

APPENDIX A

Four Nations Impartiality Review: An analysis of reporting devolution

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1. Introduction and Overview

The scope of the study

The central aim of the study was to examine how devolution is reported in UK-wide BBC network television and radio news, BBC network factual programmes and BBC online news. This analysis took place within the broad framework of questions about impartiality and accuracy, and asked whether the coverage of the four nations is balanced, accurate and helpful in understanding the new political world of devolved government. The focus of the study fell on the coverage of politics in the broadest sense, including the impact of specific policies and debates over the future of devolution, rather than being limited to the reporting of the everyday business of politics within Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay or Stormont.

We conducted two substantive pieces of content analysis. The first was based on a sample of four weeks of news coverage gathered during an eight week period in October and November 2007. This involved 4,687 news items across a wide range of BBC and non-BBC outlets. The second sample monitored 12 weeks of BBC news programming around the devolved elections in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the English local elections in the spring of 2007 – elections which witnessed the historic handshake between Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley, the emergence of the first Scottish National Party (SNP) led government in Scotland, and the first Labour/Plaid coalition government in Wales.¹

The first analysis generated a series of case studies, allowing us to take a closer look at the coverage of stories that were, in terms of devolution coverage, either typical or notable. We monitored other media outlets during the sample period – including the BBC 18.30 opt out news bulletins from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – in order to assess the volume and range of stories that did not receive UK wide attention.

We also examined current affairs coverage (*Panorama*, *File on Four* and *Analysis*) and phone-in programmes (on Radio Five Live) of topics relevant to devolution. Finally, we conducted a series of focus groups in order to test the accessibility of the BBC website as a source of information about UK devolution.

Overview

Our findings for both BBC and non-BBC output suggested that while devolution was not ignored, the great bulk of political coverage remained focused upon Westminster. Stories about devolution played a tiny part in everyday news coverage, and even during an election period which saw historic new governments elected in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, political coverage was still clearly oriented towards London.

During the election period we found that for every one election-related story, there three Westminster-related stories. We also found that coverage of the elections tended to focus on the *process* of politics (general campaigning, deal-making between the

¹ At the time of the elections, our study had not been commissioned. However, during the October-November period, the BBC was aware that our research was taking place, although not the specific weeks being monitored.

parties etc.) rather than on questions of policy. Although this is often the case, when we compared our findings with earlier studies, we found that the coverage of the devolved elections was particularly process-oriented, with very few policy-oriented election stories about the devolved nations. This was, in part, a consequence of the elections themselves, all of which generated a period of negotiation and deal-making in the formation of new governments. While these processes were clearly both newsworthy and important, the limited time made available for the coverage of devolution meant that there was little space left for the coverage of policy issues.

Outside election periods – although still within the first six months of new governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – Westminster stories outnumbered stories about devolution by a factor of 17 to one. Indeed, we found nearly three times as many stories reported from Westminster as the total number of stories on *any* subject from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Overall, a Westminster focus is apparent both in terms of volume and style. Stories about devolution are often told in relation to their relevance to or impact upon England in general and Westminster in particular. So, for example, when we looked at how the news of the SNP-led government's first budget was interpreted for UK-wide audiences, we found that a number of reports adopting a framework in which the SNP – or Scotland in general - was seen less in its own terms than in contrast/opposition to England and/or Westminster.

This tendency combined with a general bias in favour of stories about England, which, by most measures, received at least twice as much coverage as we would expect if we were simply to judge on the basis of the size of relative populations in the UK or the distribution of the audience for BBC network news². When Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland did make the news, coverage was more likely to involve topics such as sport and crime, rather than those policy areas that are now devolved responsibilities. So, for example, of the 161 news items about health and education in our general sample, no fewer than 160 were about England. On BBC outlets, all 136 stories about health and education were about England.

It is not simply that more stories were told about England, but storytelling often assumed an English perspective, or else an assumption that England can safely stand in for Britain or the UK. So, for example, one of our case studies suggested that when news items were about Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, viewers were frequently reminded of this fact, while news items about England contained very few references to their location. England is, in this sense, treated as something of a 'default' location: audiences therefore need to be attentive during stories about England to understand that they refer to one nation rather than three or four.

Any lapses in accuracy in the coverage of devolved issues tended to follow from inappropriate uses of this assumption, and involved a blurring of the distinction between England and the UK. In some cases stories were told in ways that created the impression that policy initiatives in England applied to Britain or the UK as a whole. One of our case studies, for example, examined how a story that applied only to England was widely reported as a British story.

² Around 20% to 25% of the audience for BBC network news lives in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

The potential to enrich stories by comparing and contrasting the performance of different policies in the four nations remains untapped. When comparisons of this kind were made, we found that they tended to simply refer to (rather than examine) differences in social policy between England and Scotland, often in the context of larger questions about the funding of devolution.

Our analysis of BBC current affairs programmes broadcast during 2007 (*Panorama*, *Analysis* and *File on 4*) suggested a similar pattern. Devolution received little attention, and was often neglected even when it was relevant to the issues under discussion. There were exceptions to this, notably on Radio 4's *Analysis*, which featured some programmes that dealt effectively with some of the complexities of devolution. Overall, however, we found a tendency in current affairs coverage to use terms such as 'England', 'the nation' and 'the country' interchangeably, inviting confusion over the remit of agencies, initiatives and policies, particularly in areas such as health and social care, and education and training.

Our analysis of the morning phone-in programme on Radio Five Live (during both sample periods) also confirms broader trends observed in the wider general and election samples. The amount of coverage given to the Welsh elections, and by extension, the amount of airtime given to Welsh participants, was significantly smaller than that devoted to the Scottish and English elections and to Scottish and English participants. In the October/November sample period, we found little discussion of devolution-related topics, and the little there was tended to avoid discussion of the specifics of devolved responsibilities. Instead, where Scottish devolution was discussed, issues tended to be framed in terms of English 'grievances', such as the West Lothian question.

When we looked at a sample of non-network media (including the BBC's), we found several stories (during our October/November sample period), which might prove important both for the future direction of devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as for the future of the Union. In Scotland, the prospect of increasing devolved powers over the seas around the Scottish coast brought the possibility of changes in responsibility for the oil industry, together with alterations to how the profits of North Sea oil are shared. In Wales, the All-Wales Convention and the debates over a referendum on the extension of law-making powers suggested another major realignment of the relationship between Westminster and Cardiff. At Stormont the Programme for Government represented a roadmap for the progress of devolution in Northern Ireland. None of these stories received network news coverage on the BBC or on the other broadcast outlets we examined.

So, for example, on the day when an England-only training policy was being reported under the rubric of Gordon Brown's "British jobs for British workers" speech, the fact that the Welsh Assembly had just gained powers which were directly relevant to its own responsibility for formulating training policy in Wales went unreported in the UK news.

Finally, we conducted focus groups in order to see how useful people found the BBC website as a source of information about devolution. When we asked our focus groups to use the web as a resource to answer questions about devolution, those we restricted to the BBC website did just as well as those who had access to the world wide web.

This suggests that the BBC website is as good a source as any about devolution (although given their criticisms of other websites, this may be rather faint praise).

Generally people found the BBC website excellent for news coverage, although less helpful looking for facts that were less linked to news stories. There were also criticisms about the lack of a more sophisticated search engine with the ability to filter by date (and thereby access the most up to date information about devolution), as well the assumption in many articles of a prior knowledge of devolution issues.

2. General sample

The broad pattern of news coverage across the four nations

The general sample consisted of 4,687 news items, gathered over four weeks during October and November 2007.³ Table 2.1 shows the distribution of the sample amongst TV, BBC radio and BBC online sources.

Table 2.1: Distribution of sample by media (n=4687, whole sample)

| Media | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| BBC TV | 1363 | 29.1 |
| Non-BBC TV | 1057 | 22.6 |
| BBC Radio | 1740 | 37.1 |
| BBC Online | 527 | 11.2 |
| Total | 4687 | 100 |

While most of these stories (92% of the total sample and 91% of the BBC sample) were irrelevant to an analysis of devolution coverage (giving us a smaller sample of 361 stories that were, or might have been, concerned with aspects of devolved government), the larger sample paints a broad picture of the extent to which the four nations feature in news coverage as a whole.

Previous studies have suggested that Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales receive much less news coverage than England (Lewis et al 2004). Since the bulk of the audience is English, this is, perhaps, to be expected. However, the dominance of England in news coverage is striking. Table 2.2 measures where *stories* are located (not where reporters are located – an aspect we look at shortly). By story location, we mean that the story is presented as being about or relevant to a certain location. If we exclude non-domestic stories (31% of stories) and stories that apply to Britain or the UK generally (25% of stories), Table 2.2 suggests that for every one story located in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales there are 12 located in England (including those from Westminster and Downing Street). If we exclude stories from Westminster/Downing Street, the ratio is still around eight to one. These findings replicate other studies we have conducted on news channels (on Sky and BBC News 24), where the ratio of news located in England to the other nations combined was 14 to 1 on the BBC and 30 to 1 on Sky

Table 2.2: Number of stories located in one of the four nations (n=1964 from 4687 items in total)

| Location | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------|------------|
| England | 1181 | 60.1 |
| Westminster/Downing Street | 630 | 32.1 |
| Northern Ireland | 43 | 2.2 |
| Scotland | 80 | 4.1 |
| Wales | 30 | 1.5 |
| Total | 1964 | 100 |

There are no major differences between the media outlets we studied in the geographical spread of their coverage – indeed, what is more notable is the consistent

³ See Appendix for dates.

pattern across media outlets (Table 2.3). Although BBC television outlets covered a slightly higher proportion of stories from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales than non-BBC television outlets (7.8% of stories on BBC television news compared with 6% of stories on non-BBC television news), the differences are minimal. The main differences are between those media putting a greater emphasis on Westminster, which may be about England, the UK or parts of the UK (BBC radio and BBC online) – as opposed to an emphasis on England in general (BBC and non-BBC television).

Table 2.3: Story locations by media (n=1964 from 4687 items in total)

| Media | Story Location | | | | | Total stories by medium |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | England | Wminstr | Northern Ireland | Scotland | Wales | |
| BBC TV | 68.9% (415) | 23.3% (140) | 2.5% (15) | 3.3% (20) | 2.0% (12) | 100% (602) |
| Non-BBC TV | 63.5% (266) | 30.5% (128) | 2.1% (9) | 2.9% (12) | 1% (4) | 100% (419) |
| BBC Radio | 54.9% (355) | 37.1% (240) | 1.4% (9) | 4.8% (31) | 1.9% (12) | 100% (647) |
| BBC Online | 49% (145) | 41.2% (122) | 3.4% (10) | 5.7% (17) | 0.7% (2) | 100% (296) |
| Total | 60.1% (1181) | 32.1% (630) | 2.2% (43) | 4.1% (80) | 1.5% (30) | 100% (1964) |

While over half the stories in our overall sample (56.7%) were reported by reporters/presenters in the studio, a significant number involved reporters on location. If we look at those stories involving reporters on location in the UK (Table 2.4), we can see that, once again, England dominates. Indeed, there are three times as many stories that come from reporters in Westminster (or outside No. 10 Downing Street) than the total number of stories on any subject reported from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This is not to say that stories from Westminster do not concern all four nations (although in an era of devolved government, they may only concern England), but to draw attention to the dominance of Westminster as a location.

Table 2.4. Number of stories with a reporter on location in one of the four nations (n=872 from 4687 items in total)

| Media | Reporter Location | | | | | Total stories by medium |
|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | England | Wminstr | Northern Ireland | Scotland | Wales | |
| BBC TV | 72% (303) | 20.4% (86) | 2.4% (10) | 3.6% (15) | 1.7% (7) | 100% (421) |
| Non-BBC TV | 68.7% (180) | 26.7% (70) | 1.5% (4) | 2.3% (6) | 0.8% (2) | 100% (262) |
| Radio | 62.4% (118) | 22.8% (43) | 3.2% (6) | 9% (17) | 2.6% (5) | 100% (189) |
| Total | 68.9% (601) | 22.8% (199) | 2.3% (20) | 4.4% (38) | 1.6% (14) | 100% (872) |

Even if we exclude Westminster, we found that reporters were more than eight times more likely to report from England as from the three other nations combined. Here there are differences between BBC and non BBC outlets, with non-BBC outlets being especially Westminster oriented (on BBC TV the Westminster to Northern Ireland/Scotland/Wales ratio is close to three to one while on non-BBC TV news programmes it is six to one).

There are no precise benchmarks to provide a basis for evaluating the spread of stories. The concept of news value is, in this sense, unhelpful, because it is vaguely defined, imprecise and contested (thus any objective measure of the number of newsworthy events that occur in specific locations is impossible). What we can say is that, both in terms of where stories come from and the location of reporters, outlets would need to considerably increase their coverage of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to reflect the population of the UK or the distribution of the audience. This is not to say that population should determine the volume of coverage, simply that England is given significantly more coverage than might be explained by the distribution of the UK-wide audience.

Table 2.5 looks at the main story subjects covered in the larger sample. For the purposes of this study, the most notable finding is the extent to which Westminster politics (i.e. stories about the activities of Westminster politicians or political initiatives coming from Westminster) overshadow stories about devolution.⁴ Less than 1% of stories in our sample referred explicitly to devolution (and some of these references were only in passing), compared to over 15% of stories that concerned Westminster politics.

Table 2.5 Overall story subjects (n=4687, whole sample)

| Subject | BBC TV | Non-BBC TV | BBC Radio | BBC Online | Total Percentage (n=4687) |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Devolution | 0.7 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.7 | 0.9 |
| West Lothian question | 0.4 | 0.2 | .0 | 0.9 | 0.3 |
| Westminster politics | 11.2 | 13.6 | 16.7 | 25.8 | 15.4 |
| Funding of Devolution | .0 | 0.1 | 0.2 | .0 | 0.1 |
| Agriculture | 1.5 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.5 |
| Arts high | 1.4 | 1.0 | 1.5 | 0.6 | 1.3 |
| Business | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.5 | 0.8 | 3.8 |
| Candidate/Leadership/Party focus | 0.3 | 0.9 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.6 |
| Celebrity/Entertainment news | 3.3 | 3.1 | 1.4 | 4.4 | 2.7 |
| Consumer news | 1.7 | 2.0 | 1.3 | 0.4 | 1.5 |
| Crime general/corporate | 1.9 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 1.5 |
| Crime individual | 11.2 | 13.0 | 10.3 | 11.2 | 11.3 |
| Defence | 0.8 | 0.9 | 0.2 | .0 | 0.5 |
| Diplomacy | 2.1 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 0.2 | 1.7 |
| Disasters | 3.4 | 4.3 | 1.7 | 1.3 | 2.7 |
| Economy | 3.8 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 2.8 |
| Education | 2.6 | 1.1 | 1.6 | 2.1 | 1.8 |
| Environment and Natural World | 1.1 | 0.7 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 0.9 |
| Environmental issues | 2.4 | 0.7 | 2.0 | 0.6 | 1.6 |
| Europe/EU | 1.0 | 0.6 | 1.8 | 2.1 | 1.3 |

⁴ We should note here that these concern stories that *explicitly* deal with devolved politics or areas where policy is identified as devolved, whereas the larger sub-sample looks at all those stories for which an understanding of devolution would be relevant.

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Health NHS | 2.1 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 0.9 | 1.7 |
| Health general | 4.3 | 1.6 | 2.8 | 1.9 | 2.9 |
| Human interest | 2.1 | 1.8 | 1.4 | 0.9 | 1.6 |
| Immigration/refugees | 2.4 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 3.8 | 2.1 |
| Industrial relations | 1.0 | 1.7 | 2.1 | 0.4 | 1.5 |
| International politics | 6.7 | 7.0 | 9.5 | 3.4 | 7.4 |
| International other | 2.3 | 4.4 | 3.0 | 1.3 | 3 |
| Legal issues | 0.5 | 0.7 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 1 |
| Local government | 0.1 | .0 | 0.5 | 1.9 | 0.4 |
| Media | 1.8 | 1.8 | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.9 |
| Monarchy | 2.9 | 2.8 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 1.9 |
| Other | 1.8 | 1.2 | 1.6 | 2.3 | 1.7 |
| Peace process/the troubles | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.6 | 0.1 |
| Policing | 2.5 | 3.5 | 2.8 | 3.0 | 2.9 |
| Religion | 1.5 | 1.8 | 2.2 | 0.6 | 1.7 |
| Science/technology | 1.5 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.1 | 1.3 |
| Sleaze/labour donations | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.8 | 0.3 |
| Social Policy other | 0.8 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 1.3 | 0.7 |
| Sport | 3.6 | 5.6 | 2.8 | 9.3 | 4.4 |
| Terrorism | 2.0 | 2.2 | 2.8 | 2.7 | 2.4 |
| Transport | 1.5 | 0.3 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 0.9 |
| War/conflict | 3.7 | 5.2 | 4.3 | 1.3 | 4 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

There were also 12 stories about the West Lothian question (0.3% of the sample), which, while they could technically be added to the Westminster tally, do raise questions about devolution.⁵ There were a further five stories about the funding of devolution, which obviously concerned devolved government but from a Westminster perspective. The small numbers do not alter the overall picture of Westminster-dominated coverage.

Table 2.6 looks at the geographical spread of those stories that referred to devolution. Most of these stories – 37 out of 42 – were reported on BBC outlets. As we might expect Scotland, as the largest of the three devolved nations with significant devolved powers, dominates. Northern Ireland has notably more coverage than Wales. So while six out of ten devolved stories were about Scotland (25 out of 42), we only found *one* story in the whole sample that involved devolution in Wales – about the use – and potential banning - of electric dog collars.

Table 2.6 Location of devolved stories (n=42, from 4687 items in total)⁶

| | BBC Outlets | Non-BBC Outlets | |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Location | Frequency | Frequency | Total |
| England | 1 | 0 | 1 ⁷ |

⁵ The West Lothian question was first posed by Tam Dalyell, MP for West Lothian, in 1977. It refers to the anomaly that while Scottish MPs could vote on some English policies, English MPs could not vote on those policies as they affect people in Scotland because those matters had been devolved. Since devolution in Wales and Northern Ireland, this anomaly extends to Welsh and Northern Ireland MPs.

⁶ Percentage column here has been omitted as frequencies are extremely small.

⁷ This item, on Radio 4 *6pm News* reported on a reading survey (see the section below on *Case Studies*, pp. 28-30) which focused on the survey's coverage of English reading standards, but also briefly mentioned Scotland in passing, with the reporter's comments carrying an implicit reference to Scottish

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Westminster/ Downing Street | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Northern Ireland | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| Scotland | 23 | 2 | 25 |
| Wales | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| General UK | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Westminster and Scotland | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 37 | 5 | 42 |

What is striking about Table 2.7 is how few of these devolution stories – only one, in fact – concern health or education, which are widely seen as the two most significant areas of devolved responsibility. While we did find a small number of stories that referred to health and education in a devolved context (so, for example, a handful of stories referred to differences in Scotland’s approach to care for the elderly and tuition fees) this was rarely the main focus of the story.

Table 2.7: Subjects covered by stories from BBC outlets referring to devolved government

| Subject | Subject | | | Total |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| | Devolution | West Lothian question | Funding of devolution | |
| N/A | 68.8% (11) | 25% (4) | 6.3% (1) | (16) |
| Westminster Politics | 0 | 0 | (4) | (4) |
| Candidate/Leadership/Party | 50% (2) | 50% (2) | 0 | (4) |
| Constitutional Affairs | 0 | 100% (2) | 0 | (2) |
| Crime General/Corporate | (1) | 0 | 0 | (1) |
| Economy | (8) | 0 | 0 | (8) |
| Education | 0 | 0 | 0 | (0) |
| Electoral System | (2) | 0 | 0 | (2) |
| Health | 0 | 0 | 0 | (0) |
| Industrial Relations | 0 | (1) | 0 | (1) |
| Media | 0 | 0 | 0 | (0) |
| Nations cultural | (1) | 0 | 0 | (1) |
| Other | (2) | 0 | 0 | (2) |
| Peace Process/ Troubles | 100% (2) | 0 | 0 | (2) |
| Policing | (1) | 0 | 0 | (1) |
| Devolution and Daily Life | (3) | 0 | 0 | (3) |
| Funding of Devolution | 0 | 0 | 0 | (0) |
| Independence | 80% (4) | 20% (1) | 0 | (5) |
| Total | 71.2% (37) | 19.2% (10) | 9.6% (5) | (52) |

We can develop this analysis by isolating the 1334 stories specifically located in one of the four nations⁸ (again, this refers to the location of the story, not the location of the reporter), and excluding those with a general UK focus, Westminster-based stories or international stories (Table 2.8A). Of the 161 stories in this sample that dealt with health or education, 160 were located in England (or all 136 of the stories on BBC

education powers. The story was therefore coded as a story carrying an implicit reference to devolved powers, despite having an overwhelmingly English focus.

⁸ For the purposes of this analysis we have excluded the tiny number of stories in the sample that deal with more than one of the four nations.

outlets)⁹. Overall, 14% of stories based in England concern health or education. The effect of devolution, in this instance, would seem to be that stories about education and health ignore Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Table 2.8: Subjects covered by stories from the four nations

A: BBC Outlets

| Subject | Story Location | | | | | | | | Total Frequency |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------|------------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|------|-----------------|
| | England | | Northern Ireland | | Scotland | | Wales | | |
| | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | |
| Devolution | 1 | 3.1 | 7 | 21.9 | 23 | 71.9 | 1 | 3.1 | 32 |
| West Lothian Question | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 1 |
| Westminster Politics | 49 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 49 |
| Funding of Devolution | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 3 | 100 | 0 | .0 | 3 |
| Agriculture | 43 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 43 |
| Arts (high) | 23 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 23 |
| Business | 3 | 75.0 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 25.0 | 0 | .0 | 4 |
| Candidate/Leadership/ Party Focus | 1 | 100 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 1 |
| Celebrity/Entertainment news | 26 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 26 |
| Consumer News | 4 | 66.7 | 0 | .0 | 2 | 33.3 | 0 | .0 | 6 |
| Crime General/Corporate | 17 | 85.0 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 5.0 | 2 | 10.0 | 20 |
| Crime Individual | 236 | 86.1 | 10 | 3.6 | 17 | 6.2 | 11 | 4.0 | 274 |
| Defence | 5 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 5 |
| Diplomacy | 14 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 14 |
| Disasters | 28 | 68.3 | 10 | 24.4 | 2 | 4.9 | 1 | 2.4 | 41 |
| Economy | 7 | 87.5 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 12.5 | 0 | .0 | 8 |
| Education | 62 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 62 |
| Environment and Natural World | 8 | 50.0 | 0 | .0 | 5 | 31.3 | 3 | 18.8 | 16 |
| Environmental Issues | 15 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 15 |
| Health NHS | 47 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 47 |
| Health General | 27 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 27 |
| Human Interest | 36 | 97.3 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 2.7 | 0 | .0 | 37 |
| Immigration /Refugees | 6 | 85.7 | 1 | 14.3 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 7 |
| Industrial Relations | 4 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 4 |
| International Politics | 3 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 3 |
| Legal Issues | 17 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 17 |
| Local Government | 10 | 76.9 | 0 | .0 | 3 | 23.1 | 0 | .0 | 13 |
| Media | 11 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 11 |
| Monarchy | 37 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 37 |
| Other | 17 | 94.4 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 5.6 | 18 |
| Peace Process/The Troubles | 0 | .0 | 5 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 5 |
| Policing | 70 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 70 |
| Religion | 3 | 75.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 25.0 | 4 |

⁹ The one story located outside England concerned the treatment of six patients suffering from *C. difficile* at a Glasgow hospital.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| Science/Technology | 6 | 85.7 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 14.3 | 0 | .0 | 7 |
| Sleaze/Labour | 1 | 100 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 1 |
| Donations Row | | | | | | | | | |
| Social Policy (other) | 6 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 6 |
| Sport | 50 | 79.4 | 0 | .0 | 7 | 11.1 | 6 | 9.5 | 63 |
| Terrorism | 5 | 83.3 | 1 | 16.7 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 6 |
| Transport | 10 | 100 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 10 |
| War/Conflict | 7 | 100 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 7 |
| Total | 915 | 87.7 | 34 | 3.3 | 68 | 6.5 | 26 | 2.5 | 1043 |

B: Non-BBC outlets

| Subject | Story Location | | | | | | | | Total Frequency |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------|------------------|------|----------|------|-------|-----|-----------------|
| | England | | Northern Ireland | | Scotland | | Wales | | |
| | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | |
| Devolution | 0 | .0 | 1 | 33.3 | 2 | 66.7 | . | .0 | 3 |
| West Lothian Question | 1 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 1 |
| Westminster Politics | 5 | 83.3 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 16.7 | 0 | .0 | 6 |
| Funding of Devolution | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 |
| Agriculture | 14 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 14 |
| Arts (high) | 8 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 8 |
| Business | 1 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 1 |
| Candidate/Leadership/ Party Focus | 1 | 100 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 1 |
| Celebrity/Entertainment news | 13 | 92.9 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 7.1 | 0 | .0 | 14 |
| Consumer News | 1 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 1 |
| Crime General/Corporate | 3 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 3 |
| Crime Individual | 82 | 89.1 | 4 | 4.3 | 2 | 2.2 | 4 | 4.3 | 92 |
| Defence | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 |
| Diplomacy | 0 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 9 |
| Disasters | 9 | 64.3 | 4 | 28.6 | 1 | 7.1 | 0 | .0 | 14 |
| Economy | 2 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 2 |
| Education | 9 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 9 |
| Environment and Natural World | 2 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 2 |
| Environmental Issues | 2 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 2 |
| Health NHS | 10 | 90.9 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 9.1 | 0 | .0 | 11 |
| Health General | 6 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 6 |
| Human Interest | 12 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 12 |
| Immigration /Refugees | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 |
| Industrial Relations | 1 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 1 |
| International Politics | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 |
| Legal Issues | 3 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 3 |
| Local Government | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 |
| Media | 2 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 2 |
| Monarchy | 17 | 94.4 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 5.6 | 0 | .0 | 18 |
| Other | 4 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 4 |
| Peace Process/The Troubles | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 |
| Policing | 22 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 22 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-------------|----------|------------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|------------|
| Religion | 3 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 3 |
| Science/Technology | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 |
| Sleaze/Labour Donations Row | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 |
| Social Policy (other) | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 1 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 1 |
| Sport | 20 | 90.9 | 0 | .0 | 2 | 9.1 | 0 | .0 | 22 |
| Terrorism | 4 | 100.0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 4 |
| Transport | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 |
| War/Conflict | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 | .0 | 0 |
| Total | 266 | 91.4 | 9 | 3.1 | 12 | 4.1 | 4 | 1.4 | 291 |

Similarly – and somewhat surprisingly given the spread of agricultural land in the UK – all 57 of the stories about farming or rural affairs were based in England, although this can largely be accounted for by the widespread coverage given to the outbreak of bird flu in Suffolk. In addition, all of the 31 arts stories in this sample came from England.

