MORAL PANICS AND THE BRITISH MEDIA – A LOOK AT SOME CONTEMPORARY 'FOLK DEVILS'

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Abstract

The term moral panic has been widely adopted both by the mass media and in everyday usage to refer to the exaggerated social reaction caused by the activities of particular groups and/or individuals. Such activities are invariably seen (at the time at least) as major social concerns and the media led reaction magnifies and widens the 'panic' surrounding them. This review starts by considering Stan Cohen's seminal work on and analysis of moral panics – indeed it was his initial research in the early 1970s that popularized the term itself – and looks at Jock Young's almost contemporaneous study of drug users. More recent studies that have reflected on and attempted to refine Cohen's work, including Young's revisiting of the notion that moral panics 'translate fantasy into reality', are highlighted as is the relationship between 'signal crimes' (Innes 2003 and 2004) and moral panics. It then considers some historical and contemporary examples of moral panics surrounding some quite different activities (and perpetrators of them) – in particular, garotting in mid-Victorian England, 'hoodies' and paedophilia. The review concludes that there are key elements to moral panics and that these panics are the result of real events and actual behaviour and cannot be dismissed as myths.

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Moral panic is such a well established term, both in academic and everyday vocabulary, that it is surprising to recall that it has only become widely used since the work of Stan Cohen in the early 1970s on youth subcultures. Since then the term has been regularly used in the media to refer to all sorts of anti-social and/or criminal behaviours. Essentially, a moral panic refers to an exaggerated reaction, from the media, the police or wider public, to the activities of particular social groups. These activities may well be relatively trivial but have been reported in a somewhat sensationalised form in the media; and such reporting and publicity has then led to an increase in general anxiety and concern about those activities. So a moral panic is an exaggerated response to a type of behaviour that is seen as a social problem – the term indicates an over-reaction on the part of the media and/or other social institutions. Furthermore, this over-reaction magnifies the original area of concern. Indeed it leads to the social group (and, as a consequence, the behaviour and activities they engage in) being viewed by the wider society as 'folk devils' – another term coined by Cohen. Indeed Cohen's book on the mods and rockers of the 1960s was titled *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* and therefore, as Newburn (2007) puts it, has 'the distinction of containing two terms, *folk devils* and *moral panics*, which have subsequently entered popular terminology'.

Given the status of Cohen's studies in this area, we will start by considering his analysis before looking at examples of media reporting of moral panics from before his work through to more contemporary examples.

Cohen: Folk Devils and Moral Panics

Cohen's study started out as his doctoral thesis and was an attempt to offer a sociological explanation for a particular and immediate concern – the delinquent behaviour of (and between) two deviant youth subcultures – the Mods and the Rockers. However, Cohen was aware that his analysis had implications beyond the immediate subject matter. In the preface to the first edition of the book, written in 1971, he asks 'who on earth is still worried about the Mods and Rockers?' And in an extended introduction to the second edition (1980) he points out that the book was 'out of date even when it originally appeared in 1972'.

Cohen sets out the basis of his argument in the first paragraph of his study – a paragraph which has been extensively quoted and which provides what has become the generally accepted definition of a moral panic. As with more recent scholarly work on moral panics (Critcher, 2003, Jewkes, 2004 and Newburn, 2007, for example) we will start our brief overview with this quote.

'Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight.

Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folk-lore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself.' (Cohen 1972)

Cohen then points out that there have been recurrent moral panics in post-war Britain over various forms of youth culture whose behaviour is deviant or delinquent – including The Teddy Boys, Mods and Rockers, Hells Angels and Skinheads. These groups have been seen as distinctive social types or groups, not just in terms of their behaviour but also in terms of their style. As the quote above suggests, the panics associated with such groups have been transient and soon forgotten. This is further illustrated by Cohen's comment:
'At the beginning of the decade (the 1960s), the term 'Modernist' referred simply to a style of dress, the term 'Rocker' was hardly known…. Five years later, a newspaper editor was to refer to the Mods and Rockers incidents as 'without parallel in English history' and troop reinforcements were rumoured to have been sent to quell possible widespread disturbances. Now, another five years later, these groups have all but disappeared from the public consciousness.' (1972)

In terms of its theoretical stance, Cohen's seminal study on moral panics was clearly based on the labelling or interactionist perspective – an approach with a strong focus on how society labels rule-breakers as belonging to particular deviant groups and how once a person or group is labeled, the actions they undertake are viewed and interpreted in terms of this label. A key part of the labelling process involves the mass media – and its role in defining and shaping social problems:
'The media have long operated as agents of moral indignation in their own right: even if they are not self-consciously engaged in crusading or muck-raking, their very reporting of certain 'facts' can be sufficient to generate concern, anxiety, indignation or panic.' (Cohen, 1972)

Cohen's work was clearly more focused on moral panics and the social and media reaction rather than the actual deviant and delinquent behaviour and explanations for it – a point he acknowledges in introducing the second edition of his classic study, 'the book was more a study of moral panics than of folk devils' (Cohen, 1980). So before we turn to a brief look at other examples of moral panics it would be helpful to consider Cohen's comments on the links between the media and deviant behaviour. He was well aware his study did not attempt to explain deviance and that the social reaction he examined was, as he put it, 'the 'effective' rather than 'original' cause of deviance'. In other words, his work did not attempt to provide a theoretical explanation for this type of delinquent behaviour.

