Welcome to the second virtual reader of *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*. Our first reader covered the whole of the criminal justice process. This reader focuses on the media, crime and criminal justice. This is a growing area of academic and practitioner concern. For some the concern is whether the media has effects that cause crime or influences criminal justice. These are not necessarily capable of resolution but an enormous amount of inter-disciplinary exploratory work has opened up previously closed or unconsidered areas for investigation. Such work can be useful in its own right but also offers ways to introduce students and the general public to criminological and socio-legal topics and concepts.

Some of this work this now proceeds under the banner of ‘cultural criminology’ which rejects positivistic, managerial and actuarial approaches to crime and deviance. They have their own books and journals but some of the work presented here precedes and feeds into this. We are proud of the academic quality and the relevance of the Journal to practitioners, academics and students and the breadth of topics it covers; but we are also additionally proud of the extent, relevance and durability of the articles presented here in such an exciting area of study.

First up is Stan Cohen. He is now one of the stars of criminology who should be lauded for his stance on human rights and international concerns but is, perhaps best known for his work on moral panics. The term moral panic has now escaped from the narrow confines of sociology and criminology but the ideas behind it were first set out in a lecture given to Howard League on 6th December, 1966 which was published in the Journal in 1967 as ‘Mods, Rockers and the Rest: Community Reactions to Juvenile Delinquency’. Whilst the terms ‘moral panic’ and the less remembered ‘folk devils’ don’t appear in the article the lineaments of his influential work are clear as these extracts show:

- the first stage is invariably a real event-the delusion or hysteria is created because the initial event is reported in such a way as to set in motion a cumulative sequence which serves to fulfill the expectations created by the earlier events. (p124)

- A previously ambigious situation which may have been ’written off’ as a Saturday night brawl now becomes re-interpreted as a ’Mods and Rockers clash’. (p 125)

- In the case of the Mods and Rockers the media were responsible to a large extent for the putative deviance. An analysis, for example, of the House of Commons debate on ‘Juvenile Delinquency and Hooliganism’ (27th April 1964) shows the extent to which the images and stereotypes provided by the media were the basis for theories and policy proposals. (p128/9)

Cohen’s concept has been refined, popularised and applied from anti-social behaviour to AIDS and bird flu etc which has lead to some to reject it yet Mawby and Gisby argue for its continued relevance. They examine the concept before applying it to newspaper coverage of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU and the crime threat it was said to pose. Amongst their conclusions are:

- the moral-panic model needs to be stretched to take account of the changing nature of the media and the way that pressure groups operate within the developing media landscape. The nature of mediated communication is changing – methods of reporting and publishing are moving on, as are people’s ways of acquiring news – and moral-panic models need to adapt to this to remain relevant. (p49)

and that:

- Claims makers constructed Bulgarian and Romanian migrants as folk devils and newspapers played a central role. (p49)
Whilst Cohen observed events, and analysed newspaper coverage he also interviewed many of those involved. Mawby and Gisby relied on their analysis of texts. It could be that the media had no effect. As Cohen notes:

> It is, of course, a fallacy to think of the mass media influencing a purely passive audience. [...] The reaction of the general public is less intense and less stereotypical than the reaction reflected in the mass media. (p129)

In media studies - which owes much to the sociology of theorists like, and in the train of, Cohen - this problem is addressed by studying how audiences receive, respond to or ‘decode’ communications. In the mid 80s the Home Office was very concerned with the disparity between public knowledge about crime and criminal justice and the ‘reality’ because of the additional pressure it placed on the public purse. It turned to instruments like the British Crime Survey (BCS) of which Mike Hough was a leading proponent and exponent. In an article from 1985 with David Moxon they argue:

> The British Crime Survey suggests that neither public opinion nor victims’ views are more punitive than current practice, and that people favour sentences involving compensation by offenders either to the victim or to the community.

