypothesis 1.** It is hypothesized that the Daily Express and The Guardian have a heavy usage of the word hooligan in the 1989-90 period and that the usage decreases in the 2012-13 period.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hooligan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>161</strong></td>
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*Note.* Data from Question 5 (see Appendix A).

Table 4 shows that the Daily Express uses the word nine times in 1989-90 and three times in 2012-13. Meanwhile, The Guardian uses the word ten times in 1989-90 and one time in 2012-13. What is significant is not the amount of times the word is used but rather the amount of times there is no mention of the word in neither of the newspaper’s reporting. Table 4 thus demonstrates two things: That there is a decrease in the use of hooligan over time but also that the word was not widely used in the first place. That there is a decreased use of the word in 2012-13, after the release of the independent report, suggests a shift in discourse about football. The supposed hooliganism problem was no longer a main issue on the political agenda following the ‘90s and public panic ceased.

Because hooliganism was politically exhausted and no longer was important, the media also deemed it unimportant. So while the limited use of the word falsifies part of the hypothesis and supports the other part, the data still reveals another, different pattern.
Table 5. Negative characterization of supporters and victims.

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<td>Behavior</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>203</strong></td>
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*Note.* Data from Question 6 (see Appendix A).

Table 5 shows negative characterization or representation of supporters/victims. The first pattern is the frequency of negative characterization versus the frequency of no negative characterization at all. Looking at Table 5 vertically, the table shows that in each time period and in each newspaper, there are more instances of negative characterization combined than there is none. The only exception is the *Daily Express* in 2012-13, where the negative representations tally 21 in all three categories (“Behavior,” “Background,” and “Appearance.”) and the “None” category tallies 22. However, when examining the table horizontally and focusing on each category individually, the data show that there are more instances of “None.” On a general basis, foregoing the specificities of the newspapers and the time periods, the consistent trend is no negative characterization.

The second pattern is how the “Behavior” category is ranked twice as highly as “Background” and “Appearance.” This suggest that when there is negative characterization in the *Daily Express* and in *The Guardian*, it is the supporters’ behavior that is most often portrayed negatively. One reason for this finding is the spreading in general society of myths about the “madness” of crowds, which also made their way into police manuals (McPhail, 1991). The view was that crowds would get riled up and become violent, and that it was people of similar predispositions who gathered in the first
place (such as football supporters). Another reason, one which ties in with the myths, is the tendency of British mainstream media to use fighting metaphors when describing football and the three tendencies, coined by Spaaij (2011), of stressing the irrationality of the supporters, of fans being a threat to society and hooliganism being linked with drinking or drugs.

Summary finding: Sensationalism. Although, the Daily Express and The Guardian only use the word hooligan few times in their articles, there is still a noticeable amount of negative descriptions of the supporters and victims, which is the result of a sensationalization of the problem. The act of sensationalizing stories has always been part of journalism, whether it is published in the qualities or the tabloids (Stevens, 1985).

Reason for Disaster

Due to the lies and misinformation spread by the police, there were many differing accounts of who or what were to blame for the disaster. The media would cover different angles from week to week, trying to lay blame on different actors (Hillsborough Independent Report, 1990).

Hypothesis 1. In 1989-90, the Daily Express and The Guardian suggested the supporters were to blame for the disaster, however in 2012-13, after the release of the independent report, they suggested the police were the main culprits.

Table 6 details the suggested reasons for the disaster by the Daily Express and The Guardian in the two specified time periods.
Starting with 1989-90, both newspapers suggested a variety of reasons for the cause of the disaster. There is not one version that sticks. In comparison, the data in 2012-13 is much clearer. Just like the independent report found, the newspapers echo the fact that the police carries the main weight of responsibility. This is due to the fact that the authorities acknowledge the findings of the report and are quoted by the newspapers: “Today’s report is black and white, Liverpool fans were not to blame for the disaster” (Brown, 2012, p. 4). In contrast, the 1989 report by Lord Justice Taylor is more wavering, stating “the tragedy happened when police opened an emergency gate” but also that “The presence of an unruly minority who had drunk too much aggravated the problem” (“Horror surge,” 1989, p. 9).

An indicator of the fact that the newspapers measure their coverage against the findings of the report, is the instances of acquittal in Table 7. In 1989-90, the Guardian directly writes that the police was not to blame four times. In 2012-13, this number is at zero. It also goes from only acquitting the supporters three times to acquitting them seven times. A small rise but still noticeable. The Daily Express goes from acquitting the supporters zero times to acquitting them seven times in 2012-13.
Table 7. Instances of acquittal.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Liverpool FC supporters</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
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<td>54</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>162</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data from Question 12 (see Appendix A).

*Changing “guilty parties.”* Just like in 1989-90, *The Guardian* has varied accounts on who or what is to blame for the disaster in 2012-13. Chart 4 demonstrates that despite the release of the independent report, *The Guardian* still blames different parties. 49 percent of the time, the police is mentioned as responsible while the second highest is “Other” at 30 percent.

Chart 4. The Guardian: Suggested reason for disaster in 2012 to 2013

**REASON FOR DISASTER 2012-13**
Note. Data from Table 6.

The “Other” category can refer to different organizations, such as the football club Sheffield Wednesday, the Football Association and the emergency services, among others (see Appendix B). The majority of times when the “Other” category was coded, the “police” category was also coded. Thus, this can be interpreted as *The Guardian* reflecting more of the key findings found in the independent report. *The Guardian* quotes the following findings in one article: Alterations made by policemen “downplayed or removed criticisms made by officers of their leadership and of the police response to the disaster” and “the stadium failed to meet minimum standards under the Safety of Sports Ground Act 1975” (“Key findings,” 2012, para. 3 & para. 4). On the 2013 anniversary of the disaster, Owen Gibson (2013) also states multiple reasons: “the Hillsborough Independent Panel definitively demonstrated that the causes were the unsafe ground and the inadequate response of the emergency services” and “The Independent Police Complaints Commission is also conducting a wide-ranging inquiry into police culpability and malpractice” (para. 2 & para. 3).

**Partial summary: Changing blame.** From 1989 to 1990, the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* blamed a variety of actors, including the supporters, for the disaster. However, from 2012 to 2013, blame was directed mainly at the police. This reflects the conflict between the elites in 1989-90 and their consensus on the reason for the disaster in 2012-13.

**Police Performance**
In the aftermath of the disaster, the police made statements to the media wherein they accused the Liverpool FC supporters at the match of drinking, misbehaving and attacking the officers that attempted to help the victims. Will Stewart (1989) writes that:

The Star, Sheffield’s evening paper, led its front page of its late edition with a story on ‘Fans in Drunken Attacks on Police’. The allegations were acutely serious and came from the middle ranks, who were responsible for the minute-by-minute control of their own men and the football fans (p. 8).

However, in his final report, Lord Justice Taylor found that the police had failed and the supporters had not been disruptive. When the independent report was released in 2012, it came to a similar conclusion: The police were to blame for the disaster and attempted to shift blame onto the supporters, while the supporters and victims were completely blameless. The Guardian dedicated its front page to break the news that the police had fed stories to the media to “deflect their own culpability for the disaster on to the innocent victims” (Conn, 2012a, para. 1).

**Hypothesis 1.** Immediately after the disaster, the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* implied that the police were safe, however, after the final report in January 1990, they adjusted their coverage according to the findings and implied that the police were negligent.

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<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat negligent</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat safe</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>
Table 9. Level of police effectiveness mentioned

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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat effective</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat ineffective</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely ineffective</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>79</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data from Question 8 (see Appendix A).

Table 8 and Table 9 show the implied levels of police negligence or effectiveness.

First, considering only the four categories of safety and effectiveness in 1989-90

(“Somewhat safe,” “Absolutely safe,” “Absolutely effective,” and “Somewhat effective”), the Daily Express has a total of four instances. The Guardian has 18 instances.

Chart 5 shows that the majority of The Guardian’s 18 instances were in April and May, immediately after the disaster. Following five instances in June, the implied levels of safety and effectiveness fall to zero. Chart 5 also shows that the Daily Express only implied the police were safe and effective in four instances: Two in August 1989 and two in January 1990.

Chart 5. Timeline showing implied instances of police safety and effectiveness
Note. Data from Questions 7 and 8 (see Appendix A).

The chart ends at January 1990 because there are 0 instances of implied police safety and effectiveness afterwards.

In the case of the four other categories (“Somewhat negligent,” “Completely negligent,” “Completely ineffective,” “Somewhat ineffective”) in Table 8 and Table 9, the Daily Express has a total of 12 instances and The Guardian has a total of 26 instances. Chart 6 shows that The Guardian implied negligence/ineffectiveness five times immediately after the disaster and then peaked in August with eight instances. The Daily Express implications peak in April at six instances and following this there are two in August, two in February 1990 and April 1990.

Chart 6. Timeline showing implied instances of police negligence and ineffectiveness.
Note. Data from Questions 7 and 8 (see Appendix A).

Summing up the data in the figures and charts for the *Guardian* and *The Daily Express*, the results are different between the quality newspaper and the tabloid.

**The Guardian.** Starting with the quality, the *Guardian*, the timelines indicate that the newspaper in fact did start out by implying the police were safe but then changed their coverage in August 1989. This coincides with the release of Lord Justice Taylor’s interim report as can be seen in Appendix C. There is no notable peak in January 1990 though, when Lord Taylor released his final report. One explanation for this is the view that the findings of the final report had already become “old news.” Since news are judged by their “newness” or “freshness” and not their significance, the second report might have been bypassed for lacking this quality.

The correlation between the change in coverage and the release of Lord Taylor’s report is a power imprint left by the hegemonic structure, which can be deduced from several factors. From Table 2 and Table 3 it was gathered that *The Guardian* used far
more elite sources than community sources and that when community sources were used, their pattern was random. This means that *The Guardian* did not change their coverage to imply police negligence due to them listening to the community’s voice. Rather, they changed because the officials, their main sources, changed their accounts of the events. The following quotes from *The Guardian* shows the connection between use of elite sources and the newspaper’s change of coverage.

*The Guardian* had a journalist inside the disaster inquest who wrote about the following interaction between a Mr. Collins, counselor to the inquiry, and Chief Superintendent Mr. Mole:

Mr Collins suggested that the police might have had difficulty at Hillsborough last month in recognizing and differentiating between a pitch invasion by the fans, and the emergency unfolding on the terraces. Mr Mole: ‘I’m absolutely certain the protection of life is one of our prime concerns (Parry, 1989a, para. 19-20).

It is especially in its reporting of the disaster inquiries, *The Guardian* focuses on statements given by policemen. Another example of such is in the questioning of Chief Inspector Robert Creaser: “That makes it sound as if there was an almost negligent, wanton disregard – and that is not the case” (Parry, 1989c, para. 3).

Then in August 1989, *The Guardian* quotes Lord Justice Taylor’s report as saying the following: “In his interim report on the disaster Lord Justice Taylor has held the police largely responsible” (Lacey, 1989b, para. 5). And in another article, Taylor’s report was quoted again as blaming “the failure of police control” (“How safe is Britain?,” 1989, para. 17).

*Daily Express*. The *Daily Express* did not imply that the police were safe/effective until August 1989 and even then it were only two instances and an
additional two instances in January 1990. On the other hand, the tabloid implied six times that the police were unsafe/ineffective immediately after the disaster in April 1989. After April these implications became less frequent. Notably, they went from zero to two in August 1989 when Lord Taylor’s report was released and then in 1990, before the Hillsborough one year anniversary. It is interesting why, out of the total of four instances of implied safety/effectiveness, there are two during August 1989. Pulling forth and highlighting the specific article where the instances are found, the explanation becomes clear: It is a reader writing to the tabloid to express his support for the police (O’Connell, 1989). With this in mind, there are no journalists reporting that the police were safe in the news or sports sections of the paper.

The frequency of implications of police unsafeness/ineffectiveness by the *Daily Express* immediately after the disaster, also challenges the hypothesis. If the *Daily Express* is under hegemonic dominance, why report that the police were negligent, in contradiction to their main official sources? There are two possible explanations.

*Explanation one.* First, the metaphor of the guard dog can be applied. The guard dog acts as a sentry for the system in place and the power blocs which rule at any given time (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1995). However, when the power blocs fall out with each other and confusion ensues, the guard dog will report the dispute. Therefore, it is likely that elite sources contradicted each other after the disaster in April and the *Daily Express* chose the angle of unsafe police practices. One example of this contradiction can be found directly.

