

Brixton 1981-2011: rioting, newspaper narratives and the effects of a cultural  
vanguard

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## 1. Introduction

Over the last three decades, the London district of Brixton has seen a total of five riots. Three of them were major and two of them were minor, but the 2011 riot was by far the largest in scale. The riot originally started in Tottenham and spread to a number of other boroughs in London over the next few days. Later on, unrest appeared in other major English cities as well. For these reasons, talking about the 2011 Brixton riot is somewhat misleading, even though it is a term which was used by various media outlets for a short period of time. At the moment, the two prevalent terms used with regard to the riots are the 2011 Tottenham riot and the 2011 England riots. This work, however, will have a fairly strong focus on Brixton, and one of the aims of the paper is to use the district's history to create a coherent timeline that highlights the socioeconomic and cultural background of rioting in the area. The reason for our focus on Brixton is quite simple: while rioting has become culturally ingrained in a number of locations in the United Kingdom, Brixton is essentially the poster child of this phenomenon.

Starting from the Notting Hill riot in 1958, opposition to law enforcement and battle against perceived disenfranchisement has been passed down from one generation to another. In other words, analysing and understanding the history of rioting in Brixton will help us find certain common factors that contributed to the 2011 riots as well. While various politicians, newspapers and other actors applied different kinds of narratives and took advantage of pre-existing analytical patterns to explain the reasons behind the riots, the stance of this paper is that they have all been insufficient in one way or another. The kinds of narratives the paper is examining are also known as myths, and they have been used in newspaper and media analysis by Berkowitz, Nossek, Lule and others. The exact definition and the work's methodological approach towards it will be provided in the beginning of section 5, which serves as the introduction chapter to the media analysis section.

Referring to Sir Brian Leveson's massive public investigation into the News of the World phone hacking scandal, David Lammy, who has been the Tottenham MP for

12 years, has expressed his frustration regarding “the failure to hold a ‘Leveson inquiry into the riots’ to try to understand the causes and to ensure such disturbances do not happen again” (Peachey, 2012). While Lammy’s own take on such an inquiry, called “Out of the Ashes” and published in 2011, blames the riots on the dominance of consumption, greed and materialism in modern culture, the interpretation present in this thesis will be quite different. The cultural element will still be crucial to the analysis, but it should be obvious that simply criticising modern culture is insufficient in addressing Brixton’s long-standing history of unrest. Our decision to focus on Brixton even though the 2011 England riots started in Tottenham is not just historical, cultural or rhetorical. It partially stems from the fact that for a brief period of time, the 2011 England riots were directly connected to the legacy of Brixton by the media. One example of this is a certain article in *The Guardian* that claims that they were “by all accounts the worst disturbances of their kind since the 1995 Brixton riots” (Lewis, 2011a). Similar parallels were drawn in *Daily Mail* and, to lesser extent, *The Telegraph*. The 1995 riots, however, pale in comparison to the Broadwater Farm riot of 1985, which would have been a more appropriate point of comparison in every way considering that it occurred in Tottenham, where the 2011 riots started. Regardless, it is quite clear that the newspapers were set on painting the 2011 riots as a yet another incident of Brixton unrest immediately after the initial outbreak.

The Broadwater Farm riot is generally considered to be a kind of a follow-up to the actual 1985 Brixton riot, which indicates that the two districts have a shared history of rioting. As such, it is logical to include a look at the Broadwater Farm riot and other similar incidents in the paper’s summary of the history of rioting and unrest in Brixton. Considering that the analysis present in this thesis is divergent from all of the explanations present in the mainstream, the work is inherently contrarian. The reason for this fundamentally different approach lies in the fact that the commonly accepted interpretations fail to answer certain key questions: why is the name of Brixton “shorthand for strife” and a “byword for disorder” (Vallely, 1995)? What is the reason this history of social unrest has remained persistent in the region for the last 60 years? Why was Brixton one of the first districts to join the 2011 England

riots? There are other areas in Britain that are facing similar socioeconomic issues, but Brixton's legacy and continuing tendency to riot remain very unique. Even so, this intense interpretative focus on Brixton should be seen as exemplary rather than definitive in some sections of the thesis. This is especially true with regard to one of the other primary goals, which is to examine the way the 2011 riots were framed by the media. While the initial reporting was somewhat Brixton-specific, that narrative died out once the riots started to spread all over the country. Even if we attempted to make this objective specific to Brixton, the media and the government have hardly discriminated or shown major differentiation between the London districts or even the various cities that were involved, which means that geographically these specific sections have to be all-inclusive rather than exclusive.

The goal of the media analysis in the present paper is to take an in-depth look at how certain British newspapers handled their reporting on the riots. We will consider what kinds of narratives and framing were present in their reporting and attempt to define certain dominant patterns. The paper's exact definition of what narratives and framing are will be provided in section 5. In addition to being a major aspect of the thesis, narrative analysis is also our most important analytical approach. At this point it should be obvious that clear-cut media analysis is not the only objective of this work. While the analysis should be seen as neutral and valuable in and of itself, it will be utilised further in later parts of the paper. To be specific, we will elaborate on what exactly is problematic with the mainstream narratives and eventually provide a very different interpretation, which will heavily utilise the background of social unrest in Brixton.

With regard to the British government, we will take the responses in policy-making and the various verbal and written statements from the members of the government into account. Due to our focus on newspaper media, the latter will only consist of responses that were publicised by the media outlets we are examining. However, this only applies to the actual media analysis chapters, and other sources will be used in the preliminary Brixton analysis and the section that focuses on the events of the 2011 riots. The newspapers we will be looking at are *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*

and *Daily Mail*, which serve as an ideological cross-section of the British newspaper industry. The BBC will not be considered despite its massive presence in Britain, as placing a media outlet that operates on so many separate channels next to three newspapers would make the research base uneven. The inability to easily and freely access television footage and radio broadcasts produced by the BBC would also render any careful consideration of their reporting on the riots either completely impossible or academically impaired.

Structurally, the most important parts of this thesis are present in sections 5, 6 and 7: the first one focuses on the reporting that occurred during the riots, which lasted from 6th to 10th August. The second one will concentrate on the period between 11th and 17th August, where new types of framing start to appear as the older ones become obsolete. Chapter 7 is less constrained in form, and it concentrates on scrutinizing what we discover in sections 5 and 7. The newspaper sections are preceded by sections 2, 3 and 4, which are preliminary chapters that aim to inform the reader of the necessary historical details. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the history of rioting in Brixton and the background of the 2011 riots, while section 2 will elaborate on the concept of rioting in the context of the thesis. Chapter 4 establishes a timeline for the major events that occurred during the 2011 riots. This approach allows the paper to focus on framing and narrative rather than the latest development or incident during the media analysis sections. In addition to historical accounts and newspapers, other academic sources will be cited and referenced throughout the paper. These sources range from the cultural analysis present in Stuart Hall's and Paul Gilroy's works to entirely independent analysis. Gilroy's analysis will be particularly crucial to the primary thesis question, which concerns the unique nature of Brixton, its relationship to rioting and the presence of what the paper will refer to and define as a cultural vanguard. Much like Gilroy's own works, this thesis will be operating in the tradition of Theodor Adorno's cultural, social and musicological analysis.

## 2. Initial analysis: rioting in the context of Brixton

Probably the most important thing that has to be examined initially is the way rioting and riots are conceptually approached in this paper. In the context of the Brixton riots, they have been classified as race riots, protests against the socioeconomic status quo or the police, mindless looting, criminality and, according to one specific *Daily Mail* article, a deficiency of brain chemicals (“Rioters may have ‘lower levels’ of brain chemical”, 2011). As such, taking an initial look at some of these notions and defining the approach that will be prevalent in this paper is important. When Cameron returned to Britain on 9th August and referred to the riots as “criminality, pure and simple” during a cabinet meeting (Reicher, 2011), he essentially established the mainstream ontology of the riots. This approach is something that needs to be challenged from the very beginning of this work. Unlike the other narratives, the criminality angle is capable of explaining the riots from a technical point of view: the riots were caused by criminals, who become criminals due to the persistent culture of criminality in modern Britain. It does not, however, manage to explain the origins of this cultural criminality and it offers no evidence as far as its existence is concerned. While this premise is not the only one that will be challenged in this paper, it is definitely the most prominent one. While some may see a connection between socioeconomic deprivation and criminality rates, the criminality angle discounts this entirely. When faced with this idea, Cameron’s response was “No, this was about behaviour” (Reicher, 2011). In addition, Thornburgh has noted that “It seems to comfort the authorities to see the rioters as amoral outliers. ‘We want to make it absolutely clear: they have nothing to protest against,’ said one Manchester police official” (2011).

The concept of seeing a riot as the result of nothing but criminality is not new, however. It is an explanation that has been applied to literally dozens of riots in the United States and Britain over the last 90 years. Upton (1984), citing Fogelson (1971), refers to the phenomenon as “the Criminality (Riff-Raff) Theory” and mentions that the “widespread notion underpinning the riff-raff pseudo theory holds that: (1) only a small fraction of the black population (two to three percent of the

urban ghetto population) actively participated in urban riots; (2) the rioters, far from being representatives of the black community, were mainly the ‘riff-raff’, the young, unattached, unskilled, unemployed, uprooted, criminal (petty thieves, hustlers), and outside agitators; and (3) the overwhelming majority of the black population (the law-abiding and respectable, 97 or 98 percent who did not join in the rioting) totally opposed the riots” (pp. 27-28). As Upton himself points out, this is a brand of arm-chair theorising that has a tendency to surface during times of social unrest. While the 2011 England riots were not race riots as such, there is clearly a historical precedent to the criminality angle that was espoused by Cameron. The goal of the Criminality Theory has traditionally been to depoliticise the event and to reinforce the idea that there is no real reason for the people to riot. In the case of Brixton there are other implications as well, as the theory is perfectly consistent with Cameron’s idea of a Broken Britain. This naturally makes it inherently consistent with his political platform. In addition, it would mean that there is no real connection between the 2011 riots and the previous Brixton and Tottenham riots, which entirely discounts the social legacy of Brixton.

Under the premise of pure criminality, the idea of socioeconomic factors, for example, would be completely ignored as a reason for the riots. Instead, the common denominator would be that Brixton and Tottenham have always been inhabited by people with purely criminal tendencies. This view is, of course, extremely inconsistent. First off, it offers no insight into what created or continues to create this criminality in the first place. It is also incapable of explaining what causes this criminality to culminate into a riot and why there are long stretches of time where no rioting occurs. While these questions should be extremely relevant to any analysis regarding the 2011 riots, the pure criminality train of thought turns all of them aside and focuses simply on how criminal the people involved in the riots are. David Cameron has also denied that there is “any justifiable causal link” between the death of Mark Duggan and the 2011 rioting (“Riots: David Cameron’s Commons statement in full”, 2011). It has to be mentioned that the government-commissioned report from the Riots Communities and Victims Panel disagrees with Cameron on this

matter, and argues that there is a very clear link between the death of Mark Duggan and the 2011 riots (Riots Communities and Victims Panel [RCVP], 2011, p. 40).

During the 2011 riots, there was a particularly strong focus on the aspect of looting in the media. The supporters of the criminality angle have taken the seeming prevalence of looting and stealing to be proof of their interpretation. Even David Lammy, whose work on the subject was mentioned earlier, considers the looting to be the result of a loss of morality caused by modern consumerist culture. Looting and theft, however, do have a strongly defined historical precedent as well. Much of Upton's *A Social History of 20th Century Urban Riots* deals with the transition from traditional communal riots of the late 19th and very early 20th century to modern commodity riots. While his focus is largely on American race riots, it is clear that ever since the 1935 Harlem riot most modern riots have been commodity riots. The difference between a communal riot and a commodity riot is rather simple: while the former is specifically a conflict between different communities and the violence is explicitly directed towards other groups, in a commodity riot the violence is directed towards property. Ever since the transition to modern commodity riots, which occurred with the development of the Black Liberation movement, practically every single political riot that has occurred in the West has been of the commodity variety.

With this in mind, it should be clear that the idea that looting has more to do with crime and the desire to commit crime rather than the circumvention of the established rule of law as a form of protest is inconsistent with the history of rioting in the West. While materialism and consumerism may have been factors, the attempt to twist the 2011 England riots into some abstract culmination point where either the inherent socialised criminality present in certain communities or the violent consumerist *Zeitgeist* breaks through the looking glass suffers from historical teleology. While this teleology is characteristic of present-day neoliberalism, which means that it is an ingrained part of modern discourse, the inability to create hypotheses and conceptual frameworks on a larger historical scale is extremely problematic when we are, for example, looking at an area that happens to have a historically established legacy of social unrest and violence. In cases like this, applying analysis that only applies to

the present is inherently the wrong approach. The socioeconomic explanation, which does account for the previous riots, suffers from a somewhat similar problem: its reliance on purely economic and legal data ignores the cultural and communal aspects that are relevant to shared identities and modes of thought. In other words, while the socioeconomic angle, which in Upton's terms would be a historical-economic rather than a structural-situational middle-range theory, is capable of offering a viable reason for the riots in an economic and historical vacuum, it is unable to explain or define the reason behind Brixton's unique connection to rioting.

### 3. Overview of Brixton and the Brixton riots

Brixton is a district within the London Borough of Lambeth, which is located in South London. It is a well-known area: while the people of London may be particularly familiar with it and associate Brixton with urban poor and criminal activity, it is fair to say that most people in the United Kingdom know the district for its previous riots and racial tension. It is also known for housing HM Prison Brixton, which is one of the more notorious English prisons. 24 percent of the district's population is of African and Caribbean descent, and many of the current inhabitants are directly related to the original Windrush generation. The Empire Windrush was a ship brought the first Jamaican immigrants to Brixton after the Second World War in 1948. They were generally former World War II servicemen who had been conscripted by Britain and were later invited to come to the country as a response to the post-war labour shortage. Even though these first Brixton immigrants ran into some trouble with the local populace regarding lodging and other things, which culminated in the 1958 race riot on Notting Hill, the area has diversified quite a bit over a years. Polish immigrants have been present since the 1950s, while more recent immigrant communities consist of migrants from Turkey and the Middle East.

During the last 40 years, Brixton has been affected by three major riots. They occurred in 1981, 1985, and 2011. Two minor riots happened in 1995 and 2001. All of these riots have followed a certain pattern, and while socioeconomic conditions have improved over the last 30 years they are still substandard. In 1981, 55% of the black residents were unemployed ("Q&A: The Scarman Report", 2004). Under the assumption that all of the riots have been caused by nothing but pure criminality, this number would be of marginal relevance. Assuming that there is a connection between unemployment, poverty and criminality, it can be safely claimed that a 55% rate of unemployment is more than sufficient as far the formation of a young criminal population is concerned. It is also doubtful that most proponents of the pure criminality angle would attempt to refute the relevance of unemployment to the matter at hand. Their relentless concentration on the criminal aspect of rioting does, however, reveal their belief that the criminality is the real problem here. In other

words, rather than address the issues that lead to violent radicalisation and crime, they concentrate on punishing the criminals. The consistency of this logic is obvious: the criminals do not follow the social rules we have established, so we must adopt a punitive policy that acts as a deterrent. In other words, the criminals are still indifferent towards the system, but at least the fear of punishment will prevent them from committing crimes.

The effectiveness of retributive justice has been debated endlessly (e.g. Zehr, 1985; Daly, 1999), and as a topic it is so divisive that discussing it at great length in this thesis would be redundant. These approaches are, however, worth looking at as the media had a particularly strong focus on punishment and retribution during and after the riots. With regard to the 2011 riots, the main methods of punishment have been incarceration and a removal of all social benefits. On multiple occasions, the latter has involved family evictions from their council housings, so the punishment is being extended to the rioters' parents and other family members as well. Some groups have criticised this as "destitution punishment" (Jones & Bowcott, 2011). If we accept the idea that poverty drives people to criminality, it should be clear that forcing families who rely on benefits out of their homes will just contribute to their poverty, which in turn will drive them to criminal behaviour. As long as one accepts that there is a causal relationship between poverty and criminality, the logic behind this argument is solid.