Cohen highlights different strategies for studying social reaction, such as sampling public opinion on particular types of deviance and constructing ethnographic and historic accounts of the reactions to such behaviour. However, in order to understand the reaction to deviance by the public and the authorities it is vital to consider the nature of information that they receive. In modern societies most information is received second hand, usually processed by the mass media and so subject to their definitions of what constitutes 'news' and how it is presented. And this information is also affected by the constraints which newspapers and broadcasters have to operate

under – both commercial and political constraints.   It is clear from studying media responses to deviant behaviour that the media can play on the concerns of the public and can create social problems quite suddenly and dramatically. The media reaction to deviant behaviour can lead to a process of deviance amplification (see the section below for a fuller explanation of this process) whereby media attention increases the isolation of the deviant group who are forced to continue and develop their deviant behaviour and so on. Certainly the way the media reported the behaviour of the Mods and Rockers had a major influence on public social reaction to those groups. As Cohen puts it:

'The public image of these folk devils was invariably tied up to a number of highly visual scenarios associated with their appearance: youths chasing across the beach, brandishing deck chairs above their heads … sleeping on the beaches and so on.'

(1980, p 20)

Cohen emphasises the importance of the growth and spread of a generalized belief about a particular form of behaviour or group of deviants and points out that, for the most part, such generalized beliefs are spread through the mass media.

Of course social reaction does not solely rely on the media. There is also initial, on-the-spot reaction from people who are part of or witness to the particular behaviour and there is also the organized reaction of the system of social control, often the police. Nonetheless, the 'transmission and diffusion of the reaction in the mass media' is, for Cohen, the crucial element in explaining moral panics.

Cohen: Folk Devils and Moral Panics: A Critique

In an evaluation and critique of the 'moral panic model', Jewkes (2004) considered the processes involved in establishing a moral panic that were highlighted by Cohen and then raised some problems with his model.   The analysis of moral panics developed by Cohen was clearly focused on youth subcultures and the symbolism associated with them. And since his study moral panics have been developed around a wide range of youth subcultures or groups, including punk rockers, muggers, ravers and ecstasy users, lager louts and hoodies. In spite of the diversity of these and numerous other groups, Jewkes points to some key factors identifiable in most moral panics.   Although we will only consider some of these factors here, it is useful to list the five 'defining features of moral panics' which she defined:

- Moral panics occur when the media turn a reasonably ordinary event and present it as extraordinary.
- The media, in particular, set in motion a deviance amplification spiral, through which the subjects of the panic are viewed as a source of moral decline and social disintegration.
- Moral panics clarify the moral boundaries of the society in which they occur.
- Moral panics occur during periods of rapid social change and anxiety.
- Young people are the usual target of moral panics, their behaviour is 'regarded as a barometer to test the health or sickness of as society'.

(Jewkes, 2004, p 67)

Before moving on to consider other examples of moral panics, it would be helpful to consider some of the problems or flaws with the notion of moral panics. Jewkes

(2004) raises a number of areas of ambiguity and contention in the definitions, terminology and application of the moral panic model. Firstly, there is a lack of clarity over the defining characteristics of a moral panic, in Cohen's work moral panics are seen as short-lived episodes which fade away after a few weeks or months, however some areas of concern may last for considerably longer – concerns over juvenile delinquency, for instance, have been present for hundreds of years. Although moral panics define moral boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, there is little or no focus on why groups step outside of those boundaries and behave the way that they do in the first place. Linked with the issue of moral panics and history, there is an assumption that the rapid pace of social change in recent decades leads to more frequent moral panics, although there is no real evidence that the pace of change is any more rapid than it was 100 or 200 years ago.

Secondly, Jewkes questions the assumption that the deviant groups involved in moral panics are economically marginalized and behave as they do as a result of boredom and/or financial hardship, as Cohen suggested in the case of the Mods and Rockers. However, youth subcultures of the 1960s could equally be interpreted as a product of the rising affluence of British society and youth in particular in the 'swinging sixties'. Also, the moral panic 'thesis' tends to over emphasise the centrality of the media, with analysis focusing on the media rather than the actual deviant behaviour – on the reaction rather than the causes and long-term effects. This, Jewkes suggests, leads a 'superficial analysis' as well as encouraging a shift in the media towards 'sensationalised reporting and public entertainment'.   In later editions of his study, Cohen discussed some of the shortcomings of the moral panic model, a point acknowledged by Jewkes, who concludes her commentary with the following comment and reference to Cohen:
'Ultimately, perhaps, moral panics should be regarded in the way that Cohen intended – as a means of conceptualizing the lines of power in society and the ways in which 'we are manipulated into taking some things too seriously and other things not seriously enough' (Jewkes, 2004, p 85).

More generally, Tierney reflects on the extent to which there might be a link between greater public tolerance and moral panics and, in turn, to changes in the rate of particular crimes. He makes the point that, 'an increase in crime in a particular neighbourhood might eventually *reduce* people's sensitivity, making them more tolerant, and … this should led to less criminalization, that is, less crime' (Tierney, 2010, p 368, emphasis in the original). Indeed that sort of argument could be related to notions that, in a media saturated world, moral panics have less impact as nothing really shocks us anymore.

On the other hand, Altheide (2009) emphasises how moral panics 'encapsulate the fear narrative for news purposes' and are 'part of the social control and fear narrative'. He highlights how news reports about crime and fear have contributed to studies of the links between crime and fear (such as Pearson, 1983 and Innes, 2003 and 2004) and how moral panics can promote social control through providing a focus for mobilizing fear. In this context, Altheide refers to Stuart Hall's (1978) suggestion that moral panics can help gain the support of the 'silent majority' for legitimizing coercive measures. The major impact of the fear narrative associated with moral

panics is to promote 'a sense of disorder' but also to defuse such feelings by identifying the problem or crisis as a 'mere process'.

In his introduction to the second edition of *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1980), and as mentioned earlier, Cohen acknowledged that the book was out of date as soon as it was written. He also makes the point that the rather pessimistic ending to the first edition has been more than justified in the intervening years - the first edition ended with the following comment:
'More moral panics will be generated and other, as yet nameless folk devils will be created … because our society as present structured will continue to generate problems for some of its members – like working class adolescents – and then condemn whatever solutions these groups find.'
In these intervening years (basically the 1970s) Cohen points to the developments of the 'skinhead years, the brief glamrock interlude, the punk explosion, the revival of both the Teds and the Mods (and) the continued noise of football hooliganism'.