The *Daily Express* writes that the “Merseyside police warned their colleagues in Sheffield a week ago of the impending danger from the ‘invasion’ of Liverpool fans”
(“Never again,” 1989, p. 3). Meanwhile, a colleague of Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield, the person in charge of the policing at Hillsborough, is quoted saying “David is a first-class officer. He has done all the right things in the past” (“Never again,” 1989, p. 3). These two quotes point toward tension between two different police units. So, while police negligence is implied, the criticism of the police stands with quotes in their defense, which also originates from the police. Also, in the same article is negative portrayal of the supporters’ behavior: “the ‘invasion’ of Liverpool fans,” they were “herded into the smaller of the two ends,” and “officers were warned thousands would turn up without tickets” (“Never again,” 1989, p. 3). This creates a more sympathetic picture of the police officers as they had to deal with an “invasion” and suggests that they were not the reason for the disaster.

Another example of elite sources giving different statements is found later in April. Will Stewart (1989) leads the article with the headline “Hillsborough: The anatomy of a smear” (p. 8). The very first source quoted is Home Secretary Douglas Hurd who wonders at “how the dreadful carnage had happened” and is assured by police advisers that proper policing “happens successfully every week” (Stewart, 1989, p. 8). The word “carnage” connotes a battle or war where people were slaughtered, which in turn implies that someone were responsible for this slaughter. The vague headline combined with the initial statement that police are successful at policing game and “24 hours after the awful event, there was no reports of Liverpool fans running wild,” suggests that the blame is to be placed on the fans since the possibility of them running wild has now been presented (Stewart, 1989, p. 8). Only four paragraphs down, does the journalist deliver a different party to blame than the fans: “ordinary bent bobbies on duty
at Hillsborough had spoken out – again anonymously – through calls to newspapers criticizing the performance of their own senior officers” (Stewart 1989, p. 8).

There is a set hierarchy of who the journalists reach out to when a disaster happens; at the top are the elite sources, at the bottom, community sources (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). As stated, the first person quoted in the article is the Home Secretary, then police, then more public officials and later fellow reporters and photographers. A community source does not get quoted until the 21st paragraph. The source in question is not a Liverpool supporter as might be expected but is labeled as an “impartial fan” and is quoted as saying, “Some fans had been drinking and were in high spirits” (Stewart, 1989, p. 8). The fan is also quoted as saying, “But there is no way they were behaving badly” (Stewart, 1989, p. 8). This does speak in favor of the supporter but comes after the initial statement which supports the police’s version of events. Only one Liverpool fan is quoted, and he defends the supporters while saying the police “stood and watched” (Stewart, 1989, p. 8).

While there is one Liverpool supporter who defends the accusations against them in the article, there is largely silence from the police because the officers have been barred from speaking with media. Only Chief Constable Peter Wright speaks out, saying that the media painted “an inaccurate picture” (Stewart, 1989, p. 8). Multiple factors then suggest why the Daily Express would imply police negligence: Its usual go-to sources were barred from speaking with it, and the tabloid came under attack from a high ranking policeman.

Explanation two. A second explanation of why the Daily Express implied negligence immediately after the disaster is that the tabloid, along with other media
outlets, often switched their angle on who were to blame for the disaster (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990).

**Hypothesis 2.** In 1989-90, the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* implied the police were safe but in 2012, after the release of the independent report, they implied the police were negligent.

*Daily Express.* Looking at the numbers in Table 8 and Table 9, the *Daily Express* found the police to be somewhat negligent six times in 1989-90. In the same period, they also found the police to be safe two times (in total). In contrast, in 2012-13 they found the police to be negligent 20 times and safe zero times (in the sample studied). Thus, it might seem that the correlation between hegemonic values and the media’s coverage is somewhat weak. Yet the data reveals another pattern.

Table 8 shows that the *Daily Express* did not imply any negligence (“None”), 24 times in 1989-90 and 18 times in 2012-13. In Table 9, they did not imply any effectiveness (“None”) 24 times in 1989-90 and 16 times in 2012-13. So the “None” category for 1989-90 in both Table 8 and Table 9 makes up for approximately 73 percent of the data. In the same period of time, the negligence/ineffectiveness categories are at 18 percent. In 2012-13, negligence/ineffectiveness in Table 8 and Table 9 make up for 51 percent while “None” is 44 percent. See Chart 7 for visualizations.

Note. Data from Tables 8 and 9.

The above percentages can be compared with the data in Table 6 which detail the perceived reasons for the disaster. In 1989-90, there were more instances of the Daily Express not suggesting any reason for the disaster than there were of them making a suggestion. The police’s performance was not rated in the majority of articles and that same tendency, to not mention the police, is also reflected when the tabloid lays blame for the disaster. See Chart 8 for the specific makeup of the percentages.

Chart 8. Daily Express: Suggested reason for disaster from 1989 to 1990
Note. Data from Table 6.

Chart 9. Daily Express: Suggested reason for disaster from 2012 to 2013

REASON FOR DISASTER 1989-90

REASON FOR DISASTER 2012-13
Note. Data from Table 6.

In 2012-13, Table 6 shows that the Daily Express now suggests the police is more to blame than any other category. See Chart 9 for percentages. The rise of perceived negligence by the police reflects the rise of blame being laid on the police.

Overall, this suggests that in the case of the Daily Express, the tabloid did produce definitions supporting the elites in 1989-90 and 2012-13. These definitions also changed over time. In 1989-90, the “Great Person” is defined as important and overshadows any consistent in-depth analysis of the disaster. The 2012-13 definition shows the deep rootedness of routinization.

The “Great Person.” The concept refers to the media’s tendency to highlight great individuals in their coverage (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1995). It is especially found in the sports articles of the Daily Express and becomes the focal point rather than the disaster itself. The Daily Express calls the disaster “The horror of Hillsborough” and uses it as a backdrop to describe football player Tony Cottee’s experience: “Tony Cottee, Everton’s £2m striker became involved in an argument with a policeman as he left the emotion-charged pitch after saluting Everton’s fans. Cottee, like the rest of the players, knew nothing of the Hillsborough Disaster” (Moseley, 1989, p. 42). Indirectly, Cottee’s next statement serves to link the disaster with hooliganism: “‘He told me I should be locked up’, Cottee said. ‘I don’t know whether he thought I was a hooligan’” (Moseley, 1989, p. 42).

Even when a story does suggest who or what were to blame for the disaster, it is mentioned in passing and only as a part of a bigger picture. For example, Lynne Greenwood (1989) features an “Anfield fan” who is building a new stadium. The focus of
the article is on the fan, Peter Burns, and the design and location of the new stadium.

When suggesting a reason for why the disaster happened, it is only mentioned in passing:

Soccer grounds in this country are almost trapped by terraced housing and there’s no room for traffic or people, said Burns, still reeling from Saturday’s disaster in which 95 people died when massive congestion outside the ground triggered a lethal crush inside (Greenwood, 1989, p. 46).

When the “Great Person,” or the “Great Players,” (as is more often the case in sports articles) is highlighted in the stories, their grief is enhanced and takes greater value than that of supporters and families. The Daily Express quotes the Anfield chairman as saying that when the decision had to be made whether or not to continue to play in the FA Cup: “We took into account everyone’s views, especially the players, because they have been in touch with relatives of the victims of Hillsborough” (Keith, 1989, p. 39). In another article, the Daily Express writes:

Aldridge has been more profoundly affected by the Hillsborough tragedy than most at Anfield, a Liverpudlian through and through who stood on the Kop as a boy. Indeed, such was his grief in the immediate aftermath of Sheffield, he even threatened to quit the game (Curry, 1989, p. 46).

The reason behind the disaster becomes secondary and the actual victims involved in the disaster become mere human interest stories – just another element of a larger story.

Outside of the sports section, another example of a “Great Person” is Prime Minister of the time, Margaret Thatcher. Initially, after the disaster, Thatcher was told by the police that the disaster was caused by Liverpool FC supporters (Scraton, 2007).

Before this, she already was trying to implement a soccer I.D. plan to curb hooliganism. Some days before the final Taylor report is released, the Daily Express has prior knowledge about recommendations in the report but chooses to put the following story on
the front page of the paper: “Setback for Thatcher bid to beat hooligans” (Buckland, 1990, p. 1). The focus is not on the findings of the final report but rather on the “embarrassing blow to Mrs Thatcher” because the plan will be “kicked out” (Buckland, 1990, p. 1). The Hillsborough Disaster is elevated to a national issue on the politicians’ agenda to beat hooliganism and the question of what even caused the disaster becomes nonessential.

Routinization. Next, is the 2012-13 definition of the rootedness of routinization. On September 13, 2012, the Daily Express’ front page reads: "Hillsborough: The shocking cover-up” (Brown, 2012, p. 1). Inside the story, it quotes Prime Minister David Cameron as saying that “it was wrong that the police changed the records of what happened and tried to blame the fans” (Brown, 2012, p. 2). Thus, the Daily Express acknowledges the findings of the independent report. The Daily Express also no longer suggests that the Liverpool supporters were to blame for the disaster (see Chart 9) and blame the police 43 percent of the time in 2012-13 (see Chart 9) as opposed to 12 percent of the time (see Chart 8). Despite this, the Daily Express still does not suggest any reason for the disaster 36 percent of the time (see Chart 9) or rate the police performance 44 percent of the time (see Chart 7). Why is this the case?

The first reason is the convention of routinization in journalism. Journalists’ routines are cultivated by the elites to favor the elites (Louw, 2001). A major one of these routines is the reliance on official sources for information (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Chart 10 shows the Daily Express’ use of elite sources over the course of a year. In September 2012, when the independent report is just released, there are 17 instances of
elite sources being quoted. Fewer and fewer sources are quoted over the following months.

Chart 10. Timeline showing the use of elite sources in the Daily Express

Note. Data from Questions 3 and 4 (see Appendix A).

Chart 11. Timeline showing the publication of articles in the Daily Express
Note. Data from Table 1.

Chart 11 shows when the Daily Express published the most articles about the Hillsborough Disaster. As expected, the peak is in September when the report was released and also in this chart, the numbers are seen going down over the months.

What the two charts uncover are imprints of power left by the elites. Newspapers mainly use official sources and these sources set the agenda of the newspapers (McCombs 2004; Entman, 1993). If the sources do not talk about the Hillsborough Disaster then it is not news. As mentioned, Chart 10 shows a lessening degree of elite sources and Chart 11 shows how many stories are published about the Hillsborough Disaster. These two patterns are intrinsically linked. When the elites stop talking about an issue and the “newness” fades, the community sources are not quoted anymore either, as can be seen in Chart 2. It might be hypothesized that the elites stop talking about the findings of the report and Hillsborough Disaster because nothing else of value happens in 2012 and 2013. However, when looking at the timeline in Appendix C it becomes apparent that at least one new event happened that could be reported on: The granting of a new inquest by the High Court.

The second reason is the criticism and condemnation directed at the police immediately after the report’s release. The very first article that the Daily Express writes about the independent report states that, “164 police statements were significantly altered to move blame from South Yorkshire force. This misinformation led to The Sun’s front page headline, “The Truth,” falsely claiming fans were drunk, violent, urinated on police and stole from corpses” (Brown, 2012, p. 4). In the same article, it is also written that “Police records were carried out on those who had died in an effort to ‘impugn’ their
character” (Brown, 2012, p. 4). Another example can be found in the sports section where Paul Joyce (2012) states that there were “subsequent attempts by the South Yorkshire Police to cover up their mistakes with an orchestrated smear campaign against Liverpool fans” (p. 63). In an online article, the *Daily Express* quotes Home Secretary Theresa May at the very top of the article as saying: “Police officers or anyone else who broke the law in the wake of the Hillsborough disaster should be pursued and, if the evidence is sufficient, prosecuted” (“May backs,” 2012, para. 1).

However, after these initial criticisms by mainly official sources, the coverage decreases. When the coverage decreases, the criticism of the police halts too and along with that, the *Daily Express* stops writing about the reasons for the disaster. Instead, the police are portrayed in a positive light because they are investigating the disaster. Examples of this start in December 2012.