This data suggests a general absence of social policy stories, notably in Scotland and Wales. Here, stories about crime and sport tend to dominate, especially in Wales, with over a third (37%) of Scottish stories and three quarters of Welsh stories (73%) on these subjects. This compares with 17% of stories about crime and sport across the sample as a whole, and 33% of English stories (see Table 2.5 above).

The coverage of stories relevant to devolution

Within the general sample (of 4687 stories), we isolated all those news items that had some relevance to devolution, regardless of whether this was made clear by the news report. So, for example, a story about a subject in which policy has been devolved was categorised under this heading, even if this fact was not made clear to audiences. Our aim here was to look in more detail at those stories that either contained or might have contained information about devolution.

This amounted to 361 news items¹⁰ – just under 8% of the total sample (313 on BBC outlets and 48 on non-BBC outlets). We then coded these 361 news items under a variety of headings listed in Table 2.9. Some of the 361 items were coded under more than one heading (the total number of stories in Table 2.9 adds up to more than 361).

Table 2.9 Number of stories relevant to devolution by media (n=361)

| Devolved Power | BBC TV | Non-BBC TV | Radio | Online | Total |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Relevant powers referred to | 12 | 7 | 15 | 12 | 46 |
| Relevant powers not referred to | 10 | 9 | 16 | 12 | 47 |
| Devolved political process | 16 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 30 |
| England, or England and Wales only | 60 | 19 | 78 | 32 | 189 |
| Whole UK, elements devolved | 18 | 15 | 39 | 10 | 82 |

Overall, only around one in eight of these news items made any specific reference to devolved powers, while a further one in ten mentioned politicians in the devolved administrations – such as Scottish Labour leader, Wendy Alexander, whose

¹⁰ As outlined in Section 7, this involved 71 different stories across these 361 news items

involvement in the campaign contributions scandal was featured across several outlets (referred to in the Table as ‘devolved political process’). In other words, the bulk of those stories about a subject in which policy has been devolved – specific aspects of education or healthcare, for example – made no explicit reference to devolution.

As Table 2.9 shows, the most common example of such a story – 52% of the 361 news items relevant to devolution (54% of BBC outlets and 40% of non-BBC outlets) - were those that dealt with an area of devolved government but referred only to England (or, in some cases, England and Wales) . So, for example, there were a number of stories that took their lead from an Ofsted report into failing schools in England. These stories raised issues about education policy, but made no reference to the different policies being pursued in the four nations, or to schools outside England (we look more closely at this story in our case studies). As we noted earlier, this is typical of the English focus of health and education stories.

The second most common type of story (‘whole UK, elements devolved’) - around a quarter of the sample - were UK stories that dealt with topics where relevant policy areas are partly or implicitly devolved, without referring to devolution or policies. So, for example, a story about the problem of ‘binge drinking’ that mentioned the role of education in tackling the problem was coded under this heading. While we would not expect stories of this kind to routinely refer to devolved powers or policies, they do provide an opportunity (in these cases, not taken) to compare different approaches in the four nations to issues and problems.

We also found a number of stories – 38 on BBC outlets, 47 overall – that dealt explicitly with areas of devolved policy in a UK contexts without referring to devolved government. So, for example, there were a number of stories about tackling hospital ‘superbugs’ such as *C. difficile*, which made no reference to the different approaches and records of the four nations in dealing with this problem. It is in these cases that we might say that there has been a failure to discuss or explain the nature of devolved government (or to compare the records or approaches of the four nations). Overall then, the great majority of stories that could have referred to devolved powers or policies did not do so.

The 46 stories (39 on BBC outlets) in which references *were* made to devolved powers often mentioned more than one policy area. Across these 46 stories we counted 75 separate explicit references and 8 implicit references (roughly two references per story) to devolved powers/policies.

Table 2.10 Explicit/implicit references to devolved powers by subject (n=83 references across 46 stories from a total of 361 news reports))

| | BBC Outlets | | Non-BBC Outlets | | Total |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------|-----------------|----------|-------|
| | Explicit | Implicit | Explicit | Implicit | |
| Devolved power | | | | | |
| Animal Welfare | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Crime | 11 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 13 |
| Culture | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Economic Regeneration | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Education | 14 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 18 |
| Environment | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Equal rights | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Health | 13 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 16 |
| Social Policy | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 6 |
| Tax or economy | 13 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 19 |
| Transport | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 63 | 8 | 12 | 0 | 83 |

An implicit reference is more opaque: so for example, a story about changing the legal smoking age specified that this applied to England, Scotland and Wales, thereby implying that Northern Ireland had powers to develop their own policy. We did not include stories about ‘England only’ in this category unless they specifically implied different policies existed in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales (rather than being stories that were simply about England). In most cases stories about England made no reference of any kind to any of the other three nations

When references were made, Table 2.10 shows that they tended to refer to health, education, taxation or the economy (areas like economic regeneration) or crime/policing. The most common references signalled the fact that the Scottish government does not have full tax raising powers (a point explored in our case study on the SNP’s first budget), or mentioned Scotland’s policies on tuition fees and healthcare for the elderly.

We also looked at all 361 stories (both BBC and non-BBC – relevant breakdowns below) in the ‘relevant to devolution’ sample to see if they were factually accurate or confusing. We found a significant proportion (74 stories – or 20.5% of the sample) that contained information relating to devolution that was confusing or – implicitly or explicitly – inaccurate (Table 2.11). If we break this down, 19% of BBC news items and 27% of non-BBC news items in this sample contained information that was confusing or inaccurate. We found few instances – four (all on BBC outlets) - of explicitly misleading statements. Rather, they involved, in 54 of the 58 cases (42 on BBC outlets, 12 on non-BBC outlets), statements or assumptions that were misleading by implication or suggestion.

So, for example, a story about new government training programmes in England was widely reported in the context of Gordon Brown’s speech about “British jobs for British workers”, and in most cases this gave the impression that the new training programmes were being rolled out across the UK rather than only in England (we look at this story in more detail in our case studies).

Table 2.11 also includes the small number of stories (ten on BBC outlets, 11 overall) in the sample of 361 stories that confused Britain with the UK.¹¹ A further eight stories (all but one on BBC outlets) implied that a devolved government had power to do certain things when in fact it did not. All of these involved the suggestion that the SNP-led Scottish Parliament had the power to declare independence should a referendum mandate it – a power that actually remains legally in the hands of the Westminster government.

¹¹ An error of this kind would be to e.g. confuse the United Kingdom (as a political entity, across which UK-wide policies from Westminster apply) with the island of Great Britain (therefore excluding Northern Ireland by implication).

Table 2.11 Information about stories that was confusing or inaccurate, by media (n=74 from a total of 361 news reports)

| Inaccuracy/confusion | Media | | | | Total |
|---|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| | BBC TV | Non-BBC TV | BBC Radio | BBC Online | |
| States explicitly that a story applies UK-wide when it does not | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| Assumes that a story applies UK-wide when it does not | 12 | 12 | 23 | 7 | 54 |
| Confuses UK with Britain/Great Britain | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 11 |
| Incorrectly implies devolved powers | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 8 |
| Other Inaccuracy | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Total | 18 | 13 | 30 | 13 | 74 |

Finally, we asked whether stories in the devolution sample compared specific devolved policies between nations. Only 16 stories (or 4%) in our ‘relevant to devolution’ sample of 361 stories did so, with 24 comparisons being made across these stories (19 on BBC outlets, 5 on non BBC outlets). It is worth adding here that few of these comparisons went beyond references to the fact there were different policies – again, the notable examples here were brief comparisons between England and Scotland on tuition fees and healthcare for the elderly. These stories were often about the funding of devolution rather than about social policy, in which comparisons were made to indicate different spending levels in England and Scotland.

We found *no* stories that compared the approaches taken in the four nations to tackling hospital infections, or to many aspects of education policy where Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland have not followed various English initiatives around testing, league tables, city academies etc.

2.12 Number of comparisons between devolved nations (n= 24 comparisons in 16 news reports from a total of 361 news reports))

| Subject Compared | Media | | | | Total |
|------------------|----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| | BBC TV | Non-BBC TV | BBC Radio | BBC Online | |
| Health | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| Education | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Crime | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Tax or Economy | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Transport | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 8 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 24 |

As we might expect, the dominant sources used in the devolved stories sample were politicians (who comprised 47% of all sources used – far and away the biggest single category). We looked at this group in detail, in order to see the extent to which politicians from the devolved governments - i.e., Welsh Assembly Members (AMs), Northern Irish Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), or Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) – were used to inform these stories.

The Westminster focus of many of these stories is clearly indicated by the dominance of Westminster/UK politicians – who comprise 83% of political sources used (on both BBC outlets and overall - Table 2.13) in the devolved sample. The only other notable presence was Scottish politicians – especially the SNP - while only one Welsh AM was used. Partly for this reason, the politicians used were overwhelmingly – by a ratio of nearly five to one – male.

Table 2.13: Political sources used in devolved stories sample

| Political Source | BBC Outlets | | Non-BBC Outlets | | Total |
|----------------------------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|------------|------------|
| | Freq. | Percent. | Freq. | Percent. | Freq. |
| UK Labour Party | 121 | 48.0 | 14 | 42.4 | 135 |
| UK Conservative Party | 60 | 23.8 | 9 | 27.3 | 69 |
| UK Liberal Democrats | 22 | 8.7 | 2 | 6.1 | 24 |
| UK Green Party | 5 | 2.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 |
| SNP | 14 | 5.6 | 7 | 21.2 | 21 |
| Scottish Labour | 7 | 2.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 7 |
| Scottish Conservatives | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 |
| Scottish Liberal Democrats | 4 | 1.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 |
| Scottish Green Party | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 |
| Plaid Cymru | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 |
| Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) | 3 | 1.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 |
| Sinn Fein | 3 | 1.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 |
| Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 |
| Social Dem and Labour (SDLP) | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 |
| Alliance Party (AP) | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 |
| English Councils – Conservative | 5 | 2.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 |
| English Councils – Labour | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 |
| English Councils – Lib Democrats | 1 | 0.4 | 1 | 3.0 | 2 |
| Total | 252 | 100 | 33 | 100 | 285 |

So, for example, the Welsh Assembly has a much higher proportion of women representatives than Westminster (indeed it became the first government in the world to achieve gender parity): the focus on Westminster is therefore likely to increase the prominence of male politicians.

In summary, the picture painted by these data suggests the following conclusions:

- Stories about devolution are a tiny part of UK news coverage, both on BBC and non-BBC outlets.
- The bulk of political coverage remains firmly Westminster-focused.
- News in general is dominated by England, with only a small proportion of stories either about or reported from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- Social policy stories that might involve devolved issues or policies – in areas like health or education – are overwhelmingly about England.
- The devolution sample confirms the English/UK focus suggested by the larger sample, with around three quarters of the stories in this sample being about England or the UK, and the great majority of political sources (e.g. via interviews, recorded speeches etc.) coming from Westminster.

- We found few stories that compared the different approaches taken by governments in the four nations, and none that did so in any detail.
- By contrast, we found a number of stories that were confusing or misleading about devolution – most typically, by blurring the distinction between England and the UK, sometimes creating the impression that policy initiatives in England applied to Britain or the UK.

3. Case Studies

Introduction

The purpose of these case studies is to illuminate the quantitative data presented in Section 2, specifically:

- Stories about health and education tend to be limited to stories in England, rather than extending to the other three nations (Case Study 1). This case study also suggests that when a story is about England, this is often assumed rather than stated by reporters, whereas when a story concerns one of the other three nations, its location is repeatedly made clear;
- For both BBC and non-BBC outlets, most of the small number of stories about devolution concerned Scotland (see Table 2.8 above) – Case Study 2 looks at the most prominent of these stories;
- Most of the inaccuracies we found in the reporting of devolution came from English stories being reported as if they were about Britain or the UK – Case Study 3 looks at one such instance, when an initiative in England was reported in connection with Gordon Brown’s earlier speech on “British jobs for British workers”;
- In the context of the general dominance of reporting about England – our final case study looks at how a new report that looked at reading standards in both England and Scotland was reported mainly in terms of its significance to England.

Case study 1: Reporting an England-only story: covering an Ofsted report on failing English schools

This case study is an example of the many stories we found that dealt with an area of devolved government – in this case education - based on a news story that applied only to England. While the stories we examined were consistent in locating the story in England, they were also consistent in doing so only cursorily, without making any reference to devolution. A comparison with stories that apply to the other three nations suggests that when a story is about nations other than England, viewers/listeners are repeatedly reminded of its location. The risk here is that audiences may mistake English stories as being about Britain or the whole of the UK.

On 17 October 2007 the results of an Ofsted report into English secondary schools were published. The report claimed that half of these schools were failing and that one-in-ten were deemed to be 'unsatisfactory'. We found nine instances in broadcast media of this story being covered, often in some detail, with a sequence of different reports and/or interviews (giving us a total of fifteen news reports/interviews across the nine stories). All of these items were categorised during coding as 'Stories about England, or England and Wales only'. The story was also covered online,¹² where the fact that the report only covered English schools was mentioned at the head of the story.

None of the broadcast media stories was, in a technical sense, misleading: in every case, the fact that the Ofsted report referred only to English schools was mentioned at

¹² See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7048753.stm>

the beginning of the story (see Table 3.1). So, for example, BBC *Ten O’Clock News* opens with the line, "an appalling indictment of the education service, that's the verdict of the Chief Inspector of Schools after a report found that one in ten secondary schools in England are inadequate and almost half are offering a no-better than satisfactory education".

However, although the story was generally covered in some detail, at no point was its English location stressed. Only one of the individual reports/interviews we looked at (on the BBC *Ten O’Clock News*) made any further reference to England (in this case, before presenting statistics generated by the Ofsted report – statistics which were presented earlier at 1pm and 6pm without such a reminder). These stories *may* therefore have given the impression, to a less attentive viewer/listener, that the report refers to the whole of the UK.

Table 3.1 Number of English location is mentioned in Ofsted story (BBC and non-BBC outlets)¹³

| Story on: | Mentions of England |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| BBC One O’Clock News | 1 |
| BBC Six O’Clock News | 1 |
| BBC Ten O’Clock News | 2 |
| BBC News 24 (Unit 1) ¹⁴ | 1 |
| BBC News 24 (Unit 2) | 0 |
| SKY News | 1 |
| Channel 4 News | 1 |
| Radio 4 6pm News | 1 |
| World At One (Unit 1) | 1 |
| World At One (Unit 2) | 1 |
| World At One (Unit 3) | 0 |
| World At One (Unit 4) | 0 |
| World At One (Unit 5) | 0 |
| PM (Unit 1) | 1 |
| PM (Unit 2) | 0 |

This is particularly the case when there was a sequence of reports/interviews based on this story, without any reminders that this was a story about schools in England rather than Britain or the whole of the UK. So, for example, coverage on *News 24* consisted of two pieces (a package and an interview). The only reference to English schools was contained in the first few seconds of the package, and was not repeated or mentioned at any point during the subsequent interview.

Across 15 different reports/interviews, England was mentioned explicitly only 11 times. 13 of these were BBC reports, involving nine explicit mentions. We did not find, however, any instances of confusing or ambiguous references to schools in 'the nation', 'the country' or 'Britain'. Thus, in contrast to the stories reported on in Case Study 3, all these stories are accurate.

¹³ All mentions were made by newsreaders or presenters.

¹⁴ For definitions of what counts as a ‘unit’ for the general sample, election sample and case studies, see Appendix.

Any confusion between England and the UK or Britain on the audience’s part would therefore depend upon their missing or forgetting the initial reference to English schools. Research on news audiences suggests that this is, in fact, quite likely to occur: if information is not stressed or repeated, it tends not to be recalled unless it is already a well-established fact (Lewis 1991, 2001).

Such confusion may have been increased by the use of UK politicians in the reports, such as Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, (on the BBC *Ten O’Clock News*) and, to a lesser extent, other Westminster politicians like Lord Adonis and Nick Gibb (used widely). While this is often appropriate, at no point is it made clear that UK ministers or “the government” is, in this context, only responsible for schools in England.

Confusion may also have arisen when this story was followed immediately by other stories about schools in the UK, without any clear explanation of the shift in focus. So, for example the *World at One* did a series of reports that drew on this story, one of which was based on a report from the Children's Society, a report which covers the whole of the UK, and focuses on the social divide in schools. The interview with the Chief Executive of the Children's Society thus moves the story from an English to a UK focus without signalling to the viewer the change.

None of these reports compared education in England with education in schools in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

A brief comparison with stories from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland is instructive here. In these cases, the viewer/listener is generally much more likely to be reminded of its location. For example, in a two minute BBC story on a Welsh Assembly proposal to ban electric dog collars (the only story in our sample to deal directly with devolved government in Wales) there were six explicit mentions of Wales; four by the reporter and two by interviewees.

Similarly, in a 306-second BBC interview on the issue of paramilitaries in Northern Ireland decommissioning their weapons, there were five explicit references to Northern Ireland and five mentions of the Irish parties or paramilitary groups, by both the presenter and the interviewee. And in a 73-second BBC report on the Scottish Parliament's move to recruit and retain more police officers there were three explicit mentions of Scotland (reference to the Scottish Government, a Scottish respondent and the Scottish budget) and four references to the SNP.

Table 3.2: Number of times locations are mentioned in stories from Wales/Scotland/N.I

| Story location | Reference to Wales/ Scotland/N.I. | | Indirect reference | |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------|
| | Journalist ¹⁵ | Other ¹⁶ | Journalist | Other |
| Northern Ireland | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Scotland | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 |

¹⁵ Includes references by a newsreader or studio presenter and reporters.

¹⁶ This refers to any non-journalists, such as guests, experts or politicians.

| | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|---|
| Wales | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|

In total, then, audiences were reminded of the story location 23 times across just three news items: this is a ratio of location identifiers to reports that is *ten times* higher than in the English schools story. It appears from this analysis that when stories are about England, reporters do not feel the need to remind audiences of its specificity, while they routinely do so when stories are about Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. This is true of both the BBC and non-BBC stories we looked at.

Case study 2: Reporting a devolved story: The SNP Government's First Budget

We chose to look at this story in detail because it was the only story about devolved government outside England in our general sample to receive much coverage. It reveals a variety of approaches to reporting devolution.

On 14 November 2007, the SNP government in Scotland announced its first budget. We found nine news reports on this story: five on BBC radio, and two on BBC television, one on the BBC Online Politics site, and one on Channel Four (which also carried a preview story the night before the budget announcement, which we did not analyse for this case study). Four of the reports were broadcast from the studio, three (including the Channel Four report) had a reporter on location in Scotland and one report had a reporter on location in Westminster.

All of the reports were categorised in our sample as having a clear devolved political focus in which a direct connection was made between the subject focus and devolved powers. Every report made it clear that this was a Scottish story, although coverage included discussion of its relation to Westminster and England. Indeed, this relationship was the focus of much of the coverage.

The reports on *Newsnight*, *Channel 4 News* (which featured reports on the evening before the budget, and on 14 November), and the BBC1 *Six O'Clock News* all discussed the SNP's case for the need to make Scotland independent, thereby allowing it to control its own revenue and balance its own books. The reports on the *World at One* included a debate about Scotland setting and collecting its own taxes but contained only a brief mention of independence. They also focused upon perceived mutual resentment between England and Scotland. In contrast, the Radio 4 *6pm News* did not mention the SNP's declaration of intent to become independent within ten years, preferring to emphasize the machinery of government and the processes of compromise and deal-making that must occur in order for political parties to get their policies supported and passed through the Scottish Parliament.

Coverage of this story took devolution seriously and made it clear that the Scottish Parliament is a significant legislative body. We also found a number of instances where significant information about the economics of devolution is provided.

A number of reports used a framework in which the SNP – or Scotland in general - is seen less in its own terms than in contrast/opposition to the UK Government and/or England. Or, to put it another way, this may be a story about Scotland, but it is sometimes reported through English eyes. This was perhaps most notable on the *World*

at One, which, after a brief mention of the story in headlines at the very beginning, placed the report at the end of the programme, leading with the line: "It's budget day today. No, not here in Westminster but in the Scottish Parliament". This was, of course, simply a statement of fact (given the location of the broadcast) but the decision to cover the story from Westminster rather than Edinburgh placed the story 'not here but there', indicative, perhaps, of the way in which the coverage of devolution has done little to displace Westminster-oriented routines. This emphasis was notably less in evidence with reports on location from the Scottish Parliament, such as that on Radio 4's *6pm News*, which focused more on relations between parties in Scotland.

Some of this emphasis undoubtedly came from the SNP itself: thus many of the reports focused less on how the money is to be spent than where it comes from, and the antagonism between Westminster and Scotland on funding the Scottish Parliament. Some reports used Westminster politicians or non-SNP MSPs as sources to highlight the discrepancies between Scottish and English public spending without allowing SNP members to offer their views. A more detailed description of the coverage breaks down as follows:

The Today Programme

The first report (of the material we monitored) lasted for 18 seconds, and came during the 7-8am hour of the programme. The report was read by the presenter and focused on the expectation that that the SNP would announce a reduction in business rates and call for council taxes to be frozen. The presenter also referred to opposition claims that the SNP had already backtracked on promises about police recruitment and class sizes. While there is no explicit statement to make clear that this story is about Scotland, the report is introduced as "Ministers from the Scottish National Party...". In both this report and the one that came later, there is a reminder to listeners that the SNP took power in May.

The second report appeared in the 8-9am hour of the programme, and presented the story more with more explicit reference to the Scottish context. This time the presenter explicitly mentioned that this budget relates to "Scotland's devolved government". There was also some explanation of how Scotland's budget works, with information about how Westminster gives a block of money to the Scottish government and how Scottish politicians then decide how to spend it. This report included a package from BBC Scotland's political editor, Brian Taylor, and noted that the SNP believe they have received a tight deal from Westminster. The main policies mentioned were the cutting of business rates, freezing council tax, investment in improving skills and renewable energy and improving Scotland's health record.

The World at One

Two reports about the SNP Budget were aired back-to-back in the latter half of the programme. The first was a two-way, with the reporter in Westminster, and the second was a studio discussion involving the SNP's Westminster spokesman on the economy and a Labour MP. Both reports focused heavily on the perceived (or otherwise) imbalance between English and Scottish public spending.

The first report opened with the presenter announcing that: "It's budget day today. No, not here in Westminster but in the Scottish Parliament". It could be argued that this statement assumes an English audience: one reported from 'over here' (London or England) about somewhere 'over there' (Scotland).

The report focused less on policy and more on the way that Scotland's money is raised. For example, in the first report, the reporter refers to one of "the paradoxes of devolution" - the fact that Scotland can decide how to spend money but doesn't have the power to raise it. This then led into a discussion about whether or not Scotland receives too much money from Westminster and how this issue could be fairly resolved.

