

**HOW TELEVISION INFLUENCES SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS: THE CASE OF  
POLICING AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

by

**AARON DOYLE**

**B.A., The University of Victoria, 1987**

**M.A., The University of Toronto, 1993**

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**ABSTRACT**

Most research about television studies its impact on viewers. This thesis asks instead how TV influences what is in front of the camera. The dissertation investigates how TV reshapes other institutions as it broadcasts their activities, using four ethnographic studies of televised crime and policing. These studies examine: 1) the reality-TV show "Cops"; 2) the televising of surveillance footage and home video of crime and policing; 3) television and Vancouver's Stanley Cup riot; 4) the law-breaking television stunts of Greenpeace. The four studies provide empirical contexts to draw together and compare for the first time three diverse strands of sociological theorizing which can be used to analyze how TV influences other institutions.

My data show the most powerful players, exemplified by the police, tend to dictate which situations are televised, and to produce the "authorized definitions" of these situations, and thus control their institutional consequences. Invoking the notion that "seeing is believing", TV is uniquely effective at warranting these "authorized definitions". Many understandings of television over-emphasize its visual aspect; often instead verbal interpretations of televised events by the most powerful players are more important. The meanings of these televised episodes are produced within a broader culture which tends to support the established order. Television and source institutions create new social roles for audiences in these situations. However, these roles tend to limit audiences to involvement which simply reproduces institutional power.

The implications for the three theoretical perspectives being compared are as follows. Rather than having a democratizing effect in these situations as predicted by "medium theory", TV mostly has various influences which reinforce existing power relations. These criminal justice situations are reshaped by the cultural logic of television, fitting with the "media logic" perspective. Televised activities tend to become more institutionally important, tightly managed, dramatic, simplified, and are shaped to fit dominant values. However, powerful source institutions, particularly the

police, tend to control television's influences, often harnessing them for their own legitimation and surveillance purposes, consistent with the "institutional" perspective. My data thus lead me to support key aspects of these latter two perspectives, and to produce a synthesis of these two.

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**PREFACE**

As per Faculty of Graduate Studies Doctoral Thesis Regulation 4.5, I note that an earlier version of Chapter Two appeared as the chapter "Cops": Television Policing as Policing Reality". Pp. 95-116 in M. Fishman and G. Cavender eds. (1998) Entertaining Crime: Television Reality Programs. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

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**CH. 1:****INTRODUCTION**

Over the last five decades, TV has become central to contemporary social life. Television's possible impacts have been a source of great public concern and massive social scientific research. Yet this huge body of research is hampered because it conceives of television's influences in too narrow a way.

In order to examine the social impact of television, my thesis studies a previously little-researched trend, in which TV is broadcasting more and more footage of actual incidents of crime and policing. I investigate this trend through four case studies of key types of front-line criminal justice situations which have come increasingly to be televised. These case studies provide an empirical context to draw together, evaluate and advance three strands of sociological theorizing, all of which take a somewhat unconventional approach to the influences of media. These three theoretical perspectives are distinctive in that they can all be used to understand how TV influences other institutions.

Theorizing this kind of media influence - on other institutions - is still a relatively new avenue of enquiry and marks a departure from most media sociology. Thus, these three, quite analogous, pioneering perspectives have not yet been drawn together and treated comparatively. Yet these kinds of institutional analyses call out strongly for further scholarly attention and development, as they may overcome key stumbling blocks which constrain mainstream social scientific research on TV and other media.

The potential influence of television content on individual audience members has been the subject of literally thousands of studies in sociology, and other social sciences like psychology, communications and political science. The vast majority of this huge body of research literature conceives of the influence of TV quite narrowly: simply, that television content transmits messages to viewers, influencing their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. In fact, the term "media effects" has become shorthand or synonymous in much social scientific literature with this relatively narrow conception; with this choice of language, the point that media might have other effects beyond simply influencing audience members in these ways is brushed to one side. Ironically, critical sociological research on mass media most often features a mirror image of this limitation of mainstream work (Ericson 1991), by focusing narrowly on the ideological influence of media content on individual audience members.

In contrast, my thesis begins with the observation that TV does not simply stand back and record events to convey them to audiences. Instead, television, like other media, often shapes the things it records. I investigate how television might actually alter or transform social situations when they are broadcast. Thus, I ask a different type of research question. Not the standard question: how do portrayals of criminal justice on TV affect television audiences? Instead, the alternative question: how is crime and policing itself altered as it is televised?

Crime and punishment have always been staples of television news and TV's fictional entertainment programs - just as they have

been central topics of print news and print fiction since long before the birth of television (Kaminer 1995: 50-52). In parallel, the possible consequences for society of all this crime in the media have long pre-occupied social scientists (see for example, Davis 1951; Gerbner and Gross 1976; Chibnall 1977; Hall et al. 1978; Graber 1980; Garofalo 1981; Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1987, 1989, 1991; Surette 1992; Sacco 1995; Howitt 1998).

As television has evolved technologically and institutionally, a newer development is that actual incidents of crime and policing are increasingly recorded directly by video cameras and broadcast on TV. Formerly, crime news on television was very largely based on spoken reconstruction after the events by journalists on news programs (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1991; Ericson 1998). A reporter simply told the audience about crime and policing incidents that had happened some time ago. There might have been some related visual material shown on TV - for example, the reporter might use the crime scene as a backdrop. However, there was no television footage of the actual crime and policing activities in question.

In contrast, the trend now is that more and more "real" video footage is broadcast on TV. This footage shows "live" incidents of crime and policing which are watched at home by TV audiences. The broadcasting industry term for such material is "actuality" footage. It is not "live" in the sense of being broadcast at the time it occurs, but it is "live" in the sense of being an on-scene record of actual events. This trend toward more and more footage of actual events is also evident in many other situations beyond the realm of criminal justice, due to the increasing ubiquity of video cameras, the use by

TV news of various alternative sources of video like home camcorders and surveillance cameras, and the advent of various reality-TV programs from "Real TV" to "Trauma: Life in the ER" to "America's Funniest Home Videos". Yet the trend toward such "real" TV footage is perhaps most apparent in the realm of criminal justice, which has always been a central focus of public and media fascination.

As TV has evolved, various kinds of actual criminal justice events have begun to be captured more and more by its cameras. For example, starting in the 1960s, an increasing number of political demonstrations and riots have occurred in front of TV cameras, resulting in controversial news footage of police controlling crowds. Indeed, by the 1970s, numerous activists had taken televised protest to the next step and begun to stage their own episodes of political lawbreaking for television - media stunts specifically tailored so that choreographed crime and its policing could be captured by the cameras. As we moved into the 1980s and 1990s other "real" and "live" instances of crime and policing were captured for TV news more and more by increasingly pervasive surveillance cameras and home camcorders. Finally, starting in 1989, "real" policing was being recorded for a whole new television format - reality-TV programs like "Cops" and its many imitators.

My research begins with the speculation that the presence of TV cameras might alter these particular criminal justice situations which are recorded. Furthermore, in recording these situations, TV might also have various broader effects on criminal justice institutions. The potential for these types of TV influence is perhaps

counter-intuitive, and might make more sense to the reader if I give a hypothetical example. Consider a routine criminal justice situation many of us have experienced: a roadside traffic stop by a police officer. Now consider how the social situation would be changed if such a police traffic stop were to be captured by a TV camera and broadcast to a wide television audience. The conventional social scientific way of thinking about television's role in this situation would be to analyze the content of the TV message sent to audiences, and to research how this message might influence audience attitudes and behaviour. But television would likely also alter the traffic stop situation in other ways. The police officer's behaviour might be influenced. The officer might start playing to the camera, for example, letting the driver go with a warning lecture which is also aimed at the TV audience, or alternatively deciding to "throw the book" at the driver given the high profile of the situation. If the traffic stop came to be televised, the experience would almost certainly be altered for the driver herself. For example, the traffic stop might be experienced by the driver as much more intensely punitive because of the shaming effect of TV.

Furthermore, if such police traffic stops were to be televised on a regular basis, this might lead to wider changes beyond those particular situations which are broadcast. Indeed, the standard operating procedures for conducting traffic stops might well change, given that they were now high profile events. And the televising of traffic stops might also lead to wider changes in how traffic policing was institutionally organized, for example, more political attention, more resources and more expertise might be committed to

policing speeding drivers, given the new television profile of this situation. Finally, the television audience might possibly become players themselves in new ways in the new social situations which were created. For example, perhaps viewers might be able to phone a hot-line to turn in speeders to a TV program.

In short, broadcasting this situation on TV would reshape or reconstitute this simple transaction in the criminal justice system. TV would essentially create a new social situation on the front-lines of criminal justice. The resulting changes would extend beyond the immediate situation which was recorded, and also have various wider ripple effects on the criminal justice system.

In fact, this example is not altogether hypothetical: some police traffic stops *are* now actually broadcast on TV - for example, on the reality-TV show "Cops". And, while a "Cops" crew is not present at most traffic stops, many police cruisers are now mounted with surveillance cameras recording each and every such stop, and this surveillance footage increasingly finds its way on to TV news and reality-TV. More generally, actual day-to-day episodes of contemporary institutional life which were not previously public events are increasingly broadcast on TV, both in the criminal justice system and in many other social realms.

The types of influences of television on these situations which I have just speculated about are different from those studied by most sociologists of mass media. But similar influences would likely be predicted by the scholars who pioneered three quite similar alternative perspectives on media influence, three perspectives I will now discuss.

### **THREE PERSPECTIVES ON HOW MEDIA INFLUENCE INSTITUTIONS**

**My thesis builds on three theoretical conceptions or perspectives which analyze this other direction of media influence, asking, each in somewhat different ways, not how does TV affect who is in front of the set, but how does TV affect what is in front of the camera? As a consequence, each theorizes the influence of media in broader, more multi-faceted and more far-sighted ways than conventional models.**

**Following the lead of these three perspectives, my thesis focuses on how media influence situations in other institutions. Contemporary social life increasingly occurs in and through major social institutions. Our identities are institutional identities; our careers are institutional careers. I look at institutionalized patterns of communication, and the interaction between TV and other major institutions, especially the police. I have selected these three perspectives because they are the only three bodies of theorizing which deal directly with how media influence other institutions.**

**In the first of these alternative conceptions, thinkers such as Marshall McLuhan and Joshua Meyrowitz - "medium theorists" - have examined how new forms of media such as the book, radio or television reshape social life. I focus on the work of Meyrowitz (1985, 1994) in particular. Meyrowitz argues that the advent of TV has broken down barriers between various social groups by including viewers in new "information systems". Thus TV had sweeping effects of social levelling and democratization, for example, between political authorities and everyday people.**

**A second analogous conception focuses empirically more broadly on the influences of contemporary "media culture" in general rather than on specific media such as TV. In this second conception, David Altheide and Robert Snow (1979, 1991) analyze how the cultural logic of mass media - "media logic" - feeds back on and reshapes other key institutions which operate in and through mass media, such as electoral politics, some forms of organized religion, and professional sport. The influences of "media logic" on these institutions include, for example, an orientation to entertaining a mass audience, and the need to fit the requirements of various media formats, especially the news format.**

**A third related way of thinking about media influence is the "institutional perspective" of Richard Ericson, Patricia Baranek and Janet Chan (1989). This perspective examines how the news media influence other institutions which are key sources of news. Ericson et al. show how various non-media institutions like the police, the courts, the legislature and private companies, are reshaped as they organize themselves to deal with the news media.**

**These three conceptions - Meyrowitz's medium theory, Altheide and Snow's media logic perspective and Ericson, Baranek and Chan's institutional perspective - have not previously been treated comparatively. They are not simply competing models: they each define their empirical foci in different ways, there is mutual influence between them, and they are often overlapping. Each of the three is at least partly rooted in interpretive and phenomenological sociology, although each links this to other types of sociological theory in different ways. If they are similar in important ways,**



there are also some key points of divergence between these three perspectives, which should be addressed to advance theorizing in this area.

Each of the three is, at least in part, a model of how media influence other institutions. This focus on institutions offers a way past some of the deadlocks facing media audience research (Ericson 1991, 1994; Altheide and Snow 1991). It is well known that conventional social scientific research has faced considerable difficulty attempting to demonstrate a causal influence of media content on audiences, especially outside of experimental situations. It is very difficult to isolate the influence of media in particular from other interrelated factors. This is evident in the large body of research attempting to link portrayals of criminal justice in the media with fear of crime or punitiveness among media audiences (Gunter 1987; Ericson 1991; Sparks 1992; Sacco 1995; Heath and Gilbert 1996; Howitt 1998). It is also the case in the very extensive research literatures attempting to demonstrate a link between television violence, or pornography, and violent behaviour by various audiences (see Cumberbatch and Howitt 1989; Ericson 1991; Sparks 1992; Livingstone 1996 for literature reviews confirming this point). Indeed, those familiar with long-running debates within media audience research may see relatively little evidence of progress. Repetitive controversies have persisted for decades in the mainstream media literature about whether or not it is possible to quantify various "media effects" on audience members (Cumberbatch and Howitt 1989; Livingstone 1996). Meanwhile, critical researchers of media audiences are mired in a long-running theoretical debate

about whether audiences should be understood as relatively "active" or "passive" (eg. Fiske 1987; Seaman 1992; Morley 1996; Curran 1996) with the different sides in the debate entrenched in positions seemingly pre-determined by their theoretical orientations.

A second problem with sociology using the conventional model of media effects on individual audience members is that, in attempting to isolate the influence of media, such research often tends to look at media effects abstracted from any direct social or political context. Instead, such research attempts to measure such effects using various forms of the construct of "public opinion" as operationalized by social scientists. This research too often simply presumes such public opinion as constructed by researchers must necessarily have important social or political consequences. For example, researchers who study media "agenda-setting" (eg. Rogers and Dearing 1994), examine the relationship between which issues are high on the "media agenda" and which are high on the "public agenda", as measured by audience surveys. It is often simply taken as a premise of such research that what is determined by the researchers to be high on the "public agenda" is socially and politically consequential, based on the assumption that public opinion somehow influences the "policy agenda". How this process of public influence might actually occur is most often simply left unexamined in the large body of agenda-setting work.

A third limitation of conventional audience research is simply that it misses many other important kinds of media influence beyond how media impact individual audience members. These other types of influence will be demonstrated throughout this thesis.

Thus, an alternative approach in attempting to discern the social and political consequences of mass media operations is to focus more on the media as a direct player in particular political and organizational contexts. Concerns regarding media effects on individual audience members regarding criminal justice issues such as increased "fear of crime" (Gunter 1987) or increased "punitiveness" (Roberts and Doob 1990) may be largely driven by the political implications of these facets of public opinion in any case. Surette (1992) terms this alternative focus on the direct political and institutional consequences of media coverage an "ecological approach". As Surette notes, "the media can directly affect what actors in the criminal justice system do without having first changed the public's attitudes and agendas" (1992: 100). For example, Fishman (1978, 1981) revealed how New York police and politicians were involved in the creation of a media "crime wave" of sensational reporting of alleged attacks against the elderly - even though there was no evidence that attacks against the elderly had actually increased. This media "crime wave" resulted in the allocation of more resources to police and the passing of tougher laws. Thus, although Fishman did not attempt any audience research to show that the media construction of this so-called "crime wave" actually produced measurable fear of crime in individuals, Fishman nevertheless demonstrated the media "crime wave" had very tangible social and political consequences.

A slightly different way of framing Surette's suggestion is to focus on media influence on other institutions. There are a number of studies of single examples of media influence on institutions,

including those criminal justice institutions, studies such as Fishman's analysis of the "crime wave", or research suggesting that the presence of television cameras has influenced protest policing (eg. Fillieule 1998). My thesis draws together the three strands of previous sociological research and theorizing which look beyond particular examples, and develop more general conceptions of media influence on other institutions. Ericson (1991, 1994) advocates examining media influence on organizations or institutions as audiences rather than on individual audience members. In the same way, Altheide and Snow (1979, 1991) also focus on how media considerations shape other institutions. Meyrowitz (1985) is less explicitly focused on institutions, but also incorporates into his broader theory some particular arguments concerning how TV and other electronic media reshape institutions.

If such an institutional analysis presents key advantages over narrowly focusing on media influence on individual audience members, in a converse way it presents other advantages over the extremely broad conceptions of media influence by social theorists like Marshall McLuhan (1964), Mark Poster (1990, 1995) and Jean Baudrillard (1988). These theorists offer conceptions of transformations wrought by the advent of electronic media which are so general, sweeping and abstract as to defy much by way of empirical exploration. For example, Poster and Baudrillard both argue that electronic media have essentially helped destabilize reality.

An institutional analysis represents a middle ground between these various other ways of thinking about media, a middle ground

which both captures the general and pervasive sweep of various possible media influences, and yet is still "low to the ground" enough to be open to detailed empirical evaluation.

Now I will discuss each of these three alternative perspectives on media influence on other institutions in more detail.

### **THE MEDIUM THEORY PERSPECTIVE**

"Medium theory" looks at the social influence of particular forms of medium such as television. According to Joshua Meyrowitz, its central current proponent, medium theory:

focuses on the particular characteristics of each individual medium or each particular type of media. Broadly speaking, medium theorists ask: What are the relatively fixed features of each means of communicating and how do these features make the medium physically, psychologically, and socially different from the other media and from face-to-face interaction?

Medium theory examines such variables as the senses that are required to attend to the medium, whether the communication is bi-directional or uni-directional, how quickly messages can be disseminated, whether learning how to encode or decode in the medium is difficult or simple, how many people can attend to the same message at the same moment, and so forth. Medium theorists argue that such variables influence the medium's use and its social, political and psychological impact (Meyrowitz 1994: 50).

Marshall McLuhan is by far the most well-known of medium theorists, due in part to his unique place in popular culture during the 1960s and 1970s as somewhat of a media icon himself. But

McLuhan's work did not engage with sociology, and was often elliptical and cryptic as he speculated about the influence of television and other electronic media on individual consciousness (cf. McLuhan 1964). Nevertheless, in focusing attention on the social importance of the formal properties of particular media like TV, McLuhan paved the way for the work of Meyrowitz (1985, 1994). Other social theorists such as Harold Innis (whose work on media was the key influence on McLuhan) and more recently Mark Poster (1990, 1995), John Thompson (1990, 1994, 1995) and Jean Baudrillard (1988) have made broad macro-level arguments about the importance for social theory of historical shifts in predominant media forms. But Meyrowitz has developed the most coherent, specific, systematic and sociologically-oriented body of arguments which explain how television and other electronic media might influence other institutions, so I focus on his work here. It was Meyrowitz who first defined "medium theory" as a unified perspective, building on the work of McLuhan, Innis and others he had identified as early medium theorists in various other disciplines such as English literature, history and political economy.

Contemporary medium theory received its most important expression in Meyrowitz's much-celebrated book No Sense of Place (1985). In contrast to McLuhan and other early medium theorists, Meyrowitz explicitly engaged with sociology and attempted to advance a sociological theory of media influence. Meyrowitz aimed to extend the sociology of Erving Goffman to social relations occurring through electronic media, centrally television. Meyrowitz did so by creating a bold new theory of how such media reshape

social situations. Meyrowitz reconceptualized Goffman's situationist analysis of face-to-face interactions (see especially Goffman 1959) so that it was based on "information systems" rather than on geographical place. Media like television are understood by Meyrowitz to constitute particular types of social settings that include or exclude people in particular ways. Compared to print media, Meyrowitz argues, the medium of television tends to include very different kinds of people in the same "information systems". Meyrowitz argues that television is more of a "shared arena" (Meyrowitz 1990) than various print outlets because it reaches wider and more diverse audiences, and because TV requires less specialized skill by audiences than print media in "decoding" or understanding.

Much of Meyrowitz's argument hinges on the point that, as opposed to print communication, the particular kinds of information conveyed by TV tend to reduce social distance. As Meyrowitz (1994: 58) argues, "while written and printed words emphasize ideas, most electronic media (he refers centrally to television) emphasize feeling, appearance, mood...There is a retreat from distant analysis and a dive into emotional and sensory involvement." This type of social information conveyed by TV is seen by Meyrowitz to demystify those of different social groups and emphasize what is common to all humans. Adopting Goffman's terminology, Meyrowitz suggests the shift from print to television meant a shift from conveying formal "front region" information to informal "back stage" information. Thus, according to Meyrowitz, TV and other electronic media "merge formerly distinct public spheres, blur the dividing line

between public and private behaviours, and sever the traditional link between physical place and social 'place' "(Meyrowitz 1985: 8).

Thus, for Meyrowitz, a key way TV brings about institutional change is to show audiences what was previously unseen. Like many other analysts, Meyrowitz places a heavy emphasis on the visual aspect of television in determining the meanings of what is broadcast. He thus argues that TV "exposes" (1994: 67) the situations it records, that television "shows us...close up...in living colour" previously hidden social realms (1994: 68). This heavy emphasis on the visual is also demonstrated in Meyrowitz's analogy between television and a one-way mirror: "watching television is somewhat like watching people through a one way mirror in a situation where people know they are being watched by millions of people" (1985: 39). Similarly, he argues, "television has lifted many of the old veils of secrecy" (1994: 68), allows us to "peek behind the curtain" (1985: 60) and so on.

Meyrowitz's analysis is much too sophisticated to argue that television just presents an unfiltered and unbiased reality. Indeed he specifically states that media like TV are "filters". Yet Meyrowitz does premise much of his arguments about the sweeping social changes wrought by the TV medium on the point that television simply makes visible new things which were previously invisible. Thus he argues (1985: 112) that TV news is more revealing than newspapers: "The speed of encoding in television, combined with its wide spectrum of non-verbal information, leads to a new degree of exposure of the many details, fluctuations, and uncertainties that



were traditionally filtered out in newspaper reports. What was once part of the backstage area of life is now presented as 'news'."

Meyrowitz used empirical material from the period 1954 to 1984 to illustrate his points. Television sets were first manufactured in 1946. By 1950, only 10 per cent of American households featured one; by 1955 this figure had risen to 67 per cent (Baker and Dessart 1998: 18). Meyrowitz argued that reconfigured information systems - most centrally a result of the rise of TV - helped create a "new social landscape" during the years 1954-84. He was careful to qualify his claims, suggesting that the rise of television simply had an "important contributing influence" on many social trends which characterized the 1960s and 1970s in which different social groups began to demand equality. Meyrowitz argued that the social consequences of the advent of electronic media, centrally TV, included a merging of different stages of socialization, a diffusion of group identities and a flattening of hierarchies. As a result of electronic media, most importantly television, conceptions of childhood and adulthood have blurred, notions of masculinity and femininity have merged, and politicians have been lowered in stature more to the level of everyday people. Wider-reaching social information systems also led to a homogenization of other traditional group identities; electronic media alter one's "generalized other".

These changes occurred in part because the meaning of particular social situations changed as a result of electronic media - for example the "housewife" (or increasingly, househusband) was no longer someone as wholly isolated in the home. According to

Meyrowitz, these broad cultural shifts as a result of television and other electronic media also brought about change in another way as they led to political pressure from audiences, "for pressure to integrate roles and rights" (Meyrowitz 1994). Thus, as social barriers were broken down by TV, members of isolated and distinct groups began to demand equality in further ways. The greatest impact was on groups defined by physical isolation: kitchens, playgrounds, prisons, convents and so on.

The prison is one of many institutional settings which Meyrowitz saw as altered, although he does not investigate any of them in much depth. To demonstrate the institutional changes he described, using the example of the prison, TV and other electronic media altered the social meaning and experience of the prison institution directly: prisoners were no longer segregated from the outside world in terms of receiving information (1985: 117-118). Secondly, receiving this knowledge of the outside world increased minority consciousness and caused minority groups such as prisoners to demand equality in further ways (1985: 132).

More generally, according to Meyrowitz, TV and other electronic media bypassed old channels and undermined a system of graded hierarchy based on segregation of knowledge, both directly by making available new social information and indirectly through creating political pressure for change. TV thus resulted in various types of social levelling.

Meyrowitz's conception led me to consider how television creates new social situations when it introduces audiences into new "information systems" on the front-lines of criminal justice.

Meyrowitz also draws attention to the sociological importance of the formal properties of television as a medium and how these formal properties affect the redefined social situations which TV creates.

Meyrowitz's medium theory is essentially a theory of how the advent of new media like TV brings about social change. Television is certainly no longer a new medium: it has been on the scene now for more than 50 years. Nevertheless medium theory is still applicable to my thesis, as I study new types of social situations which have emerged relatively recently because of the introduction of television. The key point here is that the specific traits of television and all other media are not static. Instead they continually evolve as media technology and the social relations around that technology evolve. Such technological development includes not just the evolution of television itself, but also of supporting technologies which interact with it. To give a parallel example, the social role of the newspaper was fundamentally altered by the emergence of the telegraph, as James Carey has argued (Carey 1989). In the case of television, one key factor is the evolving video camera technology TV can draw footage from, as I discuss in the first two case studies. Aside from interaction with new supporting technologies, there is also usually a lag between the time a new media technology such as TV appears and the time various institutions adapt to it. For these reasons, new social situations continue to be constituted by the medium of TV, even though TV has already been on the scene for more than half a century.