Discussing public opinion they note that:

> Questions designed to find out whether offenders are generally thought to get their just deserts can only be sensibly asked if people hold accurate beliefs about current practice. There is good reason to think that they do not. Readily informative statistics are not available (let alone read widely); and the national media naturally dwell on the most sensational cases.

and conclude quiet optimistically from their trawls of the ’82 and ’84 BCS:

> These findings suggest that policy-makers and courts can treat with a degree of scepticism the claims often made by the media that public opinion demands a tougher line with offenders.

And yet many of the same suspicions and findings can be found today. Other researchers have sought to go beyond researching what the media ‘say’ and what the public ‘hear’ to actively engage with them. The following two examples could not be more different. The first is by and for an agency of criminal justice (Singer and Cooper) whereas Martina Feilzer is an independent and entrepreneurial criminologist. However, both articles came from the Journal’s special edition on ‘Communicating Criminal Justice: Public Confidence, Agency Strategies and Media Narratives’ which has a number of interesting articles.

Singer and Cooper found that that effective presentation of national and local crime statistics and other CJS information can have a positive impact on public confidence. They used randomised controlled trials which found that personal delivery and discussion of good quality leaflets had measurable benefits in terms of knowledge of the criminal justice system.

Feedback on the leaflet suggested these changes; which may help other agencies with their communications with the public:

- To avoid accusations of ‘spin’, use numbers as well as percentages;
- Provide information relating to the whole CJS process rather than discrete (and potentially biased) aspects of it;
- Provide a balanced picture of failures as well as successes;
- Use cameos to maximise human interest. (p 499)
Far removed from corporate communications using marketing skills and techniques we find a solo criminologist writing a newspaper column as an experiment in ‘public criminology’. Disappointingly Feilzer found that after writing weekly 800 word columns over six months, ‘few readers of the Oxford Times had noticed (20%), still less read (12%), the Crime Scene columns’ (p 475). Interestingly and counter-intuitively fascination with factual and fictional crime stories was not as great as might be expected. She concludes:

In order to do that academics will need to communicate in an appropriate, relevant, and interesting manner; tell good, if complex and subversive, stories which make sense to, and can be understood by, the different publics they may be addressing. (p 482)

It is in this spirit that David Wilson contributed to a ‘reality’ TV programme set in prison (Wilson and Groombridge). It is too early to see what effect the experience will have had on the ‘offenders’, ex-offenders or even the ‘officers’ but it clearly had an effect on the commentating classes with many articles, reviews and op-ed pieces about the programme. Involving the former Home Secretary added to the coverage but may have detracted from some of the focus on improving public prison knowledge.

Whilst this was a factual television programme there is a long history of prison movies and the Journal has published a number of important articles on the subject. Most important of these is Mike Nellis’s contribution. Important in its timing (1988) and in covering British films prison films, though he uses the American term ‘movie’. Indeed he notes that prison movies are seen to be American, and though full of errors and freighted with ideological work on the awfulness of prisoners and power of the State they were specifically American errors. Thus he quotes William Douglas-Home’s first impression of Wakefield Prison that it was just like the prisons he’d seen in American films save the absence of machine guns.

William Douglas-Home is particularly apposite as he was the author of the prison play ‘Now Barabbas was a robber’ the basis for the film Nellis discusses. The scion of an aristocratic family he served time after being court martialled for refusing to attack a town full of civilians. In addition to the weight of Hollywood product British prison films faced the difficulty of official refusal of permission and censorship of anti-authoritarian or criminal themes. After WW2 the administrators loosed up and cooperated with the making of the film and a documentary from the Crown Film Unit.

As some of the contributors above note there is no agreement on how or whether to engage the public and Nellis notes:

The Howard League, although it had praised Douglas-Home’s play was, in any case, traditionally mistrustful of freelance prison reformers and uneducated opinion and made no attempt to capitalise on the interest which the film of ‘Now Barabbas’ might have generated in prison conditions, as the anti-capital punishment lobby were to do with ‘Yield To The Night’ (d. J. Lee Thompson 1956) just a few years later. (p 22)

He states in conclusion:

The main object of this paper has been to show that authentically British prison movies have had a longer history than is commonly supposed and, in reclaiming ‘Now Barabbas’ as an important film in its own right, to show that such films in general have an intimate and penologically interesting relationship to the realities they purport to reflect. (p 25)

Regrettably he seems to have failed in that. I can find no available version of the film so the American films he discusses and the later Shawshank Redemption have the field left clear in depicting the ‘reality’ of prison life. In the UK only the TV series Porridge has
similar, though now dated, clout. The film is now over 60 years old and the article over twenty but many of the same issues remain.