At around the same time as Cohen's original research and study, Jock Young, a fellow sociologist and criminologist (and indeed a co-author with Cohen of later studies including *The Manufacture of News* 1981), explored the moral panic that developed around the drug use of 'hippies' in the mid to late-1960s. Indeed, Young's findings were first published as a chapter in a book edited by Stan Cohen, *Images of Deviance* (1971). In particular he examined the social reaction to the use of marihuana in the Notting Hill area of West London and described the process of 'deviance amplification' - a process that occurs as a consequence of a moral panic over a specific type of behaviour. Basically, deviance amplification is a reinforcing and snowballing effect that happens as a result of a negative social reaction to such criminal or deviant behaviour. So, Young's study is an examination of the effects of the moral panic about drug use on this behaviour in London in the late 1960s. The title of Young's study was '*The Role of the Police as Amplifiers of Deviance'* and we will look at it briefly before going on to consider an evaluation of Cohen's analysis of moral panics.

As implied in the title to his study, Young considers the effect of the beliefs and stereotypes held by the police about drug-users and the conflict between the police and the drug-user. However, in terms of our focus on social reaction and moral panics, it is Young's examination of the notion of deviance amplification and the relationship between society and the deviant that is most pertinent. Young describes the interaction process between the police and drug-user in a sequential manner that is worth reproducing from the original:
'(i) the police act against the drug-users in terms of their stereotypes:
(ii) the drug-user group finds itself in a new situation, which it must interpret and adapt to in a changed manner;
(iii) the police react in a slightly different fashion to the changed group;
(iv) the drug-users interpret and adapt to this new situation;
(v) the police react to these new changes; and so on'
(Young 1971, p 33)

Young goes on to look at how the mass media present information about deviant groups, and in this case drug-users, using extracts from the popular press, including this from *The People* of 21 September, 1969:
'Hippie Thugs – The Sordid Truth : Drugtaking, couples making love while others look on, rule by a heavy mob armed with iron bars, foul language, filth and stench, THAT is the scene inside the hippies' Fortress in London's Piccadilly. These are not rumours but facts – sordid facts which will shock ordinary decent family loving people.'
He argues that 'our knowledge of deviants not only is stereotypical because of the distortions of the mass media but is also one-dimensional'. The information that is available about deviants is based on a 'gross misperception' because of stereotyped information 'purveyed via the mass media'. He goes on to suggest this leads to a social reaction based on stereotyped fantasies, rather than accurate knowledge and information; and 'because the criterion for inclusion in the media is newsworthiness it is possible for moral panics over a particular type of deviancy to be created by the sudden dissemination of information about it.'

Of particular interest here, Young also considers how the amplification of deviance (in this case drug-use) leads to the fantasy being translated into the reality. He argued that, over time, the police action against marihuana users led to the intensification of their deviant behaviour that included a change in their life style, so that 'certain facets of the stereotype became the actuality'

In a recent paper, indeed getting on for forty years after his original study and which included in its title 'the translation of fantasy into reality', Young (2009) revisited the origins of moral panic. In modern society, he suggests that moral panics involve the focus of the media and the mobilization of the police, courts and other agencies of social control. The process involves a 'mass stigmatization … of a particular deviant group' which intensifies over time resulting in a process of deviance amplification and 'a translation of fantasy into reality'. Moral panics, however, are basically moral happenings and they do relate to real fears about a particular behaviour – whether the dangers of drink or drugs, juvenile crime or paedophilia, for instance. Young also makes the point that moral panics are not just one-off events or disturbances and it is 'their *reappearance* that confirms their status as moral disturbances of any significant order' (emphasis in original).

Before considering some examples of both historical and more contemporary moral panics it is worth saying a little more about the relationship between the media and crime. It is clear that certain crimes become massive media stories and capture the interest and mood of a particular time. Studying the manner of the reporting of these crimes is essential for an understanding of the relationship between the media, crime and moral panics and here we will refer briefly to such 'signal crimes' (Innes 2003).

Recent such crimes in Britain include the killings of Rhys Jones (2007), Anthony Walker (2005), Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in Soham (2002), of Damilola Taylor (2000), Sarah Payne (2000), Stephen Lawrence (1993) and James Bulger (1993). In all these cases the victims were children/youths and the detailed and extensive media reporting led to a social reaction that seemed to go well beyond the cases themselves. They lead to, as Innes puts it, 'widespread popular concern that it

signals that something is wrong with British society and its criminal justice process, which requires some sort of corrective response' (2003, p. 51). Innes defines signal crimes as 'events that, in addition to affecting the immediate participants (ie. victims, witnesses, offenders) and those known to them, impact in some way upon a wider audience'. Such crimes are responded to with decisions to do something about preventing such crimes in future through more policing, better risk-avoidance techniques, situational crime-prevention measures and so on.

The response to such crimes overlaps with the notion of moral panics and the way in which the media present key factors as representing a symbolically loaded 'crime problem' which then leads to the wider population, egged on by the media, demanding that something be done, typically through widening the 'social control net' (Cohen 1985). In concluding his discussion, Innes argues that in order to understand such signal crimes it is necessary to examine the role of journalists and broadcasters in relation to the activities of the police and criminal justice system – with the police, for instance, often actively encouraging media publicity for a case so as to assist them in their detection work. Indeed it is often in the interests of both detectives and journalists to work together to, on the one hand, get a help in 'cracking' the case and, on the other hand, to get a 'newsworthy' story. However, such collaboration will, according to Innes, amplify the signal value of a crime and 'either intentionally or unintentionally transform it into a focal point for public concerns about crime and crime control'.

