



Editor's Introduction

Theorizing Crime and Media

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Part 1 Media 'Effects'

Students and researchers of both criminology and media studies have sought to understand the connections between media and crime for well over a century. With new media developments including satellite, digital and interactive technologies, and criminal behaviour evolving to exploit these advances in knowledge and practice, the time seems right to bring together a collection of some of the most interesting and influential readings in the field.

Although both crime and media have 'advanced' over the last century, some long-standing debates about their relationship refuse to go away. One of the most enduring questions in academic and lay circles is the extent to which television programmes, films, DVDs, websites and computer games can be said to cause anti-social, deviant or criminal behaviour. In some academic circles, and certainly in popular discourse, it has become something of a truism that media images are responsible for eroding moral standards, subverting consensual codes of behaviour and corrupting young minds. The relationship between media and audiences is sometimes referred to as the 'hypodermic syringe' model because it is conceived as a mechanistic and unsophisticated process, by which the media 'inject' values, ideas and information directly into the passive receiver, producing direct and unmediated 'effects' which, in turn, have a negative influence on thoughts and actions. But after a hundred years of research into the subject, to what degree can we say with any certainty that media content causes negative effects in audiences?

It is often taken as an unassailable fact that society has become more violent since the advent of the modern media industry. The arrival and growth of cinema, television and, latterly, computer technologies, have served to intensify public anxieties but there are few crime waves that are genuinely new phenomena, despite the media's efforts to present them as such. For many observers, it is a matter of 'common sense' that society has become increasingly characterized by (violent) crime since the advent of broadcasting, resulting in a persistent mythology that the two phenomena – visual media and violent crime – are 'naturally' linked. Yet as Geoffrey Pearson (1983) illustrates, the history of respectable fears goes back several hundred years, and public outrage at perceived crime waves



has become more intensely focused with the introduction of each new media innovation. From theatrical productions in the eighteenth century, the birth of commercial cinema and the emergence of cheap, sensationalistic publications known as 'Penny Dreadfuls' at the end of the nineteenth century, to jazz and 'pulp fiction' in the early twentieth century, popular fears about the influence of visual images on vulnerable minds have been well rehearsed.

Anxieties were frequently crystallised in the notion of 'the crowd' and it became a popular nineteenth century myth that when people mass together they are suggestible to outside influences and become irrational, even animalistic. Fears about how people behave when part of a crowd precipitated 'mass society theory' which was influenced by the work of sociologist Emile Durkheim and developed in the latter years of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. This was a protracted period of global turbulence and uncertainty, and mass society theorists held that social upheavals associated with industrialization, urbanization and the Great War had made people feel increasingly vulnerable. The first article in this volume, written by Hadley Cantril, provides a famous example from the United States that appears to support mass society theory's belief in an omnipresent and potentially harmful media consumed uncritically by a susceptible audience. It concerns the radio transmission of H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* on Hallowe'en Night in October 1938 and 'the nature and extent of the panic' that ensued. The broadcast was a fictitious drama concerning the invasion of aliens from Mars but many believed they were listening to a **real** report of a Martian attack. People in several parts of the United States fled their homes and telephoned loved ones to say emotional farewells. One in six listeners were said to have been very frightened by the broadcast, a fear that was exacerbated by the gravitas of the narrator, Orson Wells, and by the cast of 'experts' giving orders for evacuation and attack. As one listener said: 'I believed the broadcast as soon as I heard the professor from Princeton and the officials in Washington' (Cantril, 1940: 9).

The example of the *War of the Worlds* broadcast would appear to support the view that the modern media are capable of exerting harmful influences, of triggering mass outbreaks of negative social consequence and of causing damaging psychological effects. Like the invading Martians with their ray guns and poisonous gasses, the media might be perceived as alien invaders, dangerous and threatening in their impact on established forms of social and cultural life (O'Sullivan and Jewkes, 1997). However, to characterize the episode as 'proof' of the hypodermic syringe effect of the media would be very misleading. The relationship between stimulus and response was not simple or direct because, quite simply, the panic experienced by some listeners was not without context. It was the time of the Depression, and American citizens were experiencing a prolonged period of economic unrest and widespread unemployment and were looking to their leaders for reassurance and direction. War was breaking out in Europe and many believed that an attack by a foreign power was imminent. It is perhaps understandable, then, that the life-like quality of the broadcast – played out as an extended news report in which the radio announcer appeared to be actually witnessing terrible events unfolding before him – powerfully tapped into the feelings of insecurity, change and loss being experienced by many American people, to produce a panic of this magnitude.