Returning to the actual riots, it has to be mentioned that not a single riot in Brixton has simply fermented out of inadequate socioeconomic conditions. They have always had an initial spark of some sort. Waddington (1992) refers to these sparks as flashpoints in his relatively well-known flashpoint theory and claims that functionally every riot has its start in a very specific event that causes a group of people to become aggravated (p. 13). In the case of Brixton, the most famous such flashpoint happened in the April of 1981; in an effort to combat crime in the district, the Metropolitan Police initiated Operation Swamp and dispatched a large number of plainclothes police officers to the Brixton area. Operating on the basis of the sus law, which allowed the officers to stop and search people on the basis of suspicion, they

stopped and searched over 1000 people over the next six days. Most of them were young black men (Walters, 1997, p. 167). Steve Margiotta, a recent police recruit, was dispatched to the streets during this operation. While patrolling, he spotted and attempted to stop a severely injured black man, and called for help when he ran away. Rumours soon spread that he had attempted to prevent the man from getting treatment and that the injured person had died. This was the spark that ignited the first Brixton riot that involved around 5000 people. The riot culminated on the Bloody Saturday of 11 April. After the first riot, the government decided to hold a public enquiry under Lord Scarman. His report was somewhat critical of the Metropolitan Police, and he claims to believe that there is “no doubt racial disadvantage was a fact of current British life” (“Brixton Disorders: The Scarman Report”, §1404). Still, his final conclusion was that institutional racism did not exist within the Metropolitan Police.

One of the government’s responses to the first Brixton riot was to create an entity called the Police Complaints Authority, which was formed in 1985. Estimating what kind of an effect the PCA had on the situation in Brixton is quite difficult, but its successor, the Independent Police Complaints Commission, had quite an impact on the media during the 2011 riot. That will be more pertinent later, however. Scarman also had a few ideas for social and economic reforms, but the Commission for Racial Equality was less than enthusiastic to implement them. Apparently such things were “seriously out of key” at the time (“Q&A: The Scarman Report”, 2004). The Lambeth London Borough Council also commissioned a series of murals to be painted on a number of significant Brixton buildings. Many of these have now been completely destroyed or they are in a state of severe disrepair, which reflects how they were received by the community.

Officially, the riot also resulted in the repealing of the sus law. Its practice did not disappear for good however, as after the cessation of the law police officers could still stop and search civilians based on reasonable suspicion. In essence, the authorities added an abstract and hard-to-measure metre of reasonability to restrict the police from stopping people on a whim. While there was clearly a period of time

where the stop and search disappeared due to the danger of another riot, recent statistics from Tottenham make it quite clear that it has made a return and that it is utilised widely (Metropolitan Police Authority [MPA], 2011). The immediate political responses to the Brixton riots have never been effective, and they take the last spot in the three-part Brixton riot pattern. First we see a flashpoint, which naturally results in a riot that is followed by a characteristically inadequate political response and a failure to address the problems properly.

The second riot occurred in 1985. The police erroneously shot a black woman called Dorothy Groce, better known as Cherry Groce. The incident happened while the officers were conducting a home search and trying to track down Groce's son, who was suspected of being connected to a local robbery. The riots that broke out were somewhat smaller in scale, even though more people ended up getting arrested than in 1981. To be specific, 50 people were injured and one killed, and around 200 people were arrested. In 1981, over 360 people were injured and 82 people were arrested. The number of destroyed vehicles, especially police ones, was negligible in comparison to the 1981 riot. As a result of this riot, the officer at fault was prosecuted for malicious wounding. He was acquitted in 1987. A week later, the Metropolitan Police caused the death of Cynthia Jarrett in the North London district of Tottenham. This, in turn, sparked the Broadwater Farm riot, during which a police officer was killed.

A 2011 rioter characterised the government's response to 1985 riot by saying that "they built us a swimming pool" (Fletcher, 2011). In other words, despite the high levels of racial tension, no official policies were implemented or modified. After Groce's death in 2011, Lee Lawrence, who is her youngest son, noted that "the police have gotten better at covering things up; they wouldn't make the same mistakes again, like breaking into a woman's house and shooting her however it's still happening, just in a different way" ("Woman whose shooting sparked Brixton riots", 2011). There might be some truth to this as far as the notion about the police becoming more careful is concerned; for the next ten years there were no major social outbreaks in Brixton or Tottenham. The slow, but constant, improvement of

the socioeconomic level, especially in regard to employment, was likely a major factor as well. Similarly, the 1995 and 2001 riots were both sparked by deaths caused by the law enforcement. In 1995, a man called Wayne Douglas died in police custody, and in 2001 the Metropolitan Police shot a man who they thought was armed. These riots were both quite small in scale, and only lasted a few hours. While they may not be particularly notable as far as damages are concerned, they do highlight the fact that the racial tensions between the black residents and the predominantly white Metropolitan Police were and are still very much present. At this point, the lineage of rioting had persisted through two or three generations. Even if one happens to believe that tensions such as this do not exist, these riots prove that for some unstated reason Brixton had and has retained its invisible connection to social unrest. The standard of living has not improved either, as the rate of unemployment has always remained relatively high (Lambeth Council, 2005).

As far as racial aggravation is concerned, it is quite clear that the stop and search practice and what is perceived as harassment by the police has always played a crucial part in these riots. Even though the sus laws were repelled, stop and search as a practice has been making a return to certain London districts in recent years. In Tottenham, the numbers are as follows: from February to April in 2011, 6991 people were stopped and searched by the police. 22 were arrested, which means that the stop and search practice in Tottenham has a success rate of 0.003%. Black people were still more likely to be stopped, even though the area has three times as many white residents (MPA, 2011). According to the London School of Economics and the Open Society Justice Initiative, black people were, in 2008 and 2009, 26 times more likely to be stopped than whites in England and Wales as a whole. It is fair to say that these figures stand true for Brixton as well, even if specific statistics for the district have not been released. According to the English Indices of Deprivation 2011 study, Haringey, which is the borough that houses Tottenham, is classified as the 8th most deprived borough in all of England, and out of the thirty-three London boroughs it is ranked 4th. Brixton and Streatham are part of the Lambeth borough, which was the 10th most deprived borough in London at the time. It is worth noting that Hackney,

Newham and Tower Hamlets, which are the three London boroughs that are ranked as the most deprived areas in all of England, all took part in the 2011 riots.

#### 4. The 2011 riots

The 2011 England riots were the most wide-spread of all the riots Brixton and London have experienced. Due to the rather complex nature of the flashpoint, the death of Mark Duggan will be discussed in a separate section. The 2011 riots started on 6th August, and they originated from a protest march, which consisted of roughly 120 people, that went from Broadwater Farm to the Tottenham police station. The riots spread quickly all over England, and Brixton was obviously one of the first affected areas due to its socioeconomic and physical proximity to Tottenham. The cultural aspect of Brixton, which will be discussed in a later section, played a part as well. The first incidents of violence were in the evening, when a group of youths burned down the Tottenham post office and caused damage to other public properties. On 7th August, the rioting spread to Enfield and Brixton. At this time, Councillor Steve Reed of Lambeth decided to highlight the fact that the people involved in the disorder are not rioters, but looters (“UPDATE: Lambeth Council leader”, 2011).

As was discussed in the initial analysis section, attempting to make a distinction between a rioter and a looter can be quite problematic. Reed’s argument is essentially based on nothing but semantics, but its connotative importance far outweighs its denotative form. While it is true that a large amount of the participants in many riots do not take part in the disorder because of their specific beliefs or convictions, this is not indicative that the riots are not somehow politically or socially important. Generally speaking, the rioters simply feel that something is not right with the established institutions or systems, and they are willing to break the social and civil norms that the government enforces using its monopoly on violence. In some cases the individual’s political understanding may be sophisticated enough that they fully understand that “property loss and/or destruction may bring power-holding groups and powerless minorities to the bargaining/negotiating tables more readily than the loss of human lives (Upton, 1984, p. 43).

In other cases, however, the decision to participate in a riot may be motivated by something as simple as race, community or neighbourhood solidarity. Furthermore, even if someone takes part in a riot just to steal, it is indicative of a systematic failure rather than a culture of theft and consumerism. It is evidence that the individual has very little respect for the system and is willing to break the status quo. To some extent the situation here is similar to the debate between retributive and rehabilitative justice: one side sees criminal behaviour as the product of an error within the status quo, while the other claims that it is essentially a personality flaw. While the proponents of the latter have historically been more than happy to attribute these personality flaws to certain ethnicities and races, their modern counterparts, such as Cameron, have been forced to focus on more ill-defined concepts such as regionalised cultural criminality.

Returning to Reed's argument, the bottom line is that if you are willing to take part in a riot and attack property in any way, you are a rioter. Even if the individual was entirely motivated by greed, their participation is evidence that they have little to no respect for the system, the status quo and the rule of law. Whether you are pelting the Metropolitan Police with projectiles or looting the local branch of Halfords in Brixton is irrelevant, as they both are displays of a determination to oppose the system. Any attempt to create a distinction between a rioter and a looter is symptomatic of a lack of comprehension regarding what rioting actually entails. You can still object to rioting, but trying to create a distinction between rioting and looting in this context is motivated either by a moral judgement of some sort or it is an attempt to undermine the idea that there is a conditional or political background behind the rioting. Even if it is the former, sanctioning rioting, as in the destruction of property, but condemning looting, as in the expropriation of property, is a fairly inconsistent ethical stance.

On 7th August, besides Enfield and Brixton, some other London districts faced less populous disorder in the forms of incidental looting and destruction of property. Woolwich is the fourth London district that was hit particularly hard, and several shops and buildings were looted and set on fire. During the first two days, the

Metropolitan Police tripled the amount of deployed officers and initiated Operation Withern, which was an investigation into Mark Duggan and the origins of the riot. Things started escalating quickly on 8th August, and the riots spread to entirely different cities. While rioting was still strongest in the original areas, around 35 of the 118 districts in London experienced some sort of civil disturbance. All of the 32 boroughs were placed on riot alert (Dodd, 2011a). Christine Jones, a commander for the Metropolitan Police, described these as “small pockets of violence, looting and disorder breaking out on [*sic*] a number of boroughs” (“Rioting spreads to south London”, 2011). Birmingham, Bristol, Epsom and Leeds were centres of significant unrest. To name a few incidents, a police station was burned in Birmingham and a man was shot in Leeds. A total of 130 people were arrested in Birmingham over the course of the day. Other cities, such as Derby and Brighton, only had to deal with rumours of rioting. For various reasons, this day is essentially the pinnacle of the 2011 England riots. This is not simply due to the fact that the amount of damage to property probably culminated on this day, or that the amount of rioting begun to diminish afterwards.

The other major thing that makes 8th August the peak of the riots is the fact that the failures to contain them finally forced David Cameron to return to the United Kingdom from his holiday trip in Tuscany, Italy. The press certainly had a stake in his return as well, as certain publications were eager to move from criticising Cameron’s choice of holiday footwear (Pisa, 2011) to criticising his decision to let London burn (White, 2011). He returned to Britain the following morning. One highly publicised casualty occurred in London on 8th August; the death of 68-year-old Richard Mannington Bowes, who was attacked by a few rioters after attempting to extinguish several burning industrial bins, gained an immense amount of media attention. He died later in hospital, and the assault on him was witnessed by a number of riot police who were unable to respond in time due to being severely outnumbered by the mob in Ealing. This was by far the most publicised death that occurred during the riots, as the deaths of Gavin Clarke, Haroon Jahan, Shahzad Ali and Abdul Musavir did not provoke the press into performing in-depth investigations and background checks on the victims.

What separates the types of reporting here are the kinds of narratives the media outlets created for them: Bowes was turned into an iconic Englishman, the “hero of Ealing” (Smyth & Wade, 2011) who stood up against disorder. Meanwhile, the deaths of three Muslims, who all had distinctly non-English names, became a footnote to an article talking about race war in *Daily Mail* (Seamark, 2011a). Boris Johnson, the mayor of London, had the following to say about him: "I feel desperately sorry and sad for him, and what a hero he is. He walked straight up in front of the looters and tried to stop what was happening. He is an example to everybody" (Thompson & Chakelian, 2011). Ealing Council is currently considering naming the alley where he was attacked after him, and has already created the Richard Mannington Bowes Relief Fund.

The rioting proceeded as expected on 9th August, and there were only a few incidents that are worth expanding on. While the usual London districts were hit, the rioting quietened down significantly during the night, which was the first mark that the riots were starting to die off. Even though the night was quiet in London, the same does not apply to the other affected cities. Scuffles and outright violence between rioters and the police increased significantly, and people in entirely new cities decided to take part in the civil unrest. Cambridge and Basildon, for instance, saw the formation of significant mobs of rioters. In Birmingham, the police used something *The Telegraph* refers to as a “thunderflash”, which was probably a stun grenade, to disperse a crowd of 300 rioters (Britten & Hough, 2011). This was a deviation from their generally passive riot strategies.

As was mentioned previously, David Cameron returned to London in the morning of 9th August. He immediately called an emergency meeting of the cabinet and issued a statement at 11:00, announcing that 16000 police officers will be deployed to London and that all police leave has been cancelled. The Metropolitan Police also announced their intention to use less-lethal baton rounds against the rioters if necessary. With this in mind, it should not be a surprise that 10th August was the final proper day of the riots. On the last day only a handful of cities were affected in

any way, and only two besides London saw the formation of a proper riot mob. The firebombing of a police station in Nottingham led to the arrest of more than 90 people. This was the largest simultaneous mass arrest that occurred during the riots. Liverpool also had a mob of around 200 people, which caused damage to various properties with projectile weapons.

Towards the end of the riots, the rioting in London took a particularly bizarre turn as citizens and shopkeepers in Enfield and some other districts decided to form vigilante protection groups. This was possibly influenced by the fact that *The Guardian* had published a story about some shopkeepers and the Turkish community in Dalston organising itself to oppose the riots (Beaumont & Coleman & Laville, 2011). This idea of an internal cross-cultural conflict then made its way into some other publications as well. Representatives from the Hundred Flower Cultural Centre in Dalston, a local association that has primarily Turkish and Sikh members, have since refuted this idea and claimed that the Turkish community will stand with the rioters (Reel News, 2011). Regardless, the vigilante groups and the involvement of the English Defence League, better known as the EDL, in vigilantism caused significant problems for the Metropolitan Police, and in the evening their riot police units even clashed with a mob of 200 vigilantes in Eltham. They were all arrested, and 50 of them were found to have connections to the EDL. In the morning of the 10th, David Cameron organised another emergency cabinet meeting. This led to the official announcement that the government will sanction the use of plastic bullets and that water cannons will be made available within 24 hours if they are deemed necessary. Despite this, some fairly minor incidents occurred on 11th August.

The initial police reports after the riot placed the overall amount of damage somewhere around £100 million. However, certain other numbers have appeared in the press as well, and it is difficult to precisely estimate the amount of damage at this point. The Association of British Insurers, for instance, estimated the amount of damage in London to be well over £100 million alone. Thanks to the interim report on the riots published by the Riots Communities and Victims Panel, we actually have more specific numbers for the amount of damages done. The report estimates that the

total cost of the riots is around half a billion pounds (RCVP, 2011, p. 10). At least a hundred homes were destroyed due to arson as well.

On 11th August, Parliament was recalled from the summer recess, and David Cameron issued a few statements that indicated that he wants to improve the police's riot tactics by increasing their severity. The implementation of a scheme that would remove benefits from the rioters and their families was suggested soon after the riots. The total number of people arrested is around 3.100, and more than 1.000 of them have been charged. Relatively speaking, the bulk of these arrests happened in London, where roughly 1.000 people had been arrested immediately after the riots and 600 of them were facing charges. Over the course of the riots themselves and all the way to the present day, certain outlets have been attempting to maintain coverage of the incident that sparked the riots. The death of Mark Duggan and the uncertainties associated with it are extremely relevant, and the account of the events provided by the Metropolitan Police has been constantly shifting. Many media outlets have already given up on this line of reporting in favour of something fresher, but *The Guardian* has been relentlessly attempting to uncover new details about it. Their work has not been in vain, as on 19th November they had something of a breakthrough, which led to a confrontation between the newspaper and the Metropolitan Police.