In the first report a number of English Labour MPs were quoted saying that Scotland receives too much money and therefore has a public spending advantage. The suggestion was made by one MP that if the resentment felt in England about this topic were to increase, it could lead to the break up of the union between Scotland and England. During the later studio discussion, the reporter put the suggestion forward to the SNP representative that the SNP was pushing this debate in order to increase resentment north of the border so as to increase support for independence.

Radio 4 6pm News

The Radio 4 *6pm News* contained a 130-second report, which consisted of a reporter package on location in Scotland. This opened by stating that the SNP had unveiled its first budget since being elected as a minority government, before discussing the freeze on council tax and the cut in business rates for small businesses. The reporter James Shaw emphasized the fact that, as a minority government, the SNP need to make deals with the other parties in order to get their bills passed. The report contained quotes from SNP leaders who acknowledged they need the support of parliament to get their policies through, and also contained a clip of the Liberal Democrat Leader accusing the SNP of having "sums that don't add up".

The report talked about the process of deal-making between parties, discussing how opposition parties will attempt to get their policies on the agenda in exchange for supporting the SNP's policies in parliament. The SNP condemned the settlement from the Treasury as being "painfully tight" and say that their aim will be to forge ties with the other parties in order to pass their key objectives.

Newsnight

The *Newsnight* story consisted of a 218-second interview. The presenter contextualized the issue by stating that the SNP had announced that a deal had been struck to cut council tax in Scotland, but that it blamed the "tightest settlement since devolution from Westminster" for them having had to shelve other manifesto commitments, including plans to scrap student debt. This then led into an interview between the presenter and the SNP Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth John Swinney, in which Swinney claimed that the intention to introduce expensive policies such as reinstating student grants was genuine. However, he blamed the low settlement from Westminster for preventing the SNP from keeping their manifesto promises. Swinney went on to criticize the way devolved governments are funded by Westminster, claiming that

North Sea oil revenue goes to the Treasury and should go directly to Scotland. He suggested that Scotland should be responsible for both income and expenditure.

Channel 4 News

Channel 4 News opened its report by emphasizing the SNP's desire for independence within ten years and the possible dissolution of the 300-year old Union between England and Scotland. It listed the SNP's policies, including a 'council tax freeze' and 'business rates cut', but also mentioned that there was no money to cut student debt or to keep pledges on policing. This then led into a reporter package on location in Scotland (lasting 277 seconds) which was titled "Disunited Kingdom: Economic Challenges". There was discussion of the pledges that the SNP had kept and those it had failed to implement, and it was explicitly stated that nationalists view the Union as 'constraining'. The report tended to focus on the failures of the SNP to keep manifesto promises, and talked to the Labour leader in Scotland about her criticisms of the budget.

BBC 6 O'Clock News

A 120-second report on the *BBC Six O'Clock News* led with information on the freeze on council tax and cut in business rates. This reporter package on location involved a reporter in Scotland. In a clip included in the package, SNP Cabinet Secretary for Finance John Swinney called for independence and control over oil revenues to enable Scotland to balance its own income and spending. However, the report also detailed the SNP's pledge of 240 million for renewable energy, along with tax cuts. The report presented the opposing side of the argument against Scottish independence, featuring clips from opposition MPs accusing the SNP of breaking promises they made in their pre-election manifesto.

*BBC Online*¹⁷

Coming third in the running order on the Politics site on 14 November, this report comprised 860 words, and included a link to a 162-page PDF of the main Budget document. The report led with John Swinney's announcement of a council tax freeze, and listed other key pledges, alongside a summary of the timetable for the Scottish budget process. The report also noted that the SNP's pledge to cut student debt had been removed from the budget, and featured responses from the Scottish Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Green parties.

Case Study 3 'British jobs for British workers'.

This case study is an example of an English story that was largely reported as if it is a British or UK story. Like the Ofsted story, it was about an English initiative in an area (training) where responsibility is devolved to the four nations. In this case, however, the story was often explicitly reported as if it is about Britain as a whole. This was particularly significant in the light of the advice given by the BBC to journalists on the

¹⁷ See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/7094879.stm>

use of 'Britain' when 'England' is in fact the intended referent of a report (BBC 2003, p. 40).

On 16 November 2007 the UK government announced a new initiative to create millions of new training places and apprenticeships *in England* in order to equip workers for jobs. The story appeared on *The Today Programme* on BBC Radio 4 (6 items totalling 1218 seconds) and on the *ITV 6.30pm News* (one item of 124 seconds). It was *Today's* lead story at 7am and 8am and returned to later in both hours. On *ITV 6.30pm News* the item aired at 18 minutes into the bulletin. It also appeared on BBC Online's UK and Politics sites, below the top three stories in the running order in the 'Other Top Stories' section.¹⁸

Today's opening line from the newsreader at the top of the 7 am hour framed the story in a way that was repeated throughout the coverage: "The government is creating seven and a half million training places to make good on the Prime Minister's promise to train 'British workers for British jobs'". The promise referred to had been made by Gordon Brown in speeches at the Labour party conference and TUC conference in September. While references to 'British workers for British jobs' may have provided the story with a legitimate news angle, the initiative announced by Skills Secretary John Denham to the Commons applied to trainees in England only.

The newsreader then introduced a one minute package from the social affairs correspondent who again referred to "unskilled British workers" after saying that one third of people in the UK of working age are poorly qualified. The report went on to outline the government plans, including the creation of apprenticeships specifically for those over 25, 120,000 new apprenticeships for those under 25 and 3.5 million new training places. It was never explained that the scheme would apply only to England (indeed, England is not mentioned at any point). The report also brought up the themes of immigrants vying with the "British" for jobs and the alleged failure of the education system, which has made the new training initiative necessary.

Today returned to the story at 7.09 am in an interview with Jack Dromey, Deputy General Secretary of UNITE. The discussion centred on "British jobs" and "British workers" again, citing the creation of apprentice places and the type of training to be offered and again brought up immigration and education failures. During this item 'Britain' (or 'British') is used 18 times (see Table 3.3), 'England' (or 'English') not at all.

Table 3.3: Number of times reports locate the story in a particular context (J= journalist, O = other, guest, interviewee etc.)

| Story: | English/ England | | UK | | British/ Britain | | 'The country' | | Scotland/ Wales/N.I. | |
|----------------|---------------------|---|----|---|---------------------|---|---------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| | J | O | J | O | J | O | J | O | J | O |
| Today (unit 1) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Today (unit 2) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Today (unit 3) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Today (unit 4) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Today (unit 5) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Today (unit 6) | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

¹⁸ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7097125.stm>

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| ITV News | 1 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| BBC Online | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 4 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 39 | 14 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

The opening of the 8 am hour was identical to the 7 am story in the newsreader's introduction and the package, with the addition of a clip of Jack Dromey speaking. The story was picked up again at 8.10 am, and for the first time, England was mentioned, albeit briefly. The interviewer opened with a reference to immigration figures released the day before and then says: “today, the government is going to announce the creation of seven and a half million training places in England”. The interviewer went on to interview a man who runs an employment agency. The presenter moved the interview on to a discussion of British workers competing with migrants. The interviewer then had a ten minute interview with John Denham which he opened with the following:

Let's try and be clear first of all, these seven and half million, er, training places in England, is the idea that you are training British people, English people in this particular case perhaps, er, to compete with immigrants for jobs?

This was the first reference to the fact that the training schemes being announced were in England. Nonetheless, throughout the two interviews 'England' (or 'English') was used a total of four times while 'British' was used 15 times. A very attentive listener to the *Today Programme* may have grasped the devolved nature of this story during the interviews at 8.10 am. Otherwise s/he may have been left with the notion of the schemes being for 'British workers' as a whole rather than for workers in England

The ITV news item aired 18 minutes into the bulletin. The newsreader's introduction did not specify for whom the training places were to be provided. Rather, the government announcement was used as a way to lead into a package about Polish workers coming to the UK to work. The report used 'Britain', 'UK' and 'England' interchangeably throughout, never making it clear the new training places are for England only.

The BBC Online report ran to 690 words, and mentioned in the second paragraph that the initiative was restricted to England alone. It went on to provide a UK context for the initiative in terms of statistics about the proportion of the UK workforce with low qualifications. It featured quotations from John Denham's appearance on the *Today* programme (and noted that he was Skills Secretary in the Westminster government), together with a response from his Conservative shadow David Willetts.

Across the seven BBC reports, 'England' was used only four times (three times by journalists), 'Britain' or 'British' 50 times (36 times by journalists), 'UK' four times (once by a journalist), and 'the country' twice (once by a journalist). If the focus of BBC reports was on Britain, the ITV report was decidedly ambiguous, 'England' was used once by journalists, 'Britain' or British three times, 'UK' six times and 'the country' twice. The writer(s) of the BBC Online story used 'England' once, 'UK' once, and 'Britain/British' three times. The devolved nature of this story – prompted by the announcement of a training initiative in England - was this obscured by a repeated emphasis on Britain as a whole.

Case Study 4: Reading standards survey.

This case study highlighted the English-oriented nature of some reporting, in this case on the devolved social policy area of education. On 28 November 2007 the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Pirls) was released. The study carried out by Boston College in the US investigated reading ability in children after four or, in some cases, five years of formal education in a number of countries and regions. This was the second Pirls study, the first having been carried out in 2001. The report covered 40 countries counting England and Scotland separately. The study showed that England had fallen from third to 19th place (a fall of 16 places) and that Scotland had fallen from 14th to 26th place (a fall of 12 places) since the 2001 report.

The story was covered on television on the BBC1 *Six O'Clock News* (one item of 124 seconds) and BBC1 *Ten O'Clock News* (1 item of 147 seconds). On BBC radio it featured on Radio 4's *PM* (2 items totalling 478 seconds) and the *6 pm News* (one item of 116 seconds). Table 3.4 shows how often England and Scotland were mentioned – as well as, rather confusingly ‘the nation’ or ‘the country’. While it shows the preponderance of references to England, it is important to stress that the focus of the coverage was very clearly on England with references to Scotland only in passing.

On *PM* the story appeared in the headlines as the fourth story lasting 14 seconds. Only England was mentioned. They returned to the story at 35 minutes into the bulletin. The presenter introduced the story, mentioning both English and Scottish rankings. This was followed by an interview with Schools Minister Jim Knight (introduced without specifying his responsibility for English schools rather than Scottish ones) and the shadow Schools Secretary Michael Gove. The debate covered issues such as parental responsibility, the role of computers and the effectiveness of reading policy. The discussion by two Westminster politicians about education policy and how to tackle the problem dealt solely with English policy. No Scottish minister was asked to explain falling standards in Scotland. Scotland was only mentioned, once again, in passing by the presenter.

On the *6 pm News* on Radio 4 the story was previewed third in the headlines with the words: “An international study has found reading standards among 10 year olds in England have fallen dramatically.” The story then came up as fourth story in the bulletin at about 15 minutes past the hour. The newsreader’s introduction mentioned both England and Scotland's fall in the tables and the response of Education Secretary Ed Balls (without specifying his responsibility for English schools rather than Scottish ones). This was followed by a package from an education correspondent which concentrated on England throughout, discussing the details of why “English” children dislike reading and how much time they spend on computer games. The report also included a clip of Ed Balls speaking. The only mention of Scotland (the headlines at the beginning of the programme only refer to England) came in the final sentence: “according to the study more than 37% of children in England are playing computer games for more than three hours a day - in Scotland the figure is even higher at 38%”. Much of the report examined the reasons for falling standards in England and how to improve them. No such examination was made of Scotland, or of why Scotland, although it has not fallen quite as far as England, still lagged well behind.

Table 3.4: Number of times reports locate the story in different contexts

| Media | English/England | | National/ Nation | | 'The country' | | Scotland | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|---------------------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Journalist | Other | J | O | J | O | J | O |
| BBC1 Six O'Clock News | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| BBC1 Ten O'Clock News | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| PM (unit 1) | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| PM (unit 2) | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Radio 4 6pm News | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Total | 16 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 0 |

On the BBC1 *Six O'Clock News* the story appeared around 23 minutes in (the eleventh story). A graphic behind the newsreader showed England in the table of countries accompanied by the newsreader saying: "just a few years ago England was ranked third in the world when it came to children's reading but look where the English are now - 19th. Why? Well, ministers are blaming parents for not doing enough to encourage children to read." A package shot on location in an English school then followed, opening with the line "Reading - something we used to be the best in the world at". The report talked to pupils and parents about why 'we' were getting worse. The use of 'we' in a UK-wide news bulletin clearly meant the English rather the British.

On the BBC1 *Ten O'Clock News* the story aired seventh, at around 16 minutes into the programme. The same graphic from the *Six O'Clock News* showing 'England' appeared behind the newsreader as he introduced the story, and only 'England' was mentioned in the introduction. Again, no mention at all was made of the Scottish figures.

While BBC radio coverage did at least mention Scotland, albeit in passing (all discussion about education policy was Westminster based) BBC television's coverage of the report only covered the England figures. This was also reflected in BBC Online news headlines. "England falls in reading league" was the headline on the UK site (although it should be noted that the Scottish figures are mentioned in body of the story), whilst "Scotland slips in reading league" was on the Scotland site. BBC Scotland did not cover the story at all on its 18.30 pm opt-out bulletin, so audiences in Scotland would not have learnt about this information from the BBC broadcast outlets covered in our report.

4. Reporting the 2007 elections

Method and sample

In order to examine a period when devolution was likely to be in the news, we conducted a content analysis of the BBC's coverage of the elections in the Northern Ireland, Scottish, and Welsh devolved administrations and the English local councils. This involved monitoring a range of BBC output between 1 March and 25 May 2007.¹⁹ Within the sample period, the Northern Ireland elections fell on 7 March, which means that the distribution of stories about Northern Ireland was not strictly comparable with stories about the other elections. Our data set included the BBC *One O'Clock News* (Monday to Friday), BBC *Six O'Clock News* (Monday to Friday), BBC *Ten O'Clock News* (Monday to Friday), BBC news on Saturday evening and early evening Sunday, Radio Four's *World at One*,²⁰ *6pm News*, *Today*,²¹ *Newsnight*, *The Politics Show* and BBC Online election news.

We monitored all the news coverage during this period in order to analyse *every* election related story: the total number of news items dealing with the elections came to 537. The coverage on weekday television BBC bulletins was broadly similar, each of the *One*, *Six* and *Ten O'Clock News* carrying between 40-45 news items each. The weekend bulletins carried a much lower number of election-related items, airing only five during the entire election period. *Newsnight* and *The Politics Show* carried 71 and 20 items, respectively. Because many of the programmes we monitored differ in length, format and style, any comparisons between different news formats (e.g. between conventional TV news bulletins and Radio news programmes) should be interpreted cautiously.

Prominence of Election coverage

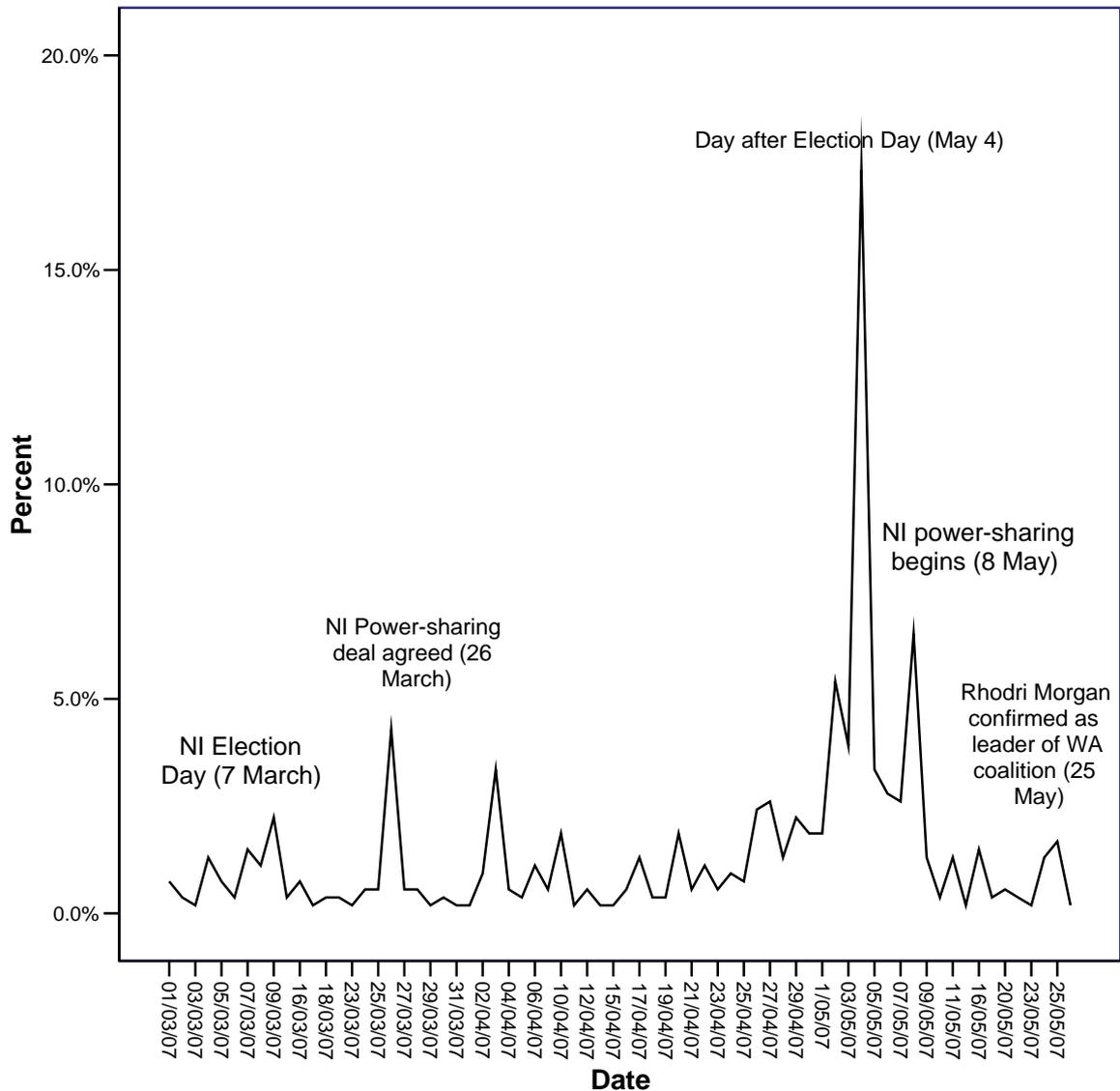
Our sample period comprised 12 weeks (86 days in total). Previous studies of elections have shown how coverage increases, by some way, *days* rather than weeks before the Election (Thomas *et al.* 2004). Our data confirms this trend. Graph 4.1 shows coverage overall across the 12 week monitoring period.

¹⁹ This period was defined in the project brief by the BBC Trust.

²⁰ For the *World at One*, we did not code the headlines.

²¹ For our analysis of the *Today* programme, we coded the programme from 7.00am to 8.30am, and did not code for the news headlines at the top of the hour and on the half-hour.

Graph 4.1: Frequency and percentage of election news items between 1 March – 25 May 2007



As Graph 4.1 indicates, election coverage was fairly low on the radar throughout March/April 2007. Coverage gradually increased from 26 April– eight days before the elections in Scotland and Wales on 3 May. We found more coverage before 3 May (58.1% of the election sample overall occurs before the elections in Scotland or Wales), although this period does incorporate the election in Northern Ireland. Table 4.1 indicates the distribution of the sample before and after the election days.

The amount of post-election coverage in Scotland and Wales can largely be accounted for by reports about the results of the election, speculation about the building of coalitions in Scotland and Wales along with the voting problems that marred the aftermath of the elections in Scotland.²² It should be noted that the period covered by our dataset does not extend to the final confirmation of the make-up of the new Welsh

²² One drawback with the chosen sample period is that the periods before and after the Scottish and Welsh elections are of different lengths to those before and after the Northern Ireland elections.

administration, which occurred some weeks after Rhodri Morgan was declared the leader of the Assembly coalition.

Table 4.1 Percentage and frequency of election coverage before and after 3 May (n=537, total election news items)

| Sources | 1 March – 3 May 2007 | | 4 May – 25 May 2007 | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|
| | Freq. | Percent | Freq. | Percent |
| Newsnight | 47 | 66.2 | 24 | 33.8 |
| One O’Clock news | 25 | 61 | 16 | 39 |
| BBC Online | 54 | 63.5 | 31 | 36.5 |
| Politics Show | 14 | 70 | 6 | 30 |
| Radio 4 6pm News | 30 | 57.7 | 22 | 42.3 |
| Saturday evening news | 2 | 66.7 | 1 | 33.3 |
| Six O’Clock news | 24 | 60 | 16 | 40 |
| Sunday evening news | 2 | 100 | / | .0 |
| Ten O’Clock news | 26 | 57.8 | 19 | 42.2 |
| Today | 51 | 51.5 | 48 | 48.5 |
| World At One | 37 | 46.8 | 42 | 53.2 |
| Total | 312 | 58.1 | 225 | 41.9 |

To measure the prominence (as distinct from the presence) of election news, we categorised news items in four ways: whether they appeared as a leading story, whether they were second or third on the agenda, or if they placed fourth or later in the news programme. Table 4.2 indicates the level of prominence across the different media.

Table 4.2: Frequency (in brackets) and percentage of prominence of election related news (n=537, total election news items)

| | Lead story | Second in agenda | Third in agenda | Fourth or later in agenda |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Newsnight | 43.7% (31) | 12.7% (9) | 22.5% (16) | 21.1% (15) |
| One O’Clock News | 29.3% (12) | 0 | 2.4% (1) | 68.3% (28) |
| Radio 4 6pm News | 25% (13) | 3.8% (2) | 7.7% (4) | 63.5% (33) |
| Saturday Evening News | 0 | 0 | 33.3% (1) | 67.7% (2) |
| Six O’Clock News | 22.5% (9) | 2.5% (1) | 12.5% (5) | 62.5% (25) |
| Sunday Evening news | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100% (2) |
| Ten O’Clock News | 28.9% (13) | 13.3% (6) | 13.3% (6) | 44.4% (20) |
| The Politics Show | 5% (1) | 0 | 0 | 95% (19) |
| Today | 20.2% (20) | 2% (2) | 4% (4) | 73.7% (73) |
| World At One | 17.7% (14) | 5.1% (4) | 0 | 77.2% (61) |
| Total | 25% (113) | 5.3% (24) | 8.2% (37) | 61.5% (278) |

A high proportion of stories on *Newsnight* – 44% - featured as the ‘lead story’ with close to a fifth (21.1%) running fourth or later in the running order (making it the most prominent broadcaster of election news) – although since *Newsnight* has fewer stories we would expect greater prominence. Two to three out of ten election news items on the BBC daily TV bulletins warranted headline status, while election news on BBC radio tended to be reported less prominently than on BBC television news (although comparisons across programmes are, of course, most meaningful between similar bulletins).

Table 4.3 shows the distribution of pre- and post-election prominence. Lead stories were less likely to appear before election day. When they did, nine in 20 of them dealt with the implications of the Northern Ireland elections held on 7 March 2007.

Table 4.3: Distribution of pre and post election news across all election sample (excluding BBC online) (n=452, excluding BBC Online²³)

| | Pre-election | | Post-election | |
|------------------|--------------|---------|---------------|---------|
| | Freq. | Percent | Freq. | Percent |
| Lead story | 41 | 36.3 | 72 | 63.7 |
| Second in agenda | 14 | 58.3 | 10 | 41.7 |
| Third in agenda | 23 | 62.2 | 14 | 37.8 |
| Fourth or later | 180 | 64.7 | 98 | 35.3 |
| Total | 258 | | 194 | |

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Fein’s coalition agreement on 26 March 2007 was a lead item across all media. Indeed, headlines about devolution settlements – such as the DUP’s Reverend Ian Paisley and Sinn Fein’s Gerry Adams’ famous hand shake – were a key theme in pre- and post-election coverage across Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Election stories were more likely to move up the agenda if ‘horse-race’ elements of the campaign were introduced, and one fifth of headlines had a party specific focus. These mainly explored the possibility of political parties losing key marginal constituencies or the possible electoral implications for UK party leaders (who, as we note later, played a key part in informing devolved election stories). So, for example, a BBC *One O’Clock News* story on 24 April explored the possibility of Labour losing in the Welsh Assembly elections whilst a Radio 4 news story on 20 April debated the prospects of whether David Cameron could sway enough voters to vote Tory and win previously safe Labour and Liberal Democrat seats across the UK.

Close to one in two post-election stories dealt with reporting the polls results, and a third of these were headline stories across most BBC media. The prominence of the elections in Scotland, followed by England and Wales was again apparent in how the elections results were reported. So, for example, BBC’s *One O’Clock News* the day after the election (4/05/07) spent 54% of its time on Scotland, 24% on England and 22% on Wales. Likewise, the *Ten O’Clock News* spent 44% on Scotland, 41% on England and 15% on Wales. By Saturday (5/05/07) – two days after election day – BBC News spent nine times longer explaining the election results in Scotland than

²³ It was not possible to assess the prominence of online stories as we only had access to the stories themselves, not the front pages of the UK and Politics websites on the day they appeared. See Appendix for a note on Online monitoring methodology.