These signal crimes, though, do not just relate to child or youthful victims as we will see in the examples looked at below.

Moral Panics in History

So far we have focused on the sociological concept of moral panic as it was developed by 'sociologists of deviance', led by Stan Cohen, in the 1970s. However behaviour which has produced strong, and panicky, responses from the wider society has a much longer history than this. Before looking at more recent examples of moral panics, we will consider an earlier, historical example of behaviour and responses to it that would be likely to be seen as a moral panics if it had occurred in contemporary society - the 'garotting' craze of the mid Victorian period.

Garotting

Pearson (1983), among other historians, shows us that for generations British society has been plagued by the same concerns and fears about criminal and deviant behaviour. In particular, he highlights the way that each generation tends to characterise the youth of the day, and particularly specific youth groups, as problematic, anti-social, deviant and so on. In his historical reviews of juvenile crime and delinquency he refers to the panic in the mid-Victorian period, around 1850s and 1860s, over a new variety of crime called 'garotting', a Victorian parallel with the more recent crime of mugging that involved strangling and chocking the victim in the course of robbery. The press reacted in a way that helped amplify the concerns over this crime, with Punch magazine launching an 'anti-garotte' movement, advocating

the use of a variety of rather bizarre anti-robbery devices, such as spiked metal collars. While this may have been slightly tongue-in-cheek, it is clear from the letters in the press of the day, that there was a real panic over garotting. While the language of the day is rather less sensationalised than might be found in the popular press today, it is worth quoting at some length from letters to the Times to illustrate this reaction and panic.

'On Saturday, the 1st inst., when returning home at night, and as usual walking quick, I was, without any warning, suddenly seized from behind by some one, who, placing the bend of his arm to my throat, and then clasping his right wrist with his left-hand, thereby forming a powerful lever, succeeded in effectually strangling me for a time, and rendering me incapable of moving or even calling for assistance … whilst a second man easily rifled me of all he could find. I was then violently thrown to the ground, or rather I found myself lying there when I cam to my senses… Now, this robbery was committed on one of the most frequented highways out of London, viz., Hampstead-road… and I am convinced that an application of this human garotte to an elderly person, or anyone in a bad state of health, might very easily occasion death.'
(Letter to The Times, February 12, 1851)

'Observing in your paper of to-day a letter from a gentleman who was nearly strangled and robbed of his watch by this abominable practice, I think it right to say that about a month since I was treated in exactly a similar manner. This was also in a public thoroughfare, and within a few yards of a public house that was open.'
(Letter to The Times, July 17, 1851)

'I wish to add my testimony to that already given in your paper with respect to the cowardly system of Thugee now being carried on in the streets of London. About three weeks back I was returning home along the Haymarket about 12 o'clock at night, and, having occasion to turn aside up a court, I was suddenly seized round the throat by one ruffian, while another snatched my watch and struck me on the head … rendering me senseless.'
(Letter to The Times, July 19, 1851)

As mentioned, in response to this street crime, Punch magazine published cartoons and adverts promoting protection from garrotters (see advert below in question break on p 00). There was also a boom in the security/protection business with people offering their services as bodyguards, as illustrated in the following advert:
'The Bayswater Brothers (whose height is respectively 6 feet 4 inches and 6 feet 11, and the united breadth of whose shoulders extends to as much as 3 yards, 1 foot, 5 inches) give, respectfully, notice to the Gentry and Public of Paddington, Kensington, Stoke Newington, Chelsea, Eaton Square and Shepherd's Bush, that they will be most happy, upon all social and jovial expeditions, such as dinner and evening parties, as well as tee-total meetings, to escort elderly or nervous persons in the streets after dark, and to wait for them during their pleasure, so as to be able to escort them home again in safety. No suburb, however dangerous, objected to, and the worst garotting districts well known, as the Brothers, both BILL and JIM, were for several months in the Police Force. Terms, so much per head per hour, according to the person's walk of life. A considerable reduction on taking a party of twelve or more. Distance no

object. Testimonials, and ample security given. For further particulars, Apply to B.B,
Royal Human Society, Trafalgar Square.'
(Punch, January 31, 1857)

However, the reaction was not limited to the press; and the panic over this form of
street crime led to hard line approaches from politicians, as ever seeking public
approval for being tough on crime. In particular, there was a call for a return to harsh
physical punishment, such as flogging - a call that was reflected in the passing of the
Garotters' Act in 1863. Although the Garotters' Act was not merely the result of the
panic, it is clear that this new crime provided the impetus for such legislation. The
Act also reflected a move away from the more reformative, humanitarian approach to
punishment and imprisonment that had characterised the early 19th century period (for
instance the religious emphasis on prisoners doing penance and emerging with
purified souls, highlighted by John Howard and the early prison reformers of that
period); and a consequent support for a more hard line, repressive approach to dealing
of criminals. Floggings, for example, had long been associated with the public school
system and with life in the army and navy, and was widely supported by politicians
and other leaders of the period, who had, of course, passed through those institutions
themselves.