#### 4.1. Mark Duggan: media and the background of the riot

As was previously mentioned, the death of Mark Duggan is the incident that sparked the 2011 riots. The way his death was handled by the Metropolitan Police and the British media are obviously critical to the subject of this thesis, and we will discuss them in considerable detail. He died from a gunshot wound inflicted by the Metropolitan Police on 4th August after the car he was travelling in was stopped. His cousin, Kelvin Easton, had been stabbed recently, and Duggan was under surveillance by undercover police on the suspicion that he might have been planning to take revenge. On 6th August, 120 of Duggan's friends and family formed a protest

march that went from Broadwater Farm to the Tottenham Police Station. They demanded to hear a senior member of the police force to come out and explain the situation to them. According to some reports, a chief inspector did come out to speak to them, but apparently his seniority or statements were not sufficient. At 20:15, Duggan's family gave up and went home, but around two hours afterwards the unrest started by people setting fire to the Tottenham post office. Thirty minutes later police vehicles were attacked and a few shops were looted (Israel, 2011). Due to the protest march not being covered by mainstream British media, it is almost impossible to tell exactly what happened and what led to the violence. The interim report provides us with a decent general timetable of the events, but the lack of media coverage means that a lot of the context has been lost.

The way Mark Duggan's death has been framed in the media is quite interesting, and the details of his shooting have changed multiple times. The first articles and reports about it clearly imply that there had been a gunfight: the Metropolitan Police had stopped his minicab and attempted to arrest him, which led to him shooting at the police. He hit a police radio, and was immediately killed by the police. Considering that the IPCC stated that they "understand the officer was shot first before the male was shot" ("Man killed in shooting incident involving police officer", 2011), it is no wonder that the media as a whole reached this conclusion. The initial framing of the shooting and his death were strongly influenced by this fact, and *The Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* presented him as a "gangster who lived by the gun" (Whitehead & Gardham, 2011; "'Gangster' shot dead by police sparking riots did NOT fire at officers", 2011; Williams, 2011a; Camber, 2011). Most of his relatives deny his suggested criminal connections, but according to his wife he "was known to the police" (France & Pollard, 2011). Still, it is true that he had never been arrested. The police have not actually given a statement regarding his background, so it is very likely that the journalists received this information from independent investigations. Some newspapers, such as *The Times*, decided to give Duggan a much more benign narrative, turning him into a family man rather than a gangster (Schlesinger, 2011). Currently, the generally accepted narrative is that Duggan was a member of the Star Gang, a small offshoot of Tottenham Mandem Crew. He was known as "Starrish

Mark” and was a drug dealer. None of this has been verified by the police, so our only course of action is to either trust or distrust the journalistic integrity of the reporters. Needless to say, there is a multitude of inconsistencies regarding Mark Duggan’s character.

On 12th August, the IPCC put out a very short statement about how they had “inadvertently given misleading information to journalists” about the shooting (Independent Police Complaints Commission [IPCC], 2011a). Some media outlets, such as *The Guardian*, picked up on this quickly and published a number of in-depth articles about it. However, *Daily Mail* and *The Telegraph*, both of which had decided to frame Duggan as a gangster, were quite sparse in their reporting regarding this new development. *Daily Mail* published one completely toneless article about it (“Police watchdog admits it may have wrongly led journalists”, 2011), while *The Telegraph* did not even respond to the 12th August statement. They did, however, publish a video and a short web article regarding the 9th August IPCC statement (“London riots: IPCC says ‘no evidence’ Mark Duggan opened fire”, 2011). The video confirms that the bullet lodged in the police radio was a jacketed round from a police-issue Heckler & Koch MP5. The 9th August web article is also where *The Telegraph*’s interest on Mark Duggan fizzles out, as no further articles about his death or the development of the criminal investigation have been published since. While the entire process was plagued by uncertainties and questionable statements from the IPCC, *The Guardian* kept up with the reporting for months. Finally, on 19th November, reporters from *The Observer* had something of a breakthrough. *The Guardian*, being *The Observer*’s sister paper, was the first one to publish an article. *Daily Mail* followed suit, but *The Telegraph* did not.

Up until this point, the press had been operating under the assumption that Mark Duggan, despite him not shooting at the police, was still armed. The article published on 19th November by *The Guardian* attempts to refute this, and their original headline even triggered a direct response from the IPCC. “Revealed: man whose shooting triggered riots was not armed: Mark Duggan investigation finds he was not carrying gun when killed in Tottenham” was the headline used in the daily

newspaper. The online version, however, was changed to “New questions raised over Duggan shooting: investigators find no forensic evidence that man whose death triggered riots was holding gun” after *The Guardian* was contacted by the IPCC. There is still a note at the end of the article, informing the reader that the headline has been amended (Dodd, 2011b). Currently it is a lead-in to another article that is essentially a public apology to the IPCC and the Metropolitan Police, but before that article was published the tone of the note was not nearly as penitent as it currently is. The IPCC initially threatened to contact the Press Complaints Commission about the headline (IPCC, 2011b).

Regardless, the new details do shed light on some things. Unfortunately, the article also manages to create a paradox of sorts. The first police reports about Duggan’s death claim that the gun was hidden in a sock with a small hole for the barrel, and these recent revelations verify that fact. According to the new information, the gun was located in a shoe box, and the box was in the back of the vehicle (Dodd, 2011b). The weapon was loaded with one bullet and it had not been fired. At this point things seem clear, but what is problematic is the fact that the gun was not recovered from a sock inside a shoe box. Instead, it was recovered 10 to 14 feet away from his body, on the other side of a fence. Obviously there have been numerous unofficial hypotheses about this: maybe he was shot after he surrendered and threw the gun over a fence, or maybe he threw it over the fence before he was stopped. Maybe the gun was planted, or maybe he was aiming at the police and the gun somehow flew to the other side of a fence once Duggan was shot. The fact that Duggan’s DNA and fingerprints were found on the box, but not on the gun or the sock, complicates things even further. The only thing that is obvious is that Duggan did not fire at the police, as the gun had not been fired and the bullet found in the radio was police-issue.

Other details include the fact that traces of ecstasy were found in his blood, and that the vehicle had been moved by the Metropolitan Police long before the IPCC had a chance to examine the scene. The previous rumours about Duggan knowing that he was being followed by the police were also confirmed. Interestingly, Duggan only

picked up the gun from a drug dealer called Hutchinson-Foster only 15 minutes before being shot. Hutchinson-Foster has been tried and convicted for supplying Duggan with an illegal weapon, and his DNA was discovered on the gun. During the trial the firearms officers have testified that Duggan had the gun in his hand and was about to shoot it before being shot, but the Metropolitan Police has still decided to remove the officer who fired the shot from active duty. The IPCC and police statements are obviously inconsistent with both some eyewitness statements about Duggan having thrown the gun away as well as the location of the gun, but at this point the case has been entirely closed and the IPCC has claimed that releasing any further information would go against the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. This means that a coroner's report, for example, is extremely unlikely to be published. On 8th January, 2014, an inquest jury ruled that the killing had been lawful. Even though Duggan's family has stated that they will keep pressing the issue, the ruling is likely to mean that, at least on the official level, the case has been closed. The Metropolitan Police has agreed to take part in a pilot project where firearms officers would wear video cameras on their bodies in order to avoid the kind of confusion present here.

As of early 2014, these are the latest developments as far as the death of Mark Duggan is concerned. Somewhat related to *The Guardian* article are the resignations of two community members from their posts in a three-person reference group, which was created as a point compromise, co-operation and communication between the police and the Tottenham community. The goal of the group was to oversee the IPCC investigation into Duggan and ensure that everything will be fair and transparent from the local community's point of view. Pastor Nims Obunge was the only reference group member who decided against resigning, while community activists Stafford Scott and John Noblemunn said that "their confidence in the police watchdog's inquiry was damaged" (Dodd, 2011c). Scott also wrote a fairly trenchant article for *The Guardian* after his resignation on 20th November. He spares no expense as far as accusations are concerned, but according to him the removal of the minicab from the crime scene is clearly the lynchpin of the IPCC's failures. Apparently the vehicle was moved away by the Metropolitan Police because they

wanted to return it to the rental company, which was done under the assumption that the vehicle contained no forensic data of any sort. According to him, this is untrue. After arriving on the scene the IPCC investigators demanded that the vehicle be brought back, even though according to the IPCC commissioner they had sanctioned its removal before they even reached the crime scene.

Besides bitterly implying that the IPCC just might be even more incompetent than the Metropolitan Police, Scott also states the following: “I believe that in removing the minicab from the scene, the police have clearly compromised the evidence. Given that the IPCC sanctioned the vehicle’s removal, the entire investigation is now in doubt” (Scott, 2011). The greatest claim in Scott’s article, however, is that according to the IPCC commissioner at least three officers had witnessed a sergeant throwing away the gun that was found near Duggan’s body. When he and the two other group members attempted to use their police contacts to identify these officers, they were told that there was no evidence to support that allegation and that the statement had never been given. A few days afterwards, the IPCC issued a public statement regarding Scott’s allegations. In the statement, interim chairman Len Jackson refutes the claims that the car had been moved before the IPCC investigators reached the scene and that a sergeant had been seen throwing the gun over the fence. According to him, the car had been sealed and briefly moved so they could do testing in a special forensic facility. They soon realised that the same tests could be done on the crime scene much faster than in the facility and the car was returned. The statement also expresses regret over the fact that the community reference group members had resigned (IPCC, 2011c). Considering that the statements issued by the IPCC have not been particularly accurate in the past, and that Scott’s primary contact in the police was the IPCC commissioner, it is very difficult to accept either account as the absolute truth. Scott offers us a second-hand account of the events that he claims to have heard from the commissioner, while Jackson says that these claims are not true without offering any evidence in a typically sparse IPCC public statement.

## 5. The golden hour: first days of rioting

In a recent lecture regarding the 2011 riots, Paul Gilroy from the London School of Economics talked about the importance of a concept he refers to as the “golden hour” (Reel News, 2011; Merali, 2011, p. 3). The term essentially refers to a certain period of time after an incident during which the “truth” regarding that incident is established by the mainstream media. We have already talked about the how the IPCC managed to mislead people and the press due to their poor communication, but we have not considered the actual impacts these kinds of errors have. When something is established during the golden hour, even if it is false, it will become entrenched in the mainstream consciousness. Uprooting falsifications such as these can be done on an individual basis, but even if the outlets that originally released this false information start publishing articles about how they were incorrect the damage is almost impossible to undo. In the case of Mark Duggan, this means that many Brits still believe that there was a shootout between him and the police, and that Duggan fired at the police first. This is the established mainstream truth, and no in-depth investigation from *The Guardian*, concession from *Daily Mail* or government-funded research report into the riots will be able to correct this glaring misrepresentation. Some may call this an unfortunate accident, while some, such as Paul Gilroy, may claim that this whole process was engineered by the police or the media.

This section of the thesis, however, is not designated for conjectures and hypothesising. In this section, we will take a look at what kinds of media narratives were formed by *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* during the actual riots, which occurred between 6th and 10th August. The exact definition of a narrative used in this paper is based specifically on the idea of framing a story in a certain manner. The aspects that influence the formation of a narrative generally range from work norms to target groups and the newspaper’s position within the framework of national realpolitik. While the journalists theoretically free themselves from personal or subjective biases, the specific nature of the professional framework and the newspaper’s stated and unstated policies results in the journalist producing articles

and reports that are inherently dialectical. Instead of simply reporting the raw facts, newspapers will attempt to convince the readers to accept the interpretation of the events. Regardless of its origin, all information is, as Nosssek and Berkowitz (2006) put it, “quickly transplanted into the chosen frame already known from within the journalistic profession” (p. 693). This section, however, will not focus on the newspapers’ general or overlying narrative leanings. Instead, we will look at the way the three newspapers decided to frame specific events that occurred during the 2011 riots. Each of these identified types of framing will be considered a narrative of its own, and they will be analysed comparatively with each other.

From a traditional point of view, *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* would respectively be classified as centre-left, conservative right and populist right newspapers. The rough ideological connection brings with it certain underlying elements that form a partially cohesive reporting pattern. These patterns are referred to by Lule (2001) as cultural narratives or myths, which can vary from general national myths to regional or even newspaper-specific trends of narration. While *The Guardian* is going to oppose David Cameron, the other two newspapers will be more likely to agree with him. It has to be noted that in this scenario, and even in the riot reporting, the populist element present in *Daily Mail*’s ideological framework resulted in some articles that opposed Cameron on varying grounds. The relative unpopularity of Cameron among the greater populace has, as such, manifested in anti-Cameron reporting due to the populist aspect of the technically right-wing newspaper. The primary goal of this paper is, however, not to define what ideologies and belief systems underline the reporting or figure out where the newspapers’ loyalties lie, which means that we are not looking at cultural narratives or myths in general. The focus is on the riots, and the narrative analysis directed at the newspapers will be exclusive. In essence, we are looking at the narratives on an article-by-article basis. Of course, the importance of the political and social undercurrent and influence is still important to factor in, as every individual narrative is nothing but a part of a larger gestalt.

### 5.1. The Guardian

On 6th August, *The Guardian* published their first article regarding the rioting in Tottenham on their webpage. Interestingly, the article acts a sort of a premise to what their reporting would focus on during the next few days, as the riot's connection to the protest march and the 1985 riot are both mentioned in the article. While the language is fairly vague for the most part, the sheer amount of time the writer spends writing about Duggan's death suggests that they see an immediate connection there. The article also talks about an "apparent exchange of fire", but emphasises that the exact details are still being investigated by the IPCC ("Tottenham in flames as protesters riot", 2011). Mark Duggan is also portrayed in a fairly positive light, but this is not relevant considering that the information regarding his possible criminal background has not yet surfaced. The second article about the riots was published at 1:25 on the 7th, and it prematurely suggested that the riots had been contained by the police. Similarly to the first article, it made references to the 1985 riot and mentioned that "Accounts of the shooting are confused, but a non-police issue firearm was recovered from the scene and a bullet apparently fired from it had lodged in the radio of one of the firearms officers on the operation" (Laville, 2011). Eight hours later, an article talking about the "sustained looting" that occurred during the night in question was released (Lewis, 2011b). The article itself is not very interesting, but the decision to create a distinction between the rioting of the 6th and the looting of the following night is curious. Making up for their previous mistake regarding the riots being contained, an article talking about how the unrest might spread to "a dozen boroughs" was published later on the 7th (Hill, 2011).

At this point in time, most of the early narratives have already been established. *The Guardian* is a newspaper that immediately saw a connection between the 2011 riots and the previous ones, and unlike the other two newspapers we will be looking at they never stopped framing the riots in this manner. This narrative colours much of their reporting, and between 7th and 10th August three articles are dedicated to simply comparing the 1981 and 1985 riots to the current ones. "The sequence of events in Tottenham at the weekend has many echoes of the Toxteth riots in

Liverpool of 1981, as well as unrest in Tottenham itself in 1985” is the focal point of an article published on the 7th (Kennedy, 2011). While the basic idea of the riots being similar is set in stone, however, the narrative does see some individual shifts over the next few days. Alex Wheatle, for instance, claims that “Although the circumstances in Brixton 1981 and Tottenham 2011 are remarkably identical ... from what I saw in Tottenham I didn’t detect any resolve in the insurrectionists for them to take the police to account. There was no standing their ground making a lasting statement and I couldn’t identify any hint of political motive.” While this is not as strong as the criminality angle, which *The Guardian* never adopted, it is still a political delegitimisation of the riots. On 7th August, two articles talking about how “The vast majority of people in Tottenham are law-abiding and peaceful” (Webbe, 2011) and how “it was the looters and arsonists who won on Saturday night, not the voices of reason” (Beaumont, 2011) appear as well. As such, it is fair to say that the earliest narrative in *The Guardian* was very much against the riots, and the newspaper clearly did not consider them to be legitimate.