Reviewing Meyrowitz's analysis raised a number of empirical questions for me. His analysis transposes a way of thinking based on face-to-face interaction into situations which are mass-mediated. Considering this, I began to ponder whether, in making this transposition, it is possible Meyrowitz did not problematize enough the power-relations now shaping the "social information" which viewers receive through TV, and the potential resulting ideological biases in that information. As opposed to a face-to-face interaction between two individuals, a televised interaction is a very much more complex social event. Broadcasting requires large resources and necessarily involves at least one major institution (the television broadcaster) and often other major source institutions (eg. the police in the cases I look at). Involving institutional players introduces institutional power into the social situation, and the consequent power imbalances may be extremely different than in a case of simple face-to-face interaction. These power relations may lead to ideological biases. Indeed, in contrast to Meyrowitz's work, there is a large body of research which suggests such ideological biases in television content, and in TV news in particular (eg. Gerbner and Gross 1976; Gerbner et al. 1994; Tuchman 1978; Fiske and Hartley 1978; Fiske 1987, 1996; Gans 1979; Ericson et al. 1987, 1989, 1991; Shanahan and Morgan 1999). Meyrowitz (1985: 14-15) argues, however, that this body of research focuses too narrowly on media content and neglects different types of key influences of the particular forms of media like TV, which are consequences of how TV changes types and patterns of information flow. These alternative kinds of influences may have a levelling effect,

essentially working in the opposite direction from the biases in content previous researchers found.

Situations where, more and more, television directly records the events in question seem like a good test of Meyrowitz's arguments. In those cases, Meyrowitz's arguments about TV making visible new social situations and conveying "back-region" information would seem to be the most applicable. Thus my thesis will ask: to what extent does television indeed "lift veils of secrecy" and let audiences see into these new kinds of situations?

Meyrowitz focuses heavily on the formal properties of television as a medium. He makes inferences, from examining the kind of information TV as a medium communicates, about what TV's influences will be on viewers. However, Meyrowitz offers little by way of sociological investigation into the actual institutional contexts of television production. Put another way, although Meyrowitz offers a model which can be applied to understanding how TV affects other institutions, he bases his arguments much more on who is viewing televised situations under what circumstances, rather than examining who is actually in front of and behind the TV camera.

For example, Meyrowitz (1985) refers numerous times to the fact that prisoners can now watch television, decreasing their isolation. However, he never mentions the converse point that, as previous research has shown, it remains rare that television cameras are allowed to record and broadcast events from inside prisons themselves (Doyle and Ericson 1996). Prisoners can now watch TV, but the "back regions" inside prison walls are certainly

not shown on TV very much. More generally, it may not be enough that the medium of TV has certain formal properties that might allow it to convey more revealing types of "back region" information. It is a different question whether or not the opportunities will actually arise for TV cameras to *record* that back-region information, and under what circumstances.

In using my case studies to assess Meyrowitz's analysis, I thus ask: to what extent does TV simply make visible new social situations or reveal new kinds of "back region" information in these situations? Conversely, what ideological biases might there be in the "social information" conveyed by TV and why?

Meyrowitz argues television operates to break down hierarchies and produce social levelling. He sometimes tends to speak of these hierarchies in an abstract way, as occurring among different "groups" like men and women and children and adults, rather than in specific social contexts such as in various institutions. However, in some places Meyrowitz does speculate about specific changes in social institutions like the school or prison, changes he sees are a consequence of television breaking down social barriers. Meyrowitz's conception can certainly be applied to the particular televised situations in criminal justice institutions which I am researching.

It seemed that a good way to evaluate Meyrowitz's formulation empirically would be to investigate how hierarchy and social inequality in specific institutional contexts is affected by the introduction of television. There is a great deal of research evidence revealing social inequality in how different social groups - varying

along dimensions such as race and class - are treated by the criminal justice system, and by police in particular. There is also a definite hierarchy of unequal power relations among the various institutional players such as police and civilians in the situations I am studying (Ericson, 1982; Brogden et al. 1988: Ch. 6; Reiner 1992). How will these situations of inequality and hierarchy be affected by the introduction of broadcast TV into these situations?

Meyrowitz's theory focuses in part on how television alters social situations by influencing viewers, who, exposed to new social information, are seen to create political pressure for democratization and equality. However, Meyrowitz does not specify the actual processes through which this pressure for change is applied by TV audiences. This raises further empirical questions for my case studies: when audiences are introduced into these new social situations by television, how much, why and through what mechanisms might they apply pressure for equality and democratization in those situations?

As opposed to the work of Meyrowitz, the two other conceptions of media influence on institutions I will discuss next focus more directly on the social contexts of media production. These latter two perspectives draw more on actual sociological investigation of media outlets, and sociological investigation of other institutions which are key sources of media content.

### **THE MEDIA LOGIC PERSPECTIVE**

A second alternative way of thinking about media influence on other institutions was pioneered by the media sociologists David Altheide and Robert Snow (1979). While Meyrowitz focused more on

media influence on social "groups", Altheide and Snow addressed the question more centrally of media influence on other major institutions. In Altheide and Snow's conception of "media logic", the cultural logic of mass media is seen to have massive social influences, including reshaping practises in other institutions which increasingly operate in and through mass media, for example politics, religion or sport. (1979: Ch. 4 -7). Thus, "all social institutions are media institutions" (1991: ix).

Altheide and Snow state that media logic consists of: "how material is organized, the style in which it is presented, the focus or emphasis on particular characteristics of behaviour, and the grammar of media communication...when a media logic is employed to present and interpret institutional phenomena, the form and content of those institutions are altered" (Altheide and Snow, 1979: 10-11). Thus, media logic is a broader way of conceptualizing media influence than that of Meyrowitz: media logic incorporates not only the formal properties of particular types of medium such as TV, but also the requirements of particular social contexts in which such media technologies are used, for example, in the production of news. "Media logic" is driven by the technical and commercial requirements of mass media and includes broad imperatives which cut across particular media like TV and print, such as the commercial imperative to entertain audiences.

Meyrowitz focused on how TV changed the meaning of institutional life for individual viewers, and thus changed the institutions that way; in contrast, Altheide and Snow focused much more directly on how institutions themselves were altered as they



reshaped themselves to fit the requirements of TV and other media. Meyrowitz focused his book on one particular theme in analyzing the changes caused by TV - social levelling due to the breaking down of barriers; Altheide and Snow described a myriad of diverse and sometimes insidious influences of the cultural logic of mass media on other institutions, varying situation by situation. They placed much more emphasis than Meyrowitz on unequal power relations, in which media institutions and media considerations had become dominant. Altheide and Snow gave examples of how media logic was responsible for both relatively minor shifts in other institutions, such as influencing the tempo and rules of televised sporting events, and also much more fundamental changes, such as the recasting of the entire political campaigning process into series of media events.

Key properties of Altheide and Snow's "media logic" which are seen to feed back on and shape other institutions are the following:

- 1) Media logic is seen by Altheide and Snow to imbue particular institutional events which come to be mass-mediated with much added significance within the institution, making them "bigger than life" for audiences and institutional players (1979: 51). This may be the case even if the events come to be mass-mediated for somewhat arbitrary reasons on the part of media organization. For example, the institutional consequences of a political scandal such as the Bert Lance affair during the Carter administration in the U.S. were much greater because it was given extensive media attention as it occurred in a slow news month.
- 2) Media legitimate and delegitimate, for example, highlighting particular topics, and experts, as important, or "controversial".
- 3) According to Altheide

and Snow, the entertainment imperative of mass media also feed backs on other institutions. Institutional events become media spectacles not simply because they are mass-mediated, but also because mass media encourage dramatic or spectacular behaviour in other institutions. 4) Media communication calls for simplicity. Entertainment very often takes the form of story-telling, and media logic also encourages the interpretation and presentation of institutional phenomena in simple story-lines. 5) Like Meyrowitz, Altheide and Snow attributed television's influences in particular partly to the fact that it communicated to a very broad and diverse audience. However, for Altheide and Snow this huge audience was seen to prompt an "ideal norm" orientation in TV programming. TV producers were seen to produce bland, innocuous programming consonant with traditional values - such as valorizing the conventional family. Producers aimed to produce the "least objectionable program" in order to maintain the mass audience. This "ideal norm format" then played back on institutions which relied on TV exposure, like certain religious organizations, causing these other institutions to be similarly "middle of the road".

To sum up then, "media logic" means that particular phenomena in other institutions which are mass-mediated will have tendencies to be more dramatic, spectacular, entertaining, simplified, narrativized and fitting with conventional values. The pivotal point is that such phenomena are not simply *portrayed* that way by the media- they also *become* that way.

The breadth of Altheide and Snow's conception seems to capture very well, in ways which previous understandings of media

simply do not, the extent to which mass media considerations may be pervasive, ingrained and essential to many or even most aspects of contemporary institutional life, so much so that media considerations thus are relatively taken for granted, so fundamental as to be invisible. As Meyrowitz sought to advance the sociology of Goffman, Altheide and Snow's perspective similarly draws on interpretive and phenomenological sociology, but in the case of Altheide and Snow they make a link with more fundamental questions in the sociology of knowledge. Altheide and Snow take one step further back and argue that media logic is often to a great degree constitutive of current realities. Media logic is so fundamental at the micro-level as to be "folded in" to the "daily routines and expectations of everyday life" in ways taken for granted (1991: 244) and at the macro-level, is central to questions of historical change (1979: 245-247) as historical events take on their meanings through media logic. Altheide and Snow's work thus anticipates later efforts by John Thompson (1990, 1994, 1995) to move studying media to the heart of general social theory.

Altheide and Snow's conception can be seen as quite a convincing argument for a new perspective on media, with examples of how that perspective would be applied to particular institutions. Because Altheide and Snow's conception of media influence is quite broad and diverse, this new perspective opens up a considerable challenge in specifying just what exactly are the most important aspects of the cultural logic of mass media in particular institutional situations.

A key question that arises in reviewing Altheide and Snow's analysis is how to discern the relative power of media considerations, and mass media institutions, in relation to various other institutions. Altheide and Snow state repeatedly that the mass media have become a "dominant" institution in contemporary society (eg. Altheide and Snow 1979: 236, Altheide and Snow 1991: 3). Yet because of the unconventional nature of their conception of media influence, this sometimes seems to be dominance in an unconventional sense. In a later volume which updates their arguments, Altheide and Snow (1991) suggest we are entering an era of "post-journalism". They highlight how the news media, and most strongly television news, are heavily dependent on pre-formatted and pre-packaged material from source institutions. Thus, key news sources largely produce news stories themselves, essentially becoming second-order media institutions and making journalists increasingly redundant. More broadly, in Altheide and Snow's model, is it simply the cultural logic of media or is it media organizations per se as institutions which are dominant?

The source institutions that Altheide and Snow (1979) initially focused on were largely institutions heavily dependent on media and on mass audience approval. In the 20 years since Altheide and Snow's initial book was published, television has penetrated more and more into the fine grain of various other key institutions, turning some front-line day-to-day institutional operations which were formerly relatively private into more public media events. A good example is the day-to-day policing activities now recorded for the reality-TV program "Cops". As Altheide and Snow point out,

media logic will be more influential on institutions which are more reliant on mass media (1979: 103). Certainly police are increasingly acknowledging the need for a favourable public and media image and striving for it (Ericson et al., 1989, Schlesinger and Tumber 1994). Yet, compared to other institutions, police are somewhat less directly dependent on whether or not they can "score points" in the media, on whether they achieve media audience support as quantified through votes (politics), financial donations (politics and religion) or TV ratings and attendance (sports). This raises the question of whether police will be relatively less prone to the influences of media logic compared to the various more heavily mass-mediated institutions which Altheide and Snow focused their analysis on.

A more recent piece by Altheide (1993) offered one highly suggestive example concerning how Arizona police organized a particular sting operation, Azscam, targetting state politicians. This police operation was a novel one in that its primary aim was producing incriminating TV footage for immediate release to the media, rather than producing criminal evidence. The resulting "trial by media" largely bypassed the need for the formal criminal process. Arizona police thus essentially created a new police tactic by harnessing media logic to their own purposes in a way which served both police and media. This was one example of a powerful influence of media logic on policing, and raised the question of whether this example reflected more general influences of media considerations on actual policing operations.

How much does media logic affect an institution such as the police, given that they are less directly dependent on media

audiences for support than the institutions focused on by Altheide and Snow? What of situations when there is conflict rather than convergence between the imperatives of media logic and the interests of powerful source institutions like the police?

Perhaps partly for rhetorical purposes in advancing their new perspective, Altheide and Snow tend to state very strongly how pervasive media logic is in all aspects of contemporary social life. The breadth of their conception raises the challenge of delineating the limits of "media logic". What limits might there be to the influence of media logic more generally?

### **THE SOCIOLOGY OF NEWS PRODUCTION AND THE INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

Thirdly, my thesis also builds on previous research on the sociology of news production, culminating in the "institutional perspective" of Ericson, Baranek and Chan (see especially Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989; Ericson, 1991, 1994). This is because I examine both TV news coverage of criminal justice, and reality-TV which is an analogous format to news. The properties of reality-TV can be thrown into relief by using previous sociological research on news production for comparative purposes.

Much previous research has indicated how the social arrangements of news production tend to reproduce the status quo, focusing on the institutional and cultural factors which shape news content, both on TV and in other media (eg. Tuchman, 1978; Hall et al. 1978; Gans 1979; Fishman 1980; Herman and Chomsky 1988). A great deal of research indicates the reproduction of the dominant

world-view in the news occurs in key part through a structured over-reliance on official or institutional news sources. In particular, journalists depend to a great degree on the police as a news source (Chibnall 1977; Hall et al. 1978; Fishman 1978, 1980, 1981; Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987, 1989, 1991; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994). The "medium theory" and "media logic" approaches I have previously discussed give heavy weight to the influences of media as causing different types of social transformations; in contrast, most empirical research on news production has tended to show instead that the media are relatively less important than key news source institutions, and than the police in particular, in shaping the influences of mass media.

Much of my thesis concerns relations between the police and the media. By no means are police simply an all-powerful arm of the state. Rather, sociological research on the politics of the police reveals they are a semi-autonomous institution, facing political constraints and vulnerability, but also wielding very considerable political influence (Reiner 1992). Although semi-autonomous, the police institution in practise has a strong tendency toward working to reproduce social inequality and hierarchy (Ericson 1982, 1993). This tendency has both a structural side - rooted in the structured relations and common interests between police and other powerful institutions and elites - and a cultural side: the central place of police in contemporary culture as symbolizing order and the status quo (Loader 1997).

There is a recent trend toward proactive police self-promotion through the news media (Ericson et al. 1989; Schlesinger and Tumber

1994: Ch. 4). This helps police achieve political ends and is also a way of closing off areas of vulnerability--the idea being that the police version of a story is much more effective in heading off media enquiries than no version at all (Ericson et al. 1989; Fishman 1980). Many police departments now have large centralized public affairs units featuring civilian public relations experts.

Police self-promotion sometimes includes promoting the notion of an ever-growing crime problem. For example, in early 1995, when Statistics Canada released a report suggesting that violent crime in Canada was not increasing, the R.C.M.P immediately countered with a statement to the news media reinterpreting the crime figures to suggest violent crime was indeed worsening (Vancouver Sun, Feb. 7, 1995).

According to the "dominant ideology model" as described by Stuart Hall and his colleagues (1978), the news media treat official accounts - in particular, those of police - most often as simply "the facts". The domination of these authoritative sources is not the result of an instrumental conspiracy among the media and the authorities, but simply the result of how routine social practises are structured.

Mark Fishman's (1978, 1980, 1981) ethnographic research on news production focused on the routine organizational demand of media outlets for a steady quantity of news items. He described how the bureaucratic and economic logic of news production - deadline and financial pressure - caused an over-reliance on readily available and easily legitimated information from official sources, especially police.



Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989: Ch. 2) offer a somewhat more nuanced account. Their ethnography of the "police beat" in Toronto described an inner circle and outer circle of police reporters. Inner circle reporters are very friendly with police sources and reflect police ideology to a large extent. They have access to more information, but also self-censor to maintain close ties with police sources. Outer circle reporters place more emphasis on reporting police and organizational deviance; their relationship is more like a running battle. In sum, though, previous research suggests a general tendency towards police ability to manage and control the content of the news (Sacco 1995).

A recent trend in a handful of works on the sociology of news production is to look at a different direction of media influence. This small number of works has examined what researchers have called the "mediatization" of other institutions (Schlesinger and Tumber 1994). The term "mediatization" refers to a process in which the influence of an orientation to news reshapes other institutions as they become increasingly proactive with the news media (see for example Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995, on the mediatization of electoral politics).

Research has revealed a general trend in contemporary Western institutions toward increasing professionalism and proactivity about news media relations. This tendency is very marked in the police institution in particular (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989: Ch. 3; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994). Mediatization is largely a consequence of relatively deliberate and overt recent trends in institutional policies adapting to dealing with the news media. Thus

it is a somewhat more narrowly focused conceptualization, focusing specifically on the development of news management in other institutions, which might be seen as one component of Altheide and Snow's encompassing "media logic". The notion of mediatization focuses on the *news* media and is *not* narrowed to any specific medium such as television. However, it has occurred in parallel with, and has been partly driven by, the rise of TV. Mediatization has occurred in an era when TV has become in many ways the most influential news medium (Fiske 1987; Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1991: 24; Baker and Dessart 1998). Being oriented to news thus most often means TV news, and many aspects of mediatization are geared specifically to television.

The key work analyzing mediatization is Negotiating Control (1989) by Ericson, Baranek and Chan (although they do not actually use that term to describe the process). Negotiating Control shows myriad ways in which news media organizations help shape and in turn are shaped by criminal justice institutions. Looking at the police in particular (1989: Ch. 3), Ericson et al. detailed the evolution and interaction of police and media bureaucracies which negotiate the news, and the physical and organizational structure of the police news beat. Like Meyrowitz, Ericson et al. applied a version of Goffman's conception of "front regions" and "back regions" to analyze what was revealed by the news media concerning the institutions they studied. However, in contrast to Meyrowitz, Ericson et al. actually conducted an in-depth empirical investigation of the social contexts of media production. Meyrowitz's account argued that the formal properties of the television medium opened

up various "back regions" for scrutiny, using the term to describe situations of previously secret information. However, Ericson et al. found that in practise, source institutions, and particularly the police, were most often able to maintain quite minimal media access to their "back regions", both in Goffman's original, spatial sense of the term, and in its new, informational sense, adopted by Meyrowitz. Put another way, in contrast to the medium theory analysis of Meyrowitz, Ericson et al. found police were largely able to protect their secret "places" from the media, in both the literal and metaphorical senses of the term "place".

In the conception of Ericson et al., a key form of media influence is thus that the operations of the news media prompt source institutions such as the police to become increasingly proactive with the media. Police and other institutions structure themselves physically and organizationally to promote favourable news coverage. Ericson et al. detail a range of diverse consequences of news media coverage as it feeds back on source institutions, media influences which are largely results of good or bad publicity. For example, the researchers found that news coverage is seen by various police interviewees as having the following diverse influences: interfering with investigations, harming citizens who are victims, relatives or accused criminals prior to trial, promoting or hurting the image of the force, creating workload pressures or pressures to solve particular cases, influencing individual police careers, distributing emergency information, helping solve crimes, having a deterrent effect on potential criminals, and putting

pressure on the police administration for various political reasons (Ericson et al. 1989: 156-169).

The analysis of Ericson et. al is somewhat analogous to that of Meyrowitz in that it places a heavy emphasis on the dimension of what is kept secret versus what is made public by the media, and the institutional consequences of either secrecy or publicity in particular situations. Meyrowitz's account heavily emphasized the importance of revelation and publicity, of new knowledge revealed through the new medium of TV which promoted social levelling and democratization. In contrast, the research of Ericson et al. found extensive evidence of substantial police ability to maintain secrecy from the news media, and a more diverse variety of positive and negative political and personal consequences of publicity.

More generally, the research of Ericson et al. found a much greater ability for source institutions to manage and control the media and media considerations, than did either Meyrowitz or Altheide and Snow. In contrast to the first two perspectives, for Ericson et al., source institutions like the police were at least as important in determining media influence as were media considerations themselves.

Like the first two perspectives, the account by Ericson et al. in Negotiating Control is apparently also strongly influenced by various interpretive sociologies, but these are grounded in a macro-level theory of the "knowledge society" in which powerful media and source institutions and high level players in these institutions dominate, in a society defined by hierarchy based on knowledge. Methodologically, the research of Ericson et al. reflects this theory

of the knowledge society, by focusing mostly on the activities and perspectives of these powerful institutions. Ericson et al. concentrated on observing and interviewing these institutional actors, as opposed to studying very much the experiences of players without any institutional affiliation (apart from a case study of letters to the editor). This general tendency made me wonder about how much the research findings of Ericson et al. concerning the dominance of powerful institutional players might be in part an artefact of their particular theoretical orientation and their consequent empirical focus on these powerful institutional players. Thus, in my thesis, observing the power of various institutional and non-institutional players in a variety of further situations not considered by Ericson et al. allows me to address this potential limitation of their research.

Each of the three perspectives offers a somewhat different view of the relationship between television and the broader culture. Meyrowitz portrayed cultural transformations wrought by electronic media. Altheide and Snow emphasized the blandness and conventionality of TV content because of producers' attempts not to offend the sensibilities of a mass audience, and argued this led to a similar "middle of the road" quality in other institutions which relied on TV. The research of Ericson et al. led them to a somewhat similar position as Altheide and Snow, but Ericson et al. placed more emphasis on the broader culture explicitly as a factor reproducing the status quo. Ericson et al. found that media and news sources were often compelled to keep their accounts consistent with

dominant cultural beliefs, thus reproducing the dominance of those beliefs (Ericson et al. 1989: 204-208).

Juxtaposing the account of Ericson et al. with that of Altheide and Snow also led me to wonder whether the introduction of TV into criminal justice situations might lead to other, more fundamental changes along other dimensions, beyond the questions of secrecy and publicity which Ericson et al. focus on. A key point demonstrated by the research of Ericson et al. is that the journalists and police sources they studied were often operating several steps removed bureaucratically from the actual criminal justice incidents which were reported in the media. Indeed, this bureaucratic distance is seen to be the product of a deliberate choice by police, and beneficial for them. This distance from police operations allows police to limit news media knowledge of the actual events and therefore makes it easier for police to develop a favourable official account for the media. Another consequence of this distance, however, is that the mediatization of the police described by Ericson et al. is also mostly several steps removed from actual policing operations. The changes Ericson et al. describe mostly affect the bureaucracies which report on those operations, and the after-the-fact consequences for the police institution of that reporting, rather than influences at the actual front-lines of crime and policing.

In contrast to the account by Ericson et al. of police-media relations, Altheide and Snow concerned themselves more with institutions where key events were directly televised, such as professional sports events, for example. Because the media recorded those situations directly, this resulted in a variety of more

**fundamental changes to day-to-day institutional operations than those described by Ericson et al.**

**More generally, an extensive content analysis by Ericson et al. showed most TV news has not involved directly recording institutional events in question (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1991). Thus Ericson argues that, "even in television news....journalists and their sources mainly give talking head accounts of the facts rather than being everywhere as an eyewitness to reality as it happens" (Ericson 1998: 85).**

**My work researches those crime and policing situations which are the exception to Ericson's claim: those situations when the camera is actually directly on scene, both in TV news and in reality television. I ask if the influences of TV might take distinctive forms in these situations - forms different from those analyzed by Ericson et al. (1989).**

**Firstly, will police ability to manage and restrict news media knowledge and its consequences be more limited in these situations where policing occurs directly in front of cameras? The research of Ericson et al. - along with much previous research - suggests a general tendency towards police ability to manage and control the content of the news. But does this tendency hold when crime and policing is actually recorded on TV and broadcast live on television? Alternatively, does the visibility created by "live" TV loosen police control, and provide more openings for other players, both journalists and civilians, creating a situation different from standard crime news?**

**Secondly, will media considerations feed into the criminal justice situation and reshape it in more direct and fundamental ways than those considered by Ericson et al. when the situation occurs immediately in view of TV cameras?**

**These questions all fit under one broader umbrella: how is the production of crime news different when the events in question occur directly before the camera?**

### **SUMMARY OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**I have set out to answer the broad question of how television might reshape situations on the front-lines of criminal justice, situations which TV now increasingly broadcasts. I have chosen this broad research question as a way to draw together and evaluate three theoretical perspectives on how media influence other institutions. My review of various literature theorizing media influence on other institutions has generated various more specific questions within this overarching framework. Answering these subsidiary questions will help me decide to what extent each of these three theoretical perspectives captures the phenomena under study.**

**To summarize, my over-arching empirical question is: how much, how and why are these particular criminal justice situations changed as they are broadcast on television? Subsidiary questions under this umbrella emerging from my literature review include the following.**

**Firstly, Meyrowitz's analysis leads me to ask:**



- 1) To what extent does TV "make visible" new social situations or reveal "back region" information as it broadcasts crime and policing?
- 2) What ideological biases might there be in the "social information" conveyed by TV about these criminal justice situations and why?
- 3) To what extent does televising these criminal justice situations bring about levelling of hierarchies or reduction of inequality between different social groups?
- 3a) In particular, to what extent and in what ways does televising these situations lead to audience pressure for change to level hierarchy or reduce inequality?
- 3b) How and through what processes or mechanisms might this political pressure by audiences for change be applied?
- 4) What is the relationship between the formal properties of television and its tendencies to reduce, or alternatively reproduce, hierarchy and social inequality?

