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IMITATION AND INCITEMENT:
AN ANALYSIS OF MEDIA-DRIVEN BEHAVIOUR AND CRIMINALITY

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Contents

Abstract

In recent years there has been an increase in the consumption of media, which has led to concerns about whether it is criminogenic. This research aims to evaluate the ways in which the media can be considered criminogenic via two outcomes – imitation of acts and incitement to crime. In order to assess the influence of media on imitation and incitement, a secondary methodological approach has been utilised; a literature review was used to compile evidence from a number of resources – including books and journals accessed through Nottingham Trent University.

In addition, this research makes use of newspaper articles to gather anecdotal evidence for the purpose of analysing imitative behaviour of fictional media. This evidence provides details about specific cases of criminality, which is analysed in conjunction with the media individuals are purported to have imitated to evaluate the extent to which media is relevant in the cases discussed.

This research found that imitation and incitement are potential outcomes of the media, and have present day significance. However, while there is a clear correlation between imitation and incitement and the media, it is difficult to assign causality in the cases discussed. Therefore, this research draws on a range of criminological theories to illustrate other relevant factors that contribute to an individual's offending behaviour.

Overall, this research has established strong links between the media and imitation and incitement, and has highlighted future concerns for media-driven criminality in the shape of 'torture porn'. However, it has illustrated that due to the number of external factors, assigning causality between media and criminality is difficult to establish – leaving this area open to further research.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

In 2010 it was recorded that, on average, 45% of an individual's waking hours are spent consuming media (Ofcom). For instance, it is estimated that four hours a day are spent watching television (Ofcom, 2011), which is demonstrative of the increase in media consumption. As early as 1975 interest in the links between the effects of media violence and aggressive behaviour had been well established – eighty studies had already been published by this point (Carnagey and Anderson, 2004).

The media's influence on behaviour has been illustrated by the Werther effect. The Werther effect, named after the main character in Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, denotes the increase in the number of suicides following the publication of suicide in the media (Phillips, 1974), and has subsequently been well documented (Gould *et al*., 2003). The Werther effect provides substantial evidence indicating that the media can influence behaviour; while it is specific to suicide, it is possible that the media causes a similar effect with regard to copycat crime.

Extensive research has been carried out into media effects, with a particular focus on screen-based media violence and the effects it has on young children (Funk *et al*., 2004). For instance, it has been suggested that children repeatedly exposed to media violence become desensitised and are therefore more aggressive in real life as a result (Farrell and Bruce, 1997). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated by Bandura *et al*. (1963) that an imitation effect exists in children who copy onscreen violence following exposure.

However, there is as much disconfirming evidence relating to media effects as there is confirming. For instance, while video games are typically associated with increases in aggressive behaviour (Anderson and Bushman, 2001) it has been demonstrated that increases in the number of stores selling such items coincides with decreases in crime (Ward, 2011). Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate the effects of the media on behaviour and criminality.

Overall, while evidence exists to suggest that there is a link between the media and real world violence there is little discussion around the direct imitation of portrayed actions in real life situations.

This dissertation builds on existing research about the media and its effects, expanding it to discuss how the consumption of media has been linked to copycat offending. Furthermore, this research analyses the phenomenon of media incitement to crimes and the differences between incitement to attitudes and incitement to action. The chapter outline is as follows;

The methodology used in this dissertation is discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter examines the selected methodology, secondary research, and evaluates why this method of research was selected; comparing it to primary research to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of this method.

Chapter 3 analyses imitation of behaviour depicted in fictional media, discussing imitative suicide as a foundation for analysis before discussing case studies of copycat crime. This chapter assesses whether fictional media provides a blue print for *modus operandi* and evaluates the extent to which the media in question is causal to the offending behaviour.

Chapter 4 evaluates incitement, an alternative way in which the media may be linked to crime. This chapter discusses the legal definition of incitement and divides the concept into two categories; incitement by non-fictional media and incitement by fictional media.

Incitement is discussed with reference to propaganda used for the promotion of genocide, which is compared to fictional media such as *The Turner Diaries*.

Chapter 5 gives attention to competing explanations relating to the links between the media and offending, including a discussion about social learning theory. This chapter compiles evidence from the previous chapters to enhance knowledge regarding why individuals replicate acts portrayed by the media, or are incited to action.

Chapter 6 assesses 'torture porn', a new form of media that may be cause for future concern. Contemporary examples of where this media format has been imitated are used to determine their potential harms.

Finally, this dissertation draws together the research contained in the chapters to offer concluding comments on the media and its effects on behaviour in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

2.1 Qualitative Research

The methodological approach used in this research is literary analysis - defined by Bryman as 'the analysis of data by researchers who will probably not have been involved in the collection of those data' (2008: 296). This approach falls into the qualitative research tradition, a non-numerical approach to research that covers a wide range of approaches such as interviews and in-depth analysis on materials to provide an analysis of an event or phenomena (King *et al*., 1995) – as such it is described as an 'anti statistical' framework for analysis (Noaks and Wincup, 2004). Due to this, qualitative research is often critiqued for not being 'scientific' (Dantzker and Hunter, 2006). However, qualitative research is advantageous as it provides rich, detailed data about social phenomenon.

2.2 Primary Research

Primary research is the undertaking of new research in order to provide an insight into the subject area – this type of research requires the collection of new data. There are methodological problems with the collection of primary research; specific to this research are the ethical implications of interviewing relevant populations and problems of access.

The British Society of Criminology's ethical statement indicates its purpose is 'to offer some guidance to researchers in the field of criminology in keeping with the aims of the Society to value and promote the highest ethical standards in criminological research' (British Society of Criminology, 2006). The code of ethics outlines a number of responsibilities researchers have to research participants – the first of which states that researchers have a responsibility to ensure the physical, social and psychological well-being of participants (ibid.).

Chapter 3 analyses the role of the media in imitative actions, with reference to the Werther effect and imitative suicide. It is possible to gain a detailed insight into the motivations of individuals who imitate suicides as portrayed in the media by conducting in-depth interviews with individuals who have experienced failed attempts of imitative suicide. However, it would be unethical to interview individuals about this subject area for an undergraduate dissertation, as it is likely to cause psychological distress (Israel and Hay, 2006).

Furthermore, Chapter 3 investigates the phenomenon of copycat criminality that has been linked to specific film or print media. As a consequence of their offending perpetrators of such crimes are often convicted and therefore reside in prison. This creates methodological problems which prevents the undertaking of primary research, firstly due to the issue of gaining access. Prison based research is unlikely to be granted to an undergraduate (Martin, 2006) due to its sensitive nature, therefore primary research is not appropriate as a methodology. There are further issues with primary research – including informed consent, confidentiality and quality.

The British Society of Criminology outlines that all research conducted in the discipline of criminology ought to be based on the fully informed consent of research participants (British Society of Criminology, 2006). Informed consent means that research participants should be given all the necessary information to make an informed decision regarding giving consent to participate in the study at hand (Bryman, 2008).