The *Daily Express* quotes Former Durham Chief Constable Jon Stoddart, who will lead the new inquiry, as saying: “I am aware of the great significance and person responsibility which comes with leading this criminal investigation” (“New police,” 2012, para. 6). In the same article, the police’s involvement does get mentioned – however, not as the cause of the disaster but rather as accused of negligence afterwards: “Stoddart will also work closely with the previously announced Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) investigation into police conduct in the aftermath of the disaster” (“New police,” 2012, para. 5). In the sports section, Mick Dennis (2012) mentions how other football supporters taunt Liverpool supporters about Hillsborough, saying, “Always the victims, you’re never to blame” (Dennis, 2012a, p. 91). In that same
context, Dennis (2012a) does not clear up who is actually to blame for the disaster but leaves the question hanging, only condemning those fans who mock.

This is a tendency in most of the Daily Express’ sports articles: They use the Hillsborough Disaster as a backdrop or a context to highlight individual players or managers without doing any analysis of the disaster itself. For example, John Dillon (2013a) uses the taunting of Liverpool FC supporters by other supporters to back his claim, “if they realized that while the game they profess to love so deeply – so insanely for some on this occasion – is being taken away from its ordinary followers by the money men, they are fighting the wrong battles” (p. 75).

In another article, John Dillon (2013b) does mention the police’s cover-up over the disaster but dedicates only eight lines to it as it is only a part of a story about Margaret Thatcher’s influence on football. Furthermore, right after the mentioning of the Hillsborough Disaster, the Heysel disaster is mentioned and the “savage hooliganism of the Eighties” (Dillon, 2013b, p. 76). This suggest that the “Heysel factor,” which was predominant in 1989 and 1990, still exists (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990).

The Guardian. In the case of The Guardian, Table 8 and Table 9 show that the newspaper implied police negligence/ineffectiveness 13 times in 1989-90. Police safety/effectiveness was implied nine times in the same period. In 2012-13, the numbers were 18 for negligence/ineffectiveness and zero for safety/effectiveness. Again, the correlation seems somewhat weak until looking at “None.” In Table 8 and Table 9, The Guardian did not imply any police negligence 31 times in 1989-90 and only eight times in 2012-13. Percentagewise, “None” then makes up for approximately 49 percent in
1989-90. In 2012-13, “None” is 31 percent while “Negligent/Ineffective” is 69 percent. See Chart 12 for visualizations.


**POLICE PERFORMANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Negligent/Ineffective</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Safe/Effective</th>
<th>None</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data from Tables 8 and 9.*

This verifies part of the hypothesis because it shows that *The Guardian* went from very having very different and contradicting performance ratings in 1989-90 to predominantly implying the police were negligent in 2012-13. Two questions arise from this. Why was the police’s performance perceived to be so varied in 1989-90? And why are there no implications about the police’s performance 31 percent of the time in 2012-13?

The variation of the police’s performance in 1989-90 is linked with who or what *The Guardian* suggests are to blame for the disaster. Looking at Chart 13, *The Guardian* also had very varied suggestions for the responsible parties in 1989-90.

**REASON FOR DISASTER 1989-90**

Note. Data from Table 6.

These variations were characteristics for the British media’s coverage during the first phases after the disaster. They often switched from one “guilty party” to another (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). In 36 percent of the cases, no suggestions were even given to who was the guilty party.

Some examples of this variation of the guilty question can be pulled from the sample. In one article, *The Guardian* suggests the police and the design of the stadium as the primary reasons, through quotes. Eddie Loyden, a Labour politician, is quoted as saying there was “inadequate policing” (Knewstub, 1989a, para. 14). This claim is countered by Douglas Hurd, who states “there were 700 police there, many showing great heroism” (Knewstub, 1989a, para. 15). The fault of the stadiums are pointed out by
Labour member Pat Duffy who says the football cages are worse than the detention “‘we ever visited on prisoners of war in World War Two’” (Knewstub, 1989a, para. 18).

In another article, Wainwright (1989b) reports on a press conference by Police Chief Peter Wright. The background of the press conference is his offer to resign as police chief due to the criticism by Lord Taylor’s report (Wainwright, 1989b). The fact that Lord Taylor directed “severe criticism” at the police is held up against quotes by Wright and his “surprise at the extent to which the police were blamed” (Wainwright, 1989b, para. 2 & para. 5). This surprise and Wright’s subsequent remark that the “officers at the disastrous match might find this side of the report difficult to understand” heavily imply that the Police Chief thinks others are to blame for the disaster (Wainwright, 1989b & para. 5)

What this proves is that there was conflicts of opinion between the hegemonic elite and in reporting on the conflict, *The Guardian* produces several reasons for the disaster.

The fact that *The Guardian* makes no implications about the police’s performance 31 percent of the time in 2012-13 is peculiar. It is peculiar because *The Guardian* strongly imply that the police are negligent, in contrast to the *Daily Express* who only implied negligence half the time (see Chart 7). This 31 percent gap will be examined closer later in the thematic analysis.

**Summary finding: Police performance.** *The Guardian* changed its coverage of the police’s performance from safe to negligent twice. First, in 1989-90 after the release of Lord Justice Taylor’s report. Second, after the release of the independent report in
2012-13. The *Daily Express* rated the police as negligent in 1989-90 due to conflict between elite sources, among other things, and also put more blame on the police in 2012-13.

**Theme 1. Routinization**

Both the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* primarily consult only elite sources from 1989 to 1990 and from 2012 to 2013 because the ruling elites have successfully naturalized the newspapers journalistic routines that favor their preferred discourses.

**Elites are given more space on the page.** As was shown in Tables 2 and 3, both newspapers mainly quotes elite sources in both time periods. Even when there is a mix of elite and community sources in one story, more space is dedicated to the elites. In 1990, the *Daily Express* reports that evidence revealed that fans had not been drinking before the disaster. Statements are taken from three family members of the victims. However, two out of these three can be classified as elite sources. The first family member is not named but simply referred to as “one father, whose 17-year-old son died at the ground” and his quote is given two and a half lines of space (Cooke, 1990, p. 5). Meanwhile, the two other family members are Barry Devonside, an “official of the Hillsborough Families Support Group,” and Trevor Hicks, a “businessman” who “lost two teenager daughters” (Cooke, 1990, p. 5). The *Daily Express* could just have labeled the two men as family members but they are given status with their titles. Aside from Devonside and Hicks, an expert, Alexander Forrest, and a retired senior police commander, Mr. Wright, are given the most space.
The same pattern is repeated in 2012 when the *Daily Express* reports on the Hillsborough family’s reaction to an apology by the FA (Football Association). Margaret Aspinall, who is part of the Hillsborough Family Support Group, says that:

We welcome the apology but the one thing that makes me angry is that we have had to wait for this report to come out before we get all the apologies that should have been made a long time ago (“FA apology,” 2012, para. 5).

Margaret Aspinall’s quote is given a total of four lines in the whole article. Meanwhile, FA chairman David Bernstein has his full statement printed, which totals over ten lines (“FA apology,” 2012).

In the case of *The Guardian*, the newspaper does have one instance where it gives more space on the page to community sources than elite sources – however, these community sources are not supporters or family members. The newspaper covers the oral evidence given at the inquiry and dedicate half of the story to testimonies given by Mr. Gary Taylor and Mr. David Watts, two men who were at a pub and not related to the football clubs. Mr. Taylor is quoted as saying that two men with Liverpool accents and one from Nottingham talked about “how they were going to get in because they had no tickets” (“The Hillsborough Inquiry’s,” 1989, para. 3). Mr. Watts similarly says that he talked to a Liverpool supporter who said he would get in without a ticket (“The Hillsborough Inquiry’s,” 1989). The two men’s statements enforce the conspiracy and hooliganism theme surrounding Liverpool supporters already present in the national media. Hooliganism was widely reported issue and considered newsworthy (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). The two community sources were an exception and given more space in the story because they were first of all not Liverpool supporters and because they enforced the established themes in the newspaper.
In 2013, *The Guardian* reports that the Hillsborough police will “refuse to give evidence to the new inquest into the disaster” (Conn, 2013b, para. 1). The sources quoted in the article are lawyers and coroner Lord Justice Goldring. The only reaction from the families that is portrayed by *The Guardian* is given two lines: “From the rows of the bereaved family members in the courtroom on High Holborn in London, there were audible gasps, and one said, quite loudly: “Outrageous” (Conn, 2013b, para. 4). This is another example of disproportional space given to elite sources and community sources. *The Guardian* reduces the family members to human interest stories rather than people with opinions. The description stands out from the style of the rest of the article by being more dramatic and “staging” the family’s reaction.

The four examples from the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* emphasize elite over community sources partly due to the inverted news pyramid and the journalistic norm of structuring stories. In the inverted pyramid, the most newsworthy information goes on top and answers the WWWWWH-questions (Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?) (Louw, 2001). Since hegemonic elites are considered newsworthy in themselves, they will be quoted first. Meanwhile, community sources will be toward the bottom as background information.

Another part of routinization is journalists using the same pool of contacts. In the case of community sources, there are a few individuals that are consulted every time the newspapers need a reaction. These are mainly Margaret Aspinall, the chair of the Hillsborough Family Support Group, and Trevor Hicks, the president of the Hillsborough Family Support Group. The *Daily Express* quotes Trevor Hicks immediately after the disaster: “The trouble began and I shouted to one of the senior officers to do something”
(“Two beautiful,” 1989, p. 3). Again focus is on his job: “Mr Hicks, managing director of a blinds company, his daughters and his wife Jenni, 42. – all ardent Liverpool fans – arrived for the game an hour before kickoff” (“Two beautiful,” 1989, p. 3). Trevor Hicks is again quoted in 1990 (Cooke, 1990, p. 5). Then in 2012 and 2013, Trevor Hicks is quoted in multiple articles over the passing months to comment on the independent report’s findings (Brown, 2012; “Former editor,” 2012; Riches & Disley, 2012).

Margaret Aspinall is not quoted at any time in the sampled articles in 1989 and 1990. An explanation for this can be the fact that she started out as a member of the HFSG and did not become chair of the group until later. Thus, she was not newsworthy enough until she got a position of power. In 2012 and 2013, Aspinall is quoted even more heavily than Trevor Hicks (“Hillsborough papers,” 2012; “FA apology not enough,” 2012; “FA apology long overdue,” 2012; “Hillsborough police face cover-up probe,” 2012; “Thousands at,” 2013; “Hillsborough fury,” 2013; Brown, 2012; “Former editor,” 2012’; Riches & Disley, 2012; Joyce, 2012).

In 1989 and 1990 there is only one single mention of Hicks in The Guardian and none of Aspinall (Wainwright, 1990). Instead of having a pool of contacts, The Guardian either quotes a community source once or group the family members together: “The victims’ families have been angered” (Wainwright, 1990, para. 4). In 2012 and 2013, The Guardian have a smaller pool of community contacts than the Daily Express. Margaret Aspinall is only quoted twice and only because reactions are sought to an event: “she was ‘delighted’ at the unequivocal, ‘profound’ apology given for Hillsborough’s savage failings by David Cameron” (Conn, 2012a, para. 3). “After his death his mother found it too painful to play the song, but now, 23 years later, she has renewed reason to listen
again” because a new version of the song will be released by musical stars (Topping, 2012, para. 2). Trevor Hicks is not quoted in 2012 or 2013. Rather his wife is quoted once, a year after the release of the independent report, as saying they are “still working towards the inquests, which I would think will be the next stage of the journey” (Gibson, 2013, para. 4).

Taking into consideration how few community sources are quoted in total in the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* from 1989 to 1990 and from 2012 to 2013 (see Table 2 and Table 3), the repetitive quotes from Trevor Hicks and Margaret Aspinall are noticeable. Why are these two specific individuals quoted? It is essentially due to their status as chair and president in the group. In their positions, they are in the eye of the public when they give speeches at memorials and attend public hearings.

**When the police are criticized, they get to defend themselves.** As a result of the media’s reliance on police for information about disasters, the police are heavily quoted, even when they are criticized. There are several examples of both the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* quoting the police’s defense.

