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Public disorder in Australia between 1985 and 1989 with particular reference to immigration and multiculturalism

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Public disorder in Australia between 1985 and 1989 with particular reference to immigration and multiculturalism

Abstract

Considerable concern has been expressed from time to time about the impact of immigration on the social cohesion of Australian society. A particular claim that surfaced in the nineteen-eighties was that prevailing levels of Asian immigration would create increased social tensions and possibly inter-communal violence on a scale not experienced in Australia before. Views of this kind came to public attention in 1984 with the much publicised interventions by Geoffrey Blainey, in his Warrnambool speech, and in the book All for Australia, published later that year. (Blainey, 1984)

In spite of the belief or perception in some quarters that immigration had already or was about to generate overt social conflict, very little scholarly or academic research has ever been conducted into these questions in Australia. There are, to be sure, a number of valuable surveys of attitudes, including attitudes to immigration, immigrants and Asian immigrants in particular—see literature review in chapter 2. Such data does not however deal with actual behaviour or with the dynamics of inter-communal relationships. Similarly while levels of violence have attracted considerable attention—including the question of racist violence, currently being examined by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission—there are as yet no reliable indicators of the scale, character and causation of behaviour of this kind.

As a result of this dearth of information, it is no exaggeration to say that public policy debate on immigration, multiculturalism and social cohesion takes place in an information vacuum. Beliefs are rehearsed, anecdotes re-counted and rhetoric liberally dispensed without much reference to actual social trends or to evidence. This state of affairs has adversely affected the capacity of policy makers to respond to the issues raised.
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with Particular Reference to
Immigration and Multiculturalism

HOLTON
Public Disorder in Australia between 1985 and 1989 with Particular Reference to Immigration & Multiculturalism

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Considerable concern has been expressed from time to time about the impact of immigration on the social cohesion of Australian society. A particular claim that surfaced in the nineteen-eighties was that prevailing levels of Asian immigration would create increased social tensions and possibly inter-communal violence on a scale not experienced in Australia before. Views of this kind came to public attention in 1984 with the much publicised interventions by Geoffrey Blainey, in his Warrnambool speech, and in the book All for Australia, published later that year. (Blainey, 1984)

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As a result of this dearth of information, it is no exaggeration to say that public policy debate on immigration, multiculturalism and social cohesion takes place in an information vacuum. Beliefs are rehearsed, anecdotes re-counted and rhetoric liberally dispensed without much reference to actual social trends or to evidence. This state of affairs has adversely affected the capacity of policy makers to respond to the issues raised.

Objectives of the Present Research Project

As a result of this serious lack of information the present research was commissioned with the following research objectives:-

(i) to determine levels and types of public disorder, including the proportion of disorders involving ethnicity, immigrant status and race.
(ii) to analyse the character and timing of public disorders involving Asian immigration as an issue.

(iii) to analyse the issues of public disorders involving Asian immigration, including the impact of major public speeches by politicians and academics on disorder.

(iv) to discover whether Asian immigration threatens public disorder, or whether there are alternative and more powerful explanations of disorderliness.

As a result of these research objectives, the study has also set itself the following objectives concerning public policy formulation and implementation:

(1) to contribute to the general policy debate about multiculturalism as a policy of positive social cohesion. The research is designed to enable policy-makers to distinguish between myth and reality with respect to the allegedly adverse relationship between immigration and social cohesion.

(2) to contribute to community relations policies by identifying flash-points involving ethnic communities, and targeting policy responses to real rather than imagined problems and tensions.

I should like to thank Elizabeth Birkett, Rosario Lampugnani and Jill Litster for their painstaking analysis of newspaper reports upon which this survey is based. I should also like to thank Kerrin Croft for the speed and accuracy shown in word-processing the manuscript under pressure of severe time-lines.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The Challenge of Blainey

A number of commentators have linked Australia's immigration policies with the potential for social disorder. Birrell and Birrell, writing in 1981, for example, diagnosed a deterioration in the hitherto 'amicable relations between Australia's ethnic groups' (p. 141). At a time of increasing Asian immigration and rising unemployment, they pointed to evidence of 'increasing numbers of press reports of hostile acts against ethnic members...[and]...sporadic outbreaks of intergroup conflicts'. From this they concluded that 'Australia does have the potential for open ethnic conflict, even if it has not experienced it to date, and may be able to avoid it altogether' (p. 159).

It was nonetheless Geoffrey Blainey's intervention in 1984 which prompted the widest public debate on this issue. In contrast with the Birrells' more cautious comments, Blainey in a much-quoted speech at Warrnambool on 17th March and in his book All for Australia (1984) launched a more wholesale attack on immigration policy in general and Asian immigration in particular. This intervention alone generated a further set of commentaries (see for example Milne & Shergold 1984, Lewins 1987). It also became a reference point in subsequent political contributions to the debate on Asian immigration, such as John Howard's much publicised statements in 1988 on the need for a discriminatory immigration policy. It is therefore worthwhile to scrutinise the arguments advanced by Blainey in some depth.

One initial problem with Blainey's discussion of immigration and multiculturalism is the mixture of academic scholarship and emotive rhetoric it contains. While advancing a number of historical and sociological propositions elaborated with evidence in a typically academic idiom, Blainey also has recourse to more passionate rhetoric in his descriptions of Asian immigration and settlement, combining pathos with moral indignation. Asian immigration is described not only as 'exotic' (p. 8) but as
a process whereby areas became ‘submerged by newcomers’ (p. 121) and neighbourhoods get ‘taken over’ (p. 96) in spite of a ‘fog of silence’ (p. 120) from official circles. Asians not only take jobs but ‘snatch’ (p. 138) them. He also refers to the theme of ‘war and peace in the schoolroom’ (p. 135) and to classroom divisions akin to the ‘Berlin Wall’ (ibid).

Abstracting from the context of Blainey’s appeals to pathos and moral indignation, his argument is founded on the following propositions:-

1. There are economic limits to the capacity of Australia to absorb new migrants, limits set by levels of unemployment.

2. When unemployment rises, social tensions will arise because immigrants compete with resident Australians for jobs especially in the unskilled labour market.

3. Asian immigration in the early 1980s has occurred at a time of rising unemployment, and this is already creating tensions.

4. Social tensions are also being generated by the tendency for Asians to concentrate in particular neighbourhoods. The mechanism creating tension centres on the ‘intrusion’ of unfamiliar changes into the worlds of ‘old Australians’ from a working-class background, notably ‘the unskilled man’ (p. 129).

5. Social tensions arising from unemployment combine with social tensions arising over neighbourhood settlement in particular.

6. Asian immigration is creating more social tensions than European immigration in the 1950s and 1960s because ‘the newcomers culture [then] was not so different, and the ghettos (sic!) were neither as tight nor as large’. However such tensions need not take the form of riots but may show up ‘in cruelty to children in the schoolyard’ (G. Blainey, cited in The Age, 19.3.1984).

7. A key component of cultural difference is that Asian migrants come from predominantly non-democratic ‘third world backgrounds’.

8. Asian immigration has taken place without public consent, and in opposition to ‘public opinion’.

9. Multicultural societies tend to fail and the human cost of failure has been high.

In addition to these 9 propositions, Blainey also draws attention to a ‘powerless’ and ‘neglected’ group in the population namely the ‘old Australians’. He refers autobiographically to his youth in a dairying town which ‘to my incomplete
knowledge had not one foreigner' (p. 18). While this isolationist world has 'vanished' he emphasises that many 'old Australians' are hostile to the changes involved in Asian immigration. Although claiming on the basis of undisclosed evidence that 'many ... are frightened to say what they think' (p. 120) he also cites evidence from correspondents who are not apparently frightened to say what they think indicating concern. The unsubstantiated implication is that this 'old Australian' group constitute the mainstream of public opinion.

The apparatus of Blainey's argument has attracted widespread attention, too voluminous to summarise here. One of the key problems with it is the treatment of Asians as a homogeneous group of unskilled, poorly educated and culturally different from the rest of the population. These assumptions simply do not hold up: Blainey uses the category Asian with little regard for its indiscriminate inclusion of Middle Eastern as well as South Eastern and Eastern Asians. The homogeneity and cultural difference thesis has also been undermined by Hassan and Tan (1985) and by Jayasuriya (1989). Asian migrants include many skilled educated and business migrants. The ranks of Asian migrants also include many Christians and many with knowledge of democratic institutions (e.g. Singapore, Hong Kong, India) or who are fleeing from oppression precisely because they want to live in a democratic context.

Most commentators would accept proposition 1 that there are economic limits to the absorption of new migrants, but the remaining 8 propositions remain more controversial for the following reasons:-

(a) it is not clear that increased unemployment creates more intense job competition between Asians and resident Australians because:-

(i) Asians especially Indo-Chinese have taken the brunt of unemployment rather than Australian residents. Unemployment among Vietnamese has been two or three times higher than the national average during the 1980s.

(ii) labour markets are imperfect and geographically segmented such that job competition is not perceived as a zero-sum game. In other words Asians do not invariably take jobs that others want. They are employed either in areas of labour shortage (i.e. unskilled casual or shift work) or in some cases in niches created by the presence of Asian migrants (e.g. small business serving Asian communities).
(iii) employers limit the proportion of Indo-Chinese in particular workplaces to avoid tensions.

(b) While the Asian immigration of the early 1980s occurred at a period of worsening unemployment, the post-1984 period has seen a lessening of unemployment and a decline in the rate of growth of Asian and especially Indo-Chinese immigrants. These alternative trends were not taken into account in Blainey's scenario.

(c) There is very little systematic evidence on levels of social tension and overt disorder over Asian immigration, but what there is tends to discount or circumscribe the assumption of growing levels of overt collective violence (see Holton and Fletcher, 1988). There is however evidence of racist violence, often of a politically motivated kind rather than on the part of communities.

(d) It is not clear that 'old Australian' conceptions of neighbourhood are so powerful or sacred as Blainey supposes. It is certainly true that other commentators have supported Blainey's assertion about the links between immigration, neighbourhood change and social cohesion. (See for example the letter of the demographer Charles Price to the Canberra Times, 17.5.1984.) However no systematic evidence has ever been assembled in Australia to substantiate this argument.

(e) It is true that certain Asian groups notably Vietnamese have produced high levels of residential concentration (Hugo 1989), but even where they have this has not been to the exclusion of other groups. These are not ghettos in the sense of Harlem or Watts.

(f) Public opinion is not so clearly against Asian immigration as Blainey believes. It is true that some opinion polls have found considerable evidence of opposition to Asian immigration. (For a review of polls conducted in 1988 at the time of John Howard's immigration speech see The Age, 10.8.1988). On the other hand such polls also report a general opposition to all types of immigration. Resistance to immigration is not confined to anti-Asian opinion. The analysis is further complicated by data in the recent report of the national survey Issues in Multicultural Australia (Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989b). This found a much higher rate of tolerance of and welcome for Asians than many had previously supposed. Thus 58.4% of a large national sample welcomed Asians either as family members, friends, next-door neighbours and workmates, while
only 26.1% would keep Asians out of Australia or limit their entry to visitors' permits. This latter figure clearly represents a significant minority, but it is still a minority.

