# Criminology ix – Crime & Media.

This is a huge topic! *Media* is the term used to describe the way in which concepts and ideas are distributed in societies. Ideologies are affected by all forms of media, but some are more powerful than others, some are intended to be influential, some not. Some forms of media are covert disseminators of ideologies; *The Archers*  was devised to ‘educate’ the public. End of life issues are being publicised in current soap operas.

WHO decides WHAT moral and educational topics are ‘virally’ introduced to a passive population?

WHY is propaganda not recognised?

A single issue, that of the normalisation of violence, will be used here to evaluate some theories.

* Normalisation =
* Commendation =
* Discommendation =

Both propaganda and advertising change behaviour. The slippery slope argument compels some people to believe that ‘therefore media are responsible for crime’.

BUT, not everyone is affected by ads and propaganda. So, we have an effect with complex roots.

Social learning theory

Devised by Bandura, and his BoBo doll experiment.

‘children model behaviour upon violence witnessed.’

Social cognition.

Aggression is amongst those things ‘activated by learning and priming scripts’.

Most usually associated with ‘desensitisation’.

Catalytic model.

Recent new theory. Part biological and part early experiences. Media weakly correlates with violence generally, but in some instances witnessed violence triggers predisposition.

Moral panic.

Pre-existing beliefs held by the old and the powerful are ‘confirmed’ by [limited] evidence and then those beliefs feed into social consciousness.

The four theories above go from the expectation that media IS responsible for a lot of violence, to, it not being at all.

Moral Panic in more detail.

‘a moral panic exists when a condition, episode, person or group emerges to become a threat to societal values and interests.’ {Stanly Cohen].

The media in many senses have long been associated with moral indignation, or ‘mud raking’. That is media from gossip to Fox News and in between.

Witch hunting , scapegoating, is a popular and much appreciated pastime.

On the other hand, simple reportage can trigger a general concern.

We must analyse evidence and reasons to avoid moral panics.

**Characteristics of moral panics.**

1. Concern.
2. Hostility.
3. Consensus.
4. Disproportion.
5. Volatility.

**Examples.**

* **Anti-Semitism.**
* **Reds under the bed.**
* **Ritual abuse.**
* **Paedophilia.**
* **Date rape.**
* **Video games.**

**The mechanism is akin to OCD on a social scale.**

**To note:**

* **The desire to explain bad actions, perhaps to prevent reoccurrence, is a powerful motivator to ‘find’ evidence for a theory.**
* **We consume MORE violent entertainment than ever before, and the numbers suggest a reduction in violent crimes.**
* **People are often revolted by images of violence, so there cannot be a CAUSITIVE relationship.**
* **There IS an argument that says that violent depictions, like pornography, actually reduce ‘copy cat’ activity.**

**Task; ‘ whilst there are examples of media portrayals increasing activities, ball room dancing for example, what examples are there of there being a high correlation between a violent criminal activity depicted, and, one acted out in reality.’**