Secondly, Altheide and Snow's analysis leads me to ask:

- 1) To what extent and in what specific ways do the activities of the institutions which are televised come to be shaped by media considerations or "media logic"?
- 2) What is the relative balance of power between media institutions and media considerations and, on the other hand, various source institutions?
- 3) What difference does it make to the influences of media logic how dependent the source institution is on the mass media?
- 4) More broadly, what are the limits of the influence of media logic?

Ericson, Baranek and Chan's analysis leads me to ask:

- 1) Do particular situations of crime and policing which occur directly before the cameras present more vulnerability for police than does standard police news?
- 2) Do these situations - where crime and policing is televised "live" - show distinctive types of TV influence on the situations themselves?
- 3) What role does the broader cultural context play in the media's influences?

Thus, working through these three approaches and summing up the research questions generated from them yields two broad types of questions. One general type of question concerns who and what factors control the content of television broadcasts, and a second type of question concerns the various possible influences that television might have on these situations it records, and on criminal justice institutions more broadly. Thus, it becomes apparent that the relatively new and unconventional type of question I am asking - how does television reshape the criminal justice situations it records? - is bound up with more conventional questions which are asked more often in media sociology - what is conveyed on TV, and who and what factors shape TV content? The path to answering my new research question thus leads me back through some older, more conventional ones.

I will demonstrate the connection between these newer and older types of questions with a simple example. If the reality-TV show "Cops" conveyed an actual, uncensored, "back region" account of policing, this might force police officers to censor their own behaviour quite substantially if they were recorded for the program.

On the other hand, if the officers whom were recorded knew police had final say over what was actually aired on the program, they would feel little pressure to moderate their behaviour when it was videoaped. In short, control over what TV broadcasts is bound up with how TV influences the situations it records.

Thus, I will be asking generally two types of questions, some concerning how TV portrays the situations it records, and others concerning how TV reshapes these situations. Ultimately though these two types of questions are bound up with one another.

### **SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES AND RESEARCH METHODS**

In common with the previous analyses I am building on (Meyrowitz 1985; Altheide and Snow, 1979, 1991; Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989), I also decided to compare and contrast a range of empirical examples from different institutional situations, rather than merely conduct a single empirical study. Producing four separate case studies allows me to make much more general claims about the influence of television than I could keeping a narrow focus on just one empirical situation.

I chose to study instances where television directly records and broadcasts institutional behaviour for three reasons. Firstly, I speculated that these situations immediately in front of the cameras would provide microcosms in which the influences of television on the social situations in question would be most evident. In particular, they are situations where the influences described by Meyrowitz as stemming from revealing new types of "social information" would be most apparent. His account seems to fit best those situations when events are recorded directly.

Secondly, because these various situations have only come to be televised relatively recently, they are revealing contexts to investigate any possible changes created by the introduction of TV. Thirdly, there has been little previous research considering this general trend toward broadcasting "live" crime and policing across different contexts.

Studying how television influences situations of front-line criminal justice offers a useful context for empirically examining these three theoretical perspectives, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the trend toward televising "real" incidents is particularly evident in the realm of crime and policing. There is a diverse array of somewhat parallel situations available for study. Secondly, the police institution offers an interesting contrast to the institutions studied by Altheide and Snow, because the police are less completely dependent on favourable media coverage. Thirdly, the particular criminal justice situations studied also offer a useful contrast to the situations of police-media relations studied by Ericson et al. In my cases - as opposed to the research of Ericson et al. - television directly records the crime and policing operations in question, and thus may have different influences from those revealed by Ericson et al, in which the media are somewhat removed from the situations they report on. Fourthly, my literature review has raised questions about the broader cultural context in which media depictions occur. This makes these criminal justice situations useful topics for case study because the cultural context of crime has been the subject of much previous research and is well known (see for example Sparks 1992; Simon and Feeley 1995;

Sasson, 1995; Garland 1990, 1996, 2000; Kaminer 1995; Scheingold 1984, 1995; Loader 1997). Fifthly, a great deal of previous research has documented inequality in policing practises between different social groups along dimensions such as ethnicity and class (for reviews see eg. Brodgen et al. 1988: Ch. 6; Reiner 1992), as well as hierarchical power relations depending on institutional roles eg. police versus suspects (eg. Ericson 1982). These variations allow me to empirically examine Meyrowitz's arguments concerning how the television medium might lead to a levelling of social inequality and hierarchy.

After deciding to focus on these types of situations, I chose four particular cases for study. These four cases were chosen in part because, together, they exemplify all the various types of situations making up the trend I have described, in which crime and policing more and more occur "live" in front of cameras and are then broadcast on TV. Each of my case studies weaves in further empirical material about related instances to situate these specific examples as part of wider tendencies.

One key new type of situation where crime and policing is now broadcast is on reality television. In the first case study I examine the reality-TV program "Cops", the first, most popular and most-imitated reality-TV program to feature actual footage of "real" crime and policing. "Cops" was an obvious choice as the best example of the trend toward broadcasting actual criminal justice footage on reality-TV.

A second key new type of situation in which criminal justice is now recorded "live" is through new technologies which provide

alternative sources of video for TV. These new sources of video allow television news and reality-TV to cast a wider net for "real" footage. In the second study I decided to compare the two new key sources of criminal justice video for television, looking at the use of both surveillance camera footage and home video. The trends toward use of either surveillance footage or home video on TV news have not previously been studied by social scientists. I speculated that juxtaposing these two trends might reveal an interesting contrast between situations when surveillance footage comes from police sources, as opposed to when home video comes from members of the public without any institutional affiliation or support. The medium theory perspective of Meyrowitz in particular stresses that the arrival of new media technologies such as these, creating new opportunities for TV broadcasting, may have a liberating or democratizing force (Meyrowitz 1985). The comparison between the use of police surveillance footage and home video footage in the second case study allows me to weigh, on the one hand, the importance of the formal properties of the new media technologies themselves, which a medium theorist like Meyrowitz would focus on, and on the other hand, the institutional contexts in which the new media technologies are actually deployed, which the institutional perspective of Ericson et al. would emphasize more.

The first two case studies thus focused on two of the key ways "live" crime and policing now come to be broadcast on TV. The third possible way in which criminal justice can come to be televised is through criminal justice events actually occurring in front of TV news cameras themselves. While TV journalists rarely

have the opportunity to record events in the normal course of day-to-day crime and policing, one form of policing which does create the opportunity to be recorded "live" by TV news cameras is "public order policing" of riots or demonstrations. As opposed to most other types of crime and policing activities, riots and political demonstrations are much more often captured by TV news cameras. This is because they are highly visible, large scale events, often of a lengthy duration, in public locations. Often, especially in the case of planned demonstrations or riots coinciding with other major public events such as championship games in professional sports, they may be anticipated by the news media. Riots also present an interesting contrast with, for example, reality television programs like Cops, in that the combination of high visibility and violent chaos in riot situations make it much more difficult for police to maintain control of their public image. I chose to do the third case study on one highly controversial, televised episode of riot policing which allowed extensive research opportunities because it was close at hand: the policing of Vancouver's Stanley Cup riot.

The final case study examines a second type of situation where criminal justice events actually take place in front of TV news cameras. The final study was selected as a counterpoint to the first three. It provided such a counterpoint because, as opposed to examining television's influence on the police, instead Case Study Four examines what happens when the media initiative is in the hands of the "criminals", situations where TV news cameras capture law-breaking and policing because protesters seek it out, notifying the media in advance. The fourth case study examines the law-

breaking media stunts of the environmental organization Greenpeace. The fourth study also asks how the adoption of these television stunts may have fed back on the nature of the Greenpeace organization more broadly. Furthermore, juxtaposing the fourth case study with the first three allows a comparison of television's influence on two institutions which show varying degrees of dependency on mass media: the police and Greenpeace.

Three of these four situations have the subject of at least some previous related research, as discussed within the individual case studies. But none of these situations have been considered together as part of a general trend. The primary aim of my thesis is to juxtapose these four case studies as a way to evaluate the three theoretical perspectives I have discussed, but my thesis also contributes to knowledge in a number of secondary ways.

Because it deals with a variety of different substantive areas, my thesis also makes secondary contributions to research in particular sociological sub-fields with narrower foci. These specialized bodies of literature are discussed within the individual case studies. The secondary contributions of the thesis to these various bodies of literature are summarized in the conclusion.

Finally, in considering how television influences criminal justice institutions, my thesis also has implications for another body of theory, literature theorizing the history or evolution of criminal justice. As a final secondary contribution of my thesis, in an appendix, I briefly consider the implications of my case studies for this other body of theory. I suggest theorists who analyze how



criminal justice has evolved should give more consideration to the historical role of TV.

My four studies use a diverse range of qualitative research methods and ethnographic data: interviews, participant observation, and textual analysis of television programming and transcripts and of a broad variety of other secondary documents. The particular methods I have used vary as appropriate for each case under study. These research methods are discussed in more detail within each of the four case studies, which I will now present.

**CH. 2****CASE STUDY ONE: "COPS"****INTRODUCTION**

This chapter examines the pioneering reality-TV program "Cops" in light of my research questions. "Cops" was not only instantly popular but ground-breaking when it appeared in 1989. It was the first reality-TV program to use actual video footage as opposed to re-enactments. To make "Cops", a video and sound team accompany police officers in action. The program has been recorded in dozens of American cities, as well as Britain, Hong Kong, Russia and Bolivia. Suspects and other civilians shown on "Cops" sign releases giving permission for the program to show them. If they will not sign, their faces are digitized to blur them and conceal the civilians' identities. The raw footage is edited down to three vignettes in each half hour episode. "Cops" thus put a new spin on the fly on the wall or verité documentary form (Corner 1996).

"Cops" has often been the highest rated reality-TV program (Coe 1996). One advantage of programs like "Cops" and its imitators is that they are cheap to make, one reason for their rapid spread. "Cops" producers found they could make an episode for around \$200,000 - about a third the cost of a typical half-hour of situation comedy (S. Smith 1993). Another key commercial element of its success was this: television executives discovered before long that, unlike news-magazines which dated quickly, "Cops" had a timeless quality. Episodes of "Cops" retained immediacy for years after they were produced. This made "Cops" highly suitable for countless

syndicated reruns of its now 300-plus episodes, even as new episodes continue to air in Saturday night prime-time on the Fox network. Thus, "Cops" became one of the most ubiquitous North American television programs devoted exclusively to crime. It showed twelve times a week in some areas. "Cops" brought "real crime" to new places on the television schedule, and to new moments in viewers' daily rhythms. Numerous other shows have copied or adapted "Cops" approach, including the Vancouver program "To Serve and Protect", as well as "American Detective", "LAPD: Life on the Beat", and Britain's "Blues and Twos".

Three factors came together leading to the development of "Cops": technological advancement meant video cameras were increasingly miniaturized and portable, television executives sought innovative and inexpensive programming to fill up the expanding range of channels, and police forces offered massive co-operation, part of a strong trend toward increasing police self-promotion in the media (Ericson et al. 1989; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994: Ch. 4).

For the purposes of this analysis, 30 episodes of "Cops" aired between 1991 and 1997 were reviewed in depth. Other data were obtained from a copy of the "Too Hot for TV" video marketed by "Cops" producers, featuring outtakes from "Cops". Some anecdotal data about "Cops" audiences were drawn from informal discussions with a handful of regular viewers. Information about "Cops" was downloaded from the official "Cops" website. This included transcripts of self-interviews by two "Cops" producers and an interview with a police officer who had appeared on "Cops" a number

of times. Unless otherwise indicated, the quotations that follow are from these interviews.

### **THE REALITIES OF REALITY-TV**

To understand how television influences the situations shown on "Cops", it is first necessary to examine how "Cops" presents these situations. Meyrowitz's arguments raise the question of what happens when viewers of "Cops" are introduced into the social situation of front-line policing. Does television bring about social changes because it "exposes" the reality of policing in new ways as Meyrowitz might argue? Certainly, its producers call the reality-TV show "unfiltered" television (Katz 1993: 25). Alternatively, are police able to control the televised portrait of themselves, even with cameras on scene, and thus control the consequences of this new form of publicity?

According to "Cops" creator and executive producer John Langley, the program was conceived as a television version of the standard "ride-along" in which a curious civilian tags along in a police cruiser for a shift. Langley describes "Cops" as simply a slice of "raw reality".

However, my data reveal that "Cops" is far from simply unfiltered reality. How television influences institutional life in this situation is governed by the point that "Cops" offers a very particular and selective vision of policing.

I argue that "Cops" is best seen instead as "reality fiction", to use a term one celebrated vérité documentary film-maker adopted to describe his work (Benton and Anderson 1989). Executive producer Langley notes that, "Reality is often ironically difficult to capture

because it is unstructured, unpredictable and unscripted." However the "raw reality" of the video footage undergoes considerable processing before it hits the airwaves. As Langley states:

The process begins with production in the field with producer Bert Van Munster and his staff of cameramen and soundmen and support staff; and then it comes back to post-production with supervising producer Murray Jordan and his editorial staff. All the material comes back to Los Angeles, with the field staff tagging what looks like potential *stories* (italics added). Then our editorial staff cuts together the most interesting material, whereupon I determine what goes in the shows after recutting or refinishing if needed. Basically we try to put together interesting combinations. For example, an action piece (which hooks the audience), a lyrical piece (which develops more emotion), and a think piece (which provokes thought on the part of the audience).

One may note the movement in Langley's description from "unpredictable and unscripted" reality to ready-to-air "stories" with thematic unity. The description "reality fiction" is useful because it throws into direct juxtaposition "Cops' " distinctive claim to be "reality-based" or "raw reality" with this story-telling quality. The expression "reality fiction" conveys the somewhat obvious point that "Cops" is a constructed version of reality with its own biases, rather than simply a neutral record. Beyond this, the word "fiction" also highlights that, because of a need to turn "reality" into entertaining narratives for television, the producers of "Cops" rely on a number of story-telling devices. While the appeal of "Cops" is in part that it seems to present "raw reality", it also offers narrative qualities such as heroes for audiences to identify with, unambiguous storylines concluding with resolution or closure, and, often, a moral

or theme. "Cops" producers very skillfully combine these story-telling devices with other mechanisms suggesting "raw reality."

Thus, while the requirements of television and desires of police affect which events are selected to be shown on "Cops", television story-telling also affects *how* these events are portrayed.

First, I will discuss how the program naturalizes the material it airs. A voice-over during the opening credit sequence of "Cops" quickly establishes the reality-based nature of the programming. It states that " 'Cops' is filmed on location with the men and women of law enforcement." One distinctive feature of "Cops" is that there is no *formal* narration, apart from this initial announcement, nor any other artifice that suggests journalism. Nor is there a musical soundtrack as in other reality-based programs such as LAPD: Life on the Beat; instead there is simply what seems to be actuality sound. As executive producer Langley puts it, "We were certainly the first, and we are still the only reality show that has no actors, no script and no host. That's as pure as you can get in documentary film-making."

Various modernist factual and fictional forms of story-telling use different strategies to construct realism. News deploys truth-claims largely rooted in appeal to legitimate authorities and their authorized forms of discourse such as science and law. Visual evidence has usually played more of a supporting role, even on television news, which has not tended to feature actual footage of the news events in question (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1987, 1989, 1991; Ericson 1998). In contrast to most news, the claim to realism of "Cops" is based more fully in the visual: in the pervasive cultural

understanding that "seeing is believing" and the emotional authenticity of "live" incidents. News purportedly seeks to provide audiences with the five "Ws" (who, what, when, where, why); "Cops" ignores some of these questions entirely (who are the civilians present, when did the events occur) and is more concerned with offering the illusion that the viewer is on scene. However, if it relies on the visual, "Cops" also derives authenticity from its first-hand oral accounts "straight from the horse's mouth."

"Cops" creator Langley states that the program allows the viewer "to share a cop's point of view *in real time* during the course of his or her duties". While clearly the footage often condenses action that takes place over a much longer period of time into seven or eight minute vignettes, most of the action does unfold in a linear sequence that simulates "real time". This is one key way in which naturalization occurs. "Real time" is also suggested by a lone subtitle flashed once in most vignettes indicating the time that a particular piece of action commences: for example, "burglary call, 6:23 p.m." There is the suggestion that the action flows continuously from the time which has been flashed, as if a stopwatch had been started.

Although events on "Cops" are presented as though the visuals and soundtrack are both captured simultaneously in the raw, often the sound which is aired has actually been recorded at other times from the visuals. This allows for a subtle, frequently-used device that the casual viewer may not notice which simulates the continuing flow of "real time": continuity in sound is edited to overlap cuts in the visuals, and vice versa. For example, the

continuous sound of a police officer talking, police radio calls, or a helicopter overhead will overlap a cut between two different visuals. The continuous sound suggests continuity in time, as if the viewer has simply looked in a different direction in the same time and place during continuous action (although in fact an hour's worth of action and dialogue could have been omitted between the cuts). "Real time" thus suggests continuous time; however it does not attempt to inform the viewer how far removed in time the incident actually occurred by giving the calendar date (for example, 6:23 p.m., June 22, 1995). Thus "real time" also means the programs do not date easily and are suitable for reruns in syndication. "Cops" does not recede into history; instead, cops chase, wrestle and handcuff criminals in an eternal present. While presenting the action highlights of a particular incident in "real time" provides a fictive immediacy or "nowness" that may make "Cops" more exciting for viewers, it also has the effect of naturalizing the footage, at least somewhat. Events unfold in an edgy, fast-forward procession that seems disconcertingly paced, yet naturalization occurs in that the actual cuts are concealed.

While the program attempts to construct "real time," the executive producer acknowledges that the vignettes are edited down from much longer stretches of video tape. "Cops" originally recorded about 100 hours of videotape for each hour of air-time. As the producers grew more experienced they reduced the ratio to 50 or 60 to one.

Any indicators of the presence of the "Cops" camera crew are nearly always edited out during the actual encounters between



police and civilians. As the "Too Hot For TV" video reveals, this entails considerable cutting of footage of civilians reacting to the camera, often with verbal hostility. Outtakes from the program include, for example, numerous episodes of individuals cursing at the camera.

Each half hour episode of "Cops" consists of three vignettes separated by sets of advertisements. Individual vignettes are often hooked on one particular officer who sets the scene, an officer whom I will call the "host cop". The identity of the host varies from episode to episode, but his or her role is the same. At certain points before and after the "action," the host cop will talk directly to the camera. (Sometimes more than one cop will talk to the camera in a particular vignette, so there is not one single host). The host cop addresses the camera most often while she or he is driving the camera crew to and from an incident that forms the focus of the vignette. Even in this context, the presence of the camera crew is not acknowledged. In this way "Cops" offers the illusion that the viewer is in the car with the officer on the way to and from the action.

While naturalizing its depictions of criminal justice, Cops simultaneously incorporates story-telling devices which promote a very particular vision of policing. This vision resonates with a prominent system of meaning in the broader culture, a particular way of thinking about crime which supports a "law and order" approach to criminal justice. In the first chapter I raised the question of the role of the broader cultural context in shaping the nature of television's influences. Thus, I will now examine the wider

cultural backdrop against which "Cops" is produced by its makers and seen by TV audiences.

### **THE BROADER CULTURAL CONTEXT OF "COPS"**

In describing the place of crime and criminal justice in contemporary culture, I am synthesizing various previous accounts (Sparks 1992; Simon and Feeley 1995; Sasson, 1995; Garland 1990, 1996, 2000; Kaminer 1995; Scheingold 1984, 1995; Loader 1997) leavened with my own ideas.

Clearly, there is no one "public view" of criminal justice- this is much too monolithic and static a model. Nevertheless previous research highlights one wider system of meaning about criminal justice which is prominent, and sometimes dominant, in the public, media and political cultures.

I will call this particular broader system of meaning "law and order ideology". While "law and order ideology" has been chronically present in public, media and political discourse, it may have assumed an even larger role in recent years (Simon and Feeley 1995). Particular media portrayals of criminal justice interact with and help to shape, reinforce and evolve this broader system of meaning, even as they are in turn shaped by it. The relationship is thus a dynamic and circular one. Similarly, this broader system of meaning also shapes and is shaped by the views of particular members of the public, by the police institution, and by politicians who promote a "law and order" approach to the crime.

In this system of meaning, society is seen to be in a state of decline or crisis because of the ever-increasing threat of crime, specifically violent street crime of the underclasses. The answer is

tougher, more punitive crime control. One key cause of the crime problem is seen to be a failure of politicians and the criminal justice system to get tough with street crime. Due process and other "softnesses" of the justice system are part of the problem, because all right-thinking people know criminals are guilty. Interestingly, the police themselves are not seen as too soft; instead they are held back by other elements of the system. A strong emphasis is placed in this system of meaning on the role of police as "crime fighters" (Manning 1978) as opposed to various other ways of understanding their job. The capacity of police to control crime is considerably exaggerated. Thus, the answer to the crime problem is partly more police, and police who are allowed to get tougher.

Intertwined with the notion of a soft system is an Us and Them mentality: crime is seen as a problem of evil or pathological individuals who are a Them less human than Us. Police are the thin blue line between Them and Us. Criminals are strangers, not family members. An overt profession that crime control is efficient and utilitarian is bound up with less conscious, more affectively-charged undercurrents of fear and anger, identification with powerful authority, and punitiveness and retribution. Various analysts argue that this punitiveness involves the displacement of anxieties and angers from other sources (Garland 1990; Sparks 1992; Scheingold 1995). Law and order ideology is seen to touch a chord with audiences who are looking for a focus for their anger.

Certainly audiences are often fascinated with deviance. Tied up with the anger it invokes may be audiences' anxieties and

ambivalences about their own identification, at least to some extent, with the criminal (Sparks 1992).

Ian Loader (1997) argues the police in particular have a very important symbolic place in contemporary culture beyond their instrumental roles, one which fits with law and order ideology. As Loader (1997: 3) states:

Within prevailing... 'structures of feeling' the police figure is central to the production and reproduction of order and security... the degree and sheer intensity of much public interest in the policing phenomenon suggests that something else is at stake here other than a reasoned calculation of what police can accomplish by way of social protection. Popular sentiment toward policing is marked by a high 'fantasy content' regarding what police can and should do... It is attracted to the idea of an omnipotent source of order and authority that is able to face up to the criminal Other.... In this respect popular attachment to policing is principally affective in character, something which people evince a deep emotional commitment to and which is closely integrated with their sense of self. Policing it seems can provide an interpretive lens through which people make sense of, and give order to their world; the source of a set of plausible stories about that world which help people sustain 'ontological security' (Giddens 1991)... It is against this backdrop that one might refer to the police as having, not only coercive power, but also symbolic power.... (Loader 1997: 3).

Another facet of the broader cultural context is the place of violence. Audiences are often fascinated by violence, especially when violence is condoned and employed by authorities like police whom they can identify with. Part of the police's symbolic or cultural power can thus be traced to their mandate for the

legitimate use of violence. Police violence is an extremely potent act of communication.

Identification with authority and authorized violence gives one a sense of power. This may be one part of the audience experience with representations of crime and policing in the media. Another facet of the television audience's experience of power with "Cops" in particular may be understood as the experience of the power of seeing or watching, whether this occurs as "voyeurism" - watching private incidents against the will of others - or "surveillance" - watching others for the purpose of control action. Other analyses have theorized "the gaze" as a form of power (Goffman 1972; Norris and Armstrong 1998). More broadly than any of these particular instances, simply being the watcher rather than watched puts one in a position of power.