The *Daily Express* reports that Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police, David Crompton, wrote an internal email saying that the families of the victims were creating untrue stories. Although, Crompton is called out due to his email, he still gets over half the space in the story to defend himself: “The email from last September was written prior to the release of the Hillsborough Independent Panel report. It was never intended to cause any offence and I apologize” (“Chief sorry,” 2013, para. 5). In another article, Chief Constable of West Yorkshire, Sir Norman Bettison, is accused of spreading misleading information about the disaster. He too gets space to pose himself in a more
favorable light: “West Yorkshire Police said Sir Norman had consistently declared that the IPCC needed to investigate the matters and he was ‘keen’ to co-operate with its inquiry” (“Hillsborough police face cover-up probe,” 2012, para. 19). A third example is the police being portrayed in a more positive light for being cooperative:

Last week, the current South Yorkshire chief constable, David Crompton, told MP’s his force would take just two weeks to give the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) the names and addresses of up to 1,000 police officers who were on duty on the day of the Hillsborough disaster (“New allegations,” 2012, para. 9).

*The Guardian* also writes about Sir Norman Bettison and his remark that “fans behaviour … made the job of the police in the crush outside Leppings Lane turnstiles harder than it needed to be” (Laville, 2012, para. 3). Bettison himself apologized, saying “The fans of Liverpool football club were in no way to blame for the disaster” (Laville, 2012, para. 7). On top of this, Bettison is also excused by the deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, who says: “His words were ill-judged” (Laville, 2012, para. 6). In another article, *The Guardian* quotes South Yorkshire as saying they “voluntarily referred matters to the IPPC” after the connection between the Hillsborough Disaster and the “battle of Orgreave” was revealed (Conn, 2012c, para. 12). A third example of the police getting space to give their version is when they refused to speak to the new inquest to “avoid the risk of incriminating themselves” (Conn, 2013b, para. 2).

In the case of *The Guardian*, there are an additional two stories wherein the narrative is flipped and the police are framed as the party that deserves sympathy. The first story details how police officers “may take legal action against their authority for compensation arising out of psychological disorders sustained during the Hillsborough soccer stadium disaster” (Sharrock, 1990, para. 1). The second story is about how police
officers need stress help: “The officers in turn were providing a form of counselling for those in distress, as well as obtaining statements” and “We intend to increase the counselling facility for our officers” (Hoyland, 1989, para. 6 & para. 10).

**Theme 2. Elimination of Actors**

The *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* attribute blame to actors immediately after the disaster in 1989 but then start passively blaming non-actors. The same trend of blaming actors, then non-actors, occurs after the release of the independent report in 2012.

**1989 and 1990.** As seen in Chart 8, the *Daily Express* suggested several different reasons for the disaster: Liverpool supporters, the police, crowd pressure and “Other.” Immediately after the disaster, most of these were suggested at different times. In April, the *Daily Express* suggests the police is to blame for ordering a gate to “be opened, allowing thousands to pour into an already-packed enclosure” (“Never again,” 1989, p. 1). The Liverpool supporters are also blamed for their “invasion” and showing up ticketless (“Never again,” 1989, p. 3). Another article in April blames “massive congestion outside the ground” and the design of “soccer grounds” (Greenwood, 1989, p. 46). Next there is a period of not attributing blame. It is not until the release of the first Taylor report in August that the *Daily Express* again suggests actors that are to blame. Both the police, the fans and Sheffield Wednesday’s “confused and inadequate signs and ticketing” are blamed (“Horror surge,” 1989, p. 9).

The passive blaming of non-actors reflects the “None” category in Chart 8. Based on the sampled articles studied from the *Daily Express*, the period of “eliminating”
actors’ starts already in April and the subsequent months. In a feature of Lord Justice Taylor, Fenton Bresler (1989) writes that the problem is “death on the terraces” (p. 8). Generally, the *Daily Express*’s sports writers do not analyze or suggest any reasons for the disaster when they mention it but merely mention it in connection with players: “Beardsley and McMahon, like the rest of the Liverpool first team, have had to put on public faces” (Giles, 1989, p. 35). In another sports article, the disaster is described as one of “soccer’s troubles” but it is never clarified exactly what this trouble is (“Disaster summit,” 1989, p. 62). All of the above mentioned examples essentially concern the game of football, suggesting that the game itself is somehow to blame.

*The Guardian* also suggested a variety of reasons for the disaster in 1989 and 1990 as seen in Chart 13. On April 17, 1989, *The Guardian* dedicates a 1048 word long article to the claim that there is “a limit to how much safer football stadiums can be made” and that “the most unpredictable element in this whole equation – human beings – will always make such a disaster as Saturday’s a possibility” (Inglis, 1989, para. 1 & para. 2). Liverpool fans are blamed for arriving late and it is suggested that they were ticketless too (Inglis, 1989). The police is also blamed in another article in April by a politician: “One of the things one immediately observed was the inadequate policing of that particular area” (Knewstub, 1989a, para. 14).

Where *The Guardian* and the *Daily Express* differentiate majorly in their coverage is their consistency in blaming actors. As shown, the *Daily Express* started eliminating actors quite early after the disaster. *The Guardian* on the other side consistently lays blame on actors in the following months. There is a decrease in the concentration of sampled articles blaming actors after June, however, there are still
occasional ones. Two examples are in March and April 1990. In March, the disaster is claimed to be a result of “corporate failures” (Tirbutt, 1990, para. 3). In April, Mr. Wright offered to retire because the blame was placed “on the shoulders of his senior officers” (Sharrock, 1990, para. 7). The Guardian does still have instances of eliminating actors as well as is also indicated by Chart 13.

One such instance is reported by Russell Thomas who writes about Liverpool FC’s return to play at the Hillsborough stadium, seven months after the disaster. The terrace where the victims died is named the “ill-fated Leppings Lane tracing” (Thomas, 1989, para. 2). He further writes that the police are “being specially advised for the game” (Thomas, 1989, para. 4). However, no reason is given for why the police needs to be specially advised. Rather emphasis is laid on the fact that it is “an emotional night for them too” (Thomas, 1989, para. 4). Another instance of eliminating actors is in a political piece published in January, 1990. The article sets up a dispute between Thatcher and Labour over the soccer ID cards and only uses the disaster as a counter argument to Thatcher: “She told MPs at question time that Lord Justice Taylor’s report on the Hillsborough disaster which is believed to condemn the scheme would be published on Monday” (Nettleton, 1990, para. 3). One of the comments made in the article by a Labour politician mentions the word guilt, but no guilt is actually attributed to anyone: “She brought in a verdict of guilty before she’d heard all the witnesses” (Nettleton, 1990, para. 9).

2012 and 2013. Chart 9 shows that the Daily Express laid blame on fewer actors in 2012-13 but in return suggested that the police were to blame in a higher degree. After the release of the independent report, the Daily Express directs strong criticism at the
police. On the September 13, 2012, its front page displays the words “shocking cover-up” to describe the police’s efforts to pass on blame to the supporters (Brown, 2012, p. 1).

David Cameron is quoted as saying that “it was wrong that the police changed the records of what happened and tried to blame the fans” (Brown, 2012, p. 4). Even the sports section contains strong wording and an awareness of the effects of the disaster which is unusual for the genre:

Yesterday was not the time to talk about, Liverpool’s Premier League plight trivial in comparison with the scale of deception that South Yorkshire Police and others undertook in attempting to cover up and deflect blame for Hillsborough (Joyce, 2012, p. 87).

In a later article, the same journalist again writes of the attempts by the police to “cover up their mistakes with an orchestrated smear campaign against Liverpool fans” (Joyce, 2012, p. 63).

However, as was the case in 1989 and 1990, the reporting changes after a while to one of not attributing blame. Mick Dennis (2012) headlines an article “The legacy of Hillsborough,” yet does not discuss or analyze the reasons behind the disaster despite the Daily Express’ earlier strong stance (Dennis, 2012a, p. 68). Instead it is simply written that “Lord Taylor got nowhere near discovering the whole truth” about the disaster (Dennis, 2012a, p. 68). Another article, dedicated to showing how the view of English football fans as hooligans is void, does not come to the same conclusion about the Hillsborough Disaster. There is no mention of who is to blame, or not to blame, but a simple mention that there was a fear that “visiting supporters would defile the occasion” of Liverpool’s commemoration of the victims (Dillon, 2012, p. 77).
The Guardian suggests a variety of reasons for the disaster in 2012 and 2013 as evidenced by Chart 4, with the most blame being laid on the police. The Guardian publishes an in-depth summary of the main findings of the report, going further than just naming the police as the main perpetrator. It details that the “inexperienced Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield” was the “prime cause” of the disaster (Conn, 2012a, para. 12). Next, it mentions “Sheffield Wednesday, South Yorkshire police and Sheffield city council” as responsible parties too (Conn, 2012a, para. 15). As was the case with the Daily Express, The Guardian’s sports writers also expands beyond just sports themes by including mention of the independent report and its findings: “The report cleared Liverpool fans of any wrongdoing and exposed the full scale of the police cover-up that prevented the real reasons behind the disaster from coming out before” (Stuart & Hunter, 2012, para. 3). This extends into 2013, where David Conn (2013a) writes about the 150th anniversary of the Football Association and criticizes the organization’s choice of stadium for the game.

As was the case of The Guardian’s coverage in 1989-90, and what differentiates it from the Daily Express, the newspaper’s coverage in 2012-13 also does not have the same degree of elimination of actors. Chart 4 also illustrates this, as the “None” category is only at 14 percent. The articles that do not attribute blame to actual actors are in most cases articles that only use one line of text to mention Hillsborough in the passing (Coogan, 2012; “Pass notes,” 2013). Or, alternatively, articles of “lighter” subjects, such as entertainment or a letter to the editor (Topping, 2012; Roberts, 2013).

Interpretation. The question of why The Guardian eliminates actors in a much less degree than the Daily Express arises. One explanation is that there are fewer sports
articles in the sampled data from *The Guardian* and more general news ones. Looking at Table 1, *The Guardian* has a ratio of 1 sports article to 2.4 news articles [1:2.4] from 1989 to 1990. From 2012 to 13, *The Guardian* has a ratio of 1 sports article to 4.14 news articles [1:4.14]. Meanwhile, the *Daily Express* has a ratio of 1 sports article to 1.27 news articles [1:1.27] in 1989-90 and 1 sports article to 0.83 news articles [1:83] from 2012 to 2013. This is a notable difference in content. It is also connected to the fact that the *Daily Express* is a tabloid with much more entertainment and sports content. Tabloids are also characterized by much shorter text lengths and described as producing “junk journalism” (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 1990). *The Guardian*, on the other hand, is a quality paper and claims to adhere to a higher journalistic standard. The articles are generally much longer than articles from the *Daily Express* and include more key points from the independent report in 2012-13.

The *Daily Express* did start out with laying blame on actors and then shifted to blaming non-actors. The guard dog metaphor is applicable to interpret this pattern. When there is a split between elites, a newspaper can side with one or the other but not create a third original position (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1995). Such a split between police departments and politicians gets a brief mention by the *Daily Express* in article: “The disclosure about the warnings sparked a row over the handling of the game, with MPs questioning the policing and ticket distribution” (“Never again,” 1989, p. 3). The split was a result of the many different conspiracies circulating about who were to blame for the disaster, which in turn stemmed from the misinformation spread by the police.

Another split also becomes apparent through the reading of the articles: A political split between Thatcher’s inner circle, other Tories and Labour over the soccer ID
card scheme. The Hillsborough Disaster was pulled into the political agenda on the opposing side as either a proof that the scheme was needed or as a contention that hooliganism was not the problem but rather ground safety.

These two examples of splits meant that the *Daily Express* did not blame just one actor but switched angles, as have been previously mentioned. When the splits start mending and consensus is reached once again between the elites, albeit temporarily, the pattern of blaming non-actors is uncovered. Instead of laying blame on actors, the disaster is described passively.

The theme of elimination of actors is not the only imprint of power left by the hegemonic elite. When a split occurs, another way of restoring consensus and protecting the system is by sacrificing individuals.

**Theme 3. The Sacrifice of the “Great Person”**

The *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* report attacks on individuals in powerful positions but not on power structures because they are sentries for the system.