(g) Multi-cultural societies have a more varied chance of success than Blainey believes. His analysis fails to consider the importance of democratic politics as a pre-condition for the success of multicultural societies. The failure of South Africa, Fiji and Malaysia—cited by Blainey—all occurred in contexts where democratic principles had been violated by coercion or racism. He does not cite Canada or the United States which point in a more successful direction, raising the possibility that multicultural policies within a democratic political system may be a unifying rather than divisive force, able to overcome conflicts.

This critique of Blainey's core propositions leaves comparatively little of his original argument still intact. Asian migration is undoubtedly unpopular in many quarters, but is still not overwhelmingly so. While anti-Asian prejudice exists it is not clear that prejudicial attitudes necessarily lead to discriminatory behaviour. In addition there is no clear evidence to suppose that initial prejudice will not diminish over time in a manner similar to the growing acceptance of Mediterranean migrants originally greeted as 'wogs' and 'dagoes', in the 1950s. Similarly while a fear of migrant enclave-creation exists, there is no clear evidence that this is leading to the creation of totally exclusionist ghettos on the American pattern of Harlem, or that Asian, especially Indo-Chinese concentration leads to the complete domination of residential communities excluding 'old Australians' from social participation.

It is noteworthy, as the recent Fitzgerald Committee report pointed out that the whole area of immigration in general and Asian immigration in particular is subject to a high degree of confusion, inaccuracy, rumour and even fear in sections of the public mind (CAAIP 1988). Consultants' evidence presented to the committee reflected a considerable degree of confusion and feelings of insecurity among blue-collar workers. The report also testified however to the generally positive reception of more accurate information by these groups during the course of group interviews. The official figures on immigration levels and on Asian immigration generated much surprise among these initially hostile respondents. Once confronted with facts and the reality of the situation, a good deal of initial hostility against Asian immigrants is allayed.
This is consistent with the findings of a 1986 study by the Department of Immigration which indicated that hostility to Asians lessened with the degree of residential contact. Those that lived closest were in aggregate less likely to express hostility than those who lived further away (DIEA 1986). This suggests that remoteness from Asian immigration causes more hostility than proximity—completely reversing Blainey's argument about neighbourhood stress.

The burden of critical evidence suggests an alternative agenda which challenges point by point the 9 tenets of Blainey's argument as follows:-

(1) There are finite economic limits to the capacity of Australia to absorb new migrants, but it is not at all clear these have been reached.

(2) Asian migrants have not, according to existing evidence, taken jobs from resident Australians, on the contrary they have helped to create jobs. The burden of unemployment has meanwhile fallen on Asians.

(3) Unemployment in the early and mid-1980s did not continue to rise as feared. This has taken some pressure off labour market job competition, although there is no guarantee that unemployment will not rise again.

(4) Neighbourhood concentrations of Asians have not led to the total domination or intrusion of areas in the strict sense of the European or American ghetto.

(5) The link between unemployment and neighbourhood stress is not supported by any evidence of overt inter-communal conflict between Asians and 'old Australians'.

(6) It is not clear that community reception of Asian immigration in the 1980s and 1990s will over the long term be any different to community reception of Mediterranean background migrants in the 1950s and 1960s. Initial tensions may then be overcome, unless there is a dramatic worsening of economic conditions.

(7) Asians are not a homogeneous category culturally foreign to Australia. Their background includes Christian as well as Muslim and Buddhist, those experienced in democratic institutions as well as those who are not.

(8) Immigration policy may not have been formulated on the basis of full public consent. It is the case, however, that immigration has been constantly on the political agenda, that voters have had the chance to express their views at the ballot box, and citizens have had the opportunity to use other modes of political pressure such as demonstrations or lobbying to make their views known. Nonetheless there is no electoral evidence that public opinion is uniformly or
predominantly opposed to Asian immigration, to the extent of penalising Governments who support such programs.

(9) There is no necessity that multicultural societies sometimes fail. Many of those which do are internally undemocratic societies lacking political means of addressing social issues through participation and debate.

Available Literature on Public Disorder

We now turn to examine the wide literature on public disorder both in Australia and overseas. It should be emphasised that the literature under consideration here refers to actual behaviour rather than the attitude material referred to above. As a first working approximation, it is fair to say that the literature on behaviour engages only tangentially with the key questions under scrutiny in this study. Material on public disorder and social cohesion is, with few exceptions, discussed in the context of some broader over-arching theme such as the incidence of violence or crime, the analysis of crowd behaviour, or the examination of social protest.

As far as Australia is concerned, the findings of a comparative 114-nation study of civil strife conducted by a team of American scholars in the 1960s revealed Australia to be one of the most peaceable nations. This work by Ted Gurr and his associates (Gurr, 1969) conducted for the U.S. (Kerner) Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence ranked Australia 96 out of 114 on a descending scale of civil strife. Civil strife was defined in this study as 'all collective non-governmental attacks on persons or property that occur within a political system but not individual crimes' (Gurr, p. 573). Data was collected for the years 1961-65, which in the Australian context reflected a period of low unemployment coupled with significant levels of immigration including NESB migrants from Southern Europe.

The low 'civil strife' indicators for Australia at this time reflect the consensus view that the earlier phases of post-war immigration occurred without large-scale or overt instances of public disorder. They rate Australia at half the level of civil strife reported for the United Kingdom and one quarter the level of strife recorded for Ireland and Switzerland, and none at all for New Zealand, Scandinavia, and Romania.
This study represents the only general benchmark allowing comparisons between Australian 'strife' or 'disorder' and levels recorded overseas. No similar study is available for the 1980s to include the period of Asian immigration and increased unemployment.

Another major historical study, stimulated in part by earlier work of Gurr is Peter Grabosky's work on the politics of crime and social conflict in Sydney and New South Wales from white settlement to the 1970s (Grabosky, 1977). This notes periodic episodes of civil strife including Aboriginal massacres in the 1830s and anti-Chinese protests in the late 19th century. It also covers the period up till the late 1960s characterised by numerous anti-Vietnam war protests and anti-apartheid demonstrations, but terminates prior to the 1980s. Grabosky concludes that 'over the years Sydney has enjoyed a level of tranquility, exceeding that in many, probably most of the world's large cities'. Without mentioning any particular threat to cohesion from immigration, he argues that 'as long as state and federal governments continue to provide conditions of freedom and comfort to the vast majority of its inhabitants, Sydney should remain a relatively orderly place' (p. 462). This study, like the earlier work of Gurr deals with the larger overt forms of strife or disorder.

Aside from these general studies, no over-arching attempts were made to analyse the scale and incidence of public disorder in Australia until the 1988 report by Holton and Fletcher to the Criminology Research Council (Holton and Fletcher 1988). Using the same analysis techniques adopted earlier by Gurr, this study reported the following findings for the period 1969-84:-

1. There was no general tendency for levels of public disorder (defined as 'any violent or illegitimate action involving 10 or more persons...directed against persons or property') to rise during this period.
2. The most widespread category of disorder involved political protest including anti-Vietnam war demonstrations and general demonstrations over domestic political issues.
3. There was no hard evidence that either unemployment or Asian immigration was contributing significantly to levels of overt public disorder. Disorder involving NESB migrant populations was comparatively limited in scale and impact.
Australian social cohesion was more threatened by overt strife in the anti-Vietnam war period than in the early 1980s.

In addition to general studies of this kind a number of detailed monographs exist on particular episodes of overt public disorder. There are a number of historical studies of particular strikes, riots, and disturbances, including anti-Chinese disturbances, in the period before 1945. For the period since, very little material of this kind deals specifically with NESB migrants or ethnic communities. Far more prominence has been given to disturbances such as the Bathurst motorbike conflicts between police and 'bikies' (Cuneen et al. 1986, Cuneen et al. 1989). Some attempts have been made by the National Police Research Unit to monitor levels of public disorder, including that related to immigrant and aboriginal groups through the Brixton Index project. However these did not generate any kind of systematic data base.

The lack of an extensive academic literature on public disorder and social cohesion as they affect ethnic communities is reflected in the absence of an empirically-based response to Blainey's challenge. The evaluation of Blainey's argument has therefore concentrated either on revealing emotive or prejudicial elements of his case, or on challenges to the empirical plausibility of aspects of his argument, other than issues of disorder and cohesion.

One of the major gaps in the Australian literature hitherto is the absence of any systematic data on racist disorders and especially racist violence directed at Asians. There is therefore no study comparable to the British Home Office study of 2630 reported racial attacks taking place within a single month in 13 major regions of England (Home Office 1981). This study included individual level 'crime' such as robbery or assault as well as incidents not regarded by the police as offences such as harassment, abuse and slogan writing. As such its scope is wider than the larger-scale overt incidents discussed so far. Nonetheless, while the study found that 1/2 the incidents reported lacked any discernible racial motive, it also reported that 'the incidence of racial attacks presents a significant problem. The frequency of such attacks often of a particularly insidious nature and the depth of feeling and concern which they generate in the ethnic minority communities, are a matter of fact and not of opinion.' (Home Office, 1981, p. 35) It is as yet not clear how far the Human Rights
Commission report on racist violence in Australia, expected in mid-1990, will include material of similar scope, and evaluative sophistication.

Another major contribution of overseas literature lies in the theoretical analysis of public disorder. A number of propositions have emerged from this material which are of some relevance to the Australian situation. Most of them relate to the reasons why cultural minorities have become involved in protest, disorder, and collective violence. The first and most general finding is that public disorder is typically episodic and cyclical rather than evolutionary in its incidence. Put another way the simplistic overarching scenarios whereby 'everything is getting worse' or 'everything is getting better' rarely fit the evidence over the medium to long range. In the U.S.A., to take one example, levels of disorder or strife, including levels of inter-racial violence do not exhibit long-run patterns of increase (Levy 1969). The ghetto riots of the 1960s have not been repeated with anything like the same level of intensity in the two succeeding decades, in part because of remedial changes in political structures. In short there is no necessity or inevitability that inter-racial or inter-ethnic tensions will continue to grow or decline in scale and intensity within any given context. Whether they do or do not is contingent on the evolving social and political context.

The prevailing theories of public disorder are therefore conjunctural rather than evolutionary in character; that is, they relate to particular configurations of economic, political and cultural relationships in a given context at a given point in history. General or universalistic propositions, e.g. cultural differences inevitably produce increasing levels of social conflict, disorder and cohesion are not supported by the literature.