Informed consent becomes more difficult to obtain when the research participants lack the maturity or competence required to make an informed decision (Ruane, 2005) - in addition, it becomes particularly important when the intended research participants constitute a vulnerable population, such as individuals residing in prison. It is more complicated to extract fully informed consent from an individual in a vulnerable population as they are not considered to have the responsibility or capability to grant such consent (Freedman, 1975).

Had primary research been selected as the methodological approach for the research, the method used for data collection would have been qualitative interviews. Interviews can be conducted in a number of ways – such as face-to-face, via the telephone and email – and can be conducted in structured, semi-structured and unstructured ways (Bernard, 2000). For the purpose of qualitative research the interview technique favoured is unstructured interviews – this allows participants to give detailed answers in response to questions (Bryman, 2008), the results of which are similar to that of a conversation (Burgess, 1984).

However, there are issues that could arise from the conduction of unstructured interviews – for instance, issues of confidentiality. Researchers have a duty to maintain confidentiality of research participants (British Society of Criminology, 2006). Confidentiality refers to the assurance that information and data collected from research participants are not published in such a way that it is possible to link them to specific individuals (Monette *et al*., 2008). The conduction of interviews with criminals such as those imprisoned for copycat crimes would provide the opportunity to gain a deeper insight into the motivation behind their offending behaviour (Finch, 2001).

However, there is a need to ensure that responses cannot be connected to individual participants (De Vaus, 2005), a standard that may be difficult to uphold due to the nature of the topic at hand. For instance, the details of high-profile copycat crimes are often well publicised - an example of this is the murder of James Bulger. This particular crime prompted public outrage and as a consequence a significant amount of media coverage was granted to the crime and the trial (Franklin and Petley, 1996). As a result of this, the majority of people may be able to identify Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, suggesting that responses to questions may leave participants vulnerable to identification by third parties.

It is notable that trust is a key element in the disclosure of information to researchers (Finch, 2001). Trust is relevant in the respect that a higher quality of information is likely to be provided during interviews (Ortiz, 2003). While trust is necessary between researchers and research participants, it could be problematic if participants subsequently disclose information of a nature such that it has legal implications (Corbin and Morse, 2003). For the topic at hand, this could include the disclosure of additional offending behaviour. Under circumstances such as this there are no strict outlines to follow (Martin, 2006) therefore it is at the researcher's discretion how to handle the information. A way in which to avoid such issues is to outline in a consent form, to be signed prior to the interview, stating whether information of this nature will or will not be disclosed to the appropriate authorities (Wolfgang, 1981).

Furthermore, a primary research approach may not have provided accurate information to draw conclusions from. It is arguable that 'imprisonment' and 'dishonesty' are overlapping concepts (Newman, 1958), therefore suggesting that information obtained through interviewing or surveying perpetrators of copycat crime would give rise to questions of reliability.

Chapter 4 analyses the role media, both factual and fictional, have on incitement to crime; with specific reference to the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Some of the problems discussed with reference to prison populations are relevant – such as gaining access and informed consent – but there are also more specific issues with conducting research on the Rwandan population.

Survivors of the Rwandan genocide are likely to have been exposed to traumatic events – a study with 408 refugees established that all participants had experienced a number of traumatic situations (Kolassa *et al*., 2010). The overall conclusion of the study stated that genetic predispositions to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) become insignificant when individuals are exposed to extreme environmental factors such as the genocide. Additionally, a study with 68 adolescent survivors of the genocide indicated that all had experienced traumatic events – such as seeing someone being killed and seeing dead or mutilated bodies - which lead to PTSD; all indicated that they had re-experienced symptoms of the disorder (Schaal and Elbert, 2006).

Studies such as these indicate that the genocide was a traumatic event to the survivors, leaving them vulnerable to flashbacks of the events. Under the British Society of Criminology's code of ethics, researchers have a responsibility to ensure the psychological welfare of participants (2006). Conducting interviews with survivors of the genocide is likely to induce flashbacks or recurring symptoms of PTSD, resulting in a degree of psychological distress – therefore, it is unethical to conduct in-depth interviews with such individuals.

To interview genocide survivors in Rwanda would require travelling to the country, as there are limited modern technologies which would make cross country interviewing possible. For instance, the telephone system in Rwanda is described as small and inadequate and does not serve the general population as a whole (CIA, 2012). Travelling to Rwanda to conduct interviews would require approval from the ethics committee at Nottingham Trent University and large amounts of time (Robson, 2002). Time constraints do not allow for research of this nature to take place and the cost of conducting such research would not be supported.

Furthermore, dangerous conditions mean research in Rwanda would be unsafe. The majority of research conducted by individual researchers in Western society usually incurs no real danger (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999). However, Rwanda has a more volatile culture than that in the UK, and lower levels of human rights increase the risks to researchers in the country (Beyrer and Kass, 2002). These factors indicate the danger posed by travelling to conduct face-to-face interviews – gaining ethical approval for research of this nature is unlikely to occur for an undergraduate.

Lastly, it is notable that in much qualitative research the data sets used in analysis are small and therefore the results can appear to confirm statistical improbabilities (Thorne, 1994). This demonstrates the difficulty in obtaining a significant number of research participants so that the results are applicable and accurate. The proposed method of primary research would not allow access to a significantly large population of research participants, so would add little knowledge to the discipline of Criminology.

Overall, it has been demonstrated that primary research with relation to this subject area has many drawbacks which are not outweighed by benefits – therefore, a secondary research methodology is more practical for the research at hand.

2.3 Secondary Research

Secondary analysis of pre-existing research is considered to be an important aspect of research (Glass, 1976). Due to the nature of the research a content analysis is arguably the most ideal approach; content analysis is a non-intrusive means of obtaining research and the research used already exists irrespective of the subject at hand (Hessey-Biber and Leavy, 2011). However, secondary analysis has been critiqued in comparison to primary research, as it is argued that there is a limited relationship between the researcher and the research used in analysis (Thorne, 1994).

One of the primary methods of data collection has been through the medium of the internet. Towards the end of the twentieth century the internet became a widely valued tool for the undertaking of social research (Babbie, 2007). Particularly relevant is the ease at which it offers access to a wide variety of information, such as electronic journal articles (Jupp, 2006). Many universities subscribe to academic journals and allow access to them online for students (McBurney and White, 2010). Nottingham Trent University subscribes to a number of online journals, which has provided a wealth of internet based journal articles to be used for the research.

While the internet is useful as a resource for social research it also has its drawbacks – for instance, it can be difficult to assure that a number of internet-based resources are free from bias (Babbie, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the documents used for the research are of a reasonable quality – this can be assured by using academic journals rather than opinion-based blogs. However, it is likely that bias may appear in newspaper articles that are accessed online, or they will lack authenticity – for instance, some newspaper articles are falsified for the purpose of selling more copies of the newspaper (Macdonald, 2001). The use of newspaper articles in this research is unavoidable, as they provide the basis of anecdotal evidence of copycat offending.