Wales. As one *Ten O’Clock News* presenter put it, the English and, to a much greater degree, Welsh elections were “overshadowed by events in Scotland” largely because of the voting problems north of the border, but also because of the implications of the SNP’s success.

A third of post election coverage dealt with the ongoing coalition talks across nations and between political parties, most notably involving Northern Ireland (44%), but also Wales (29%) and Scotland (27%). Wales appeared to gain greater prominence after the election (from a very low base) with two more election-related pieces and twice as many lead stories. Scotland, similarly, had more post-election news and four times more headline items than before the 3 May election.

So, overall, while there was more coverage overall before the elections in Scotland and Wales, the aftermath of the devolution settlement in Scotland and Wales was more prominently reported than the election campaigns.

Elections across the four nations

Our analysis looked at the volume of coverage across the four nations more generally. Table 4.4 shows the extent to which Northern Ireland, Scottish, and Welsh election news featured in BBC UK broadcast news along with other election news on, for example, the English and Scottish local elections.

Table 4.4: Frequency and percentage of election focus across the four nations (n=537, total election news items)

| Election focus | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| England | 113 | 21 |
| Northern Ireland | 107 | 19.9 |
| Scotland | 143 | 26.6 |
| Wales | 66 | 12.4 |
| Reference made to more than one election | 108 | 20.1 |
| Total | 537 | 100 |

Of the four elections examined, Scotland received most coverage overall, twice as much as Wales, although only a little more than the elections in England and Northern Ireland. Indeed, the council elections in England were received almost twice as much coverage as the Welsh Assembly elections. When one of the four nations was the exclusive focus of a news piece, one in three stories related to the elections in Scotland, one in four to Northern Ireland or England, while Wales accounted for less than one in seven.

While we might expect Scotland – as the largest of the three devolved nations with more law making powers – to have received the most election coverage, especially given the news value of the result - the lack of election coverage in Wales is striking. This is very much in line with our analysis of day-to-day coverage in Section 2. This is worth noting in the context of a rather shocking recent poll of the Welsh public (ICM 2008) – who are largely reliant on UK news media - which found over six in ten voters

did not know who ran the Welsh Assembly Government (i.e. Labour/Plaid Cymru coalition).

There were also a number of fairly cursory updates on ongoing electoral developments across Scotland, England and Wales. In most cases, the elections in Scotland were introduced first, followed by England and then Wales.

The coverage of the different elections was not uniform across all BBC news coverage. Tables 4.5-4.7 indicate the spread of coverage across different media. Perhaps most notably, attention to Scotland overall is largely accounted for by radio coverage: TV coverage was, in fact, more likely to focus on Northern Ireland.

Table 4.5: Percentage and frequency of country focus in the 2007 English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland elections on BBC TV (n=131, all BBC TV items)

| | One O'Clock News | Six O'Clock News | Ten O'Clock News | Saturday Evening News | Sunday Evening News |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| England | 14.6% (6) | 25% (10) | 15.6% (7) | 33.3% (1) | 0 |
| Northern Ireland | 31.7% (13) | 25% (10) | 35.6% (16) | 33.3% (1) | 100% (2) |
| Scotland | 22% (9) | 25% (10) | 24.4% (11) | 33.3% (1) | 0 |
| Wales | 19.5% (8) | 15% (6) | 6.7% (3) | 0 | 0 |
| Reference to more than one election | 12.2% (5) | 10% (4) | 17.7% (8) | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 100.0% (41) | 100.0% (40) | 100.0% (45) | 100.0% (3) | 100.0% (2) |

For the daily news bulletins on BBC1, the focus on each nation varied across each bulletin. The *One O'Clock* and *Ten O'Clock News* dedicated roughly a third of their election coverage to the Northern Ireland elections (31.7% and 35.6% respectively). A quarter of election coverage was given to the Scottish elections across the three daily weekday bulletins. Just three news items on the BBC's flagship *Ten O'Clock News* were exclusively about the elections in Wales, only one of which ran before the election. These covered offers of incentives by the main parties to voters (27 April), along with the Assembly election results. The two items which covered the results emphasized in each case the lack of any overall majority for Labour and the consequent need for a coalition to be formed (3 and 4 May)

Radio coverage, by contrast, was more likely to focus on Scotland (the high volume of radio coverage in our sample accounting for Scotland's overall prominence). The *World at One*, was the exception here, running most election stories about the English local elections, whilst a third of Radio 4's *6pm News* and *Today's* election coverage concerned Scotland. Wales received just nine election stories on *Today*, with just one election related story appearing *before* the election. This dealt with the possibility of a potential coalition between Plaid and Labour.

Table 4.6: Percentage and frequency of country focus on the 2007 English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland elections for BBC Radio (n=230, all BBC Radio items)

| | World at One | Radio 4 6pm News | Today |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| England | 24.1% (19) | 15.4% (8) | 20.2% (20) |
| Northern Ireland | 12.7% (10) | 25% (13) | 17.2% (17) |
| Scotland | 21.5% (17) | 32.7% (17) | 36.4% (36) |
| Wales | 15.2% (12) | 11.5% (6) | 9.1% (9) |
| Non-specific | 6.3% (5) | 0 | 0 |
| Reference to more than one election | 20.3% (16) | 15.3% (8) | 17.1% (17) |
| Total | 100.0% (79) | 100.0% (52) | 100.0% (99) |

For the rest of the sample – *Newsnight*, *The Politics Show* and BBC online election news – Table 4.7 indicates the spread of coverage across the four nations.

Table 4.7: Percentage and frequency of country focus in the 2007 English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland elections for other media outlets (n=176, all other BBC items)

| | Newsnight | Politics Show | BBC Online |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| England | 16.9% (12) | 25% (5) | 29.4% (25) |
| Northern Ireland | 19.7% (14) | 15% (3) | 9.4% (8) |
| Scotland | 33.8% (24) | 30% (6) | 14.1% (12) |
| Wales | 8.5% (6) | 10% (2) | 16.5% (14) |
| Non-specific | 2.8% (2) | 5% (1) | 5.9% (5) |
| Reference to more than one election | 18.3% (13) | 15% (3) | 24.7% (21) |
| Total | 100.0% (71) | 100.0% (20) | 100% (85) |

Newsnight was four times more likely to cover the elections in Scotland than in Wales. *The Politics Show*, with much longer pieces, also focussed primarily on the elections in Scotland.

Three in ten BBC online stories were exclusively about the Council elections in England. The next largest category – making up a quarter of online news – consisted of election round ups too, with smaller parties given greater prominence. So, for example, one headline (4 May) read “UKIP fails to win council seats”, before describing how UKIP had “been aiming to get its first Welsh assembly member – where it hoped to benefit from the proportional representation system”.

Reporters on location?

While the analysis so far has looked at which elections were most frequently covered, our study now explores how coverage was reported. Our election sample found that a third of news came from the studio. This figure would have been a little higher had we included certain presenters from locations across the four nations. So, for example, John Humphrys, Fiona Bruce, James Naughtie or Huw Edwards presented news programmes at some point over the campaign, from locations in England, Wales or Scotland. But we did not, it should be made clear, include this as an instance of a reporter on location. Instead, we only quantified reporters out on location when they were reporting about the election from a location away from the studio to a presenter. Table 4.8 indicates the number of times reporters were used on location across the four nations (on a total of 255 out of 452 total non-BBC Online items).

Table 4.8: Percentage and frequency of reporter location for stories with reporters on location in the 2007 English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland elections (n=452, total election news items excluding Online)

| Reporter location | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| England/London | 68 | 26.9 |
| Northern Ireland | 66 | 26.1 |
| Scotland | 84 | 33.2 |
| Wales | 37 | 13.8 |
| Total | 255 | 100 |

The pattern here reflects the coverage overall, with Scotland a little ahead of England and Northern Ireland with Wales receiving the least coverage. But in stories exclusively about the elections in Scotland, England, Northern Ireland or Wales, we found a remarkable consistency in coverage: in all cases, six in ten overall had a reporter on location. Again, this suggests that, at election time at least, reporters were more likely to report the issues from locations in the nations away from the programme’s main studio.

Indeed, when we break down the numbers of reporters on location before and after the election, we found they were four times more likely to be reporting from England and twice more likely to be reporting from Northern Ireland before election day. By contrast, the same frequency of reports on location occurred before and after the election in Wales, whilst more occurred in Scotland after the election.

Our data, in other words, confirms that the aftermath of the elections in Wales and Scotland appeared to be more newsworthy than the devolved election campaigns in these nations.

Westminster politics vs local elections and elections to the devolved administrations

Previous studies have shown how political journalists collectively focus their reporting on the twists and turns of the campaign when a General Election is called (Deacon *et al.* 2005). The devolved elections, by contrast, had to compete with the world of Westminster, including the imminent handover of power from Tony Blair to his successor. To explore just how much competition from Westminster-based politics the elections faced, we quantified the type and prominence of every Westminster-based story that appeared over the sample period. This included day-to-day events in and around Parliament (such as reports about process, procedure, leadership contests and so on), as well as Westminster-based policy stories (such as a Government spokesperson announcing a new health initiative, etc.).

While we found 452 election news items across our sample of BBC output (excluding the online sample), we found over three times more Westminster-based news items (1408) over the same period.²⁴ Indeed, the only point in which the election campaigns received more coverage was immediately after the elections themselves. Table 4.9 indicates the difference between the frequency of election coverage and Westminster news across media.

Table 4.9: Distribution of Election and Westminster news across BBC outlets (excluding BBC online)

| | Election news | | Westminster news | |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Newsnight | 71 | 40 | 108 | 60 |
| One O'Clock News | 41 | 31 | 93 | 69 |
| Politics Show | 20 | 39 | 31 | 61 |
| Radio 4 6pm News | 52 | 7 | 227 | 93 |
| Saturday Evening News | 2 | 18 | 9 | 82 |
| Six O'Clock News | 40 | 34 | 78 | 66 |
| Sunday Evening News | 3 | 10 | 28 | 90 |
| Ten O'Clock News | 45 | 45 | 55 | 55 |
| Today | 99 | 15 | 562 | 75 |
| World At One | 79 | 27 | 217 | 73 |
| Total | 452 | 24 | 1408 | 76 |

Table 4.9 indicates that every news outlet sampled featured more Westminster news than news on the devolved elections. Radio stood out as being the most Westminster-focused (nine times more likely for Radio 4, six times for *Today* and three times for the *World at One*). For the *One* and *Six O'Clock News*, twice as much Westminster news was reported. The weekend early evening bulletins largely ignored election coverage.

If we compare the *prominence* of election coverage with Westminster-based news, a slightly different picture emerges. The frequency of pre-election lead stories for the

²⁴ Online sources are excluded here because the timing of the study meant we did not have access to a full data set of online stories about Westminster politics.

four nations (15.9%) was broadly in line with Westminster stories (17.6%). But around seven in ten post-election stories were lead ones (63.7%) – four times more than Westminster (16.7%). In other words, while the election overall was three times *less* likely to be reported, the stories that did get reported were given more prominence than Westminster stories in the immediate weeks following election day.

To get a sense of the kinds of Westminster stories covered over the sample period, we categorised every type of news item in terms of its specific subject matter (see Table 4.10). This table gives sense of the range of stories involving everyday business at Westminster.

Table 4.10: Subjects for all Westminster-based stories (n=1408, all Westminster news items)

| Story subject | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| House of lords -- nations | 1 | 0.1 |
| Power sharing | 7 | 0.5 |
| Agriculture | 10 | 0.7 |
| Arts high | 8 | 0.6 |
| Britishness | 2 | 0.1 |
| Business | 3 | 0.2 |
| Campaigning generally | 5 | 0.4 |
| Candidate focus/leadership | 174 | 12.4 |
| Celebrity/entertainment news | 3 | 0.2 |
| Constitutional affairs | 17 | 1.2 |
| Consumer news | 25 | 1.8 |
| Crime general/corporate | 61 | 4.3 |
| Crime individual | 15 | 1.1 |
| Defence | 84 | 6 |
| Diplomacy | 107 | 7.6 |
| Economy | 26 | 1.8 |
| Education | 72 | 5.1 |
| Electoral system | 2 | 0.1 |
| Energy | 12 | 0.9 |
| Environment and natural world | 5 | 0.4 |
| Environmental issues | 44 | 3.1 |
| Europe/EU | 14 | 1 |
| Freedom of information | 26 | 1.8 |
| Government restructuring | 14 | 1 |
| Health NHS | 105 | 7.5 |
| Health General | 21 | 1.5 |
| Horse race/opinion polls | 1 | 0.1 |
| House of lords general | 5 | 0.4 |
| Immigration/refugees | 49 | 3.5 |
| Industrial relations | 22 | 1.6 |
| International law | 3 | 0.2 |
| Iraq general | 19 | 1.3 |
| Legal issues | 44 | 3.1 |
| Monarchy | 4 | 0.3 |
| Other | 37 | 2.6 |
| Policing | 13 | 0.9 |
| Public opinion general | 14 | 1 |
| Religion | 6 | 0.4 |
| Science/technology | 18 | 1.3 |
| Sleaze/cash for questions | 48 | 3.4 |
| Social policy other | 90 | 6.4 |
| Sport | 8 | 0.6 |
| Taxation | 35 | 2.5 |
| Terrorism | 64 | 4.5 |

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|
| Transport | 15 | 1.1 |
| UK foreign affairs | 28 | 2 |
| War/Conflict | 19 | 1.3 |
| Media | 3 | 0.2 |
| Total | 1408 | 100 |

In one sense, Table 4.10 reflects the priority accorded to what we have called a candidate or leadership type of news item (174 in total – the largest single category of stories). The majority of these dealt with Tony Blair’s impending departure from Downing Street, and the speculation surrounding his likely successor. But while this personalisation of politics – a handover of power to a new party leader, the latest resignation or ministerial sacking – is a familiar and well-documented trend in media coverage of UK politics (e.g. Franklin 2004), Westminster stories also featured a wide range of standard domestic policy issues – health, crime, education, the economy and transport for example. As we shall see, this is stark contrast to the coverage of the elections in the four nations.

Process or Policy?

To explore the nature of election coverage, we examined every type of election story in terms of whether it was about the process of the elections or about the policies of political parties across the local and three devolved elections. Our definition of ‘process’ stories includes stories which deal with the razzmatazz associated with election campaigning, the personalities of and clashes between rival politicians as well as the horse trading between political parties, such as the building of coalitions. Process stories also include news about the process of voting itself and the electoral system (such as the problems in Scotland). Policy news, by contrast, refers to stories which attempt to engage, in some form, with the policies of a political party or government.

Historically election studies have shown that it is process rather than policy driven news which tends to dominate coverage over a campaign period. Recent General Election studies in UK-wide media (Deacon *et al.* 2005) and regional and local press (Cushion *et al.* 2006), along with studies examining coverage in previous devolved elections (Thomas *et al.* 2004) have shown process stories account for around 50-60% of coverage overall.

Table 4.11: Frequency of type of election news items during the 2007 English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland elections (n=537, total election news items)

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Power sharing/building a coalition | 131 | 24.4 |
| Election results | 128 | 23.8 |
| General campaign | 91 | 16.9 |
| Party specific | 74 | 13.8 |
| Electoral system | 52 | 9.7 |
| Westminster main focus | 35 | 6.6 |
| Policy specific | 13 | 2.4 |
| General policy | 10 | 1.9 |
| Process leadership | 3 | 0.6 |
| Total | 537 | 100 |

Table 4.11 suggests media coverage of the devolved elections was even more process-driven than in previous UK electoral campaigns. This, as Graph 4.1 indicated, may

partly be because our analysis, unlike the previously cited studies, went beyond election day and included the building of coalitions in Scotland and Wales (hence power-sharing or coalition-building was the most frequent type of story overall). Nonetheless, the absence of policy stories is striking.

Overall, a quarter of media coverage in the sample overall dealt with the possibility of power sharing (23.8%) and, following election day, the horse trading between parties needed to (re)form government coalitions (24.4%) and voting problems in Scotland (9.7%). Just under a tenth of news items overall were classed as electoral system stories. These, generally speaking, involved cases of voting problems (such as difficulties with postal voting), and came primarily from Scotland where the results process became newsworthy because 140,000 ballot papers were rejected and delays in the processing of results occurred etc.

We found remarkably few exclusively policy-orientated stories. These ranged from party-specific policies (2.5%) to a more general round up of what each political party's policy was on crime, the economy, the environment and transport (2.1%). All 23 policy-related election stories are summarized in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Summary of policy stories from election period

| Date | Source | Running Order | Subject | Devolved powers referred to | Election(s) Covered |
|----------|------------------|---------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| 01/03/07 | One O'Clock News | 4+ | NI business leaders and an academic talk about the economic challenges facing a reconstituted NI Assembly | Economic regeneration | Northern Ireland |
| 16/04/07 | Six O'Clock News | 4+ | A businessman and NGO representative talk about the achievements of devolution in Wales | Health, education, economic regeneration | Wales |
| 16/04/07 | Today | 4+ | Overview of environmental policies of the main Scottish parties (including Greens) | SNP's 'veto' on nuclear power | Scotland |
| 03/04/07 | World At One | 4+ | Labour and Lib Dems launch election campaigns in England, Scotland and Wales – general policy overview | None | England, Scotland, Wales |
| 06/04/07 | World At One | 4+ | Tories' weak position in North of England linked to policy | None | England |
| 12/04/07 | World At One | 4+ | SNP announces plans to look into renationalisation of Scottish railways | Transport | Scotland |
| 16/04/07 | One O'Clock News | 4+ | Overview of the Welsh Assembly's record since devolution | Health, economic regeneration | Wales |
| 12/03/07 | Ten O'Clock News | 2 | Overview of main UK parties' environment policies | None | England |
| 22/04/07 | BBC Online | N/A | Major parties in Wales back anti-racism rally | Social policy (equality) | Wales |
| 28/04/07 | Today | 4+ | Interview with Nick Clegg on Lib Dem crime policy | None | England |
| 28/04/07 | Today | 4+ | Investigation of crime in Nottingham against backdrop of UK Government crime policy | None | England |
| 28/04/07 | Today | 4+ | Focus on Government crime policy in discussion with Home Office minister and Conservative home affairs spokesman | None | England |
| 23/04/07 | Six O'Clock News | 4+ | Impact of environmental issues on English local elections | None | England |
| 26/04/07 | Six O'Clock News | 4+ | Impact of issue of congestion charge in Manchester on local elections | None | England |
| 26/04/07 | Newsnight | 1 | Impact of environmental issues on English | None | England |

| | | | local elections | | |
|----------|------------------|-----|---|--|-----------------------------|
| 26/04/07 | Newsnight | 1 | Studio discussion between representatives of SNP, Scot. Labour, UK Conservative and UK Lib Dems on Scottish independence | Tax or economy | Scotland |
| 26/04/07 | Newsnight | 1 | Investigation of Scottish Government's spending plans and of the constitutional issues surrounding independence | Health, constitutional reform | Scotland |
| 08/05/07 | Six O'Clock News | 1 | As power-sharing returns in NI, reporter talks to member of the public about policy challenges people expect new Assembly to tackle | None | Northern Ireland |
| 18/03/07 | Today | 4+ | Alex Salmond launches policy document for 'first 100 days in government' | None | Scotland |
| 03/04/07 | BBC Online | N/A | Party campaign policy on meals for prospective voters criticised by peer | None | England, Scotland and Wales |
| 12/04/07 | Ten O'Clock News | 4+ | Scottish parties respond to new SNP manifesto | Implied Scottish government has constitutional powers it does not have | Scotland |
| 26/04/07 | Ten O'Clock News | 4+ | Report on economic viability of Scottish independence | Education, social policy | Scotland |
| 27/04/07 | Ten O'Clock News | 4+ | Welsh parties offer incentives to voters to illustrate key policies | None | Wales |

It is interesting to note that most attention was given to policy stories within the context of the English local elections. Where devolved policy issues were reported, the focus was mostly upon the Scottish elections, with items on *Newsnight*, the *Ten O'Clock News*, *Today* and the *World at One* all looking either at possible expansions of Scottish Government powers after the elections, or at the viability of independence. The only story about the Welsh elections to feature on the *Ten O'Clock News* focused on the main parties' (Welsh Labour, Conservatives, Lib Dems and Plaid) use of incentives to highlight their major policies ahead of the elections (e.g. Plaid's pledge to give laptops to all school pupils 11 and over).

The importance of Westminster politics in the devolved elections was again apparent in media coverage: we found that 6.6% of news items interpreted the elections through the prism of Westminster. The impact the elections might have on Tony Blair's status, for example, was a repeated theme as was, to a lesser extent, speculation surrounding the chances of David Miliband deciding to run for the Labour leadership.

The character of election coverage varied noticeably across the four nations (Table 4.13). Most of the power sharing stories (63.4%) were about the Northern Ireland elections, while reports on the Scottish elections were much more likely to focus on the results themselves or on the electoral system. General campaign stories, or items dealing with specific policies were both much more likely to come from England and Scotland, with the low levels of coverage of the Welsh elections across the board. These findings reflect the fact that the Northern Ireland elections took place earlier than the others.

Table 4.13: Types of news items associated with elections in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (n=537, total election news items)

| Election covered | Type of News Item | | | | | | | | % and Number of all stories/ Country |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | General policy | General campaign | Policy specific | Process: leadership | Process: power sharing | Party specific | Election results | Electoral system | |
| English Council | 30.0% | 39.6% | 53.8% | / | / | 41.9% | 14.8% | 17.3% | 21.0% (113) |
| Scotland | 20.0% | 30.8% | 38.5% | 66.7% | 16.8% | 27.0% | 31.3% | 36.5% | 26.6% (143) |
| Wales | 30.0% | 11.0% | 7.7% | / | 18.3% | 16.2% | 11.7% | 1.9% | 12.3% (66) |
| Northern Ireland | 20.0% | 4.4% | / | 33.3% | 63.4% | 2.7% | 7.0% | 5.8% | 19.9% (107) |
| Scottish council | / | / | / | / | / | / | .8% | / | .2% (1) |
| Non-specific | / | / | / | / | / | 4.1% | / | 3.8% | 2.4% (13) |

The pattern of election coverage was fairly similar across the media sample, although some interesting differences were apparent. For the *One* (36.1%), *Six* (34.1%) and *Ten O'Clock News* (28.9%) bulletins, the story of power sharing, of building government coalitions, dominated election coverage. Compared to other media, the daily bulletins contained what little policy oriented news we found. Approximately one in ten election stories were policy oriented during the *Six* and *Ten O'Clock* election news coverage, compared to one in twenty for the *One O'Clock News*.

References to devolved powers

In the general sample we showed how coverage across BBC and non-BBC outlets only rarely made explicit references to specific devolved powers. This was also the case in the election coverage: we found only 51 explicit references to devolved powers across our 537 BBC election stories.

Table 4.14: Number of explicit references to devolved powers across types of news items (since there can be more than one reference per news item, these are not percentages)

| Type of news item in which explicit references occur | Number of explicit references |
|--|-------------------------------|
| General or specific policy | 6 across 23 stories |
| General campaign/leaders | 8 across 94 stories |
| Process power sharing | 13 across 131 stories |
| Party specific | 14 across 74 stories |
| Westminster main focus | 2 across 35 stories |
| Election results | 5 across 128 stories |
| Electoral system | 1 across 52 stories |
| Total | 51 out of 537 stories |

These reference were made across many different types of story (Table 4.14), although, not surprisingly, they were more likely to occur in policy stories or stories about

specific parties, and less likely to occur in stories based on election results or problems in the electoral system.

Explicit references to powers (or lack thereof) covered a range of responsibilities, notably health, education, and, perhaps more surprisingly, tax and spending (Table 4.15).

Table 4.15: References to devolved powers in election stories (n=51, total number of stories containing either explicit or implicit references)

| Powers referred to | Frequency |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Health | 21 |
| Education | 21 |
| Immigration or Asylum | 1 |
| Environment | 10 |
| Crime | 7 |
| Social Policy | 9 |
| Tax or Economy | 24 |
| Transport | 6 |
| Rural Affairs | 0 |
| Constitutional Affairs | 1 |
| Total | 100 |

Most of these references (around half) were made to Scotland (and often about Scotland’s lack of full tax raising powers) with only a few references to devolved powers in Northern Ireland (Table 4.16). Both *World at One* and Radio 4’s *6pm News* (25/05/07) explored whether Welsh Labour’s re-organisation of hospitals across Wales might be threatened by the party’s poor performance at the polls. Similarly, Sinn Fein and the Unionists’ disagreement on class selection at age 11 was specifically dealt with on Radio 4’s *6pm News* (26/3/07).