Economic explanations of public disorder and civil strife have been given considerable support, in the sense that economic disadvantage is positively correlated with participation in disorder. Typical rioters include those from low-status low-income jobs (Kerner 1968). On the other hand, evidence from U.S. ghetto riots indicates it is not the least well off, least well educated, or most destitute, that are most likely to be involved in overt disorderly behaviour (Fogelson and Hill, 1968, Caplan and Paige, 1968). For such groups demoralisation rather than activism may be the outcome of poverty.
In addition, the American evidence from the ghetto riots of the 1960s and British evidence from the 1980s, indicate that purely economic explanations of disorder are by themselves inadequate. In the first place the impact of cultural relations, notably inter-racial relationships interacts with economic influences, especially through the mechanism of racial discrimination in labour markets. Secondly racial discrimination in political and social life, including police practices, also plays a major part in public disorder leading to grievances among minorities which are not in any direct sense economic (Spiecel 1969, Marx 1970). Modes of action by white majority groups may change over time from direct mass aggression against cultural minorities through racially-motivated policing, to residential and educational segregation. In the urban American context, at least, the white unskilled or unemployed working class has not perpetuated the same level of racist aggression against cultural minorities, that has characterised inter-racial relations in Southern states. In urban Britain, by contrast, there is some suggestion that unskilled or unemployed working-class youth have played a significant part in street violence against cultural minorities, though there is insufficient evidence to support Blainey's supposition that such clashes are produced by labour market competition or neighbourhood resistance.

Another well-tried theory often applied to public disorder and civil strife focuses on the dislocating effect of migration on social order. This theory was developed in the first instance to explain disorders and protests accompanying European industrialisation in the 19th century, but has subsequently been extended to 20th century events. The argument is that recent migrants to cities, in search of work, experience profound social dislocation leading to social unrest and disorder. These problems are however transitional, or in the longer term adjustments are made and new institutions develop to channel discontent and create a more cohesive society.

The main problem with this theory is that participants in urban social disorder have rarely been recent migrants, but rather settled groups expressing grievances of various kinds (Kerner 1968). The American ghetto riots of the 1960s did not involve recent migrants from the Southern states but thoroughly urbanised groups, including the children of migrants rather than migrants themselves.
One major difficulty in applying the overseas literature on economic disadvantage and migratory dislocation to Australian conditions is that most such studies have focused on problems of the inner city and the ghetto. Although Blainey has spoken of Asian ghettos in Australia, there are significant differences between overseas' and Australian patterns of inner urban development with respect to immigrant settlement. As already indicated, levels of immigrant residential concentration even amongst the much-cited Indo-Chinese in places like Cabramatta, are in no sense equivalent to the exclusionary ghettos of North American cities thoroughly dominated by one racial group. Meanwhile the Australian housing market has been less affected by processes of racial exclusion than that in Britain (Rex and Moore, 1967), and more influenced by Government policies seeking to discourage ghetto formation. Middle-class Asians have successfully moved to a range of suburbs outside the major initial concentrations of Asians, also encouraging dispersal and a less residually polarised social structure.

Difficulties in applying overseas theories of public disorder and ghetto formation to Australia should not, however, lead to the bland conclusion that compared with elsewhere, all in Australia is for the best in the best possible of all worlds. The capacity of some ‘old Australians’ and some ‘Asians’ to move out of disadvantaged inner city or suburban neighbourhoods, does not mean that ‘old Australians’ welcome Asian migrants with equanimity, or that ‘Asians’ can easily surmount problems of economic deprivation and social discrimination. The least mobile groups including the elderly, the unemployed and those with least education may be those most fearful of change, those least able to move place of residence, and those most vulnerable to economic disadvantage. Paradoxically they may also be those least able to articulate their fears and anxieties, and less prepared to participate in overt social protest or to challenge social order. In this respect, evidence pointing to a lack of overt disorder should not be interpreted to mean that ‘old Australians’ are broadly content with current changes, or that Asian migrants have a comfortable social niche.

A final more useful theoretical approach to public disorder locates political grievances as the primary source of unrest, communal conflict, and perceived challenges to social order. Field and Southgate (1982) in their careful review of American evidence, note that urban disorders always included a strong political dimension, by which they refer to grievances over racial inequalities and over policing policies in black areas. The key
to such problems was exclusion of cultural minorities from participation in political institutions.

In addition, political explanations have been addressed to explain the relative peace of American ghettos in the 1970s and 1980s. Even though economic conditions worsened, few major disorders have taken place. This may be linked to the greater involvement of blacks in the political system, and official recognition of the need to address racial inequalities. While black unemployment remains high and inner cities continue to decay, disorder has been avoided through recognition of political rights and involvement in political institutions. Extrapolating from this to the British situation, Field and Southgate (1982) argue that 'disorder has not occurred simply for the lack of a job or an inside toilet. More likely it has occurred because certain groupings have lost faith in the capacity and will of establishment institutions to take their interests into account and to provide them with the means of achieving social acceptance and material success' (p. 33).

Within Australia, Holton and Fletcher (1988) have taken up a broader version of the 'political' explanation of disorder, drawing on the work of the American historical sociologist Charles Tilly (1969). Tilly's argument is that public disorder and collective violence are 'normal' endemic features of political life. Outbreaks of public disorder are connected in his view with constant shifts in the struggle of groups for power. Disorder is only contingently related to 'pathological' institutions. More important are the normal processes whereby groups try to seize hold of, or realign the levers of power. Tilly places particular emphasis in this respect on moments when groups are struggling for inclusion in the political community, or to prevent others from gaining inclusion. Holton and Fletcher (1988) in their study of disorder in Australia between 1969 and 1984, found that a greater part of disorder was explained by political grievances, attempts to extend social citizenship rights (e.g. for Aboriginal people), and with attempts to influence power in favour of hitherto politically weak groups such as women, students, anti-war campaigns and conservationists.

Such political explanations of public disorder are of considerable importance to an analysis of social cohesion within a multicultural Australia. They encourage a
research agenda within which it may be hypothesised that disorder and threats to cohesion tend to arise in the following types of situation:-

(i) where hitherto (wholly or partly) excluded groups struggle for full inclusion within the socio-political community, and against legal, economic and cultural obstacles which deny them access to rewards, facilities and equal social participation with other groups.

(ii) where a significant segment of the hitherto dominant groups struggles to exclude other groups from inclusion within the socio-political community by means which include the active mobilisation of dominant community resources against those seeking inclusion.

In the latter case it may be hypothesised that the stronger members of dominant groups will tend to have access to 'normal' and 'orderly' methods of exclusion through control or influence over labour market, housing market or through party political policy initiatives such as implementation of a discriminatory immigration policy, etc. It will therefore tend to be segments and the weaker and more socially insecure sectors of the dominant groups who seek alternative means to implement exclusion, one of which includes disorderly behaviour such as offensive graffiti (Asians Go Home), racist attacks and attempts to police street behaviour according to dominant community norms.

Arising from this analysis, the evaluative tests of multicultural policies in Australia are then twofold:-

(i) Have non-English speaking background immigrants and Aboriginal people been included within the socio-political community to an extent sufficient to channel remaining grievances within existing institutions?

(ii) Have Blainey's working-class 'old Australians' been able to confront the reality of a culturally pluralist Australia by a combination of means other than communal resistance—means such as successful inter-personal communication, inter-marriage, cautious acceptance, the limiting of prejudice and attitude rather than behaviour, or social and geographic mobility to avoid contact?
Conclusion

This selective review of literature on multiculturalism, public disorder and social cohesion sets out from the challenge mounted by Geoffrey Blainey. The arguments by Blainey linking Asian migration and settlement to disorder and threats to cohesion are identified, and attempts are made to separate emotive rhetoric from propositions that can be assessed through social scientific analysis. Many theoretical and empirical weaknesses in Blainey's arguments are noted. However, no adequate empirical data on public disorder in Australia has as yet been assembled to develop a more conclusive assessment of the impact of Asian migration on disorder and cohesion. Beyond this, a range of theories on the causes of social disorder are reviewed, many of them originating from the U.S.A. and Britain. A number of economic, social and political theories are discussed, and their relevance to Australian conditions assessed. Particular emphasis has been given to political explanations of disorder or the absence of disorder, connected with processes of inclusion or exclusion with respect to the political community. Several hypotheses were then articulated linking political processes to the probability of disorder.

We now turn to the development of a research design and methodology to address the current lack of relevant data connecting multiculturalism, Asian immigration and public disorder.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter examines the following issues:-
(a) Definition and conceptualisation of public disorder.
(b) Sources of data on public disorder.
(c) Newspaper-based research design.
(d) Methodology of the current study.

**Definition and Conceptualisation of Public Disorder**

Public disorder is a very difficult concept to define. Indeed it appears to be even more difficult to define than the related term violence. Whereas violence entails some coercive and threatening form of action on behalf of individuals, groups or institutions, sufficient to create physical or mental injury, disorder embraces a larger but more elusive set of normative reference points. Whereas violence deals with a set of actions that produce coercive and injurious effects, disorder involves a perceived break-down of the norms, rules and patterns through which social interaction is organised and is made coherent. The distinction between public disorder and violence is analogous to the distinction in the theory of policing between threats to the public peace and crimes. The elusiveness of the definitions of public order and disorder arise because both terms involve expectations and tolerances concerning the need for patterns and rules, as well as being related to different values about the desirability of particular rules and forms of organisation. For some any strike is perceived as disorder because it interrupts the normative pursuit of work, whereas for others strikes are part of the repertoire of industrial relations and bargaining. By contrast an assault on a picket by a policeman, or by a striker on an employer, would generally be identified as violent. Within the area of community relations, perceptions of public disorder will vary according to the interests and values of those involved.
The distinction between violence and public disorder is not an absolute one, since much disorder involves violence. However the presence of violence is not necessary to the perception of disorder. Such perceptions can arise simply as a product of change and confrontation with the unfamiliar. Similarly not all violent events are regarded as disorderly, as reflected in the tolerance of physical robustness in body-contact sports such as football.

Applying this distinction to community relations it appears that some regard the mere presence of culturally unfamiliar people and institutions as a threat to public order and social cohesion. It is not necessary that violence take place for disorderliness to be perceived especially for those who feel insecure or threatened. Recent research on perceptions indicates that the mere presence of some kind of graffiti or of broken windows in a neighbourhood may fill some residents with a fear of an impending threat to social order (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). In other cases street life involving gregarious bands of young males, may create perceptions of threat and disorder. Elderly people and women, in particular, typically express fears of violence and sexual assault in such contexts (Jones and Young 1986).

Perceptions of public disorder and violence are nonetheless both connected with moral evaluation since what is described as disorderly or violent is usually also regarded as 'bad' and 'undesirable'. This renders a dispassionate sociological analysis of disorder difficult since attributions of disorder are often regarded as pejorative criticisms of those involved, rather than analytical devices to enhance explanation.

The possibility of a sociological analysis of public disorder is nonetheless founded on the assumption that perceptions of disorder will vary according to the social interests and values of those involved whether they be migrants, 'old Australians', policemen, or academics. It is thereby possible to analyse the social patterning of disorder—in terms of group perceptions linked to particular events—without implying a universal validity to such perceptions, signifying approval or disapproval.

In the light of these initial considerations two major propositions follow. The first is that public disorder raises issues wider than violence or crime as such. The second is
that any analytical definition of public disorder should be regarded as sociological rather than morally judgemental.