In addition to the sociological theory of 'mass society', models of media effects have also been strongly influenced by an approach from psychology known as 'behaviourism' which itself derives from 'positivism', a philosophy which emerged from the natural sciences and which regards the world as fixed and quantifiable. In Criminology, positivism is most often linked to the work of Cesare Lombroso who believed that the causes of crime are to be found in individual biology. While Lombroso was working on the task of isolating the variables most likely to be found in criminals as distinct from non-criminals, and writing his famous books *The Criminal Man* (1876) and *The Female Offender* (1895), media researchers were also developing new theories based on positivist assumptions and behaviourist methods. The notion that all human action is modelled on the condition reflex so that one's action is precipitated by responses to stimuli in one's environment rather than being a matter of individual agency made the new media of mass communications an obvious candidate for concern. In the context of research into media effects, this approach most often resulted in experiments being carried out under laboratory conditions to try to establish a direct causal link between media images of a violent or potentially harmful nature and resultant changes in actual behaviour, notably an inclination among the research participants to demonstrate markedly agitated or aggressive tendencies.

One of the most famous series of experiments was that conducted by Albert Bandura and colleagues at Stanford University, California in the 1950s and 1960s. Typically, children aged between three and five years were shown a film or cartoon depicting some kind of violent act or, as described here in article 2, were witness to an adult behaving aggressively - and were then given 'Bobo' dolls to play with (these were large inflatable dolls with weighted bases to ensure that they wobbled but did not stay down when struck). Their behaviour towards the dolls was used as a measure of the power of imitation, and when the children were observed behaving aggressively (compared to a control group) it was taken as evidence that a direct relationship existed between observed aggression and imitative behaviour. Bandura et al's study also notes that quite complex gender patterns emerge in the imitation of adult aggressive behaviour with both boys and girls approving of and imitating a male adult's physical aggression but that, when it comes to verbal aggression, the greatest amount of imitation occurs in relation to the same-sex adult; indeed the male children had quite strong views about what constitutes gender appropriate behaviour.

Although these studies were undoubtedly influential in endorsing the view that violent media portrayals can cause 'copycat' behaviour, they are hugely problematic for several reasons. They fail to replicate a 'real life' media environment; they reduce complex patterns of human behaviour to a single factor among a wide network of mediating influences and might be said to treat children as unsophisticated 'lab rats'; they are able to measure only immediate responses to media content and having nothing to say about the long-term, cumulative effects of exposure to violent material; they use dolls designed to frustrate; the experimenters praise or reward children when they behaved as 'expected'; and they frequently overlook the fact that children who had not been shown any film stimulus were nevertheless found to behave aggressively towards the Bobo doll if left with it - and especially if they were felt it was expected of them by the experimenter. In article 3 David Gauntlett expands on these criticisms, outlining 'ten

things wrong with the “effects model”. He illustrates how, despite the ‘scientific’ status they claim, behaviourist methods have been rejected by most contemporary media scholars on the grounds of their great many flaws and inconsistencies. He also underlines the importance of seeking explanations for aggressive and violent behaviour in forms of social exclusion rather than isolating media from social context for the sake of a convenient scapegoat.

Despite the cogency (in this writer’s opinion, at least) of Gauntlett’s arguments, the idea of a direct, causal link between media consumption and behaviour is still popularly held and re-emerges whenever particularly serious and shocking crimes occur. ‘Common sense’ beliefs about harmful media effects usually take one of three forms. The first is a moral or religious concern that exposure to the popular media encourages lewdness, sexual promiscuity and copycat violence. A second anxiety, from the intellectual right, is that the media undermine the civilizing influence of high culture (great literature, art, and so on) and debase tastes. A third concern, which has traditionally been associated with the intellectual left, is that the media represent the ruling élite, and manipulate mass consciousness in their interests. This view was first aired when the fascist and totalitarian governments that emerged across Europe in the 1920s and 1930s used propaganda to win the hearts and minds of the people. The belief that the new media of mass communications were among the most powerful weapons of these political regimes was given academic attention by members of the Frankfurt School – a group of predominantly Jewish scholars who fled Hitler’s Germany for the USA.

In academic studies of crime and media, however, a belief in the power of media effects has all but disappeared from scholarship outside of the United States. As Gauntlett intimates, the idea of isolating television, film, or any other medium as a variable and ignoring all the other factors that might influence a person’s behaviour (family, education, peer pressure, legality and availability of weapons, etc.) is considered too crude and reductive an idea to be of any epistemological value. Much effects research cannot adequately address the subtleties of media meanings, the polysemy of media texts (that is, they are open to multiple interpretations), the unique characteristics and identity of the audience member, or the social and cultural context within which the encounter between media text and audience member occurs. It mistakenly assumes that we all have the same ideas about what constitutes ‘aggression’, ‘violence’ and ‘deviance’, and that those who are susceptible to harmful portrayals can be affected by a ‘one-off’ media incident, regardless of the wider context of a lifetime of meaning-making (Boyd-Barrett, 2002). It also ignores the possibility that influence travels the opposite way; i.e. that the characteristics, interests and concerns of the audience may determine what media producers produce.