While it contrasts with the recent trend in criminal justice system discourse toward more rational and technical approaches to crime (Feeley and Simon 1994), law and order ideology fits traditional media templates well, because of its simplicity, drama, emotiveness, violence, and easily identifiable villains. Because law and order ideology is media-friendly, and because it seems to touch a chord with audiences, it has been a key political tool of politicians across the partisan political spectrum, not only the Republicans but the Clinton Democrats in the U.S., not only the Conservatives but the Blair "New Labour" government in Britain, not only the Reform Party but the NDP in British Columbia.

Ideology is meaning that fosters relations of domination (Thompson 1990). Law and order ideology is implicated in power

relations along some broader social dimensions and thus helps reproduce inequality along those dimensions. Law and order ideology displaces a different set of meanings that links crime with social structural causes such as poverty and unemployment. Law and order ideology thus has much wider political implications beyond its influence on the justice system itself. Law and order ideology may often become connected with different systems of meaning that also construct people as Us and Them, for example race. Stories about crime and control - about deviance and how it is punished - have always been a central tool through which people make sense of and dramatize other cultural concerns and anxieties (Sparks 1992; Scheingold 1995; Loader 1997), such as concerns about ethnic differences, about the city and urban life, about government and the state, or more broadly about modern life or modernity itself. For example, Scheingold (1995: 165) speculates that "the public's obsession with street crime may actually be fueled by a much broader and more amorphous social malaise...a focus on street crime allows both the public and the politicians to evade more intractable and more unwelcome problems."

In particular, law and order ideology may speak most clearly to white audiences. Crime narratives often become a way of telling stories about race. Reactions to the O.J. Simpson case, for example, dramatized stark differences between white and African-American concerns and perceptions regarding law and order, differences that are repeatedly confirmed by survey research (Flanagan and Longmire 1996). Fear and loathing of criminals often means non-white criminals. For politicians, playing the "crime" card may be a slightly

more subtle way of playing the "race" card. As Gamson (1995: xi) notes, "the image of the enemy--the violent criminal--has the additional advantage of providing a hidden image of the 'black' violent criminal whose content can be decoded in this way by the intended audience while providing the users of the image with plausible deniability of any racial intent." The "war on drugs" in the U.S. for example may be read by some observers as a "war on blacks" (Fiske 1996; Andersen 1996). A review of social science research on fear of crime suggests it is closely linked, not only with fear of strangers, but with fear of other social groups (Hale 1996).

Class is another key dimension along which law and order ideology works. This is shown, for example, in the focus on street crimes of the lower classes, while less attention is given to other types of criminal activity, such as white collar and corporate crime.

Because law and order ideology is bound up with these wider dimensions of inequality, if portrayals on "Cops" resonate with law and order ideology, such portrayals will tend to have the opposite effect from that hypothesized by Meyrowitz. Rather than creating pressure for social equality, they will help reproduce an ideology which justifies and reinforces social inequality.

### **HOW COPS TELLS ITS STORIES**

While naturalizing its depictions as "reality" in the ways I have just discussed, "Cops" simultaneously presents a very particular vision of criminal justice through various story-telling devices. This is a vision which articulates very well with law and order ideology.

## **Identification**

Firstly, "Cops" promotes audience identification with police and a simultaneous distancing of the viewer from suspects. Much audience research on crime and the media does not use very complex psychological models of the ways people interact with media texts. Such research instead suggests a rather passive linear process whereby media consumers absorb faulty information or scary representations, making them misinformed or fearful. However, consumers also interact with media texts partially by identifying with particular characters (Livingstone 1990). Verité documentary makers sometimes deliberately promote certain meanings in their "reality fictions" by structuring their documentaries to encourage identification with particular individuals in their films (Anderson and Benton 1991: 49). Good story-telling requires such protagonists.

"Cops" similarly encourages the viewer to identify with police, while distancing the viewer from other individuals who are portrayed. This creates an Us-Them dichotomy which fits with prominent cultural understandings of criminality: crime is a problem of evil or pathological individuals who are a Them less human than Us. Police are the thin blue line between Them and Us. "Cops" accomplishes identification and distancing through five mechanisms. Some are intended by the producers as story-telling devices; others are more subterranean results of the program's content and form.

## **Context**

The various categories of people shown on "Cops" are contextualized very differently. The first time the audience sees her or him, the host officer's name, rank and department are flashed on



the screen as an introduction. Other officers are often identified by name in subtitles. Non-cops remain nameless. The host officer also often provides auto-biographical information in the introductory phase of a vignette. Thus, the viewer gets to know the host cop personally. The officer will talk about why he--or occasionally, she--joined the force, how long he/she has been a cop and so on. One officer talked about how he had joined the military and this helped him "get some discipline and maturity." Another said he became a cop because, "I suddenly realized I couldn't sit behind a desk...I wanted to get out and make a difference."

Another contextual device that promoted identification with the host cop in some episodes was that the viewer accompanied the host through various aspects of the daily routine. For example, one officer was shown making tea in his kitchen with his wife, who was also a cop. The viewer even accompanied the officer to the pub after work, joining in the police camaraderie there. The viewer also spent off-duty time with the cop enjoying his vintage Daimler automobile.

Responding to a suicide attempt allowed one host cop to express a human side of policing: "The public does think that police officers have this thick skin and a lot of that is the appearance we have to present when we're trying to control a situation...cops feel shock and anger and sadness and everything else that regular civilians feel."

While police officers on "Cops" are humanized through such portrayals, the civilians shown are conversely dehumanized in the way they are portrayed. The television spotlight focuses on the brief moment of police intervention, and does not provide any social

context for the civilians portrayed or the alleged crimes. Police exist on the surface of social life (Ericson, Haggerty, and Carriere 1993); this applies in particular to "Cops", which offers only a superficial engagement with the world beyond the police cruiser. When any context is given, it is often likely to be the criminal record of the suspect as recounted by the officer. For example, in one episode, after a young African-American man was arrested, an officer stated, "We've been chasing this guy around for years. He's got a drug problem. He was just arrested last week. He just got out of jail today. It just worked out pretty good. We just happened to be right there." When civilians have their faces blurred or concealed by the editors to hide their identities, this further depersonalizes them.

#### **Point of view**

"Cops" also encourages identification with police through its use of point of view. The lone camera in "Cops" simulates a single viewpoint--that of the police officer. This is analogous to the point of view shot used in film fiction to simulate the view of a particular character. Thus, while viewers are up close and personal with the host cop, they are also positioned on scene as if they themselves were cops. For example, the viewer gets a cops-eye-view through the cruiser window of the hunt for fleeing suspects. In this case, the attempt to get the viewer to identify through point of view is explicitly acknowledged by the producers. As executive producer John Langley states, "The goal is to put you (the viewer) in the passenger seat with them so you can experience what it's like to be a cop." Langley also states that the program allows the viewer "to

*share a cop's point of view* "(italics added). Thus, the "raw reality" the producers talk about elsewhere is discussed here as "reality" from a particular point of view.

### **Identifying with job satisfaction**

Identifying with police may mean identifying with authorized power and its pleasures. In this vein, "Cops" also promotes audience identification--as the officers shown describe the sensations and satisfactions of their work. One officer described his job as "like Disneyland." Another's closing comment after an arrest was "I enjoyed that. It's a nice way to end the night." A third said, "I suppose the best thing is you never know what's going to happen next. Occasionally you get something exciting happening and it makes all the boring bits worthwhile." Another host cop said, "I don't like thieves...I've had two cars stolen over the last 10 years. When I pop a car thief and get to chase him and catch him, that's a good high there." Thus the viewer is encouraged to share the satisfactions of policing.

### **Identifying with successful violence**

Other research has indicated that "Cops" shows more violence by police officers than violence by suspects (Oliver 1994; Andersen 1996). Furthermore, police officers on "Cops" are consistently successful in their use of violence, overpowering suspects. This is analogous to a recurring feature of television fiction, which is the successful use of violence by "heroes" of dominant social groups rather than villains from subordinate social groups. Such violence becomes a metaphor for power relationships in society (Fiske and

Hartley 1978; Fiske 1987: 9). Audiences are encouraged to identify with the power of heroes who use violence successfully.

### **Identification and voyeurism**

Identification is also bound up with the program's voyeuristic aspects. The supervising producer of "Cops", Murray Jordan, suggests that the program is successful in large part because of the "inherent voyeuristic interest that most human beings have." Scholarly analysts have also pointed out a voyeuristic quality in reality crime programs in general (Nichol 1994; Bondjeberg 1996; Andersen 1996).

Voyeurism is taking pleasure from viewing the private or forbidden. The viewer overrules the wishes of others that the object of viewing remain secreted. Viewing may thus be experienced as an act of domination. The voyeurism of "Cops" is intertwined with its authoritarian pleasures. The seductions or pleasures of one type of power--voyeuristically intruding into the private or forbidden--are meshed with the seductions of another type of power--identifying with the sanctioned authority and sanctioned violence of the police.

A warning at the top of the show--that "viewer discretion is advised" because of the "graphic nature" of the program--may contribute to this sense of voyeurism. While there are legal reasons for the concealing of subjects' faces, this also adds a frisson of voyeurism through the suggestion that the viewer is being allowed to see "private" incidents.

Survey research shows that viewers who report greatest enjoyment of "Cops" and other reality programs tend to be young males (Oliver and Armstrong 1995). A small portion of the material on "Cops" is explicitly sexual and seems to address a heterosexual

male viewer. For example, the opening montage of one episode of "Cops" began with a close-up of the bikini clad torso of a woman--from which the camera pulled back to establish that the location was a Miami beach. The "Too Hot for TV" video marketed by "Cops" producers contains more explicit sexually voyeuristic material. This includes footage of a sting operation in which the viewer is positioned with cops hiding behind a one-way mirror; the cops press against the glass to get a good view as they watch semi-naked female prostitutes with their male customers.

Another "Cops" vignette--one which did air on television--featured the arrest of a teenaged girl. This vignette most explicitly demonstrates the intertwining of the seductions of authorized power and of voyeurism. It seemed this particular vignette might have been included for its sexually suggestive content--especially an extended sequence following the teenager's arrest. Police said the girl had led them on a drunken car chase. Once arrested, she was taken inside the police station. Tearful and not apparently resisting the police, the girl-- clad in shorts and a revealing halter top--was kept in handcuffs. Then the cuffs were chained to a bench as the camera lingered voyeuristically on her body. ("We have to keep the handcuffs on for your own safety"). Very drunk and continuing to cry, she expressed in a repeated, disjointed way the fear that people were going to hurt her. Her face was blurred by the producers to conceal her identity, but this also served to decontextualize and further objectify her body. She began to pull and fight against the chain and then two cops seized her and bound her legs. Then the vignette jumped ahead in time. Her legs now cuffed together, her

hands now cuffed underneath her thighs, she was lifted into the back of a squad car by a team of cops--all the while fixed in the light of a "Cops" camera crew (the camera crew, while of course never acknowledged in the edited version, likely added to the terror of the experience for her). In sum, the young girl's body was the object of a display of converging practices of domination by both the police and the camera.

Just why exactly did the producers opt to show all this? The voyeuristic qualities of "Cops" are of course part of its commercial logic, rather than something introduced by the police. These seductive qualities help sell the program. Yet they may also contribute to viewer identification with the authoritarian pleasures of policing.

### **Closure**

Promoting identification with protagonists is one key story-telling device. Another is closure. Because of the need for a relatively unambiguous story-line, the narrative structure of "Cops" imposes a closure on the events portrayed. Often the imposed structure encourages viewers to interpret events in ways consistent with law and order ideology.

One important way closure is accomplished is that the commentary of the host and other officers is used to impose an informal narrative framework on the televised events. This commentary often makes sense of a jumble of imagery that would be either meaningless or ambiguous without this imposed structure of meaning. While there is no formal narration, the material is edited so that the officers serve as informal narrators; the careful viewer

can discern that their narration is edited over various visual sequences. Accounts of other officers, dialogue between officers, recordings from briefings and from police radio are also stitched together in the soundtrack to structure these storylines. Thus, viewers must rely heavily on oral interpretation of events by police, rather than the visual record. Because the role of police as narrators is informal and naturalized, the police definition of the situation simply becomes the "reality" of reality-TV.

For example, one episode featured a raid on an alleged drug dealer's home in Riverside County, California. Without the host cop's narrative before and after the raid to construct the events, all the viewer would have seen would have been a short confusing set of images, featuring some figures in body armour running through the darkness, several explosions in the night, the sound of breaking glass, then men in body armour standing in a hallway and a shot of a woman lying face down on the floor. However, on the way to the scene of the raid, an officer told the viewer that the man inside the house carried a shotgun at all times and had bragged that he had blown another man's head off. The cop described the villain as "very paranoid, has a bulletproof vest, goes to the bathroom with a shotgun in his hand, has vowed to kill any law-enforcement officers that come on the property". Then there was the short burst of images described above, lasting perhaps 20 seconds. Afterwards, as the camera showed the prone woman, an officer narrated after the fact, "These doors were locked back here. We had to break them. We got one suspect on the ground right here. We got a shotgun (not shown). He's the dude we were thinking about." In this segment of reality-TV,

the reality was the narrative constructed by the officer. It was only through his account the viewer knew that police had succeeded in efficiently containing and controlling a "dangerous criminal."

One aspect of producing a coherent story from actuality footage involves removing potential ambiguity from events and introducing some form of closure. Police accounts-- and the way in which they are edited by the "Cops" producers--may serve to partially close off alternative readings of the televised events. In the episode discussed above, an officer said to a suspect who protested his innocence, "That's something that the courts are going to have to determine." However, in the next vignette in the same episode, "Cops" invoked its own closure, pronouncing who was the guilty party in a highly ambiguous situation. A police cruiser pulled up on a suburban street to a scene where one man, armed with a metal baseball bat, raised it above his head and was threatening to strike another man sitting on the road. He had apparently already struck him. The beaten man staggered in front of the camera with one eye swollen shut, in tears and moaning, "I'm hurt bad. I need help." A third man stood by, a handgun protruding from the pocket of his sweat pants. "I seen him come out of my backyard," said the man with the bat. "My gate has a lock and he ripped the gate open." The beaten man said, "I was walking down the street...He said I was burglarizing his fucking house and he hit me with a bat." The man with the bat and his gun-carrying colleague were both beefy individuals who seemed larger than the beaten man. The bat man said, "He was banging on my door. He ripped the gate open. I stood there. We were scared to death. I had no weapon. I had my bat. That's



all I sleep with. We ran across the street because we thought he was in the backyard. Then he comes walking around the corner. We approach him, we ask who are you, what's going on. He comes at us with his fists and I hit him." A foiled burglary or a brutal assault on a passerby? The police officers made a decision. An officer said to the man with the bat, "You want to press charges for prowler, right?" The cop directed the bat-wielding man to place the injured man under "citizen's arrest," even though the injured man was lying on a stretcher in an ambulance by this time. One officer commented that the beaten man "lives in (another suburb). That's kind of a bad area." He asked, "Why is he coming down to this area? It makes no sense." Another cop was given the last word of the vignette by the editors, saying the beaten man was "a prowler and a thief who got caught. A prowler with a broken jaw."

From the producers' point of view, this closure of meaning--by editing the vignette to make that the last word--provides a neat wrap-up and avoids any ambiguity that might leave the audience more troubled than entertained. Closure of meaning is negotiated between television editors and the front-line police who function as informal narrators. Police produce the authoritative definition of an ambiguous situation, not only for the legal system, but for the TV camera and its audiences. The result in this case was that producers and police constructed this highly ambiguous incident in terms of social class--as though it was clear that the "bad guy" was the one who came from a "bad area."

The officers sometimes even seem to take actions deliberately to provide some form of closure for the camera to record. For

**example, in another vignette, an ambiguous situation arose where a mother had apparently abandoned her baby: did she flee because of the threat of violence from the baby's father, or for some other less excusable reason that would leave her open to criminal charges for neglecting the infant? In this situation, the moral ambiguity was resolved when the host cop took the camera right into the woman's jail cell. "Cops" filmed the host cop eliciting from the woman that she had not left the child because of the threat of violence, thus resolving the moral ambiguity and providing closure.**

**While the program announces at the outset that "all suspects are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law," all the evidence the viewers will ever get suggests they have been arrested because they are guilty.**

**Not only do events have only one storyline but it is one that can be swiftly diagnosed and dealt with by police. Police are the ones who know the reality of events. This creates an "illusion of certainty," as Haney and Manzolati (1988: 127) argue concerning fictional police dramas. "Police work...is fraught with uncertainty...this image of sureness and certainty may actually create in the minds of most viewers a presumption of guilt." Haney and Manzolati surveyed television viewers and found that heavy viewers were significantly more likely than light viewers to be believe that defendants "must be guilty of something, otherwise they wouldn't be brought to trial."**

**As the previous example demonstrates, there is usually a closing comment or "last word" from a cop, voiced over a black screen featuring only the "Cops" logo. Some "last words" simply sum**

up the outcome of the vignette to offer closure. However a number of others provide a moral for the narrative that has just unfolded. These morals--interpretations from the viewpoints of front-line cops--often serve to reinforce various aspects of the ideology of law and order. For example, in one episode, after a camera crew arrived to find a bloodied suspect subdued on the ground, the vignette closed with an officer's comment that "the really important fact in this whole deal is that (the arresting officer) is tough as nails." In another vignette, after two suspected burglars would not admit their guilt, the officer's "last word" was that this was "just a sign of the times." Other morals perpetuated this theme--the comfort of police protection in an uncertain world. These included, for example: "That's it for today. Who knows what might happen tomorrow?" and "We'll be sleeping safely in the knowledge that the night shift are on." Frequently, the last word serves to emphasize that "lives have been saved" or "someone could have been killed." A vignette where an officer decided not to arrest a suspected drunk driver concluded with a moral about the "technicalities" of due process interfering with crime control: "It's a pity...I couldn't get him off the street. He's probably going to kill someone". Similarly, another episode incorporated a "moral" about the need to get tough with teenage offenders. After some juveniles were arrested, a cop noted in a final monologue: "They'll go ahead and say 'release them to their parents'...They may not spend the night in jail. That's kind of frustrating...It's a little bit of a letdown because they may walk...they may be kiddie crooks but they grow up to be adult crooks."

The content of these morals is not the result of some conspiracy between police management and media. It is simply that front-line officers, who provide these interpretations, are immersed in "cop culture" (Reiner 1992) which resonates well with law and order ideology.

### **Selection of events and situations**

"Cops" is ideological not only in the ways it tells its stories, but also through the selection of events and situations it portrays. Other reality-TV programs such as "America's Most Wanted" and "Unsolved Mysteries" feature a high proportion of serious crimes which are relatively rare in official and other statistics, notably homicides (Cavender and Bond-Maupin 1993). "Cops" tends to feature statistically more common or routine crimes, although it has aired multiple murders. In fact, "Cops" crews deliberately searched for murder footage to air in the November 1992 ratings sweeps week (Bernstein 1992). "Cops" shows many incidents involving crimes such as burglaries, robberies, less serious assaults, street-level drug busts and incidents involving intoxication. Drunks are sometimes presented as clown characters in a kind of low comedy, falling down, embarrassing themselves with foolish statements or failing simple practical tests of roadside sobriety. "Cops" shows a large number of police chases, both auto and on foot, and has also shown a number of drug raids. "Cops" also frequently shows domestic disturbances and domestic violence. "Cops" also features a mixed assortment of other items deemed of viewer interest, such as a case where a man attempted suicide by shooting himself in the head,

skydiving injuries, a car fire and a single mother calling police to help try and discipline her teenaged son.

Nevertheless, in some respects, "Cops" offers a highly selective vision of criminal justice. As Oliver's (1994) quantitative content analysis notes, reality crime shows, including "Cops", tend to over-represent both violent crime and the amount of crime which is solved by police. Oliver found that 69 per cent of the criminal suspects on "Cops" and four other reality-based crime shows were portrayed as arrested, a very dramatic increase from the arrest rate in official and other statistics. In these respects, "Cops" resembles most fictional portrayals of crime, as a number of items of research demonstrate (Reiner 1992: Ch. 5). More generally, "Cops" tends to show cases where police apparently deal effectively with situations, swiftly diagnosing trouble and resolving it.

"Cops" is also ideological in not airing material which will cast police in a bad light. Several factors explain the tendencies of "Cops" to portray police in a uniformly positive way: the producers are very dependent on on-going co-operation of police; "Cops" producers themselves internalize pro-police attitudes; the producers of "Cops" also aim to give the audience what they apparently want.

The fact that many police forces are keen to cooperate with "Cops" is part of a broader trend toward proactive police self-promotion through the mass media (Ericson et al. 1989; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994: Ch. 4). However, while police forces are often active in promoting particular views of criminal justice, one must be careful not to ascribe a one-dimensional top-down

instrumentality to police involvement in "Cops". "Cops" is shaped as much by front-line police officers as police management, although one may infer that the particular officers who receive management permission to appear on the program are carefully vetted. Instead, these officers' interpretations may be molded more directly by front-line "cop culture" (Reiner 1992) than by the management line.

The relationship between police and television personnel in the production of "Cops" can be compared to police-news media relations. Police have often dominated such relations. The producers of "Cops" are like inner circle reporters who have close ties with police (Ericson et al. 1989), yet their dependence on police is even greater. Unlike the situation with news, there is no subcultural valorization of at least some degree of critical journalistic autonomy. Nor does the "Cops" format feature any perceived requirement for balance.

The producers of "Cops" acknowledge that, like inner circle police reporters, they have internalized pro-police attitudes. "Cops" creator and executive producer John Langley pondered whether his feelings about police had shifted:

To say 'yes' is to declare the understatement of the year. I'm a kid of the 60s. If you had asked me this in the 60s, I would have laughed and said I would never do a show called "Cops". Maybe "Pigs" but not "Cops". Of course I was brash and immature back then...I have developed a profound respect for police officers, firemen, paramedics, and everyone else involved in public service...They put their lives at risk for others, and I think that's both admirable and inspirational.

Another "Cops" producer said she had been approached by several police forces about signing up as a cop herself once she left the program (Bernstein 1992). Debra Seagal, a former member of the production staff at a similar reality-based show, "American Detective", noted that the camera crews for the program "even wear blue jackets with POLICE in yellow letters on the back...The executive producer...frequently wears a badge on his belt loop" (Seagal 1993).

A Kansas City police officer who let a "Cops" crew accompany him on his midnight shift for two weeks told Time magazine it was an enjoyable experience. "Most officers would be apprehensive to have the media ride with them...But these guys proved themselves to us. They said that they wouldn't do anything to undermine us, and that we'd have final discretion about what ran" (Zoglin 1992). Time reported that "each episode of "Cops" is reviewed by the police before airing, in part to make sure no investigations are compromised".

For these reasons, "Cops" does not air incidents that would cast police in a bad light. As Katz (1993: 27) argued:

The cameras recording "Cops" would probably not catch a Rodney King style beating. The officers would know better than to behave like that; even if they didn't, it's unclear whether the broadcast's producers would show it, since the program depends on the voluntary co-operation of the police.

For example, as reported in the Seattle Times (Scattarella 1992) and elsewhere, in one notorious case in May 1992 a "Cops"

camera crew recorded the scene as police on a drug raid burst into a suburban Washington state home. They roused a couple and their children from sleep, and handcuffed the half-naked woman--before finally realizing they were in the wrong house. The woman complained, "They pulled me out of bed and put a gun on me. Here I am with my butt showing, and I see the camera." Police apparently had the address wrong on the crack-bust warrant. "Cops" decided not to broadcast any of the raid.

Similarly, Seagal (1993: 55) described an incident she had reviewed on "American Detective" videotape:

our cameramen, wearing police jackets are in one of the (Santa Cruz police) undercover vans during the pursuit (of two Hispanic suspects)... One of (the camera men) has his camera in one hand and a pistol held high in the other. The police don't seem to care about his blurred role...the suspects are pinned to the ground and held immobile while cops kick them in the stomach and the face...Our secondary cameraman holds a long, extreme closeup of a suspect while his mouth bleeds into the dirt. One producer shakes his head at the violence. "Too bad," he says. "Too bad we can't use that footage." This was clearly a case of too much reality for reality-based TV.

Another reality-TV show, "Real Stories of the Highway Patrol" recorded a West Virginia state trooper pursuing a drunk driver until the drunk crashed his car into another vehicle and killed an innocent 21-year-old woman. The camera crew then captured the trooper's reaction at the scene: "I killed that girl, man....I killed her, goddamn it. " However, the footage was never aired, as the police exercised a



contractual option with the production company to suppress it (Vick, 1997).