Chapter 3 – Imitation

3.1 The Werther Effect

It is proposed that one of the most important sources of suggestion on behaviour is the media (Hittner, 2005) and a significant body of proof indicating this comes from literature relating to copycat suicide. The increase in the number of suicides following reports of suicide in the media is well documented (Gould *et al*., 2003) to the extent that it is argued that 'No fact is better established in science, than that suicide is often committed from imitation' (Farr, 1841: 82 cited in Etzersdorfer *et al*., 2004: 137). Imitative suicide was first noted following the publication of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1774.

In *The Sorrows of Young Werther* the main character, Werther, following an episode of unrequited love, dresses in boots, a blue coat and a yellow vest and sits at a desk with an open book before shooting himself (Coleman, 2004). This book arguably inspired copycat suicides as many individuals were found dressed in the same outfit or had committed suicide with the book on their person. For instance, one individual shot himself and was found with a copy of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, as had been described in the book (Pirkis *et al*., 2006).

The term 'the Werther effect' was coined by Phillips (1974) to describe the phenomenon of imitative suicide after he discovered that on average, the number of suicides increased by 58.1 following the publication of suicide stories in the media.

There are a number of factors that are suggested to make the Werther effect more likely, for example if a celebrity commits suicide. If the victim holds a celebrity status, copycat suicide is 14.3 times more likely to occur (Stack, 2003). For instance, following Marilyn Monroe's suicide in 1962 the month after saw 197 people – the majority of them young, blonde females – commit suicide using Monroe as a model (Coleman, 2004).

Celebrities constitute members of the *entertainment elite* with who the general public may feel a sense of identification. By watching celebrities, such as Monroe, in a variety of film roles the audience can develop feelings of identification to factors about the character (Stack, 1987). These feelings of identification are useful in analysing why individuals may be inclined to carry out copycat suicides. Furthermore, it is arguable that this factor may influence imitation of television and films; should an individual identify with a character they may be more inclined to imitate their actions.

However, there are issues surrounding the data provided to demonstrate the Werther effect. There are five main external influences which may skew data in favour of a Werther effect; seasons and trends, misclassification, bereavement, prior conditions and precipitation (Phillips, 1989).

It is arguable that there are seasonal trends in relation to suicide. Although not entirely universal, a study across a number of European countries and Japan found that the number of suicides tends to peak in spring months (Takahashi, 1964). While arguable that weather has an effect on availability of certain methods of suicide – such as drowning – findings indicate the peak in spring and summer may be linked to failure to adjust to time-giving signals, such as longer periods of sunlight (Partonen *et al*., 2004).

The influence of misclassification argues that if imitation effects are well known and publicised this may alter the perceptions of coroners, who subsequently register more deaths as suicides by misclassifying them (Phillips, 1989). Similar to Merton's self-fulfilling prophecy it is arguable that this concept is applicable to these circumstances in the form of a self-fulfilling verdict; the misclassification of suicides makes the perceptions appear true.

The influence of prior conditions has been discussed by Durkheim, who argues that the two social variables that suicide rates depend on are integration and social regulation (Johnson, 1965). Integration refers to purposes and ideals ascribed by society, while regulation is the restraint put on desires (Yang, 1992). Changes to the economy can alter the levels of integration and regulation, resulting in more suicides during times of recession and less in times of prosperity (ibid.). Therefore, it is important to note social conditions such as economic factors when evaluating increases in suicide rates.

The influence of bereavement suggests that rather than imitating publicised suicide, individuals are saddened by the report so subsequently commit suicide themselves (Phillips, 1989). For example, Marilyn Monroe was a popular public icon whose suicide resulted in copycats from young women who potentially identified with her; it is also arguable that due to high levels of identification such individuals are saddened by the death so commit suicide as an act of grief, rather than as an imitative action.

Finally, it is arguable that rather than causing an increase in the rate of suicide, the publication of suicides in the media precipitates suicides that would have happened regardless (Phillips, 1989). The publication of suicide stories in the media have the potential to bring forward suicides that would have occurred anyway.

3.2 The Laws of Imitation

Gabriel de Tarde wrote *The Laws of Imitation* in 1903 which outlined imitation as the 'action of one mind upon another at a distance' (Park, 1938: 188). Tarde outlines three general laws of imitation; the law of close contact, the law of imitation of superiors by inferiors and the law of insertion (Reid, 2011).

The first law argues that imitation is more likely to occur in proportion to the amount of time an individual spends with another; the second law denotes that individuals imitate those considered to be their superior; the third law states that methods of criminality can be substituted with newer methods, for example the use of guns rather than knives (ibid.).

With relation to copycat crime, Tarde's second law of imitation is the most significant. Acts carried out by characters in fictional media may be subject to imitation firstly because the character portrayed is superior in status to the individual, or – in the case of films – the celebrity portraying the character is perceived to be of superior status.

3.3 Life Imitating Art

The Werther effect – also known as the copycat effect and imitation – was initially formulated in relation to suicide, but can be applied to the replication of acts portrayed in the mass media.

Rage by Stephen King, writing as Richard Bachman, is a psychological thriller, in which a high school student, Charlie Decker, takes a gun into school, kills two teachers – including his algebra teacher - and holds his classmates hostage (Hoppenstand and Broadus, 1987). This novel was withdrawn from publication following its links to high school shootings –

most notably the case of Barry Loutaitis. Loutaitis entered his high school algebra class and shot the teacher before proceeding to kill two of his classmates (Egan, 1998). It is reported that he said "This sure beats algebra, doesn't it?", a line from the novel (Coleman, 2004: 168). However, this has been mis-reported by the media – this line does not appear in King's novel. In this respect, it appears that the media may be seeking a post-hoc explanation for Loutaitis' criminality.

Regardless of whether Loutaitis directly imitated *Rage*, it is arguable that the novel shaped his actions and inspired the *modus operandi* for the crime. Furthermore, while *Rage* has been linked to other high school shootings, it is plausible to suggest that the media coverage of Loutaitis' original crime resulted in copycat shootings – similar to the way in which media coverage of suicides inspired copycats. However, it is difficult to pinpoint causality; therefore, further copycats may have been influenced by both *Rage* and media coverage.

Child's Play 3 (Bender, 1991) has been directly linked to the murder of James Bulger by Robert Thompson and Jon Venables; one of the most infamous examples of copycat criminality in modern times. Bulger, aged two, was abducted from a shopping centre in Liverpool by the defendants - both aged ten - in 1993; following which he was violently attacked and murdered by the youths (Sharratt, 1993). The murder has been linked to *Child's Play 3* as elements of the crime occurred in the film, suggesting that it inspired the *modus operandi*.

In the film, during a war games scene, Chucky - the doll - gets shot with a paint gun containing blue paint (Bender, 1991). This was mirrored in real life, as a small tin of blue modelling paint was spilt over Bulger during the assault (Pilkington, 1993); it is possible that, influenced by the film, the youths were seeking a living doll (Davis, 2003). In addition to this, Chucky is left on the train tracks of a funfair ride (ibid.); this was reflected in real life as Venables and Thompson left Bulger on a railway line (Sharratt, 1993). These aspects suggest that Thompson and Venables were directly influenced by the film in question.