Yet notwithstanding the obvious flaws in traditional effects research, the legacy of Bandura and his colleagues is still strongly felt in much commentary on the subject and behaviourist assumptions about the power of the media to influence criminal and anti-social behaviour (ironically) underpin discussions within the popular media in most countries. Of particular salience in the public imagination is the notion that media content may lead to copycat acts of violence. This view is prominently aired when spree killings occur, especially those on school and college campuses perpetrated by disaffected students, and when new films and computer games are released that are clearly aimed at consumers younger than the official classification awarded them. For example, in the UK,

much social commentary was generated by the release of *Grand Theft Auto IV* in April 2008 because of its violent content and themes. Despite being awarded an 'adult-only' 18-certificate, several national newspapers published reviews of the game written by children as young as twelve.

Debates about 'effects' are not restricted to trying to establish a direct, causal link between media content and imitative behaviour. A different, yet equally enduring thesis on the influence of the media is the concept of 'moral panic' popularized by Stanley Cohen in his book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, from which article 4 is taken. Although the concept has become something of a catch-all used to describe public reaction to **any** unpleasant phenomenon from paedophiles to flu epidemics, Cohen's original discussion of moral panic refers to public and political reactions to minority or marginalized groups, usually young people, who appear to be some kind of threat to societal values and interests. The subjects of Cohen's analysis are mods and rockers; two rival youth groups who emerged in England in the 1960s and whose different styles of dress, taste in music, and preferred modes of transport (scooters and motor bikes respectively) marked their sense of tribalism and antipathy towards each other. In article 4, Cohen describes what happened when the two groups met on the beaches of several English coastal towns on a public holiday in May 1964. Scuffles and fights occurred which were subsequently over-reported by the press, who described it in terms such as 'day of terror' and 'orgy of destruction'. Over the course of a few days, the actual deviance that took place became amplified to a level where a sense of collective panic set in similar, in Cohen's view, to the kind of mentality that prevails when a disaster takes place. The response of the authorities also mirrors that which occurs in time of disaster: first there is a short period characterized by disorganization and panic; then follows an 'inventory' phase during which those exposed to the disaster take stock, assess their own condition and make predictions about future calamities.

While Cohen's study of moral panics has proved to be one of the most influential and enduring studies in the history of media and crime scholarship, it is not without its critics (although it should be emphasized that it was never Cohen's intention to present a fully-formed thesis; the concept of 'moral panic' was exploratory, yet took flight in a manner probably not anticipated by the author). Regarded by many media scholars as reactionary, paternalistic and overly media-centric, the model is highly problematic in numerous respects (Jewkes, 2004). To take just a few shortcomings: society is not as monolithic and functionalist as implied and youth cultures may be far more knowing about the likely reaction to their deviant activities than is sometimes suggested; the genuine, deep-seated anxieties at the root of reaction, and the 'outsiders' onto whom these anxieties are displaced, have become secondary concerns amidst all the rhetoric about the persuasive powers of the media; the desire to search for a single causal explanation for undesirable moral or social changes – television for the 'disappearance' of childhood; adolescents for a suspected decline in social morality; the Internet for facilitating the activities of paedophiles – almost certainly serves to deflect attention away from other possible causes; the concentration on symptoms, rather than causes or long-term effects, leads to a somewhat superficial analysis of crime and deviance and frequently negates the fact that those who commit crimes are not 'others', they are 'us' and are of our making (Jewkes, 2004); and in a multi-mediated world where global media events vie for public attention

xx **Editor's Introduction**

with interpersonal forms of communication within small groups of friends, the idea of macro-level responses have declined in probability. Above all, the construction of crime and deviance as moral panic designed to sell newspapers, signifies a shift from 'hard' news towards the safe territory of sensationalised reporting and public entertainment. Consequently, a faithful adherence to the moral panic thesis may make it impossible to arrive at a balanced and reasonable estimation of the real role of media in people's lives and the true impact of crime on society.

It is for these kinds of reasons that Angela McRobbie and Sarah L. Thornton urge us to 'rethink' moral panics in article 5. Although one of several much-cited commentaries on Cohen's work, and of undoubted influence in the development of the moral panic thesis in a context of a proliferating and fragmenting media, McRobbie and Thornton's piece was published at a time when the UK media had undergone deregulation resulting in a plurality of magazine titles and broadcast channels becoming available, but before internet news services and social networking sites took off and the social world became truly multi-mediated. That said, in the current context of 24-hour rolling news and audience-participation (via reality television, audience phone-ins, talk radio etc), their observation that moral panics have ceased to be events that happen 'every now and then' (Cohen, 1972: 9) and have become the standard way of reporting news in an ever increasing spiral of hyperbole and 'ridiculous rhetoric' (p. 560) designed to grab our attention in a crowded media marketplace, is indisputable.