Certainly, the Garotters' Act, and the flogging of garrotters, chimed with the mood of
the day, as indicated in the following contemporary comment:
'A parliamentary return just issued affords us the gratifying information that the
Garotter's Act of 1863, punishing attempts at robbery, accompanied by violence, with
flogging, has not been allowed to remain a dead letter. In the first year of the
operation of this salutary measure, under its beneficent provisions, according to the
document above referred to, 19 prisoners were flogged in England…

There are objections to public flogging … But one thing might be done to give the
roughs, who are inclined to be Garotters, some idea of what the flogging inflicted on a
Garotter is. An elaborate photograph of the face of every such criminal condemned to
be flogged taken whilst he is experiencing the sensation excited by the scourge, at the
moment when his features are contorted with their strongest expression. What a
pretty portrait-gallery might thus have been derived from the nineteen Garotters who
were flogged in 1863!'
(Punch, April 8, 1865)

Recent Moral Panics

There is a danger that the notion of media panic can be applied somewhat
indiscriminately to all sorts of quite transient examples of youthful behaviour and/or
delinquency; and in our discussion we are keen to keep the focus on the social
reaction as led by the mass media. Having said that, there have been many recent
examples of youthful behaviour that could be considered as having produced a moral
panic. In his book that focused solely on the media and moral panics, Critcher (2003)
discussed a range of such recent examples, including the rave/ecstasy culture of the
late 1980s and early 1990s, the reaction to video nasties in the 1980s and 1990s, new
age travelers in the mid 1980s and, periodically, child abuse in families. Here we will

discuss one more recent example, the panic surrounding 'hoodies', and one example of a moral panic that was examined by Critcher, paedophilia.

Hoodies

A recent example of a style of dress worn by young people, rather than what could be termed a youth subculture, that has excited some degree of panic and paranoia among the wider population has been the wearing of hooded sweatshirts, or hoodies. Of course, hoods on garments of clothing have been worn throughout history, with images of monks in the middle ages wearing hooded cowls coming to mind. Hooded jackets were particularly popularized in the 1970s as part of the hip hop music scene and as a result of being worn by Sylvester Stallone in the *Rocky* films. However it was not until the 1990s that the term 'hoodies' was generally used to describe these garments, when they became associated with emergence of what were termed 'chavs', young disaffected working class youths, in this country; and were spread by their use by young skateboarders. And it was not until 2005, that the press and public were referring to 'hoody culture'.

It is particularly in the UK that hoodies have been regarded and reacted to in such a negative way – exemplified in them being banned from shopping centres such as the Bluewater retail park in Kent. This banning of hoodies and baseball caps (officially stated as the 'wearing clothing that obsures the face – hooded tops, baseball caps – will not be allowed) brought the hoody culture into the public arena; and raised the irony of shoppers being prevented from wearing an article that was still on sale in shops within the centre. The move was, though, welcomed by many, including the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, who saw it as an attempt to clamp down on anti-social and threatening behaviour. By contrast, 'defense' for the wearing of hoodies came from the leader of the opposition, David Cameron, who suggested the hoodie was not worn as an offensive act. In a speech made in July 2006 that was parodied by the government as the 'hug a hoodie' speech, Cameron said:
'In May last year hoodies became political… The Bluewater shopping centre banned them and the Prime Minister said he backed the ban…
But debating the symptoms rather than the cause won't get us very far. Because the fact is that the hoodie is a response to a problem, not a problem in itself… For young people, hoodies are often more defensive than offensive. They're a way to stay invisible in the street. In a dangerous environment the best thing to do is keep your head down, blend in, don't stand out…
For some the hoodie represents all that's wrong about youth culture in Britain today. For me, adult society's response to the hoodie shows how far we are from the long-term answer to put things right.' (BBC News 10 July 2006)

The banning of hoodies from the Bluewater shopping centre in 2005 excited a great deal of media interest and debate. It led to the 'meaning' of the hoodie being examined by journalists and academics. As Gareth McLean (2005) pointed out, although only a sweatshirt with a bit extra, the hooded top strikes fear into the heart on most people, 'a lone figure behind us on the walk home – hood up, head down – and we quicken our step.. a group of hooded teenagers on the street and we're tensing our shoulders, clenching our fists.' His article in the Guardian reports the vice-chair

of the British Youth Council, Rachel Harrington, as saying that the Bluewater ban 'demonstrates a growing demonisation of young people… and overreacting to any behaviour by young people.' While Angela McRobbie is cited in *The Guardian* (Ainley 2005) as highlighting the hoodies anonymity and air of mystery as explaining its appeal and also the anxiety it produces in others. She goes on to say that: 'leisurewear and sportswear adopted for everyday wear suggests a distance from the world of office (suit) or school (uniform)… (The hooded top) is one in a long line of garments chosen by young people, usually boys, and inscribed with meanings suggesting that they are 'up to no good'. In the past, such appropriation was usually restricted to membership of specific youth cultures – leather jackets, bondage trousers – but nowadays it is the norm among young people to flag up their music and cultural preferences in this way, hence the adoption of the hoodie by boys across the boundaries of age, ethnicity and class.'

Ainley (2005) makes the point that the moral panic over hoodies is almost a continuation of a previous panic over chavs – working class, white boys who had underachieved in school and who, in the face of a bleak future in terms of respectable employment, turn to anti-social, delinquent behaviour.   Of course, we have been here many times before, from the Victorian garotting mentioned earlier, through a variety of (typically) male working class youth subcultures. And, as before, the rest of society resents and fears such groups, as Ainley puts it, the 'respectable working middle class live in fear and loathing of the hooded, chav "underclass"'. Indeed it was this resentment and response that led to the banning of hoodies from the Bluewater centre; and it was a response not just from 'respectable' society but from other teenagers:
'Street rats, says Ainsley, 17. "That's what they're called." "They sit on the streets and drink," explains Lauren,16… The teenagers from Bexleyheath describe the disrespectful youths of today as they glide along the Bluewater shopping centre in Kent. Street rats wear hooded tops and baseball caps.'
(Barkham, 2005)

The moral panic about hoodies was part of a wider concern about the anti-social behaviour of youths and, as with other panics, the reaction has been criticized by academics and those working in the criminal justice system as excessive. As Shapland (cited in Barkham, 2005) commented, 'I'm not sure if it's always a good idea to see youth as a problem… Hooded tops are a problem if you are relying on cameras and policing at a distance rather than face-to-face personal security'.   While in a report in *The Guardian,* Barkham refers to the director of the Crime and Society Foundation thinktank, Richard Garside, suggesting that the government's drive for respect could amplify perceptions of anti-social youths and to the West Midlands police service complaining that they are being inundated with calls from the public about 'innocuous anti-social behaviour'.