Table 4.16: Explicit references to devolved powers cross-referenced with election covered (n=537, total election news items)

| Election covered | Percentage of explicit refs |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Scotland | 53.2 |
| Wales | 31.9 |
| Northern Ireland | 14.9 |
| Total | 100 |

Informing election news

Our general sample found that, even in a fairly routine, non-election period, the dominant sources used to inform devolved stories were overwhelmingly party politicians (close to one in two sources for BBC and non-BBC outlets). In our election sample, the overall volume of party political sources was six in ten sources (we examine these in more detail in a moment), whilst members of the public accounted for two in ten sources. This left little time and space for other voices from business, think

tanks, trade unions or the academic world to have any meaningful input into the devolved elections. In other words, the actors involved in the elections were primarily politicians from across the four nations. Table 4.17 shows the distribution of political party sources across all media.

Table 4.17: Percentage and frequency of political party sources across election stories, 1 March -25 May 2007 (n=537, total election news items)

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|------------|------------|
| UK Labour Party | 112 | 17.7 |
| UK Conservative Party | 55 | 8.7 |
| UK Liberal Democrats | 47 | 7.4 |
| UK Green | 5 | 0.8 |
| UK Independence Party (UKIP) | 7 | 1.1 |
| UK Plaid Cymru | 2 | 0.3 |
| British National Party (BNP) | 3 | 0.5 |
| Liberal | 1 | 0.2 |
| Respect | 1 | 0.2 |
| Scottish National Party (SNP) | 70 | 11.1 |
| Scottish Labour | 37 | 5.9 |
| Scottish Conservative | 18 | 2.8 |
| Scottish Liberal Democrat | 22 | 3.5 |
| Scottish Greens | 6 | 0.9 |
| Welsh Labour | 26 | 4.1 |
| Plaid Cymru | 25 | 4.0 |
| Welsh Conservative | 10 | 1.6 |
| Welsh Liberal Democrats | 14 | 2.2 |
| Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) | 36 | 5.7 |
| Sinn Fein | 40 | 6.3 |
| Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) | 10 | 1.6 |
| Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) | 7 | 1.1 |
| Alliance Party | 5 | 0.8 |
| Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) | 1 | 0.2 |
| English Councils - Conservative | 20 | 3.2 |
| English Councils - Labour | 16 | 2.5 |
| English Councils - Liberal Democrat | 15 | 2.4 |
| English Councils - Green | 39 | 0.9 |
| English Councils - BNP | 10 | 1.6 |
| English Councils - Respect | 1 | 0.2 |
| Scottish Councillor | 1 | 0.2 |
| Councillor other | 3 | 0.5 |
| Total | 665 | 100 |

Although there were no UK-wide elections during this period, a third of all sources were from the three main UK political parties. For devolved political sources across the four nations, a quarter came from Scotland (45% of this from the SNP), three in twenty from Northern Ireland and 12% from Wales. English councillors accounted for 11%

sources. Out of the four nations, most political sources came from England (see Table 4.18).

Table 4.18 Location of political sources for all election items, where specified (n=537, total election news items)

| Location of Political Source | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| England | 273 | 43.8 |
| Northern Ireland | 121 | 19.4 |
| Scotland | 157 | 25.2 |
| Wales | 73 | 11.7 |
| Total | 624²⁵ | 100 |

Of the 665 political sources we examined, party leaders accounted for over 82.9% of sources, perhaps supporting the recent claim that the media have helped create a “Presidentialization” of UK politics (e.g. Munghan 2000). Male politicians were seven times more likely to appear on television or radio, or be quoted online than their female counterparts. This might be, as we noted in the general sample, a reflection of male dominance in Westminster both for MPs and Ministers as opposed to the greater proportion of women in the devolved administrations.

Finally, we examined whether a news item referred viewers or listeners on to other sources of information, BBC or otherwise. In the vast majority of cases – 95% -- they did not. When sources were referred to, however, it was limited to three outlets – the BBC Election Website, *News 24* or *Newsnight*.

Summary of election findings

The key findings of the election study tend to reinforce some conclusions reached by previous studies of election campaigns.

- While UK General Election campaigns tend to dominate news agendas, the devolved elections in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales found it hard to compete with the overall emphasis on news from Westminster. We found three times more Westminster stories than stories about election issues or the campaigns.
- Coverage of the elections tended to focus on the process of politics (general campaigning, deal-making between the parties etc.) rather than questions of policy. Whilst this might have led to a greater prominence of election coverage than might otherwise have been the case, viewers, listeners and readers of BBC election coverage would have struggled to find information about the differences in policies between political parties and across nations.
- In keeping with the lack of policy focus, fewer than one in ten election stories made explicit or implicit references stories to devolved powers (see tables 4.14-4.16 above)

²⁵ This figure differs from the figure of 665 given in Table 4.13 because a location was not given for each political source in every case.

5. Current Affairs Coverage 2007

Introduction

We examined BBC Current Affairs output across three programme formats (*File on Four*, *Analysis* and *Panorama*) for the whole of 2007.²⁶ Programmes were placed in one of three categories:

- (a) those programme that covered topics with no connection to devolution;
- (b) those programmes that referred to devolved powers/issues (i.e. the programme was directly connected with devolved powers);
- (c) those programmes that dealt with issues that involved devolved powers but where this connection was *not* explicitly clarified.

The vast majority of programmes fell into the first category, covering topics that were irrelevant to the politics of devolution. We found nine programmes in which relevant powers might have been referred to but were not, and only four that dealt with devolved powers or issues (all four of which were on *Analysis* - see Table 5.1). None of the 29 *File on Four* or 50 *Panorama* programmes made any explicit references to devolved issues or policies. We will look at those programmes that referred – or did not refer – to devolution in more detail.

Table 5.1: 2007 Current affairs overview: number and percentage of programmes by category and airtime in minutes by category

| | Total progs 2007 | A) Irrelevant | | B) Relevant Powers referred to | | C) Relevant Powers not referred to | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|---------------|------|--------------------------------|------|------------------------------------|------|
| | | | % | | % | | % |
| File on Four | 29 | 24 | 83.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 17.0 |
| Analysis | 26 | 21 | 81.0 | 4 | 15.0 | 1 | 4.0 |
| Panorama | 50 | 47 | 94 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6 |
| Total | 105 | 92 | | 4 | | 9 | |
| Total Airtime (mins) | 3440 | 3000 | | 120 | | 320 | |

²⁶ For *Panorama*, broadcast editions of the programme were viewed, except in one case (the *Please Look after Mum* programme), where a transcript available on the BBC website was referred to. In the case of the radio programmes, transcripts available through the BBC website were used.

Programmes That Did not Explore Relevant Devolved Powers

We found instances of a failure to examine the devolved nature of UK government in all three programmes, as follows:

Analysis (Radio 4, Thursdays 2030-2100 GMT)

ROH The Roof Over Your Head (16 Aug 2007)

File on 4 (Radio 4, Tuesdays 2000-2040 GMT)

CC Crack Cocaine (23 Oct 2007)
LSC Learning & Skills Council (22 Feb 2007)
CH Care Homes (18 Sep 2007)
SH Social Housing (17 Jul 2007)
VA Vulnerable Adults (20 Mar 2007)

Panorama (BBC 1, Mondays 2030 – 2100 GMT)

PLD Please Look After Dad (3 December 2007)
PLM Please Look After Mum (12 February 2007)
WNC What Next for Craig? (12 November 2007)

All these programmes looked at an issue affecting the UK where one or more of the nations has significant devolved competencies. They all did so by examining the record of UK Government agencies, policies or initiatives whose remit does not necessarily extend to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In each case, there were references by the presenter to England and the UK which gave the misleading impression that the remits of certain English agencies, policies or initiatives extend over the UK (cf. BBC 2003, p. 40). Against this backdrop, references by programme participants to both UK and England policy contexts increased the possibility of confusion.

Although programmes often referred to UK-wide contexts, English locations were favoured. Sometimes it was specifically stated that the programme subject was of UK-wide, before the focus shifted back to locations in England. One example of this was in a *File on 4* on 'Crack Cocaine', where it was reported that a new epidemic of crack cocaine was spreading from "from Bodmin to Inverness", before focusing solely on English locations in Brixton and Middlesbrough (see Table 5.2).

The possibility of confusion between the UK and England usually stemmed from a lack of clarification of the context and coverage of the report. In each case, the programme opened with a UK context either being assumed, e.g.

MASANI: [...] Gordon Brown's new government has made affordable housing a central plank of its policy launch. According to the latest figures, the price of an average British home is now eleven times the average salary.
(ROH)

or explicitly stated, e.g.

URRY: *It's a scene being played out almost daily across Britain. Our research shows crack cocaine has broken out of the inner cities and spread across the UK, from Bodmin to Inverness.*

(CC)

URRY: *The Government's been spending a fortune trying to increase Britain's productivity to meet the challenge of a global economy by improving the skills of young people.*

(LSC)

NORTHAM: *A new Prime Minister and a new burst of political interest in Britain's housing crisis.*

(SH)

NORTHAM: *Every week new cases of adult abuse come to light in what one campaign calls Britain's greatest hidden scandal.*

(VA)

Table 5.2: References to UK and English contexts in programmes with implicit connections to devolved powers²⁷

| Programme | Intro of Programme (first 40 lines or before signature tune) | | Rest of Programme | | | | | | |
|--------------|--|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---|---|--|----------------------|--|
| | UK context implied | UK context stated | UK context implied | UK context stated | Mention of England or England/Wales-only agency/policy/initiative ²⁸ | Mention of UK-wide agency/policy/initiative | English Location (no direct link with prog. focus) | Non-English Location | |
| CC | 0 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | |
| CH | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| LSC | 1 | 1 | 11 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 0 | |
| PLD | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| PLM | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| ROH | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| SH | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | |
| VA | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| WNC | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | |
| Total | 8 | 5 | 29 | 6 | 21 | 6 | 8 | 1 | |

Against this backdrop, the programmes explored English policy contexts for their investigations, without explicitly noting the change of focus. The use of terms by the

²⁷ References by presenter or by participants in direct discussion with presenter (as distinguished from stand alone statements by participants) are both included.

²⁸ Mentions of a policy, initiative or agency with an England or England/Wales remit where the specificity of remit is not also mentioned.

presenter and also by participants like ‘across the country’, ‘national’, and ‘the Government’ carried the suggestion that a UK focus was being maintained, even where the reach of statutes, agencies and initiatives was limited to England or England and Wales only (for other example of this problematic usage in news coverage, see Case Study 3).

In ‘Vulnerable Adults’ on *File on 4* for example, a Government policy document from 2000, “No Secrets”, is referred to as “the government’s national policy on adult abuse”, and states that:

***NORTHAM:** To the Government, these figures are a setback. The No Secrets policy launched in 2000 was intended to provide proper protection for all vulnerable adults, wherever they live.*

In fact, the policy was only actionable across England. Social care remains one of the powers extensively devolved to the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland administrations.

When *File on 4*’s programme on care homes focused on the Commission for Social Care Inspections (CSCI), it was contextualised in relation to the findings of a UK parliamentary committee on standards in care homes.

***URRY:** A care worker from Portsmouth has just been jailed for abusing elderly residents in the home where she worked. Two other staff were also convicted. File on 4 is here at the courts to see them sentenced and to investigate this, the latest in a series of disturbing cases which raise serious questions about the failure to care for the frail and the mentally ill in residential homes. Last month a parliamentary committee found more than 20% weren’t even reaching basic minimum standards laid down by the Government.*

This might suggest that the remit of the organisation (introduced as ‘the regulator’) is UK-wide. In fact, the CSCI is only concerned with the regulation of care homes in England. An earlier *Panorama* documentary (‘Please Look After Mum’) also referred to the CSCI, without further clarification of the agency’s remit, within a story on care homes which, again, framed its subject within a UK context from the outset.²⁹

Similarly, *File on 4*’s investigation into the resurgence of crack cocaine across the UK presented data from the National Treatment Agency and British Crime Survey. The NTA covers England, whilst the BCS’s coverage extends to England and Wales. In ‘What Next for Craig?’, another *Panorama* programme (which served as a source for news reports broadcast on the same day about ADHD treatments – see below, p. 69), the National Treatment Agency was referred to, again without clarification of its reach. This programme also referred to the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, whose remit over drug licensing does not extend to Scotland, although this was not mentioned.

²⁹ The remit of the CSCI is correctly qualified as ‘the regulator for homes in England’ on the BBC webpage for this edition of *Panorama*, however. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6332327.stm> (accessed 21/02/08).

Some programmes referred to agencies or initiatives with genuinely UK-wide responsibilities or coverage, but without necessarily explicitly distinguishing between the remit of these agencies and those of the England or England/Wales-only organisations referred to in the rest of the programme.

In *File on 4's* programme about the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the LSC, together with its initiative "Train to Gain", are repeatedly referred to in the context of the UK Government's responses to "Britain's skills shortage". The coverage of the LSC and its initiatives is restricted to England, but an organisation called Summit Skills is also referred to. This, unlike the Learning and Skills Council, is a UK-wide organisation. However, it is possible from the programme to draw the conclusion that the LSC is the organisation with wider responsibilities:

URRY: The Learning and Skills Council, Britain's largest quango, has been pouring money into Further Education colleges for vocational training to increase the supply of those hoping to become tradesmen and women, but they've left the tap running.

URRY: Blane Judd used to be operations director of an organisation called Summit Skills. It's part of the system set up by Government to make sure industry gets what it wants.

As we found in our case study of the "British jobs for British workers" story, reporters sometimes gloss over the politics of devolution by switching between English and UK policy context, without making these moves clear to the viewer or without any references to relevant policies or practices in the other three nations.

Programmes with Explicit Connection to Devolved Powers

All four references to devolved powers were made on *Analysis*, as follows:

Analysis (Radio 4, Thursdays 2030-2100 GMT)

| | |
|-----|---|
| B&B | Bravehearts and Bankers (5 Apr 2007) |
| OW | One Wales? (25 Oct 2007) |
| LPD | Let The People Decide? (29 Nov 2007) |
| BGS | Beginner's Guide To Separation (6 Dec 2007) |

All these programmes dealt with subjects in which issues relating to devolution were explicitly examined. The key analytical themes present in the four programmes were as follows:

- The consequences of devolution for identity
- The legitimacy of devolved government (including the North-South divide in Wales), especially relating to increasing administrative costs.
- The effect of devolution on public services
- The future of the Union/Scottish Independence

These themes appear to reflect findings from the Electoral Commission (2000a, 2000b) on what the primary areas of concern in Scotland and Wales are regarding the

continuing process of devolution. There was no similar coverage for Northern Ireland within the sample.

‘Let The People Decide?’ falls into this category of programme because it briefly mentioned the possibility of a referendum on Scottish independence, although its focus did centre on a debate over the democratic credentials of referenda *per se*.

Programme Contexts

The key contextual background in three of these programmes was the uncertainty associated with the ongoing process of devolution – economic, political and cultural:

WEIGHT: *Amid all this uncertainty, Britain is preparing to be governed by a Scottish Prime Minister. And the Scottish economist Adam Smith has just replaced the composer Edward Elgar on the reverse of the twenty-pound Bank of England note. But few now deny that the currency of British national identity has been steadily devalued since the Second World War.*
(B&B)

BOWLBY: *[...] Everyone acknowledges the Union's in flux since devolution, and no one's sure exactly where it's heading. The scenario envisaged by the SNP sees a referendum in Scotland in which a majority approves negotiations for independence.*
(BGS)

DEVICHAND: *[...] My journey around Wales revealed that both English and Welsh speakers were united in their quest for a stronger Welsh identity and a revived Welsh language. But because those in charge are using public money and an element of compulsion to achieve this, they risk creating divisions and resentment. There's only one way to stop that and that's to allow all the bottled up sentiments out into a vigorous debate about what kind of society Wales should become.*
(OW)

Although two of the programmes (‘Bravehearts and Bankers’ and ‘Beginner’s Guide To Separation’) dealt with Scottish independence in some depth, neither discussed in any detail how an independent Scotland might come about. These two programmes, together with ‘Let The People Decide?’ (which touched on it only briefly), reflected some of the news coverage of Scottish politics. As we suggested in our analysis of the general sample (see p. **Error! Reference source not found.****Error! Bookmark not defined.** above), where independence is mentioned, it is sometimes implicitly presented as an outcome which could be brought about without the UK government’s intervention.

An exception was the ‘Beginner’s Guide To Separation’, although the presenter did not explicitly spell out what constitutional procedures would need to be followed in order for Scotland to become independent:

BOWLBY: [...] A deal to divide up the common state would then be subject, it's assumed, to approval by further referendum or by votes in the Scottish and Westminster parliaments. This deal would matter to every UK citizen.

Consequences of Devolution for National Identity

The impact of devolution on identity was discussed in detail across 'Bravehearts and Bankers' and 'Beginner's Guide To Separation') in relation to Scotland, and by 'One Wales?' in relation to Wales. This proved the most dominant theme on the programmes which explicitly focused on devolution-related issues. Across all three programmes, the discussions touched on economic influences on identity and cultural expressions of identities post-devolution. 'Bravehearts and Bankers' and 'Beginner's Guide To Separation' also covered the historical influences on Scottish political identity, particularly with reference to the effect of decolonisation, given the extensive participation of Scots in administering the British empire. The former dealt at length with these topics, comparing the rise of Scottish political nationalism in the mid to late 20th century with that of Catalonia in Spain, which was caught up in the process of Spanish decolonisation.

WEIGHT: *Like Scotland and England, Catalonia and Castille have been rivals for centuries. And while the loss of lucrative colonies like Cuba or Kenya was not the start of the smaller partner's discontent with the State they'd bought into, decolonisation, and the direct or indirect effect it had on the Catalanian and Scottish economies, was clearly a dynamic catalyst. A shift from cultural to political nationalism, accelerated by economic decline, is a feature of both these small ex-colonial nations.*

The complexities of Scottish involvement with the empire were addressed, including Scottish involvement with slavery, with a range of opinions concerning the benefits to Scotland of empire together with its costs (including political suppression):

WEIGHT: *So the Scots not only played a disproportionate role in the British Empire, in the creation and maintenance of the Empire, but they were also involved in the slave trade as well?*

DEVINE: *They were all up to their necks in it. But the second and more important thing is slavery gave Scotland an important economic platform. Scotland's economy in the 18th century depended on the sugar, cotton and tobacco trades, all of which themselves depended on un-free labour.*

DEVINE: *They promised, for example, compensation for those who had lost out in the so-called Darien disaster, Scotland's attempt to create a colony in the Isthmus of Panama in the 1690s. They also promised that Scots private law and the Scottish if you like system of higher education and even the private courts of Scottish landowners would be maintained within the Union. But there was also the potential stick. There were troops stationed across from the most recalcitrant part of Scotland, the Western Lowlands, and there were definitely brigades on the borders.*

'One Wales?' saw the revival of the Welsh language as closely tied to the establishment of a political identity for the nation, and having different significance in the south of the country, where the new political institutions are located, but where Welsh has historically been spoken much less:

***DEVICHAND:** One thing that struck me was that I met indigenous Welsh speakers in the North of Wales and they didn't seem to be as het up as English speakers in the South, which is a more post-industrial place. In the South they seem to identify more with the language although, paradoxically, they didn't speak it and in fact you know it may not even be the case that their ancestors spoke it.*

The programme interpreted the resurgence of the Welsh language as a symbol of a renewed sense of confidence in Welsh identity, against a backdrop of long-standing economic decline in South Wales.

***DEVICHAND:** [...] But patriotism in these Valleys used to mean the Welsh Rugby team, the rousing hymns and arias on match days, the male voice choirs that sang them. The strongly working class identity here took a hit when Mrs Thatcher opened the economy to global markets and Welsh coal mining collapsed. So it's great news to me that the people here do feel a renewed sense of confidence.*

Whilst portraying the promotion of Welsh as a response to global forces, it also referenced people's worries about the possibly isolating consequences of relying on language as a marker of identity.

***CASTELLS:** You use this attempt to build on your language as a sign of creating autonomy. It's a reaction against globalisation.*

***MALE 1:** Not a chance, no. More chance of getting them to speak Arabic. (laughter)*

***DEVICHAND:** Why do you say that?*

***MALE 1:** It would broaden people's horizons a bit more than actually becoming even more insular than they're trying to make us.*

Legitimacy

Mention of public perception of the legitimacy or otherwise of devolved administrations was made in the 'One Wales?' investigation into the Welsh Assembly's funding for the development of the Welsh language, and, more broadly, whether such political intervention for cultural goals could be considered a legitimate use of public money:

***DEVICHAND:** [...] But there's an official plan to fashion a bilingual society in Wales. Public services must be offered in both English and Welsh by law,*

and now, after a decade of limited self-rule from Cardiff, there's a push to extend this into the private sector too.

Where there's friction it's not really about the Welsh language itself but about the specific way state power and funds are being used to promote it - over £19million a year from the Welsh Assembly government.

***ANONYMOUS:** We seem to be so worried about creating the perfect Welsh person and that perfect Welsh person must speak the Welsh with a certain accent, using certain words and terminology, that we forget about the fact that the rest of the world is out there.*

Effect on Public Institutions/Services

In 'One Wales?', the focus on the use of public money to promote the Welsh language addressed the impact of Welsh language policies on the culture of public institutions and on civil society more broadly, with various issues being explored. The effect of devolution on public institutions and the economy formed a minor focus of 'Bravehearts and Bankers' and 'Beginner's Guide To Separation'. With respect to Scotland, the latter ended with comments on devolution's economic and political outcomes so far from John Curtice, Professor of Politics at Strathclyde University, and on its cultural effects from the Director of the Edinburgh Book Festival.

***CURTICE:** I think it's quite difficult to argue so far that the creation of the separate institutions in Scotland has been of clear economic advantage to Scotland.*

[...] certainly since 1999 rates of economic growth in Scotland have tended to be lower than they are in England. There have been one or two quarters when there's actually been recession, which has not been true across the UK as a whole.

***CURTICE:** Certainly ask Scots whether or not the Scottish Parliament has made much difference and the principal answer, almost irrespective of how you ask the question and what you ask it about, tends now to be no difference.*

***LOCKERBIE:** I think the evidence is that since devolution Scottish writing has diversified greatly and we don't any more get the sense of people having to bang a particular drum.[...]This is about Scotland not being a constricting, confining concept, but actually a liberating, outward looking one. The chip is off the shoulder. The cringe is leaving and farewell to it. We want to see the back of it altogether.*

The Future of the Union/Scottish Independence

The question of the present and future appetite for independence amongst the Scottish electorate was touched on in both programmes which dealt with Scotland.

***BOWLBY:** Given what's at stake for, say, Gordon Brown or Alistair Darling, they'll take comfort from opinion polls in Scotland suggesting under twenty-five per cent of voters currently favour independence.*

(BGS)

***CURTICE:** [...] Around a third of people support independence. That was roughly the position back in 1999.*

(B&B)

Support for independence was presented as tied to economic performance. To look at the issues surrounding independence in this way reflects the emergence of economic autonomy as a key concern amongst the Scottish electorate, as evidenced by opinion polls for the Electoral Commission. It is seen as a determinant of Scotland's potential to be independent from the rest of the UK (Electoral Commission 2006: p. 27).

'Beginner's Guide To Separation' followed on from a series of reports both on the BBC website (Stamp 2007) and on BBC radio concerning the funding of independence, all of which made the connection between Scotland's claim to oil revenues from the North Sea and its need to pay for pensions and care for an ageing population.

The Union between England and Scotland was represented as a deeply embedded and complex intertwining of cultures and institutions, resting on economic and political arrangements which would produce a long-drawn-out process of separation which would be traumatic for both partners, should independence happen. The imagery of marriage and divorce was often used to make this point.