"Cops" is also selective in its portrayal of race. This reinforces ties between law and order ideology and racism. According to a content analysis by Oliver (1994) of five reality crime programs including "Cops", these programs tend to under-represent African-Americans and Hispanics and over-represent whites as police officers, while over-representing minorities and under-representing whites as criminals. "Cops" also omits any portrayals of overtly racist behavior by police. Management would be unlikely to choose more overtly racist officers to be filmed for the program; officers who were filmed would likely censor their own behavior somewhat. Even if such material were recorded, producers would likely opt not to air it. According to survey research (of white viewers only), viewers who report greater enjoyment of reality-based programs including "Cops" also tend to show higher levels of racial prejudice (Oliver and Armstrong 1995).

The many episodes of "Cops" reviewed for this research focused exclusively on "street crime". "Cops" is also selective in focusing on crime in poorer neighborhoods. While this is apparent from watching the program, it was also revealed in a Los Angeles Times profile of a "Cops" co-producer: "Most often, it's poor neighborhoods where "Cops" goes for its stories. Wealthy areas, while often host to the same domestic abuse and robbery problems that make up the program's stable of policing situations, are disdained as not crime ridden enough. 'Traditionally, we don't go and ride in those areas,' (the "Cops" co-producer) said. Things that

happen in places like Beverly Hills, she said, 'aren't the kind of things that are stories for us on the show.' " (Bernstein 1992). Thus law and order ideology is intertwined with wider issues of class.

### **"Cops" and other cultural products**

"Cops" resonates with ways of understanding of criminal justice which pervade the broader culture. One way in which this is most immediately apparent is in how "Cops" fits together with other media products concerned with crime and policing. "Cops" does not operate in isolation of other media portrayals of criminal justice. Media products influence each other's meanings. People do not consume them in isolation but together. An evening's television may feature news, fiction, advertising and reality-TV, and viewers may often make sense of them through their interplay or intertextuality as a package (Barthes 1975; Fiske 1987). If we see the O.J. Simpson trial on the news, it will probably affect how we interpret a similar fictionalized trial later that night on "Law and Order". The meanings of the particular visions of policing on "Cops" will be shaped in part by this interaction with the broader culture.

This notion of interplay or intertextuality is well established (Barthes 1975; Fiske 1987). However it has not been considered in much social scientific work on the specific question of crime in the media. Most social scientific analyses consider either crime news, crime fiction or reality-based TV in isolation, or else treat them as discrete components of media content which may be considered in additive fashion. This approach ignores the extent to which these media products are intertwined and mutually constitutive. Together they make a whole that is more than the sum of its parts.

For example, a striking facet of the Fox TV network's Saturday night line-up is the interplay between different elements. "Cops" has been repeatedly situated as part of a broader package of television entertainment related to fear and loathing of street crime. During "Cops", there are ads for "America's Most Wanted", the other popular reality crime program which followed. After watching "Cops", viewers can "help the cops catch a killer on America's Most Wanted" because "it's a night of non-stop action on Q13." One segment of "Cops" immediately cut from the closing credits to a slogan saying: "Real Cops," an ad for another reality-based program, "Top Cops", which features re-enacted scenarios of heroic police moments. Once, back-to-back episodes of "Cops" were followed immediately by "Front Page", a Fox-TV "news magazine" which featured segments on the kidnapping and strangling of a young girl, on "gangsta" rap music, and on "locking up drug dealers...how one state sends first-time drug dealers to prison--for the rest of their lives."

"Cops" viewers were also repeatedly enlisted by advertisements to participate in hunting down wanted criminals. In the Pacific Northwest, Saturday nights featured ads for Greater Vancouver Crimestoppers and Western Washington's Most Wanted, interspersed with the episodes of "Cops". Also featured repeatedly on "Cops" in an apparent attempt at niche marketing were ads for Pepper Mace spray. Airing shortly before Christmas, these ads concluded with the suggestion that the Pepper Mace "makes a great stocking stuffer."

"Cops" and "America's Most Wanted" are sometimes even tied together thematically: for example, they featured back-to-back

episodes set in New Orleans to mark Mardi Gras celebrations. "America's Most Wanted" is much more overtly ideological, and "Cops" will be read by audiences in the context of this. For example, one November 1996 episode of "Cops" featured video vignettes of a suspected assault/child neglect case, a drug raid and a car chase. The closing credits for "Cops" were aired on half of a split screen. Aired on the other half of the screen, with a backdrop of dramatic fictional crime footage using actors, was a monologue by "America's Most Wanted" host John Walsh. This monologue encapsulated law and order ideology. Walsh said:

You know what I'm sick of. Criminals who serve only a fraction of their sentences. Sexual predators who are released to live next door to you and your children and you don't even know it. Drug dealers who think they run these streets. This is a society where criminals have all the rights and victims don't have any. Well, it's going to change. You're going to make that happen. The new "America's Most Wanted". America fights back. Premieres next Saturday after "Cops" on non-stop Fox.

More broadly, crime news, reality crime programming and crime drama are often consumed in juxtaposition by viewers. If one's daily rhythms are structured to include an hour of news at six o'clock, so that meal-time is spiced with lashings of crime and punishment, then topped off by a couple of hours of prime-time police dramas, one does not absorb them independently of each other. Being read in the context of news may add an immediacy to crime fiction; being read in the context of fiction may add dramatic impact to crime news. Media consumers make sense of crime by juxtaposing countless crime stories from different sources in the mass media and elsewhere.

Through its claims to be "reality-TV" and its power to invoke the notion that "seeing is believing", "Cops" occupies a crucial place in the wider media package. More generally, as more and more "real" footage of actual crime and policing appears on television - both on reality programs like "Cops" and in the news - it adds extra force to law and order ideology. This is because it offers visual "proof" that powerfully reinforces the law and order messages in other programming. This is one key influence of TV as it comes to broadcast new situations in the realm of criminal justice.

Weekday episodes of "Cops" have often been broadcast immediately after the 6 o'clock news, bridging the gap between the news and prime time crime. This bridging is both literal and figurative. As one television executive noted, the interplay between "Cops" and local television news may be an important part of its success in this time slot. Twentieth Television syndication president Greg Meidel told Broadcasting and Cable magazine, "All our research indicates that viewers closely identify "Cops" content with that of similar sorts of law enforcement coverage on newscasts locally. That's why "Cops" has been so compatible as a lead-in or lead-out from local news programming. It looks, feels and tastes like a first-run news program" (M. Freeman 1993).

If viewers may see "Cops" as resembling news, the storytelling of "Cops" also resonates extremely well with fictional crime programming. "Cops" has the simple, unambiguous narrative structure, pumped-up action, heroic police protagonists, high arrest rate and illusion of police certainty characteristic of much fictional crime drama. Like many such fictional dramas, the action on "Cops"

also ends with closure or summary justice at the arrest stage of the criminal process. "Cops" takes place in linear "real time" in a fictional present rather than being recounted in summary form in the past tense like news. The presence of the camera is not acknowledged on "Cops", which is also characteristic of fictional or dramatic realism (although it is an approach also adopted by some verité documentarists).

Many viewers will likely draw on the experience of one form to interpret the other. For example, if people see that "Cops" is a lot like crime fiction, crime fiction may be seen as more realistic; conversely, the fact that "Cops" itself is structured like crime fiction may simply seem natural. More generally, the influences of "Cops" must be understood by situating it among a broader range of sources of crime stories. Combined, these sources are a package that is more than the sum of its parts.

Thus, the broader cultural context in which "Cops" exists will reinforce its tendencies toward law and ideology.

### **"Cops" and audiences**

Clearly not all audiences will simply accept that "Cops" is reality. Yet audience research suggests that many viewers largely do see it this way. A survey of 358 television viewers in Wisconsin and Virginia by Oliver and Armstrong (1995) showed that audiences perceive "Cops" and four similar programs as significantly more realistic than crime fiction. Andersen (1996) notes that, according to a 1993 Times-Mirror survey, viewers tend to think of reality crime shows as informational programming rather than

entertainment. Industry research also suggests that many viewers see "Cops" as very similar to local news (Freeman 1993).

Of course, not all viewers will take "Cops" the same way; some audience members will subvert the police definitions of the televised situations and make their own meanings (Fiske 1987) . Yet many viewers are already inclined toward law and order ideology, and these are the people whom "Cops" will most likely appeal to. This is confirmed by Oliver and Armstrong (1995: 565). Their survey found that reality programs like "Cops" "were most enjoyed by viewers who evidenced higher levels of authoritarianism, reported greater punitiveness about crime and reported higher levels of racial prejudice." Another survey showed that regular viewers of "Cops" and three other reality programs were significantly more fearful than infrequent viewers of being sexually assaulted, beaten up, knifed, shot, or killed (Haghighi and Sorensen 1996: 23).

To sum up, there are strong indications that "Cops" does not simply allow viewers to see unproblematically into a previously hidden situation, as Meyrowitz would argue. Instead, Cops offers an ideological vision of criminal justice which will more likely tend to reproduce hierarchy and inequality rather than eliminating it.

### **"COPS" FEEDS BACK INTO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

The question of how "Cops" portrays crime and policing is bound up with how it feeds back into the criminal justice situations themselves. "Cops" helps constitute events in the justice system, so that criminal justice events also become television events. "Cops" does not simply offer a distorted representation of some "real

world" of policing; "Cops" helps shape that world. "Cops" illustrates the more general point that "the mass media do not merely report on events but rather participate directly in processes by which events are constituted and exist in the world" (Ericson 1991: 219; see also Altheide and Snow 1979, 1991).

There are numerous indications that police tailor their behavior for the program. For example, outtakes from "Cops" reveal both police and camera crew members giving stage directions during "real" incidents. The most controversial incident involving stage directions given to police from a reality-TV crew occurred with another program, *Real Stories of the Highway Patrol*. As described above, in November 1996, the crew recorded a police pursuit gone awry. The crew was riding with a West Virginia State Trooper as he chased a drunk driver until the impaired driver collided with another vehicle, killing an innocent 21-year-old woman. The woman's parents launched a wrongful death suit, charging:

the presence of the camera crew further excited a perilous situation. The allegation is supported by a vivid moment picked up on the videotape: the sound of one of the TV crew members apparently urging (the trooper) on.....'That has to affect him', says (the dead woman's) mother....'They are hyping the situation...Had they not been there, would my daughter be sitting here?' (Vick 1997).

During "Cops", in many cases on-the-spot interrogations of suspects and conferences between officers seem staged for the camera's benefit. "Cops" has also displayed small scale sting operations that illustrate a convergence of police and media needs. One episode featured such an operation conducted by police in which a Mack truck was intentionally abandoned outside a housing project



and in other impoverished-looking urban areas. Police and cameras were concealed in the truck, and within a short time, males in the area, usually young and African-American or Hispanic, would break into the truck's container to see what kind of valuables were inside. This made not only for ready-made arrests and charges, but also ready-made footage for "Cops". As one of the officers noted, it was "Christmas in August" for all concerned--except, of course, for the African-American and Hispanic youths breaking into the truck, who simply wound up "gift-wrapped" for police and media consumption.

One way in which television coverage reshapes criminal justice practice is through the emergence of informal rituals of punishment for the camera. The result is the spectacularization of arbitrarily-selected day-to-day instances of crime and punishment.

For example, police sometimes parade arrested suspects in handcuffs in strategic locations so they can be visually recorded by the media--one such ritual known colloquially as the "perp walk" (Doyle and Ericson 1996). Similar practices are evident on "Cops". The narrative structure of "Cops" works to provide closure for each vignette, and police often seem to deliberately shape their actions to produce such closure, as the example above of the officer interrogating the mother in her cell suggests.

One way of giving the stories closure is that suspects shown on "Cops" are sometimes subjected to informal shaming rituals by police. These offer a kind of summary justice that provides such closure and a moral to the particular vignette. While police often may offer some form of lecture or shaming to suspects regardless of whether or not television cameras are present, of course the

presence of the "Cops" camera redefines the situation dramatically for the participants. For example, in one vignette a man was pulled over by police while he was driving to a funeral with his female partner and small children. The man was found to be in possession of a small amount of marijuana. He was not charged but was instead subjected to a roadside lecture by police, as he pleaded by way of mitigation that he was unemployed. The humiliating effect of the lecture was likely magnified powerfully because he was in front of a camera and would appear on national television.

This example raises the more general point that "Cops" also alters the experience of criminal justice for particular civilians who are recorded. While media considerations may cause police to alter their behavior, media attention also redefines the situation for other participants. For example, media coverage of the criminal process may make the experience of it more punitive for suspects. Being recorded for "Cops" becomes itself an informal shaming ritual. Certain suspects may possibly be excited by the attention, and a surprising number do sign the releases. However, being taped for "Cops" may often be a painful and humiliating experience for many other civilians videotaped for the program, as television cameras intrude on some of the unhappier moments of their lives. This is very evident when witnessing outtakes of the program, although footage of viewers reacting to the camera is edited out when the program actually airs. Even if they deny consent for the footage to be aired, being filmed may sometimes be highly unpleasant for them. Nor does the blurring always effectively conceal the identities of civilians. Producer John Langley told one newspaper, "We don't disclose

someone's identity without their permission." This was not the situation however in at least one controversial incident in Los Angeles. The identity of a 14-year-old alleged statutory rape victim was revealed on "Cops" without the permission of her or her family (Los Angeles Times, April 20, 1991, p. B3). During televised footage of a police interview, a 19-year-old suspect mentioned the girl's unusual first name and admitted having sex with her. The footage made it clear in which locality the events were taking place. The result was that the 14-year-old girl was verbally harassed and "pushed around" by schoolmates and temporarily removed from her school by her parents. The teenager said, " I was very embarrassed to find out that many students in my school were talking about me and it upset me to hear the things they were saying...If I had known my name would be given out, I never would have spoken to police...Now when I go out, if I mention my name, it's 'Oh, you were the girl on "Cops"'. I just don't want to be known as the girl on "Cops"."

While police may tailor their behaviour for the program, a key point is that they do not feel compelled to constrain their actions very much because of their possible visibility on TV. As Debra Seagal, former production staffer of a very similar reality-TV program, "American Detective", noted in a letter to the Columbia Journalism Review (March/April 1993 p. 4):

This footage, before its transformed into an acceptable episode, features cops and detectives at their uncensored "best" , which invariably includes slander against every minority under the sun, as well as numerous acts of excessive physical and verbal harassment. The cops are well aware of the fact the viewer will never see any of this,

since they have a tacit agreement with the producers that they will be shown in a positive light.

In short, it is unlikely "Cops" forces police to restrict their behaviour.

"Cops" also feeds back into policing more broadly by influencing police and would-be police who are viewers. While there has been massive study of the influence of crime in the media on individual audience members, there has been little research on how crime in the media influences the particular audience of criminal justice personnel. Mary Beth Oliver, who has researched "Cops" extensively, said that instructors from many police academies around the U.S. have indicated that these shows have inspired many of their students to pursue law enforcement careers. The students' "whole idea of what it means to be a police officer is based on these very shows," Oliver said (Perigard 1995). Similarly, one would-be police officer interviewed for this chapter said that he watched "Cops" often and saw it as part of his training: each episode taught him how to deal with particular situations.

As "Cops" feeds back into policing, it begins to blur the worlds of television and "real life." For example, the possibility police officers may one day appear on "Cops" suggests a continuity between their working worlds and the world of crime on TV. One California police officer, who was being recorded in action for "Cops", told the Los Angeles Times that he and his wife were also regular viewers and big fans of the show: "I watch it all the time...I like the action...which is also what I like about being out here (on the beat). It's an adrenalin rush. It's what a lot of us like about police work -

the excitement" (Bernstein 1992). How did viewing many previous episodes of "Cops" shape his behavior when "Cops" actually began recording him on the job? For police officers being recorded, "Cops" may represent a fantasy come true in that they have become cops after being raised on the fictional heroics of police crime dramas. Now they have their chance to be a "television hero."

These diverse examples demonstrate that the various influences of "Cops" on policing and the criminal justice system are much more pervasive than is first apparent. "Cops" has now televised over 900 vignettes of police activity. This means that the program has video-taped between 5,000 and 10,000 hours of policing since 1988. "Cops" has thus affected numerous instances of police activity and touched the lives of many individuals in this way. However, "Cops" has further effects on the criminal justice system far beyond the particular incidents it has recorded. "Cops" has spawned many imitators such as "American Detective", "LAPD: Life on the Beat" and "To Serve and Protect". In fact, in St. Petersburg, Florida, the increasing media consciousness of police has pushed this influence to the next step. St. Petersburg police are now bypassing the media and producing their own "Cops"-style reality-based program on local cable television. These police sometimes take video-cameras along as they work and film their own activities for the show. The program, "Police Report," combines actuality footage of their own real-life operations in "Cops" fashion, along with interviews with police. Police have also created their own media shaming ritual and incorporated it into the show in the form of televised naming of prostitutes' johns (Getz 1995).

Video cameras are increasingly omnipresent in criminal justice, and "Cops" has attempted to expand its reach to obtain footage from all of them. In the spring of 1996, the official "Cops" website on the Internet was advertising an appeal to "officers, deputies, corrections officers, troopers" and others. The advertisement stated that "The producers of "Cops" are looking for amazing, unusual, exciting or weird videotape. Crazy arrests, angry suspects, hot pursuits, bloopers from in car cameras, cam corders, surveillance cameras." The footage was sought for a new home video which would be entitled "Caught on Camera." First prize for the best footage was a trip for two to Hawaii.

Thus, the influence of "Cops" penetrated more and more throughout the criminal justice system. Word would spread among criminal justice personnel so that, conceivably, any footage from any video-camera in the system anywhere at any time might potentially appear on "Cops". Increasingly, any criminal justice moment might become a media event.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

There has been copious research on how individual media products affect the views of audiences. This chapter has demonstrated that this is too narrow a conception to fully capture the force of media influence. Certainly, "Cops" may influence many viewers' attitudes. "Cops" demonstrates profoundly how the story-telling of "reality-TV" can be ideological, as its narrative techniques --such as naturalization, positioning of viewer identification, closure, and selectiveness--shape "raw reality" into

made-for-TV stories. Thus, "Cops" does not simply include viewers in a new "information system" (Meyrowitz 1985) or reveal previously unseen "back regions" of policing, even though it may appear to do so. Television does not simply offer a "one way mirror" on policing, as Meyrowitz argues (1985: 39). Instead "Cops" offers a very particular portrayal of criminal justice, one which works, not to reduce, but to perpetuate hierarchy and social inequality.

In this case, reality television clearly does *not* have the influence of simply making visible the "back regions" of policing and leading to pressure for social change as posited by the medium theoretical account of Meyrowitz. The definitions of the criminal justice situations recorded for "Cops" are negotiated in unequal power relations among police, television personnel, "suspects" and audiences. This occurs in ways more consistent with the account of Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989) and with other previous research on the sociology of news production which has demonstrated extensive police control over the media (Chibnall 1977, Hall et al. 1978, Fishman 1978, 1980, 1981, Schlesinger and Tumber 1994, Sacco 1995). Ironically, police seem even less vulnerable in the situation of "Cops", even though their activities are recorded directly for television. Television broadcasters who are allowed to record policing for "Cops" do so on terms dictated by police; the resulting portrayal of policing is an artifact of police power. Power relations affect which situations of crime and policing are selected for broadcast, how these situations are packaged interpretively, and the ways of understanding criminal justice in the broader culture which are drawn on when these images are interpreted by audiences.

The key to understanding the various influences of "Cops" is the role of the police as authoritative definers of the events which are recorded. Police are both informal narrators of the footage, and those who largely define the criminal justice situation for the various front-line players, including defining particular behaviour as criminal. Clearly not all audience members will simply accept the police definition of what they see (Fiske 1987), but audience research suggests those viewers who are drawn to watch "Cops" are also more likely to accept its purported "reality". Audiences tend to see "Cops" as informational programming, like news, and in any case the particular audience segment which favours "Cops" tends to have authoritarian tendencies which make them likely to identify with police and accept their accounts (Oliver and Armstrong 1995).

Power is in large part the ability to define the situation so that others act on that definition (Altheide and Snow 1991: 4). In the case of "Cops", the ability to present the authoritative definition of the situation before the cameras, an ability mostly held by police, is the key to controlling the various influences of television, not only on audiences, but also on the situation in front of the camera, and the wider institutional influences of TV. "Cops" not only portrays events and practices in the criminal justice system, it actually helps reshape them, for example, by prompting informal rituals of summary justice by police, or reshaping the experience of criminal justice as more punitive for suspects. Day to day policing activities are imbued with a spectacular, ritualized shaming quality, consistent with a media tendency to foster spectacular behaviour in the institutions it records. These changes show how, as everyday



policing is televised, it comes to be shaped by this particular facet of "media logic" (Altheide and Snow 1979, 1991). "Cops" also feeds back into policing in broader ways, reaching beyond the immediate situations which are recorded. For example, "Cops" functions as informal promotional and teaching footage for would-be police officers, and thus influences their behaviour in future situations. Thus, situations where policing is directly recorded and broadcast by television result in more direct and fundamental changes to day-to-day policing than those described by Ericson et al. (1989). Through an infusion of "media logic", the routine crimes and arrests captured by "Cops" are reshaped into media spectacles.

**CH: 3****CASE STUDY TWO: SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS, AMATEUR VIDEO AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE ON TELEVISION****INTRODUCTION**

The influence of television on various institutions cannot be analyzed as if TV itself exists in a single, static and final form. TV and related technologies perpetually evolve, continually altering the social relations which surround them. The development of smaller, more portable video cameras for television crews was one factor that led to the emergence of reality-TV programs like "Cops"; this chapter discusses two similar examples.

"Cops" demonstrates how TV does not simply record criminal justice but reshapes it. In this second case study, I show how similar tendencies occur more broadly with the use of other types of "real" video footage of crime and policing, not only in reality programming, but also in television news and in TV advertising about criminal justice. I look at the impact of two new kinds of media technology: the surveillance camera and the home video camera. During the 1980s and 1990s, both of these new technologies have increasingly become sources of broadcast TV footage of "real" crime and policing. How does the interaction of these new technologies with broadcast TV reshape social situations on the front-lines of criminal justice, and feed back into criminal justice more broadly?

These two sources of footage for television - the surveillance camera on the one hand and the home camcorder as wielded by the amateur videographer on the other - provide an interesting

comparison. How do the influences differ when video footage of crime and policing comes from a non-institutional source, a home camcorder, as opposed to a more official or authoritative source, a surveillance camera operated by public or private police?

Of the topics selected for case study, this one has been the subject of the least previous research. There has been very little previous social science work on the use of either surveillance camera footage or amateur video on television news or other TV outlets. The use of surveillance camera footage is mentioned in some literature on reality-TV (e.g. Schlesinger and Tumber 1993). Young (1996) and Fiske (1996) each analyze single incidents in which certain crimes (the killings of James Bulger and Latasha Harlins, respectively) were recorded by surveillance cameras and then displayed on television news. Moran (1998) offers a chronology of surveillance cameras which lists other incidents where surveillance footage has appeared on the news. Some works by journalism professors discussing trends in television news comment briefly on the increasing use of amateur video (e.g. Lichty and Gomery 1992, Bird 1997). There have been a number of analyses of the politics of interpretation surrounding the Rodney King video in particular (Gooding-Williams 1993; Goodwin 1994; Fiske 1996).

This chapter uses qualitative data drawn from specific examples to generate an exploratory typification of the uses of surveillance camera footage and amateur video footage on broadcast television, and to examine the social and theoretical implications of the use of this footage in light of my research questions. I obtained transcripts of dozens of television items featuring either

surveillance camera video or amateur video of crime and policing. These transcripts were downloaded from "Nexis", an on-line database of the contents of hundreds of television and print media outlets. I collected further examples as I came across them in my own viewing, and from a variety of secondary sources.

### **SURVEILLANCE CAMERA FOOTAGE ON TV NEWS**

During the mid-1970s, a crude but dramatic piece of U.S. network news footage lifted from a California bank surveillance camera featured kidnapped heiress Patty Hearst brandishing a gun during a hold-up. Such cameras were relatively rare then, but this crude footage presaged a trend. As surveillance cameras have become more and more common, police have also become more proactive with the media, often providing TV news with surveillance footage. Closed circuit television (CCTV) surveillance of public spaces is becoming increasingly pervasive, with Britain leading the way (Norris, Moran and Armstrong 1998). (I use the British term "CCTV" interchangeably with "video surveillance" in this chapter). By 1999, Britain had an inventory of over half a million surveillance cameras (A. Freeman 1999). In Vancouver, a proposal is currently being considered to mount 23 surveillance cameras to monitor 59 blocks in the downtown area. (Van. Sun, March 13, 2000, p. B1). The surveillance cameras which are now frequently mounted in police cruisers have become another source of TV footage (Newsweek, July 22, 1991). Increasing surveillance camera use also pervades the private sector as one part of a major expansion of private policing (Shearing 1992).