Guided by these considerations, it is possible to move towards an operational definition of public disorder and of what constitutes an example or incident of public disorder. In selecting a suitable definition, care should be taken to distinguish the phenomena of most concern of this study. First we are not concerned with social order and disorder in general, but with those forms of disorder which occur in public rather than in private. Secondly, it is beyond the resources of this study to examine disorder carried out by individuals or very small groups, including those micro-level crimes of violence which either take place in private, or which, while devastating to individuals, may have a relatively minor impact on the public domain. This delimitation undoubtedly excludes many types of small-scale racist abuse and violence. The emphasis is rather on collective modes of public disorder by significant numbers of individuals. Thirdly we are not concerned with ‘collective violence’—a term used by Charles Tilly (1969)—as such, but rather with all categories of collective public disorder, whether or not violence was intended or actually used by some or all parties concerned.

Ted Gurr’s conception, ‘civil strife’ (1969, pp. 573, 626) is the most useful starting point for an operational definition of public disorder. This is defined as “All collective non-governmental attacks on persons or property that occur within a political system, but not individual crimes”. For operational purposes the reference to ‘attacks’ was not restricted to overt violence, but “included symbolic attacks on political persons or policies such as political demonstrations and political strikes”. Again no normative judgement is implied here, simply the wish to group together all collective manifestations of disorder. Finally Gurr adopts a minimum cut-off point of 100 participants for an incident of civil strife to qualify for inclusion.

This operational definition requires qualification on two counts, however. First Gurr does not sufficiently emphasise that his definition of civil strife is essentially an administrative one, based on the evaluations of those legitimately responsible for public order. To group overtly violent and symbolically violent incidents together reflects a concern on the part of those responsible for public order for both actual disorder or strife, and potential challenges.
A second qualification necessary with Gurr's definition concerns the minimum cut off point of 100 participants. This was designed for an international cross-national study aiming to pick out major incidents of civil strife. In the present study it was felt that this cut-off point was unduly high and would exclude many significant incidents. Consequently the cut-off point was reduced to 10 persons—too high for small street-brawls, but low enough to pick up those public disturbances involving between 10 and 100 participants which may reflect communal rather than individual issues. There is of course a certain arbitrariness in this choice.

In the light of these modifications to Gurr's concept of civil strife the final operational definition for this study was formulated as follows:

Any violent or illegitimate action involving 10 or more persons, other than actions by agents of the Government, directed against persons or property.

Sources of Data on Public Disorder

The second major methodological issue at stake in this study was the problem of securing an adequate data-base. Two sources of data of prima facie relevance to the study of public disorder are crime statistics for various categories of disorderly behaviour, and police log-books recording the daily activities of officers. Neither of these sources was regarded as adequate as a means of generating the kind of data on public disorder required by this project.

Crime statistics are typically organised around individual offenders, and prosecutions for specific offences. The main problem with using this to measure public disorder is that it usually fails to differentiate between offences committed by individuals acting alone or in very small groups, and offences committed as part of some collective group whose actions disturb public order. This is not always the case, since common law offences like riot and affray or unlawful assembly exist, and have been used on occasion during some of the more violent episodes of public disorder (e.g. Bathurst Bike Race Riots in 1985, Cuneen et al. 1986, Cuneen et al. 1989). Nonetheless it appears that on most occasions offenders are more likely to be charged with offences relating to disorderly behaviour, destruction, public drunkenness, and use of offensive language.
These very broad categories that are well-nigh impossible to disaggregate so as to separate incidents involving collective public disorder from those occurring at an individual or very small group level.

A second problem with the use of crime statistics as a measure of public disorder is that not all disorderly behaviour results in a charge. There have often been occasions when police either felt it unwise to attempt to arrest and charge all those apparently involved in disorder for fear of escalating violence, or where police had insufficient numbers to effect such a strategy. Even where crime statistics are organised in terms of ambiguous collective disorder categories, the charge patterns will only measure some part of the disorderliness of an incident, and there is no guarantee at all that the proportion of those charged will remain roughly the same across different incidents.

A third problem with crime statistics is that criminal offence categories do change over time as new legislation appears, and old legislation is either repealed or modified. This makes the construction of a time-series measuring disorder extremely difficult. One example, pertinent to the analysis of public disorder, concerns the use of intoxicating liquor. With the recent decriminalisation of drunkenness, police do not have drunk and disorderly available to them, as they once did, to aid in the policing of those collective disorders where intoxication by alcohol is involved. Wherever offence categories have changed in this way it is very difficult to use crime statistics as a means of measuring trends in public disorder over time.

Such problems do not totally invalidate the use of crime statistics to measure trends in public order, since the extent of criminality is generally regarded as a major component in assessing orderliness. They do, however, reduce the usefulness of such statistics, to the extent that offence categories are not restricted to collective disorder, to the extent that criminal offences do not represent a constant proportion of actual disorder, and to the extent that legislative changes render offence categories incommensurable or difficult to compare over time.

An alternative way of proceeding would be to focus on actual police behaviour, drawing on police patrol logs and other formal operational records to build up a picture of the scale and typology of public disorder. This data could in theory be combined with
interview or survey data, of the type collected in the Policy Studies Institute's major survey of the London police concerning the distribution of police time (Smith and Gray, 1983). There are of course a number of other studies of this kind.

There are three problems with this methodological strategy. The first is the lack of sociological observation and detail involved. The primary purpose of police patrol logs is not to take detailed sociological field-notes, but to record basic factual details of the time and place at which specific activities were undertaken. Such reporting is necessarily highly routinised and rationalised.

A second problem in assessing police patrol logs is a practical one, namely the extremely time-consuming nature of the activity. Since involvement in coping with public disorder—as defined here—represents only a limited proportion of police time, the scrutiny of police patrol logs is not likely to be a cost-effective use of research time. Finally, there is the problem of variations in reporting conventions and standards between different police areas and different officers, noted by Carole Willis in her paper 'A Classification of Public Disorder dealt with by the Police' (Willis, 1986) and between different officers. These difficulties introduce problems of comparability in data which appear insurmountable.

As a result of difficulties associated with the use of crime statistics and patrol logs for purposes of public order measurement, this study is based on measurement by means of a systematic newspaper content analysis. This research strategy has itself to be justified, however, given certain problems connected with the use of newspapers for social scientific purposes.

A Newspaper-Based Research Design

The most basic objection to this procedure is that newspapers are prone to bias, distortion and sensationalism. In other words they are vulnerable to highly subjective influences where emotion, ideology, proprietorial and editorial political standpoints, or personal perceptions will influence both the selection and the coverage of news items. There is, in addition, a widely canvassed sociological critique, advanced
amongst others by the Glasgow Media Group that the media—both print and electronic—tends to skew the reporting of sensitive or controversial news items towards the viewpoints of the powerful and influential. For example, the claim is made that the reporting of industrial disputes is slanted more to the employers’ than the workers’ case.

Both these criticisms carry some weight in relation to the study of public disorder. There is evidence that newspaper reporting does, on occasion, involve the emotive and sensational treatment of public disorder, both in the reporting of actual events and in the creation of emotionally-charged expectations about events, before they actually happen. The New South Wales team researching the Bathurst motor-cycle disturbances identify this tendency to heighten expectations of extreme disorder in various sections of the New South Wales press (Cuneen et al., 1986). Similarly there is evidence of social and political bias in giving uneven coverage to different parties that may be involved in disorder.

The issue is not whether newspapers are sources of objective fact, they quite clearly are not. The methodological issues at stake here are twofold. Firstly, does the type of data contained in the print media carry substantially accurate sociological content to be usable as an index of public disorder? Secondly, is this data largely or wholly unobtainable from any other source? We are not talking here about pure laboratory conditions for a controlled experiment, but of pragmatic choices between a range of possible sources, containing varying degrees of imperfection and bias.

Crime statistics certainly offer quantifiable measures of reported crimes and details on offenders apprehended, within prevailing categories of offence and offender characteristics. Within these parameters, they are almost certainly more objective than general newspaper reporting of crime and disorder. What they do not provide is, first of all, a measurement of public disorder in the broadest sense including behaviour that did not result in a criminal offence. Secondly, the crime statistics categories do not measure collective events but rather individual offences. Newspaper reporting, by contrast contains highly personalised and selective commentary. It is uncontrolled by rules of criminal justice procedure attending the official definition and reporting of crime. It is also clear that reported incidents of disorder are not identical with actual
rates of disorder—though this problem is analogous to the problematic relationship of reported criminal offences to actual offences—that is behaviour that would be classified as criminal if detected or reported.

The methodological problem of relating reported disorder to actual disorder is of course a difficult one. The major strategy for dealing with this problem is to identify those influences which might change the ratio between reported incidents and actual incidents. As far as newspapers are concerned this might be expected where economic changes affected the size of a paper or the ratio of news and copy to advertising. It might also arise where changes of ownership and editorial policy affected decisions to cover certain events, although it is doubtful whether major instances of public disorder could ever be entirely ignored. It is not at all clear that either of these changes occurred to the Australian press during the time period of this study.

Additional methodological checks and balances can be built into a newspaper-based survey to attempt to control for bias and inaccuracy in reporting. Such checks include:

a) comparison of newspaper reporting with official data of the same event—to compare for accuracy

b) selection of more than one newspaper covering the same event as another check on accuracy or bias

c) selection of more than one newspaper as a basic source of data—to bring the scale of reported disorder closer to actual disorder

d) selection of the less sensational, 'quality' press as data bases.

All these checks were built into the research design, and operated on the data collected wherever possible.

**Methodology of the Current Study**

The current study built upon the newspaper-based research design developed by Holton and Fletcher in their 1988 study of public disorder in Australia between 1969 and 1984. However in the present study, two major newspapers *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* were systematically studied for the period 1985-89 (inclusive). This two-
newspaper design gave a wider coverage than the one-newspaper design used by Holton and Fletcher in their earlier work. It also enabled checks to be made on the veracity of information in particular newspapers. Finally, the selection of The Age in the current study for 1985-89, enabled comparisons to be made with previously assembled The Age data from the earlier study from 1969-85, giving a full run for the entire period, 1969-89. This two-newspaper design does not of course give a complete national coverage. While both papers report events outside their home states, the majority of events covered focus on these states. This skewing of the data is not however regarded as problematic in the sense that New South Wales and Victoria represent the major centres of NESB immigrant settlement, and especially Asian migrant settlement in Australia. Focus on these states is therefore especially relevant to the testing of Blainey's theses on Asian immigration and social cohesion.

The research design is nonetheless based on two time-series of newspaper-based data on public disorder. Even when the two newspapers are combined, this still falls well short of a comprehensive survey. Such a survey, while ideally desirable, fell outside the scope of the current research.

Files of The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald were systematically examined for the period 1985 to 1989 inclusive. To qualify as a relevant case each individual incident was matched against the definition of public disorder described earlier. This involved testing for the presence of violence of the behaviour regarded as illegitimate from an official viewpoint and therefore requiring a police or judicial response. In addition, the presence of at least 10 people was required. These criteria typically include both riots and crowd violence, as well as forms of social protest and political demonstration involving some form of aggressive confrontation between individuals, groups and the police. Incidents lacking one or more of these features would not be included.