**Daily Express.** The very first story that the *Daily Express* runs about the Hillsborough Disaster after the disaster in 1989 singles out Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield as the man in charge of policing at the game. It is speculated whether “he gave the order directly for the gate to be opened or whether one of his officers acted alone” (“Never again,” 1989, p. 3). Later in April, Chief Constable Peter Wright, who is described as “one of the most highly rated senior policemen in Britain,” is also under scrutiny for claiming that the decision to open the gate was “unconnected to the subsequent deaths” (Stewart, 1989, p. 8). In the same article, Wright is also quoted for
blaming the media for painting an “inaccurate” picture (Stewart, 1989, p. 8). After the release of his first report, Lord Justice Taylor named two policemen, Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield and Superintendent Roger Marshall, as directly responsible for the opening of the gate. The article notes that Duckenfield “has now been suspended” (“Horror surge,” 1989, p. 9).

The *Daily Express* also reports attacks on Margaret Thatcher due to the failure of her soccer ID card scheme, however, it is merely described as an “embarrassing blow” (Buckland, 1989, p. 1). Thus, she is not directly blamed or even connected to the failures of the disaster. Her only connection to the disaster is through whatever value it has on her political agenda.

From 2012 to 2013, the *Daily Express* reports more attacks on individuals following the independent report. Since the report also detail failings by other organizations, it is no longer just policemen being attacked. One article features Shadow Health Secretary Andy Burnham who calls out the Football Association. As the front figure of the organization, the chairman, David Bernstein, is directly in the line of fire. Bernstein makes a “full and unreserved apology” after being criticized for not apologizing in the first statement (“FA apology not enough,” 2012, para. 2; Joyce, 2012). In another article, the chief executive of Yorkshire Ambulance Service, David Whitling, is named after the report revealed “up to 41 Liverpool fans might have survived if given adequate emergency care” (“Don’t forget,” 2012, para. 1). Politicians’ failings are also highlighted. John Mann, Labour member, demanded that Sir Irvine Patnick was stripped of his title and described his behavior as “shameful and disgusting” (Brown, 2012, p. 5).
The policemen attacked in 2012-13, are Sir Norman Bettison and David Crompton. Bettison is condemned for, among other things, attempting to “‘influence the decision-making process’ of the West Yorkshire Police Authority” (“Hillsborough police face,” 2012, para. 9; “IPCC slams,” 2012). Chief Constable David Crompton is forced to apologize in public for an inappropriate email he sent (“Chief sorry,” 2012).

**The Guardian.** The quality paper have several articles that detail political debates in the Commons. Seeing as it is a forum for debate, and sometimes mud throwing, there are attacks on politicians by other politicians (Knewstub, 1989a; Wintour, 1989a; Knewstub, 1989b; Rawnsley, 1989). However, none of the attacks directed at the politicians stem from their direct implications with the disaster. Rather, they are attacked because of their opinions about the disaster and their proposals to avoid such disasters in the future.

When it comes to criticism of policemen, the initial criticism of individuals is not made directly by The Guardian. It is rather observed in a courtroom as an interaction between lawyers and police on the stand (Parry, 1989b; Parry, 1989c). However, after the release of Lord Taylor’s report in August 1989, individuals start getting pointed out. The Guardian headlines a story “Police chief shocked by burden of blame” (Wainwright, 1989a). Police chief, Mr. Wright, accepted full “responsibility for policing at Hillsborough” and offered to resign from his position (Wainwright, 1989a, para. 3). Mr. Wright is also quoted as saying that he suspended Duckenfield due to accusations of “incivility during the chaos” (Wainwright, 1989a, para. 6).

After the release of the independent report in 2012, The Guardian attacks “Great Persons” from the very beginning. David Conn (2012a) reports that the police cover-up
was led by Chief Constable Peter Wright. In the same article, several others are similarly criticized: From the editor of *The Sun*, Kelvin MacKenzie, to Constable Paul Middup and Chief Superintendent Duckenfield (Conn, 2012a). Like the *Daily Express*, *The Guardian* too reports on Sir Norman Bettison’s comments and on calls for him to “resign over his role in the Hillsborough operation” (Laville, 2012).

Attacks on politicians are also recurring in the 2012-13 coverage. *The Guardian* takes a deeper dig at Margaret Thatcher, connecting the “culture of impunity in the police service,” which among other things led to the disaster, with the “sometimes confrontational style of the Thatcher government” (Beckett, 2012, para. 9 & para. 10). Also, Prime Minister David Cameron is under scrutiny from time to time just like Margaret Thatcher was during her rule in 1989-90. In the case of David Cameron, he is not under scrutiny due to attempts to regulate football but rather because of the police spying scandal and the police reforms (Jones, 2013; White, 2013).

**Interpretation.** The many attacks on individual high ranking policemen is also an indicator of conflict in the power system and of the relationship between the system and the media. The *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* rarely look beyond the surface and criticize the system itself. The fact that there are so many problems with the police forces, not only in the 1989-90 period but also in the 2012-13 period, suggests that the structure is corrupt. When reading through all of the sampled articles from the two newspapers, only one article discusses the bigger picture.

This article is by Sondra Milne Henderson. Henderson (1989) investigates the funding of peacetime disasters – such as the Hillsborough Disaster – and how no money is allocated to handle it. She criticizes Home Secretary Douglas Hurd for reaching the
decision not to give funding and which “has been universally condemned by the experts” (Henderson, 1989, para. 10). Henderson (1989) further ties the lack of funding together with the lack of proper facilities to handle disasters. “Many lives would have been saved” at Hillsborough if the ambulance brigades had had proper equipment (Henderson, 1989, para. 33). The article also quotes John Holloway, Chief Civil Emergency Planning Officer for the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority’s, warning: “There is an urgent need for legislation to clarify the uncertainty surrounding the control and coordination arrangements at major incidents” (Henderson, 1989, para. 49). The lives lost at the disaster are thus directly tied with the allocation of funding by the governing bodies of society and the ruling elites.

The lack of criticism of the structure and the attacks on the “Great Person” are not exclusive to the Daily Express and The Guardian but is rather the convention for media. The hegemonic elites naturalize the practices they prefer with gatekeepers of media, those who hire and fire these gatekeepers and lastly, those who educate the gatekeepers. The fact that routinization is a convention in journalism and that the media are part of the consensus means that the stories “confirm the existing hegemonic arrangements” (Louw, 2001).

**Theme 4. Hooliganism, in Other Words**

By portraying Liverpool supporters and football supporters negatively, The Daily Express and The Guardian operate within the context of hooligan hysteria.

The word *hooligan* is not widely used in the Daily Express or The Guardian in neither 1989-90 nor 2012-13. However, there is widespread negative characterization of
supporters as can be seen in Table 5. In order to examine the framing of football supporters, the four functions of the framing theory will be applied to articles from the two newspapers.

**Dominant frame: The myth of the hooligan persists.** Hooliganism was first labeled as a social policy area in Britain in 1968 (Giulianotti, 1994). Since then the phenomenon has been one of the primary definers of football, both politically and culturally, despite the fact that hooliganism has faded from modern football. One of the main reasons for the continued reappearance of the hooligan is media portrayals. The media has continued producing impressions about the “hooligan” and continued to quote others about it.

**Liverpool supporter’s behavior.**

*The problem:* The *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* identity the Liverpool supporters’ behavior as the problems that led to the disaster in 1989.

The *Daily Express* uses words such as “invasion” and “herding” about the Liverpool supporters at the game (“Never again,” 1989, p. 1 & p. 3). This connotes violent behavior and a perception of the supporters as a mob that needs supervision. Furthermore, it is reported that the fans “surged into already crowded pens behind the goal, propelling youngsters at the front up against strong wire-mesh fences which stop pitch invasions” (“Horror surge,” 1989, p. 9). The surging movement is connected with bad behavior in the next line as Lord Taylor states that the “presence of an unruly minority who had drunk too much aggravated the problem” (“Horror surge,” 1989, p. 9).
The Guardian speculates about the behavior and the effect it had on the day:

“That entry-control system clearly failed on Saturday, almost certainly owing to the sheer number of fans arriving in the busiest period, 15 minutes or so before kick-off” (Inglis, 1989, para. 11). Also, if non-ticketholders were allowed to approach, that was “the single most serious lapse” (Inglis, 1989, para. 14). Furthermore, the newspaper also quotes an assistance chief constable saying that they are investigating “suggestions that fans had been misbehaving” (Hoyland, 1989, para. 13). In a minute-by-minute timetable provided to the inquest, The Guardian reports the supporters behavior in factual terms: A fan who had climbed a wall lead to the opening of “the gate into Leppins Lane” (“Timetable of,” 1989, para. 6). After the opening of the gate, supporters “rush” through and when they hear the roar of the crowd inside “people swarm into the stadium” (“Timetable of,” 1989, para. 7 & para. 8).

Notably, The Guardian does also report findings from the inquest which are in contention with what the newspaper previously claimed: “Previously unseen film screened at the Hillsborough inquiry yesterday showed clearly that there was no stampede by Liverpool fans when police opened the gate” (Wainwright, 1989a, para. 1). However, even after this video proof, The Guardian still carries on with definition of the supporter’s behavior being a main issue. This definition is mainly produced by uncritically reciting the proceedings of the inquest and quotes by the police. One such quote is by Chief Inspector Robert Creaser: “I have never seen so many drunks at a football match before” (Parry, 1989c, para. 5). He further states the fans were “‘perhaps what the tabloid press would call yobs or lager louts’” (Parry, 1989c, para. 7). In the same article, the journalist, Gareth Parry (1989c), states that the reason why the gate was
opened and the disaster happened was due to “relieve the pressure outside ground caused by thousands of Liverpool fans arriving late” (para. 8).

The cause. The cause of the Liverpool supporters’ behavior is given several explanations. The main ones are the background of the supporters and intoxication.

The Daily Express writes of a “warning” that was given by Merseyside police to their Sheffield colleagues about the “invasion” of Liverpool supporters (“Never again,” 1989, p.3). The Merseyside force further warned that “thousands would turn up without tickets” (“Never again,” 1989, p. 3). This indicates that the police believed that preemptive actions should have been taken because the supporters were from Liverpool. An editorial piece written by Charles Moore directly states that the Liverpool spirit is one of “resentment and self-pity” and that everything bad that happens to its people is “all somebody else’s fault” (Moore, 1989, p. 9). Moore (1989) compares the Heysel Disaster with the Hillsborough Disaster, thereby linking the violence of the first disaster to the latter. Finally, he states that Liverpool cannot accept that “some of its troubles might have something to do with its own people” (Moore, 1989, p. 9). In an article about Lord Taylor’s report, the judge is quoted as attributing alcohol to the bad behavior of some supporters (“Horror surge,” 1989, p. 9).

In the same vein as Charles Moore, Paul Montgomery (1989) discuss the people of Liverpool. He states that the “dark side of Liverpudlian football fandom is found in the Heysel riot” and in groups of young men who “discuss weapons and tactics for the following Sunday’s game” (para. 7 & 9). Generally, local men only care for football and “consider cricket a degenerate sport of public schoolboys, other homosexuals, blacks, old men and rural winos” (Montgomery, 1989, para. 2).
The Guardian quotes the opinions of other newspapers, national and international, about the Hillsborough Disaster. The Belgian newspaper, Het Volk, links the violence of Heysel with the disaster at Hillsborough, suggesting that the behavior is due to the nature of the “undisciplined British supporters” (“Quote,” 1989, para. 1). Another Belgian newspaper, La Dernière Heure, claim the cause of the supporters behavior comes down to “attitude” (“Quote,” 1989, para. 3). Finally, the Yorkshire Post says it is the “direct consequence of football hooliganism, even though there was no perceptible violence as such” (“Quote,” 1989, para. 11). Often, The Guardian also links the behavior with alcohol (Parry, 1989b; Parry, 1989c; Lacey, 1989a).

Superintendent Roger Marshall’s analysis of the cause of the behavior of the Liverpool supporter’s is quoted:

There is in my view a very strong link between the drink, which a lot of individuals had consumed, the heat of the day, the urgency to get in the ground before the kick-off, and an almost blind necessity to enter, come what may (Parry, 1989b, para. 8)

During the final day of oral evidence at the inquest, The Guardian quotes two witnesses who claim that Liverpool supporters conspired to enter the grounds without tickets (“The Hillsborough Inquiry’s final day,” 1989). Though not stating a direct cause for their behavior, it is suggested that it is their general attitude since they had previously created “as much trouble as possible to force police into opening the gates” (“The Hillsborough Inquiry’s final day, 1989, para. 3).