However, there are other factors that may have contributed to their offending – such as both were the product of broken homes and both experienced abuse at the hands of their parents (Bracchi, 2010; Davis, 2003). While *Child's Play 3* may have influenced and shaped their behaviour, it is not possible to claim it was wholly responsible because '[m]illions of children watch television dramas and videos with a partially violent theme – so if they were the sole cause of inciting murder, we'd have a juvenile killing epidemic' (Davis, 2003: 338). While it is not possible to assign causality between *Child's Play 3* and the actions of Thompson and Venables due to the existence of other factors, because of the similarities between the plot and their actions, it is plausible to suggest the film shaped their *modus operandi*.

The film *A Clockwork Orange* was banned in Britain in 1973 on the grounds that it was violent for the sake of violence (Staiger, 2003). Since its re-release in 2000 it has frequently been referenced by the media in relation to crime, particularly youth criminality. It has been argued that the media generates a cycle of concern about the 'pathological' nature of the younger generation (Kidd-Hewitt, 2002). News publications linking *A Clockwork Orange* to criminal behaviour arguably fuel moral panics relating to youth violence.

However, *A Clockwork Orange* has not been linked to crime in the same way as *Child's Play 3*. *A Clockwork Orange* has regularly been referenced in relation to violent crime – for instance, in 2009 two teenage girls kicked a gay man to death over his sexuality; a witness described the attack as similar to a scene from the film (Cohen, 2010). In the film the main

character, Alex DeLarge, and his gang of 'droogs' attack and repeatedly kick an elderly tramp (Kubrick, 1971).

The 2009 attack on Ian Baynham occurred in London - the assault appears predominantly based on the victim's sexuality; during the attack the perpetrators shouted homophobic slurs such as 'faggot' (BBC, 2011a). There is no evidence indicating that the attack in question was motivated or inspired by *A Clockwork Orange* – rather, the assault was described as resembling scenes from the film by witnesses.

Under these circumstances, violent media has been used as a benchmark for descriptive purposes and has no direct link to the attack in question. The use of fictional media to draw descriptive comparisons to real-life events could be described as 'the DeLarge effect', after *A Clockwork Orange*'s main character.

3.4 Contemporary Examples of the Copycat Effect

The copycat effect has recently been cited by the press in relation to individuals imitating actions depicted in films. *Project X* is a 2012 film about three male teenagers who, left alone for the weekend, hold a house party that descends into chaos (IMDb, 2012). In Texas in March 2012 a group of teenagers held a house party that caused $80,000-$100,000 worth of damage to the property in question (Daily Mail, 2012). When questioned by the police about the party, the teenagers reported they were copying what they had seen in *Project X* (ibid.).

Furthermore, in the UK there has been the case of Daniel Bartlam – a 15 year old boy who murdered his mother by beating her round the head with a claw hammer, in a manner resembling a *Coronation Street* storyline (BBC, 2012). In the soap, the character John Stape killed a woman with a claw hammer then left her body in the wreckage of a tram crash to cover the crime (Dolan and Reilly, 2012). The scene in question was found stored on Bartlam's computer, and films such as *The Amityville Horror* and *Final Destination* were also found at the address (Peachey, 2012). Furthermore, it is reported that Bartlam watched the horror film *Saw* shortly before carrying out the murder (Dolan and Reilly, 2012; Peachey, 2012). These films do not appear to have generated an imitative effect on Bartlam – this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

3.5 Art Imitating Life

The copycat phenomenon is a cultural reference point which feeds back into itself. An early example of this is Jack the Ripper – following his crimes a number of films have been produced based on the real-life events, for example *The Lodger* (Byrne, 1998).

The Columbine High School massacre occurred in April 1999, when Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold attacked their high school with guns and pipe bombs, killing 12 students and a teacher before committing suicide (Wright, 1999). This controversially lead to the Super Columbine Massacre RPG!, a free downloadable game played through the eyes of the perpetrators, reportedly aiming to enhance understanding regarding the reasons for the massacre (Columbine Game, 2005). While it is not possible to conclusively determine the effects of media such as Super Columbine Massacre RPG!, it does demonstrate a cycle that potentially fuels the copycat effect.

Chapter 4 – Incitement

4.1 Incitement

Incitement is the process of urging an individual to action (English Dictionary, 2006). In the UK on 1st October 2008 the Serious Crime Act 2007 came into effect, which abolished incitement under section 59. Prior to this, the act stated that an individual would be guilty of the offence of incitement if;

> 'a. s/he incites another to do or cause to be done an act or acts which, if done, will involve the commission of an offence of offences by the other; and
>
> b. s/he intends or believes that the other, if he acts as incited, shall or will do so with the fault required by the offence(s)' (CPS, 2010).

Despite not having a specific law relating to the offence of incitement, the UK has a number of laws prohibiting incitement to specific crimes – for instance, the Public Order Act 1986 proscribes incitement to racial hatred, which refers to colour, race, nationality or ethnic origin (Liberty, 2012b). Furthermore, following the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, behaviour and acts designed to incite religious hatred are now public order offences (Liberty, 2012a).

In contrast to the UK, the first amendment of the US constitution outlines that all citizens are granted the freedom of speech and expression, such as religion, and no laws will be created abridging these rights. As such, there is no legislative approach to curb incitement in the USA.

Incitement can be split into two main types – incitement to attitudes and incitement to actions. Incitement to racial hatred falls into the category of incitement to attitudes, however, it can lead to illegal action driven by the attitudes instilled in individuals. Furthermore, incitement to attitudes and actions can be divided and discussed with relation to non-fictional and fictional media.

4.2 Incitement through non-fictional media

Hate media is used to encourage 'violent activities, tension or hatred between races, ethnic or social groups, or countries for political goals and/or to foster conflict by offering a one-sided or bias view or opinion, and/or resorting to deception' (Gardner, 2001: 304). The use of hate media can cause incitement to attitudes which provides grounds for action to take place – for instance Nazi Germany used propaganda to inspire racial hatred which subsequently resulted in the Holocaust (Gardner, 2001).

A more contemporary example of the use of non-fictional media to incite negative attitudes occurred in Rwanda; the 1994 genocide has been classified as one of the twentieth century's most extreme crimes against human rights (Straus, 2007). The starting point of the Rwandan genocide is widely accepted as being 6th April 1994, when President Habyarimana's plane

was shot down, resulting in his death (Caplan, 2007). The genocide that followed resulted in the death of 800,000 Tutsi's in 100 days (Rwanda-Genocide, 2012)

Rwanda has been beset by racial tension between the Tutsi and the Hutu populations due to their unequal status in the country – over time the relationship reversed so that by 1994 the Hutu were in the dominant position (BBC, 2011b). Following generations of intermarriages any physically identifiable traits between the two populations – such as height - have disappeared (Bowen, 1996). In modern times the distinctions between the two groups are difficult to establish; the groups live side-by-side, speak the same language and practice the same religion (ibid.; Paluck, 2009) – in essence, the Hutu and the Tutsi are a single ethnic group separated by socio-economic status (Uvin, 1997).