Raising the spectre that society is in danger of creating 'folk devils' out of Hoodies, Rod Morgan, Chair of the Youth Justice Board, advises against extreme responses, asking:
'Would we be wise to exacerbate the problem by making certain forms of dress or behavioiur even more attractive by damning them? We have to be careful we don't demonise them. Having said that, if young people are engaged in serious anti-social

behaviour, destroying the quality of life in neighbourhoods, it needs to be dealt with.'
(in Barkham 2005)

However, in spite of the differing political comments around the reaction to hoodies, the media reporting of 'hoody culture' has been both hostile and scaremongering in line with the way the media has responded to other, previous moral panics. Even though and at the same time as exciting this hostile reaction, the hoodie is a widely popular item of clothing that is in the wardrobes of millions of people, and is sold in the millions by firms such as Nike, Adidas and Gap. As the examples below indicate, recent murder cases have referred to the hoodie in their headlines, irrespective of whether this was a key aspect of the particular crime:
'Justice for Dad Killed Tackling Hoodies
A teenager was facing life in jail last night for shooting dead a young father who stood up to a gang of hoodies'
(Daily Express, 28 March 2007)

'Named: The 'Hoodie who shot dead Rhys
… Rhys was shot dead in a pub car park in Croxteth Park, Liverpool, more than two months ago as he walked home from football practice with two friends. Police believe the hooded gunman was firing at a rival gang but missed and hit innocent Rhys.'
(Daily Express, 30 October 2007)

Paedophilia

In his discussion of paedophilia as a moral panic, Critcher (2003) makes the point that there are few academic and secondary sources of information on paedophilia and that an examination of newspaper coverage is the clearest way of showing how the panic emerged and developed. He categorises various phases of this development, even though the term paedophilia was rarely used before the 1990s. Firstly in the late 1970s and early 1980s the term was introduced in relation to child pornography and the notion of organized paedophile rings. By the later 1980s, he argues that paedophiles became associated with the abduction and murder of children, illustrated by the police investigation 'operation stranger' into 14 children who were murdered or missing between 1978 and 1986. The panic surrounding this crime peaked in the 1990s, fuelled by the media coverage of sexual offences against children in Ireland and, later, Belgium. The Irish context involved the publicity over Roman Catholic priests who were accused of sexual offences against children; while a 'bigger surge in coverage' concerned the case of the Belgium paedophile, Marc Dutroux. Dutroux was given early release, in 1992, from a thirteen and a half year prison sentence he was given in 1989. Subsequently he kidnapped, tortured and sexually abused six girls aged between 8 and 19, four of whom died. He was arrested in 1996 and has been in prison since. This case sparked public outrage in Belgium and led to the tightening of the parole criteria for convicted sex offenders, partly as a result of public pressure - indeed in October 1996 more than 300,000 people dressed in white marched through Brussels, the capital, demanding major reforms of the judicial system.

By the late 1990s, the press coverage of paedophilia reached what might be termed moral panic level. Critcher cites 25 headlines referring to child abusers and paedophiles in one month in one newspaper, the *Daily Mail*. He cites a *Daily Mail* editorial arguing against the release of paedophiles, asking 'what kind of law is it that plays Russian roulette with the lives of our children?' (13 March 1998). By 2000 the coverage of paedophilia in the British press had reached unprecedented levels following the sexual murder of Sarah Payne, an 8 year old girl who had been missing for two weeks. Photographs and stories about Sarah and her anguished family appeared every day in the media; and following the discovery of her body thousands of people made their way to the field to lay wreaths. This murder, in July 2000, encouraged a media orchestrated outcry, led by the *News of the World*.

The role of the *News of the World* in promoting the moral panic over paedophiles is worth considering briefly. This paper is part of Rupert Murdoch's News International corporation and, along with *The Sun* and other tabloid papers, is a vociferous supporter of and campaigner for hardline measures being taken against criminals. Following the murder of Sarah Payne, it campaigned to force the Labour government to introduce stricter sentences against sex offenders. Using the fact that as a result of the 1997 Sex Offenders Act, sex offenders have to register their names and addresses with the police, the *News of the World* started to publish the names, photographs and approximate whereabouts of 200 individuals on the Sex Offenders Register. Although the police and welfare agencies warning that such a practice might well endanger children by driving sex offenders into hiding, it continued to publish the list as, it put it, a matter of 'public concern'. The *News of the World* claimed that there were thousands of paedophiles preying on young children and was joined by other appears demanding action against paedophiles. As a front page article in the *Daily Mirror's* put it, 'Hanging these bastards really is too good for them'. The panic orchestrated by the British press, encouraged an atmosphere that sparked a series of brutal attacks on suspected padeophiles. The violence and lynch mob atmosphere on the Paulsgrove housing estate in Portsmouth led to prolonged rioting and innocent families being forced out of their homes and into hiding. Elsewhere in the country, a number of people were wrongly identified as sex offenders and subjected to arson attacks on their homes. And rather than condemn the *News of the World*, the government, aware of the panic and mood of the general population, organized compromise meetings with the paper, relatives of Sarah Payne and children's agencies. As Hyland (2000) argues, even though sex abuse is a matter of great concern, 'this does not legitimize the hysteria over predatory paedophiles being whipped up by the media … all this has accomplished is to induce panic and fear amongst many parents'. (The question break below considers the News of the World's 'name and shame' campaign).