It should be noted that this methodological design is not equivalent to either a social protest or a crime index. Many protests do not involve disorder, and most crimes involve less than 10 persons. It should also be noted that the definition of legitimacy is an official one rather than one which is based on the views of participants in disorder. No view is taken on the reasonableness or otherwise of official viewpoints. A recording sheet (see Appendix 1) was compiled for each incident. Data was collected on the date,
location, type of disturbance, age-sex composition, scale and duration of each incident, together with numbers killed, injured and arrested and the estimated value of property damage incurred. Data was also collected on the scale and type of police intervention for each incident. Wherever possible additional data was collected on the more qualitative characteristics of each incident including the existence of 'generalised beliefs' (see Smelser 1962) among participants, the degree of formal organisation involved, the presence or absence of institutional mediation of conflict, the presumed origins of the incident, and the connection (if any) with previous and subsequent disturbances. Such information is not available for every incident, and proved to be extremely time-consuming to research in each individual case.

Within this mass of data, particular note should be taken of the typology of public disorder utilised. This drew upon the typology developed in the UK by Eric Dunning and his associates (Dunning et al., 1987). This sub-divided public disorder into four major categories, namely political, industrial, sport and leisure and community. For operational purposes, these were defined in terms of the criteria proposed by Dunning, thereby allowing some degree of international comparison between Australia and the U.K. The criteria are as follows:

(i) Political... refers 'not just to collective disturbances in connection with the activities of political parties and at elections, but also to disorders connected with public demonstrations and protest marches'.

(ii) Industrial... refers to disorders 'related to the industrial protests of workers'.

(iii) Sport and leisure... refers 'not only to the disorderliness of spectators in and around stadia, but is a more general category which includes the broad spectrum of leisure activities, such as fairs, carnivals, public dances, theatres, cinemas etc.'.

(iv) Community... refers to 'racial, ethnic or religious disturbances' and large scale 'street fighting and brawls not otherwise included'.

There is inevitably a degree of arbitrariness in this classification. Certain specific types of incidents have been singled out for separate classification (e.g. conservation/anti-logging incidents) while other incidents may be grouped into general categories (e.g. general political demonstrations over domestic political issues). There is no general way of resolving this problem of arbitrariness. However in the present
study some attempt was made to ensure that specific types of disorder which may involve immigrant or ethnic issues were identified as distinct from other classifications, rather than being lost within general catch-all classifications.

Another problem of arbitrariness is involved in the allocation of incidents to sub-categories, where incidents may combine two or more of the elements of the typology, such as disorders between ethnic groups at soccer matches. The instructions given to the research assistants were, wherever possible, to code incidents in terms of the most important characteristic.

Two major amendments were however made to Dunning's typological classification. The first was to include another category for major types of disorder not included in the four major sub-divisions. Second, each of the major categories was sub-divided into a number of further classifications.

The major sub-classifications were as follows:-

Political
General demonstrations over domestic political issues
Anti-apartheid demonstrations
Womens issues
Anti-uranium/anti-war/anti-biological warfare
Conservation/anti-logging
Anti-union protests
Civil liberties protests
Demonstrations and para-military activity by ethnic groups over events outside Australia
'Blainey' incidents involving protests stimulated by Blainey's intervention in the immigration debate
General political demonstrations over aboriginal issues

Community
Aboriginal land rights/sacred sites demonstrations based on specific aboriginal communities
Aboriginal clashes with whites/police in particular communities
Local issues (e.g. squatters)
Bikie gang disturbances
Xmas/New Year/Holiday celebrations
Violence between and within ethnic communities
Violence between and within aboriginal communities
Pub brawls
Larrikinism and vandalism

Sport-leisure
Pop/Rock concerts/dances
Soccer crowds
Motorbike/car events
Football crowds
Other sporting crowds

Industrial
Trade Union/Worker demos over economic issues
Unemployment demonstrations
Farmer demonstrations

Other
Student protests over institutional issues
Prison riots
Sexual violence
Police instigated disorder

A three digit coding manual was developed for the typology variable, in order to register fine distinctions in the sub-typological classification.

A final note should be made of the procedures adopted to measure the scale of disputes. Data such as the number of participants in most disorderly events represents an estimate, and such estimates tend to vary depending on the position and standpoint of those making the estimates. It is well known that protest organisers, for example,
produce estimates of crowd participation well in excess of police estimates. The procedure adopted here was that every estimate should be recorded and an average of all estimates obtained. There is clearly an unavoidable loss of precision involved here, but there seems little alternative to proceeding pragmatically in this fashion.

We now proceed to discuss the research findings.
CHAPTER 4: PUBLIC DISORDER IN AUSTRALIA 1985-9: CRISIS OR COHESION

This chapter reports the findings of the newspaper-based survey of public disorder in Australia between 1985 and 1989.

These findings based on intensive scrutiny of The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald during this period have been combined in the following analysis with data from The Age gathered by Holton and Fletcher for the years 1969-1984 (for further detail on this previous study see Holton and Fletcher (1988). The effect of combining these two databases is to create a data-base for one newspaper for the entire 21-year period 1969-1989.

Analysis in this chapter addresses the question: How far has public disorder increased in the last 5 years, and how far is this increase related to processes of non English-speaking background immigration and settlement?

The General Pattern

The intensive 2-newspaper survey of public disorder identified 276 incidents between 1985 and 1989 meeting the definitions outlined in the previous chapter. In the initial survey of The Age a total of 174 incidents were identified. In the follow-up survey of The Sydney Morning Herald another 102 incidents not reported in The Age were identified. In addition The Sydney Morning Herald provided additional information on incidents already identified from The Age. This data-base is obviously incomplete. While both papers report nationwide news, the bulk of incidents reported (in excess of 70%) originate from Victoria and New South Wales. The following data is therefore based on reported rather than actual rates of disorder. Within this context the analysis that follows presumes a constant relationship between reported and actual incidents. While these data cannot give a conclusive answer to the question of the
actual magnitude of disorder, they are valid as a means of identifying trends in rates of
disorder in general and for particular sub-categories of disorder.

In Table 1, the general pattern of public disorder over the last five years is outlined
nationally and by state or territory.

**TABLE 1: PATTERNS OF PUBLIC DISORDER REPORTED IN AUSTRALIA: 1985-89**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGGREGATE</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>WA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>276</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|            | 4.3% | 37.0% | 3.3% | 8.3% | 1.8% | 3.6% | 35.1% | 6.9% |

As already noted the geographical distribution of disorder recorded is skewed to New
South Wales and Victoria due to a disproportionate local focus in the newspapers
chosen. However this skewing is not a serious problem, partly because these are the two
most populous states, and partly because they are the final destination of the majority
of Australia's immigrants, including Asian immigrants. The over-representation of
these two states is therefore likely to magnify any role played by immigration in the
genesis of public disorder. Conversely, if data gathered on this basis were to find little
significant connection between immigration and public disorder, then this could be
taken as a striking disconfirmation of the belief that immigration is challenging social
cohesion in Australia. With this proviso the aggregate data on public disorder here
show a significant upward trend over the four years 1985-8, but then a reversion in 1989
to a figure closer to that of 1985. For this reason we cannot speak of an unambiguous
trend in Australia towards higher rates of disorder over the last five years.

The typology of public disorder, outlined in Table 2 indicates that 'political' and
'community' disorder represents the overwhelming majority (72%) of all reported
disorder during this period.
TABLE 2: TYPOLOGY OF PUBLIC DISORDER REPORTED IN AUSTRALIA: 1985-89

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>POLITICAL</th>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>SPORT/LEISURE</th>
<th>INDUSTRIAL</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% SHARE</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is necessary to look more closely at these categories to determine whether there is any discernible connection between reported disorder and immigration and settlement. This involves disaggregation of broad categories into the specific sub-categories mentioned in the previous chapter.

In the case of ‘political disorder’, the reported rates for the various sub-categories are outlined in Table 3.

TABLE 3: PATTERNS OF 'POLITICAL' PUBLIC DISORDER REPORTED IN AUSTRALIA: 1985-89

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUB-CATEGORY</th>
<th>NO. OF INCIDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General demonstrations over domestic political issues involving Government policy</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-apartheid demonstrations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations and para-military activity by ethnic groups over events outside Australia</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/youth protests over Government policy</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay rights demonstrations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations against US bases in Australia</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-uranium/anti-biological warfare rallies</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation demonstrations</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of ‘community disorder’ the reported rates for the various sub-categories are outlined in Table 4.
**TABLE 4: PATTERNS OF 'COMMUNITY' DISORDER REPORTED IN AUSTRALIA 1985-9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUB-CATEGORY</th>
<th>NO. OF INCIDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal demonstrations over land rights/sacred sites/Government policy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal clashes with whites/police</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xmas/New Year holiday celebrations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outbreaks of violence at private parties</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorder involving local issues (e.g. squatters)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence between and within ethnic communities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larrikinism/street brawls</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pub brawls</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence within and between aboriginal groups</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data should be approached with some caution since there is a varying degree of arbitrariness involved in the allocation of incidents between categories and between sub-sections of major categories. In addition incidents may combine elements of more than one sub-category. The procedure adopted in dealing with such allocation problems was, as already indicated, to instruct researchers to allocate to the category which best described the incident, wherever possible.

On the basis of this dis-aggregation process, the following sub-categories of incidents were isolated for further attention, as being relevant to the impact of immigration:

- **POLITICAL**: demonstrations by ethnic groups over events outside Australia.
- **COMMUNITY**: violence between and within ethnic communities.

In addition to this identification of incidents involving the overt presence of members of ethnic communities, further scrutiny of all categories was undertaken to test for the presence of migrant or ethnicity-related issues.

Under this heading, a further sub-category emerged as significant, namely:

- **SPORT/LEISURE**: soccer crowd incidents. Four out of seven instances under this heading involved rivalry between members of ethnic communities.

If we combine the disorderly incidents from these 3 sub-categories, an index of public disorders relating to multicultural migration and settlement can be created. Table 5 provides an aggregation of the incidents involved.
TABLE 5: PUBLIC DISORDERS CONNECTED WITH IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>SUB-CATEGORY</th>
<th>NO. OF INSTANCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POLITICAL</td>
<td>Demonstrations by ethnic groups over events outside Australia</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY</td>
<td>Violence between and within ethnic communities (other than aboriginal communities)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPORT/LEISURE</td>
<td>Soccer crowd incidents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data enable conclusions to be reached about the relative but not absolute magnitude of public disorder in Australia connected in some way with immigration and settlement, and with membership of migrant communities.

Relative to all sources and types of public disorder in Australia between 1985-9, a total of 26 out of 276, that is 9.4% of all cases reported in The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald can be related in some way to the immigration and settlement of non-English speaking background people. Put another way for every one incident of this kind reported, over nine other incidents took place with no direct connection with immigration and settlement. Another way of looking at these 26 incidents is to consider their chronological distribution. This is provided in Table 6, where no consistent upsurge pattern is evident for the period as a whole.