The victims of massacres such as those carried out in Rwanda tend to belong to groups that have not threatened or acted in a hostile way to the group that perpetrates the massacre (Kelman, 1973). Cohen coined the term moral panic whereby the media defines a group of individuals as a threat to society and societal values (2000). In Rwanda the media defined the Tutsi population as folk devils, which served to legitimise violence against the group carried out by the Hutu.

Academic research on media used to incite racial hatred during the Rwandan genocide has focused particularly on the radio station *Radio-Télévision des Mille Collines* (RTLM) – however, while radio was significant in the broadcasting of racial hatred propaganda, the use of other forms of media to incite attitudes took place prior to RTLM and 1994. For example, in 1958 *Ijwi rya Rubanda Rugufi* – a journal - supported the Hutu population by printing the following in one of their publications;

> '[F]or you, too, young men and girls of the Hutu movement, the time has come... to defy the Tutsi youth. Arm yourself with machetes and rid our field of the reeds that infest it. With hoes we have to uproot them so as to fertilize our field, the season for sowing is close!' (cited in Kamatali, 2002: 62).

Following this, in 1959 the Rwandan press continued to portray bias against the Tutsi population by encouraging Hutu to carry out a number of actions – from burning down homes to murder (Kamatali, 2002). The propaganda in place pre-1994 established an enabling environment so that subsequent propaganda encouraging negative actions against the Tutsi population were legitimised and acted upon.

In Rwanda, printed media was difficult to access outside the capital city due to limited circulation (Straus, 2007). Furthermore, because a significant proportion of the population in Rwanda cannot read or write, radio was the most easily accessible form of media (Des Forges, 2007) and as such was the most influential on attitudes and behaviour. Prior to the establishment of RTLM, radio in Rwanda had previously been recognised by the United Nations as playing a significant role in 'inciting ethnic tension and ethno-political murder' (Metzl, 1997: 629).

RTLM was created as a tool explicitly designed to demonise the Tutsi population (Dallaire, 2007). It was founded in 1993 as a talk radio station, but incorporated anti-Tutsi propaganda to the extent that the station was considered to be an arm of the extremist Hutu population (Paluck, 2009). The overall results of the RTLM broadcasts were the generation of hatred and the dehumanisation of, and creation of fear towards, the Tutsi population (Straus, 2007). Furthermore, through the instilling of fear RTLM legitimised the actions Hutu committed

against the Tutsi; broadcasts focussed around the concept of 'kill or be killed' which encouraged Hutu to act first in self-defence (Kellow and Steeves, 1998).

Radio broadcasts have the capacity to influence behaviour (Zajonc, 1954). On October 30th 1938 Orson Wells and a group of actors broadcast a version of H. G. Well's *War of the Worlds* over the radio, which 6 million Americans listened to (Kellow and Steeves, 1998). The broadcast allowed Cantril (1940) to analyse the effect the mass media had on invoking panicked reactions – he observed;

> 'Long before the broadcast had ended, people all over the United States were praying, crying, fleeing frantically to escape death from the Martians. Some ran to rescue loved ones. Others telephoned farewells or warnings, hurried to inform neighbours, sought information from newspapers or radio stations, summoned ambulances and police cars' (47).

This unique study demonstrated that media, in this case the radio, has the power to influence behaviours and reactions of consumers; by adapting this concept to the broadcasts of RTLM during the Rwandan genocide, the fear created was arguably powerful enough to create panicked reactions to the situation – reactions that are further legitimised by the labelling of the population as folk devils.

It is important to note that in Rwanda the radio is viewed as the voice of authority, and to a lesser – but significant - extent the voice of God (Dallaire, 2000). This indicates that radio exerts significant power over listeners, so offers strong influences on attitudes and behaviour. It is documented that individuals are more inclined to commit reprehensible acts following the legitimization of their actions by authority (Milgram, 1974 cited in Bandura *et al*., 1975). The constant use of RTLM to broadcast anti-Tutsi propaganda helped maintain an environment of fear in Rwanda; combined with the fact that the radio exerted significant levels of authority in the minds of the population it is plausible to claim that the media played a significant role in inciting attitudes, and subsequent actions, of the Hutu population.

There are four main methods used by the media to create fear; focusing on previous actions to emphasise negative history between the groups; the manipulation of myths and stereotypes to dehumanise; overemphasis on past grievances; and general negative reporting (Frohardt and Temin, 2003). Rwandan media, particularly RTLM, was influential in the dehumanisation of the Tutsi population. RTLM continually referred to the Tutsi population as inyenzi, the Kinyarwandan word meaning 'cockroach' (Straus, 2007). It is arguable that frequently referring to the Tutsi population as cockroaches results in their dehumanisation – once the population is perceived as being less than human it becomes easier to justify killing them (Frohardt and Temin, 2003). Under the circumstances described it appears that dehumanisation helped create an enabling environment for the genocide to occur.

The evidence overall indicates that use of the media in Rwanda was successful in incitement to negative attitudes, which culminated in action in the shape of massacres of the Tutsi population. This therefore demonstrates a way in which the media can be used to drive individuals to criminality. However, there are evidential problems that make analysis of this phenomenon difficult.

4.3 Evaluating Incitement

Firstly, it is difficult to evaluate the true extent of incitement as there is nothing tangible to measure. It is not possible to measure incitement based on the number of deaths as the

reasons for participation in the genocide are not clear-cut. For instance, analysis demonstrates that victims and perpetrators hold different views regarding reasons for involvement in the genocide. Victims – the survivors of the Rwandan genocide – identify RTLM as a significant and influential driver of the genocide; many believe the massacres would not have occurred without it (Kellow and Steeves, 1998).

This is in stark contrast to the perceptions of those who actively participated in the violence and killings. A survey conducted with individuals who took part indicated that some of their motivations for involvement include imitation, obedience, anger and fear – none cited radio broadcasts as the reason behind their offending. Furthermore, when specifically asked whether the radio was the reason for them taking part in the genocide, 85% answered 'no' (Straus, 2007).

Additional issues include the difficulty in separating the impact of incitement on individuals and the effects of imitation. A number of individuals may be incited to hatred of the Tutsi population by the media in place in Rwanda; however, another subsection of the population may find themselves imitating the acts of those incited towards action. Furthermore, it is unclear what role group membership alters likelihood of incitement to action – many Rwandans listen to the radio in groups; this dynamic is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

4.4 Incitement through fictional media

Fictional media, such as novels, can also be linked to incitement – including incitement to criminal actions. *The Turner Diaries* is one such example which was arguably written to incite racial hatred which subsequently resulted in incitement to racist attitudes and partaking of criminal action.

The Turner Diaries was published in 1978, written by William Pierce – who founded the white separatist group the National Alliance - under the pseudonym, Andrew Macdonald (Reed, 2002); it went on to sell around 500,000 copies (Sutherland, 2000). The book takes the form of the fictitious personal diary of Earl Turner, a member of a group denoted 'the Organization', whose aim is to bring about a white supremacist revolution in the USA (ADL, 2005). Since its publication, *The Turner Diaries* has been described as '"the bible of the racist right," "the handbook for white victory," and "the blueprint for revolution"' (Kushner, 2003: 369).