This stance may seem somewhat inconsistent, especially since the articles comparing 2011 riots to the previous ones generally treat the older ones as perfectly legitimate or make no comment on the matter. However, shifts and inconsistencies such as this are not unusual for *The Guardian* in this case, and we will see multiple instances of different contributors endorsing, excusing or condemning the rioters over the next few days. The problem is that, much like Wheatle’s article, these views can often be attributed to the individual writers rather than to the newspaper’s general narrative. For example, on 9th August, which was when Wheatle’s article was published, the paper also released an article about police being directly targeted (Lewis & Khalili, 2011), which obviously directly goes against his personal observations. Their presence does contribute to the narrative, however, and attempting to establish a baseline of some sort is quite difficult.

On 8th August, a potential candidate for this appears in the form of an editorial written by an anonymous author. The article argues that police training, behaviour and the infrastructure in Tottenham have all improved drastically since the previous

riots and that “Today’s rioting has set that all back, in heartbreaking destructive individual and community ways.” According to the writer, “the riots of 2011, like those of 1981, still have to be understood, though not in any way excused or justified, so that they can be overcome ... Blaming the riots on individual wickedness, conspiracies or on government spending cuts is too glib for such complex issues, though they cannot be dismissed altogether even so” (“Urban riots: Thirty years after Brixton”, 2011). If we truly want to establish some sort of a standard framework for *The Guardian*’s early riot narrative, the views presented in this anonymous piece of writing seem like they could be used for that purpose. Ultimately, it has to be concluded that at this point in time there is no single dominant narrative. While the ideas present in the aforementioned article are the some of the more common ones, there are enough differing views to offset it. The web version of *The Guardian* is also particularly fond of publishing opinion articles, which contributes to the uncertainty.

As an example of these wildly varying individual views, we can look at some other articles published during the first three days of rioting. Nina Power (2011), for example, believes that if we “Combine understandable suspicion of and resentment towards the police based on experience and memory with high poverty and large unemployment and the reasons why people are taking to the streets become clear”. She also blames the income gap between the rich and the poor, the lack of social mobility and the austerity measures for contributing to the riots. On the other hand, David Lawrence (2011) says that he is embarrassed to live in Tottenham and that the most of the rioters “just saw it as an opportunity to wreak havoc and seek things for personal gain.” These views are obviously incompatible with each other, as the former treats the riots as an inevitable thing while the latter believes that they were fuelled by choice and opportunism. Matthews (2011), however, manages to create a compromise between them. She believes that the rioters have been “taught that consumerism is a recreational right”, and she places the blame for this process on bankers, austerity cuts and the “two-tier society”.

One other article focusing on a sociologist who attributes the riots to “social exclusion” and the fact that “a generation bred on a diet of excessive consumerism and bombarded by advertising had been unleashed” was published on the 8th (Topping, 2011), while another one interviewing a youth worker who believes that lack of parenting was critical to the riots appeared on the 10th (Gentleman, 2011). Besides the various writers presenting their personal opinions, the other major reason behind this constantly shifting narrative is that unlike *The Telegraph* or *Daily Mail*, *The Guardian* dedicates plenty of time to interviewing actual rioters and residents who are sympathetic towards them. For example, one article quotes an unnamed older local saying that “I was one of these kids but it’s bloody hard for them. There’s nothing to do at all. University fees have gone up, education costs money. And there’s no jobs. This is them sending out a message” (Addley, 2011). Some articles are even completely dedicated to comments and quotes from rioters and affected residents (Davies, Walker & Davies, 2011; Siddique, 2011).

In order for us to put all these varying views into perspective, we need to look somewhere else. On the 10th, the newspaper published an article that analyses how the Left and the Right will examine the riots and see things that will advance their respective political agendas. Taking into account that the newspaper has been offering various interpretations of the riots, having one journalist write that “Offering up a single explanation for the violence and looting that began in one London borough on Saturday and has since spread as far as Birmingham and Salford must be a nonsense” is quite interesting. The rest of the article offers the current recession, the “fiscal retrenchment and instability’ that goes beyond the misery caused by recession” and the fact that black people are still regularly stopped and searched in the affected areas as some of the basic background reasons. The writer also notes that “London in the early 80s was marked out by a generation of black and Asian politicians who were able to serve as interlocutors for their communities ... they were able to serve as credible representatives of areas in turmoil. David Lammy is an admirable MP, but he does not have the same heft” (Chakraborty, 2011), and claims that the lack of these figures is one of the things that makes the 2011 riots seem so apolitical. This article may initially seem to be at odds with the newspaper’s other

content, but in reality this is not the case. The article argues that there are multiple reasons behind the riots, which is essentially an attestation that *The Guardian's* varied approach to analysing the riots is the correct one. Thus, the article is not nearly as neutral as it may initially seem. It may not be ideologically biased, but it is a self-published confirmation that the newspaper is approaching the riots correctly by not allowing a single dominating narrative to control their reporting. Despite this, certain types of framing are clearly dominant, as the references to the 1981 and 1985 riots are almost omnipresent. The focus on black people being harassed and the unstated racial profiling present in the Metropolitan Police's stop and search practice are also narrative staples, and their contribution towards the riots is never questioned.

The other narratives are not nearly as complicated as the newspaper's framing of the cause of the riots. Two of the more minor ones concentrate on how the riots will affect sports and how social networking contributed towards the riots. The sports narrative is a lot more restrained in contrast to *Daily Mail's* equivalent one, and the focus is strongly on the Olympics (Williams, 2011b; Jackson, 2011). The social networking narrative is more interesting, as the first article that talks about it claims that "Social networks did play a role during this weekend's events – just not the way Daily Mail journalists think". At this point in time, the fact that Twitter and BlackBerry Messenger were used by the rioters for coordination is already a widely known fact. *The Guardian's* approach here is not very standard, however, as the aforementioned article focuses on how social networking sites and mobile chat programs can allow for rumours and half-truths to become facts as long as enough people are sharing them with each other (Eddo-Lodge, 2011). This is not the final form of *The Guardian's* social networking narrative, and we will return to it in a later section. The first article criticising the government's decision to employ harsh measures in punishing the rioters appeared on the 10th as well (James, 2011). In response to Cameron's early claim that much of the violence could be attributed to organised gangs, Gavin Knight (2011) wrote an article refuting that. The gang narrative was extremely minor in *The Guardian* and practically non-existent in the other newspapers.

The way Mark Duggan was represented is also different from the other two newspapers. *The Guardian* focused strongly on the criminal investigation into his death, and most of the articles concerning him are related to the IPCC investigation in one way or another. During the first four days, the newspaper published four stories about him, and only one of them focuses on his criminal background in any way. The article juxtaposes the views that he was a loving family man, which is the idea his relatives have been putting forward, and the view of him as a gangster. It also reveals the sources for the notion that he had links to the Star Gang, which apparently consist of a picture on his Facebook page that shows him wearing a T-shirt that says “Star Gang”, the name of his Facebook page, what the paper refers to as “other unconfirmed reports”, “messages posted by friends on his Facebook pages” and a bouquet left outside his family home that refers to a “Gang N17 Farm” (Barkham & Henley, 2011). According to the article, the *Voice* newspaper also claims that he had links to the gang. The writers are quite neutral and do not consider one account stronger than the other, which means that the newspaper has no definitive narrative as far as Mark Duggan is concerned at this point in time.

On 10th August, the first article concerning Richard Mannington Bowes appeared, but at the time he had not even been identified and the narrative had not started to form (Quinn, 2011). A narrative regarding the communities fighting back appears as well, and the reports concerning the Turkish community banding together to oppose the rioting are at the forefront. *The Guardian* does not focus on their ethnicity, however, and does not attempt to create a race war narrative of any sort. These articles are interesting, as it seems like the journalists are afraid to directly comment on things. Instead, they attempt to paint the people involved in as neutral a light as possible and let them speak for themselves: “If some guy ever breaks a window in this street, all the Turkish Kurdish people come down to protect the shops. We’re like a family” (Beaumont, Coleman & Laville, 2011). The article talking about the three Muslims who were run over by a car is similarly cautious, as the newspaper specifically talks about “British Asians” and the “British Asian community” (Butt & Wainwright, 2011).

Despite this, the people they quote make it clear that there may be an “ugly race dimension” present and that “there had been no doubt about what they were planning” with regard to the African-Caribbeans who ran over the three victims (Butt & Wainwright, 2011). This cautiousness may be explained by an article which was published on 10th August. It talks about how race factors into the riots, and presents various instances where racial tension or solidarity has had some kind of an effect. One of the ideas present in the article is that attempting to “racialise” some of these incidents or the riots in general causes nothing but ethnic division, which is why *The Guardian* may have wanted to be particularly careful with their language (Addley, Taylor, Domokos & Lewis, 2011). Interestingly, while the newspaper was willing to publish articles about ethnic minorities banding together to protect their local areas, the EDL vigilantes and 300 people protecting the “white working-class area” in Eltham were not reported on individually. Instead, they were mentioned as a footnote in the article focusing on race. They were also present in an opinion piece that condemned all forms of vigilantism and argued that “racially, there has been a significant, and racially determined, difference in the way vigilantism is perceived” (Williams, 2011c). The incidents are referenced later on, but the lack of individual reports indicates that the newspaper considers the instances of minorities defending their locales more important.

## 5.2. The Telegraph

By examining the Telegraph News Archive, which contains numerous web articles and articles published in the paper editions of *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph*, we can see that one article concerning the initial small-scale rioting in Tottenham was published on 6th August. The lack of coverage here and in the other newspapers suggests that the British media did not consider the incident to be particularly significant, and that they did not anticipate how serious the situation might become over the next few days. The article talks about an “apparent exchange of fire with officers” and perpetuates the myth that Duggan had fired at a police officer (Howie, 2011). The language is very vague and saturated with terms such as

“apparent” and “suggests”, but considering that the article simply puts forward the idea that a police officer might have been shot at without offering an alternative option, it is fair to say that the perpetuation of the shootout myth by *The Telegraph* is a fact at this point in time. On the following day, the newspaper published a total of 13 articles concerning the riots on their website. Many of them were based on rehashed information about Duggan and why the riots were happening. In the middle of these reports, however, one of the other early media narratives started forming; the idea that these riots were somehow similar to the 1981 and 1985 riots was one of the early media undercurrents, but it faded out once present government members started making comments and the pure criminality angle took over.

On 7th August, *The Telegraph* published three articles claiming that the current riots resembled the ones that occurred in 1981 and 1985. Two of these articles were actual retrospectives which detailed the events of the previous riots to a significant extent. The following statement by David Lammy featured prominently in two of these articles: “Those who remember the destructive conflicts of the past will be determined not to go back to them” (“Tottenham riot reminds north London of Broadwater Farm riot in 1985”, 2011; Millward, 2011). Perhaps in an attempt to put things into perspective, a long opinion piece written by Andrew Gilligan, a *Sunday Telegraph* editor, was also published. He argued that things have improved dramatically since the 1985, and that racism is no longer institutional in the Metropolitan Police. Gilligan does not actually offer any sort of an explanation for the riots, but he spends a significant amount of time shaming the various Labour politicians who had been placing the blame on the Tory government for the riots (Gilligan, 2011a). A short piece about how Lord Harris of Peckham, a Tory peer who owns a Carpetright store in Tottenham, wants to help the people who lost their homes to arson was published, and the newspaper self-referenced that article in a different one on the following day.

During the last three days of the riots, we see some significant shifts in the newspaper’s narratives. On 8th August, for instance, *The Telegraph* unofficially abandons the notion that the current riots are similar to the previous ones. The new

narrative argues that while they may resemble each other, “Mr Duggan’s shooting was certainly not a racist attack on the local community which, on the whole, enjoys a warmer relationship with the police than in the 1980s.” The article this narrative was present in also begins the process of transplanting rioters with looters, as it argues that the people involved “may not even have heard of Duggan” (“Tottenham riots have posed hard questions”, 2011). In other words, this is a point where the paper stops talking about rioters in all their articles. The term is immediately replaced by “looters” and “vandals”. This intention to depoliticise the rioters is also reflected by the two articles that criticised the BBC for using the term “protesters” (Whitehead & Hough, 2011). The newspaper dedicated one article to the revelation that the bullet found in the radio was police-issue, and the new narratives focusing on cultural criminality and opportunistic looting started taking over.

The criminality angle is often attributed solely to David Cameron, but it did exist even before he returned to London. Nick Clegg, for example, claimed that the riots were “needless, opportunist theft and violence - nothing more and nothing less” (Rojas, 2011) on the 8th. Following Cameron’s statements on 9th August, the way *The Telegraph* is framing the riots becomes more stable. The only new development is the formation of the narrative that paints Mark Duggan as a “suspected gangster” (Whitehead & Hough, 2011). The first instance of *The Telegraph* talking about Duggan as a suspected gangster appeared in the article criticising the BBC, but it saw recurrent use in the articles that concerned Duggan all the way to early December. On 9th August, the articles talking about his possible criminal connections outnumber the ones that focus on the investigation into his death three to one. On the final day of rioting, the newspaper started reporting on communities and people who oppose the riots. This includes two articles that deal with Richard Mannington Bowes and the Turkish shopkeepers. At this point Bowes is still alive in a hospital, so the “hero of Ealing” narrative has not appeared yet. These articles do form the backdrop for some of the narratives that appeared in the media after the riots were over (Beckford, Hall, Williams & Millward, 2011; Hughes, Adams & Rojas, 2011; Wardrop, Rojas & Adams, 2011).

### 5.3. Daily Mail

In comparison to *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*'s reporting on the riots does not really gain momentum until 9th August. A few articles are published earlier, but it takes some time for proper narratives to start forming. The paper's use of language, however, is clearly less constrained in general, which means that specific framing techniques are much easier to identify in individual articles. Unlike the two other newspapers, the Mail Online News Archive indicates that *Daily Mail* did not actually publish a report about the 6th August unrest. The first articles that concern the riots were published on 7th August, and one of them is a very detailed look at all the aspects of the incident. It is primarily driven by comments from residents, local politicians and Twitter commentators, but it manages to lay out most of the factual details concerning the events of the riots so far. Due to their use of multiple commentators, the framing is somewhat incoherent. For example, at one point the article claims that the riots that occurred on the 7th were "copycat" riots, which indicates that there is no direct connection to the death of Mark Duggan, but later on the reporters claim that "trouble flared after members of the community took to the streets last night to demand 'justice', after Mr Duggan's death" (Gallagher & Farrell, 2011).

All in all, the long article comes off as more populist than ideologically motivated. It does have a definite anti-riot and anti-rioter slant, however, as the article attempts to reinforce the idea that the people taking part in the riots were violent criminals and looters by citing selected Twitter messages from supposed rioters. At this time, their handling of Mark Duggan's death and character is very neutral. The gangster narrative is clearly not present, and most of the people *Daily Mail* quotes are sympathetic towards Mark Duggan in one way or another. Another article published on the 7th claims that the "disturbance sparked grim memories of the infamous Broadwater Farm riot of 1985 in which PC Keith Blakelock was hacked to death" ("Tottenham anarchy: Grim echo of 1985", 2011). The presence of this narrative should be expected at this point, as the other newspapers also made the same connection immediately.

On 8th August, *Daily Mail* starts a line of reporting that the other newspapers have mentioned, but decided not to focus on as strongly. Unlike its competitors, the newspaper adopted the idea that Twitter and other social networking sites were somehow responsible for the riots without any real restraint. *The Telegraph* mentions that they were used by the rioters, but never actually delves much deeper, while *The Guardian* did not focus on social networking as a malicious tool for criminal coordination. *Daily Mail*, however, takes the more obvious route and presents social networking technology in a critical light; no other newspaper we have looked at published articles about how Mike Butcher, Boris Johnson's technology aide, wants to shut down BlackBerry Messenger. While the majority of the article focuses on what he said during a BBC Today programme, the journalist does present the riots in a way that support Butcher's belief that "phones have become weaponised in their capability of spreading information". According to the article, "Claims that rampant lawlessness was motivated by the death of Mark Duggan at the hands of police was quickly exposed as a lie" ("It's unbelievable BlackBerry Messenger hasn't been shut down': Mayor's aide calls for ban on riot 'tool'", 2011), which is clearly consistent with the criminality angle that denies the connection between Duggan and the riots.