TABLE 6: CHRONOLOGICAL PATTERN OF PUBLIC DISORDER INCIDENTS 1985-89 CONNECTED WITH IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>AGGREGATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the type of data measured in this study, we find no significant evidence of a recent upsurge of overt political or community disorder connected with immigration.

It is very striking that none of these incidents involved an 'old Australian' or 'nativist' outburst of discontent arising from opposition to Asian immigration or from threats
(real or perceived) from immigrants to the cultural integrity of neighbourhoods. In this respect we found no examples of the following types of disorder experienced overseas:

(i) Anti-Asian or anti-Asian immigration rallies conducted by political leaders. There are (as yet) no parallels to the marches by blue-collar workers in Britain in support of the anti-immigration statements of the British politician Enoch Powell. Similarly there are (as yet) no parallels to the aggressive marches by the British National Front through areas of high immigrant concentration.

(ii) White-inspired disorders within areas of immigrant or ethnic concentration. There are (as yet) no parallels to the mass invasions or threats to immigrant neighbourhoods that have occurred at various stages to black areas in the U.S.A.

(iii) Clashes between members of migrant groups and the police, similar to those that have occurred between Aboriginal people and police in Australian country towns in northern New South Wales, southern Queensland and Western Australia.

Having said this, our data say nothing about the scale and intensity of racist or hostile behaviour against migrants. They do not cover attacks by individuals or small groups on other small groups, whether highly dangerous as in arson attacks or physical assault, or involving abuse, taunting or other types of verbal cruelty. As already indicated, these are not typically reported by the press. Further insight into these issues is expected from the National Inquiry into Racist Violence being conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

With this major proviso it still remains the case that no public disorders involving anti-Asian feeling were reported between 1985-9. The nearest piece of evidence fitting this category was located, prior to the period under examination, in 1983. This concerned a neighbourhood reaction to four Vietnamese men cooking a dog to eat in their backyard.

*The Dog-Cooking Incident*

The incident, which took place in Springvale, Victoria in November 1982—18 months before the Blainey speech—was reported in *The Age* on 5th and 8th March 1983. It is worth recounting in detail because it dramatises social tension between Australian residents and recent Vietnamese migrants, over contrasting cultural practices.
As told to the Sandringham Magistrates Court, two Springvale residents looked over their fence to see four resident Vietnamese men cooking a dog on some tin sheeting. One of the on-lookers jumped over the fence to protest and claimed he was threatened with a carving knife. On the intervention of the police, the Vietnamese men ran off, but one was apprehended, taken to the police station and interviewed through an interpreter.

This Vietnamese man described in detail the Vietnamese practice of eating dog. He also outlined the process by which this particular dog was slaughtered. This involved one man holding the dog and another beating it around the head until it was dead. The dog's hairs were then pulled out prior to cooking. This mode of killing was also said to be customary in Vietnam.

While the Vietnamese defendants argued they had been shocked by the uninvited invasion of their property, the police had laid charges of assault with a weapon against the neighbour, and of cruelty to an animal. All four men pleaded guilty to the charges. Three of the four received jail sentences of one to three months, and one was put on a good behaviour bond.

The court case prompted a small demonstration of around 40 people. Participants were reported as shouting 'racist slogans' and the incident was head-lined under the banner 'Racist demonstration as four sentenced over dog killing' (The Age, 8.3.83). However it was also reported that some participants were animal lovers rather than racist ideologues.

This incident was given considerable publicity as it dramatised cultural differences between Vietnamese and prevailing Australian customs. While the legal system was concerned more with the killing of the dog and the assaults, rather than with the practice of eating dog, the whole episode was interpreted by some as a symptom of a cultural divide and of impending social tension. Paula Kelly, Director of the Australian Centre for Indo-Chinese Research claimed that Vietnamese had not been counselled about the cultural offensiveness and illegality in Australia of killing dogs to eat, and recommended such counselling should be given. Bob Birrell by contrast saw the incident as a symptom of mounting social tension and inter-ethnic competition stemming from job scarcity.
While the incident may be interpreted as an example of cultural conflict reflecting concern and outrage at a particular Vietnamese practice, the question remains as to the typicality and incidence of events of this kind. Certainly, within the intensive press scrutiny of the period 1985-9, no similar incidents were found. The significance of this particular episode should not therefore be exaggerated. One would have expected some further reporting of incidents of this kind if Blainey's analysis were correct. One would also have expected newspapers to carry stories of this kind since they are susceptible to sensationalist treatment involving actions that are 'bizarre' by Australian standards.

Public Disorder and Racial Hatred

There is nonetheless a striking contrast between the increase in publicly expressed race hatred involving immigrants reported in a number of quarters (Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1989a), and the lack of large-scale overt racial conflict over Asian immigration reported in *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*. If it is indeed the case that small-scale racial violence involving migrants is increasing while large-scale racial disorder is not, this contrast requires some explanation.

The first type of explanation that needs consideration is that racial violence involves a small often ideologically-motivated minority rather than a widespread community reaction by 'old Australians' to changes in the neighbourhood. This minority is not sufficiently large to stage aggressive political demonstrations. Similarly, its outreach is too limited within the wider community to inspire spontaneous outbreaks of communal violence against immigrants in general or Asian immigrants in particular. What is at stake here is not so much prejudice against immigrants or Asians, which may be quite widespread, as the willingness to become involved in overt anti-Asian or anti-immigrant behaviour. *While a significant number of Australians may not welcome Asians* (Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1989b), *only a very small number of Australians, on this evidence, are prepared to take overt action against Asians*.

If this argument is followed through, Blainey's intervention may be seen as flawed for two main reasons:-
(a) He has exaggerated the extent of concern about the social impact of Asian immigration.

(b) He has over-estimated the extent to which the fears and concerns of a minority will become translated into overt social action.

A second type of explanation concerns the legitimacy of anti-immigrant or anti-Asian behaviour, rather than the scale of support. In this argument, the confining of racial violence or abuse to small-scale and often clandestine attacks on people or property reflects the lack of social and political legitimacy for such behaviour within Australia. Were anti-Asian sentiments as legitimate in Australia as they have been in post-war Britain, then one might well have expected a greater degree of overt public disorder by opponents of immigration than has been the case. The statements by Geoffrey Blainey in 1984 and John Howard in 1988, though attracting massive publicity, have not undermined the political consensus which regards discriminatory behaviour against migrants on grounds of race or culture, to be illegitimate. This is reflected in the muted and implicit way in which John Howard returned to the issue, four years after Blainey had raised it.

Types of Public Disorders Connected with Immigration and Settlement

We now turn to a closer inspection of incidents of public disorder between 1985-9 which were connected in some way with processes of immigration and settlement. This analysis revealed three types of 'flash-points':

1. Disorders arising from protests by non-English speaking background migrants—in many cases refugees—about events or decisions that have taken place outside Australia.

2. Disorders arising from inter-ethnic clashes between people and/or representatives from two different migrant communities.

3. Disorders arising during soccer matches played between teams associated with particular ethnic communities.
We shall now examine each of these types of disorders in turn:

1. Disorders arising from protests by non-English speaking migrants about events or decisions that have taken place outside Australia.

Such disorders have usually arisen from conflicts between the actions of overseas governments and migrant protest against such actions. These have often been triggered by the presence of representatives or supporters of such governments in Australia. They have been classified as 'political' even though they involve a strong 'community' dimension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>30 April</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Clash between Vietnamese refugees and members of the Committee Against Repression in the Pacific and Asia, over the showing of film sympathetic to Ho Chi Minh (attack on hall, police intervention, 4 arrested, streets cleared in 1 hour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>3 May</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Clash between Vietnamese refugees and members of the Australian-Vietnam Society celebrating the 10th anniversary of the fall of Saigon (attack on hall by 200 participants, 2 injured, police in riot gear intervene)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>7 May</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Clash between Vietnamese refugees and members of the Spartacist League celebrating the 10th anniversary of the fall of Saigon (police intervention required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>16 May</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Aggressive demonstration by Afghan refugees against the presence of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (attack on Russian Consulate) (burning of flag, police intervention required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>26 April</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Clash between Afghan refugees and police outside Soviet Consulate on the occasion of the 8th anniversary of the Soviet-backed coup in Afghanistan. Flags burnt and death to Russia chants (police intervention to stop entry to Consulate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>5 May</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Ukrainian-Australian protest against Soviet inaction over the Chernobyl disaster, leading to occupation of Intourist offices and assault on staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>15th Oct</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Sikh protest on the situation of Sikhs in India during visit of Mrs Gandhi (very large police and security force present at hotel to control crowds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>6 Nov</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Palestinian protest at presence in Australia of President of Israel, organised by the PLO (large police and dog presence to control crowds)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1987 2 February Kew, Vic  Protest by 200 Tamils at presence of Sri Lankan Minister (burning of effigy and verbal abuse)

1987 27 Dec Sydney  Demonstration by Arab Islamic community against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

1988 27 Nov Sydney  Macedonian protest at lunch held in honour of visiting Greek President for a recent political statement that Macedonia belonged to Greece Car mobbed and kicked (police intervention with batons, 1 injured, 1 arrested)

1989 3 December Sydney 300 Armenian immigrants protest at Soviet Consulate over Soviet Government decision to return control of Ngarno-Kurabkh to Azerbaijan (scuffles with police)

Typically this type of disorder involves very few arrests or injuries. The aggressive or violent actions of participants are as much symbolic as actual (e.g. effigy or flag burning). Police involvement usually succeeds in protecting diplomatic property against incursion. In addition policing methods generally involve containment rather than para-military initiative. This reflects the political sensitivity of the issues involved in disorders implicating overseas governments.

In addition, it should be noted that this type of disorder is largely concentrated in Sydney where many embassies or consulates are located. Much of the protest is by refugees rather than economic migrants, and the target in the majority of cases is the Soviet or some other Communist government. There is some evidence that anti-Soviet demonstrators from different ethnic groups have joined forces to augment each others' protest activities.

It should also be noted that the genesis of these disorders is legitimate protest over international political issues relating to the political and cultural experiences and backgrounds of a significant range of migrants to Australia. Not all protests of this kind are disorderly. However it is to be expected that disorders will often arise in the politically-charged situations typically involved, and it is equally to be expected that such incidents will continue to be manifest in Australia given existing traditions of conflict between Australian immigrants and overseas governments.

46 PUBLIC DISORDER IN AUSTRALIA
2. Disorders within or between Ethnic Communities

It is very difficult to insist on a clear distinction between 'political' and 'community' disorders involving migrants. This is primarily because political action and protest is a typical mode of action by which communities seek to influence public policy and the political process both in Australia and overseas. Nonetheless there is a distinction to be made between disorders primarily directed at political targets, such as Government policies or representatives, and disorders in which groups located within particular residential communities of migrants conflict with each other.