The Turner Diaries served to justify terrorism by portraying the Organization members as 'brave heroes [who] resist the imminent threat to the white race and America posed by Jews, blacks, and other minorities' (Turk, 2004: 279). This justification arguably legitimises such actions for individuals in real life, therefore making it more acceptable as a response to attitudes. The book is popular with right wing extremists and has been cited as the inspiration behind terrorist activities carried out by such groups (ADL, 2005) – most notably, *The Turner Diaries* has been linked to the actions of Timothy McVeigh.

In 1995, Timothy McVeigh carried out a bombing in Oklahoma which resulted in the death of 168 individuals and the injury of 500 more (Walker, 2001). McVeigh was reportedly influenced by *The Turner Diaries* – pages of which had been photocopied and highlighted and subsequently discovered in McVeigh's car (Sutherland, 2000). Furthermore, it is arguable that *The Turner Diaries* offered a blueprint for the creation of the bomb used by McVeigh;

> '"This book provides essentially a step-by-step recipe as to how to put together your own fertilizer fuel-based bomb…. In fact, it shows how unbelievably simple it is to make a hugely, hugely powerful bomb" U.S. Attorney Hartzler told the jury in 1997' (Davis, 2004: 56).

The number of hate groups active in America in 2011 was 1,018, a number which has been growing exponentially in recent years (Potok, 2012). It is argued that the instating of Barack Obama as President of the United States has worked to aggravate racism within the country, as extremists may be of the perception that white supremacy in America is under attack (The Leadership Conference, 2012). This indicates that the environment in the USA is more accepting of racism, potentially suggesting that individuals may be more susceptible to the effects of media such as *The Turner Diaries*. The Oklahoma City bombing occurred in 1995 prior to the factors in discussion – however, 809 Patriot and Militia groups were active in the USA at this time (Potok, 2012) which indicates that an enabling environment was in place at the time of McVeigh's attack.

4.5 Incitement and the internet

The origins of the internet lie in 1966, when Lawrence G. Roberts wrote up his idea for the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) regarding computer networking (Leiner *et al*., 1997). Since its initial conception, the internet has grown exponentially (Thompson, 1999). However, while the internet has been taken advantage of by entrepreneurs and consumers, it has also attracted attention from criminals (Wall, 2001). Communication on the internet is hallmarked by the traits of anonymity, disembodiment and outreach (Jewkes and Sharp, 2003) – which can lead to individuals being more outspoken.

The internet can help facilitate crime – an example of such is the growth in the problem of child pornography, where the internet acts as a medium for the access and distribution of images (Taylor and Quayle, 2003). Furthermore, it is arguable that the internet can incite individuals to attitudes resulting in action, such as those constituting hate crimes – these include the threat of physical attacks, actual physical attacks and verbal abuse (West Midlands Police, 2012). Hate crime in the UK is any crime that is motivated by the offender's hatred of the victim due to their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability (ibid.).

The internet offers a new means of communication and many hate groups now publish hate information on the internet (Deirmenjian, 2000). For instance, Pierce, the author of *The Turner Diaries*, recognised the potential of the internet and subsequently created websites on which he could publish racist viewpoints (Reed, 2002). There has been a growth in hate sites on the internet; this growth can be associated with the anonymity offered by the internet, as it allows for opinions not supported by all members of the public - such as those of racial hate groups - to be voiced (Bargh and McKenna, 2004). Furthermore, the internet breaks down traditional geographical boarders (Postmes *et al*., 1998) meaning that such opinions reach a wider audience.

It is not just criminal behaviour that the internet facilitates and incites – once attitudes have been established within an individual's mind-set, the internet plays a key role in maintaining and supporting attitudes. The internet has the potential to influence and support suicidal behaviour and incite vulnerable individuals to action.

The internet offers unrestricted access to uncensored information (Thompson, 1999); while beneficial in some respects it is negative in others. For instance, Haut and Morrison (1998) discuss the case of a female who twice attempted to commit suicide via methods she'd found

on the internet which reported that death would be certain. Following this admission, the authors indicated shock at the number of websites offering details about the amount to take of a number of substances which would constitute an overdose (Thompson, 1999).

A contemporary example of the internet supporting suicidal mentality is the suicide of Kevin Boyle in 2011. Boyle had been able to purchase a 'suicide kit' online for £44 from a company which required no proof of illness of psychiatric assessment, assuring painless 'deliverance' (Weathers, 2012). This case demonstrates that the internet provides an enabling environment for such attitudes to thrive; following which, it offers the information and resources needed to act on such attitudes.

4.6 Media for the prevention of incitement

This analysis has demonstrated the role media plays in incitement to attitudes and actions. However, media can also be used to prevent the incitement of attitudes and subsequent actions.

Following the Rwandan genocide an educational radio programme entitled *New Dawn* was created. *New Dawn* took the form of a radio soap opera, where the storylines incorporate educational messages which aim to address and change the beliefs and prejudices of the audience (Paluck, 2009). The study indicated that while the programme did not demonstrate a strong impact on personal beliefs, it did influence participants' perceptions' of social norms (ibid.). This is significant as social norms influence attitudes and behaviours, which are discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

Furthermore, it is arguable that the internet may potentially act as a safety valve – preventing rather than encouraging criminality. It is possible to demonstrate this by drawing comparison to the period of prohibition in America. Prohibition in the USA involved legislation which saw the banning of production and sale of alcohol in the country, which was in place from 1919 to 1933 (Tyrrell, 1997). Despite the reduction in supply of alcoholic beverages there was still a demand for the product, therefore smuggling occurred – commonly known as 'bootlegging' (Petkus, 2008). This demonstrates that prohibition was ineffective in reducing the consumption of alcohol in the USA.

It is therefore plausible to argue that similar to prohibition, legislation put in place to outlaw hate websites will reduce supply while having no impact on demand. Therefore, this could cause displacement of prejudice attitudes into real-life, potentially culminating in actions. Therefore demonstrating that hate websites – while immoral – may not be explicitly responsible for incitement to actions; rather, they may act as a safety valve, preventing negative attitudes, such as racism being displaced into real-life.

Chapter 5 – Competing Theories on Media Effects

5.1 Theories on Media Effects

It has been argued that the mass media has the potential to teach, thereby influencing behaviour (Villani, 2001). Schramm *et al*. argue that;

> 'For *some* children, under *some* conditions, *some* television is harmful. For *other* children under the same conditions, or for the same children under *other* conditions, it may be beneficial. For *most* children, under *most* conditions, *most* television is probably neither particularly harmful not particularly beneficial' (1961:2).

This conclusion can be adapted to apply to adults and other media formats, including films such as those discussed. While most individuals are unlikely to be influenced by violent media, there is a small proportion of the population that are susceptible to incitement and imitative effects. Regardless of the influence media may have over their behaviour, the overall effect is likely to be small in comparison to other social experiences (Reiner, 2007).