Just like *The Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* adopts this view of the riots before Cameron returns to England and starts talking about criminality; another article quotes Clegg talking about "opportunistic theft" and how the riots have no connection to Duggan ("Riots will leave 'big scars', says Clegg", 2011). As long as we are assuming that Nick Clegg is not an authority on the matter, we can also note that the reporter fails to mention how the connection between Duggan and the riots has been disproven. As was mentioned before, the involvement of social networking was something that made the rounds in the press, but *Daily Mail* focused on it by far the most. A number of articles regarding the involvement of Twitter appear sporadically during the riots, and many of them highlight the fact that the police is unable to trace BlackBerry messages ("Twit and Twitter", 2011). Taking the way the newspaper handles the riot into account, the implication that the police should be able to track and monitor text messages is fairly clear.

One of the other long-term narratives which appeared on 8th August focuses on how the riots will affect local sports events, and they discuss how teams are hiding inside apartments and how certain matches may be cancelled. The tone is fairly neutral, but during the next three days the paper publishes a total of 12 articles that combine sports and rioting in this manner. While *The Guardian* does have a similar narrative, they were more concerned with the upcoming Olympics than anything else and the amount of articles was much lower. The sheer volume here is evidence that *Daily Mail*'s target audience is quite different from *The Guardian* or *The Telegraph*. Based on their reporting, the latter two obviously do not believe that their readership would be particularly worried about local sports events being cancelled due to the riots.

The newspaper's portrayal of Mark Duggan as a gangster started on 8th August, as an article that focuses solely on Duggan's background calls him an "unlikely martyr" and rhetorically asks: "Can there be any doubt that Mark Duggan, the loving father and 'respected' member of the community, was involved in this chilling sub-culture? Not really" (Bracchi, 2011a). This is obviously in stark contrast with their previous portrayal of Duggan. Again, it is worth mentioning that Duggan's background is still fairly unclear. The information about his criminal connections was not received from the police, so it has to be the result of independent investigative journalism. Also, if *The Guardian* is to be believed, this investigative journalism mostly consisted of scouring his Facebook page for details (Barkham & Henley, 2011). Still, the two dominant types of framing have made him out to be either a violent gangster or a respected community member, and neither of these narratives has been substantiated by a respectable neutral party or the police. Ultimately, this is simply a matter of placing blind trust in the journalistic integrity of a given newspaper. This is where the newspaper also starts to move away from comparing the riots to the 1985 riots. According to Richard Littlejohn (2011), "The roots of the burning and looting in North London at the weekend can be traced back not to Broadwater Farm 1985 but to the Great Ikea Riot of 2005." While the same thing happened with *The Telegraph*, they were not as vocal about it. This was probably because fully discrediting

previously published articles in this manner is not a very common journalistic exercise.

The rest of the narratives that appear during the riot itself are fairly similar to the ones we observed in *The Telegraph's* reporting. The idea that Labour is trying to make “political capital” out of the riots is present in a few articles (Shipman, 2011a). On 8th and 9th August, the stories about how certain communities, such as Turks and Sikhs, have been standing against the riots (“Reclaiming the streets: Sikhs defend their temple”, 2011) start appearing, which is to be expected. The narrative is consistent with the ones present in the other newspapers, but it is worth mentioning that the *Daily Mail* seems to consider Sikhs and Turks to be different from “ordinary Britons” in this article. A piece that frames the rioters in a very curious way was published on the 9th. The article concerns a recent study conducted in the University of Cardiff that indicates that people with lower amounts of a brain chemical called GABA may be more impulsive and aggressive. The writer, however, takes this idea and immediately links it to the rioters: “Do rioters, pictured looting a shop in Hackney, have lower levels of a brain chemical that helps keep behaviour under control?” While the question technically remains unanswered, another picture of rioters has been captioned as “Men with lower GABA” (“Rioters may have ‘lower levels’ of brain chemical”, 2011). A few articles detailing the backgrounds of people who one would not expect to take part in the riots are published as well, though the newspaper does not focus on a single character (“The middle class ‘rioters’ revealed”, 2011; Greenwood, 2011). While Laura Johnson is mentioned once on 9th August, that angle does not develop into a scandalous character study as it does with *The Telegraph* a few days afterwards. This solitary mention of Johnson is the first indication that the press may consider her to be a person of interest, but the narrative surrounding her has not properly begun to manifest at this point.

During these last few days, the articles start forming a narrative that supports police action in general, but condemns the Metropolitan Police. Comparisons between London and other affected cities are made in a few articles, and the idea is that the London police are being accused of adopting a “softly-softly approach” (“So where

WERE the police?”, 2011). Meanwhile, the newspaper commends the Birmingham police force for having “tracked down suspected rioters hours later and smashed into their homes to arrest them” (“Why police were so soft on London looters”, 2011). In general, *Daily Mail* is clearly advocating the use of increased force by these comparisons. This is reinforced, for example, by one article which focuses on how “Anti-riot police in Chile have shown their British counterparts how to control unrest after turning water cannons and tear gas on a rampaging mob” (Longbottom, 2011) and the way Cameron’s decision to finally start using rubber bullets and water cannons was lauded in multiple articles (Allen, 2011; Shipman, 2011b). At this point in time, the newspaper is still somewhat careful in approaching this issue. The articles published after the riots, however, are markedly more radical.

## 6. After the riots: development of the narrative

Despite the importance of the golden hour in reporting, the narrative can still continue to shift. The creation of entirely new or branching narratives is obviously possible whenever a newspaper dedicates a significant amount of time to reporting on a single larger item as well. While the idea that there was a shootout between Duggan and the police has already been set in stone, certain other narratives only started gaining speed after the riots were over. *The Telegraph's* initial narrative that linked the riots to the 1981 and 1985 riots, for example, ended up disappearing completely due to them adopting the Criminality Theory. The minimal amount of time they dedicated to the ongoing criminal investigation regarding Duggan's death also passively contributed to the dominance and strength of its golden hour narrative. While many of these post-riot narratives have their roots in reporting that occurred during the riots, such as the hospitalisation of Bowes, they were only truly established after the riots were over. Obviously, the newspapers continued reporting using the previous narratives, but the continuation of an old narrative is not very interesting to us unless there is a shift of some sort. Therefore, this section will primarily deal with completely new narratives and narrative shifts. If a new type of framing is somehow related to the themes and narratives we discussed in the previous section, it will naturally be mentioned. This chapter will specifically deal with articles published between 11th and 17th August.

### 6.1. The Guardian

One of the first narratives that began developing after the riots was the Bowes narrative, and *The Guardian's* framing of him is very much on a par with the other two newspapers. From the 11th to the 16th, a total of five articles were published concerning Bowes. He is indirectly referred to as “the man hailed as a ‘community hero’” (Davies, 2011), and the newspaper does not talk about his background at all. Even though *The Guardian's* approach is detached, many of the articles contain multiple quotes from local residents that paint Bowes as “a really, really nice guy, a

nice, old, public school gent” (Davies & Laville, 2011). Therefore, the newspaper does maintain a sort of cautious “hero of Ealing” narrative. The social networking narrative continues to develop as well, and *The Guardian* is clearly against any sort of government intervention. Two articles regarding social networking and the riots were published on the 11th, and one of them is an opinion piece where the author urges his “British friends to be careful about enabling their government to impose restrictions on the public.” He also states that “Censorship is not the path to civility. Only speech is” (Jarvis, 2011). The other article is less direct, but it is driven by quotations from Jim Killock, who is a director for the Open Rights Group (Halliday, 2011). The beliefs present in these two articles are very much comparable.

This is also the period of time where *The Guardian* starts to properly talk about the rioters and the kinds of punishments they are receiving. There are essentially two sides to this narrative, but the framing is extremely consistent. The first side focuses on the actual physical process of retributive justice. An article published on the 11th, for instance, attacks the idea that courts can properly identify rioters based on CCTV footage. According to the writer, “If you are in a store that is being looted, and are then arrested, ID issues do not arise - any more than they do if you are picked up on the way home with a 40-inch television for which you do not have a receipt” (Bystander, 2011). The judicial decisions regarding the rioters are also seen as unlawful, as “there is nothing in the Bail Act to say that certain crimes preclude the grant of bail” (Bystander, 2011). In her article regarding forced eviction and the loss of benefits as types of punishment, Elizabeth Prochaska (2011) assumes a critical stance as well: “Changing the system so that benefits are denied to those convicted of a very broad spectrum of offences relating to the riots would represent a radical departure from the universalist assumptions underpinning the welfare state.” Despite the earlier articles, which starkly condemned the rioters, the framing has turned more sympathetic and the punishments are treated as “a relentless conveyer-belt of charges” (Addley, Vasagar & Coleman, 2011). On 15th August, one article linked the harsh punishments to David Cameron’s views and the fact that the “Magistrates are being advised by the courts service to disregard normal sentencing guidelines” (Bowcott & Bates, 2011).

The other side of this narrative focuses on the rioters, and the number of articles dedicated to talking about who the rioters are and why they are rioting easily outnumbers the ones that focus solely on the punishments they are being given. Between 11th and 16th August, 14 articles concerning some aspect of the former were published. In contrast, only 4 articles focusing on the punishments were published in the same period of time. Considering that these two are very closely linked, there is a fair amount of overlap. Talking and interviewing the rioters is, of course, not a new practice for *The Guardian*, as their determination to give the rioters a platform is one of the things separating them from *The Telegraph* and *Daily Mail*. The previous chapter mentioned that the newspaper reinforced the validity of this approach by publishing an article that attempted to ideologically elevate them above left-wing and right-wing rhetoric. On 11th August, the same thing happens again. In an article entitled “We must talk to the rioters, not turn our backs on them”, Kettle (2011) writes that “most of the politicians, commentators and public figures who have expressed a view about why the riots took place have placed them in a well-worn, pre-existing explanatory frame.” Besides this, the way the rioters are being framed is predominantly sympathetic and understanding. While the idea that the riots are “unacceptable” and “unjustifiable” (Brand, 2011) is still faintly present, a narrative shift to a type of framing that advocates leniency towards the rioters has clearly happened. In other words, the narrative has solidified over time, which allows us to talk about this greater two-sided narrative instead of having to focus on the agglomeration of opinions the newspaper is putting forward.

The sympathetic narrative approaches the riots from a multitude of angles. Some of them focus on analysing the way they are perceived by society and the media, while others pay more attention to the disenfranchisement of young people. In the vein of the article talking about the unlawfulness present in the way courts are handling the riot cases, one writer argues that the “push to have young rioters ‘named and shamed’ goes against established case law” (Banks, 2011). To be fair, this article was published on the 16th, and a dissident view claiming that publishing photos for the purpose of identifying rioters does not break the law or human rights appeared five

days earlier (Flinn, 2011). On 12th August, Jonathan Jones (2011) presents a very critical view of the journalistic practice to compile pictures of rioters into collages of criminality: “The Daily Telegraph’s arrangement of three pictures of people of different ages and class backgrounds was intended to show that social and economic factors cannot be blamed for the riots. These people do not share the same social context – ergo, they must share something else, a moral failing ... as soon as you follow that very logic, looking for common moral threads, you face exactly the same problem that undermines easy economic explanations.” The decision to talk about a “rogue gallery” is also apt, as *Daily Mail* literally published an article they themselves referred to as a “Rogues’ gallery” (“Straight from Shameless: Rogues’ gallery of riot thugs”, 2011). In other words, this article is not just a continuation of *The Guardian*’s own narrative, but an attack on the narratives present in other newspapers as well.

The final facet of this narrative comes in the form of a strong focus on the fact that the many of the rioters were young. Another article that consists of nothing but explanations from rioters claims that they have been “Condemned as ‘feral scum’ and the sick of society” (Hegarty, 2011). This approach is complemented, for instance, by a former Inner London Education Authority officer stating that “What our young people are doing around us is not the result of children born bad, but of disfranchised young people, ground down by disadvantage, poverty and exclusion, expressing frustration and anger.” He also puts the burden for this disenfranchisement on the lack of financial support by the city of London (“Young people being let down”, 2011). Meanwhile, Shiv Malik (2011) exemplifies the solidification of *The Guardian*’s narrative in his article that argues that consumerism is not the cause of the riots, and that young people “want a secure living environment, they want to have a good relationship ... and they want secure jobs.” Citing a Boston-based sociologist, he also turns away the fact that many rioters considered the riots to be “fun” by talking about the “de-individuation” that occurs in groups and relieves the rioters from individual responsibility to a certain extent.

While many of these articles have made a point regarding the age of the rioters, there are two articles that exemplify this exceptionally well. One of them is a particularly compassionate look at a 13-year-old boy who says that the riots were “the worst thing I’ve ever done”. Uncharacteristically, this article examines the child’s background very extensively, and even talks about his upcoming GCSE tests (Vasagar, 2011). Deep character studies and background checks have not, besides Duggan, been common in *The Guardian* during these riots, and even Bowes did not receive this much attention. In the other article, Suzanne Moore (2011) literally refers to the rioters as “kids” on multiple occasions. From 16th August onwards, *The Guardian*’s reporting on the riots slows down considerably. They still publish articles more recurrently than the other two newspapers. Obviously, when the new information regarding Duggan’s death is revealed in the end of November, this period of calm comes to an end.

## 6.2. The Telegraph

On 11th August, we see the first proper appearance of a traditional scandal story. While *The Telegraph*’s attacks against Labour politicians, the BBC and Mark Duggan’s character may be scandalous in a sense, the lines of reporting that focused on the arrests of an unnamed 11-year-old girl in Nottingham and Laura Johnson, a 19-year-old daughter of a rich businessman, were inching fairly close to the character studies that are often associated with scandal stories. With regard to the former, one article was essentially dedicated to her refusing to apologise (“Nottingham riots: riot girl, 11, refuses to apologise”, 2011; Gilligan, 2011b). Despite the fact that the newspaper investigated their lives fairly deeply, the journalists did not speculate or attempt to find out why they had taken part in the riots. The focus was clearly on the idea that them being involved was somehow unexpected. Instead of actually addressing the obvious question, however, the writers decided to investigate their family backgrounds. On 12th August, the newspaper published another article talking about how Johnson is now in danger of being “thrown out of university” (Evans & Orr, 2011). With a total of three articles about her wealthy family and the

arrest, the amount of time dedicated to her actually rivals Bowes. The reasons for this approach are unclear, but it is possible that the character study route was deemed to be more interesting or the newspaper simply did not want to give a platform to pro-riot ideas.

A few articles talking about the light punishments the rioters were getting and how the police lack power appeared on 12th August. These were definitely influenced by the various statements made by David Cameron and other members of the government, as they were quoted and referenced heavily in the majority of them. This narrative should be considered to be something of an extension of the criminality narrative, which the newspaper adopted few days prior. The bulk of these articles reflect Cameron's ideas regarding restoring a sense of morality, and his various speeches on the matter are quoted without much restraint. During his speech in the House of Commons on the 11th, the prime minister claimed that "We will track you down, we will find you, we will charge you, we will punish you. You will pay for what you have done." The immediately confrontational nature of this statement was quite well-received by *The Telegraph*, and even *Daily Mail* referred to it as a "Churchill-style rallying cry" (Shipman, 2011c). One article claims that the rioters should "pay for their crimes" (Kirkup, 2011), which clearly mirrors Cameron's stance. The importance of retributive justice and how the government "will make the criminals suffer" (Porter & Kirkup, 2011) remain prominent in the narrative from this point on, and discussing the failures of the system were generally limited to, for example, mentioning that many of the rioters will escape punishment because they are first-time offenders. To be fair, there are a few articles that go against this trend in one way or another, but they are not numerous or unified enough to form proper narrative trends.