The moral judgment. The moral judgment is one of condemnation of the passionate following of football and that it has more flaws than benefits.
*The Daily Express*’ moral judgment can be found in the pages of their sports articles. Kevin Moseley (1989) directly condemns those who take football too seriously: “Somewhere in that moment where was a moral to those who take the sport beyond the confines of life itself and the simply rewards it offers” (p. 42). Charles Moore (1989) takes it even further, saying that Liverpool supporters “should be ashamed” of the fact that they consider football a religion (p. 9).

That football is not more important than human lives and grief is also echoed by John Giles, who writes in the *Daily Express*’ sports sections. Giles (1989) advises England’s national football manager, Robson, not to listen to the Liverpool players who want to play following the disaster. He applauds the player John Barnes as a “sensitive man” for pulling out of the game and further says he brings “a sense that it will never be the overriding passion of his life” (Giles, 1989, p. 35).

In one of the *Daily Express*’ opinion pieces, a condemnation of a politician can be found. MP Eddie Loyden, it is reported, is “determined never to see, speak nor hear the slightest evil of any Liverpool fans, anywhere” (“Justice for,” 1989, p. 8).

*The Guardian* publishes a quote by the Angelican Bishop of Liverpool who says that following a football team gives some people “the feel of liturgy of the Resurrection” (Engel, 1989, para. 11). This claim is countered by the author of the article, Matthew Engel (1989), who states that:

the liturgy of football is usually altogether different. On the bridges along the M62 there are slogans placed by Liverpool’s supporters to taunt Manchester United’s fans: ‘Munich ’58’ (para. 12).

*The Guardian* also publishes information from a press conference by the police wherein the question is asked “if Liverpool supporters would co-operate fully after being
upset by police allegations about their behaviour at Hillsborough” (Hoyland, 1989, para. 9). Instead of asking the question to a Liverpool supporter, the question is directed at West Midlands assistant chief constable, Mr. Mervyn Jones, who gets to decide the primary interpretation of the question. Jones answers, “I hope that they will recognize the objective of the judicial inquiry is to get to the truth” (Hoyland, 1989, para. 9). Thus, the Liverpool supporters are judged as being unhelpful. Also, since the reason why the Liverpool supporters are upset by police allegations is not further discussed, the police take ownership of the “truth.”

*The Guardian* quotes a senior police officer for saying, “he had never witnessed ‘such mindless determination’” to get inside the stadium before the game started and that “the comfort and welfare of their own colleagues and their own fans was pushed aside” (Parry, 1989b, para. 7 & para. 9).

The supporters are not the only actors in the game of football which are condemned in *The Guardian*. Also, football clubs receive flak. However, this flak is different what is directed at the supporters. The clubs are criticized for caring more about their finances than the people that watch the games (Nettleton, 1990; Ridley, 1989; Tirbutt, 1990; Travis, 1990).

*The solution*. The Liverpool’s supporters’ behavior was judged as the problem that led to the Hillsborough disaster. The *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* are not the primary definers of the solutions suggested but rather generate the solutions through quotes from politicians and experts. The solutions generated suggest safer stadiums and more regulation.
In the very first story the *Daily Express* publishes about the disaster, the tabloid reports, “Politicians, police and soccer chiefs were unified in their call for drastic new safety measures at football grounds” (“Never again,” 1989, p. 1). Further into the story, it is stated, “Thatcher is expected to turn Government recommendations into tough new laws on soccer safety” (“Never again,” 1989, p. 3). The *Daily Express* extends the coverage about safer stadiums to its sports sections later in April where a story headlined, “Anfield fan is building hope next to disaster” is run (Greenwood, 1989, p. 46). The story focuses on Peter Burns plans to build a new stadium for football and sports in general, based on the safety recommendations that will be provided later by Lord Justice Taylor’s report (Greenwood, 1989). The article quotes Peter Burns condemnation of the state of England’s current stadiums: “‘Soccer grounds in this country are almost trapped by terraced housing and there’s no room for traffic or people’” (Greenwood, 1989, p. 46).

When the Taylor report is released in August 1989, the *Daily Express* reports on the key pointers found in the report to secure grounds. These include reassessing the maximum capacity for terraces, pre-match entertainment and more police radio operators (“Horror surge,” 1989).

*The Guardian* has much more focus on Thatcher’s proposed membership scheme and the political battle over it. The membership scheme was in the works before the Hillsborough Disaster happened and *The Guardian* confirms that the government “intends to go ahead with it,” although pausing “‘for reasons of seemliness’” (Knewstub, 1989a, para. 1). That the scheme is a good idea is contended by Shadow Home Secretary, Mr. Roy Hattersley, who instead suggests that safety committees should be asked to take
fences at stadiums down because “On Saturday it proved lethal” (Knewstub, 1989a, para. 8).

In the later months of 1989, The Guardian has spread out updates about the process of the scheme. Patrick Wintour (1989b) writes in July that the government seek “to give itself powers to require football clubs to make grounds all-seater stadiums” (para. 1). In October 1989, the “controversial identity cards scheme won its third reading in the Commons by 273 votes to 204” (Nettleton, 1989, para. 2). The Guardian quotes Mr. Chris Patten’s reasoning for why the scheme needs to be initiated: “previous measures had contained, but not eradicated football hooliganism. Continuing violence after the Hillsborough disaster demonstrated the need for its provisions” (Nettleton, 1989, para. 3). Thus, The Guardian projects the view that not only was Hillsborough caused by hooliganism but even stricter laws are needed to combat the problem. This is said despite the fact that Lord Justice Taylor’s interim report, published months earlier, claimed that hooliganism was not to blame. The desire to implement the membership scheme by the government also preempts Lord Taylor’s final report which was not yet released at the time.

The last act of The Guardian’s coverage of the scheme in the studied sample comes in January, 1990. Patrick Wintour (1990) reports that the scheme was shelved due to Lord Justice Taylor advising against it. The article focuses mainly on the blows it causes to Thatcher and her government and not on other solutions for safety. Despite Lord Taylor’s report focusing on the reasons for the Hillsborough Disaster and new recommendations for safety, these findings are not published by The Guardian. One of the only mentions about Hillsborough in the article is as follows: “Mr Hurd argued the
The Guardian not only reports on politicians’ solutions to the problems of football but also the Football Association. Mr. Graham Kelly, the chief executive and secretary of the FA, said that the FA’s “multi-million pound plans to replace unsafe and outdated stadiums will accompany proposals for new tougher and more efficient control methods” (Parry, 1989d, para. 3).

**English football fan’s behavior.**

The problem. The Daily Express and The Guardian identify English football supporters behavior as a problem in 2012 and 2013. Specifically, the rivalries between different club’s supporters are framed.

The Daily Express mainly frames the problem of supporter behavior in their sports section. In September, 2012, five days following the revelations of the independent report, the tabloid reports a plea issued by clubs Manchester United and Liverpool FC, “to ensure Sunday’s emotionally charged game at Anfield is not disfigured by insensitive chanting” (Tanner, 2012a, p. 63). This insensitive chanting refers both to mocking chants about the Hillsborough Disaster and the Munich Disaster, which involved Manchester United in 1958. Richard Tanner (2012) reports that the plea was ignored “by a vocal minority of United fans on Saturday, when chants of ‘always the victims, never your fault’ could be heard coming from the Stretford End (p. 63). Tanner (2012) further speculates that the upcoming game between United and Liverpool could be “marred by supporters trading insensitive chants” (p. 63). In another article, also concerned with the
upcoming game between the two rival clubs, the *Daily Express* again reports that there is a prospect of “unsavoury chants” (“Gerrard and Vidic,” 2012, para. 3).

The day before the game between United and Liverpool, the *Daily Express* once again reports the prediction that supporters will cause troubles. Richard Tanner (2012b) paraphrases United manager, Sir Alex Ferguson’s, hope that:

all the talk of players and fans being on their best behaviour at Anfield since the Hillsborough Independent Panel’s report does not take away some of the traditional fire and fury (p. 87).

Ferguson’s quote stands out against the previous reports urging the supporters to behave. Instead, he says that if the supporters end the chants about Munich and Hillsborough, “they can fight as much as they like” (Tanner, 2012b, p. 87). This further portrays the supporters as an unruly mass that is expected to fight and behave badly.

The general negative language about football supporters continue in the *Daily Express*. In an article by Mick Dennis (2012), football players elevated status and portrayal is highlighted by the journalist’s comparison to supporters. He writes that “Fabulously well-paid athletes” resort to “the aggressive, potty-mouthed behaviour of the Saturday-night drunken yob” (Dennis, 2012b, p. 90). Mick Dennis (2012) continues describing Liverpool supporters and supporters in general in a strong language: “poisonous partisanship,” “warped logic of football fans,” “semi-literate, racist slurs,” blinkered and despicable behaviour,” and “diseased minds” (p. 91).

John Dillon, one of the *Daily Express*’ sports columnist’s, describes negative supporters in an especially negative language and highlights their bad behavior (Dillon, 2012; Dillon, 2013a; Dillon, 2013b).
Like the *Daily Express*, *The Guardian* also has a concentration of reporting about supporters’ behavior ahead of the game between Manchester United and Liverpool. *The Guardian* quotes football player, Nemanja Vidic, saying “football is never more important than any life” (Stuart & Hunter, 2012, para. 2). *The Guardian* also mentions that the anti-Liverpool chants were by a “minority of United supporters” (Stuart & Hunter, 2012, para. 4).

On the day of the game itself, David Conn (2012b) reports about the happenings for *The Guardian*. Even though Conn (2012b) himself writes that only “Some United fans” were heard singing slurs about Hillsborough and “a couple of Liverpool supporters” taunted about the Munich air crash,” in an “otherwise empty ground” the incidents still become a focal point of the article (para. 3). The very headline of the article is, “Defeat and chants tarnish a celebration of justice” (Conn, 2012b).

*The cause.* The cause of the English football supporter’s bad behavior is not investigated much by neither the *Daily Express* nor *The Guardian*. In the case of the *Daily Express*, it can be hypothesized that the lack of critical analysis into the subject is due to its tabloid nature and focus on sensationalism. On the other hand, in the case of *The Guardian*, the quality has very few frames defining supporter behavior as a problem and so there are not suggested causes for it either.

The *Daily Express* does give one suggestion as to the cause. Mick Dennis (2012a) writes that back in the 1980s, the football landscape was “brutal” and “football clubs herded fans into pens and denied them basic amenities” (p. 68). After the Hillsborough Disaster, clubs did change their attitude and realized that “folk who go to matches should be treated with dignity and respect” (Dennis, 2012a, p. 68). Dennis (2012a) argues that
clubs now treat their supporters better, although “some grim grounds still remain” (p. 68). However, as Dennis (2012a) notes, these grounds are very few.

Instead, what might be argued is that the behavior of England football supporters is generally not as bad as the *Daily Express* and other media make it out to be. Rather, whenever there is an instance of bad behavior, that instance gets extensive coverage and thus the phenomenon is blown out of proportion. Since all major British media does sports coverage and there are only a certain amount of games to report on each weekend, if there is one instance of bad behavior, whether on the pitch by players or off the pitch by supporters, that instance will be covered by all the media outlets. Therefore, the cause of the problem might be said to be a construction by the press.

*The moral judgment.* The moral judgment differs between the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian*. Where the *Daily Express* judges the behavior of the supporters as enraging and diseased, *The Guardian* rather reflects that it is due to the structure of modern football.

The main writers, whose comments on the behavior of the fans are quoted in the sampled articles from the *Daily Express*, are sports columnists. Since columnists usually offer their opinions and commentary, there are less restrictions on form and language. This is also the case in the sampled studies, where the columnists, Mick Dennis and John Dillon, use attention grabbing headlines and dramatize the minority of supporters who misbehave. Thus, because of the inflammatory language and the exaggeration of the problem, the moral judgment becomes one of enragement at the supporters.
Furthermore, because the supporters are behaving poorly, it is acceptable for the *Daily Express* similarly to put them down. Mick Dennis (2012b) judges that supporters’ loyalty to their club is “poisonous partisanship” and they have “diseased minds” (p. 91). Dennis (2012b) highlights the disease by mentioning cases in which a minority of supporters from different clubs broke the law: “When Stan Collymore criticised Liverpool’s stance on the Suarez affair, he was deluged by semi-literate, racist slurs on the internet” and “Ferdinand, meanwhile, was sent an airgun pellet in the post” (p. 91).