In a detailed study of the 'Paulsgrove riot', Williams and Thompson (2004) highlighted a number of problems and inaccuracies with the media accounts of it. After a year long, ethnographic study, they found that the Paulsgrove 'riots' were not provoked by the *News of the World's* campaign. The residents of the estate had planned a peaceful demonstration to express concerns about Victor Burnett, an offender who had been exposed by the *News of the World* and whom residents had previously complained about. It was the failure of the authorities to act upon thee

complaints that led to a peaceful demonstration against the local Housing Department. Williams and Thompson concluded that:

'While some of the marches saw clashes with the police; what is important … is to note that the demonstrators were neither out to cause personal in jury or damage property, as was commonly alleged; and they were not vigilantes. Contrary to what the press assert … no one, paedophiles or 'innocent' residents, was personally attacked.'

There was evidence that some teenagers did throw stones at some houses, but there was no planned attack on anyone, paedophile or otherwise. And no one was arrested, charged or convicted of such an act either.

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The following extracts refer to the *News of the World's* campaign in 2000 to 'name and shame' paedophiles in response to the murder of Sarah Payne; and subsequent 'naming and shaming' in *The Sun*. They highlight the issues surrounding the publication by newspapers of the names and personal details of convicted sex offenders. (*The Sun* is the largest selling British tabloid paper and the *News of the World* is its Sunday stablemate – both are part of Rupert Murdoch's News International empire.

'In response to the murder of Sarah Payne, the News of the World "named and shamed" scores of people it said were guilty of sex offences against children…

*"If you are a parent you **must** read this," said Sunday's News of the World. The tabloid newspaper went on to publish the names and photographs of dozens of people it said had perpetrated sex attacks on children. Some 88% of us want parents to be told when a convicted paedophile moves in to their area, says a poll commissioned by the paper.*

Since September 1997, moves have been made to monitor the whereabouts of convicted sex offenders. However, the information is restricted to the appropriate police force, the probation service and the local MP. Under the Sex Offenders Act, those found guilty of crimes such as rape are obliged to report their name and address to a local police station within 14 days of their conviction or release from custody…

Anyone failing to register risks a six-month prison term or a £5,000 fine. The register contains some 12,000 names; a compliance rate of 97% says Tony Butler, of the Association of Chief Police Officers…

Some 250,000 Britons have been convicted of a sexual offence – 110,000 have targeted children. However, those convicted or released before 1997 are not compelled to join the register. Nor are those given conditional discharges for more minor sexual offences, such as the possession of child pornography.

Pressure groups, such as End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking (Ecpat), also complain that the register fails to include Britons convicted of sex crimes abroad. Also, names on the register are not shared with foreign authorities if the offender decides to leave the country, says Helen Veitch of Ecpat. "The monitoring process falls down when the offender goes overseas…"

Despite its plans to tighten controls, the government remains adamant that it will not follow the American lead, and give the public access to its register… However, American courts are concerned leaks of the names, addresses and car registration numbers are all too common…

Naming and shaming can also tar the innocent. The Daily Mail reports a Manchester man was wrongly targeted by a mob following the News of the World campaign. With many paedophiles targeting children within their own family, public notification may also stop many victims from seeking a conviction in the first place, according to the American Civil Liberties Union. "One reason attacks are not reported is the shame." Perhaps not the "shame" the News of the World was hoping to produce.'
(BBC News Monday 24 July 2000 - www.news.bbc.co.uk)

'Executives of the News of the World have agreed to meet police and probation chiefs who have led criticism of its campaign to publish the names and photographs of paedophiles. The newspaper denied it was giving ground last night and issued a robust statement saying that it would give an audience to its critics tomorrow but if necessary restate the objectives of its campaign. However, an article published in yesterday's News of the World acknowledged that police chiefs and others had "valid reasons" for opposing the publication of paedophiles' names and addresses in newspapers and said their expert opinion would be listened to.

Ahead of the meeting, requested by Tony Butler, Chief Constable of Gloucester and the police chiefs' spokesman on child protection, probation officers led a fresh attack on the newspaper by accusing it of driving sex offenders underground. The Association of Chief Probation officers (Acop) wrote a letter of complaint, copied to the Press Complaints Commission, claiming the "naming and shaming" of sex offenders was hindering work to supervise offenders by driving them underground. The tactic also risked identifying innocent relatives of offenders and encouraged violence, Acop said…

The National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (Nacro) backed up the accusation by saying driving paedophiles underground was counter-productive and actually heightened the risk that they would re-offend…

Ministers also appealed to the newspaper to heed police warnings that it was better that sex offenders remained at registered addresses where they could be monitored by officers. Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, said he was "very worried" by the public naming of paedophiles although he recognized it was done with the "noble motive" of protecting children… Paul Boateng, a Home Officer Minister, also warned against creating a "climate of fear" and emphasized the need to avoid "panic and hysteria".
(The Independent, July 31, 2000)

'The Sun has been forced to make an embarrassing apology after naming and shaming the wrong man as a sex offender. Owing to a mix up by a picture agency, the tabloid mistakenly used a photograph of David Gazley in place of a picture of Christopher Harris, who has been banned from going near children for life after groping young girls in Great Yarmouth. An apology to Mr Gazley – whose portrait appeared in Saturday's Sun above the headline "Face of kid ban pervert" – is published in the tabloid today. "We sincerely apologise to Mr Gazley for the hurt and embarrassment caused by our report," said the newspaper.