***CANNADINE:** I think the unravelling, should it come, would probably be a protracted nightmare. It would be a divorce, a division of the spoils on a kind of epic, spectacular scale. If we think of such issues as the army, things like British embassies overseas, Britain's permanent representation on the United Nations, all of these things would have to be unravelled and negotiated and fixed somehow. And I suspect that that would be extremely difficult, it would take a very long time, and I think that maybe for one or two years Great Britain - and I use that term advisedly - would just kind of go out of business in terms of its relations with the rest of the world while all this was sorted.*

***BOWLBY:** And what would emerge would not only be a new Scotland but also a new remainder of the UK in search of a name and a new sense of coherence, shorn of its historic Scottish part. The Scots have been making the running in discussing what their independence might mean and whether or not it's desirable. But all UK nations need to face more clearly the prospect of the Union ceasing to exist and, Neal Ascherson believes, that applies particularly to one of them.*

***ASCHERSON:** It would be a traumatic event for England and it would be also an opportunity to think about what England is. If Scotland isn't there, the*

English are free to think seriously hard about themselves and their constitutional arrangements and what they want to do in the world and what sort of power this is going to be,

‘One Wales’ presented the future of Wales within the Union as more a slowly-evolving matter of its own distinctive cultural identity, particularly with respect to language, although it did make the link between the attractiveness of a renewed sense of cultural identity against a backdrop of the economic hardships of the 1980s. It saw a need to bring to the surface the conflicts the programme alleged were being aggravated by the Welsh Government’s language policies, particularly within a context where the Assembly ‘is now asking for more powers’. The uncertainties here were presented in terms of positive and negative potentials for language to exclude and include and create political divisions or new forms of identity:

DEVICHAND: *But if language is by its very nature exclusionary, can the society being created here in Wales really be an open one? I’m not fluent in Welsh and I’m the child of outsiders – my parents came here from India. But the warm fabric of Welsh life absorbed us. The risk is that this linguistic vision for Wales could end up with Welsh-speaking identity becoming a powerful members only club.*

DEVICHAND: *Talking to Guto, you pick up the clear sense that the youthful scene around the revival of Welsh is not in any way exclusionary. Like him, many in the flourishing Welsh media set have moved to inner-city areas of Cardiff like Grangetown and Butetown, where the Somali community that lived there before now runs Welsh classes. It made me realise that the construction of identity around language is not meant to shut others out. The aim is to invite others in.*

The programme related this inclusionary/exclusionary potential of language policy to public perceptions of its political uses:

DEVICHAND: *[...] But when it comes to utopian visions, it’s wise to tread carefully. There is an alternative theory out there about why nationalism of many stripes is rising. That theory argues that it isn’t the grassroots but instead the elite establishment who entrench their power by creating a national culture or “imagined community” in their own image.*

In addition, it opened up a longer term view of the dynamics at work behind shifts in linguistic identity, using this to introduce a discussion with members of the public in Newport on the changing nature of Welsh identity:

HUWS: *I don’t think you’re talking about wholesale transformation overnight though. I think this is such a slow process. In language planning terms, we talk about a window of thirty years and that’s what we’re talking about here. In 2010 you won’t see a totally bilingual Newport. By 2040 we could see something that is very, very different.*

Summary

Overall, the trends found in our content analysis of news is reflected in current affairs programming. Devolution receives little attention, and is often neglected even when it is directly relevant to the issues being discussed. For example, the tendency to use terms such as 'England', 'the nation' and 'the country' more or less interchangeably (against the advice of the current BBC News style guide, BBC 2003, pp. 39-41) invites confusion over the remit of agencies, initiatives and policies, particularly in areas such as health and social care, and education and training. However, where devolved powers and policies are explicitly the subject of programmes, some of the available BBC radio current affairs output show that it is possible to deal effectively with some of the complexities of devolution.

6. Five Live Phone-In Programmes (Oct-Nov and Election Samples)

Introduction

The format of the Five Live phone-in programme on weekdays changed slightly with the handover in 2007 from Matthew Bannister to Victoria Derbyshire. Bannister (and Richard Bacon) presented the show during the election period (defined as 1 March 2007 – 25 May 2007) across 62 programmes. In this period, the show lasted for three hours (9.00am – 12.00pm). Of the 62 editions falling within the sample period, five contained topics directly related to the election, with 55 units being coded across these five programmes. During the October-November sample period, we examined a dipstick sample of twenty editions of the two hour phone-in show (hosted in this period by Victoria Derbyshire, with Phil Williams covering), with three of these including topics with some relevance to devolution.

Note on Methodology

The unit of analysis the morning phone-in show on Five Live differs from the other coding exercises. Since the programme cannot be divided into distinct news items, we decided to code each *exchange* within the programmes. An exchange was defined as one of the following kinds of segment:

- a) an introduction or similar section spoken by the presenter alone,
- b) a conversation between presenter and guest,
- c) conversation between presenter and reporter,
- d) reporter package on location,
- e) the presenter discussing an issue with a caller (or more than one caller if all engaged in the same conversation),
- e) the presenter in discussion with a guest and caller or callers,
- f) the presenter discussing an issue with a reporter and caller(s),
- g) the presenter summarising text messages and/or emails that had been received dealing with the same issue,
- h) the presenter in discussion with a caller(s) and also summarising text messages and/or emails, and
- i) the presenter inviting comment from a guest or guests on text messages and emails.

Where phone-in participants were involved, the end of one segment and the beginning of another was assigned once the topic of discussion changed, or if one caller was replaced by another. If a caller was brought in to join a conversation on a given topic, this was treated as being part of the same unit.

October-November 2007 devolution coverage

In this period, the format of the programme differed slightly from the election period, with a different topic often being covered within each hour of the show, although callers were permitted to respond to earlier topics throughout the rest of the programme. This arrangement varied slightly from programme to programme, with individual editions of the show covering from two to four topics within the two hours.

Across these 20 programmes, only three shows featured topics which were relevant to devolution. The featured topics were the following:

- 1) the West Lothian question and differences between devolved social policy in Scotland and policy in England (29 October)
- 2) Scots' 'willingness to work' (29 October)
- 3) the resurgence of "slum housing" for immigrants in Glasgow (14 November)
- 4) the implementation of free prescriptions in Wales and proposed free prescriptions for Scotland (16 November).

Among these, 1) and 3) can be classified as programmes where the link between devolved powers and the topic was an explicit feature of the programme, while 2) and 4) were programmes where a link existed between their subject and devolved government, although this was not clarified.

1) The West Lothian Question

Taking in two exchanges between the presenter (Phil Williams), callers and invited experts, these two units comprised together just under 16 minutes of airtime, with the first unit occupying the last slot of the programme's first hour before the news, and the second unit beginning straight after the news. Coverage of this issue was prompted by Malcolm Rifkind's suggestion (BBC 2007a) for an English grand committee to be set up in order to solve the West Lothian issue. In the first exchange, an initial call from a female participant in England expressed resentment concerning the higher levels of funding given to Scotland under the Barnett formula,³⁰ and at SNP MPs in Westminster being allowed to vote on the introduction of university tuition fees in England. For the caller, the abolition of tuition fees and of prescription charges in Scotland showed this funding difference most significantly. Scottish and English regional journalists gave their perspectives. In the discussion, the funding differentials between different English regions and London were compared by the Scottish journalist with those between England and Scotland.

In the second exchange, the themes of the cost of devolution to the UK and constitutional problems attributed to it were expanded on further in a discussion that included a Scottish male caller, together with the previous three participants. Various solutions to the West Lothian problem were discussed, with Scottish independence being suggested by the English caller as one possible way out.

2) Service Industries in Scotland and the Public Sector

This exchange followed on directly from the West Lothian discussion as a fresh topic, and lasted for nearly five and half minutes. The presenter introduced the former racing driver Jackie Stewart who had recently made comments on the unwillingness of Scots to work in Scottish service industries and the relative size of the public sector in Scotland (O'Kane 2007). Connections were made between the latter topic and the West Lothian discussion, particularly with the idea that Scotland benefits unfairly from 'handouts' from Westminster. Two male callers, one from England and one from Scotland were introduced, both of whom took issue with Stewart's comments. The

³⁰ A financial instrument used by the Westminster Government to adjust some elements of public expenditure in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to reflect decisions concerning other parts of the UK.

Scottish caller commented that the Scottish public sector reflected how public services had improved in general in Scotland. No specific devolved powers were mentioned during the discussion of public sector employment, as it was conducted at the level of the public sector in general.

3) Slum Housing for Immigrants in Glasgow

This story comprised six units and took up just under 33½ minutes of the second hour of the programme, beginning after the news. Phil Williams introduced the first of two consecutive reports from Five Live's Scotland correspondent James Shaw which looked at the resurgence of privately rented 'slum housing' in Glasgow in which recent immigrants from Eastern Europe were felt by local people and the local authority to be concentrated. The two reports covered social problems highlighted by representatives of the police and other agencies, focusing on crime and 'pressures on social services'. Together these reports comprised just over 23 minutes of airtime.

They were followed by a discussion of emails from two English listeners concerning immigration, followed by a call from a Scottish listener with local knowledge. Another English caller related the stories to his experience of different cities around the UK, followed by a final call from Scotland. Throughout the six units, the main responsibility for the situation was seen to belong to Glasgow council, but within Shaw's second report, a council representative pointed to the wider context for housing policy, namely that established by the Scottish Government. There was no explicit discussion of the Scottish Government's responsibilities on housing or immigration, with the main emphasis of the discussion with callers being on immigration to the UK as a whole from Eastern Europe and the problems participants associated with it. This shift of focus back to the UK as a whole meant that the programme could not examine the policy relationship on immigration and housing between the Westminster and Scottish governments. This relationship had been highlighted just two weeks before the programme in the *Scotsman*, which reported that some of the new strengthened provisions on immigration in the UK Borders Act 2007 would not apply to Scotland (See below, Omissions, p. 73).

4) Free Prescriptions in Wales and Scotland

This story comprised two exchanges, with a total duration of just over 9 minutes, beginning before the news at 10 am and continuing afterwards. The presenter (Victoria Derbyshire) introduced calls from two female callers in England who discussed the provision of free prescriptions in Scotland and Wales. The inequalities with which they were concerned were not to do with differences in funding between the nations, but with certain chronic medical conditions. These required medication for which free prescriptions used to be available but, following a change in UK Government policy on these conditions, English sufferers now had to pay. In the second unit, a male representative of the Patients' Association was introduced, commenting that the settlement amounted to a 'postcode lottery', a claim which had been receiving publicity across other media during the previous week (Devlin 2007).

Although the comparison between the different situations in England and in Wales and Scotland was made in both units, the majority of references, particularly in the second

unit, were to the situation in Scotland. This might reflect the fact that the Scottish government had announced on 22 October that it planned to abolish prescription charges (BBC 2007b), a proposal which was later confirmed in early December 2007.

Elections Coverage

No programmes in the election period we sampled dealt with the Northern Ireland elections in the run-up to voting, but a special programme from Stormont was aired on 8 May, the day when power-sharing began. In the week before the 3 May elections, a series of related programmes took place, with representatives of the Liberal Democrats, Labour and the SNP taking questions (no representative of the Conservatives or Plaid were interviewed). On May 4th, Richard Bacon hosted a results programme covering the English, Welsh and Scottish elections.

Because the programmes featured individual party representatives, most units across the elections coverage consisted of exchanges between presenter, guest and caller(s), and the presenter and guest, followed next in frequency by the presenter inviting the guest to respond to one or more text messages or emails (see table 6.1).

Table 6.1: Frequency of unit types for all election programmes (n=68)

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Presenter + reporter | 4 | 5.9 |
| Presenter and callers | 5 | 7.4 |
| Presenter & texts/emails | 3 | 4.4 |
| Presenter & guest(s) | 16 | 23.5 |
| Presenter, guest(s) and callers | 26 | 38.2 |
| Reporter package on location | 1 | 1.5 |
| Presenter, guest(s) and reporter | 1 | 1.5 |
| Presenter, callers & txts/emails | 1 | 1.5 |
| Presenter, reporter & caller(s) | 1 | 1.5 |
| Presenter, guest(s) & txts/emails | 10 | 14.7 |
| Total | 68 | 100.0 |

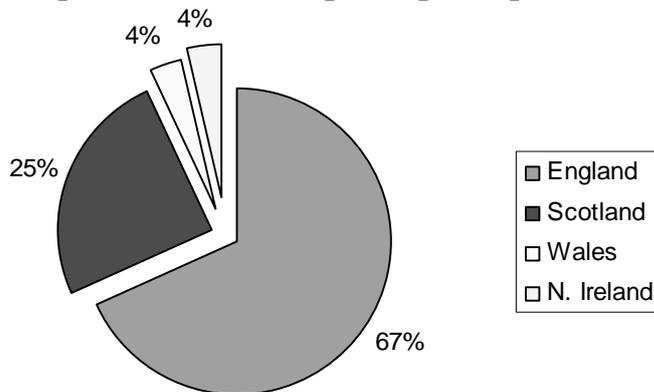
Across these programmes, most references to the elections contained within individual exchanges were to the Scottish elections, with the English elections being next and substantially fewer references to the Welsh and the earlier Northern Ireland elections (see table 6.2).

Table 6.2: Elections covered for all election period programmes

| Election | Frequency | % |
|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| England | 16 | 21.3 |
| Scotland | 21 | 28.0 |
| Wales | 5 | 6.7 |
| Northern Ireland | 2 | 2.7 |
| Scottish Council | 7 | 9.3 |
| Not specified | 24 | 32.0 |
| | | |
| Total | 75 | 100.0 |

The controversy over voting problems in Scotland dominated discussions during the results programme on 4 May. Nonetheless, the substantially smaller presence of the Welsh elections in the available Five Live phone-in coverage is in line with both our content analyses, in which the Welsh presence is notable mainly by its absence. Occasionally within the election special programme, the fact that there had been elections in England and Scotland was mentioned without the Welsh elections being included. In terms of the location of members of the public participating in the programmes, the highest number by far came from England, twice as many as from Scotland and around ten times as many as from Wales and Northern Ireland. The lack of a pre-election programme featuring a Plaid candidate³¹ and the fact that the Northern Ireland elections took place much earlier in the election period may have been responsible for some of this variation (Graph 6.2).

Graph 6.1: Location of public participants



Gender participation followed a tendency which has long been noticed in studies of phone-in debates (McNair, Hibberd & Schlesinger 2003: pp. 43-4), with the great majority of members of the public calling in being male.

Table 6.3: Gender of participating members of the public for all election period programmes

³¹ This shortfall may have been compensated for elsewhere in Five Live programming during the election period which fell outside the scope of our data set

| | Txt/Email | Caller | Total | % |
|--------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Female | 3 | 5 | 8 | 14.0 |
| Male | 18 | 31 | 49 | 86.0 |
| | | | | |
| Total | | | 57 | 100.0 |

1) Party Representatives – 23 April (SNP), 24 April (Labour) and 25 April (Lib Dem)

In each case, a prominent member of the party was present for discussion with members of the public during the first hour of the programme: for the SNP, Alex Salmond; for Labour, David Miliband (the then Environment Secretary) and for the Liberal Democrats their then leader, Menzies Campbell. No Conservative representative appeared during this pre-election period on the phone-in show.³² The amount of airtime given to discussion varied between the three parties as follows (see Table 6.5):

Table 6.5: Total Airtime for Parties in Pre-Election Programmes

| | Number of Units Analysed | Total Airtime (seconds) |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| UK Labour | 15 | 2690 |
| UK Liberal Democrats | 17 | 2580 |
| Scottish National Party | 13 | 2268 |

The programme with Alex Salmond on 23 April was dominated by discussion of the effects that independence could have on the UK and Scottish economies, and on the relationship between the UK and an independent Scotland on defence issues. Salmond offered comments on the constitutional arrangements for achieving independence, which covered the questions of just how much support there was for independence or a referendum. Salmond referred to recent polls which he suggested had shown support for independence.³³ Out of the three programmes with party representatives, Salmond's appearance featured the most references to the upcoming elections, all of these being the vote for the Scottish parliament.

David Miliband's appearance saw participants focusing on environmental and transport issues. Indeed, the discussion overall very much concerned the record of the party in

³² This shortfall may have been compensated for elsewhere in Five Live programming during the election period which fell outside the scope of our data set.

³³ Poll results on this issue, it has been argued, tend to be particularly sensitive to how the poll question concerning independence is framed, e.g. questions that frame the concept of independence positively as a single alternative to the status quo show a much larger degree of support (40-52%), whereas questions which frame the choices in much more nuanced and 'technical' terms result in reduced levels of support (around 27%) (Wells 2007).

Westminster (together with the possibility of Miliband standing for the party leadership), with the local elections not receiving a single mention in the programme.

Issues discussed on the Menzies Campbell edition concentrated on Campbell's record as party leader together with his age and suitability for the post, although a number of participants raised queries concerning the Liberal Democrats' electoral strategy at the local level in the English elections, and particularly wards where no candidate was standing, or deals which had allegedly been struck between the Liberal Democrats and other parties. The focus was overwhelmingly on the English local elections, with Campbell limiting discussion of his party's chances to what he saw as the different situations "south and north of Birmingham", except for one reference in the third unit to their opposition in Scotland to any referendum on independence.

Although these programmes took place in the run up to elections in Scotland and Wales, public participants in the three programmes came predominantly from England, with none from Wales or Northern Ireland (see Table 6.6).

Table 6.6: Pre-election programmes - location of public participants

| Party Represented in programme | Location of participant | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|-------|------------------|
| | England | Scotland | Wales | Northern Ireland |
| UK Labour | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| UK Liberal Democrats | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Scottish National Party | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 |

2) Election Results Special (4 May)

This programme, presented by Richard Bacon, examined the outcomes of the elections which took place on 3 May in England, Wales and Scotland (including the Scottish Council elections). Guests invited to discuss the results included the comedian and television presenter (and former member of New Labour's NEC) Tony Robinson, together with representatives of the Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, SNP and Plaid. Robinson and a Conservative MEP were allowed by the presenter to make the most contributions across a number of exchanges, with the Lib Dem, SNP and Plaid representatives contributing only one exchange each.

The programme was dominated by discussion of the voting problems which had affected the elections in Scotland. Across all units analysed, coverage of the Scottish elections was most frequent. The number of units referring to the Welsh elections, by contrast, was lower than those referring to the Scottish, English or Scottish Council elections (see Table 6.7). As noted above, on two occasions the fact that there had been elections in England and Scotland was mentioned without the Welsh elections being included.

Table 6.7: References to Elections in 4th May Results Special

| Election | Frequency | % |
|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Scotland | 14 | 40.0 |
| England | 9 | 25.7 |
| Wales | 5 | 14.3 |
| Scottish Council | 6 | 17.1 |
| N. Ireland | 1 | 2.9 |
| | | |
| Total | 35 | 100.0 |

The locations from which public participants were drawn showed a similar pattern of weighting away from Wales and towards England and Scotland, with a slight majority of participants coming from England (see Table 6.8).

Table 6.8: Location of Participants in Election Results Special

| Location of Participant | Frequency | % |
|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| England | 10 | 45.5 |
| Scotland | 8 | 36.4 |
| Wales | 2 | 9.1 |
| N. Ireland | 2 | 9.1 |
| | | |
| Total | 22 | 100.0 |

Once again, callers were overwhelmingly male, men outnumbering women by 23 to three, an even higher percentage (88.5%) than for the election sample as a whole.

3) Stormont Special (8 May)

This segment fell within the second hour of the programme, and consisted of one report, just over eight minutes in length by Northern Ireland correspondent Kevin Connolly from Stormont, covering the reinstatement of power sharing government in the province, together with an overview of the history of the peace process leading up to this point. A theme common to many of the reports on power-sharing in Northern Ireland across other channels was repeated here, namely that the resumption of devolved government in Northern Ireland would enable former enemies to collaborate in addressing issues of everyday concern, of which the impending water charges were selected as the most pressing. The report was a stand alone piece, with no public participation.

Summary

Although the Five Live samples represent only a small number of programmes, it is still possible to view them as indicative of some of the broader trends we have observed in

the wider general and election samples. The amount of coverage given to the Welsh elections, and by extension, the amount of airtime given to Welsh participants, was significantly smaller than that devoted to the Scottish and English elections, and to Scottish and English participants. In October and November, as well as there being only a small number of programmes where devolution was relevant to one or more topics, it was evident that the framing of these topics was done in a way which tended to avoid discussion of the specifics of devolved responsibilities. Instead, where Scottish devolution was discussed, issues might be framed in terms of English 'grievances', as in the case of the West Lothian question, or that of the Scottish public sector. Or alternatively, as in the case of the 'slum housing' story, focusing on a Scottish location was used as an occasion for broadening the discussion to cover general trends in immigration to the UK, at a time when the Scottish administration's specific attitudes to the UK Borders Bill might have offered other alternative ways of framing or opportunities for enriching the content of the programme.

7. Devolution Stories on BBC *Six O’Clock News* and 6.30pm Opt-Outs

Introduction

We also looked at the relationship between the network BBC1 *Six O’Clock News* and the opt-out programmes that followed in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales (*Reporting Scotland*, *BBC Newslines* and *Wales Today*). From the October-November 2007 sample, there were 71 stories in total (occurring on different days, across 361 news items) which were concerned either explicitly with devolution-related topics, or where devolved powers were relevant to the subject, even if not explicitly mentioned. Of these, there were ten news items that appeared on the *Six O’Clock News*. We then looked at *Reporting Scotland*, *BBC Newslines* and *Wales Today* to see whether they had picked up these stories and, if so, to compare the *Six O’Clock News* coverage with that of the opt-out programmes.³⁴

Only three of the ten stories were picked up on the opt-out bulletins, as described below.

1. Effectiveness of ADHD Drug Treatment (11 November)

This story drew on *Panorama*’s investigation of American research into the effectiveness of drugs currently available through the NHS for treating children diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (see Section 5). It appeared in the second half of the *Six O’Clock News*, but was the second item on *Reporting Scotland*. The reports were similar in length, and both featured the American academic who had directed the research.

The UK bulletin also featured a male psychiatrist engaged in drawing up treatment guidelines for practitioners in England and Wales (in an extract from the *Panorama* programme), with the Scottish bulletin replacing this expert with a female representative from a Scottish psychiatric body (not in the *Panorama* documentary). In the Scotland bulletin, direct reference was made to a figure of 47,000 children diagnosed in Scotland with ADHD, and to the Scottish Government’s powers to vary treatment policies (neither was mentioned in *Panorama*). No reference was made in the main UK bulletin to these powers: reference was made to the UK-wide increase in prescriptions, but the inclusion of the psychiatric expert changed the focus to new measures that would apply only to England and Wales, without further explicit mention of the fact.

2. Scottish Government Budget (14 November)

The SNP-led Scottish Government’s first budget, and its announcement that it would look to freeze council tax rates and reduce business rates, was reported by the *Six O’Clock News*. The item came far down the news order, in the last third of the programme, and comprises a single unit on location in Scotland, lasting for two

³⁴ For these 10 stories, 3 of the relevant opt-outs were missing from the sample. All three were of the Northern Ireland 6.30pm news.

minutes. Andrew Cassell covered the main proposals in the budget, mentioning measures regarding taxation, health and education policy, policing levels and environmental protection, along with responses from the Scottish Labour finance spokesman and the leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

It was the second item on *Reporting Scotland* (following a new development in a murder case unsolved since 1991), and comprised three discrete items: i) a location report on public responses to the budget, with five people interviewed, and devolved powers with regard to tax and education policy mentioned; ii) a report by the presenter covering the proposals to freeze council tax and cut business rates, which also covered the main policy areas covered in the earlier UK bulletin and included political reactions from the same figures, plus the Scottish Conservative finance spokesman; iii) a two-way discussion between the presenter and BBC Scotland's Political Editor Brian Taylor concerning the discussions the SNP would be involved in with local councils to ensure the council tax freeze would be carried through. The total length of these three items was 6 minutes 41 seconds.

3. Welsh Assembly bans electric dog collars (15 November)

This item was placed far down the running order on both the *Six O'Clock News* (last item but one before the weather) and *Wales Today* (eighth item). The preceding items on the Welsh news were: the funeral service for the rugby player Ray Gravell, a proposed new road bridge to Anglesey, the ongoing consequences of severe flooding in Wales, and reduced levels of service provision for drug treatment programmes in North Wales. The item covered measures taken by the Welsh Assembly to ban electric shock collars used by some trainers for training hard-to-control dogs.

The *Six O'Clock News* item, with a reporter on location in Swansea, interviewed two dog trainers critical of the policy, together with Elin Jones AM, the Assembly's Minister for Rural Affairs, who defended it. This unit was two minutes in length. *Wales Today* featured two reports, giving a rather different impression of public attitudes. The first outlined the policy and talked to three members of the public who were broadly in agreement with it. The second was a studio interview with a representative from the Welsh RSPCA who was, again, supportive of the ban. In total, these two units were two minutes and 52 seconds in length.

Summary

The small number of devolution-related stories covered on the UK BBC *Six O'Clock News* makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions. However, the fact that only three stories were picked up or developed on the relevant 6.30pm opt-outs across a four week period suggests that the UK bulletins and the opt-outs do not currently work together effectively to remedy the lack of devolution reporting across the UK-wide outlets.

8. Omissions

Introduction

Coverage of devolution-related stories across the Northern Ireland, Scottish and Welsh media (the BBC1 6.30pm news opt-outs - *Reporting Scotland*, *BBC Newsline* and *Wales Today* - and a selection of newspapers³⁵) was examined during the October-November period. The aim was to ascertain the range and number of stories of potential UK-wide significance (and particularly stories that were important for understanding the ongoing development of devolved governance) that were reported in Scottish/Welsh/Northern Ireland media, but were not picked up by the BBC outlets we monitored during the four weeks of the general sample (including those sections of the BBC Online's UK and Politics sites we monitored).³⁶ Although we only looked at a sample of the available media outlets, we found a wide range of stories - a full list of which is provided at the end of this section. We would not, of course, expect the BBC network to have picked up all these stories: nonetheless, coverage of stories of some of them would have aided an understanding how the nations are changing under devolution.