Between 1985-9 the following 10 events of this kind have been reported:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>7 July</td>
<td>Bankstown NSW</td>
<td>'Gang battle' between 750 Vietnamese and Lebanese, triggered by assault on a boy of 13. Palings were ripped from fences for weapons. Ended with police arrival, 8 injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>16th July</td>
<td>Marrickville NSW</td>
<td>Brawl between around 50 Vietnamese and Lebanese. 1 seriously injured, 1 arrested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>28 Nov</td>
<td>Springvale Victoria</td>
<td>Croatian demonstration and attacks on guests attending a dinner to celebrate Yugoslavia's national day, 8 injured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>2 Oct</td>
<td>Griffith NSW</td>
<td>Clashes between Italian and Aboriginal youths at the Griffith show. Over 100 participants and 5 Aborigines arrested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>19 Nov</td>
<td>Kings Cross NSW</td>
<td>Large brawl involving Tongans and others, sketchy details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>25 Nov</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Croatian protest outside Yugoslav Consulate over celebration of Yugoslav national day. Boy shot by Consulate security guard after group attempted to scale fence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>26 Nov</td>
<td>Keysborough Vic</td>
<td>Croatian protest over Yugoslav national day celebration. Police intervention called for after fights broke out; 20 arrested, several police injured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>4 July</td>
<td>Sydney NSW</td>
<td>Clashes between 200 rural Assyrian faction members over control of church. Police intervention, several people injured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>8 July</td>
<td>Fairfield NSW</td>
<td>Renewed clashes between Assyrian factions. Begun in Fairfield shopping centre and injured followed to hospital where renewed fighting broke out; 2 arrests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>6 August</td>
<td>Arncliffe</td>
<td>Clash between two Lebanese factions over control of the Shi'a mosque. Nearly 1000 participants, 7 injured, six arrests. Large police involvement in containment and mediation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disorders of this type are usually located within particular residential communities and have strong cultural as well as political overtones. In the case of Yugoslav-Croat conflicts, these continue older historic rivalries. In the case of Vietnamese-Lebanese, or Italian-Aboriginal conflicts these involve new areas of inter-ethnic conflict developed within Australia.

It is reasonable to suppose that overt inter-ethnic disorders of this kind represent the more visible and tangible aspects of more deep-seated problems of community relations, reflected in individual-level assaults, abuse and feuding.

In the case of the Vietnamese-Lebanese disorders of 1986, there is evidence that these represent instances of longer term tensions between the two groups. Other instances of similar disorders are reported for 1983. Such clashes have generally been linked to conditions of economic deprivation and high unemployment in the two communities, competing for scarce jobs in the same segments of the labour market. It is arguable that improvements in the economic position of these groups are now occurring with increased length of residence. If so this should tend to mitigate inter-ethnic rivalry and disorder of this kind. This has in fact happened in New South Wales since 1986.

The prognosis is that inter-ethnic clashes involving newly arrived economic migrants competing in the same labour market are more likely to abate, than more historic conflicts such as those between Serbs and Croats which have been built into the ethnic identity of many members of such groups. However, prognoses of this kind are somewhat speculative. More research in this area is therefore recommended to examine more closely the scale and dynamics of disorders of this kind.

3. Disorders arising during soccer matches played between teams associated with particular ethnic communities.

It is a well-known feature of Australian soccer that many of the leading clubs are associated with particular ethnic communities. It is also well-known that soccer overseas has produced many instances of crowd violence, in Britain, Europe and South America. Between 1985-9, seven major soccer crowd disorders were reported in *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, four of which involved conflict between supporters
from different ethnic communities. How far such incidents relate to specifically ethnic rivalries and how far to other issues is unclear.

These instances were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>19 Jan</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Clash between supporters of Melbourne Hellas and Melbourne Croatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cans thrown at players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>7 July</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>500 rural supporters of Sydney City and Sydney Olympic invaded the pitch, leading to the abandonment of the match. Crowd attacks on players and referees (1 arrest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>10 May</td>
<td>Footscray Vic</td>
<td>Clash at the end of match between Footscray Just and Sydney Croatia (4 police injured, 24 supporters detained and 10 charged)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>28 May</td>
<td>Yanchep WA</td>
<td>Clash between Vietnamese supporters and Yanchep locals during soccer match, including the use of offensive weapons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no research literature on this type of disorder in Australia upon which analyses of causal factors might be based. It is therefore unclear whether it has any direct connection with processes of immigration and settlement. Soccer crowd violence may relate more to the adversary character of body-contact sport, or to the socio-economic composition of crowds based on working-class communities experiencing high levels of unemployment. Nor is there any direct evidence of racial or ethnic motivation in the types of violent eruptions that took place.

At the same time it is undeniable that many club supporters see soccer as an aspect of their ethnic identity. This is reflected in club names derived from European national or club sources. It is also reflected in the wearing of national colours and the carrying of national flags at games. It is however difficult to determine how far these symbolic associations create an exclusively ethnic motivation in soccer crowd violence. Certainly none of the four examples cited draw on historic rivalries transplanted to Australia. It is difficult therefore to see clashes between Italian and Croatian or Italian and Greek background supporters as an episode in a more deep-seated rivalry. This is because conflicts in football stadia do not appear to be reproduced in the world outside.
For these reasons it is argued that this category bears only an indirect relationship with immigration and settlement.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reports on patterns of public disorder in Australia between 1985 and 1989. It draws attention to the limited level of disorder involving immigration and settlement. In particular it rebuts Blainey's view of mounting community tension concerning Asian immigration, at least in relation to overt instances of collective violence.
Do patterns of disorder represent a continuity, or a break in trend from what went before? In order to address this issue, the 21-year time-series of incidents reported in The Age is utilised.

Between 1969 and 1989, a total of 744 incidents have been identified from The Age, which together with the 102 incidents reported solely in The Sydney Morning Herald create a grand total of 846 incidents. This represents an average of just over 40 incidents per year.

The first set of issues arising from this longer time-series of incidents, concerns the long-term trend in public disorder in Australia since the late 1960s. Is Australia becoming a more or less disorderly place, and has the development of Asian immigration created any effect on reported rates of disorder?

In order to ensure comparability in the scope of data-collection procedures over time, Table 7 focuses on the time-series of incidents reported in The Age between 1969 and 1989. This single-newspaper focus is necessary because pre-1985 data have not been collected from The Sydney Morning Herald.

**Table 7: Reported Rates of Public Disorder in The Age 1969-89**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>AGGREGATE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Peak years when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>anti-Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>war protests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>are prominent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>no consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>increase even</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several features of this unique data-set are worthy of comment.

The first is that aggregate patterns of reported public disorder show no clear secular trend over the 21-year period. If anything, the aggregate pattern is cyclical rather than exhibiting any underlying trend to greater or lesser levels of public disorder. These data do not support the hypothesis that Australia is becoming a more disorderly place—at least in terms of overt disorder involving significant numbers of people.

The second is that the aggregate patterns show several ‘peaks’ including the years 1970-72, 1978, 1988 connected with different types of disorder, rather than with one single type of disorder.

The third is that there is no clear linear correlation between the increase in Asian immigration in the 1970s and 1980s and reported rates of public disorder of whatever type. It is, of course, highly likely that disorderly incidents do not emerge in any linear or mechanistic way in response to given stimuli, rather they may be expected to be episodic and explosive. Nonetheless in order to test for any type of relationship between disorder and Asian or NESB immigration and settlement it is necessary once again to disaggregate the overall pattern into sub-categories. In particular, the increase in disorder between 1982 and 1984, the date of Blainey’s intervention, requires further attention to determine whether his contribution occurred in response to a flood-tide of immigration-related disorder.
In turning from analysis of scale to the classification of incidents, the concern is less with magnitudes than with proportions of incidents within categories. The following analyses are therefore based upon the full sample of 846 incidents. Taking the entire set of incidents over the period 1969-89, the predominant categories of disorder involve once again ‘political’ and ‘community’ categories, as outlined in Table 8.

**TABLE 8: TYPOLOGY OF REPORTED PUBLIC DISORDER 1969-89**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1969-84</th>
<th>1985-89</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POLITICAL</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPORTS-LEISURE</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDUSTRIAL</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>846</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data indicate that nearly half of all incidents are associated with ‘political’ issues; over a quarter, with ‘community’ issues; and the remainder divided between ‘sport-leisure’, ‘industrial’, and the ‘other’ category. Amongst the incidents recorded as ‘other’ are prison riots, and student-related disorders over institutional issues as distinct from Government policy.

Changes are evident however in the typology of public disorder over time. Table 9 compares disorder in the last 5 years (1985-9) with that of the previous 16 years (1969-84).

**TABLE 9: CHANGING TYPOLOGY OF REPORTED PUBLIC DISORDER OVER TIME 1969-89 (% SHARES)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1969-84</th>
<th>1985-89</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POLITICAL</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPORTS-LEISURE</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDUSTRIAL</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shows a marked relative decline in the ‘political’ category and a significant increase in the relative importance of ‘community’ and ‘industrial’ disorders as classified here.
Changes over time are also evident in the various sub-classifications within the four major categories. Within the ‘political’ category, for example, the end of anti-Vietnam war protests in 1975, was only partly offset by the growth of new types of disorder in the 1980s, such as those connected with conservation. Meanwhile, in the community category, very rapid expansions of disorder involved Aboriginal people and related to land rights and to community relations.

Rates of change of disorders involving issues of migration and ethnicity are not especially striking. Some expansion is evident, however, both in the numbers of incidents involving ethnic groups protesting against events outside Australia, and in incidents of inter-ethnic violence. Table 10 outlines the salient changes between 1969-84 and 1985-89.

**TABLE 10: THE NUMBERS OF PARTICULAR TYPES OF INCIDENTS REPORTED PER YEAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident Type</th>
<th>1969-84</th>
<th>1985-89</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations by ethnic groups over events outside Australia</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-ethnic violence</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data indicate a more rapid growth in inter-ethnic violence than the community disorder as a whole. They also show a lesser rate of increase in disorderly demonstrations by ethnic groups over events outside Australia.

These findings do not, however, lend much tangible support for Blainey's belief in a build-up in social tension within the neighbourhood concerning Asian immigration. Although there is some increase in both categories from 1985 onwards, there is little evidence of overt tensions between Australian residents and Asian migrants in 1983 and 1984, that is, in the period leading up to Blainey’s Warrnambool speech. The two disorders identified in this study as ‘Blainey incidents’, refer to student attempts to prevent Blainey speaking to audiences in universities.
Commentary

Using the measure of public disorder developed in this study, there is no evidence of overt collective behaviour directed against immigration in general, and Asian immigration in particular. This does not mean that racist attacks and abuse were not present. Nor does it mean that many Australian residents found the presence of recently arrived South-East Asian immigrants 'strange'/'perturbing'. We may hypothesise that between the extremes of racist opposition and active welcome, there is a range of intermediate positions from racial prejudice through 'puzzlement' and 'anxiety' to 'tolerance'.