Coming up to date but returning to the United States - here helpfully signalling the journals international concerns - we find Cecil and Leitner examining a TV documentary series about prison running to 31 separate hour long programmes on individual prisons. It achieved cable TV popularity and a number of awards with a variety of spin offs. They give lots of details and figures about the programmes they also note the contention about the effects of such programmes for good or ill. But sadly they conclude:

In sum, the view of imprisonment given through the images presented in Lockup clearly supports current crime control policies by failing to address the general prison population. (p 196)

One article in the Journal attempts to examine the interrelationalship between media, crime and punishment (Bennett) through the medium of prison films themselves. The media in such films can be seen as good, bad or ugly. Amongst the 'good' are:

\textit{I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang} suggests that a fair and just society needs a robust, independent media and that this strengthens and improves justice.

Whereas \textit{A Clockwork Orange} shows the media in a very bad light in flipping and flopping as the fictional Home Secretary 'cured' and 'rescued' the protagonist Alex. The ugly is represented by an amoral postmodernism with differing examples like, \textit{Chicago} and \textit{Chopper}. Yet:

\begin{quote}
Despite some notable failures and the absence of dramatic direct reforms, prison films have provided public space for reflecting on and shaping views of prison and the media. (p 113)
\end{quote}

If only because it is easier methodologically much work on crime and media is content analysis of newspaper coverage. Keith Soothill and his colleagues have contributed a number of articles. The one chosen here touches on local papers - often ignored - coverage of non-consensual sex crimes.

Not only does Soothill look at the \textit{Lancaster Guardian} he does so over a long period - 1860 to 1979 - looking at 6,000 editions which show a growth of interest after WW2 and a shift in the types of cases. An average of 5-8 cases a year were covered but concern about indecent language and prostitution peaked in the Victorian period. WW2 period showed a slight increase and interest in indecent exposure. As an Assize town not all of these offences will have been committed in Lancaster but those given the most coverage will have. There is the expected stereotypical coverage of women and girls.

In Naylor’s article this is the central theme but also examined women as offenders. She examined all reports of violence found in \textit{The Times}, \textit{The Guardian}, \textit{The Sun} and \textit{The Daily Mirror} between February and July 1992. During that time women constituted 14.5% of violent offenders yet merited over 20% of coverage (except \textit{The Times} which matched near exactly!). Half of the articles concerned female victims with all papers equally involved but the tabloids favouring violence against women. She notes too the habit of the broadsheets of publishing one paragraph crime stories and of tabloids eroticising violence against or between women. Even limited violence by women is reported as extensive and is seen to be in need of more explanation than men’s violence.

And finally we should not forget new media. A very early example of interest in the internet is shown in Spencer’s article. Given the speed of development of the internet
some of this material sounds mundane or dated yet much remains prescient. He examines the difficulties of censoring debate (of a Canadian court case in one instance) and police websites. He concludes:

- media interests, such as the global conglomerates [...] have internet interests but they do not have control over the medium as they do in relation to newspapers
- crime, offenders and victims are situated on the web in such a manner as to reproduce familiar and known stereotypes
- in relation to crime and the internet. Only particular forms of crime are evident. Those crimes which are considered more newsworthy
- the approach of criminology to considering how crime is represented on the internet reproduces previous flaws in criminology's academic and analytic structure (p 249)

Much of that is true today and of all media and criminology.

These twelve articles cover a wide variety of methods and media from a variety scholars in different eras and the transatlantic. No claim is made that these are between them complete but they show a wide and growing interest topic in which the Journal has a proud heritage and a growing profile in.

Contents in order

Cohen Stan (1967) ‘Mods, Rockers and the Rest: Community Reactions to Juvenile Delinquency’ 12:2, 121-130


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