

Moral panic

Experience, Human Nature



The public has always used the Mass Media as the primary source of information about most topics especially crime. The Mass Media has the power to convey messages and ideas to a large audience but how truthful or factual these messages are has long been a debate of sociologists, due to news broadcast being so criminogenic for example, Ericson et al (1987). " Study of news-making in Toronto found that a remarkably high proportion of news was about deviance and control.

Ranging from 45. % in newspaper to 71. 5% on radio stations. (Maguire, Morgan and Reiner 2012, p. 248) Therefore this use of Media may create fear amongst the public which in turn causes " Moral panic" and " Folk Devils". Therefore I will outline and illustrate the term " Moral Panic" and the effect it has on the public, also aiming to show the role the Media plays in creating panic. " Moral panic" is a term used to describe groups or subculture as a threat to the way of life for society's, norms and values.

There are several organisations who claims a oral breakdown such as the " Mass Media, Politicians and churches"(Tim Newburn 2013, p. 96). Stanley Cohen's research into the Mods and Rockers gave a clear view of the media classifying these subcultures as deviant and creating panic amongst the public. Cohen's had three main ideas to illustrate how " Moral Panic" was created during the 1960s. Firstly Exaggeration and Distortion. " The exaggeration of seriousness.... the proportion engaged inviolence". Secondly Prediction. " Media coverage regularly assumed events would be even worse".

Lastly Symbolisation " Mods and Rockers appearance became associated with delinquency and deviant behaviour. (Tim Newburn 2013, p. 97). This indicates that the Media's use of emotive language used in broadcast and newspapers created " Folk Devils" of these subcultures and wide scale panic in Britain and subsequently creating stigma towards Mods and Rockers. However there has been criticism of the " Moral Panic" Theory. Jewkes (2004) states that the audience may not be as receptive to the " Moral Panic" as Cohen mentioned. Tim Newburn 2013, p. 101).

This indicates that the public are more aware of issues in society and are able to think rationally without becoming fearful of news reports. Secondly " an occasional over-reading of the extent of " panickyness" in media representations". This demonstrates that Cohen had no real evidence to prove that " moral panics" created panic amongst society, as it would be difficult to measure the level of concern throughout communities. To conclude " Moral Panic" may sometimes be created by the Mass-Media through the use of emotive and sensationalised heading to make a story more entertaining or appealing to its audience.

Through this process they create fear amongst the public and stigmatize subcultures which in turn may cause these social groups to be the truth out for themselves and come to their own conclusion without relying on the media as a primary source of information.