Surveillance camera footage which makes the news is not only of sensational crimes but often of more routine and prosaic incidents. Such footage is also picked up by various other TV formats as well as news: for example, it has been regularly used in British Crimestoppers television ads since 1988 (Moran 1998: 280) as well as on the popular television program Crimewatch UK (Schlesinger and Tumber 1993). In the U.S., the Fox network's current weekly hour-long program *World's Wildest Police Videos* is one key outlet for footage from police surveillance cameras. The British Carlton Television program *Police! Camera! Action!* features surveillance footage of dangerous and disturbing driving incidents (Moran 1998: 283). So do the commercially released videos, *Police Stop!* and *Police Stop! America*. Another commercial video, *Caught In the Act!*, markets a montage of events captured by surveillance cameras monitored by local authorities and by the police (Moran 1998: 285).

#### **"VIDEO WANTED POSTERS"**

The surveillance capability of the cameras is enhanced by working in conjunction with television news, with TV programs such as Crimestoppers and Crimewatch UK, and with other visual media such as newspaper photographs. Television and the increasingly omnipresent surveillance cameras work together to produce the "video wanted poster", calling on the viewing audience to identify suspects. Thus television not only reshapes the social situation by including the audience in a new "information system" but actually creates a new institutional role for the audience as a participant in surveillance.

There have been a number of success stories for the video wanted poster. For example, a man who violently held up a Louisiana convenience store, pounding the clerk's head on the cash register, was apprehended after his father saw surveillance camera news footage of the assault on local news and turned him in (The Rivera Show, May 30, 1998). The capture of the young killers of James Bulger in Britain and of a suspect in the bombing of an American federal government building in Oklahoma were two such successes (Graham 1998: 90). A British subway bomber was also identified and captured through the use of this tactic (A. Freeman 1999). Video wanted posters are also being adopted to identify suspects in the aftermath of riots, as discussed in Case Study Three.

While it serves the practical purpose of aiding the search for suspects, releasing surveillance footage to the news for video wanted posters simultaneously has the effect of dramatizing and sensationalizing particular crimes. Perhaps the most prominent example has been the James Bulger case in Britain. Sixteen cameras captured a two-year-old toddler being led away from a shopping mall by two 10-year-old boys. The older children would later murder the youngster. While the crime itself was a sensational one in any case, the public furore over the Bulger case was magnified by the repeated airing of footage from the 16 security cameras which recorded the two-year-old's abduction.

Furthermore, while surveillance footage may be broadcast for video wanted posters, it is also often released by authorities to the news media without any direct crime-fighting purpose. For example, in the Latasha Harlins case in the U.S., television repeatedly aired

surveillance camera footage of a young black woman being shot in the back of the head and killed by a Korean shop-owner, even though the identity of the shop-owner was obviously known to police (Fiske 1996). To give another example: on May 25, 1999, a Seattle television station aired surveillance footage of an unidentifiable thief removing a painting from the wall of a Salt Lake City art gallery. There was only a very brief verbal description accompanying the image. Airing footage on Seattle news of a painting being stolen in Utah seemed neither to provide local news coverage nor to serve a crime fighting purpose. It was simply a dramatic image of a crime captured live on video.

Thus, aside from surveillance, my various data show that a secondary function of the cameras has developed, which is to produce "promotional footage" for police and other authorities. John Daly is host of the American reality program *Real-TV*, which offers dramatic video clips of actual incidents, purely for entertainment. Daly said a key source of video footage for *Real-TV* is government agencies - local, state and federal - along with surveillance cameras in businesses (The Rivera Show, June 30, 1998). *Real-TV* even features footage from hidden surveillance cameras in FBI undercover operations. Footage used in TV news or on reality programs also comes from camcorders mounted in police cruisers. For example, in 1992 *I Witness Video* featured footage from a Texas constable's police car of suspects gunning down the officer, followed by footage from a second police car of one of the suspects in turn being killed in a subsequent shoot-out with police. (LA Times, February 22, 1992). Such footage is often used on *World's*

***Wildest Police Videos.*** In Britain, there has been controversy over the fact that police released footage from their own surveillance cameras to the producers of *Police Stop!*, which features video footage of high speed pursuits:

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is in two minds about *Police Stop!*. It didn't like the emphasis on white-knuckle pursuits, but it welcomed, with qualifications, the road safety messages. Nevertheless, it is now rethinking its guidelines to forces on the future provision of reality footage. This follows the case of the Birmingham father whose two-year-old daughter was in a car that was rammed by a suspected armed robber in a police chase crash. Repeated requests by the father for police footage to support his claim for compensation - he felt the police had needlessly endangered his daughter's life - got nowhere. But the footage was made available to Labyrinth Video, maker of *Police Stop!*.

There is confusion, too, on the question of "payment". An ACPO spokesman said: "We are not in a position to sell our footage". Yet Labyrinth confirmed that it had made "donations" to some of the police forces. "In some cases, we've given (video-making) equipment or cash for them to buy equipment," a spokesman said. (Daily Telegraph, July 2, 1994).

This type of video is "promotional footage" as it often promotes the problem of crime and the solution of "law and order" in general, or the use of surveillance cameras themselves as a solution in particular. Of course, much video plays multiple functions: it facilitates the identification of suspects through video wanted posters but also dramatizes the problem of crime or the use of surveillance cameras. Police news often promotes a law and order



**approach to crime; surveillance cameras are used to supplement the package with dramatic visuals.**

**One widely-reported example of use of surveillance cameras for such promotional footage occurred when a video camera captured a 40-year-old man trying to commit suicide outside an apartment building in Brentwood, England. Police rescued him after a camera operator noticed what was going on; however, the tape was then released to television news without the man's permission, in order to publicize the effectiveness of the town's security system (The Independent on Sunday, March 31, 1996; Globe and Mail, April 5, 1996, p. A20).**

**Surveillance camera footage of criminal activity is often used in news stories publicizing the effectiveness of the technology itself. This is one partial explanation for the rapid spread of CCTV after its initial introduction in Britain: once it is introduced, CCTV provides its own dramatic visuals for media promotional material very effectively. As McCahill points out, "there has been widespread media coverage of several tragic cases, including of course, the abduction and murder of James Bulger... As Beck and Willis (1995: 166) argue, the media coverage of such cases has given an almost irresistible impetus to the introduction of CCTV in Britain. For example, in July 1994, less than a year after the James Bulger case, a large scale CCTV system 'went live' in the centre of Liverpool" (McCahill 1998: 59).**

**Surveillance cameras offer "found television crimes": the class of crimes which become elevated to media fame because they are recorded for television by an unforeseen source such as a**

surveillance camera or a home video operator. Thus, in addition to surveillance, the cameras are also involved in reshaping criminal justice by turning arbitrarily-selected instances of relatively common-place crimes into media spectacles. Such crimes become "bigger than life" due to the influence of media (Altheide and Snow 1979).

For example, in 1989 footage was broadcast worldwide from a secret surveillance camera that captured a nanny in Tennessee slapping the infant she cared for. The footage was released to the media after the nanny had already pleaded guilty in court. In the absence of such footage, this type of crime, while repugnant, would probably receive little media attention. However, thanks to the shocking imagery from the surveillance camera and the subsequent public outcry, the ex-nanny will probably never outlive the incident, said her lawyer: "It was like taking a sledgehammer to an ant." (Newsweek, July 22, 1991: 45).

### **TRIAL BY MEDIA/INTENSIFICATION OF THE FORMAL PROCESS OF PUNISHMENT**

While the media attention given to such cases is often quite punitive itself, it also influences the formal justice process. Television broadcast of video may pre-empt the accused's right to a fair trial, resulting instead in "trial by media" (Altheide 1993). Another consequence of crimes becoming heavily publicized because they are captured on video is that this may result in an intensification of formal punishment. The television culture of criminal justice is not something which exists completely separate and apart from the system. Instead, it feeds back into the system

itself, shaping both particular day-to-day practises and broader policies of criminal justice. Thus, for example, crimes which receive media attention may be less likely to be plea-bargained and more likely to be pursued and punished to the full extent of the law by media-conscious prosecutors and judges. Pritchard (1986) studied 90 Milwaukee homicide cases and found that the amount of news coverage given to the cases was the strongest predictor of whether or not prosecutors would plea-bargain. This confirmed findings of earlier research (Utz 1976; Jones 1978): the more media coverage, the less likely prosecutors would be to negotiate a plea-bargain for a lesser penalty. While, as Pritchard admits, one must be cautious about inferring a causal relationship here, previous research also suggests prosecutors pay close attention to news coverage (Dreschel 1983), particularly in the United States where district attorneys are elected officials.

Other ways in which the media culture feeds back into the day-to-day practises of criminal justice are described by Altheide (1995). He offers examples of "gonzo justice", where judges pass spectacular individualized sentences to achieve media attention. Sometimes they even directly involve media in the execution of the sentence, for example, by forcing convicts to buy advertising shaming themselves. Even if such sentences do not directly involve media in this way, they often receive massive media attention, adding to the punitive shaming effect. In June 1999, the Associated Press widely featured one example of a "gonzo justice" media shaming ritual, ironically involving a television executive as the criminal:

**A former TV station executive who rigged a contest last year so that his mother-in-law would win a pick-up truck was given 60 days in jail, fined \$10,000 U.S. and ordered to attend a Sept. 25 college football game wearing a sign declaring: "I am a liar, a coward and a thief. I rigged the Channel 51 contest so my mother-in-law would win the pick-up truck and give it to me." (Vancouver Sun, June 5, 1999, p. A 14).**

**Publicity-loving sheriff Joe Arpaio of Phoenix, Arizona personifies this trend toward media considerations influencing the day-to-day practices of criminal justice. Arpaio has employed numerous spectacular media-friendly measures such as scouring the streets with volunteer posses, putting up a two-metre-long neon Vacancy sign outside his tent city prison, and forcing his inmates to wear humiliating pink boxer shorts (Appleby 1996). The sheriff is:**

**savouring every moment of a publicity extravaganza that (by his count) has encompassed 111 radio shows, 38 national TV shows, 27 national print stories, 24 foreign radio shows, 15 foreign print articles and 14 foreign TV stories. "It keeps building, " he said excitedly. "It's a runaway train." (Appleby 1996).**

**The influence of television in particular may reshape even the smallest details of police practise:**

**The standard issue shoulder stars on the sheriff's uniform, for instance, were a tad small for the TV cameras. So he had larger ones sewn on. (Appleby 1996).**

**While an orientation to television and other media may simply lead criminal justice to be more visual and colourful, it may also lead to a push for heavier punishment. Media attention given to the**

James Bulger case in Britain - due in part to the frequent broadcast of surveillance camera footage - led to a massive public appeal for harsher sentences. The Home Secretary eventually intervened in the Bulger case, raising the sentences of the 10-year-old perpetrators to nearly double their original length (Young 1996: 126).

### **BIAS IN THE AVAILABILITY OF SURVEILLANCE CAMERA FOOTAGE**

The crimes spectacularized by television in this way are selected as a result of somewhat arbitrary factors, but they are certainly not a completely random sample of all crime. The surveillance produced by the interaction of the cameras, authorities and broadcast television is a selective one that tends mostly to work to the advantage of police and other dominant institutions, and works against less powerful social groups. Again, how television brings audiences into these particular situations thus tends to reproduce hierarchy and social inequality, instead of resulting in social levelling as Meyrowitz suggested.

Firstly, CCTV or police surveillance cameras are more likely to be present in poorer areas. Davies (1998: 270) notes, "Rather than focussing on town centres, (arguably democratic) particular residential trouble spots are being singled out for special attention: the Meadowell Estate in North Shields and Chapeltown in Leeds to name two examples. Rather than equalizing the rates of detection of middle class and working class delinquency, the effect is to intensify an already unequal pattern of policing." Similarly the 23 surveillance cameras proposed for Vancouver would all be located in

poorer parts of town: the Downtown Eastside, Chinatown, Gastown and Strathcona areas (Van. Sun, March 13/00, p. B1).

Aside from bias in where police surveillance cameras are located, there is further bias in whom the camera operators opt to monitor when they make decisions about which cameras to attend to. Clive Norris found, in a study of British surveillance camera operators in three areas covered by 148 cameras, "the young, the male and the black were systematically and disproportionately targetted, not because of their involvement in crime or disorder, but for 'no obvious reason'." (study quoted in Vancouver Sun, September 15, 1999, p. A15; Results reported in Norris and Armstrong 1999; See also McCahill 1998: 51-53; Fiske 1998 for similar evidence).

This exemplifies, as is the situation with "Cops", how the knowledge produced by surveillance cameras always involves interpretation. Surveillance cameras do not simply "make visible" what they record; instead those who may interpret the images - who produce the authorized definition of the situation - are the ones who hold the upper hand.

Police also dictate which footage from cameras is available to the news. Of course, footage of police deviance from this source seems very rare. In sum, as is the situation with "Cops" described in the previous chapter, the use of CCTV footage on the news features a structured bias toward reporting certain types of crimes. In particular, it will likely tend toward street crimes committed in poorer urban areas, and by non-white populations.

## **THE CONVERGENCE OF POLICE AND TELEVISION NEWS SURVEILLANCE**

The above examples concern the use by TV broadcast outlets of surveillance footage which was recorded for other purposes.

However, one police operation actually produced its own surveillance footage designed first and foremost specifically for TV news, resulting in "trial by media". Altheide (1993) offers a case study of an instance where police surveillance footage was produced directly for television news: a police sting operation known as Azscam in 1990 and 1991. In this ground-breaking initiative, Arizona police used hidden cameras to record state politicians accepting bribes from undercover operatives. However, instead of presenting this video material in the courts, Arizona police turned it into pre-packaged news releases, and went directly to television news with it.

In this article, Altheide argues those in the justice system are increasingly tailoring their activities to get media coverage. In this way, media logic penetrates and helps shape the justice system. In the Azscam episode, a police stooge offered numerous state legislators phony bribes. The politicians were not under any previous suspicion of wrongdoing. Some accepted the bribes, and were videotaped in the act. Unlike previous operations, the videotapes were given to the media well before any trials. In the words of one reporter, "evidence in the case was literally pushed on us. ...evidence was made available to the media in wholesale lots, with the video provided by direct uplink from police headquarters". This led seven members of the state legislature to resign. Most accepted plea

bargains and went to prison. In sum, it was a situation of trial by media for nearly all of the accused. This pre-empted troublesome questions about entrapment which may have arisen in court. Public opinion was very much in favour of the police.

Altheide suggests Azscam was "a turning point in mass mediated justice and social control and that it represented a "major refolding of social control and mass communication". It is clear in this situation that police and television journalists were not striving simply for criminalization, but for publicity and public shaming of the suspects which would effectively force their resignations from office. In its interaction with broadcast television, police surveillance is not simply expanded but qualitatively transformed.

### **A PARALLEL TREND: THE RISE OF AMATEUR VIDEO ON THE NEWS**

In addition to the increasing use of surveillance camera footage on broadcast TV, a parallel trend since the late 1980s has been the increasing use of home video footage on television news. Here the forerunner was the famous Zapruder film of the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963.

Only 3 per cent of American homes had camcorders in 1987 (Nightline, May 14, 1992). By May of 1998, this figure had increased more than tenfold: about one in three American households owned a camcorder, according to ABC's 20/20 (May 11, 1998). As of 1995, about 1.5 million Canadian families owned a video camera (Toronto Star, Feb. 25, 1995).



The increasing availability of these home camcorders, combined with tightening budgets of TV news organizations (Kimball 1994; Baker and Dessart 1998), were two factors that led to a rising use of amateur video footage on television news in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This trend is noted by numerous industry observers (e.g. Robins 1989; Luft 1991; Lichty and Gomery 1992: 14; and Bird 1997). The use of more amateur video was encouraged by influential broadcast news consultants, such as the firm Frank N. Magid Associates. These consultants urged local news producers to institute procedures to collect amateur footage (Lichty and Gomery 1992: 15). "Using home video is especially important for small stations with limited budgets, because people who live where news happens can cover it quicker and cheaper," said Jeff Bartlett of the news consulting firm Audience Research and Development (Luft 1991: 35). In January 1987, CNN inaugurated its News Hound program, whereby viewers who had potential amateur footage for the news network could call a 1-800 number. As of January 1989, CNN was airing three or four such News Hound stories a month. Philadelphia's WCAU Newswatchers program was generating five to eight stories a month (Robins 1989: 30). By 1991, KSNW in Kansas had aired about 100 stories using amateur video. In Canada, Edmonton's A-Channel began a "Street Shooter" promotion to collect home video.

The world-wide attention given the notorious Rodney King video in 1991 was a massive stimulus to amateur videographers. "The King tape made more people think how to put their cameras to use and how to make money from them," said the news director of

KTLA television (Electronic Media magazine, Sept. 23, 1991). A 1993 survey of 100 television news directors found that 77 per cent now used camcorder video from amateur sources (Electronic Media magazine, Sept. 27, 1993).

While much amateur video on the news focuses on other kinds of incidents such as tornadoes, fires and car accidents, there have been a variety of criminal justice items captured by home cameras. Footage from home camcorders (like surveillance camera footage) is also a staple of some reality-TV programs. These include both those programs that are specifically focused on criminal justice, and those with a more general focus such as *Real TV*, *Amazing Videos*, and *I Witness Video*. Even the latter programs rely heavily on criminal justice footage. As with news stories, reality-TV programs based on actual video footage tend to rely heavily on topics of crime and deviance (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1987).

Certainly the camcorder is sometimes empowering to individual members of the public in their dealings with police. The Rodney King case is the most notorious example of a series of incidents where police brutality was recorded by civilian video cameras, creating trouble for authorities. The politics of interpretation concerning the Rodney King video have been analyzed in some depth (e. g. Gooding-Williams 1993; Goodwin, 1994; Fiske 1996). I will not revisit these issues here other than to point out that, despite these conflicting interpretations, indisputably, the Rodney King video was a source of massive trouble for the L.A. police, and a highly effective means of resistance against police brutality. There are now a number of similar examples. In Fort

Worth, Texas, in 1991 a tourist videotaped a patrolman clubbing a handcuffed man 24 times. The police officer was suspended after the incident played repeatedly on local TV news (Newsweek, July 22, 1991). In Baltimore in 1997, a home camcorder captured the controversial shooting of 20-year-old James Quarles by a police officer. In Brazil, the popular TV-news program Jornal Nacional broadcast an amateur video showing military police beating and even killing civilians (Human Rights Watch World Report 1998).

Indeed, whether or not their video footage is submitted to the news, some members of the American public have taken to videotaping police interactions they witness as a check on such brutality (Fiske 1998; Haggerty and Ericson, forthcoming). Others use camcorders for vigilante crime-fighting themselves, for example, neighbourhood "video vigilantes" who tape suspected drug dealers or prostitutes either to intimidate them, or to turn the footage over to police. While it is not primarily intended for broadcast, this footage may often also wind up on TV. For example, the May 11 1998 episode of the ABC news-magazine 20/20, used extensive footage in chronicling the "video vigilante" phenomenon.

The Rodney King video triggered a chain of events which led to the bloody Los Angeles riot of May 1992, but it also had broader ripple effects on criminal justice. This demonstrates how television not only reshapes particular situations it records, but feeds back into the criminal justice system more broadly. When footage of the Rodney King beating received such wide publicity, it prompted other members of the public to step forward with additional complaints about instances of police brutality. "After seeing the King tape,

people who have been mistreated are finding the courage to come forward," said John Crew, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union. Police brutality complaints "increased markedly" nationwide following the airing of the King video, and the Department of Justice considered hiring extra lawyers, said Assistant Attorney General John Dunne (San Francisco Chronicle, April 2, 1991).

There was also speculation that with the emergence of the camcorder, police behaviour would be constrained. Doug Elder, the President of the Houston Police Officers Association, said: "These cameras are so popular I'm worried that we're going to have a case where because of intimidation, an officer didn't use a necessary level of force and we'll get somebody hurt or killed because of it." (Newsweek, July 22, 1991).

Amateur video of policing of demonstrations and riots, such as that in New York's Tompkins Square in 1988, and various demonstrations by the AIDS activist group ACT-UP, has also found its way on to television news and supported accusations of excessive police violence. However, such video is subject to a complex politics of interpretation which constrains its effectiveness as a tool of resistance. In the next chapter I talk about these constraints, using the example of Vancouver's Stanley Cup riot.

Many civilian videographers, however, are not politically motivated; they are just after the token amounts of money local news stations will pay for such amateur footage, or the symbolic recognition they will receive. In this way, media logic (Altheide and

**Snow 1979) has spread not only through contemporary institutions, but through much of the general public as well. As one American TV news director said, "In many cases people are just interested in getting their footage, and their name, on TV.....People are even starting to ape TV reporters and do their own on-the-scene interviews" (Electronic Media, Sept. 23, 1991). Some amateur videographers listen to police scanners at home and race to potential news events to record them for possible sale to TV news. News director, Bob Yuna, formerly of KSNW-TV in Kansas, said, "Many people feel as though it's almost their duty to go out and get those pictures. It becomes a symbiotic relationship - the people actually feel bonding between themselves and the TV station" (Luft 1991: 35).**

**In the previous chapter, I discussed examples of how police behaviour might be initiated and tailored for recording for "Cops". Arrests initiated by civilians may be similarly prompted by the possibility of recording them for television. For example, an anonymous tipster turned in a fugitive to the FBI. The tipster also arranged for a friend to be on hand to record the arrest with a camcorder for Seattle television news (Lichty and Gomery 1992: 14).**

### **CRIMINALS WHO RECORD THEIR OWN CRIMES**

**Like surveillance cameras, camcorders wielded by amateurs can spectacularize relatively pedestrian or mundane crimes. Sometimes criminals themselves even record their crimes for their own gratification. Like surveillance camera footage, this can also result in spectacularization of otherwise more routine crimes. For example, a group of criminals who carried out a series of robberies**

in Washington D.C. videotaped their efforts, producing footage which aired repeatedly not only on local and national news, but at their trials (Robins 1989; Lichty and Gomery 1992: 15). A group of American teenagers who drove around shooting at passersby with a paintball gun became a small media sensation because one of them recorded the episode on a camcorder, and the dramatic footage - mirroring "real" drive-by shootings - was released to television, appearing on *Real TV*. Even though the crimes were relatively minor, they were visually spectacular. Here again, the media spectacularization may have been a factor in intensifying formal punishment: the perpetrators subsequently received prison sentences as media coverage evidently made their crimes "bigger than life" once again (Altheide and Snow 1979).

On March 11, 1999, the tabloid-TV program *Fox Files* featured an item on such "video crimes" recorded by criminals, calling these the "crime of the 90s". ABC's *Prime Time Live* (July 15, 1998) featured blurred home video footage a rapist took of himself with his drugged victims.

The intensification of the formal process of punishment may also occur when home video footage of crimes is broadcast. A Michigan couple were the subject of a nationwide outcry after the parents video-taped two of their children fighting. The parents were heard on the tape egging their children on to fight for the camera. After the tape was broadcast on national news, and shown as evidence in court, the couple had their four children taken away by the government, were charged with first degree child abuse and faced a possible 20-year-sentence (NBC News, March 7, 1997). A 16-

year-old Nebraska high school student who video-taped a friend beating up one of his peers was himself arrested for assault for his role in wielding the camera. He also had his name publicized on NBC nationwide after the tape was broadcast. A reporter with the local NBC affiliate noted the force which the television images added to the situation: "The community in general seems to be pretty shocked about it.....They're shocked because it happened in a school, during school, and they're shocked really - the police don't want to minimize it, but because most people don't know what a fistfight looks like, and they have to see it firsthand--and that is shocking. It's as shocking as the Rodney King beating..." (Rivera Live, June 5, 1996).

### **COMPARING THE SURVEILLANCE CAMERA VERSUS THE AMATEUR CAMCORDER**

There are a number of similarities between amateur video and surveillance camera footage, and between these and the reality-TV footage of "Cops". Like the video shot for "Cops", amateur video and surveillance camera footage both have a strengthened claim to authenticity because of their crude underproduced quality. This quality works to deny the existence of artifice, suggesting that the tapes have come, undoctored, from a "real" source. They have a similar aesthetic to the video shot for "Cops"; their crudeness or starkness, and the graininess of surveillance video in particular, suggest a grim, harsh, street-level "reality", conjuring up for the audience a "gritty realism" which may actually be learned from fictional crime programming (Cavender and Bond-Maupin 1993). The

grey and black palette of surveillance footage has the same kind of "film noir" quality as "Cops", which seems to be recorded most often at night with relatively limited lighting. These properties fit with a "common sense" view of crime - committed on dark "mean" (i.e. poor) streets at night by strangers - which is so naturalized it may take the critical observer awhile to realize that this is a particular, ideological way of understanding crime.