Rebekah Wade, who replaced David Yelland as editor of the Sun in January, pioneered a "name and shame" campaign against convicted sex offenders when she was editor of the tabloid's Sunday stable mate, the News of the World. The campaign fought under the banner "Sarah's Law", following the murder of eight-year-old Sarah Payne, aimed to name all 110,000 sex offenders in Britain in a bid to change the law to give public access to the sex offenders register. However, critics said Wade's campaign was responsible for inciting mob violence and forcing paedophiles to go into hiding.'
(The Guardian, 31 March 2003)

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Critcher (2003) finishes his account by considering whether the notion of moral panic can be applied to paedophilia, in particular given the prolonged nature of the panic. Certainly paedophilia does meet all the major aspects and criterion of a moral panic – there are identifiable 'folk devils', there is widespread agreement, and strong emotional passions, among the public, media and politicians about the extent and danger of such behaviour. However, the focus on the 'folk devil' paedophile as a stranger who preys on children does not present an accurate picture of the variable nature of sexual offenders. Although 'stranger danger' seems to be the biggest worry for parents, and while it is this aspect of sexual offending that excites media and public opinion, it is well established that it is abuse within the family, or by an adult who is trusted by the child, that is the most common form of sexual abuse and offending. The numbers of children abducted and killed in Britain by a stranger have remained at between five and ten annually for many years, with a very small percentage of sex offenders falling into the category of predatory paedophiles. As Critcher points out, the paedophile label contributes little to our understanding of the frequency or nature of sexual abuse, 'moral panics distort our capacity for understanding, even when they appear to recognize a genuine problem.'

In a recent study that highlights the difficulties with categorizing and applying taxonomies to popular fears, Cavanagh (2007) looks at the panic around internet paedophilia. As we have seen, a demonized group or individual (the folk devil) is a central aspect of the phenomenon of a moral panic, and the scapegoating of those people involved acts to reaffirm the communal boundaries of the wider group or society. In applying this to internet paedophilia, Cavanagh recognizes that there is a recognisable folk devil in the form of a 'shadowy paedophile lurking in the chatroom to seduce the unwary', there are also various other 'candidates for blame'. For instance, there are the internet service providers and the issue of whether commercial bodies should share some responsibility for regulating what is available on the internet. And should the state and other institutions be blamed for failing to police the problem.

As internet paedophilia, and paedophilia in general, became more widely reported and panicked about, so there emerged moral entrepreneurs who aimed to channel public support against the folk devils. Groups such as Internet watch and child welfare organizations, along with more traditional moral entrepreneurs such as the churches, emerged alongside technical experts as spokespeople against the new threat. Indeed fears about the specific illegal materials provided on the internet merged with fears of

the internet in general as an invasive and addictive media. (see chapter 7 for a fuller discussion of cyber crime)

Revisiting the notion of moral panics

In this brief review we have considered a range of behaviours and reactions to them under the broad term of moral panics; and there are many more examples that we might have looked at. In doing this we have used the notion of moral panic very broadly and in concluding it would be useful to say something about the term. At the start of the chapter, we said that moral panic is a well established term; however that does not mean it is a clear cut one. In commenting on the panic surrounding paedophilia and the internet, Cavanagh (2007) make the point that 'applying taxonomies to popular fears' is a task fraught with difficulty. Indeed the term has been used so indiscriminately by the media that it has become almost 'a term of abuse to refer to the activities of journalists … so the idea of a moral panic is elaborated as an elaborate media scam, a deliberate attempt to 'spin' social problems'. What Cavanagh is suggesting is that the moral panic has become a regular aspect of media reporting of anti-social and criminal behaviour so that, 'moral panics are a direct product of the mundane practices of journalists'. The essential point here is that public anxieties and concerns are only able to take on a public form through the media.

Nonetheless, there are key elements apparent in any moral panic. As Cavanagh (2007) puts it, the moral panic reflects social anxieties and concerns about behaviour that is seen as some sort of moral threat. The concerns are then exaggerated in regard to both scale and frequency, they are symbolised in terms of them being a threat to traditional values and are emphasized by groups of 'moral entrepreneurs' who reframe the particular problem in terms of the solutions that they favour. And it is important to be aware that moral panics are not myths but are the result of actual behaviour and real events. So the analysis of moral panics, 'is focused on the observation of distortion and exaggeration in presentation of this factual problem'.

In a recent paper entitled 'revisiting a moral panic', Yeomans (2009), looked at the reaction to the extension of licensing hours as a result of the 2003 Licensing Act. In theory, the liberalization of licensing hours allowed pubs and other premises to sell alcohol twenty-four hours a day. This possibility led journalists, as well as politicians and other public figures, to voice their dismay and to stress how this would "worsen problems of crime and disorder already seen by many as 'out of control'". Yeomans illustrated how much of the public discourse surrounding this change was 'severe and near-hysterical'. His paper aimed to explain this moral panic and he asked the question as to why this legal reform (which had quite limited practical implications) lead to such a response. While Cohen's work emphasises the exceptional rather than routine nature of moral panics, Yeomans highlights the regular and recurrent public concerns and panics over alcohol, illustrated by the temperance movement in the nineteenth century and the 'virtual hysteria about the effects of alcohol drinking during World War One'. Indeed moral panics can, he argues, be located within longer term processes of moral regulation, following Critcher's defining of moral panic

episodes as extreme and temporary developments in wider processes of moral regulation (Critcher 2009).

Developing this point, Yeomans sees the reaction to the licensing reforms as a moral panic for two reasons – firstly it demonstrated an increased concern about alcohol use (within a longer term view of alcohol as a social problem and something which needed regulation); and secondly the reaction seemed disproportionate to the level of threat (and in fact very few license extensions were granted anyway). He suggests that the reaction to the implementing of the 2003 Licensing Act (which came into effect in November 2005) was 'a high point of anxiety about alcohol within a long term project of moral regulation' (concerning alcohol use and abuse).

In finishing, then, the idea of a moral panic is based on their being a disproportionate reaction to the particular behaviour and event(s), as Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) comment, 'the concept of moral panic rests on disproportionality'. In his important recent paper, Young (2009) agrees and sees the disproportional reaction to the particular behaviour as a key attribute of any moral panic. The various examples we have considered certainly all fit this description.

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