We found 230 stories in total, of which 58 were selected as being of particular importance in the context of devolution, before being grouped into three broad topic areas:

- a) the political process in the devolved administrations, including the emergence of conflicts between parties;
- b) the significance of particular policy areas for the ongoing development of devolution;
- c) the evolving relationship between the devolved administrations and Westminster, particularly in relation to the possibility of increased devolved powers (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1: Frequency of omitted devolution-related stories with UK significance in 6.30pm opt-outs and nations newspapers (n=58)

| | <i>Crime policy</i> | | <i>Devolution Process</i> | | <i>Social Policy (Health/Ed. etc.)</i> | | <i>Immigration policy</i> | | <i>Increasing Powers</i> | | <i>Transport/ Environment policy</i> | |
|---------------|---------------------|----------|---------------------------|-----------|--|----------|---------------------------|----------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|----------|
| | Opt-out | Print | Opt-out | Print | Opt-out | Print | Opt-out | Print | Opt-out | Print | Opt-out | Print |
| N. Ireland | 1 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Scotland | 2 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Wales | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 1 |
| Totals | 3 | 2 | 5 | 21 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 11 | 1 | 5 |

³⁵ Northern Ireland, *Belfast Telegraph*; Scotland: *The Scotsman*, *Scotland on Sunday*; Wales: *Western Mail* and *South Wales Echo*, *Wales on Sunday*.

³⁶ See Appendix for dates and details of Online monitoring.

Northern Ireland

Political Process

Several stories involving major differences of opinion between parties at Stormont were reported during October and November 2007. The first of these concerned the DUP's Iain Paisley Jr.'s involvement in lobbying for a private property developer engaged in a development scheme near the Giant's Causeway, which the *Belfast Telegraph* described on 10 October as "the first big policy-bust up of a fledgling devolved Assembly". The resulting controversy continued throughout October and November.

Among these stories were several which were seen as having great significance for the future of power-sharing. On 16 October, the 6.30pm *Newsline* carried stories about NI Culture Minister Edwin Poots' opposition on cost grounds to the introduction of an Irish Language Act, and on the Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie's decision to remove funding from a Loyalist community project (the former story appeared at the bottom of the Top Stories section of the BBC Politics website on the same day). In addition, the same edition of the 6.30pm news carried a report on differences of opinion between Nationalists & Unionists on a huge re-development project (including social housing) in deprived areas of Belfast.

27 October's edition of the *Belfast Telegraph* carried a number of reports on the NI government's first draft budget and its proposed legislative programme for the next few years, the Programme for Government.

On 27 November's edition, a report was aired on how 'deals' being struck between the DUP and Sinn Fein in the Executive were creating new divisions in Stormont. These were brought out in debates over the proposed NI Programme for Government, in which the UUP and SDLP voted against an outline of the power-sharing government's proposed legislative programme. The positive impact of devolution since the elections was the subject of a report in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 28 November, dealing with projections by NI's First Trust Bank of a 3% rise in NI GDP due to the return of devolution.

Crime Policy

The relationship between the Stormont assembly and Westminster was highlighted by a story on 18 October's 6.30pm news about new proposals to double the maximum sentence for carrying a knife. It was pointed out that any changes would have to wait until the middle of 2008 as new legislation on this matter could not proceed without Westminster's approval (this story appeared on the BBC Northern Ireland website, but did not include a mention of the latter issue). A similar limitation on Stormont's law-making powers in relation had been reported in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 11 October, in relation to a proposed law to allow children aged 12 to train with guns at gun clubs. Whether such a law could be introduced, it was noted, remained a decision for Westminster.

Environmental Policy

The relationship between Stormont and Westminster was addressed in a story in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 11 October, when two SDLP MLAs launched a motion in the

Assembly calling for the UK government to close down and decommission the Windscale nuclear site according to a schedule which considered Irish and Northern Ireland interests.

Scotland

Crime Policy

New legislative measures outlawing kerbcrawling which mirrored laws in countries such as Sweden (as opposed to the rest of the UK) were reported in the *Scotsman* and on BBC Scotland news on 15 October. Differences in penal policy were also highlighted by a report on the 6.30pm *Reporting Scotland* on 27 November that the SNP government would be seeking an extension of the use of non-custodial sentences in Scotland.

Immigration Policy

In the *Scotsman* on 28 October, it was reported that the Scottish Government would not be implementing all measures contained within the UK Borders Bill, which was about to pass into law. The report asked whether this would increase the threat of terrorism, along with people trafficking and illegal immigration.

Health Policy

The differences between the Scottish and English positions on health care for the elderly were highlighted by the decision by the SNP Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon (reported 19 October by the *Scotsman*) to tighten up rules on the provision of free care, following a court case.³⁷ Later, it was reported on *Reporting Scotland* on 26 November that the Scottish Government had announced a new three-year funding plan to address the problem of MRSA in hospitals, making Scotland the first part of the UK to have a full screening programme for all hospitals.

Transport and Environmental Policy

The vote by MSPs to approve plans to scrap tolls on the Forth and Tay road bridges on 15 November was reported on *Reporting Scotland* as being the focus of a debate at Holyrood on the likelihood of congestion and environmental consequences.

Increasing Powers

Significant stories regarding devolved responsibility over the seas around Scotland and North Sea Oil were reported on in late October and late November respectively. On 29 October, *Reporting Scotland* looked at the issue of Scottish fisheries and the allocation of rights to fish in them, and whether the Scottish Government should seek powers to restrict these. This was accompanied at the end of October in the *Scotsman* by a series of reports launching a campaign (“Save Our Seas”) that also lobbied for increased Scottish powers over the seas (such as extending conservation areas out to a 200 mile limit). On 26 November, *Reporting Scotland* reported on the SNP’s call for powers over oil rig health and safety to be devolved to Holyrood, and on the possibility that powers may be sought to allow oil revenues to come to Scotland rather than to the UK.

³⁷ This story was picked up by the national BBC news on television and radio, but not until 16 November.

Political Process

In the *Scotsman* on 19 October, it was reported that MSPs would receive an extra week off in October as the Scottish Parliament had run out of business for the current session. On 27 October, *Reporting Scotland* and the *Scotsman* both reported that Scottish election officials would be examined by the Scottish Affairs Committee at Westminster, following the problems with the Scottish voting system during the 2007 elections. On 1 November, *Reporting Scotland* reported that the Scottish Justice Secretary was considering allowing English jurisdiction over a Scottish air force base to allow quicker inquests into the deaths abroad of Scottish military personnel to take place. The *Scotsman* reported on 25 November that the SNP had decided to lift its ban on the possibility of future coalition talks with the Scottish Conservatives. On 29 November, the paper addressed the aftermath of the 2007 elections voting problems, noting a proposal that in future Scottish voting may be spread over several days to avoid a repeat of the problems that occurred in May.

Wales

Increasing Powers

In Wales, there were significant developments throughout October concerning the future of devolution, especially around the issue of expanded powers and the prospect of a referendum in Wales to secure expanded law-making powers for the Assembly.

The *Western Mail* reported on 18 October that the Shadow Welsh Secretary had made cautious remarks about the possibility of a referendum on a further increase in powers for the Assembly. In the same edition, a story was printed covering a row over the constitutional settlement in Wales, and the lack of anything like a Welsh Sewell Convention. Welsh First Minister Rhodri Morgan had protested against a Westminster ruling that new Assembly legislative proposals would have to be vetted before being admitted as valid. There was debate over the meaning of this “interference” for the future of devolved government in Wales. On 29 October the *Western Mail* reported remarks by Secretary of State for Wales Peter Hain that if Wales rushed into an early referendum on full law-making powers for the Assembly, the vote would be lost. This was reported on the 6.30pm *Wales Today* as a “row” between Westminster and the coalition Assembly government over the prospect of a referendum. On 26 November, the *Mail* reported Plaid’s Dafydd Wigley’s proposal for a “coalition team” of Labour and Plaid peers to be created to ensure the House of Lords could not block plans for extending WA powers.

In the same edition of the *Western Mail*, a report covered the likely make-up of the All-Wales Convention, which is designed to look at the appetite in Wales for full law-making powers, together with their likely scope, and hence to pave the way for a referendum perhaps by the next general election. This story was taken up again by the *Western Mail* on 24 November, covering suggestions by constitutional experts that the Convention should look at controversial legislative issues. The differences between Plaid and Welsh Labour on the extent of further powers, and the potential consequences for the One Wales coalition were explored in a *Western Mail* story on 31 October. This was followed two days later on 2 November by another story in the *Mail* that reported extensive disquiet within Plaid over the attitude of Welsh Labour to the prospect of a

referendum before 2011, with some Plaid AMs threatening to pull out of the governing coalition.

Education Policy

On 15 November (the day when Gordon Brown's proposals on British Jobs for British workers' were being reported – see Case Study 3) the *Western Mail* reported on how the Assembly had just gained new powers to decide on education and training provision.

Health Policy

Wales Today reported on 12 November that Welsh clinicians had sent a letter to the Assembly requesting that £20m more per year be made available for long-term medical research to keep health care in Wales in line with the standards available in England.

Social Policy

On 14 November, the relationship between Cardiff and Westminster was the subject of a report in the *Western Mail* which detailed how the Assembly's new plans for expanding affordable housing had been delayed by Whitehall for being "too wide-ranging".

Summary

Several stories emerged in October and November which could prove important both for the future direction of devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as well as for the future of the Union as such, which were not covered in the BBC's UK-wide broadcast programming. In Scotland, the prospect of increasing powers in Scotland over the seas around the Scottish coast brings the possibility of changes in responsibility for the oil industry, together with alterations to how the profits of North Sea oil are shared. In Wales, the All-Wales Convention and the debates over a referendum on the extension of law-making powers could result in another major realignment of the relationship between Westminster and Cardiff. At Stormont the Programme for Government represents a roadmap for the progress of devolution in Northern Ireland.

But at the level of specific policy, there were also significant developments which could be important for a public understanding of the current state of devolution and its future, including crime and environmental policy in Northern Ireland, and health, environmental and immigration policy in Scotland. And at the level of the everyday process of politics, the emergence and management of new differences of opinion within the Stormont Assembly, and their significance for the future, has remained unreported, despite the level of interest shown in the run-up to the 2007 elections in detailing the sectarian divisions which formed the historical background to the return of power-sharing. It is also interesting that, on the day when an England-only training policy was being discussed under the rubric of Gordon Brown's "British jobs for British workers" speech, the Welsh Assembly had just gained powers which were directly relevant to its own responsibility for formulating training policy in Wales, but which remained unreported in the UK news.

Omissions: Full List of Stories

Those stories selected as having potential UK-wide significance in terms of their meaning for devolution are indicated **in bold**.

Belfast Telegraph 10-16 October Week 1

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|--|
| 10/10/07 | Row over Ian Paisley Jr's role in lobbying for private property developer's plans for development near Giant's Causeway – "the first big policy-bust up of a fledgling devolved Assembly" |
| 10/10/07 | "Paltry" rise in budget allocation for Ulster from Westminster |
| 10/10/07 | Friends of the Earth call on Assembly to cut NI CO ₂ emissions |
| 10/10/07 | NI education minister urged to sort out teachers' strike by NI Mencap |
| 11/10/07 | Children aged 12 may train with guns: Ulster law change in prospect, but likely to be decided at Westminster |
| 11/10/07 | SDLP MLAs launch motion in Assembly calling for UK government to close down and decommission Windscale nuclear site according to a schedule which considers Irish and NI interests |
| 12/10/07 | NI Health minister announces delay in introduction of restructuring to NI NHS via setting up of new Health and Social Services Authority |
| 13/10/07 | Labour Relations Agency to manage negotiations in NI teachers' strike |
| 15/10/07 | DUP Deputy Leader Robinson seeks radical shake-up of Stormont, with less departments |
| 16/10/07 | UUP and DUP ministers in disagreement over policy on water charges |

Belfast Telegraph 27 October – 2 November Week 2

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|--|
| 27/10/07 | Stormont makes new pledges on landfill targets |
| 27/10/07 | Several stories around Stormont Draft Budget/Programme for Government |
| 29/10/07 | SDLP minister's historic speech to UUP offers cooperation |
| 29/10/07 | UUP Executive to gain new powers to endorse election candidates |
| 31/10/07 | NI Education Dept figures show 55000 excess school places in NI |
| 31/10/07 | Key figures in Ulster peace process to hold conference in May 2008 |
| 01/11/07 | Ulster party donors set to remain secret - intimidation 'is still a possibility' |
| 01/11/07 | Margaret Ritchie officially terminates €1.2 million loyalist regeneration fund |
| 01/11/07 | Stormont Education Ctte discovers extent of drain on schools' budget by compensation claims |
| 02/11/07 | Ian Paisley Jnr's role in lobbying for private property developer – row continues |
| 02/11/07 | NI Friends of the Earth criticise Environment Minister for 'dragging her heels' over implementation of EU directives |

Belfast Telegraph 10 – 16 November Week 3

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|--|
| 13/11/07 | Paisley Jnr and SF clash over cottage development |

| | |
|----------|---|
| 13/11/07 | NI local government association asks Assembly to transfer powers to councils |
| 13/11/07 | NI Education minister calls for 'zero tolerance' of bullying |
| 14/11/07 | NI teachers' union votes to reject pay offer |
| 14/11/07 | NI agriculture minister tightens rules on importation of birds in response to threat of bird flu |
| 15/11/07 | Paisley makes new overtures towards unity at launch of Dana autobiography |
| 15/11/07 | NI and Irish agriculture ministers announce new plans for cooperation on animal welfare and bluetongue controls |
| 15/11/07 | Education Department criticises teachers' strike's effects on special needs pupils |
| 16/11/07 | Stormont forks out £42m for outside consultancy advice in 2006/07 |

Belfast Telegraph 24-30 November Week 4

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|---|
| 27/11/07 | Energy Action NI budget for 2008 to be halved by Stormont Ministry of Social Development |
| 28/11/07 | Stormont Finance minister announces plans to reduce rates bills for pensioners which increased under direct rule from Westminster |
| 28/11/07 | NI mental health expert attacks Assembly's budget for mental health support |
| 28/11/07 | Assembly disagreements over Programme for Government continue |
| 28/11/07 | First Trust Bank predicts 3% rise in NI GDP due to return of devolution |
| 29/11/07 | Union writes to Stormont minister about extra pay for NI teachers to bring them into line with English colleagues |
| 30/11/07 | Community festivals to receive extra funding under Assembly's matched funding scheme |
| 30/11/07 | MLAs' retirement fund continued to increase during Stormont suspension |

The Scotsman 13-19 October Week 1

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|---|
| 13/10/07 | Separate education laws mean Scotland can show 'An Inconvenient Truth' in schools, despite English controversy |
| 14/10/07 | SNP wants to outlaw 2-for-1 deals on alcohol. Challenged by Westminster, leading to cross-border row. |
| 14/10/07 | Cross-border row over Westminster refusal to compensate Scottish farmers |
| 14/10/07 | New Bank of Scotland notes refused in Holyrood vending machines |
| 14/10/07 | Scottish Parliament comments on councils housing homeless people out of their own areas |
| 14/10/07 | David Cameron looks to Alex Salmond for an electoral model |
| 15/10/07 | Introduction of 'Prostitution (Public Places) Scotland And' criminalises |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| | kerb-crawlers in Scotland |
| 17/10/07 | Scottish universities seek GBP168m to compete with English counterparts |
| 18/10/07 | MSPs respond to House of Lord's ruling to end asbestos-related compensation |
| 18/10/07 | Westminster fails Scottish sheep farmers |
| 18/10/07 | Another fall in Scottish joblessness |
| 19/10/07 | SNP Health Secretary vows to changes laws to tighten rules on care for the elderly (although this is reported in the UK-wide news, this isn't until Nov 16th) |
| 19/10/07 | Attacks on Scottish police rise by 50%, says Justice Secretary |
| 19/10/07 | MSPs get extra week off in October as Parliament has run out of business |
| 19/10/07 | MSPs to be asked if they want better pension plans |
| | |

The Scotsman 27 Oct-2 Nov Week 2

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|---|
| | |
| 27/10/07 | Scottish election officials to face Commons grilling over election fiasco |
| 27/10/07 | Scottish universities to get £400m for major building projects |
| 28/10/07 | Alex Salmond meets Rupert Murdoch to hope to win his support |
| 28/10/07 | SNP vows to improve surgery targets by 6 weeks |
| 28/10/07 | Scottish civil servants and whistle blowing |
| 28/10/07 | Elections in Scotland should be over-seen by an independent monitor |
| 28/10/07 | Scottish Govt. not implementing UK Borders Bill – will this increase terrorism, people trafficking and illegal immigrants? |
| 29/10/07 | Should Scotland gain devolved responsibilities over the sea in order to get profits from the fishing industry? |
| 30/10/07 | Alex Salmond plans Norwegian energy link-up |
| 30/10/07 | Rivals quash SNPs plans to reduce quangos and government agencies |
| 30/10/07 | Lib Dems aim to curb tenant's right to buy council houses |
| 31/10/07 | Police cast doubt on Salmond's claim of 1,000 extra officers |
| 31/10/07 | Salmond popular but independence isn't |
| 31/10/07 | Deputy Leader of Scottish Tories proposes a 'federal' solution to UK's constitutional problems |
| 1/11/07 | MSPs banned from making a speech to Scottish Parliament after policy details leaked |
| 1/11/07 | Scottish govt. unveils plans to improve housing |
| 1/11/07 | SNP MP accuses opposition and English press of anti-Scottishness as tensions heighten over Holyrood budget |
| 1/11/07 | Microsoft boss says SNP is 'wrong' to try to fully fund Universities through public funding |
| 2/11/07 | SNP accused of breaking its promise to cut class sizes |
| 2/11/07 | MSPs should let artists lead way on environment |
| 2/11/07 | £68,000 Scots boost for Malawi businesses |

The Scotsman 10-16 November Week 3

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|---|
| 10/11/07 | MPs throw spotlight on the West Lothian Question |
| 11/11/07 | Comment Story on the 'myths' surrounding English subsidies to Scotland |
| 12/11/07 | Scots Labour's Kerr backs talks on independence poll |
| 12/11/07 | SNP 'needs another GBP 1bn' to meet pledges |
| 14/11/07 | Salmond: Scotland independent in 10 years |
| 15/11/07 | The Scottish Budget 2007: Key policy plans laid out, but will MSPs back them? |
| 15/11/07 | New rules 'threaten whole Scottish dairy industry' |
| 16/11/07 | Degrees of success for Cabinet members |
| 16/11/07 | Islanders in plea for their own government minister |
| 16/11/07 | Scot Labour accuses SNP of betraying pre-election promises in Budget |
| 16/11/07 | The Scottish Budget 2007: Opposition aims to influence spending plans |

The Scotsman 24-30 November Week 4

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|--|
| 25/11/07 | SNP lifts ban on coalition pact with the Tories |
| 25/11/07 | Scots NHS workers data files lost in the post by Scottish pensions agency |
| 29/11/07 | Scottish voting may be spread over several days to avoid repeat of May fiasco |
| 29/11/07 | Wendy Alexander drawn into Labour donor row |
| 30/11/07 | Scottish Transport spokesman forced to quit over illegal donation |

The Western Mail 13-19 October Week 1

| DATE | STORY |
|-------------|--|
| | |
| 13/10/07 | Wales Millennium Centre seeks more money from Assembly |
| 15/10/07 | First research into closure of small schools |
| 15/10/07 | Wales' economy shows growth as rest of UK slows down |
| 16/10/07 | Rural Affairs AM says foot and mouth ban lift in England will boost Wales |
| 15/10/07 | Assembly defers the need for animal transport certificates of competence until April 2008 |
| 16/10/07 | AM urges funding increase for recycling schemes |
| 16/10/07 | Welsh MP urges Westminster to pay in full for welfare packages for Welsh farmers after foot-and-mouth outbreak |
| 16/10/07 | Assembly Heritage Minister makes statement on financial uncertainty surrounding WMC |
| 17/10/07 | Wales' chief medical officer says Welsh beginning to head healthy eating messages |
| 17/10/07 | Welsh Tory Leader alleges cover-up over WMC cash crisis |
| 17/10/07 | Post Rhodri Morgan's "Bonfire of the quangos", the decision to "merge" the Welsh Development Agency, the Wales Tourist Board and Elwa with the Assembly Government is still having an impact |

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| 17/10/07 | Former quango employees cost WAG £2m per year despite not having been found proper jobs |
| 18/10/07 | Shadow Welsh Secretary adopts “wait and see” attitude to referendum on powers to increase devolved responsibilities |
| 18/10/07 | Constitutional row after it was confirmed Rhodri Morgan and other Assembly Ministers will not be able to announce new legal proposals without having them vetted by Whitehall first |
| 18/10/07 | Welsh girls outperform boys in education by up to more than 20% in the first year of secondary school, new figures show |
| 18/10/07 | AMs “annoyed” by Plaid failure to attend a scrutiny session |
| 18/10/07 | Law Lords ruling could prevent Welsh workers from claiming compensation over asbestos exposure |
| 18/10/07 | Future financial support for WMC will be coupled with efficiency improvements |
| 18/10/07 | Mental health care is “substandard” says Shadow Health Minister for Wales |
| 18/10/07 | Cost-cutting in schools is better than firing teachers |
| 18/10/07 | Unemployment in Wales falls by 3,000 between June and August 2007 |
| 19/10/07 | Schools fail to meet infant class-size guidelines |
| 19/10/07 | Drug crime hits new high in Wales as police target more offenders |
| 19/10/07 | Job cuts in probation service could result in increased murders, claims Politian |
| 19/10/07 | Recycling rates must improve, councils told |
| 19/10/07 | Commission for Equality and Human Rights comes under fire for having no Welsh on its website |
| | |

The Western Mail 27 Oct-2 Nov Week 2

| DATE | STORY |
|----------|--|
| | |
| 27/10/07 | Wales-only smack ban dismissed by Westminster |
| 27/10/07 | Plaid AM suggests Royal Family “does not reflect Wales’ radical progressive tradition” |
| 29/10/07 | Wales takes a cautious approach to PFI hospital schemes – are they missing out? |
| 29/10/07 | Areas in Wales make up half of the top ten of those with the highest proportion of people who have been on benefits for five years or more |
| 29/10/07 | An early referendum for independence for Wales would be lost, claims Hain |
| 29/10/07 | All Wales Convention (to pave way for a referendum for full law-making powers) – who will sit? |
| 30/10/07 | Peter Hain urged to step in to save jobs in Wales by Plaid |
| 30/10/07 | All of Swansea’s comprehensive schools are being assigned their own police officer |
| 31/10/07 | Plaid wants to make irresponsible lending a criminal offence |
| 31/10/07 | Plaid wants further devolution, but Labour not so keen – will coalition suffer? |
| 31/10/07 | Forecasters say Wales will be amongst worst hit by house price fall |
| 31/10/07 | Plans to change school inspection service |
| 01/11/07 | Piloting of Chartered Teacher schemes in Wales a success |
| 01/11/07 | Welsh Assembly developed Bilingual e-course in special needs for teachers |
| 01/11/07 | Costs £1,200 less to die in Wales than anywhere else in the UK |
| 01/11/07 | Bed blocking costs Welsh NHS £69m a year – not enough being done |

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| 01/11/07 | Welsh GPs getting higher % pay raise than anywhere else in UK but still don't earn as much as English ones |
| 02/11/07 | Welsh businesses failing to embrace globalisation, compared to businesses in other parts of the UK |
| 02/11/07 | Elements within Plaid Cymru threaten to pull out of coalition over the timing of a referendum on a law-making parliament. |

The Western Mail 10-16 November

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|---|
| 10/11/07 | Dafydd Wigley: Coalition at risk if Labour backtracks on spending and reforms |
| 10/11/07 | Institute for Welsh Affairs warns Assembly needs more AMs to manage any extended law-making powers |
| 12/11/07 | Research cuts could cost lives, medical experts warn Assembly |
| 13/11/07 | Health Minister releases new guidelines on preventing superbugs in hospitals |
| 14/11/07 | WAG budget will hit public services, say Tories |
| 14/11/07 | Assembly Health Minister announces development of oral health action plan for Wales |
| 14/11/07 | Health Minister denies health research funds are too low |
| 14/11/07 | Assembly affordable housing plans are delayed by Whitehall for being 'too wide-ranging' |
| 15/11/07 | New head of Estyn (Welsh Ofsted) appointed |
| 15/11/07 | Assembly gains new powers over FE and training |
| 15/11/07 | Local government heads condemn Assembly's funding settlement for councils |
| 16/11/07 | RAC Foundation judges Welsh roads 'worst in EU' |
| 16/11/07 | Welsh teachers may strike, say unions, if Assembly's local government budget causes education cuts |

The Western Mail 24-30 November

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|---|
| 26/11/07 | Dafydd Wigley: A "coalition team" of Labour and Plaid peers should be created to ensure the Lords does not block Welsh lawmaking plans |
| 26/11/07 | Welsh Lib-Dems delay selection of European candidates after women fail to apply |
| 26/11/07 | Assembly grants help create Welsh multi-university neuroscience academy |
| 27/11/07 | 'Lack of guts' and the memory of Merthyr debacle cited as a reason Plaid Cymru gave up chance to lead May coalition |
| 27/11/07 | Labour AM calls for a probe into the results of Assembly elections after Plaid MPs' misuse of cash |
| 27/11/07 | Auditor General for Wales judges rural management funding scheme (Tir Gofal) to have been success so far |
| 27/11/07 | Farmers call on the Assembly to pay compensation to livestock farmers |

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|-----------------|---|
| | following foot-and-mouth outbreak |
| 29/11/07 | Law-Making Powers: Hain denies he would block any further transfer of power to Assembly |
| 29/11/07 | Welsh CBI warns high proportion of population with no qualifications 'puts Welsh economy at risk' |
| 29/11/07 | Fishing group meets AMs to protest against banning of ancient fishing technique |
| 30/11/07 | More funds for Wales Mental Health Primary Care Network |
| 30/11/07 | Assembly under fire from Welsh Councils over funding for 'pet projects' |
| 30/11/07 | National Botanic Garden of Wales seeks further funding from Assembly |

BBC 6.30pm Opt-Outs

*NORTHERN IRELAND*³⁸

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|---|
| | |
| 15/10/07 | Striking classroom assistants to return to work following strike over pay |
| 16/10/07 | NI Executive – rows over loyalist funding and Irish Language Act |
| 16/10/07 | Nationalists & Unionists have different views on huge re-development project (including social housing) in deprived Belfast areas |
| 17/10/07 | Fingerprint school dinner system |
| 18/10/07 | Ministers meeting – community development project axing Loyalist funding independent report into water charges |
| 18/10/07 | Tougher sentences for knife crime introduced by govt. but may have to wait for next Summer before change as NI at mercy of Westminster |
| 18/10/07 | Pathways to work scheme for lone parents |
| 19/10/07 | Ministers meeting controversy over Loyalist funding |
| 14/11/07 | Classroom assistants strike – how will schools cope? |
| 14/11/07 | Row over ministerial comments on causeway development in private sector |
| 26/11/07 | Changes in school system & comments on striking classroom assistants |
| 26/11/07 | Jobs and urban regeneration projects |
| 27/11/07 | Rates package unveiled – benefits for pensioners |
| 27/11/07 | Divisions in Stormont over ‘Programme For Government’ |
| 27/11/07 | Classroom Assistant strikes continue |
| 28/11/07 | Research facility cancer research |
| 28/11/07 | Northern Ireland executive comments on new “Maze” stadium |
| 30/11/07 | Union representing class assistants vote to accept pay deal |
| 30/11/07 | Paisley & McGuinness to make trip to USA to get investments |
| | |

³⁸ Programmes for Week 2 (27 October – 2 November) not available.