There are a number of theories that can be used to analyse the effects media has on individuals. Social learning theory is an approach to understanding behaviour which looks at how individuals imitate actions and shape their behaviour based on the behaviour of others (Banyard and Grayson, 2008). Furthermore, behavioural choices are shaped depending on rewards or punishments received for previous behaviour (Akers *et al*., 1979).

Positive reinforcement of behaviour makes subsequent behaviour more likely to occur – as the individual has been rewarded for their actions. Positive reinforcement arguably occurred in Rwanda; RTLM encouraged negative action against the Tutsi population and then applauded those who carried out such acts (Kamatali, 2002).

Furthermore, it is argued that if individuals identify with a model they are more inclined to shape their thoughts, feelings and actions on those of the model (Bandura, 1969) – this is relevant when evaluating the copycat effect. Similar to the way in which identification with celebrities can result in imitative suicide, identification with characters in media such as books, television and films may result in imitative behaviour; such as the examples discussed in Chapter 3.

5.2 Social Norms

The term 'social norms' is a label attached to behavioural regularities which drive people to co-operate; deviation from social norms differs from deviation from other behaviours as they can invoke sanctions (Posner, 2000). People use social norms as a benchmark for how they ought to behave (Krull, 2001), as they allow individuals to evaluate whether certain behaviours are good or bad (Akers *et al*., 1979). Social norms have an effect on prejudice (Paluck, 2009), as was seen in Rwanda leading up to the genocide.

Anti-Tutsi propaganda was present in Rwanda prior to and during the genocide, and it is the media that helps to communicate social norms to the population (Paluck, 2009). Overall, this

created and sustained an environment of hate towards the Tutsi population – making hatred acceptable and therefore a 'social norm'.

Normalisation thesis has been discussed in reference to drug use; it theorises that deviant groups or individuals and their behaviour become a feature of everyday life (Parker *et al*., 2002). This thesis may have applicability to violent media; debatably, the increase in violent media makes behaviour portrayed appear 'normal' and therefore acceptable.

5.3 Group Mentality

In Rwanda, individuals would listen to the radio in groups because not everyone had access to their own – survey data from Rwandan's who participated in the genocide indicated that 52% owned a radio (Straus, 2007). It is difficult to separate the impact of radio programmes from the impact of peers on behaviour. Arguably, factors such as discussion with peers may have helped legitimise the actions of the population.

Furthermore, it is difficult to separate the effects of incitement and imitation, which is relevant in group situations. RTLM arguably catalysed a small minority of the population who already held extremist views (Straus, 2007) – for these individuals the radio incited their actions. However, many individuals cited that the radio did not play a role in their offending (ibid.). For these individuals, it is plausible to suggest that they were influenced by, and imitated the actions of, their neighbours.

5.4 Obedience to Authority

Milgram undertook a psychological experiment to demonstrate the influence of authority on the actions of individuals. The experiment involved participants administering what they believed to be lethal electric shocks to an actor, who they thought was a fellow participant. The results of the experiment showed that 26 of the 40 participants obeyed the experimenter to the end – administering a 450 volt electric shock (Milgram, 1963).

In Rwanda, the radio was perceived as the voice of authority (Dallaire, 2000), therefore helping to explain participation in the genocide. Survey data indicates that while direct incitement from the radio was not cited as a reason for actions, obedience was often indicated as being significant (Straus, 2007).

Furthermore, a dominant partner may act as a figure of authority resulting in obedience and criminal behaviour. A study by Gudjonsson and Sigurdsson indicated that 73% of participants committed offences in the company of others (2004). Furthermore, following an Offence Motivation Questionnaire which assessed motivation for offending based on five key factors – compliance, provocation, financial, excitement and consequences – there was correlation for the compliance element (ibid.).

This provides evidence that the influence of other individuals is significant in offending behaviour. In the case of Venables and Thompson the dominant individual was Thompson; this was demonstrated on several occasions, such as Thompson influencing Venables to play truant from school (Davis, 2003). While aspects of their crime indicate they were imitating *Child's Play 3* it is important to note the influence of external factors and the impact Thompson had on driving the behaviour of Venables.

5.5 Cultural Criminology

> 'In this world the desire for excitement can only be satisfied through irrational acts where content and context become secondary to immediate experience. Along with this world based on fun and pleasure the motivation for action becomes predicted on the fulfilling of desire and pleasure' (Presdee, 2000: 74).

Cultural criminology analyses crime in relation to emotional drivers – including the seeking of pleasure and the adrenaline rush associated with criminality (Young, 2004). It is arguable that this branch of criminology is relevant for evaluating why individuals imitate actions portrayed in the media, particularly films.

As previously stated, Gudjonsson and Sigurdsson carried out an Offence Motivation Questionnaire, which also indicated a correlation between offending and excitement (2004). It is argued that certain crimes have 'sensual dynamics' (Lyng, 2004: 361). Research in the area of cultural criminology and the concept of deviancy as 'fun' has focused on crimes such as theft (e.g. Katz, 1988). However, the premise of deviancy as 'fun' can arguably be extrapolated to apply to the phenomenon of imitative criminality, as has been discussed. Due to the portrayal of crime as entertainment in fictional media it is arguable that it may be perceived by the audience as 'fun', resulting in imitation.

5.6 Predispositions

With relation to suicide, certain individuals may have predispositions making them inclined to carry out such actions. It is argued that both genetic and social factors are relevant in evaluating pre-existing dispositions to suicide (Kety, 1990). Using this behaviour as an example, it can be suggested that predispositions may exist that incline individuals towards imitating the behaviour of others, or leave them susceptible to incitement by media.

However, predispositions based on biological or psychological factors are difficult to establish, particularly without conducting primary research into individuals who have been incited by, or have imitated, media. While predispositions may be relevant in explaining imitation and incitement, it is important to not ignore the influence of social factors on explanations for behaviour.

5.7 Are certain individuals drawn to specific types of media?

It is possible to argue that individuals who are susceptible to media effects are likely to be drawn towards specific types of media to begin with.

For instance, RTLM attracted a demographic mainly consisting of young people (Kellow and Steeves, 1998). As discussed in Chapter 4, individuals who participated in the genocide did not cite the radio as a reason for their participation; therefore, any effect was on the subconscious. It is arguable that individuals who were driven to take part in the genocide by the radio may be extremists who were already predisposed to violence (Straus, 2007), therefore representing a small proportion of the population. Individuals who are more inclined towards violent behaviour are arguably more likely to consume media such as RTLM, and may also be more susceptible to media effects on behaviour.

Furthermore, the case of Daniel Bartlam arguably demonstrates that certain individuals may be drawn to specific types of media. Films such as *The Amityville Horror* and *Final Destination* were found in Bartlam's room (Peachey, 2012). In addition to this, the victim's partner described Bartlam's obsession with films such as *The Evil Dead* and *Halloween* and how he appeared to 'thrive' on them (Ball, 2012).

While *Coronation Street* appears to have directly influenced Bartlam, there is no evidence to suggest he took inspiration from the horror films in question; rather, it indicates that he may have been drawn to particularly violent media.