McRobbie and Thornton outline the trajectory of moral panics from the work of Becker (1963) and Wilkins (1964) who developed theories of labelling and deviancy amplification respectively, through the work of Jock Young (1971), Geoffrey Pearson (1983) and Stuart Hall et al (1978). Sharing a Marxist theoretical vocabulary, all these 'classic' studies aim to demonstrate how moral panics act on behalf of those in power to elicit public support for increasingly repressive measures of social and legal control. McRobbie and Thornton further comment on more radical developments of, and departures from, the moral panic model, including Watney's (1987) study of media responses to HIV and AIDS which calls for a more sophisticated understanding of human motivations for marginalizing certain groups.

In article 6 David Garland also reassesses the moral panic thesis but from the vantage point of the twenty-first century. His theoretical framework is the sociology of social reaction, and he charts the trajectory of moral panic from its foundations in the Durkheimian tradition to the criticism voiced in the 1980s by left realists led by Jock Young. Garland argues that there has been a shift away from moral panics as traditionally conceived (involving a vertical relation between society and a deviant group) towards 'culture wars' (a more horizontal conflict between social groups). This implies a much more multifaceted and politically attuned approach to understanding the nature of power in society. It also reminds us that, far from bowing under the weight of collective anxiety and endless, cyclical panicky-ness – a state that, as Richard Sparks (1992) has argued, is ontologically unsustainable – there is some excitement and enjoyment to be had from passionate mass public outrage.

In article 7 Sparks joins McRobbie, Thornton and Garland in arguing for a more complex and nuanced interpretation of the role of the media in informing public perceptions of crime and punishment. Employing three of the most discussed and

debated terms in the social sciences of recent years, 'populism', 'risk' and 'fear', Sparks explores the relationship between media and audiences but argues that the lines of influence – 'effects' as they have traditionally been conceived – are far more complicated and multi-directional than frequently characterized. He draws on several empirical examples, including research he conducted with Evi Girling and Ian Loader into public perceptions of fear, risk and crime in an English town (see article x in Part 2 of this volume), to analyse how local and global influences intersect and diverge to create a multifaceted and complex picture of crime and perceived risk of victimization. It may have become fashionable to regard the media as purveyors of highly emotive and punitive rhetoric exploited by opportunistic politicians to manipulate populist sentiment, but Sparks suggests that individuals will always make sense of global transitions and transformations, including crime and crime control, from within the context and contours of their local community. Quite simply, mediatized 'fear of crime' becomes substantially more intelligible in the light of a deeper contextual understanding of time and place. As such, any recourse to the concept of moral panic must be tempered by a knowledge and understanding of blames attributed and solutions sought at a local level (though Sparks counsels against reiterating the usual stand-off between moral panic and 'realism'). That is not to say some crime stories do not exist on a global plane; as Lynne Chancer argues (see article 26) certain events transcend 'crimes' and become representative of much larger social anxieties. But Sparks reminds us that the fact that such cases evoke universally emotional responses neither detracts from the locally constituted lens through which we view them, nor makes the public necessarily gullible, reactionary or punitive.

Part 2 Audiences, Punitiveness and Fear of Crime

In Part 2 we continue exploring the role of media in influencing people's ideas and opinions about crime and take our lead from Sparks in the last article of the previous section by focusing on fear and anxiety in 'risky' times. It is increasingly being recognized that the media are situated within, and fully interwoven with, many other social practices, to the extent where crime, criminals and criminal justice cannot be separated from their media representations (Sparks, 1992). While we should be cautious not to make sweeping claims about media 'effects' or the media being responsible for 'causing' fear of crime and creating hard-line punitive attitudes, we should remain alert to the ways in which media are integral to the processes of meaning-making by which we make sense of our everyday lives.

Article 8 by Anna King and Shadd Maruna suggests that punitive public attitudes to offenders are fuelled by news stories that support such responses. Drawing upon empirical research that was informed by psychosocial perspectives on identity, King and Maruna found that individuals who held strongly punitive views sought out stories that provided clear examples of right and wrong with which they could align their own worldview. Not only does this arguably provide justification for the media's adherence to a binary oppositional view of the world (highlighted by Jewkes and Chancer in articles 23 and 26 respectively) but, according to King and Maruna, it finds parallels with the way that these audience members conduct their own lives and regard themselves. By contrast, less punitive individuals were

drawn to 'subversive' media stories that highlighted government and corporate corruption, or the 'legitimate' breaking of rules. By providing qualitative examples of the differences between individuals who hold highly punitive views on offending, and those who score low on the punitiveness scale, King and Maruna are able to extract from their data the various ways in which media consumers adapt to the uncertain times in which we all exist.