Starting from the 12th August, the newspaper starts gradually reporting less and less on the riots. The narrative talking about Mark Duggan being a gangster is still going on. Unlike *The Guardian*, however, the ongoing criminal investigation is clearly no longer considered important. With regard to Bowes, the few articles the paper publishes about him after his death are sympathetic. He is not, however, turned into a

local hero. The way *The Telegraph* frames Bowes is very much restrained in comparison to *Daily Mail* or *The Guardian*. The character study approach is applied here as well, but in contrast to Laura Johnson it actually has some meaning and reason behind it. Interviews with the people who knew Bowes reveal that he “was a recluse who was tormented by youths repeatedly urinating and throwing litter in the street outside his home” and that he often reprimanded people for minor littering (Blake, Gardham, Hall & Hughes, 2011). Both of these things give some perspective into the situation that led to his death, while looking into Johnson’s background revealed nothing about why she took part in the riots.

Interestingly enough, one article is published regarding the origin of the riots which considers other things than criminality. Peter Osborne (2011), the *Daily Telegraph*’s chief political commentator, claims that “The rioters who have rampaged through the streets of Britain over the past seven days were the children of Tony Blair” and that “At the heart of this problem lies New Labour’s approach to the welfare state.” It is an interesting take on the situation, but it clearly ignores the fact that the areas where the rioting started have had recurrent riots since 1981. Perhaps he thinks that the recent riots are somehow fundamentally different, even though the core areas have always been the same, but that is not something he directly claims in the article. The narrative here is essentially a continuation of the narrative that attacked the BBC and centre-left viewpoints a few days prior. As was mentioned before, this is where *The Telegraph* trails off and the newspaper starts returning to a more standard news cycle. This lasts until *The Guardian*’s investigation into the riots starts bearing fruit at the end of November, but the few articles *The Telegraph* published about this will be discussed in the next section. It is worth mentioning that even though this decision to talk about the riots again is clearly linked to the intensification of *The Guardian*’s reporting, *The Telegraph* never actually published an article about Mark Duggan being unarmed when he was shot.

### 6.3. Daily Mail

With regard to *Daily Mail*, instead of major narrative shifts, we see the previous ones reach their peak in one way or another after the riots. The most notable one is definitely the narrative calling for the police to increase their use of force. On 11th August, for instance, an article consisting of nothing but reader comments that demand a more radical response from the government is published (“‘If these thugs want a war, let's send in the Army.’”, 2011). The idea of sending in the army was fairly prominent on many social networking sites during the riots, but most newspapers did not take the sentiment seriously enough to report it. *Daily Mail*, however, continues the narrative by publishing two other articles talking about this over the next few days. One of them details how the United States already have highly strategic riot plans, and claims that “Experts have revealed that the military would immediately be drafted in - patrolling the streets with police officers and securing important buildings, landmarks and bridges.” The tone of the article is very neutral, and the American plan is called “controversial” by the reporter (Bentley, 2011). Regardless, the impartiality of the article does not matter, as the fact that it was published in the first place indicates that the newspaper does not want to discount the idea of using the military to perform law enforcement duties by turning it into an extremist viewpoint. The decision to look to the US was probably motivated by Cameron’s announcement that he would try to learn from the United States’ anti-gang tactics (Wintour, Dodd, Carrell & Gumbel, 2011) and the ongoing “supercop Bratton” (Bratton, 2011; “Cameron’s U.S. ‘supercop’”, 2011) narrative that was only tangentially related to the riots.

The other article, which describes how the “Metropolitan Police has clashed with the Prime Minister over a suggestion that the Army could be deployed to quell rioting in London”, was published on 14th August (Verkaik & Hewett, 2011). It also continues framing the Metropolitan Police and the government as being antagonistic towards each other. It is worth mentioning that *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* never seriously entertained the possibility of the army being utilised to stop rioting. The former actually rejects the idea outright (Meikle, 2011) and attaches the whole

concept to Nigel Farage and Twitter comments written by a handful of Tory representatives (Jones, Wells, Owen & Quinn, 2011; Watt & Sparrow, 2011). While the *Daily Mail* article was written after the riots, it frames Cameron in a way that suggests that he was willing to call in the army to stop the riots: “It is understood that Mr Cameron was keen to explore a number of options and contingency plans as the riots spread across the capital. One of these was bringing in the Army. But later at the Cobra meeting, Mr Godwin repeated his objections to using soldiers” (Verkaik & Hewett, 2011). This is an opportunistic misrepresentation of what he said during that speech, as he was clearly talking about the possibility of using the army to quell riots in the future. To quote Cameron directly, “The acting Commissioner of the Metropolitan police said to me that he would be the last man left in Scotland Yard with all his management team out on the streets before he asked for Army support. That is the right attitude and one I share, but it is the Government’s responsibility to make sure that every future contingency is looked at, including whether there are tasks that the Army could undertake that might free up more police for the front line” (“Riots: David Cameron’s Commons statement in full”, 2011).

The militaristic narrative is complemented by the continuing framing of police action as a good thing. In an article concerning police raids, Arthur Martin (2011), for instance, writes that “After days of being pelted with bricks and petrol bombs, this was payback time” and that “Huge numbers of stolen good [*sic*] were recovered – it was as if the looters were getting a taste of their own medicine”. The reports concerning the kinds of punishments the rioters are receiving have a very similar tone, as the article that lists various convicted rioters refers to itself as a “Rogues’ gallery of riot thugs” (“Straight from Shameless: Rogues’ gallery of riot thugs”, 2011). One of these articles, published on 12th August, laments the fact that child rioters aged 11 and 12 would “escape with a slap on the wrist” (Williams, Greenwood & Tozer, 2011). This is another instance where *Daily Mail*’s reporting seems to be driven by populism rather than anything else. While Winston Smith (2011) is claiming that David Cameron’s tough stance is just rhetoric and that nothing will happen to underage offenders due to the fact that the “criminal justice system in this country is broken”, a host of other reporters are presenting Cameron as

a man of his word in the light of two men who unsuccessfully attempted to incite riots in Manchester on Facebook being jailed for four years (Doyle, Tozer, Narain, Boyle & Cooper, 2011). Much like *The Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* also published a number of rioter character studies during the riots. There was never a narrative that equalled the extent of the Laura Johnson narrative, but the reports regarding the 11-year-old girl utilise similar framing techniques (“Hiding under her hood: The smirking 11-year-old GIRL”, 2011).

Quite surprisingly, the Twitter narrative also continues after the riots. The newspaper claims that Cameron is calling for a “crackdown on social media” (Shipman, 2011c). This is a fairly exaggerated way to put it, as the article makes it clear that the government is simply focusing on researching ways to prevent people from misusing these sites rather than actually considering shutting down the sites. In the same vein, another article claims that “Conservative MP Louise Mensch has backed David Cameron’s calls for a temporary shut down of social networking sites during civil unrest” (“Twitter and Facebook should be CLOSED during riots”, 2011). The article does make note of the inherent irony in Mensch using Twitter to share her ideas on the matter. After 13th August, the riot-focused reporting starts slowing down just like it did with *The Telegraph*. The Bowes narrative appears in *Daily Mail* as well, and he is referred to as an “always happy local hero” (Seamark, Kelly & McDermott, 2011). The article is essentially a memorial that praises his bravery and details how local residents have been placing flowers and notes at the place he was attacked.

The other casualties receive little coverage, except for the “race murder” of the three Muslim men or British Asians which was mentioned in a previous section (Seamark, 2011a; “Racial tensions reach boiling point in Birmingham”, 2011). Articles focusing on unusual rioters are still published, and the sports narrative continues for a few more days. While some individually interesting angles appear, the framing always conforms to the narratives that have already been established. For example, on 16th August, *Daily Mail* published an article regarding Chris Sims, a chief constable, who said that they “need to show some compassion and be pragmatic about how we deal with these people” (Hartley-Parkinson, 2011). The reporter does

not dispute this point of view, but counters it by citing half a dozen individuals, organisations and politicians that are arguing for harsher punishments. These quotations are not direct counterpoints, however, and in effect the constable's opinion is juxtaposed with Theresa May, a Conservative politician, saying that "The events of the past ten days show police reforms are more urgent than ever."

## 7. Narrative conflict and the socioeconomic explanation

The fact that the criminality angle would be incompatible with this thesis was established very early, and this has not changed in the light of the media analysis. On top of this, now that we have gone through the narrative section, it should be clear that this thesis will be more inclined to support *The Guardian's* interpretation rather than *The Telegraph* or *Daily Mail*. Of course, proclaiming that everything *The Guardian* has written is correct and that their framing is fully unbiased would be as problematic as adopting the criminality angle. As such, this acknowledgement is primarily based on a common opposition towards the idea of criminality as a dominant factor rather than full agreement with the paper's framing of the riots. After *The Guardian* reported that Mark Duggan was unarmed when he was killed, which happened on 19th November, the riots returned to the front pages. The revelation itself received no coverage from *The Telegraph*, but *Daily Mail* did publish a very neutral article that was essentially just paraphrasing the original Guardian report (Hartley-Parkinson & Mackenzie, 2011). The articles focusing on the criminal investigation are not interesting to us at this point, but the Duggan revelation and *The Guardian's* "Reading the Riots" investigation triggered a number of responses that were very critical of *The Guardian* and the more centre-left approach to the riots in general.

The first article that attacks *The Guardian* was written by Philip Johnston (2011) and published on the 5th of December. Early on, he admits that "there is nothing wrong with researching the causes of the worst outbreak of lawlessness in this country since the early Eighties". This attitude changes quite fast, however, as apparently the "Reading the Riots" investigation has been an attempt by the desperate Left to "seize back what it likes to call the 'narrative' of these riots, which was hijacked early on by the law-abiding majority who just happened to witness most of it." Considering the narratives present in the newspapers, this is a confusing statement in the sense that the views of the "law-abiding majority" were much more visible in *The Guardian* than in *The Telegraph*. Of course, this is only true if we assume that we are talking about accounts written by commentators living in the riot areas rather than Tory

columnists. According to Johnston, *The Guardian* has been using “their usual excuses for bad behaviour: deprivation, poverty, hopelessness – and, of course, police brutality” to justify the riots. The first three are certainly true, but the use of the stop and search practice can hardly be classified as police brutality. That term has not been widely used even in regard to Duggan’s death. *The Guardian* never adopted a stable narrative for fixing the situation, so claiming that they are trying to “trot out the previously unsuccessful remedies: more money, intervention, community penalties – anything but punishment” is hardly justifiable either.

Besides these inconsistencies in his account, the most important thing regarding the criminality angle is that the police was unable to do what they needed to do during the 2011 riots “because, ever since the Brixton riots in 1981, they have had to police what we are supposed to refer to as ‘communities’ with kid gloves.” In other words, he is arguing against the legitimacy of the previous riots as well. However, if every single riot in Brixton and Tottenham has been the result of criminality, then we have to pose a few questions. For instance, if criminality is a cultural thing, then why have riots of these kinds almost always started in very specific areas in London? Is criminality somehow constrained to the districts of Tottenham and Brixton? Why are riots of this scale not regular? Considering the history of Brixton as a black British district, Johnston’s comments pass over basic essentialism and border on racism. While culture did play a critical role in the riots, there is no culture of criminality in Brixton and Tottenham. Instead, these areas have a cultural legacy of rioting. This is one of the aspects that make Brixton and Tottenham more likely to take the initiative when a sufficient spark or flashpoint manifests.

Of course, arguing that the riots were entirely caused by the presence of some Derridean spectre of Marx in the local culture would be senseless. The cultural effect is left almost entirely unexplored by *The Guardian*. Most other nominally leftist have ignored it as well, which is problematic. While *The Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* are not entirely incorrect in their decision to talk about nothing but culture, their view and understanding of the matter tends to be ludicrously reductionist. The continuation of the socioeconomic deprivation and urban decay is still a key factor, because it is

conducive to the perpetuation or formation of an environment where a flashpoint can successfully develop into a riot. The cultural factor is still extremely relevant, however, and unlike socioeconomics or employment it is not reflected in statistics. At this point, it has been well-established that the rioters have a “deep-seated and sometimes visceral antipathy towards police” (Lewis, Newburn, Taylor & Ball, 2011). This is something the newspapers agree on, but their suspected reasons for this hatred vary wildly.

Considering the statistics regarding the stop and search practice, it should be obvious that in regard to black and Asian people living in these areas it has been an important component in worsening the relations between the communities and the Metropolitan Police. The Riot Victims and Communities Panel highlights this aspect in its interim report: “In many areas people identified stop and search (in relation to Black and Asian men) as a major source of discontent with the police. In some instances these tensions were cited as a motivating factor in the riots, including some of the attacks on the police” (RVCP, 2011, p. 71). In relation to antipathy towards the police becoming a cultural factor, however, this only applies to roughly half of the rioters: 53% of the people who took part in the riots belonged to ethnic minorities, while 42% were white (RVCP, 2011, p. 29). To *The Telegraph*, this is one of the cruxes of the argument. They are unable to explain this disparity, which means that they do not see it as a legitimate train of thought; the idea of stop and search being behind it is obviously faulty, because it does not account for the white population at all. According to their method, we should instead be concentrating on the fact that many of the rioters had committed criminal offences previously, which is the one universal factor. One of the more obvious implications behind this notion is that communities are incapable of feeling solidarity with each other unless they possess the same skin colour or belong to the same race. This idea is so archaic that, barring some neoconservatives, referring to it as fundamentally conservative would likely be construed as an insult by the modern right-wing. As such, treating it as a viable or serious justification for the criminality angle would be ridiculous.

To quote another *The Telegraph* article talking about *The Guardian*'s investigation: "Criminals don't like the police. I'm shocked, shocked!" (O'Brien, 2011). The problem with this approach, on top of being built on the top of the faulty criminality angle, is that what the statistics concerning previous offences indicate does not matter if we assume that the local law enforcement is taking part in racial profiling and targeting. The very existence of the localised stop and search practice and the high amount of police presence in the area will naturally lead to them discovering more offences per capita than they do in less-policed districts. While the stop and search in Tottenham has been a waste of resources and the amount of criminals caught is almost nonexistent in comparison to the number of insulted or annoyed citizens, the statistics do infer that the Metropolitan Police is not averse to using racial profiling as a tool. As such, comparing the statistics from Brixton or Tottenham to the London average, as O'Brien does, is not intellectually honest. If there is any doubt that the agency gathering the statistics may be using an unfair methodology, their correctness must be questioned. If the police truly are targeting ethnic minorities in any way, then the validity of the previous offences can be questioned on the account of institutional racism. The stop and search statistics show that black people are 26 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people, which strongly suggests that racial targeting is very much present (MPA, 2011; Townsend, 2011). It is worth noting that the majority of people living in Brixton and Tottenham are white, which makes these numbers even more significant. While the stop and search practice has been a spectacular failure, the statistically proven racial profiling associated with it is likely to be a factor in all other police operations.

The *Daily Mail* article, despite its focus on talking about the "liberal coalition", the "Guardianistas of this world" and the notion that the Archbishop of Canterbury is an extreme leftist does share one valid idea with O'Brien's article (Bracchi, 2011b). While their approaches may be different, both of them question the validity of *The Guardian*'s "Reading the Riots" investigation by focusing on the people the investigators are interviewing. O'Brien claims that there is a "selection bias" here. According to him, "the sort of rioter who agrees to be interviewed as part of a social

science research project for *The Guardian* is unlikely to be representative. They would be much more in touch with community organisations (given that was how many of them they were recruited). They would be much more likely to be people who wanted to make a point, rather than simply nick stuff (otherwise why waste time talking to some old professor?) ... In this study you are looking at the more thoughtful ‘upper crust’ of the rioters.” This argument, which may initially seem like it has some validity, unfortunately lacks substantiation. Furthermore, if a riot is a violent political demonstration and a show of anger rather than an outburst of criminal behaviour and looting, is the so-called upper-crust not the most crucial sector? Assuming that there was any organisation behind or during the riot, which O’Brien seems to believe, the people doing the organisation would be the ones who understand the nature and the message of the riot. Most political groups and movements possess an internal hierarchy, which leaves certain people, for instance, in charge of organising action, informing the public and acting as liaisons. As such, if the riot had any political significance, the individuals doing the ground-level organising and thinking are the exact people we should be interviewing. In addition, if there truly were numerous individuals that “wanted to make a point” associated with the riots, the riot is obviously politically legitimate, which is hardly consistent with the absolute political delegitimisation associated with the Criminology or Riff-raff Theory.