As discussed in the previous chapter, there is an attempt with "Cops" to naturalize the verbal narration that accompanies the footage, stitching together an unofficial narrative through the soundtrack of police officers' speech. In contrast, both surveillance camera footage and home video are often accompanied by more explicit narrative dissection, as well as overt manipulation of the footage to assist the narrative, for example, the use of slow motion, repetition of key sequences, and use of on-screen arrows or diagramming to clarify the imagery. It is easier to see in this case that much depends on verbal interpretation of the video footage. Here the interpretive activity is much more explicit.

There are some key differences between surveillance footage and home video. It is instructive to compare the relative difficulties faced by police on the one hand, and civilian sources on the other hand, in publicizing their preferred video imagery of criminal justice, obtained either from surveillance cameras or from home camcorders. The Rodney King video revealed some of the power of the new technology of the home camcorder in facilitating resistance to the power of police. Yet such episodes will necessarily be comparatively rare in relation to the use of surveillance camera



footage. Official sources have a huge sweep of available visuals from surveillance cameras to draw from, as opposed to the haphazard availability to private citizens of small amounts of newsworthy camcorder footage.

Although there has been no social science research on the trend toward using amateur video on the news, it has prompted much discussion and debate in both broadcasting and journalism industry publications and in the popular media itself. There have been extensive concerns raised in both the popular media and in broadcast industry outlets about the increase in amateur video on the news. However, the parallel rise in surveillance camera footage on the news has received no critical comment whatsoever. In contrast to home video, surveillance camera footage apparently comes from an unquestionable source.

Criticisms questioning the use of amateur video reveal an interesting tendency toward what I will call "selective epistemology". This is the situational questioning of the truth-value of video evidence. The kinds of questions raised about amateur video present an interesting contrast with normal attitudes toward visual material on TV news. Similar questions do not seem to be raised about other forms of video evidence on the news, such as that from surveillance cameras. Apparently, critics end up doubting the validity of video evidence only when it suits them.

The more optimistic observers heralded the tendency toward use of amateur video on TV as producing "video democracy" (Ted Koppel, *Nightline*, May 14, 1992) or adding a "democratic dimension to television journalism worldwide" (Luft 1991: 35). "Now anyone

can be Dan Rather", Newsweek enthused (July 22, 1991). These are arguments similar to that of Meyrowitz: that increased visibility due to television leads to social levelling.

However, many critics and media personnel argue that with amateur video, seeing is not believing. Not surprisingly, the trend toward amateur video provoked a fair amount of unease among media professionals who saw themselves as potentially displaced from their jobs. Journalism professor Roger Bird (1997: 127) saw the use of home video as a "threat to the authenticity of news", questioning the "motives, skill and honesty of the amateur sources. Their choice of what to record and sell is constrained by no journalistic tradition, ethics, or training" (Bird 1997: 127). He charged that amateur video news would be vulnerable to new technologies which would allow altering or morphing of footage.

David Bartlett, president of the U.S. Radio-Television News Directors Association, said "Seeing is not always believing in the world of video so television stations have to apply rigorous standards to this material and not just stick it on the air." (Toronto Star, Feb. 25, 1995).

Media writer Howard Rosenberg of the Los Angeles Times (April 3, 1992, p. F28) was highly critical of local television stations for airing footage in early 1992 of another event that echoed the Rodney King incident. This parallel incident featured footage of a police officer kicking a Santa Cruz man and striking him with a baton. The target was a suspect in a child molestation case who was later found to be wrongfully accused. The suspect was sitting on the ground while the officer clubbed and kicked him, but

was being beaten as he was apparently still moving around against the officer's orders. The camcorder footage of the police beating was recorded by the suspect's wife.

Firstly, Rosenberg criticized the verbal interpretation by television reporters which accompanied the footage, specifically that the officer was "beating" the "wrong man". Rosenberg did admit however that the man - who was undoubtedly being kicked and clubbed - had been wrongfully arrested and wrongfully accused of child molestation. Nevertheless the critic concluded that it was inappropriate for television news to air the footage because the police officer "appeared to be acting properly in using the level of force that he did".

Rosenberg further charged that the officer was a victim of "guilt by association" because the footage was aired alongside another item updating the King case. Rosenberg also stated that, "There was no word on why the ...footage was released to TV at this time. Some observers feel that the move may have been instigated by proponents of review boards for both the Santa Cruz police and sheriff's departments."

Thus, regardless of the authenticity of the footage itself, it was impugned because of the context in which it was shown, and the possible motives of those who may have supported its release to TV. Clearly much TV news footage is open to very similar criticisms, yet does not seem to undergo similar scrutiny.

A former television journalist who moved on to work doing publicity for a non-governmental organization described the problems he faced in getting amateur video footage shot by

volunteers onto television news: "Response from the media has been cautious because there is still some doubt that ordinary people can produce this stuff. There are ethical concerns and concerns about quality...." (Toronto Star, Feb. 2, 1995).

ABC-TV journalist David Marash commented on Nightline (May 14, 1992) concerning the use of amateur video, "One scene on videotape can yield many interpretations. The physical position of the camera can define how it captures an event, and so can the camera-person's point of view."

When pushed, these critics might conceivably make similar observations about *all* video used on television. However, the point is they are not pushed to make these observations. Their silence accedes to the common sense that, in other situations, video seeing is believing - but here it is questioned.

Although the Rodney King footage is the strongest example of amateur video as resistance to police power, its aftermath was also beset with legal complications. George Holliday, the plumber and amateur cameraman who taped the Rodney King beating, received only a token amount of money for the footage. Holliday wound up launching multi-million dollar lawsuits against various television outlets after the footage was aired massively world-wide without his consent. He lost. Numerous stations now ask amateur videographers to sign waivers absolving the station of any liabilities incurred during the taping of the story (Luft 1991: 35).

A key difference is that surveillance camera footage is more likely to come to television news in a package with an authorized definition from police; in contrast, amateur video footage must

speaking much more for itself. Home video footage may carry less weight independent of such an authorized definition which imbues it with significance. The discrepancy in media treatment of surveillance camera footage versus home video extends the trend documented in much previous media research in which journalists rely very heavily on official sources as "primary definers" or "authorized knowers" (Hall et al. 1978; Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989). Similarly, research on which letters-to-the-editor are published by newspapers also reveals that those from official or institutional sources are significantly more likely to get published (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989: 338-376). In the same way, even when there is video footage of actual events, it is much more likely to make it onto the news if it is officially approved footage accompanied by an authorized definition from police.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

To sum up, the interaction of broadcast TV with surveillance cameras and home video reshapes selected social situations in criminal justice. However, to suggest these technologies simply include viewers in new "information systems", as Meyrowitz might argue, ignores the ideological tendencies marking the resulting visions of criminal justice. I have indicated biases in the availability of footage from both surveillance cameras and home video that tend to reproduce an ideological vision of crime and policing. For example, surveillance footage will tend to be more available from lower class neighbourhoods. Police also use surveillance cameras selectively to produce "promotional footage" dramatizing a particular vision of the crime problem. Similarly to

**"Cops", this particular vision resonates with law and order ideology and thus works to reinforce rather than undermine social inequality.**

**I have also shown how, while it offers new potential for resistance to police power, amateur video faces many more challenges in making it onto the TV airwaves than does surveillance footage from police cameras. The belief of some hopeful observers that the rise of amateur video on the news would result in "video democracy" would fit well with Meyrowitz's arguments, if it were in fact the case. However the various power imbalances demonstrated in this chapter make it more appropriate to speak of "video inequality". It is powerful institutional players who encounter much less difficulty in getting their preferred video on to the news, fitting more with the institutional perspective of Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989).**

**The examples in this chapter reveal again how the introduction of television not only records but reshapes front-line criminal justice situations themselves. For example, I have shown how footage broadcast from these sources may lead to the somewhat arbitrary spectacularization of particular crimes. This may in turn lead to intensification of the criminal process itself, to harsher punishment in those cases which are broadcast, as media logic makes them "bigger than life". In the extreme case analyzed by Altheide (1993), the introduction of television prompted a whole new form of control action: police produced surveillance footage for the primary purpose of releasing it to TV news as a kind of "trial by media".**

One key way television reshapes the police institution is shown in the advent of the "video wanted poster". Not only is police surveillance capability expanded considerably but a new institutional role is created for the audience. They are not only viewers but watchers, engaged in surveillance of each other. Viewers are indeed placed in a new information system as Meyrowitz would suggest; however, rather than resulting in social levelling, what viewers do with that new information operates largely in the service of dominant institutions, especially the police.

More generally, these two new media technologies in interaction with broadcast TV do influence criminal justice. However these influences do not simply flow from the formal properties of the technologies in question. Instead, the nature of these influences is most often dictated by the most powerful institutional players.

**CH. 4****CASE STUDY THREE: TELEVISION AND THE POLICING OF VANCOUVER'S STANLEY CUP RIOT****INTRODUCTION**

The previous two case studies have analyzed situations where television footage of policing is recorded quite selectively. The selection of what is, and is not, recorded for television occurs on terms mostly favourable to police. This chapter moves on to examine a contrasting case of more visibility - and more potential vulnerability - for police. In contrast to "Cops", for example, this chapter examines a situation of conflict rather than convergence between police and media interests. This is the situation where police must control a crowd of rioters or demonstrators with television cameras present. The chapter asks, firstly, how are the power relations affecting what is broadcast different from the first two case studies? To what extent does the balance of power shift in this less-controlled situation? Secondly, given this shift in power relations, how does this affect how TV feeds back on and reshapes the criminal justice situation in question? I ask, how has the advent of television affected the policing of "public order events" such as riots or mass protests? What role might TV play in a trend which other researchers have identified, a trend toward the selective softening of protest policing which has occurred since the 1960s? What other potential influences might television have in such a situation?

These questions are examined through a case study of the relationship between television and policing concerning Vancouver's



**Stanley Cup riot of June 14, 1994. Television footage of Vancouver police violently attempting to control the June 14 crowd aired frequently on the news in the following months. In considering the power relations affecting what was communicated, I focus on the role television played in how the various players made sense after the fact of the riot and how it was policed. Given the highly complex nature of a riot, the process by which the authoritative definition of the televised situation emerged was much more lengthy and complicated than, for example, with an episode of "Cops".**

**My case study in this chapter thus looks at the effect of television on the political situation surrounding the Stanley Cup riot, as a way of talking about the role of TV in policing riots more generally. Riot footage showing up on TV news was one factor that led to the three subsequent enquiries into the riot; in turn the television footage was also used (although very selectively) in the enquiries themselves. The chapter also examines other roles television played in policing the Stanley Cup riot, and in its aftermath. Shortly after the riot, police collected or seized all the videotape that had been recorded for local television that night. Police used the television footage they had taken control of to produce and promote their own retrospective accounts of the riot, for public consumption and in the courts. Police also used TV footage in various ways to enlist the public to help identify and criminalize numerous members of the crowd. Finally, television eventually came to play another important role in the riot aftermath. One of the main themes of the enquiries became whether television itself may have helped cause the destruction that night.**

With all this in mind, in the chapter's conclusion I reconsider how television has reshaped public communication about riots, influenced crowd policing itself, and altered police surveillance in public order situations.

What does previous research tell us about these questions? Police, the crowd and the media all interact in shaping "public order events" such as riots or demonstrations, and in shaping how these events are understood. However, the three-way dynamic here has not been considered much by social scientists, apart from an isolated handful of works. For example, the role of the media is not examined much in the literature on protest policing (eg. Della Porta and Reiter, 1998). Similarly, the research literature on social movements and the media tends to ignore the police-movement interaction. Peter Waddington (1994: Ch. 1) argues more broadly that social movement theory has neglected the influence of policing on movements. There is a need to broaden the analysis to consider all three players in this triangle.

Most of the literature on "public order policing" or crowd policing focuses on political demonstrations or political riots, as opposed to riots in other contexts, such as those associated with sports events like the Stanley Cup. In practise the boundaries between what constitutes a political riot and what constitutes a sports riot are slippery. Sometimes sports crowds become disorderly for political reasons, for example in the Chicago Bulls riot of 1992 (Rosenfeld 1997). Riots are almost always the topic of competing interpretations; one focus of the competition is often whether a genuine political grievance exists, or whether riots are

simply the behaviour of "hooligans". Regardless, there are obviously many similarities between televised political riots and televised sports riots. In both cases, there is a combination of high visibility and violent chaos. This combination may make it difficult for police subduing the riot to maintain control over their public image, both for the live audience and, more importantly, for the news media, especially television.

"The whole world's watching", demonstrators chanted at the 1968 Chicago Democratic National Convention, as Mayor Daley's police billy-clubbed them in front of TV cameras. Chicago 1968 was perhaps the most controversial episode of televised protest policing. Powerful images of police brutality on television network news from Chicago fed a crisis of institutional legitimacy. The "police riot" (Stark 1972) of Chicago 1968 is seen as a watershed in two ways. Firstly, after Chicago, media accounts became generally more sympathetic toward protesters, according to some analysts (eg. Gans 1979: 54). Secondly, after Chicago, police also began to adopt softer styles of protest policing in response to the dangers of increased media visibility, other research suggests (Fillieule 1998). British police faced a similar crisis of legitimacy over their role in the riots at Brixton and elsewhere in 1981, partly due to coverage by television and other media (Reiner 1992: 181). Resulting criticism, notably in Lord Scarman's report on the riots, led to police reforms. These included not only reform of crowd policing methods, but more broadly "a reorientation of policing on a wide front" (Reiner 1992: 258). This featured, for example, introduction of a multi-agency approach which diffused responsibility from police, and the adoption

of new corporate management techniques. Similarly, television coverage of policing action at APEC 1997 in Vancouver led to massive controversy. This focused especially on one widely aired clip of Staff Sergeant Hugh Stewart pepper-spraying protesters and a CBC cameraman. The aftermath was a great deal of trouble for police and the Prime Minister's Office leading to the lengthy on-going APEC enquiry (Ericson and Doyle, 1999; Pue 2000).

In sum, these accounts suggest the advent of television may have changed public order policing. Indeed, whether or not television was the cause, there has certainly been widespread adoption since the 1960s of less coercive styles of protest or crowd policing in Western Europe and North America (Waddington 1994; Della Porta and Reiter 1998b; McPhail, Schweingruber and McCarthy 1998). One prominent emerging 'softer' strategy for policing protest in these countries has been 'negotiated management' (Della Porta and Reiter 1998b). A departure from more heavy-handed protest policing styles of the 1960s and 1970s, negotiated management strives to avoid coercive intervention through an emphasis on peacekeeping rather than strict law enforcement, and through the increasing formalization of negotiation between police and protest organizers.

Some researchers argue that television has been an important factor in this general shift toward a less coercive style of public order policing. As Gary Marx (1998: 257) suggests:

**Police may conclude that rigidly enforcing the law through use of overwhelming force will be counterproductive, whether in the short or the long run. The presence of the mass media is an important factor here serving to moderate police behaviour. The symbolic importance of always being**

**in control is given lesser importance than the harm that might befall police, demonstrators, and third parties and the longer negative consequences that might flow from media accounts of police violence.**

**Thus the softening is termed by some "the mediatization of protest policing" (Fillieule 1998: 14; see also Geary 1985; Della Porta 1998). The term "mediatization" situates this as one component of the much broader trend we have discussed of increasing news media awareness in contemporary institutions, and in particular by police in recent years (Ericson et al. 1989; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994).**

**In considering this argument - that the presence of media and TV cameras in particular is one key factor in the softening of crowd policing tactics - two qualifications are in order. Firstly, some key researchers of protest policing, such as Peter Waddington (1994) and Olivier Fillieule (1998), argue that this shift to a softer style of crowd policing has been quite selective. Thus police will still adopt more repressive tactics in certain situations, particularly with crowds or protest groups who are perceived to have less legitimacy or to be more socially marginalized.**

**Secondly, in contrast to the above accounts, another body of social science research takes quite a contrary position. This other work - mostly emanating from British critical sociologists and criminologists - suggests that news coverage of riots tends simply to legitimate police violence and to demonize rioters or demonstrators (eg. Murdock 1984; Young 1986). David Waddington (1992) summarizes extensive literature in this vein arguing that**

media provide insufficiently critical reporting of violent police suppression of riot or protest. Justin Wren-Lewis (1981) argues that television's tendency to select out visuals of the most violent sequences legitimates a law and order approach to riot policing, by exaggerating the threat of violence by crowds (as also argued by Halloran et al. 1970).

Fillieule (1998) suggests that - just as there is very substantial variation in how heavy-handed police are, depending on just who is protesting - there is also significant variation in how the media cover such events. In his ethnographic research on French protest policing and the news media, Fillieule found that: "the sensitivity of the police forces to media surveillance is highly variable depending on the nature of the demonstrators" (Fillieule 1998: 14). Thus, the news media sometimes - but not always - give critical coverage of police brutality during suppression of crowds, depending on just whom the brutality is directed against: "The less social power the demonstrating group enjoys on the local level, the better the chances that the police will manage to impose its vision on the event" (Fillieule, 1998: 18).

There seems to be an unspoken or implicit point in much previous research on media coverage of riots: that it is the words, not the images, that count the most in television coverage. I should be clear that none of the authors in question state this point explicitly; I have drawn it simply from how they focus their analyses. For example, Justin Wren-Lewis (1981/1982) in his piece "The Story of a Riot: The Television Coverage of Civil Unrest in 1981" focuses almost entirely on television's verbal portrayal of

events, rather than on visual imagery. In this article Wren-Lewis gives over 40 quotations of what presenters and interviewees *said* on television. In contrast he only refers to television imagery of the riot twice: once talking briefly about generic television riot imagery; the other talking about a particular image of policing the riot, but only in the context of discussing the oral interpretation by the presenter of that image.

This example might simply reflect the bias of Wren-Lewis in particular; however, the same tendency is evident in nearly all of the social science literature on media coverage of riots reviewed by D. Waddington (1992). One exception is an analysis by Masterman (1985) of coverage of a violent conflict in front of the cameras between police and striking coal-miners. Masterman is critical of one British television news outlet for not airing footage of a policeman beating a miner in the head with a truncheon, even though the program showed a retaliatory attack by another miner on police immediately after the first incident. However, another television news outlet is also criticized by Masterman - even though the second outlet did actually air the very footage in question, of the policeman clubbing the miner. The other TV outlet is also criticized by Masterman because this footage of the police attack was "not accompanied by spoken commentary, as if the reporter was reluctant to condemn such action" (see D. Waddington 1992: 170). Of course, a journalist cannot simply "condemn" police actions in any footage, as Masterman (1985) called for; this would run afoul of journalistic canons of objectivity. Here again the premise seems to be that it is

the words, not the images, that are central to understanding how television portrays riots and their control.

### **THE STANLEY CUP RIOT**

With the above issues in mind, I now proceed to examine the role of TV in Vancouver's Stanley Cup riot of 1994. I was not present at the riot, but, like many thousands of Vancouverites, watched on local television. To research the story of the riot, I monitored television and radio news coverage very extensively. I collected dozens of news clippings, many from the file on the riot in the Vancouver Public Library. I also obtained television transcripts from the Canada News Disc. I attended four community meetings as part of the riot review process. At that time, I spoke with or exchanged e-mail with members of the public who had been present that night, and with many people involved in the riot reviews. I obtained and examined in depth the City's reports and the B.C. Police Commission report on the riot. I visited the riot display installed at the Vancouver Public Library, and repeatedly viewed a tape of the Rogers television special on the riot and review.

A key characteristic of television footage is that it is ephemeral (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1991). Unlike print media coverage it airs and then it is gone. Recordings can be recovered only with considerable difficulty, if at all. In the politics of events such as the riot, this advantages institutions able to access such recordings - broadcasters themselves, and, in this case, the police who confiscated copies of the television tapes - as opposed to members of the public who have no access to the footage.



This situation also makes life difficult for those researching television. I was unable to obtain a complete set of video-tapes from the three local stations of that period (CBC, BCTV, UTV). Of necessity, my analysis focuses most heavily on CBC news coverage as this was the outlet for which the most footage was available, thanks to the CBC's Archive Project. I obtained video-tape of all local CBC coverage from the day following the riot through to the end of the review in early 1995. I eventually accessed a 25-minute tape of BCTV coverage from the day immediately following the riot, by ordering a copy from the National Archive in Ottawa. I could not obtain any UTV footage.

Given these practical constraints, it is fortunate that the CBC represents the best test case among local broadcasters. Of the main Canadian television outlets, the CBC is the most likely to be accused of a left-wing bias (see for example Cooper 1994). It was CBC coverage of APEC 1997 that was most damaging to police. In contrast, BCTV, the most-watched local outlet, is notoriously cozy with police. Of the three stations, the CBC was the least co-operative with police in the riot aftermath. It was the only station which did not voluntarily hand over all its videotape to police after the riot. In sum, of the three local broadcasters, the CBC was the one most likely to offer critical coverage of policing the Stanley Cup riot. It thus represents the best test case of the power of television to provide critical coverage.

This chapter focuses on a key premise on which the notion of the "mediatization of protest policing" (Filleuille 1998) is based. This premise is that that visibility of harsh police suppression of

**crowds in front of cameras leads to negative television coverage which is damaging for police. How vulnerable were police because television recorded the Stanley Cup riot?**

**This leads us to the question of how the meaning of a riot is negotiated after the fact. Most of the literature on the policing of protests or riots focuses on the events of the day as being simply fixed in definition, as static, stable entities (but see Tumber, 1982, and P. Waddington, 1998, for two key exceptions). In contrast, this chapter explores how the meanings of clashes between police and rioters or protesters may undergo a lengthy process of re-negotiation after the fact. This process involves not only reconstructing the events themselves, but also their causes (P. Waddington 1998). I contend here that even when such events are televised widely, their meanings are not fixed. Fillieule (1998) quotes a French police official: "I never know if the demonstration has been a success until after the press reports come out". While media reports do this in the first instance, they are only part of a wider process of retrospective reconstruction. Riots are highly complex and chaotic, and necessarily feature a swirl of many different perspectives and narratives, even if such events are recorded by television. The televised accounts interact with, are reconstructed and rewoven into subsequent accounts in various ways. Criminalization of rioters (and very occasionally police) involves building criminal justice system accounts of the events. There may be formal inquiries. Activist communication often links the story of the protest and how it was suppressed with wider grievances, a process which social movement theorists call "frame**

bridging" (Snow et al. 1986). All these varying accounts of the riot or protest then re-enter and re-shape ongoing media coverage and public debate.

It is apparent from my data that footage of policing the Stanley Cup riot - and, by extension, all television footage of policing crowd disturbances - is open to a great deal of retrospective reinterpretation shaped by political considerations. In other words, television does not simply "make visible" riot policing; seeing is not simply believing in this case. This is the key point to keep in mind when we consider how television has influenced the policing of public order events.

My data and analysis of the Stanley Cup riot tells the story of how police were able to retrospectively re-assert control over the definition of the situation. Many people were saying immediately after the riot that police caused or escalated it. However this narrative was largely silenced in the subsequent review process. I will show how the three riot enquiries were structured to deflect blame from police; the fact that a television record existed of virtually the entire riot made little difference, given the political context. In fact, the reviews were structured so that television itself instead came to be a convenient scapegoat, cast as one of the culprits responsible for the riot. This may have actually worked, in turn, to further constrain media coverage of the review process as well. Some journalists backed off critical coverage somewhat and became "gun shy" of the riot story, as one local television journalist told me at the time. Thus, even when police do adopt more coercive tactics in public order policing, my research shows how police can

retrospectively achieve control over televised accounts of this policing.

This is not to say that police are always able to achieve such control. Certainly, the fallout from television coverage of suppression of protest at APEC 1997 was quite damaging to police and government officials, as was the case with Chicago 1968. However, whether or not television coverage is damaging seems to depend to a substantial degree on the political context, not simply on the availability of the pictures themselves.

Certainly, some particular television images can be very damaging to police, but these are images other than those simply of police roughly subduing or assaulting rioters or demonstrators. The images need to have some additional element that makes them damning. A powerful example was Staff Sgt. Stewart blotting out the lens of a CBC camera with pepperspray at APEC. Stewart's blocking of the CBC camera was a potent signifier that he was engaging in behaviour he didn't want the public to see, in effect, an admission of guilt by gesture (Ericson and Doyle 1999; Pue 2000). Another recent devastating television image featured Seattle police at the WTO protest in December 1999. Police were recorded charging and running off a tearful woman who clearly wore a Red Cross arm band and was kneeling to administer first aid to someone prone on the ground. Such distinctive images as these examples from the APEC and WTO protests provided the proverbial "smoking gun" visually conveying police deviance; in contrast, the image of police violently subduing generic protesters or rioters is quite open to alternative interpretations. This is particularly the case with

footage of a chaotic crowd situation. In other words, whether or not the generic riot-policing image constitutes deviant police behaviour is highly ambiguous, and depends to a large degree on the politics of verbal interpretation. The two examples I have just given, in contrast, were much less ambiguous images, more clearly conveying police deviance.