Questions of public opinion and punitive attitudes are further explored by Mick Ryan in article 9. Challenging the pervasive pessimism that characterizes academic discussions of punitiveness, Ryan suggests that the combination of new media and new social movements has led to a greater democratization of the public sphere. Far from being slaves to the top-down policies of the ruling elite, media consumers are increasingly finding an independent voice and a wider, more creative forum in which to express their opinions. The growing resonance of this public voice – used very effectively in relation to a number of social issues in the UK that are discussed in this article – is ignored by politicians and policy-makers at their peril. However, as Ryan makes clear, the question of punitiveness remains contested territory and, in a country in which the popular press elevate certain offenders to the status of evil monsters (an example of the escalating hyperbole since the 'folk devils' of the 1960s and 1970s as noted by McRobbie and Thornton in article 5), the difficulties of engaging in rationale dialogue about crime and punishment with the public have barely diminished.

Mediated misrepresentations concerning the extent of certain types of crime, the likelihood of victimization, and the locations in which crime commonly occurs, are bound to create a skewed picture of the 'problem of crime' and in technologically advanced, media-saturated, culturally diverse societies, audiences cannot be treated as a homogeneous group responding to social pressures (such as 'risk' and 'uncertainty') in uniform ways. The next two articles explore why fear of crime is experienced differently and, in some cases, disproportionately, among different socio-demographic groups taking their news and entertainment from different media sources. The first by Jodi Lane and James W. Meeker (article 10) discusses their research into fear of victimization (particularly related to gang crime) among communities of white and Latino people in Orange County, California. Lane and Meeker start from the premise that whites and Latinos constitute different interpretive communities; that is, within each ethnic group, shared language, culture and rituals are likely to interact with broadly similar life circumstances and experiences of crime, resulting in shared processes of mediated meaning-making. Their research enables them to demonstrate that fear of crime and perceived victimization are inextricably linked to audience characteristics, notably ethnicity, gender, age, education, and place of residence. Furthermore, these demographic factors intersect with different media sources in quite complex ways. Thus, Lane and Meeker do not simply provide support for the left realist proposition that individuals living in poorer communities are (justifiably) likely to experience relatively high levels of perceived victimization and fear of crime, but they start to tease out the role of different mediums in informing, challenging or endorsing these views.

In article 11, Evi Girling, Ian Loader and Richard Sparks further explore the relationship between fear of crime and physical place. Their contention is that if fear of crime is more likely to be governed by uncertainties than known probabilities,

the issue of fear must be inextricably linked to issues of representation, interpretation and meaning. Exploring the anxieties about crime felt in a relatively comfortable, low-crime village in 'middle England', Girling et al note that the relatively privileged residents are happy to pay a premium, not only to live in this 'safe haven' but to cut themselves off from their co-citizens in surrounding neighbourhoods. This 'revolt of the elites', as it has been termed in the United States, is a fragile state because, while 'outsiders' (e.g. criminals who travel from nearby cities) can easily be identified and, to some extent controlled by situational crime prevention measures, the young people who congregate in public spaces are not outsiders, but 'strangers' who bring the chaos and disorder of the cities to the imaginatively sustained tranquillity of the village community.

Although the previous two articles make it clear that the relationship between risk and anxiety must be viewed through a local lens, it might seem reasonable to suppose that 'fear of crime' has taken a different, more urgent form since the 'war on terror' was initiated and waged on a global scale in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on America in 2001. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center took place when millions of Americans would be tuned into the breakfast news programmes on TV. The timing of the actions ensured that viewers across the world who missed the terrifying aftermath of the first attack on the north tower would tune in to see 'live' pictures of the second hijacked aircraft being flown into the south tower sixteen minutes later. The television pictures from that day – transmitted immediately around the globe – have arguably become the most visually arresting and memorable news images ever seen, evoking countless cinematic representations from *The Towering Inferno* to *Independence Day*. The 'event that shook the world' had such an overwhelming impact because of the immediacy and dramatic potency of its image on screen; it was truly a postmodern spectacle.