## 8. The cultural vanguard

In the middle of this war of words between *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph*, both of the sides have forgotten something. Cameron considers the riot areas to have been infested by a culture of criminality, while *The Guardian*'s narrative has been split between, as O'Brien (2011) acutely notes, the "hard left" that "wanted to argue that the riots were a justified 'uprising' against social inequalities and police racism" and the "soft left" which "wanted to argue that it was an understandable protest against the government's policies." We have already talked about the relevance of local culture, and how it is a crucial factor in the riots. It is also a better explanation than what *The Guardian* has been offering, as it explains the recurrent unrest that has been a part of these districts' histories for a long time. While focusing entirely on the statistical side of things may be consistent with the modern understanding of how the world at large works, this does not mean that it is always the best or only possible approach. The socioeconomic situation and racism are not the causes of the 2011 riot, but they are some of the constant factors that have maintained the cultural legacy of rioting in these disenfranchised districts.

What *The Guardian* has determined is important as well, these things simply contribute to the radicalisation of opinion with regard to the police and the government. Of course, the rioters themselves have testified that many of them took part in the riots for fun, which means that claiming that they are all politically active revolutionaries is completely impossible. There is, however, a distinct undercurrent of rebellion in the culture of Brixton and Tottenham, which is something none of the newspapers in question have taken into account. The media did talk about similarities between the 2011 riots and the older Brixton riots, but the newspapers did not properly explore the exact nature of this connection. In addition, this narrative became quickly obsolete once government sources began espousing the Criminality Theory. While the legacy of rioting and antipathy towards the police are parts of this cultural undercurrent, it does have even more concrete manifestations. As Stuart Hall, one of the most important pioneers in the field of cultural research, mentioned in an interview, "You can no longer think primarily in terms of the economic and the

material and then add the cultural icing afterwards. You have to treat culture as formative of human life, human agency and of historical process” (Jacques & Hall, 1997, p. 1).

The cultural aspect is clearly something that never played a part in *The Guardian*'s framing. To the contrary, they even published articles that seem to go against the cultural argument. On 14th August, for instance, *The Guardian* published an article written by Krissi Murison (2011) regarding punk music in conjunction with rioting and rebellion. The headline reads “Punk spoke up for angry kids. Why won't today's bands follow suit?” Most of the content is dedicated to talking about the Clash and other old music groups that are “associated with riot and protest”. The article offers Alex Turner from Arctic Monkeys and Dizzee Rascal as possible current equivalents, but rejects them for various reasons. According to the writer, a song called “Kill People. Burn Shit. Fuck School.” by Odd Future Wolf Gang Kill Them All would be the most fitting modern counterpart. This, as the latter part of this thesis will prove, betrays the author's complete lack of familiarity with the subject.

While Murison's sentiment regarding the importance of music is quite correct, her arguments are not consistent with reality. There is some merit in the belief that songs such as this have influenced rioters at large as far as mass movements, especially during the Prague Spring period, are concerned. It does not, however, account for the fact that the influence of music is always filtered through a cultural lens. If Brixton and Tottenham unique cultural features that somehow distinguish them for Murison's punk examples, this filter would function entirely differently. In addition, focusing on mainstream pop music entirely ignores the local artists that tend to have significant cultural relevance to their communities. If we wish to truly understand what kind of culture is dominant in these areas, closely examining music on the local level is obviously more relevant than attempting to analyse, as Murison does, “a controversial LA rap collective led by Tyler the Creator – a middle-class drop-out and pop culture anti-hero beloved of hipsters and indie-rock fans.” Musicologically, it is not very likely that American rap collectives are particularly relevant to the legacy of rioting in Brixton or even current regional culture. Culture, much like

media, is both a producer and a product of socialisation. As an important aspect of regional culture and culture in general, locally produced music is incredibly important to understanding the nature of various cultural formations.

With this in mind, Brixton has always been separated from other London communities by its music. Starting from the second generation of Empire Windrush immigrants, the prevalence of Linton Kwesi Johnson is probably the most obvious example of this. Johnson's musical and lyrical leanings were developed from more traditional Caribbean music, which originally appeared in England with the black diaspora that appeared after the Second World. For instance, the lyrical importance of Babylon, which Johnson refers to in many of his dub poems, has a direct connection to Rastafarianism and was later adopted by the punk movement in the 60s and 70s. Krissi Murison would probably think that this is ancient history and no longer has any relevance, which is a notion that is easily reinforced by a simple comparison between the radical activism of 1968 and the pacified protests and demonstrations of the modern day. In the case of Brixton, however, which has always been distinct from the London mainstream due to its historical importance and connection to the black British diaspora, the argument's own reductionism works against it. The difference between the majority or mainstream culture and a minority culture is impossible to ignore.

While the trends of the majority culture often have an effect at the regional and communal level, it does not mean that the mainstream acts as a guide for the development of the local culture or somehow overrides it. As Stuart Hall (Jacques & Hall, 1997) would put it, "for good or ill, culture is now one of the most dynamic and unpredictable elements of historical change in the new millennium" (p. 2). Culture is entirely dynamic, unpredictable and there are no permanent cultural processes. The amount of financial investment in the cultural industries, such as music and art, combined with the rapid development of technology and the way these two things have affected culture are, according to Hall, evidence of this dynamicity. "There is always an openness to culture. This introduces contingency and uncertainty into the historical process.' Unpredictability is directly related to the fact that culture has

empowered people, it has enabled them to enter society and influence its processes in many new ways” (Jacques & Hall, 1997, p. 2). While the cultural narratives present in mainstream newspapers largely tend to side with the status quo and act as a social safeguard for the majority, the cultural processes present in regional, ethnic and ideological communities and groups can serve very different goals.

This thesis argues that from the moment the immigrants of the Empire Windrush settled in Brixton, the district has possessed a unique “cultural vanguard” of sorts. In relation to the 1981, 1985 and even the 1958 Notting Hill riots, the presence of this vanguard has been a major cultural force. Before the nature of the cultural vanguard can be defined in specific, looking at the ideas related to cultural studies that form the methodological background of the concept is necessary. Talking about something as incredibly specific as a vanguard in the context of culture, which is subject to fluctuation, adaptation, incoherency and unpredictability is naturally quite unorthodox. For the purpose of clarifying this, it might be worth explaining the two sides of the concept that, while being part of the same larger whole, constitute this work’s definition of the term. While the cultural vanguard does refer to the visible or material side of cultural elements that includes everything from songs to specific individuals and even artistic directions, these physical manifestations of the vanguard are united by the far more abstract aspect of cultural vanguardism as a persisting element of the ever-developing and shifting culture.

Much of Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* deals with the importance of music to the various African and Caribbean diasporas around the world. While the Brixton diaspora in specific is comparatively quite small and it has radically diversified over the last 70 years, the transposed folk tunes of the district’s original inhabitants have always been relevant to its cultural heritage. Anderson (1995) paraphrases one of Gilroy’s primary ideas in the following manner: “A key point of the black diaspora’s response to the experience of geographical displacement, slavery, and subjugation within modernity has been the production of an oppositional culture or counterculture” (p. 175). Black music has generally been the most important product of this counterculture, which is clearly consistent with slave narratives, early

African-American literature and other geographical and historiographical data concerning the displaced. The types of music have obviously dealt with numerous different social issues, which Anderson delineates into a general resistance to Eurocentric modernization. This is, as Anderson himself notes, directly connected to Gilroy's idea that the "repressible rhythms of the once forbidden drum are often still audible in their work. Its characteristic syncopations still animate the basic desires--to be free and to be oneself--that are revealed in this counterculture's unique conjunction of body and music" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 76). As was previously mentioned, Linton Kwesi Johnson is probably the best-known example of this process. This does not, however, mean that his writings are the most recent or best contemporary paradigms for it.

In a certain sense the fact that Johnson has remained extremely relevant to modern observers complicates matters, as the presence of a well-known figurehead can easily defer attention away from more obscure artists and cultural producers. Furthermore, Johnson's innate connection to the radical movements of the 60s and 70s can easily, especially considering the prevalence of Fukuyama's "end of history" to many modern thinkers, be interpreted to mean that such radicalisation is a thing of the past. This is another factor that leads the mainstream to focus strongly on the economic and statistical explanations for social unrest; if globalisation is leading to the formation of a monoculture, we can simply examine the universal mechanics of this monoculture to find out why the machine is suffering from localised malfunctions. As the quotations regarding cultural studies and culture presented indicate, this approach is inherently flawed on multiple levels. Its biggest problem is obviously the fact that it assumes that we have already reached a stage of some uniformity. If we were to look beyond the Western bubble, our mileage regarding this idea of uniformity would begin to vary.

If there is a modern equivalent for Linton Kwesi Johnson, Kareem "Lowkey" Dennis would probably resemble him the most. Like Johnson himself, Lowkey is a political activist and a public speaker in addition to being a musician. While he is not necessarily a household name, the aggressive and vitriolic praise for countercultural

opposition present in his lyrics has earned him a notable following. Lowkey's second album, *Soundtrack to the Struggle*, was released in October 2011, and it immediately went to number one in the UK iTunes Hip Hop Album Chart. Two key lines from the title track are "I knew truth since I was a small little boy, I am a product of the system I was born to destroy", and they are a good reflection of the rebellious cultural undercurrents we are talking about. However, in comparison to Linton Kwesi Johnson's poems, Lowkey is more universally accessible. Anderson (1995) writes that "Although the relatively recent forms of hip-hop and rap music were commodified rapidly for a multiethnic global audience, they nevertheless remain privileged forums of cultural self-signification and communication within black youth culture" (p. 176). While this does not entirely address Lowkey's universalism, which is the result of his focus on international politics and imperialism rather than more local issues, the status of rap music is certainly one of the reasons behind his popularity. The relationship between music and the cultural vanguard in the context of Brixton lies in the fact that the vanguard is a very specific cultural component. It is present in the works and ideas of numerous cultural producers and it has, by adaptation, managed to survive the district's demographical changes. It should be obvious that music is critical to the maintenance its lineage.

While Lowkey's music may initially seem more accessible, undefined and very topical due to the current economic crisis and the subsequent social unrest, it does not mean that is populist. The global accessibility of the music is the result of it dealing with issues that are present and can be related to on the global level. Linton Kwesi Johnson, in comparison, always maintained a distinct focus on England and London in his artistic works. There are actual problems with claiming that Lowkey is the current representative of the cultural vanguard of Brixton, but they are not related to the content of his lyrics. His writings, speeches, affiliation with the Brixton-based rappers Logic and Akala and his collaborations with numerous other radical British and American acts, such as Klashnekoff, Immortal Technique and Lupe Fiasco, who is probably the most well-known of the group, clearly make him comparable to Linton Kwesi Johnson both as a radical and a cultural producer. His relative importance within this circle of modern musical counterculture is represented by the

fact that some of these artists have literally mixed in excerpts from his speeches to their songs. Logic's "For My People", the lyrics of which are relevant to the topic at hand in their claim that "if we are not violent, the media is silent", does exactly this. In addition to this network of artists, his founding of the Brixton-based People's Army with Logic further reinforces his status. According to Hardy (2011), the organisation is "a collective of musicians, poets and writers who have a common goal of combating the misogyny, violence and materialism that is often associated with hip hop."

The actual problems with the idea of a cultural vanguard and Lowkey's role in it come from the fact that, first off, he is a descendant of an Iraqi immigrant and as such has no obvious ethnic or cultural connection to the Caribbean diaspora in Brixton. Secondly, while he has connections to various artists in Brixton and has performed there on multiple occasions, he has never lived in the district and did not grow up there. In other words, there is a seeming cultural disconnection. In order to explain these obvious discrepancies, further define the nature of the hypothetical cultural vanguard and find out if the two artists can really be consociated and classified in this manner, taking a closer look at Paul Gilroy's body of work is necessary. His theories primarily concern the way the cultures of various black diasporas, both African, Caribbean and otherwise, have developed and interacted with both each other and the respective host cultures. The consideration of music as a powerful cultural indicator is an integral part of his research, which is a result of Gilroy's work being rooted in the academic tradition of Theodor Adorno.

Perhaps the most uncommon of Gilroy's approach is that he strongly emphasises the idea that all black diasporas, whether African, Caribbean or otherwise, are all connected. This concept of "the black Atlantic" has been one of his core concepts for a long period of time. According to Gilroy (1991), "the transnational structures that brought the black Atlantic world into being have themselves developed; these structures now articulate its myriad cultural forms into a system of global communications" (p. 111). The growing importance of black music, ranging from ragtime to jazz, reggae, dub poetry and rap music, is entirely consistent with this

claim. The various forms of black music and their obvious longevity has resulted in the formation of a “new analytic orthodoxy”, which “suggests that since black popularity is socially and historically constructed, the pursuit of any unifying dynamic or underlying structure of feeling in contemporary black cultures is utterly misplaced. The attempt to locate the cultural practices, motifs, or political agendas that might connect the dispersed and divided blacks of the New World and of Europe with each other and even with Africa is therefore dismissed as essentialism, idealism, or both” (p. 111-112).

This idea of continent-spanning cultural interconnectivity obviously has a number of implications for the Empire Windrush generation. Even though many forms of modern popular music are connected by their points of origin, their specific development is the result of socialisation within the specific diaspora. While the folk music of the original immigrants in Brixton did have its own social, cultural and political significance, this meaning was only culturally accessible and understandable to the members of the diaspora. Linton Kwesi Johnson’s dub poetry clearly developed from this specific background, but there were other influences as well. Regarding the British situation, Gilroy (1991) mentions that most contemporary black diasporas in the United Kingdom are unique in that they only begun appearing after the Second World War and that, “if these populations are unified at all, it is more by experience of migration than the memory of slavery and the residues of plantation society” (p. 114). This “newness and conspicuous lack of rootedness” eventually led to the formation of “syncretic racial subcultures”, which were influenced both by the local Caribbean communities as well as the cultural exports of black America. What we can infer from this that many of the racial minority subcultures in London possess a certain degree of interconnectivity.

This is the cultural context that, alongside the traditional Caribbean influences in Brixton, led to the formation of Linton Kwesi Johnson’s brand of poetry in the 60s and 70s. The veracity of this claim is reinforced by the fact that Johnson’s poetry and political ideology were both initially shaped by his affiliation with the British Black Panther Movement and his membership in the Brixton Black Panther Party, which

were essentially imported from the United States and adapted to fit the British situation by Obi Egbuna. Quite interestingly, one of the key differences between the British Black Panther Movement and its American counterpart were that Egbuna was unconditionally willing to admit Asians and other minorities into the main organisation. While the American Black Panther Party did allow Richard Aoki and several other Asian Americans to join, they were far more selective and less universalist. Regardless, Egbuna's version of the Black Panther ideology is perfectly consistent with Gilroy's notion of the syncretic racial subcultures in Britain. Of course, this degree of syncrecity does not mean that Johnson's poetry is somehow inauthentic. The varieties of music produced by the numerous black diasporas were "the primary expressions of cultural distinctiveness which this population seized upon and sought to adapt to its new circumstances".