John Dillon (2013a) expresses his discontent with the Manchester United and Liverpool supporters because they, instead of grouping together to fight the rising cost of match tickets, prepare “to resume their hate-filled rivalry” (p. 75). Dillon (2013a) passes the judgment that football supporters are illogical because they fight the wrong battles and “merely taunt each other about the disasters of Hillsborough and Munich” (p. 75).

*The Guardian* makes two moral judgments about the supporter’s behavior. First, Stuart and Hunter (2012) hold the fact that the player Vidic grew up in war-torn Serbia and that “he knows the importance of keeping things in perspective” up against the rivalry between the clubs (para. 8). The comparison highlights that Vidic is also quoted as saying: “football is never more important than any life” (para. 2).

The second judgment is about the state of modern football. David Conn (2012b) writes that before the game between United and Liverpool, there was a “hush in the streets outside, suggesting some emotional unity might have been forged between the clubs” (para. 5) This kind of unity, Conn (2012b) judges, is “too often lacking in modern football” (para. 5).
The solution. The solutions suggested to solve the problem of the English fans behavior are few but similar in the Daily Express and The Guardian.

In an article about the legacy of the Hillsborough Disatser, The Daily Express gives examples of solutions that have already worked. Mick Dennis (2012a) tells of Cardiff where “some of the scariest fans” met the “‘stakeholders’” and the result was that the “hardcore fans now have an end, the Canton Stand, where a degree of tolerance is shown towards standing and where banners and the like are encouraged” (p. 68). Meanwhile, no solutions are provided for the racism and chanting that the Daily Express reports on.

The Guardian does give an outright solution to the chants heard at and after the game. However, David Conn (2012b) does comment that “expressions of togetherness, the tributes to the bereaved Hillsborough families, and their battle for justice, were consummately realized” and were “grandeur” (para. 2).

All in all, The Guardian’s coverage of supporters has most notably changed since the 1989-90 period. The newspaper has far fewer negative characterizations. This can be attributed to the fact that their main sources, the elites, do not view hooliganism as a modern problem in football and that after the release of the independent report, Liverpool supporters were acquitted.

The Daily Express meanwhile has much stronger negative characterization of supporters than in the 1989-90 time period. This change might be explained by the sensationalist nature of tabloids and the growth the market has experienced over the last twenty years. Also, the articles that do feature heavy negative characterization are 1)
opinions and commentary by columnists and 2) quoting elite sources (e.g. Sir Alex Ferguson).
CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the main findings of the analysis will be presented. These findings are based on the previous chapter’s analysis of the sampled articles.

Finding 1: The Ideological Struggle is Won by the Elites

Stuart Hall (1982) describes the media as a field of ideological struggle where different social actors compete to establish their dominant meaning-system. The main social actors who competed for access to the media after the Hillsborough Disaster were the authorities and the bereaved families of the victims. However, as this study shows, the competition was not only won by the authorities but convincingly so. The authorities’ definition of what happened at the disaster lasted over two decades. The Hillsborough Family Support Group and supporters present at the disaster, tried to challenge the framework by speaking of their experiences and by pointing out the police’s lies. Trevor Hicks criticism of the police gets quoted after the inquest found that the supporters were not drunk at the game: “Hopefully this will lay to rest some of the scurrilous rumours put about by South Yorkshire police” (Cooke, 1990, p. 5). These challenges surface in the Daily Express and The Guardian’s stories from time to time when a community source gets quoted but are few and far between.

Even after the truth was exposed in 2012, the authorities still had privileged access to the media. The study hypothesized that there would be more balance between the two types of sources (elite and community sources) after the release of the
independent report in 2012, but rather than letting the bereaved families and supporters tell their side of the story, the Daily Express and The Guardian still sought out elite sources.

The main reward of winning the ideological struggle, is the preserved welfare of the power structure. While the different blocs of elites, from the police to the Football Association and the public officials, definitely have suffered blows to their reputation and credibility after the independent report, the very system itself still survives. This is one of the mechanisms of the media as a guard dog: In times of conflict, it attacks high ranking individuals to once again create consensus. The Daily Express and The Guardian went after a variety of “Great Persons,” from senior police officers to the presidents of the Football Association and top politicians.

Finding 2: The Myths of Crowds are Entrenched in the Media

One of the main myths about crowds and their behavior is that people become irrational and dangerous (McPhail, 1991). These myths are not only believed by the general public and the police but also the media.

As this study highlights, the media does not understand the way crowds work. This is shown through the Daily Express and The Guardian’s description of the supporters who went to watch the game on April 15, 1989. The main words used by the newspapers to describe their crowd movement is “surge,” “invade” and “rush,” and it is reported that the crowd needs to be “marshalled” and “herded” (Greenwood, 1989, p. 46; “Horror surge,” 1989, p. 9; “Never again,” 1989, p. 1 & p. 3; “Timetable of,” 1989, para. 6). In general, homogeneity is the rule and heterogeneity the exception in the Daily
Express and The Guardian’s coverage. The Liverpool supporters are grouped into one mass that is passed judgment on for their behavior. This only changes in 2012 and 2013 where there are made more deliberate efforts by the newspapers to use words such as minority and some to describe supporter’s behavior.

The importance of understanding the complexity of crowds becomes very clear in the case of the Hillsborough Disaster. Because the media did not have a basic understanding of the phenomenon, they did not challenge the police’s statements nor call them out on misinformation. The lack of knowledge about crowds and the convention of using official sources, benefitted the police. As a result, the media produced their own myths and spread the misinformation about the disaster to the general public.

**Finding 3: The Media is Not Self-Aware of Its Responsibility**

After the release of the independent report in 2012, The Daily Express and The Guardian report critically about The Sun’s lapse in judgment when it published its infamous “The Truth” headline (Brown, 2012; Conn, 2012a). However, neither of the newspapers look back at their own involvement in spreading misinformation. According to Herman and Chomsky (1988) and Hall (1982), bias and self-censorship happen on an unconscious level in the media because they operate within the consensus of society. Similarly, the point can be argued that the Daily Express and The Guardian unconsciously disassociate themselves from guilt when it comes to the question of the media’s role in the aftermath of the disaster. This disassociation happens because routinization is a convention in journalism and because the filters news goes through are engrained. The media are not aware of the fact that their strong reliance on elite sources marginalize other actors and creates a dominant discourse about issues.
This lacking self-awareness is also apparent in the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian*’s 2012 and 2013 coverage of the supporter’s behavior. As was established in the analysis of frames, the two newspapers pass judgment on supporters who make anti-Liverpool chants and mock Hillsborough. The two studied newspapers, and the British national media in general, framed the fans as being to blame and because the coverage of the disaster was so saturated across the national media, large portions of the public were exposed to it. The only newspapers that reported a different frame were local ones and the majority of the public would not have access to these. Neither the *Daily Express* nor *The Guardian* analyze how come some people still believe that Liverpool supporters were to blame for the disaster despite the findings of the independent panel. It is very possible that misconceptions in 2012 and 2013 about the Liverpool supporters involvement are a reflection of the media’s framing of the issue in 1989 and 1990.

**Finding 4: Despite Differences in Form and Style, the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* Report Similarly**

There are many differences between tabloids and qualities in Britain. Some of these differences are mentioned in the study: 1) the sample contains more sports articles from the *Daily Express* while there are more general news and political articles from *The Guardian*, 2) the *Daily Express* uses inflammatory language in contrast to *The Guardian*’s more serious tone, 3) the *Daily Express*’ articles are usually much shorter than *The Guardian*’s, and 4) the *Daily Express* focuses on celebrities (in the shape of football players and managers) while *The Guardian* focuses on political personalities.

Yet, despite these differences in form and style, the newspapers are both under the influence of hegemony. In the context of Herman and Chomsky’s (1988) propaganda
model, the five filters determine the type of news that the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* presents. So, since the tabloid and the quality quoted the same pool of elite sources about the disaster, and since hooliganism was considered newsworthy at the time, both portray the supporters in a negative light and both pair criticism of the police with quotes defending them.

Usually, qualities are held to a higher standard than tabloids. However, as the Hillsborough Independent Panel (1990) also found, the qualities uncritically adopted tabloid sensationalism. Like the *Daily Express*, *The Guardian* publishes unsubstantial claims of drunkenness and ticketlessness among Liverpool’s supporters and does not quote community sources about their experiences. In their political reporting, *The Guardian* also focuses more on the fights between the politicians and the drama of the membership scheme than the implications it has for the disaster.

**Finding 5: Routinization is Deeply Engrained in British Journalism**

This study is built on the foundation of extensive research into the practices of journalists and the role of the media in society. Thus, the findings from the two studied newspapers can be applied to a broader view of journalism, especially in Britain.

By studying the media coverage of the Hillsborough Disaster in two periods of time, this study reveals how deeply engrained routinization is in journalism. From 1989 to 1990 and from 2012 to 2013, the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* predominantly use elite sources. Also, they use the bereaved families and supporters as human interest stories, not as eyewitnesses and people with opinions. Although, the study hypothesizes that there would be a change in the use of sources in the 2012-2013 period because of the
release of the independent report and the exoneration of the supporters, this is not the case.

Routinization is so engrained that despite the revelation of failures by the authorities, these authorities are still the main sources that are sought for information. Also, when the elites change their discourse, the media follow suit. The families and supporters attempted to prove that the police were the cause of the disaster for 23 years, yet only when the government sanctioned a report by the Hillsborough Independent Panel and subsequently spoke out to support the findings, did the media change their coverage.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This study examines social control of the media. The *Daily Express* and *The Guardian*’s coverage of the Hillsborough Disaster, from April 15, 1989, to April 30, 1990, and from September 12, 2012, to September 30, 2013, is examined in order to determine if the political elite controls the media’s coverage. Also, two comparisons are made. First, the coverage of the tabloid newspaper and the quality newspaper is compared. Second, the media’s coverage in the two distinct time periods is compared.

The study found that the elites control the media’s coverage of the disaster mainly through means of cultivating journalistic practices. These practices include determining what is newsworthy and who the appropriate sources are. Once the answer to these two questions is elite issues and elite sources, and are viewed as common-sense by the media, the hegemonic dominance is successful. This is the case for the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* who accept and produce the discourse that: In 1989, the behavior of football supporters was a problem and therefore, the Hillsborough Disaster was caused by the supporters, and that in 2012, the government-sanctioned report revealed the police were to blame and therefore, supporters were acquitted from blame.

The study also found imprints of the power elite’s hegemonic dominance by uncovering the amount of space afforded to authorities and high ranking individuals in the stories. The *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* not only predominantly quote elite sources but also allow them to defend themselves in the very same stories where they are criticized – an advantage that is not afforded to the Liverpool supporters when they are
under attack. It is also in the criticism of and attack on high ranking individuals that the media’s role as a guard dog is exposed. When the authorities have internal disputes in 1989 to 1990, senior policemen are named and attacked while in 2012 to 2013, when the institutional failings of the authorities are revealed, the system itself is not criticized. Rather, the two newspapers protect the welfare of the system by instead blaming “Great Persons.” This restores consensus and in the aftermath of the independent report in 2012, as the newsworthiness fades, the ramifications of the failings at the Hillsborough Disaster are less and less frequently discussed.

Discussion

What this study highlights is the media’s lack of understanding of several key areas. First, the British national media did not reflect the complexity of the Hillsborough Disaster. Rather, the media oversimplified events by being more focused on laying blame than discussing what went wrong. In the process of laying blame, the media marginalized the bereaved families and the Liverpool supporters. Thereby, an untrue version of events was created, the ramifications of which can be seen in the 2012 and 2013 coverage.

Second, the media does not understand how crowds work and as such are prone to creating an image of irrationality and homogeneity. Third, the media automatically connect football and football related disasters with hooliganism, even when there is no violence. This amplifies the phenomenon of hooliganism and creates moral panic over the issue. This general lack of understanding is not inherent to one type of media but, as the analysis of the Daily Express and The Guardian showed, is present in both tabloid newspapers and quality newspapers.
This study argues that the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian*, through their roles as guard dogs for the hegemonic elites, carry a large part of the responsibility for the fact that the truth about the Hillsborough Disaster was not revealed until 2012. As the dominant social producers in society, the media have an enormous responsibility in informing and educating the public. They failed that responsibility not only from 1989 to 1990 but also from 2012 to 2013. Also, an argument can be made that this responsibility is even bigger in 2012 to 2013 due to the global nature of news. With the Internet, news can be shared instantly across the globe and thus, if major media outlets create a certain frame about an issue or an event, this frame will be dominant not only nationally but internationally.