Terrorist attacks on 'innocent' civilians chime with the notion that we are all potential victims; a concern with a lurking, unpredictable danger fortified by an omnipresent media. Postmodernist critic, Richard Osborne, suggests that the ubiquity of mediated crime reinforces our sense of being victims: 'media discourses about crime now constitute all viewers as equally subject to the fragmented and random danger of criminality, and in so doing provide the preconditions for endless narratives of criminality that rehearse this everpresent danger' (Osborne, 1995: 27). Perversely, then, the media's inclination to make all audience members equal in their potential 'victimness' lies at the core of the postmodern fascination with crime. Echoing Garland's observation that excitement and entertainment will always be a media priority even (or especially) in times of moral panic, Osborne notes that there is 'something obsessive in the media's, and the viewer's, love of such narratives, an hysterical replaying of the possibility of being a victim and staving it off' (ibid: 29).

In article 12 American journalist-turned-media critic Danny Schechter assesses the ongoing role of the media since the day that 'changed everything', not least the ratings of all the big news corporations within and beyond the United States. Schechter's article is interesting for its observation of a sudden early change of focus in the news (and other media) reporting in the aftermath of 9/11/2001. What he describes amounts to a manipulation by the US government (perpetuated faithfully by the mainstream media) to turn around the initial introspective and disbelieving tone of coverage to an emphatically robust style of patriotism. This easily transmutes into a situation where anyone who opposes the 'war on

terror' is regarded as 'unpatriotic' or treacherously 'anti-American'. At the same time, those who perpetrate acts of terror on the US and her allies become constructed as cartoon baddies or evil automatons, with little or no discussion of their histories and motivations. In turn, these two binary oppositions – good vs. evil – go beyond providing a framework for reporting and create a political and cultural climate in which governments feel licensed to introduce sweeping security and surveillance measures in the name of public interest.

These are themes raised by Gabe Mythen and Sandra Walklate in article 13. They argue that, following terrorist attacks by groups claiming allegiance to al-Qaeda in New York, Washington, Madrid and London, the creation of common enemies in these countries and their allies has resulted in a simplification of complex issues and personalities, and a separation of cause and effect, both of which add to the public's perceptions of the terrorist as an irrational 'other' whose motivations are greed or fanaticism rather than socio-economic or geo-political. The experiences of marginalisation that such individuals commonly experience are underplayed by politicians and the media who continue to discuss individual moral responsibility as if it exists in a vacuum, somehow detached from the circumstances in which people find themselves. As Mythen and Walklate observe, this leaves little room for rational attempts to understand the values, objectives and grievances of these individuals and instead reduces them to inhuman objects of hate.

Mythen and Walklate also chart the UK government's attempts to communicate the terrorist risk, arguing that the framing of the terrorist problem through the political discourse of 'new terrorism' has built upon and escalated a cultural climate of fear and uncertainty while at the same time emphasizing discourses of responsabilization. Thus, fear of the terrorist 'other' has been positioned, albeit prominently, within the pre-existing framework of fear that encompasses all areas of crime, immigration and security. Where serious offending and acts of terrorism differ is that terrorist attacks are exceptionalised; treated as somehow above, or different to, other types of crime and therefore requiring their own special laws. Exceptionalising terrorism encourages the public to distinguish between acts of terror and 'ordinary' crime, thus generating a level of fear that is also exceptional and paving the way for militarised responses and use of 'emergency powers'. It also makes more acceptable to a greater number of people the introduction of invasive identity verification measures, as well as sustaining a wide-ranging terrorism industry and a considerable body of risk entrepreneurs. It is as if we are in a perpetual state of warfare; or at least in a liminal space where a state of peace can at the same time be a state of emergency (Zizek, 2002).

Part 3 Ownership and Control

In the third part of this volume we continue our examination of the relationship between producers and consumers of media texts but now our focus is issues of ownership, control and political economy. The political economy approach is a Western model drawing on Marxist ideas and arguing that, since the mass media are largely privately owned, the drive for profit will shape their output and political position. Concentration of ownership, it is suggested, leads to a decline in the material available (albeit that there are more channels in which to communicate), a

preoccupation with ratings at the expense of quality and choice, a preference for previously successful formulae over innovation and risk-taking, and a reproduction of representations and meanings presented in such a way as to make the interests of those in power seem both natural and inevitable. The net result of these processes is that the material offered is reduced to the commercially viable, popular, easily understood and largely unchallenging (both of the audience and of the status quo).

In the first article (article 14) of this section Graham Murdock and Peter Golding offer a rather more sophisticated overview of political economy than many previous contributions, which have been overtly instrumentalist or structuralist in tone (both of which Murdock and Golding caution against). They outline the 'three core tasks' of a critical political economy approach and explore the interplay between the symbolic and economic dimensions of public communication. Their aim is to demonstrate how the ownership, control and organization of cultural production have observable consequences and lead to widely differing experiences of access, participation and interpretation on the part of consumers.