As Gilroy (1991) notes, these new circumstances were usually quite hostile towards the black diasporas. Britain and Brixton were not different in this regard. The diaspora "used these separate but converging musical traditions if not to create itself anew as a conglomeration of black communities, then at least as a means to gauge the social progress of the spontaneous self-creation that was formed by the endless pressures of economic exploitation, political racism, displacement, and exile" (p. 115). While the Empire Windrush generation was exclusively Caribbean, the diversification of the district did not result in the creation of exclusive communities. While Gilroy specifically talks about musical heritage acting as a transitional catalyst, which allowed the diverse groups to unite under a "distinct mode of blackness", it was not a cultural process that was restricted to a single race. "It was instrumental in producing a constellation of subject positions that was openly indebted to the Caribbean, the United States, and even to Africa. It was also indelibly marked by the British conditions in which it grew and matured" (Gilroy, 1991, p. 115). These specific British conditions are marked by the aforementioned racial syncrecity, the ideological framework of which was defined by Obi Egbuna and codified into culture by Linton Kwesi Johnson.

Great amounts of cultural interactivity will eventually lead to the formation of a kind of cultural universality. African Americans are an excellent example of this, as the greater connected culture has replaced the importance of distinct ethnic heritage or a point of origin. While personal progeniture of this kind is not necessarily considered irrelevant, it does not even begin to compare to the amount of emphasis Caucasian Americans place on their respective European lineages and family trees. In the British context, Gilroy (1991) uses reggae music as an example of this phenomenon: “Once its own hybrid origins in rhythm and blues were effectively concealed, it ceased, in Britain, to signify an exclusively ethnic, Jamaican style and derived instead a different kind of cultural power both from a new global status and from its expression of what might be termed a pan-Caribbean or Creole culture” (p. 115-116). Of course, even though this is a process of assimilation, elements of the “raw materials”, as Gilroy would put it, remain in the final product. The cultural vanguard is ultimately nothing but a subsection of these materials that has been defined for the rhetorical and analytical purposes of this thesis. Earlier in this section, the fact that the British punk movement incorporated numerous anti-establishment themes and concepts from Caribbean and especially Rastafarian culture was mentioned. While the cultural vanguard is somewhat similar to cultural permeation of this kind, its development and continuing relevance is the result of adaptation rather than adoption.

The way Lowkey relates to the diaspora theory and the growing cultural universality is quite simple. According to Gilroy (1991), “in the Afrocentric discourse the idea of a diaspora tends to disappear somewhere between the invocations of an African motherland and the powerful critical commentaries on the immediate, local conditions in which this music originates. These complexities aside, hip-hop culture (which is not neatly reducible to its Afrocentric components) is simply the latest export from black America to have found favor in black Britain” (p. 118). Linton Kwesi Johnson’s poetry dealt primarily with the problems faced by first and second generation urban minorities in Britain, and it was produced at a quandary between Afro-American music, radicalism and local Caribbean communal tradition. Lowkey’s music is connected in the sense that it was produced a few steps down the

line; its dominant cultural pretext was partially shaped by Johnson's contributions to culture. They share the exact same strain of cultural vanguardism that, in accordance with Gilroy's diaspora theory, first appeared in Britain with the original Empire Windrush generation. In other words, Brixton is its cultural point of origin. In general, the timeline of the cultural vanguard is historically consistent the growth of racial synecrecity. The cultural landscape of the 60s and 70s, which coincides with Johnson's period of activity, was considerably less developed in this sense. While claiming that the racial subcultures of 21st century London exist in perfect harmony would be ludicrous, they are culturally more unified than in the past. The fact that the 2011 riots, unlike the 1981 and 1985 Brixton riots, are impossible to refer to as race riots is indicative of this as well.

It has to be mentioned that Linton Kwesi Johnson and Lowkey are naturally not the only members of this hypothetical vanguard, nor are they the only contemporary individuals whose cultural production is relevant. Elements of the vanguard are present in a whole host of different artists, but Lowkey's prevalence makes him more comparable to Johnson than anyone else. In addition, his focus on global and wide-spread issues befits the massive scale of the 2011 riots well. It is also consistent with the idea that racial synecrecity among ethnic subcultures in Britain has increased since the 70s; while Johnson could comfortably focus on issues that only affected London and black British individuals, Lowkey dedicates his music to more universal problems. While someone like Logic might be thematically more comparable to Johnson in that his music is deals primarily with local issues rather than international politics, the historical situation is currently entirely different.

Music, just like culture, is entirely dynamic, which means that the prospective longevity of a construct such as the cultural vanguard becomes very dubious. Focusing on the persistence of the vanguard might not be the correct approach, however, as Gilroy (1991) states that analysing music as a dynamic cultural aspect "involves the difficult task of striving to comprehend the reproduction of cultural traditions not in the unproblematic transmission of a fixed essence through time but in the breaks and interruptions that suggest that the invocation of tradition may itself

be a distinct, though covert, response to the destabilizing flux of the postcontemporary world” (p. 126). The nature of the cultural vanguard is not uniform. As Hall (1990) mentions, culture shifts and changes. The vanguard has simply adapted to different environments: starting from the forbidden drums of dissidence, it moved to Linton Kwesi Johnson’s hybrid poetry and eventually managed to cross ethnic, racial and communal barriers. Its persistence is not evident in the stable flow of history, but in the recurrent outbreaks that bring the legacy of Brixton to the headlines. It is always present in the undercurrent, but when these strains of vanguardism are invoked they manifest as flashpoints.

In order to illustrate the way the cultural vanguard functions, it can be compared to the core in Wallerstein’s core-periphery theory. In the traditional sense, Brixton would be a struggling city periphery, which has never been properly assisted by the rich urban core of London and all attempts to revitalise it have largely failed. Attempting to adapt the core-periphery model to cultural studies and applying it to Brixton results in a complete reversal of roles. Brixton becomes the cultural core, the heart of the vanguard, while the rest of London becomes the periphery. Representing the cultural vanguard in this manner also illustrates the district’s unique historical connection to both material and social unrest. Tottenham was already following Brixton’s footsteps in 1985 with the Broadwater Farm riot, so the specific strain of cultural socialisation we are looking at had already begun spreading to the peripheries at that time. It has to be reiterated that despite this paper’s focus on Brixton, culture does not abide by geographical or communal borders. While this may be the case in socially introverted first-generation immigrant communities, Gilroy’s diaspora theory indicates that as time passes the culture will begin to disseminate. As such, while the cultural vanguard might have been relatively restricted to Brixton at one point in time, it is no longer unique to the cultural core. It follows that when Gilroy talks about the variability of musical tradition and how we should focus on the “breaks and interruptions that suggest that the invocation of tradition may itself be a distinct, though covert, response to the destabilizing flux of the postcontemporary world”, a riot would be such an invocation of tradition as far as the cultural vanguard is concerned.

In a certain sense, the British conservatives and their criminality angle is correct. If we assume that cultural tradition that poses an inherent resistance to the mainstream social fabric or actively tries to oppose the Babylon is dangerous or even criminal, you could claim that there is a culture of criminality in London. This would, however, mean that we are, barring the actual riots, operating on a level where the mere abstraction of crime is inherently illegal. The vanguard, as per the Leninist meaning of the term, is a group of individuals that are, in one sense or another, leading the charge. The hypothetical cultural vanguard of this thesis largely fulfils the same function. Its historical presence in Brixton in the form of both well-known and more obscure cultural producers, many of whom have had Marxist leanings, is one of the ignored or forgotten reasons behind the perpetual unrest in the district. The immense scale of the 2011 riots, however, cannot be simply explained by the spread of cultural vanguardism outside the district.

The primary function of the vanguard exists in relation to the Brixton riots; its presence in the local communal culture increases the likelihood of a riot flashpoint. Accordingly, the 2011 riots were the ultimate result of an extremely localised non-violent conflict between the community and the police. The fact that the unrest spread to the rest of the country does not necessarily mean that the cultural vanguard is present everywhere. What the scale of the riots does indicate is that dozens or even hundreds of communities all over England have been subject to similar conditions of social tension or socioeconomic distress. The most important thing to note is that, despite these problems, the flashpoint never occurred in any of these other communities. In this sense, it could be said that while the original rioters in Tottenham acted as the material vanguard for the 2011 riots, they were motivated to riot by the cultural vanguard. The other English cities, which would be less likely to riot on their own due to the missing cultural element, simply followed the leader.

## 9. Conclusion

For a very long time, cultural studies were seen as either supplementary or entirely irrelevant by the academic world. In reference to the founding of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964 at the University of Birmingham and the consequent development of the academic field, Hall (1990) mentions that “The positive work one then went on to do in the Center had still to be invented. No place existed at that stage, whether in the social sciences or in the humanities, where one could find the concept of culture seriously theorized” (p. 15). At this point in time, it was completely impossible to apply cultural analysis in an interdisciplinary manner. The rigid constraints placed upon academic fields were also evident in, for example, the strictly institutionalist approach to political science. The cultural research that did exist was more likely to take the form of comparative recursive propaganda rather than critical analysis, and examining the relationship between, for instance, culture and politics was perceived as academically worthless. As such, the fact that the legacy of Brixton has rarely been properly analysed under a cultural context should not be surprising. It is worth noting that the research centre that Hall references was closed in 2002. The ensuing uproar from current students as well as graduates led to the creation of a campaign that opposed the closure and was covered extensively by the press. Some saw the campaign’s failure to keep the centre open as a death knell to social studies in Birmingham.

When the 1958 Notting Hill riots occurred, cultural studies did not even exist as a field of study. Even in the 80s attempting to apply cultural analysis to the 1981 and 1985 riots would have been quite unorthodox. Furthermore, even though the approach has managed to secure a position in the academics, it still has not transfixed itself in mainstream consciousness. While globalisation has clearly been conducive to the spread of different cultures, it has not necessarily managed to spread intercultural comprehension. Some might even claim that the current form of globalisation actually works against this due to its weakly essentialist approach to cultural distinction. Whether this is indicative of a growing monoculture is debatable, but the modern economics-focused approach seems to favour the idea that our

understanding of cultural asymmetry should essentially be reduced to the idiosyncrasies of business etiquette.

To a certain extent, the problems cultural studies have faced can be compared to the philosophical conflict between constructivism and positivism. Even in the context of academia, most social fields are relatively recent in comparison to the ones focused on the material or positivist reality. Philosophy is obviously an exception, but as a field that has always struggled with its own praxis, it has always had a very limited effect on the more positivist disciplines. As Marx (1845) put it, “philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.” As these social fields have gained more and more ground, they have begun competing with the positivist disciplines in their interpretation of specific events as well as the nature of reality or existence as a whole. Competition, however, was not the only form of interaction the increasing importance of social sciences brought with it. In order to legitimise itself, the Centre decided to use an unconventional academic strategy, which can be described as interdisciplinary raiding. Hall (1990) explains this methodology as an attempt to “enable research to be done in the formations of contemporary culture and the theoretical models that would help to clarify what was going on”. These “raids on other disciplinary terrains” were one of the earliest forms of actual interdisciplinary work: “Fending off what sociologists regarded sociology to be, we raided sociology. Fending off the defenders of the humanities tradition, we raided the humanities. We appropriated bits of anthropology while insisting that we were not in the humanistic anthropological project, and so on. We did the rounds of the disciplines” (p. 15-16).

While this thesis may seem like an interdisciplinary work, this is not the case in the traditional sense of the term. The approach taken here is somewhat similar to the aforementioned measures taken by Stuart Hall and other members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in their attempt to legitimise the discipline. This is not, as Hall would put it, a question of raising the “interdisciplinary flag” and forming a “coalition of colleagues”: “Serious interdisciplinary work involves the intellectual risk of saying to professional sociologists that what they say sociology is,

is not what it is ... It was never a question of which disciplines would contribute to the development of this field, but of how one could decenter or destabilize a series of interdisciplinary fields” (Hall, 1990, p. 16). This thesis, alongside the concept of a cultural vanguard, is premeditated on this premise; while it is interdisciplinary in its incorporation of elements from a number of disciplines, it simultaneously breaks established disciplinary barriers. It could be said that the validity of this approach is at least partially based on the Whiteheadian or Heraclitean notion of conflict as a catalyst for progress. Nevertheless, it should be obvious that the explanation present in this thesis is quite unconventional. This is a result of design rather than accident, and whether the irregularity of the argument works against it is an open question.

Considering the current state of Britain and what Lowkey has described as a “slip into fascism”, it is unlikely that the situation in Brixton will see dramatic changes. The culture is obviously always shifting, but it is extremely unlikely that the name of the district will cease being a “byword for disorder” (Vallely, 1995) in the near future. With the worsening economic condition and the statistical enormousness of the 2011 England riots in mind, the cultural vanguard will persist in one form or another. Whether cultural production of this kind will increase, decrease, become exacerbated or suppressed is naturally impossible to predict. Someone like Mark Duggan, on the other hand, will almost certainly be remembered primarily in the context of the flashpoint. One thing this paper has not covered is the effect of the cultural narratives employed by the mainstream media; the focus has been on piecing together a number of individual narratives to see how certain specific events were covered during the rioting. It is worth remembering that the mainstream fourth estate, by its very definition, is extremely unlikely to leave the Overton window and go on the offensive against the system. This only occurs in cases where the system itself decides to directly attack or abolish the fourth estate, which is exactly what happened when Greece decided to forcibly close the national ERT broadcaster. Due to their incompatibility with established myths, certain interpretations of the riots will never be seen as valid or acceptable, which is somewhat reminiscent of the situation Stuart Hall faced 50 years ago. The fact that Paul Gilroy may write an occasional CiF article for *The Guardian* will not change the situation in the slightest.

While the case for the presence of the hypothetical cultural vanguard has been made and this thesis is essentially a methodological gestalt, the fact that the sum is generally greater than its parts does not imply that the parts themselves lack value. The acceptability or perceived validity of the argument should be considered in the interdisciplinary context: the work should optimally be capable of being raided, as Hall would put it, by other interdisciplinary thinkers. The initial sections are filled by basic, yet necessary, historical details and descriptions. Besides informing the reader and formulating an argument, the gradual progression into more complicated social and political analysis and eventually into cultural studies can be seen as a kind of submersion. Whether the interdisciplinary raiding present in the later sections is interpreted as a grasp for straws or as rhizomatic activity is not necessarily even relevant. As long as fundamental reinterpretation and re-examination, which Hall refers to as the decentring or destabilisation of interdisciplinary fields, is seen as a valuable activity, many of the goals of this paper have been fulfilled. The functional difference between the alteration and correction of a person's reading of the 2011 England riots and simply offering them an alternative interpretation is not important. As far as socialisation is concerned, this distinction would not even exist in the constructivist sense. Similarly, the acceptability of the conclusion itself may not be a crucial goal as long as the process of fabrication is seen as having some inherent value.

If the concept of a cultural vanguard presented in this paper is seen as either an extension or an adaptation of Paul Gilroy's brand of cultural analysis, it should also be seen in a strategically universalist light. The aim is not, however, to further the idea of Gilroy's planetary humanism: the concept is strategically universalist in a less-defined conceptual sense. As a result, its interdisciplinary nature is essentially "nothing other than a bridging maneuver" (Buden, 2007). It is an attempt to bridge the gap between "theoretical deconstruction", which is represented by the analyses of media and culture, and "political essentialism", which influences the work through the incorporation of Gilroy's fundamental ideas. It is worth noting, however, that someone like Buden and the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies

might be more drawn towards a coalition of colleagues than Hall's idea of interdisciplinary raiding; the philosophical catalyst for the bridging process in this thesis is conflict rather than consensus. The goal is, at least partially, to "reconnect thinking and acting, theory and practice ... after the death of universalism" (ibid.). It is crucial to realise that the process of formulation and portrayal of the cultural vanguard in this work has been influenced by strategic universalism. The concept itself is consistent with the essential nature of the philosophy of praxis: if the cultural vanguard is social construct in the constructivist sense, it exists for reasons of praxis and rhetoric rather than representation. Like other strategically universalist concepts, it is not merely an interpretive device. In other words, examining what the cultural vanguard does or how it functions is less important than studying what the cultural vanguard means. This concluding section ought to be seen as an examination of meaning rather than a paraphrasing of function. In contrast to the rhetoric of strategic universalism, the distance of its observation is something of an estrangement effect.

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