

Topic 7- Crime and the Media

Media representations of crime:

WILLIAMS AND DICKINSON (1993)

British newspapers devote up to 30% of their news space to crime however the media gives a distorted image (e.g. compared with Official Statistics):

- It over-represents violent and sexual crime
- Portrays criminals/victims as older + more M/C FELSON (1998) calls this 'age fallacy'
- Exaggerate police successes
- Exaggerate risk of victimisation
- Report crimes as a series of separate events (don't examine underlying causes)
- Overplay extraordinary crimes FELSON (1998) calls this 'dramatic fallacy'

News Values and Crime Coverage:

News= social construction **COHEN AND YOUNG (1973)** - news isn't discovered it is 'manufactured' and is the outcome of social process whereby stories are selected and rejected

Key concept = News values: the criteria journalists/editors use in order decide whether a story is newsworthy, if a crime story can be told in terms of these 'news values'= more likely to make news

Key News Values

1. Immediacy
2. Dramatisation (action & excitement)
3. Personalisation (human interest stories about individuals)
4. Higher status person + 'celebrities'
5. Simplification (eliminating shades of grey)
6. Novelty or unexpectedness (new angle)
7. Risk (victim-centred stories, vulnerability/fear)
8. Violence (visible and spectacular)