In article 15, Melissa Hickman Barlow, David E. Barlow and Theodore G. Chiricos present a content analysis of news articles appearing in *Time* magazine in the post-war period with the aim of demonstrating the extent to which news is ideological and supports the capitalist political economy of the United States. Drawing on the theories of Marx and Gramsci as well as several of the commentators represented in this volume, the authors illustrate the predominant ways in which crime reporting is skewed to serve the interests of those in power. Like Schechter and Mythen and Walklate in the previous section, Hickman Barlow et al find that news stories about those who break moral and legal rules serve a useful purpose in securing popular consent for criminal justice policies that might be more controversial in times and places perceived as less dangerous. Further, they suggest that such policies (which in the UK and some other western nations currently include the introduction of mandatory identity cards) succeed in preserving the stability of the political economy and status quo, but are highly unsuccessful at reducing crime.

Hickman Barlow et al are concerned with how reporting of violent crime relates to social demographics (race, class and employment) in times of economic expansion and stagnation. Noam Chomsky (article 16) expands our focus to the history of propaganda and public relations. One of the most well-known political economists of his generation and a consistently outspoken critic of the American media's relationship with successive US governments, Chomsky is perhaps best known in academic circles for his development of the 'propaganda-model' with Edward S. Herman in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988/2002). The model aims to demonstrate that certain stories are underrepresented in the media because of powerful military-industrial interests. For example, in a content analysis of the *New York Times* they show how atrocities committed by Indonesia in East Timor in the last quarter of the twentieth century received a fraction of the coverage devoted to the Khmer Rouge killings in Cambodia. Chomsky claims that the reason for this imbalanced coverage is that the weaponry used to slaughter the people of East Timor was supplied by America, Britain and Holland. In article 16, he describes the huge effort that successive US governments have put into reconstructing events in

which they have used military force, including the Vietnam War, the Gulf War and the 'War on Terror'. In a passionate and emotional piece, Chomsky maintains that the truth about these, and many other events involving the US military, has been 'buried under edifice after edifice of lies upon lies' (p. 37).

Ted Magder (article 17) continues the debate, arguing that the problem is partly one of language; we do not have (or perhaps shrink from) using an appropriate lexicon to describe our moral and ethical stance on the relationship between global communication, power and politics. He suggests that informed and sophisticated dialogue is being submerged by news values which prioritize the 'big bang' effect of conflict and violence. Magder anticipates articles 20 and 21 below, and Volume 3 of this collection, by discussing the unevenness of access to and participation in cyberspace. He argues that the flow of media and information in the Internet age is dominated by the West, especially the United States of America. Moreover, the US's foreign policy, communicated by the world's media, amounts to 'soft power'; or the ability to get others to want what the US government wants. However, far from creating a homogenized global culture, new forms of communication simply entrench existing divides and reinforce parochialism.

While Magder is critical of uneven flows of access and power, and Chomsky fervently believes that the picture of the world that is presented to the public 'has only the remotest relation to reality' (p. 37), it is nonetheless the case that the political economy of communications and culture most familiar to a global audience is the country about which these commentators are most critical; the United States. Less known to the majority of us is that of the emerging superpower of China which is the subject of article 18. While they do not have anything specifically to say about crime, Betty Houchin Winfield and Zengjun Peng provide a fascinating account charting developments in the Chinese media over the last two decades. Their analysis is carried out within a context of the economic reforms that have taken place in that period; principally the tensions that have arisen as a result of a Communist political system adopting a market economy, or the problems of maintaining a balance between the Party line and the bottom line, as they put it. The authors argue that with a population of 1.2 billion and an increasingly important role to play in the global political economy, the Chinese media are in transition between totalitarianism and market authoritarianism. This, Winfield and Peng argue, makes the Chinese media unique and impervious to Western models of understanding. That said, while the Chinese media may constitute an extreme example, and be bound by greater restrictions than most culture industries elsewhere, the dual role that they play – simultaneously commodities in the market and ideological apparatuses – may have greater parallels with Western media than is acknowledged in this article.

Jingrong Tong provides a fascinating account of the 'guerrilla tactics' employed by investigative journalists in China to get round the restrictive political controls (article 19). While being constantly mindful of the importance of placing political compliance above professional or personal values, Chinese journalists have developed ways of reporting politically risky events in a way that, on the surface, seems uncontroversial. The author describes the craft involved in this manipulation, and describes two cases where guerrilla tactics were employed effectively; a case involving alleged government corruption and the Chizhou Riot of 2005. Both, she says, demonstrate that the first lesson that has to be learned by any

investigative journalist is the importance of mapping the danger areas so that political minefields can be circumvented.