**Future Research**

The saga of the Hillsborough Disaster is not over yet. As this thesis is written in the spring of 2015, the new inquests and investigation into police negligence are still ongoing. As such, more research will be needed to examine the media’s role in reporting these proceedings and generally, the media’s continued portrayal of the disaster and the implicated actors. Research can investigate how the disaster is covered by local Merseyside media, the British national media and international media. It can also encompass more type of mediums, such as radio, television and online papers.

Other interesting avenues of future research also include citizen journalism and social media. Nowadays, a wider variety of actors have the opportunity to affect the news
agenda and research could be conducted to see how the Hillsborough Family Support Group and supporters campaigned for justice online.

Lastly, future research could also include the impacts of the media’s coverage of the disaster from 2012 and onwards on the public’s perception of the issue.

**Limitations**

The main limitation of this study results from the chosen case study. Since the Hillsborough Disaster took place in 1989, it meant having to pull data from news publications during this period. The initial plan was to examine *The Sun* and the *Daily Telegraph* because the two news publications both had the largest print circulations in 1989 and in 2012, along with being the most read online. However, finding readily available print articles from the largest British newspapers and tabloids in 1989 turned out to be very challenging as most newspapers have not created online archives yet. Even when requesting microfilms from libraries, the results were almost nonexistent. Since the publications were British, the microfilms would have to be sent from Britain to the US and in a timely matter as well since the thesis was under time restrictions. Eventually, the search for data was narrowed down to the *Daily Express* and *The Guardian* due to the fact that they fitted the criteria of being large nation-wide publications and on opposite ends of the newspaper quality scale (tabloids and qualities).

One of the limitations of the qualitative method lies in number of media outlets examined. More specifically in the context of this thesis, analyzing only two newspapers and drawing generalizations is not a representative sample of all the British national newspapers. A bigger sample of newspapers and articles would have provided more
empirical data to answer the research question and also yielded a more accurate picture of the media’s portrayal of the disaster.

Furthermore, all the coding was done by one person, meaning there was no check on reliability, as would be the case when there are multiple coders and analysis of intercoder reliability. Having two or more coders, who in turn have high intercoder reliability, can prove the strength of coding methods and that the coding categories are clear. Intercoder reliability shows that measurements can be consistently repeated. In order to make up for the lack of additional coders, the coding sheet was firstly; read and critiqued by the three committee members, secondly; tested on the articles and restructured several times, and lastly; the questions were clearly defined in the coding manual.
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APPENDIX A

Coding sheet

Date of story: __/__/____  Article #: ___  Headline (first two words):

Data source: ___

CODING SHEET

1. What kind of article is it?
   A. News
   B. Sports
   C. Editorial

2. Is the story featured on the front page of the newspaper?
   Yes/No

3. Who is the first source quoted in the article?
   A. Community source (Liverpool FC supporters, family members of victims, other)
   B. Elite source (Police, government officials, other)
   C. None

4. List the second source quote in the article
   A. Community source (Liverpool FC supporters, family members of victims, other)
   B. Elite source (Police, government officials, other)
   C. None

5. Is the word hooligan used?
   Yes/No
   If yes: who used the word?
   A. Author of the article
   B. Police
   C. Government official
   D. Other

6. Did the story characterize or represent the supporters/victims in a negative light?
   Yes/No (If yes: specify phrase)
   With regard to their behavior? Yes/No
   With regard to their background? Yes/No
   With regard to their appearance? Yes/No
7. **Police negligence**: if police negligence is implied in the article, what is your impression about their implied level of negligence?
   - 4 = completely negligent (caused the disaster)
   - 3 = somewhat negligent
   - 2 = neutral
   - 1 = somewhat safe
   - 0 = absolutely safe (not responsible for the disaster)

8. **Police effectiveness**: if police effectiveness is mentioned in the article, what is your impression about their level of effectiveness?
   - 4 = completely ineffective (unsuccessful in managing the crowd)
   - 3 = somewhat ineffective
   - 2 = neutral
   - 1 = somewhat effective
   - 0 = absolutely effective (successful in managing the crowd)

9. **Heysel Disaster**: is there any mention of the 1985 Heysel Disaster?
   - Yes/No
   - If yes: does the comparison tend to blame the victims?
     - Yes/No

10. **Reputation of Merseyside**: if the county of Merseyside and/or the city of Liverpool is mentioned in the article, is it negative towards the residents?
    - 4 = definitely negative (antagonistic toward the residents)
    - 3 = somewhat negative
    - 2 = neutral
    - 1 = somewhat positive
    - 0 = definitely positive (sympathetic toward the residents)

11. **Reason for disaster**: did the article suggest who or what caused the disaster to happen?
    - Yes/No
    - If yes: who or what caused it according to the article?
      - A. The Liverpool FC supporters/victims
      - B. The police
      - C. Crowd pressure
      - D. Other

12. **Acquittal**: did the article directly state who or what were **not** responsible for the disaster?
    - Yes/No
    - If yes: who or what were not responsible according to the article?
      - A. The Liverpool FC supporters/victims
      - B. The police
      - C. Crowd pressure
      - D. Other
APPENDIX B

Coding manual

One coding sheet will be filled out per story. Below are definitions and clarifications of each question along with instructions how to answer them.

Q1 – Article type

Mark A (News) if the article is a general news story. Mark B (Sports) if the article is located in the sports section of the paper. Mark C (Editorial) if the article is an opinion piece written by an editor or if it is a letter to the editor.

If it is not clear which category the article belongs to, e.g. because the information is not provided by the database, skip the question.

Q2 – Front page

Mark Yes if the story starts on the front page of the newspaper. Front page refers to both the front page of the general news and the backside of the newspaper, which is the front page of the sports section. Should a story start on the front page and continue on a later page, this still counts as a front page story.

If there is no information about the location of the article, skip the question.

Also, if the article was originally published online (relevant only in the 2012-13 time period) and information about the location is not available or clear, skip the question.
Q3 – First source

The first source is defined as the person who is interviewed or quoted first in an article, including secondary sources. Community source refers to the general public: Liverpool FC supporters, family members of victims, the victims themselves, ordinary people, and so on. Elite source refers to officials, those in powerful positions and wealthy people: police, government officials, doctors, lawyers, managers, football players, and so on. The third possibility, None, refers to reporter observations or editorial comments.

In the case of parliamentary hearings or inquests, the sources should be coded as either Community or Elite. It is not regarded as merely a reporter observation, due to the fact that it takes place in an open forum for attribution. If interactions between spectators, activists or the police at a protest are written down, it is considered a reporter observation. However, if the activists address the public or the media, it should be coded as a Community or Elite source.

Q4 – Second source

The second source is defined as the person, or secondary source, who is interviewed or quoted next in an article. The answers available and definitions are the same as above.

Q5 – Hooligan

If the word “hooligan” is used about football supporters or just in general, answer Yes. If the word “hooligan” is not mentioned at any time during the article, answer No. The definition of a hooligan can be found in the literature review.
If the word is used then specify who used the word: the author of the article (meaning the journalist or editor), the police, a government official or another. Other could possibly be a player or a member of the community/general public but the assumption is that a community member would not be using the word. If more than one category applies, mark the relevant categories.

Q6 – Characterize or represent

Characterization or representation of the supporters/victims is a description of a person’s or groups special qualities or features. This can be in regard to their behavior, background and appearance. Behavior refers to actions, activities and mannerisms made both before, during and after the disaster by individuals or groups. Background refers to socio-economic status and what city the people live in, while appearance refers to the person’s looks. The coder should mark “Yes” if the above mentioned characterization or representation is negative, here meaning the opposite of positive: i.e. lacking positive attributes.

The supporters/victims in question should specifically be referenced as Liverpool FC supporters/victims in the article or be generalized as football supporters, i.e. not be lumped together with supporters from other clubs. The supporters/victims category will in this case also include any negative representation of the bereaved families and/or the family support group.

It does not specifically have to be the author of the article doing the characterization but it can also be through the mouth of another, i.e. the article referring to characterization done by a source or third party.
If characterization is found, the specific phrase is written down in the appropriate section.

**Q7 – Police negligence**

Since it is not common practice in the media to outright accuse police and other public institutions of negligence, the question is worded so that the coder can find hints or suggestions that the police were not without blame in the disaster. The scale is from 4 to 0, 4 being complete negligence and 0 being absolute safety, and is based on the coder’s own impression created by the article.

Negligence here refers to the police failing to exercise the amount of care that is expected under the circumstances. It also includes police negligence after the disaster – in both the immediate aftermath and leading up until the 2012-13 time period.

Number 2 on the scale is labeled as neutral. Neutral is defined as not taking any sides.

The coder should look for actual mention of the police, in any variety of the word. If no negligence is implied and/or the police is not actually mentioned, move to next question.

**Q8 – Police effectiveness**

This question is introduced as another indicator of the same idea: that the police performance was questionable at the day of the disaster. The scale also goes from 4 to 0 but the highest rating, 4, is absolute effectiveness and 0 is complete ineffectiveness.
Effectiveness here refers to the police producing the expected result of their presence at the game. As with the question above, effectiveness also includes police effectiveness after the disaster and up until the 2012-13 period, and the police should be mentioned.

Number 2 on the scale is labeled as neutral. Neutral is defined as not taking any sides.

If effectiveness is not mentioned, move to next question.

Q9 – Heysel Disaster

The Heysel Disaster that occurred in 1985 also involved Liverpool FC supporters, and therefore sets a precedent for the Hillsborough Disaster. If the Heysel Disaster is mentioned, the coder should mark Yes and subsequently answer whether or not the comparison of the two disasters tend to blame the victims.

Q10 – Reputation

As can be read in the literature review, the county of Merseyside had a bad reputation before the disaster in 1989. This question seeks to uncover whether the bad reputation had an impact on the coverage of the disaster. If the county or city were mentioned in the article and were negative towards the residents, use the scale. The scale goes from 4 as the highest, being definitely negative, to 0 as the lowest, being definitely positive.

Number 2 on the scale is labeled as neutral. Neutral is defined as not taking any sides.
If the county or city are not mentioned in the article, move to next question.

Q11 – Reason

Since the official reason for the disaster is not stated until Lord Taylor released his final report in January 1990, the media could only speculate, and thus the question is worded to consider this fact. In case the article in question does make a suggestion as who or what is to blame for the disaster, the coder must specify which of the categories it falls under: Liverpool FC supporters, the police, crowd pressure (another variation is “crushing”) or another reason. “Other” reason can refer to the club Sheffield Wednesday FC and the Football Association. If more than one category applies, mark the relevant categories.

Q12 – Acquittal

Acquittal refers to a source in a story, or the author self, acquitting someone from responsibility in the circumstances of the disaster. The word does not refer to the judicial process of being acquitted for a crime but is instead making a claim of who or what were not responsible. If a claim of acquittal is made in the article, the coder must specify who is acquitted: Liverpool FC supporters, the police, crowd pressure or a fourth reason. If more than one category applies, mark the relevant categories.

The question is worded absolutely; there has to be a direct statement made and not just a suggestion or hint as in Question 11. This is because an omission of the cause of the disaster in article can in itself be a suggestion or hint of acquittal, and thus is not easily coded. This question is another indicator of the same idea: That the media made speculations of blame.
APPENDIX C

Hillsborough timeline

15 APRIL 1989  The Hillsborough Disaster unfolds at the Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield during a football match between Liverpool FC and Nottingham Forest.

19 APRIL 1989  The Sun publishes its infamous front-page story “The Truth” about the events of the disasters and blames Liverpool FC supporters for misbehavior and assault.

AUGUST 1989  Lord Justice Taylor publishes his interim report about the disaster.

JANUARY 1990  Lord Justice Taylor’s final report is published in which he finds that the police carries the main responsibility for the disaster.

APRIL 1990  The anniversary for the Hillsborough Disaster.

12 SEPTEMBER 2012  The Hillsborough Independent Panel releases their report which fully acquits the victims and supporters and exposes a massive police cover-up to shift blame from themselves to the victims.

19 DECEMBER 2012  A new inquest into the disaster is granted by the High Court.