Chapter 6 – Future Concerns

6.1 'Torture porn'

Violence in the media has undergone an increase in graphicness since the end of the Second World War (Reiner, 2007). The term 'torture porn' was first denoted by David Edelstein in an article in *New York Magazine* to describe the influx of a particular brand of horror film (2006). 'Torture porn' is the term now used to describe modern day horror films where the main focus is on extreme and graphic violence (Kattelman, 2009). It is important to note that not all films containing torture fall into the 'torture porn' category – the torture must be central to the film and not simply a coincidence of the plot; rather, the torture is in place for the sake of taking the audience through the horrifying experiences (Morris, 2010). Examples of such films include the *Saw* franchise and the *Hostel* films (Murray, 2009).

The *Saw* films are centred on the serial killer, 'Jigsaw', who constructs elaborate traps for individuals which puts them in control of their own destiny. 'Jigsaw' is removed from the situation and informs the victims of the way out of the traps via tape recordings. The killer's second tape recorded monologue in *Saw* is the first in the franchise to explicitly make reference to the traps as a game; this speech includes the terms '[y]our aim of this game', '[t]here are ways to win this' and ends by stating '[l]et the game begin' (Wan, 2004).

More significantly, later in the same film the Jigsaw killer makes a speech to a victim on video via the means of a puppet. The speech is as follows;

> 'Hello, Amanda. You don't know me, but I know you. I want to play a game. Here's what happens if you lose. The device you're wearing is hooked into your upper and lower jaws. When the timer on the back goes off, your mouth will be permanently ripped open. Think of it like a reverse bear trap. Here, I'll show you. There's only one key to open the device. It's in the stomach of your dead cellmate. Look around, Amanda. Know that I'm not lying. You'd better hurry up. Live or die. Make your choice' (ibid.).

This template is used repeatedly throughout the films in the franchise, with many focusing around the concept of playing a game. This speech template was used more frequently in *Saw II* where several victims were greeted in an identical format; examples include 'Hello Michael, I want to play a game', 'Hello Obi, I want to play a game' and 'Hello Xavier, I want to play a game' (Bousman, 2005). It is therefore arguable that the 'I want to play a game' speech is an iconic feature of the franchise, and it is this that has been linked to copycat behaviour in real life. In 2007 two teenagers in the USA left the following message on Beverly Dickson's phone;

> 'I want to play a game. You need to decide if life is worth living for. There are vents and there is toxic gas that will be fogged through in 10 minutes. It will kill you in a half a minute, so you decide. It's your game. Do you want to live or die?' (NewsChannel5.com, 2007).

The prank resulted in the victim having a stroke (ibid.). It is clear from the example that the message left by the teenagers is strongly based on those that appeared in the films, indicating that this is a direct copycat. Furthermore, the main plotline in *Saw II* involves a number of kidnapped individuals attempting to escape the house they are held captive in before a nerve agent is released, killing all victims (Bousman, 2005). Therefore, it is arguable that the message was also based around the plot of the second film in the franchise.

6.2 Problematic factors of 'torture porn'

It is therefore reasonable to suggest that 'torture porn' may be problematic with respect to imitation in the future based on three factors; desensitization of the audience to violence, glamorization of violence and dehumanization of victims.

Desensitization refers to 'a reduction in emotion-related physiological reactivity to real violence' (Carnagey *et al*., 2007: 490). Desensitization can occur over time after repeated exposure to violent media (Funk *et al*., 2004). Exposure to violent films has been shown to cause desensitization (ibid.). It is therefore arguable that, due to desensitization, in order to achieve the same emotional reactions the violent depictions need to be more extreme and graphic.

Furthermore, violence for the use of entertainment in film and television-based media is often an untrue representation of real life violence – rather, it is glamorized (Bushman and Huesmann, 2001). Glamorization serves to make violence more appealing, which is relevant with relation to the concept of crime as 'fun', as discussed in Chapter 5 – this factor may leave 'torture porn' susceptible to imitation.

Similar to the situation in Rwanda, 'torture porn' involves dehumanization; in this case for entertainment rather than political purposes. The discussion contained in Chapter 4 demonstrates that dehumanization of subjects makes it easier for victimization to take place. The dehumanization of characters in entertainment media may consequently make it easier for individuals to victimize others in real life, having seen such acts legitimized.

In summary, these factors serve to indicate that 'torture porn' may be susceptible to imitation in the future by a select few individuals. Aspects of films within this genre have already been subject to imitation, as has been discussed with relation to the *Saw* franchise. Due to the aforementioned factors it is plausible to argue that 'torture porn' films may be problematic in the future; however, it is difficult to conclusively predict media effects.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

This analysis has illustrated two ways in which the media can play a role in offending behaviour. Although it is difficult to unravel the complex relationship between media and criminality, this examination has demonstrated that certain media formats are susceptible to imitation and others are likely to cause incitement, indicating that media has an effect on the shaping and inspiration of behaviour.

In terms of imitation, the effects of media on copycat behaviour have been well established with relation to suicide; the imitation of which caused Phillips to coin the term 'the Werther effect' (1974). This can be adapted to explain the relationship between imitation and modern fictional media, and is cited by the media in the present day as an explanation for criminal behaviour, with reference to specific cases – such as those discussed in Chapter 3.

Imitation is difficult to prevent – it is a small minority of the consumer population who imitate acts portrayed in fictional and non-fictional media. In the case of the Bulger murder, the perpetrators were young children. While it may not have been possible to prevent the crime, where media consumption can be monitored it is advisable, as it may help reduce likelihood of imitation.

It is relatively well established that the media plays a role in shaping attitudes and behaviours (Paluck, 2009). This analysis has highlighted the role of RTLM in incitement to attitudes and actions in the Rwandan genocide. Rwandan media put in place the foundations for prejudice attitudes to flourish and evolve into actions against the Tutsi. Furthermore, Chapter 4 indicated that while the media is arguably relevant in incitement, it can also be used to prevent incitement. Educational improvements may be useful in the prevention of abuse of media for incitement purposes, as demonstrated in Rwanda. The use of media to prevent incitement to attitudes and actions is an area that requires more in-depth research in the future.

However, despite strong links between media and criminality it is not possible to assign causality. As demonstrated in Chapter 5 there are multiple competing explanations relating to motivations and reasons for committing the crimes discussed in this analysis. While it is plausible to suggest that media plays a significant role in both imitation and incitement to crime, it is important to not be overly deterministic and discount other factors that also contribute to offending behaviour. Further research is required to fully establish the significance of media where other factors – such as social influences - are equally or more significant.

Lastly, because this analysis has demonstrated that media plays a role in influencing behaviours, it is feasible to suggest that 'torture porn' may be problematic in the future with relation to imitation. Films from this genre have already been subject to the copycat effect, and while the majority of people who watch such films are unlikely to imitate the behaviour depicted, there is a minority that may be susceptible to copying the graphic depictions of violence. This may serve as a relevant area of research in the future to establish their significance in offending behaviour.

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