One aspect of Chinese media control which causes particular concern to the international community is that of Internet restriction and censorship. A study conducted in 2002 found that of approximately two hundred thousand websites to which access was attempted, 19,032 sites accessible from the US were inaccessible from China on multiple occasions, suggesting that even allowing for temporary technological glitches, the vast majority of these sites were deliberately blocked via government-maintained web filtering systems (Zittrain and Edelman, 2003). In 2004 an Amnesty International report revealed that the Chinese government was becoming increasingly heavy-handed with people using the Internet to circulate anti-government beliefs. All Chinese Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have to register with the police and all Internet users must sign a declaration that they will not visit forbidden sites (among those routinely blocked are news, health and education sites, although pornography sites are virtually unregulated). The Amnesty report notes that 54 individuals had been arrested, largely either for organising online political petitions, or for criticising the government for policies which, it was claimed, were contributing to the spread of AIDS and SARS. Arrestees faced sentences of up to 12 years, but Amnesty report incidents of torture and even deaths in detention (http://web.amnesty.org/web/content.nsf/pages/gbr_china_internet).

Nevertheless, four years is a long time both in political economic and technological terms and in May 2008 it was reported that the Chinese government had responded to the devastation caused by an earthquake in the Sichuan province in which tens of thousands of people perished by moderating its control of the Internet. This meant that those affected by the tragedy could use video sharing sites, blogs, chat rooms, instant messaging services and the like to circulate graphic pictures and accounts of their experiences. For these new 'citizen journalists' the government's relaxation of its generally tough stance on Internet content has brought an unprecedented level of freedom, at least temporarily (<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23701837-7582,00.html>).

Article 20 by James Curran charts the impact of new media in Britain. While his chronology includes cable, satellite and digital television, his most interesting comments in the current context concern the growth and use of Internet sites. Far from being the anarchic, decentralized space we might assume it to be, Curran reports that the Internet replicates the dominance of established media organizations with the *BBC*, the *Guardian*, *Times*, *Telegraph*, and *Sun* being the most popular websites for news and public affairs. This may not be surprising given the steep costs of establishing, maintaining and promoting high-profile sites, a point which echoes Murdock and Golding's argument in article 14. Curran also observes that new media are making only a relatively small (though slowly increasing) dent in the dominance of traditional media, notably television. While this piece is not concerned with crime, Curran's comments about concentration of ownership in the culture industries and the cost of participation which remains prohibitive to many sections of society, raise many issues of potential interest to criminologists, including illegal downloading, copying and file-sharing.

John Pratt takes a rather different slant on these issues, arguing (in article 21) that the proliferation of new media has forced traditional media to become increasingly competitive, and it is in the drive to be more attractive to audiences and

advertisers that the picture of crime has become skewed. Clearly, given Curran's data on the most frequently accessed Internet news sites in the UK, established news organizations have been successful in this endeavour, although for Pratt this has entailed an unfortunate escalation in the reporting of serious, violent, unusual offences and tidbits involving celebrities and scandals. In some senses Pratt appears to be optimistic about the role of new information technologies in giving ordinary citizens a voice, although he remains cautious because of the types of crime most likely to be regarded by the media as being newsworthy. Cases involving the murder of children who conform to an ideal/idealized victim type (white, attractive, from middle-class backgrounds, etc.; see Jewkes, 2004) are prime examples of stories which have the potential to capture the public imagination and, in some cases, even lead to major legislative change. Yet the sensationalized coverage of such cases belies the reality which is that the abduction and murder of children by strangers is relatively uncommon and statistically stable (for example, in the UK six children become victims of these crimes each year).

An interesting aside that arises from Pratt's article which has been a common theme in this Volume, is the frequency with which patriotism is invoked as the antithesis to crime. Pratt cites the website of the 'Sensible Sentencing Trust' in New Zealand, which claims to promote a 'patriotic, crime free New Zealand through the promotion of personal responsibility and a better deal for Victims of crime' (p. 83). Furthermore, he comments that the exponential growth in 'reality television' can hardly be taken as evidence of a process of democratization because the vast majority of such shows in the area of criminal justice are concerned with the police and, in the main, provide uncritical support for the 'heroic' work they do. The construction of the police as heroic crime-fighters, guardians of the moral order and upholders of the status quo evokes a certain kind of patriotism and pride reminiscent of international responses to the global circulation of images of the fire fighters called to the twin towers on September 11th 2001. A British Channel 4 documentary ('9/11: The Falling Man') first broadcast in March 2006 and subsequently shown in more than 30 countries, claimed that photographs taken of people jumping to their deaths out of windows in the World Trade Center were considered too 'distressing' for the TV audience. They were removed from the schedules and replaced by images of heroic fire fighters and rescuers, and pictures of the American flag being planted at Ground Zero. Those critics and commentators like Schechter and Chomsky who write about news as ideology and who have criticized the media for supporting US foreign policy would be rather more cynical about the reasons for this abrupt change of focus in media coverage.

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Editor's Introduction xxix

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