The issue of the Vietnamese charged with killing a dog to eat, well-publicised in the press in the year prior to Blainey's speech, dramatises a sense of contrast, unfamiliarity and distaste between prevailing Australian cultural mores and a quite normal Vietnamese culinary practice. The limited public concern expressed about this incident, the confining of much of that concern to the fate of the animal rather than to racist hostility to Vietnamese, and the lack of widespread evidence of similar examples of overt culture clash, suggest that many Australians occupy a middle position on this spectrum. This position finds Vietnamese practices unfamiliar and possibly threatening, but not something to be actively opposed or uncritically welcomed as an expression of cultural diversity. If Blainey were correct, one would expect to find either more instances of overt disorder arising as a result of active hostility by residents to Vietnamese and other Asians, or more cases of public concern about the impact of Vietnamese and other Asian cultural practices on Australian society. With the exception of very recent concerns about Vietnamese gangs, criminal activity and inter-personal violence, no other major concern has emerged into the public agenda of debate. Against this, considerable sympathy and support has been given to Vietnamese as refugees fleeing war and trauma.

The context in which Blainey wrote was not one in which impending social conflict and disorder over immigration was rampant. It was, however, one in which certain social changes had recently come about. These included:-

(a) an increase in Indo-Chinese immigration in the early 1980s reaching short-term peaks which have not since been repeated.
(b) a temporary increase in unemployment in the early 1980s which subsequently abated—at least in aggregate terms.

The timing of the Blainey debate was set by the intersection of these trends in the context of the considerable cultural contrasts between Indo-Chinese and Australian ways of life. The inferences that Blainey and others drew from these trends relating to the dynamics of Asian immigration and Australian social cohesion were, at least on the evidence presented here, unfounded.

The specific context in which Blainey's speech was made had changed by August 1988 when John Howard, then Leader of the Opposition, made a much publicised speech on immigration. This alluded to concerns over Asian immigration and social cohesion, but refrained from more explicit propositions about the actual state of community relations in Australia. While Howard's speech was much quoted, it appeared from the evidence reviewed here to have had little impact on overt anti-Asian and anti-immigration behaviour. There is little doubt, however, that this speech was widely thought to have influenced attitudes both of Asian immigrants towards the Liberal Party, and of racists and opponents of immigration towards the legitimacy of publicly expressing anti-Asian sentiments. How far those sentiments may have stimulated anti-Asian incidents, such as racial abuse or attacks is unclear on the basis of newspaper data.

Overall, we may conclude that the contributions to the immigration debate by Geoffrey Blainey and John Howard have shaken, but not undermined, the prevailing view as to the illegitimacy of a racially discriminatory immigration policy. Blainey's scenario of mounting social tension has not (as yet) appeared, thereby explaining the very muted and defensive approach of Howard's speech, designed to test the strength of popular feeling on Asian immigration. From the evidence assembled here, it seems that Australia's immigration and settlement policies have so far weathered the storm created by the Blainey debate.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This research set out to address the following four objectives:-

(a) to determine levels and types of public disorder in Australia between 1985 and 1989, including the proportion of disorders involving ethnicity and immigrant status.

(b) to analyse the character and timing of public disorders involving Asian immigration as an issue.

(c) to analyse the issues raised by public disorders involving Asian immigration, including the impact of major public speeches by politicians and academics on disorder.

(d) to discover whether Asian immigration threatens public order, or whether there are alternative and more powerful explanations of disorderliness.

These objectives were to be seen in terms of current public policy debates about the relationship between multiculturalism and social cohesion, and to make a contribution to community relations policy.

The entire set of issues discussed here was dramatised by the speeches and writings of Geoffrey Blainey. This study is intended, in part, as an evaluation of Blainey's views about Asian immigration and perceived threats to Australia's social cohesion. The challenges raised by Blainey are identified in Chapter Two in terms of a series of propositions connecting immigration in general, and Asian immigration in particular, with labour market pressure and changes in urban neighbourhoods, leading, in turn, to social tension and conflict. A number of general problems and weaknesses in Blainey's argument are also outlined at that stage.

The research design adopted in this study is able to address some, but not all, aspects of Blainey's arguments. Above all, it is intended to scrutinise Blainey's assumptions about
the scale of social tension and communal conflict associated with processes of immigration and settlement. The main aim here is to confront assumptions and assertions with hard evidence of social tension.

The review of literature in the second part of Chapter Two indicates how little evidence exists on social tension and public disorder in Australia. It also identifies a number of important insights into the theory of public disorder derived from the overseas experience with particular reference to the U.S.A. and Britain. These insights tend to be sceptical of evolutionary theories of public disorder or collective violence, which stress long-run trends to greater or lesser levels of disorder. The emphasis is rather on the complex conjunctural nature of public disorder and civil strife. Complexity here involves the interaction of economic conditions and well-being with 'political' factors, notably the extent to which particular groups are integrated within the broader social and political community. In this approach, conflicts and violent disorders arise when excluded groups seek inclusion within a community and may be connected either with protest struggles to be included, or with the resistance of powerful groups to such exclusion, or both.

The research design outlined in Chapter Three examines the following issues:-
(a) Definition and conceptualisation of public disorder
(b) Potential sources of data on public disorder
(c) Newspaper-based research design
(d) Methodology of the current study

In this chapter difficulties are identified in the conceptualisation of public disorder, including the analytical distinction between disorder, violence and crime. A working definition of public disorder is developed based on the research of Ted Gurr, the American political scientist, on 'civil strife'. This is formulated as follows:

Any violent or illegitimate action involving 10 or more persons, other than actions by agents of the Government, directed against persons or property.

On this basis, a number of potential data sources are examined. Routine criminal statistics and police-logs are considered as one possibility, but rejected as the preferred
data-source because they generally lack sufficient data on the character of collective action during disorderly events.

The preferred research design, already utilised overseas and in an earlier Australian study of the period 1969-89, focuses on newspaper data. This is regarded as an imperfect, but nonetheless usable, source under certain methodological safeguards and checks.

The methodology of the present study involved the systematic analysis of disorderly events between 1985-89 using two newspapers for wider scope and cross-checking. Events themselves were classified according to a typology developed by the English sociologist Eric Dunning. This involved a sub-division into political, community, leisure/sport and industrial disorders.

Chapters Four and Five report the major findings of the study. The main thrust of the findings is that no discernible increase in overt disorder is reported in community relations between Asian migrants and other Australian residents during the period between 1985-9. While smaller-scale incidents of racial abuse and attacks may be prevalent, we found no significant evidence of larger scale riots, violent protests or other kinds of disorder linked to Asian immigration. From this it may be inferred that Geoffrey Blainey exaggerated the threat to social cohesion in Australia due to Asian immigration.

Other types of connection between immigration and disorder are examined, and statistical data presented on three specific types, namely:-
(a) disorders involving members of ethnic groups over events outside Australia
(b) violence between or within migrant communities
(c) soccer crowd violence

Between them, these disorders amounted to less than 10% of all reported disorders. Few of them actually involved Asians with the exception of Vietnamese.

Another finding of the study is that anti-Asian feeling, insofar as it exists among a minority may be covert, rather than overt, in expression. The apparent contradiction between low reported levels of anti-immigrant or anti-Asian public disorder, on the one
hand, and anecdotal evidence of high levels of offensive graffiti and street abuse may be explained by the lack of legitimacy surrounding public statements of anti-Asian feeling. This is consistent with other survey data indicating that a majority of Australian residents tolerate if they do not actually support Asian (or Vietnamese) migrants. This has limited the impact of speeches by Blainey and Howard inviting adverse interpretations of the Asian presence in Australia.

Other evidence reviewed for the longer period 1969-89 does not support the view that Blainey was commenting on a rising tide of overt anti-Asian behaviour. There is no hard evidence of this rising tide, though there is some evidence of community concern. Much of this, however, took place in the context of an increase in unemployment in the early 1980s, coupled with a growth in the Asian intake and a realisation of considerable cultural contrasts between Vietnamese and the Anglo-Celtic majority in Australia.

The limits of this study are that they deal with larger overt instances of disorder, rather than smaller-scale, but equally serious disorders involving attacks by individuals or small groups on other individuals and small groups. We cannot offer any informed comment on such activities.
Recommendations

In the light of these findings, the following recommendations are made in two key areas:

1. Information and Research

1.1 It is recommended that steps be taken to gain further information on the scale of racial attacks in Australia in recent years.

This recommendation should be reviewed in the light of the (presently unavailable) data collected by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission National Enquiry into Racist Violence, to determine how far this Enquiry has been able to collect and analyse the relevant data.

1.2 It is recommended that an on-going monitoring process of public disorder in Australia be established to overcome delays between information gathering and public policy response.

This recommendation should be explored by The Office of Multicultural Affairs in conjunction with the Attorney-General's Department and, through them, the National Police Research Unit. It is desirable that any monitoring of this kind include all types of disorder, rather than only those involving immigration and settlement.

1.3 It is recommended that information on school-level racial and ethnic tensions be collated and analysed to address a sensitive area of difficulty which is currently under-explored.

2. Community Relations Policy

2.1 It is recommended that The Office of Multicultural Affairs facilitate an information campaign to the general public stressing the importance and success of Multiculturalism as a policy of social cohesion, beyond already existing campaigns.
2.2 It is recommended that particular attention be given to the disorder 'flashpoints' identified here in the formulation of community relations policies, especially those relating to inter-ethnic violence and to soccer crowd violence.

2.3 With respect to soccer crowd violence it is recommended that initiatives in the area of multiculturalism and sport include a campaign to create 'multicultural' soccer. This perspective should not involve "de-ethnicisation" of soccer clubs, but rather the involvement of such clubs in a multicultural program to emphasise the sharing of differences, and the existence of common bonds.
APPENDIX

PUBLIC DISORDER PROJECT
INCIDENT REPORT SHEET

1. CASE NUMBER
2. SOURCE
3. DATE
4. LOCATION (city)
5. LOCATION (state)
6. TYPE OF DISTURBANCE (including grievances)
7. HOMOGENEITY
8. AGE-SEX COMPOSITION
9. OCCUPATIONAL COMPOSITION
10. ETHNIC COMPOSITION
11. SOCIO-GEOGRAPHIC CHARACTER OF LOCATION OF DISORDER
12. LOCATION OF DISORDER AND COMMUNITY LOCATION OF PARTICIPANTS
13. LEVEL OF MIGRANT SETTLEMENT
14. NO. OF PERSONS PARTICIPATING
15. DURATION (days)
16. TOTAL PERSON-DAYS
17. NUMBER KILLED
18. NUMBER REPORTED INJURED
19. NUMBER ARRESTED
20. VALUE OF PROPERTY DAMAGE
21. INTERVENTION OF POLICE
22. LARGEST NO. POLICE INVOLVED
23. INTERVENTION BY ARMY
24. INVOLVEMENT OF PRIVATE SECURITY AGENCIES
25. PRESUMED ORIGINS - IMMEDIATE REASONS
26. PRESUMED ORIGINS - BACKGROUND REASONS
27. CONNECTION WITH PREVIOUS DISTURBANCES
28. CONNECTION WITH SUBSEQUENT DISTURBANCES
29. OTHER COMMENTS - INCLUDING BRIEF DESCRIPTION
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