SCOTLAND

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|--|
| | |
| 15/10/07 | Scottish Govt introduces legislation to criminalise kerb-crawlers as well as prostitutes |
| 17/10/07 | Free care for elderly threatened by new Court legislation – should councils have to fund private care? |
| 17/10/07 | Farmers petition Scottish Govt for compensation over foot and mouth in England |
| 29/10/07 | Report on treatment of people with autism by other people – bullying, police etc. |
| 30/10/07 | MP asking for legislation to protect people from damage to houses caused by neighbouring properties |
| 31/10/07 | Scottish Govt. plans for tackling housing shortage – new council houses but not enough to meet need |
| 31/10/07 | Study suggests people voted for SNP because they like Salmond and party, not independence |
| 1/11/07 | Scotland thinking about handing over part of country to England – something to do with coroners investigating Iraq deaths |
| 1/11/07 | Opposition says SNP have backed down over class size promises |
| 1/11/07 | Head teachers want better pay – pay doesn't compare to work involved |
| 1/11/07 | Are SNP back-tracking on pledge to cut class sizes and improve numbers of police? |
| 2/11/07 | Alex Salmond proposes a Winter Festival of Scottish Culture |
| 2/11/07 | Scottish gov. rules out possibility of English coroner issues |
| 12/11/07 | Commonwealth Games – Alex Salmond goes home |
| 12/11/07 | ADHD – use of drugs on children according to Quality Improvement Scotland and Health boards in Scotland |
| 12/11/07 | SNP confirms it will not fund 1,000 new police officers |
| 12/11/07 | Food poisoning test kit developed by Scottish scientists with funding from Scottish Enterprise |
| 12/11/07 | Badger baiting – 50 reports in Scotland each year |
| 14/11/07 | Company to be set up to organise Commonwealth Games, Alex Salmond tells Parliament |
| 15/11/07 | SNP budget fallout (failing to wipe out student debt etc.) |
| 15/11/07 | Legislation to abolish tolls on 2 bridges has passed first Parliamentary hurdle – expected to become law next year (2008) |
| 26/11/07 | Scottish party plans to tackle MRSA – first part of UK to screen all hospitals |
| 26/11/07 | SNP says Scotland should be in charge of oil and its revenues, rather than Westminster |
| 27/11/07 | St. Andrew's celebrations – is this a sign of growing Scottish pride? |
| 27/11/07 | Waiting times cut in NHS hospitals in Scotland |
| 27/11/07 | Change to Scottish exams in Higher English |
| 27/11/07 | Prison sentencing – new Scottish guidelines to increase non-custodial sentencing |
| 29/11/07 | Asbestos compensation law in Scotland overturned by House of Lords |

| | |
|----------|---|
| 29/11/07 | Child welfare – too many at risk 56,000 referred to this year |
| 29/11/07 | New Scottish legislation being drawn up to screen foreign medical workers |
| 30/11/07 | Poor hand-writing – consideration of allowing schoolchildren to type in exams |
| | |

WALES

| DATE | STORY |
|-----------------|--|
| | |
| 16/10/07 | Health protests – future of hospitals in Mid and North Wales (report mentions Assembly elections) |
| 17/10/07 | Assembly Government to consider giving Millennium Centre more money |
| 26/10/07 | Cancer patient surgery is cancelled – issues in NHS Trusts in Wales |
| 29/10/07 | Autism – new research done in Wales by National Autism Society |
| 29/10/07 | Row between Welsh Assembly & Westminster over referendum on full law-making powers |
| 29/10/07 | Fire services re-organisation in Swansea area |
| 31/10/07 | Welsh Assembly plans to complete coastal path around Wales |
| 1/11/07 | Bed blocking – council funding row |
| 12/11/07 | Assembly needs to spend £20m more per year to keep up with England and stop Welsh patients missing out, say 30 medical clinicians in letter to Assembly |
| 16/11/07 | Plaid not sure they should have backed a military training camp |
| 23/11/07 | New Welsh Assembly figures on drinking |
| 27/11/07 | Divisions in care home allowance depending on where you live |
| 27/11/07 | Campaigners lobby Assembly over facilities for disabled children |
| 28/11/07 | Poor ambulance service in Wales |
| 29/11/07 | Welsh Botanic gardens want more money from assembly as they did for Millennium Centre – should they? |
| 30/11/07 | Welsh Health Service failing on cleanliness, patient privacy etc. |
| 30/11/07 | Welsh Assembly initiative on being Green |
| 30/11/07 | Pay rise row of party whips (Rhodri Morgan) |
| | |

9. Devolution Online: The BBC Website as an Information Source

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to test the utility of the BBC website – and the web in general – as a source of information about UK devolution. Our concern here was not so much the content of websites, but what was easily available to reasonably well informed young citizens fairly used to using the internet.

Four focus groups involving six to eight people were carried out in December 2007 and January 2008. Each group was asked to individually complete a questionnaire about devolved issues by looking for the answers on various parts of the internet. This was followed by a group discussion covering their user experiences of the various sources of information they had employed to answer the questions. The participants were all either Masters or BA students at Cardiff University studying either journalism or politics (see Appendix for breakdown of groups).

To complete the questionnaire the groups were asked to only use specific parts of the internet to find answers. While some were asked to use only BBC websites (BBC only) others could use any BBC site plus any links to other sites. Once at a linked site, however, they were not allowed to move to another part of the web (BBC+1). The remaining participants could use the entire internet (www). The aim was to compare online user experience across BBC and external web sources.

The groups were given 30-40 minutes to complete the task, followed a 30 minute discussion of user experiences. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in the Appendix.

Questionnaire results

The questionnaire consisted of ten questions, and in total the participants were required to find 31 separate pieces of information. For each question the participant had to fill in the answer and also to note down the URL of where they found it. Some questions were one word answers, for example, “How many elected members are there for the National Assembly of Wales?” Other questions required one or two sentences of explanation, for example, “What is the 'West Lothian Question?'”.

The questions were based on information the research team felt would be useful for citizens to know with regard to how devolved government functions and what practical differences devolution was making in the various nations.

Before starting the participants were asked to rate themselves on a scale of one to five of how badly or well informed they were about politics, one being the least informed and five being the most well informed. One person rated themselves as two, everyone else rated themselves as 3 or 4 with two people rating themselves at five. Even with 40 minutes, few participants managed to complete all the questions with some only managing three or four.

Most participants searched on key words either putting in a country name or “devolution” or combinations such as “schools+inspections+wales”. Some people also

put in whole questions such as “What is the West Lothian Question?” which did bring up the answer. A few people started by going to specific sites that they thought may contain the answers and working out from there.

The most notable result was that there was no discernable difference in either accuracy or amount of information between the three groups who could search solely the BBC, BBC+ or the whole web. While users did make a number of critical comments about the BBC website, this finding suggests that information on the site appears to be at least as comprehensive as other easily available sources of information about devolution.

Certain types of information seemed easier to find than others. Simple numerical questions - such as the number of elected members to the various bodies - presented few difficulties for most participants and everyone except one person who answered got the question right. Questions with more obvious search words such as “West Lothian” or “Ofsted” also seemed to turn up answers more readily.

However, complex questions – for example about how the voting system worked in the three nations – proved rather more difficult. The groups were asked to find out if the voting system in each country was by proportional representation, first-past-the-post or a mixture of both. Most respondents had a stab at answering some of this question but only a tiny number got all three countries right. In discussions afterwards people complained about being confused by terminology which assumed a familiarity with voting systems that they did not possess.

Discussion of findings

The BBC website

The groups were asked questions about what they had found easy or difficult, the quality of the information they had found, and the relative merits of various websites. Although there were differences between participants in terms of prior knowledge of devolution, the following themes were raised in all the groups and were often returned to several times during discussions.

Coverage of Scotland and Wales was deemed better than for Northern Ireland. One respondent who used BBC+1 found all his Welsh answers within the BBC site and did not need to use any links. All four groups stated that Northern Ireland was the most difficult country to find out information about – both on the BBC and the Northern Ireland government sites.

CBBC’s *Newsround* site was praised by one group in particular as a source of clear, comprehensible information. The *Action Network* site was brought up by two of the groups as a good place to find concise factual rundowns of issues. It was seen as slightly “biased” on occasions but participants all seemed to understand the rationale behind the site and factored it into their answers.

The question about Ofsted brought up praise for education coverage for all the nations. One participant called it “very, very good”. Another said:

... quite a good page on all different aspects of school inspections and the way that the school system works and they have one for Wales and one for Scotland which was really useful.

Those using the whole web found the BBC at times came up when they ‘googled’ questions, not as the first hit but generally as the third or fourth. When this happened, participants, especially the overseas students, would go straight to the BBC rather than the first hit as they felt they would have more chance of finding answers in the BBC site.

However, there were a few major concerns about information retrieval on the BBC website. The main complaint was that the search facility brought up a number of old articles and participants found it hard to establish whether the information was still current. For example, one group member said:

It kept throwing up answers from like 1997 and you didn’t know if they were still true or not.

No one in the group found any facility for searching in chronological order or in fact, any advanced type of search at all. As one group explained:

A.. When you search the whole of the BBC I kept getting stuff about the Welsh assembly and the Scottish government but it was about five years old and I was like, how can I get up to date information and there didn’t seem to be a search...

B. Yeah, like 2001 information.

A. Yeah, so I’d be like – this is clearly out of date now. And they’d come up at the top especially when it was, like, about Welsh students or like the Scottish government, at the top you’d get like Scottish government, devolution blah, blah, blah, 2001. And well, that’s not a lot of use.

Even when participants searched with a date as a key word, they complained that it still returned old articles, many of which dated from when the devolved institutions first came into being. Respondents were thus unable to verify that the situation was still the same in 2007 or 2008.

People also complained that, when they searched the BBC site, there was *too much* and, without the facility of filtering search results (e.g. by date), they spent large amounts of time trawling through large numbers of hits to find information. As one participant put it:

I find that generally and today when we were doing this exercise - searching through the BBC website can be like wading through treacle.

All groups said they ran out of time for the task, largely because they had to read long articles in an attempt to glean the particular answer they were after. People suggested it

would be helpful if the search could (like Google) highlight the key words in the article, as this would save having to read a lot of text to find the relevant information. As one group discussed:

A. *There was a page on the Welsh Assembly on the BBC and I thought 'ah, this will be where it all is'. It was all about 'your views' and the building and art in the Assembly - nothing about the actual people who work in the Assembly though. I was, like, searching in all the little sections about who works there and how many people work there and I couldn't find anything... And that was a dedicated page to the Welsh Assembly on the BBC news page and yeah I was, it was a load of teenagers going 'if I was an AM I would make..' you know.*

B. *There was an eleven year old – what would you do to combat terrorism? 'Well I'd make everyone happy'*

A. *Yeah,*

B. *More concerned with random things like the artwork rather than the basic facts.*

A. *As if it's trying to justify its existence.*

Also a lot of the articles, being 'news of the day', were about the political process. For example in a discussion about Northern Ireland one group member summed it up as:

There's a lot of news coverage of like the 'Troubles' and the back and forth and a time line of the development but no kind of facts on, you know, voting systems or things like that.

All four groups expressed concern that most of the coverage presumed a prior knowledge by the reader, of the issues and terminology. One participant described how the web articles:

...talk around the subject without actually answering it, if that makes sense. They'd be relying on me to actually know the subject in depth.

In sum, the groups found a lot of the answers to the questionnaire using BBC sites and in many cases found the BBC more helpful than the rest of the web. But they also found the search facility to be a rather blunt instrument, and found it difficult to establish the current picture with respect to devolution.

Non-BBC sites

The external links provided on the BBC sites received a mixed reaction. Some found these useful, with one person saying as soon as you got to one decent website you could use that for a lot of the information. Others found the links unhelpful but acknowledged

that this was not really the BBC's fault as often the links were to the most logical site – for example the Scottish Parliament. Some found there were very few links – but this was usually due to the age of the articles searches brought up.

The various devolved administrations' official websites came in for a lot of criticism. The Welsh site was regarded as the most useful. The Scottish Parliament site was brought up as an example of a bad site by two groups, who complained that it was difficult to find something as basic as the number of SMPs. One respondent found it “bafflingly difficult”, gave up and eventually found the answer on the BBC website. Another found herself having to count individually from a list of members' names, before eventually giving up and ‘googling’ the answer instead. All four groups singled out the Northern Ireland Assembly site as the worst saying it looked “old-fashioned” and that information was hard to find using it.

Wikipedia was often used by those with access to the whole web, saying it was often the most concise and was useful as a starting point even if participants were wary of completely trusting the veracity of information. Often Wikipedia came up first in searches.

Online newspaper sites were found to be useful when they came up in web searches. *The Telegraph* was mentioned in three groups as a good source with clear and concise fact files, even though participants were aware of the paper's political stance. *The Guardian* and *The Independent* were also cited by one group.

Summary

Generally people found the BBC excellent for news coverage, and the BBC site clearly stands up well in comparison with other sources or information about devolution. One participant reflects this saying he always uses it to find out what is happening in Wales. Where it falls down is looking for facts that are not currently in the news. As one person put it:

If you want it for a political research point of view it's not a very good site. But if you are looking generally, you know, for issues of the day then I think it is.

There were also complaints about the lack of a more sophisticated search engine with the ability to filter by date; articles containing more rhetoric than facts; and the assumption of a prior knowledge of devolution issues. There was a consistent observation voiced by all the groups that Northern Ireland was the least well served nation.

However, many of these problems pertain not just to the BBC but are applicable to the internet in general. Indeed, some participants found it more difficult to find the answers within the allotted time when they ‘googled’ the entire web than did those participants who used the BBC site only.

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11. Appendix

A. Dates of Sample

Election Period

01 March 2007 – 25 May 2007

General Sample

01 October 2007 – 30 November (9 weeks)

Dipstick (four weeks):

13 October – 19 October

27 October – 2 November

10 November – 16 November

24 November – 30 November

B. Outlets:

Election sample

BBC One O'Clock News
BBC 6 O'Clock News
BBC Ten O'Clock News
BBC News Saturday Evening
BBC News Sunday Evening
BBC Online
Five Live Phone-In
Newsnight
Politics Show
Today
Radio 4 6pm News
World At One

General Sample

BBC One O'Clock News
BBC 6 O'Clock News
BBC Ten O'Clock News
BBC News 24 (5-6pm weekdays, 6-7pm weekends)
BBC News Saturday Evening
BBC News Sunday Evening
BBC Online
Newsnight
PM
Politics Show
Radio 4 6pm News
Today
Victoria Derbyshire
World At One

Channel 4 News
ITV News
Sky News (5-6pm weekdays, 6-7pm weekends)

C. Online Monitoring

We monitored stories available on BBC Online's UK and Politics sites at 5pm each weekday during the four weeks of the October-November sample period. To make the analysis manageable, we separated the front page of each site into 'above the fold' and 'below the fold' sections, separated by the 'Features, Views, Analysis' content bar. Only the stories 'above the fold' were assigned a 'running order' and coded (see screenshot below), as below this section, links are included to the Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales areas of the site. As we were interested in the presence of devolution in the UK context, it was logical to disregard this part of the website.

UK
Last Updated: Friday, 9 November 2007, 10:15 GMT



Tide fears recede as surge passes 1

Fears of widespread flooding in East Anglia diminish while surge tides move towards the Kent coast.

- In pictures: Fears of flooding
- The threat to England and Wales

WATCH Flood preparations

OTHER TOP STORIES

- ▶ Meredith accused to be remanded 4
- ▶ UK set for military space launch 5
- ▶ Men targeted for chlamydia tests 6
- ▶ House revival scheme 'high risk' 7
- ▶ BAE inquiry decision challenged 8
- ▶ Potter books 'UK's most re-read' 9
- ▶ Apple iPhone fever begins to grow 10

ALSO IN THE NEWS



Landlord says he will not be dictated to over 'Hitler' pub sign 11

SPORT HEADLINES

Scotland awaits 2014 Games result 12

▶ Football: Everton beat Nuremberg 13



Youth charged over bonfire death 2

Police charge a 13-year-old boy with murdering a man whose body was found in the embers of a bonfire.



Rising speed penalties pondered 3

The Department for Transport is to consider proposals to increase the penalties for speeding drivers.

FEATURES, VIEWS, ANALYSIS



Pienaar's view 15

John Pienaar on why Gordon Brown is not grinning any more.



Fuel for thought 16

Which firms lose and which ones gain from surging pump prices?



'Miracle babies' 17

UK-based preacher told women trafficked children were theirs

D. Definition of ‘Unit’ for Analytical Purposes

For the purposes of coding, news programmes in the general sample, election sample and case studies were divided up into the following units, with one coding sheet being filled out per unit.

Anchor only – report presented by presenter in studio. Item is either full stand alone report or is at least 30 seconds long (may include images).

Reporter studio package – reporter in studio introduces pre-recorded report.

Anchor + package – pre-recorded report introduced by presenter.

Studio interview – anchor interviews one respondent.

Reporter/anchor 2-way – reporter in studio or on location and presenter discuss story.

Studio discussion – presenter and two or more respondents in discussion.

Reporter package on location – reporter on location introduces pre-recorded report.

DONUT – Reporter on location presents package, followed *directly* by two-way with presenter.

E. Focus Groups

Breakdown of groups

Tuesday 2007 group:

The Tuesday 2007 group consisted of 6 people all of whom were 2nd year students on the BA in Journalism, Film and Media at School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies (JOMEC), Cardiff University. The group was made up of 4 British women and two British men.

For the online task they were divided into:

2 x BBC only

2 x BBC+1

2 x www

Wednesday 2007 group:

The Wednesday 2007 group consisted of 7 people all of whom were students on the Diploma in Journalism at School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies (JOMEC), Cardiff University. The group was made up of seven British men.

For the online task they were divided into:

3 x BBC only

2 x BBC+1

2 x www

Thursday 2007 group:

The Thursday 2007 group consisted of 8 people all of whom were students on the MA in International Journalism at School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies (JOMEC), Cardiff University. The group was made up of one French Canadian woman, one Zambian woman, one Greek woman, two Indian women, two Chinese women and one Italian man.

For the online task they were divided into:

3 x BBC only

3 x BBC+1

2 x www

Wednesday 2008 group:

The Wednesday 2008 group consisted of 6 people, 3 of whom were students on the MA in Journalism Studies at the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies (JOMEC), Cardiff University and three were third year BA politics students. The group was made up of 5 British and one American woman.

For the online task they were divided into:

2 x BBC only

2 x BBC+1

2 x www

F. Sample Focus Groups Questionnaire

Number:
 Sex:
 Nationality:
 Course:
 Year of study:
 How well informed would you say you are about politics?
 1 2 3 4 5
 (Circle one – 1 being badly informed and 5 being well informed)

BBC only
 BBC + 1
 WWW

Nations Impartiality Review Devolution on the Internet – Focus Groups December 2007

REMEMBER – please include on this sheet the URL(s) of the webpage where you got the information you used in writing your answer.

1. How many elected members are there in the

| | No. | URL |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|
| a. National Assembly of Wales | | |
| b. Northern Ireland Assembly | | |
| c. Scottish Parliament | | |

2. What kind of voting systems are used for elections to these bodies? Is it a) proportional representation (PR), b) 'first past the post' as in Westminster, or c) a mix?

| | A | B | C | URL |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|-----|
| To the National Assembly of Wales | | | | |
| To the Northern Ireland Assembly | | | | |
| To the Scottish Parliament | | | | |

3. a) What is the 'West Lothian Question'?

Answer:

URL:

b) Can you describe the position that the UK Conservative party has recently taken on the West Lothian Question?

| |
|---------|
| Answer: |
| URL: |

4. What different tax-raising powers are possessed by the individual devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland?

| |
|----------------------|
| Scotland: |
| Scotland URL: |
| Wales: |
| Wales URL: |
| Northern Ireland: |
| Northern Ireland URL |

5. OFSTED is the government agency responsible for carrying out inspections of schools in England. What are the equivalent bodies in Wales and Scotland? Do they provide league tables for Welsh and Scottish schools in the same way that OFSTED does for English schools?

| |
|---------------|
| Wales: |
| Wales URL: |
| Scotland: |
| Scotland URL: |

6. Although powers have been devolved to the Scottish parliament, Scotland remains part of the United Kingdom. Could the Scottish Government actually make Scotland a fully independent nation? If so, how? If not, why not?

Answer:

URL:

7. Since devolution, how might life for a Welsh student studying at a Welsh University be different from life for a Welsh student studying at an English university?

Answer:

URL:

8. What are primary and secondary legislative competences? Do the Welsh Assembly Government, Northern Ireland Assembly Government, and Scottish Government all possess both?

Answers:

URL/s:

9. Which of the following policy areas are:

- a. reserved to the UK parliament
- b. devolved powers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- c. devolved powers in Scotland only

Care for the elderly
 Decisions on levels of defence spending
 Varying rates of income tax
 Building prisons
 Provision of pre-school education

| A | B | C | URL |
|---|---|---|-----|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

10. How much did the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament cost to build? How many millions were both institutions over budget?

| |
|-----------------|
| Welsh costs: |
| URL/s: |
| Scottish costs: |
| URL/s: |

G. Inter-coder reliability statistics

General Sample

| Question | Percentage of accuracy (%) |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | |
| TV/radio/online | 100 |
| Source | 100 |
| Date | 100 |
| Item number | 100 |
| Story subject | 90 |
| Story location | 93 |
| Reporter location | 98 |
| Devolved political focus | 98 |
| Countries covered | 93 |
| Political sources | 90 |
| Devolved powers referred to | 100 |
| Non-devolved powers referred to | 98 |
| Inaccuracies | 98 |
| Comparisons | 100 |
| Directs you to other sources of info. | 100 |

Election Sample

| Question | Percentage of accuracy (%) |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | |
| Source | 100 |
| Date | 100 |
| Item number | 92 |
| Type of news item | 94 |
| Story subject | 91 |
| Story location | 94 |
| Reporter location | 90 |
| Elections covered | 98 |
| Political sources | 96 |
| Devolved powers referred to | 84 |
| Non-devolved powers referred to | 97 |
| Inaccuracies | 100 |
| Comparisons across nations | 96 |
| Directs you to other sources of info. | 98 |
| | |