I will also show how the political context of the Stanley Cup riot aftermath meant police were able to use the television news footage of the riot to their own advantage in a number of other ways. Police used the video they had collected or confiscated from TV stations to produce their own retrospective accounts of the riot. These surfaced in various outlets, and even became evidence in the courts. Police also used circulated images from the TV tapes they had collected to enlist the public to identify and criminalize rioters. The use of video wanted posters here is part of a broader trend whereby televising of public order events is increasingly co-opted by police and used for surveillance purposes.

These roles of television in policing the riot are largely shaped by the most powerful institutional player on the scene, the police. This illustrates that the influences of a new media technology do not occur in a vacuum, dictated solely by technological factors. How a new media technology reshapes the social situation is dictated by who has the power.

I will now proceed with a more detailed account of the riot and the subsequent review process, in order to illustrate these points.

## **THE EVENTS OF JUNE 14**

**On the evening of June 14, 1994, many thousands of people gathered at various venues in downtown Vancouver to watch the conclusive game of the Stanley Cup hockey final, and potentially to celebrate the city's first Cup win. Following the Vancouver Canucks' defeat by the Rangers in the conclusive game in New York, a crowd estimated at 70,000, a large number of whom had been drinking for several hours, choked downtown Vancouver streets, along with over 500 police. Shortly after 10 p.m., Vancouver police's recently-created Crowd Control Unit advanced in para-military formation, clad in armour and wielding batons. They moved on a rowdy throng at the intersection of Robson and Thurlow.**

**There has been considerable dispute about whether the so-called "flashpoint" of the riot occurred before or after the Crowd Control Unit moved on the crowd. All sides agree, however, that there was an explosive melee following the police advance. Police maced people in the face and clubbed their heads, and fired tear-gas canisters into the crowd until they exhausted their supply. Rioters taunted police and hurled bottles and bricks, overturned a squad car, shattered retail display windows and made off with piles of stolen goods. Assorted residents trapped at the scene stumbled in vain to escape the bitter pinch of tear-gassed eyes. The chaos lasted hours. In the most controversial single incident, one officer shot 19-year-old rioter Michael Berntt in the side of the skull with an Arwen riot gun. The impact of the plastic bullet threw the teenager into a coma for nine days. He was not initially expected to survive. Berntt was left with a cavity in his skull, his intellectual functioning, speech**

and walking permanently impaired. Another man shot by the Arwen gun needed 32 stitches to close the hole in his chin. Over one hundred others were injured, and ultimately 150 people faced criminal charges. The riot cost \$1.1 million as a result of property damage and theft.

### **THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH: COMPETING ACCOUNTS**

Competing accounts soon emerged about how and why the riot occurred, and about who was to blame for the destruction. One story, told by a sizable group of those present and in some media accounts, was that a full-scale riot did not explode until the Crowd Control Unit marched, unleashing tear gas, pepper spray and batons.

The concept of police iatrogenesis in crowd situations - simply put, making things worse rather than better - is well known in the literature on public order policing (eg. Stark, 1972; Marx, 1981; D. Waddington et al. 1989; D. Waddington, 1992) both in connection with political demonstrations and with sports crowds (Marx 1981). The Vancouver police Crowd Control Unit was created in 1993 for the Clinton-Yeltsin summit meeting in Vancouver, but its first real action did not come until the June 14, 1994 hockey riot. Relative inexperience in such public order situations is one factor that meant the police response that night might have featured an element of panic and over-reaction. For example, one police officer gave an account of his experience of the riot:

In a matter of seconds I saw a diverse collection of individuals transform into one snarling salivating monster. I looked into the crowd, and the thousands of faces disappeared to be replaced by one. The face of evil was staring back, grinning in anticipation...with shaking knees,

**we watched its appetite for violence grow...Those who claim we joined the fray too eagerly will realize the folly of their statements if they ever look into the eyes of the Beast. For five hours, or lifetimes, we did battle with an enemy unlike anything I've faced before..." (Van. Sun, June 23, 1994: pA3).**

**In the following pages, I show that the narrative of police escalating the situation was widely circulated immediately following the riot. However, it is not my aim to make a definitive assessment of how much police actually triggered or worsened the Stanley Cup riot. This is not the question I am trying to answer. Instead, my focus is on the role television and police played in the politics of how the story of the riot came to be told.**

**Unlike riots with a clear political grievance - such as the very much bloodier 1992 Rodney King trial riot in Los Angeles, or various riots in Thatcherite Britain - there was no apparent grievance that enraged the Vancouver crowd. Nevertheless, the Vancouver riot - with its televised images of armoured police raising clubs and transgressive youth looting stores - represented a dramatic yet ambiguous symbol that could be fitted to competing ideologies. Tumber (1982) and P. Waddington (1998) describe similar processes in the wake of British riots, in which various political players gave competing accounts of the riots framed in terms of their own ideological positions. Similarly in the case of the Stanley Cup riot, for example, Vancouver Sun columnist Trevor Lautens (in a June 23, 1994 column) blamed the riot on a "smallish class" that was nevertheless a "powerful elite" he called "the New Freedomites". Lautens' "New Freedomites" ranged from "grunge rocker groupies,**



television zombies and loud noise and violence fans through drifters, druggies and certified criminals". In contrast, *Adbusters* magazine used a photograph of the Robson St. rioters to accompany an article on "The Age of Info-Toxin" (Winter, 1995, p.52). This linked the riot to "the pollution of the mental environment" by the mass media. The caption asked whether the rioters were "drunk on info-toxin or beer?". Diverse other narratives were voiced following the Stanley Cup riot. These blamed, for example, the media for causing "copycat" behaviour, or violence in professional sports, or parents for not adequately controlling their young. The Vancouver Sun sports section kept things in perspective with the headline: "Life is still good. After all, we beat Toronto" (June 16, F1).

#### **DID THE PRESENCE OF CAMERAS HELP RESTRAIN POLICE BEHAVIOUR?**

Reviewing all the evidence, it seems apparent that the presence of television cameras did not have much restraining effect on police behaviour during the riot. Vancouver's Crowd Control Unit seemed to have enough difficulty staying in touch with its own command that night, and dealing with the immediate crisis, let alone worrying about media considerations.

Given this, in considering whether television has led to "the mediatization of public order policing", the key question then becomes: what are the consequences for police of neglecting the problem of media visibility? Was ignoring the presence of cameras during the riot a blunder for which police would pay dearly in terms of damaging media coverage? If so, then policing the Stanley Cup riot would be a kind of exception that proves the rule. If crowd

policing is not conducted with a gentler touch, this is how police pay the price. On the other hand, if police were able to engage in highly coercive policing in front of the cameras that night with relatively little consequence, this might call for some qualification or modification to the "mediatization of protest policing" argument.

### **TELEVISION COVERAGE OF THE RIOT**

One factor in making sense of the Stanley Cup riot after the fact was that it was recorded very extensively on video. This was facilitated in part because television cameras were already in place on a roof-top at the intersection of Robson and Thurlow to record the post-game celebration. In addition to the rooftop cameras, TV news crews mingled with the crowd below and recorded hours worth of action. In fact, only a small portion of the extensive video recorded that night by television crews was ever aired. A CBC archivist told me the CBC made 40 field-tapes that night. Police also had two of their own video cameras recording the action. Finally, activity was captured by in-store surveillance cameras when looters broke into stores, and external security cameras on some buildings.

Analysts have sometimes commented that the impact of media imagery of riots is often dictated by the fact it is visualized from behind police lines (Halloran et al. 1970; Wren-Lewis 1981/1982; Murdock 1984). In fact, however, much of the coverage of the Stanley Cup riot was from other vantage points. The rooftop cameras looked down on both groups, while other close-up footage was taken amidst the melee, rather than from behind the lines. One photographic image that was published several times and was used in the year-end

review by the Vancouver Sun (Dec. 31, p. B1) offered quite a different viewpoint from the one described in earlier research. It showed a lone rioter - from behind - dwarfed by an oncoming army of police in armor and brandishing batons.

Some initial coverage by television news and other media outlets of the Stanley Cup riot raised questions concerning the police's role. As Margo Harper of the CBC Evening News reported the following day: "Today there was criticism that police didn't act soon enough...and that when they did it was without warning and with excessive force".

However, in the days following the riot, accounts which were critical of police actually appeared more in the print media rather than on TV. The newspaper accounts critical of police depended very largely on after-the-fact verbal recounting of events by participants, rather than a visual record. Local CBC-TV news seemed to encounter more difficulty in finding eyewitness sources for such retrospective accounts, apart from one young man recorded by the camera on the night chanting simply that "police were idiots". While television had recorded the whole riot, the most critical coverage by CBC-TV concerned two police shootings of members of the crowd with the Arwen riot gun. In the more serious shooting by police, there was CBC footage from immediately before and from after the shooting, showing the fallen victim. In the other shooting, there was no such footage; thus a critical CBC television news story also depended simply on after-the-fact recounting of the shooting by the man who was shot, and by witnesses.

BCTV produced a lengthy chronological account of the riot for its news the following day. This also relied heavily on after-the-fact interpretation. While CBC reporting suggested that its journalists were trying to sort among competing accounts of causes of the riot, the BCTV version had a much more unitary narrative. BCTV blamed "thugs" and "punks". In dealing with the question of possible police over-reaction, rather than relying on video footage for visual evidence, BCTV used an after-the-fact verbal recounting of the events from one of its own cameramen. The cameraman underwent a strange shifting of roles and instead became a witness in front of the camera. Interestingly, rather than relying on the footage he had shot, to get to the bottom of what happened, BCTV simply used a "talking head" interview conducted with the cameraman himself the next day. They chose to rely on the cameraman's verbal recollections rather than his very extensive video record of the riot. "Did police over-react?", the camera-man was asked. He held up a brick and responded: "I don't see how you can over-react to a crowd that's carrying bricks like this".

BCTV did not record footage of either victim being shot by the Arwen gun. Perhaps for this reason, BCTV gave this aspect of the riot less play on the following day. BCTV reporter John Daly simply said he had heard two stories, one in which the man who lay near death from the shooting was wielding a screwdriver and threatening police, another in which he was an innocent victim.

Both CBC and BCTV aired snippets of graphic footage of police violently beating individual crowd members with batons, but in the

absence of any critical verbal interpretation of this police behaviour, this proved not particularly damning.

Media criticism of police crowd control tactics also relied on Simon Fraser University criminologist and policing expert Robert Gordon. Professor Gordon reportedly watched hours of television footage of the riot and was quoted making critical comments on police tactics on television and radio, and in the Vancouver Sun newspaper. Again, in the available television transcripts and newspaper clippings, Professor Gordon does not refer directly to specific visuals to support his interpretations. Rather, he warrants his interpretations of events simply by stating that he had watched hours of tape.

In short, although television cameras had taken massive footage of the Stanley Cup riot, critical (and supportive) reporting of policing the riot tended to rely more on after-the-fact verbal accounts, rather than on TV footage offering a visual record of the events. This is consistent with what I identified earlier as an unspoken theme evident in previous research: that, in TV accounts, the words are more important than the pictures in fixing the meaning of a riot.

Print media coverage of the Stanley Cup riot is interesting to consider in contrast to the television reporting. Print news outlets offered more critical coverage than television - even though they lacked the same body of extensive visual evidence to rely on. For example, a front page headline, above the fold, in the Globe and Mail, on June 16, 1994, two days after the riot, said, "Probe ordered into

hockey riot - Vancouver residents at the scene say police provoked melee".

**Other quotes from the print media:**

"I personally think it is the cop's fault," said Jeff Murphy, manager of the Cows clothing store at the corner of Jervis and Robson. "They started shooting tear gas when it wasn't needed. They provoked it." (Sun, June 15, front page).

"I do not blame the crowd," said Thane McLennan, a 47-year-old bookstore manager who mingled with the revelers until police moved in. "The police turned it into a situation." (Maclean's, June 27, 1994, p.13).

Simon Ng, a systems manager at an investment company, said "he witnessed a savage beating. Near midnight, he saw a small group of men heckling a riot squad on Burrard St. When the officers suddenly lunged at the group, the name-callers turned to flee. But a thin man in his 20s tripped and fell. 'They gathered around him and began to beat him with nightsticks,' said Ng. 'Later he was so badly beaten up he got up to run away, but collapsed in pain.' "(Vancouver Sun, Saturday, July 18, 1994, pA4).

Clearly one factor here may have been that television cameras simply may not have captured some individual incidents such as this which might have provided more unambiguously telling visuals. A "smoking gun" piece of TV footage never emerged from the Stanley Cup riot.

**"I'm going to file a complaint with police, " said Shawn Sheehan, 18. "Police should have given a warning, saying we're going to fire tear gas, rather than going in and bashing people." He said he was in the centre of the action at Robson and Thurlow when the riot squad showed up, blocking his exit to his apartment a block away at Robson and Thurlow. He politely asked police if he could cross through the police line. "I got maced." (Sun, June 16, 1994, page A3):**

**"David Neylan, 17,...said he was taken by surprise when a tear gas canister exploded in front of him. He pulled off his No.10 Canucks shirt and bunched it over his face to protect himself from the fumes. He said that by the time he lowered it to see what was going on, police were upon him. "They billy-clubbed me to the ground and kicked me when I was down," he said. His shirt had been wrenched from his hands in the scuffle..."As I reached for my shirt they stomped on my wrist, breaking my wrist," he said. (Sun, June 18, p. A4).**

**In a column headlined "The violence escalated when police moved in," the Sun's "Town Talk" columnist Malcolm Parry wrote:**

**"I was there - mingling with prudence but little fear at the centre of the crowd until an unannounced tear gas barrage, drove us, blinded and retching, along Robson St...most present likely will agree that crowd violence suddenly escalated after the police squad's unannounced and disorienting action. We had seen a shirt-sleeved fellow walk in front of the armored officers, casually spraying them**

with beer from a shaken can. Then we were all being counter-attacked with major force." (Sun, June 18, p. A6).

### **THE POLICE ACCOUNT OF THE RIOT**

Several days after the riot, police also executed search warrants at the three local television stations for videotapes of the riot. Police also attempted to seize still photos from that night from local newspapers. BCTV and UTV co-operated with police immediately; CBC-TV joined two local newspapers in a brief court battle resisting the warrants, but eventually succumbed.

Police used the seized videotapes from news cameras for a variety of purposes. These included producing television news spots and advertising and arranging an "interactive video kiosk" in shopping malls in order that members of the public could identify anonymous rioters recorded by television, so these rioters could face criminal charges. The footage was also used to produce a television special about the riot as part of the review process. Frames of the video were frozen to help create a public display on the riot at the Vancouver Public Library; the frozen video images featured captions giving the official interpretation of the images. Finally, the television tapes were viewed as part of the B.C. Police Commission's review of police behaviour.

In the face of considerable criticism, the Vancouver police soon displayed "account ability" (Ericson 1995). Police focused very much on arguing that the public supported their actions, rather than justifying their actions *per se*.

Well known to local television audiences, Constable Anne Drennan is the public relations officer who handles most media



contact for Vancouver police. In the aftermath of the riot, she was quick to vividly construct the image of a public that was supportive of police action:

Drennan said police appreciate the support they have been receiving from the public in the aftermath of the Tuesday night riot....'I'm told it's 99 in favor, one against,' she said. Supportive calls are flooding in from the Lower Mainland and from viewers in other parts of Canada and the United States who saw scenes of the riot on television. "Our switchboard is jammed. People are calling in on 911 in huge numbers to thank us". Drennan said members of the public have sent police gifts of flowers and chocolates to show their support for officers who battled rioters and looters... (Vancouver Sun, June 17, 1994, B1).

However, accounts from the tear-gassed crowd were not all flowers and chocolates. Controversy was generated both by media coverage and by direct complaints to various authorities from many members of the public who were present during the events. Within 24 hours a review process was announced.

### **CONTROLLING THE RETROSPECTIVE ACCOUNT: THE RIOT REVIEW PROCESS**

Politicians announced a review to post-mortem the riot, or rather three separate reviews. In order to explain how these proceeded, first it is necessary to detail the political context of the three riot reviews.

As I suggested in the introductory chapter, it would be incorrect and naive to argue that the police are simply an all-powerful arm of the state, and that, for this reason, any official review would automatically legitimate them. Instead, police are a

semi-autonomous institution, which negotiates with political constraints and is sometimes vulnerable (Reiner 1992). However, as the context of the Stanley Cup riot reveals, police often wield very significant political influence.

The three-part structure of the riot review process reflected the rather complex political status of the Vancouver police. The City of Vancouver conducted its own review, but the City review did not consider the police response to the riot. The B.C. Police Commission conducted a second review, looking at the police role. Vancouver police also conducted a third process, their own internal review of policing the riot.

Ultimately, this three-part structure precluded much criticism of police behaviour. The City's review made the strongest effort to get public input. However, as I will show, any input which questioned the police role was deflected as not relevant to that particular review. The other reviews did look at police behaviour - but only solicited public input in a very limited way. In sum, there was input from the public on all other aspects of the riot except the role of the police. There was also a look at the police role, but with very little input from the public. These two components of the review were isolated from one another, so that there was no opportunity for citizens to question the police role.

Another way in which this three-part structure precluded criticism of the police was through how the reviews employed the videotapes of the riot which were confiscated from television stations. In the most public review, the City of Vancouver review, the videotapes of the riot collected by police were not used at all.

Thus, no potentially unfavourable interpretations by members of the public of what was on these videotapes could enter into the review process. On the other hand, in the closed door review conducted by the B.C. Police Commission, the tapes actually were reviewed and used as evidence. In this way, only interpretations of the TV tapes by the Police Commission - which, as I will discuss, is notoriously pro-police - would enter into the review process. In short, police maintained control of the TV tapes, and Police Commission members were the only ones allowed to interpret them during the review. That is, the Police Commission were the only ones allowed to say what the images on the TV tapes meant.

A key political factor shaping the enquiries was that the two levels of government involved, the provincial NDP and Vancouver City council, seemed to lack the will to question the police role in the riot. The provincial NDP government, nominally a social democratic one, was evidently keen to adopt a centrist tack, given its low standing in the polls at that time and the fact that an election was forecast for 1995. Pundits said that the NDP, traditionally seen as soft on crime, were keen to be seen instead as provincial advocates of law and order. For example, legislative reporter Keith Baldrey of the Vancouver Sun stated in his year-end political analysis and predictions (Jan. 6, 1995, p.B2): "Law and order will also dominate the political agenda as each of the three parties tries to capture that issue as its own....In a move consistent with the government's strategy for the past year, (the Premier) will try to become personally identified with the government's law and order initiatives."

Before that term, the NDP had only been in power in B.C. for three years since 1952. For the rest of that period, the right-wing Social Credit party had controlled the B.C. legislature. Provincial Attorney-General Colin Gabelmann, when he announced the riot review, said in the legislature, "The people of British Columbia need to learn how such an event could unfold, where some individuals behaved with such disrespect and disregard for the law of this province, law enforcement officials, and indeed, common decency." However, the attorney-general "refused to say if he was also concerned about police conduct" (Van. Sun, June 16, 94, front page). As we shall see in the next section, Vancouver City council displayed a similar bent in avoiding difficult questions about police behaviour.

Vancouver City council was dominated numerically at that time (as it is currently) by a right-of-centre political organization, the Non-Partisan Association (NPA). The NPA have always been strongly supportive of police.

The Vancouver police maintain an interesting state of quasi-independence from council. The police are ostensibly administered instead by the Vancouver Police Board, which is appointed partially by City council and partially by the province. During the review process, City councillors and staff repeatedly denied ownership of police problems and passed them off to the Police Board instead.

At the final public meeting I attended, one member of Vancouver council spoke about how the City had an arms-length relationship with police and the board. Thus, he said, the public should take concerns about policing the riot to the police board, not

to council. Afterwards, we exchanged e-mail and the councillor told me his role in policing matters was as a "a lobbyist, trying to persuade the department of a particular course of action, rather than saying, this is what you're going to do." It seemed city councillors such as this man would take credit for this more positive political involvement with the police. The examples he gave were lobbying for community policing and for "Cops on Bikes". Yet this "lobbying" relationship meant councillors could also deny ownership of police issues when things got more politically sensitive, as with the riot.

Similarly, in the case of the City's review, it was not policing questions per se that were outside the mandate of the review, only awkward political questions regarding criticisms of the police response to the riot. In fact, the City's review would deal with a number of other, less politically dangerous, facets of policing.

A lone City councillor, Jenny Wai-Ching Kwan, the only representative at that time of the left-wing Committee of Progressive Electors (COPE), did push in vain to get council to take a different approach. Kwan wanted council to look at the role of the police, or alternately wanted a full independent inquiry into all aspects of the riot. However, the rest of council sought to distance themselves from any role as "lobbyists" on the sensitive issue of police misbehaviour during the riot.

Another key political factor to consider is the relative powerless of the rioters as a group. They tended to be young, diffuse and anonymous, although with a number of exceptions. Unlike, for example, the protesters at APEC 1997, the Stanley Cup rioters did not have a political organization in place to advocate for them, nor

the legitimacy of a recognized cause which was supported by significant segments of the community.

With this political context in mind, I will now analyze the three reviews, beginning with that conducted by the City of Vancouver.

### **THE CITY'S REVIEW**

Although the City's riot review was not supposed to examine the role of the police, paradoxically the police nevertheless seemed very actively involved in the conduct of the City's review.

Vancouver Mayor Philip Owen said at the time that the police were "observing" the City process, and that there was a "very close liaison" between the City's review and the police reviews. In fact, a police officer who worked in Community Services was one of the four-member team who wrote a key document, the City's Background Paper on the riot. A police officer co-authored that document which, as I will show, dictated the course of the whole process. This document appeared prior to the review's public meetings, but nevertheless very much telegraphed the final results of the review.

In fact, close ties with police were evident through the City's review. A consultant hired to manage the City's review also moderated the lone public meeting for the police review.

Furthermore, I saw several high-ranking Vancouver police officials in extensive discussion with City officials at each of the four City review meetings I attended.

Given these factors, and the apparent co-operation of City staff, the City's review was an interesting study in the social organization of knowledge - in this case, the review was a

"procedure not to know" (D. Smith 1984) about police misbehaviour. The City's review was instead structured to find support for explanations which blamed the riot on several other factors, notably the media, and in particular television.

The City's review proceeded as follows: first, a team of four researchers, including a police officer, developed the lengthy document mentioned above entitled "Riots: A Background Paper". Once this was completed, the City set up a large display in the Vancouver Public Library concerning the riot and review, and began gathering public input. They widely distributed a public questionnaire called a Feedback Form and gathered the results. Four meetings with the public and community representatives were held in October 1994. City staff then produced a final report which was formally presented to City council at a last public meeting on November 23, 1994.

The question of possible police wrongdoing was a spectre that hovered above the City's review process, leading to some interesting silences. For example, the key document "Riots: A Background Paper" offered a four page section on crowd behaviour. This offered a variety of reasons why some crowds "turn ugly", drawn from an article in Police Journal. However, this section of the Background Paper on crowd behaviour omitted any consideration at all of the possibility that police behaviour itself could cause or worsen riots, even though this factor is well-documented in the literature on riots (eg. Marx, 1981; D. Waddington 1992).

Similarly, the City collected several hundred letters and comments from individuals concerned about the riot. Numerous

excerpts from these comments were reprinted in "Riots: A Background Paper". However, none of the reprinted quotations involved any questioning of police behaviour, even though, as City staff admitted to me at the time, concerned individuals had actually commented on police behaviour very frequently. As one City staff member told me privately after one of the public meetings, "Frankly (the role of the police) is top of most people's list. People have very strong feelings about it." Yet one would never know this from reading any of the excerpts from the public in "Riots: A Background Paper".

Instead, a number of aspects of the City's review had the effect of pushing individual public input in other directions, of pre-formatting other public concerns. For example, at the display on the riot in the Vancouver Public Library, passersby were asked to fill out Feedback Forms which included the question "what do you think are the causes of the riot?" However the same display itself featured a detailed narrative of the riot. This narrative already indicated what the causes were. The public library display featured selected frames frozen from the television footage, but with captions giving a verbal interpretation of the television images which was favourable to police. For example, the display said that "The fact that looting started after the Crowd Control Unit was used to regain control of street space can be understood to be part criminal behaviour and part psychological. Confronted with an unbeatable enemy, the bystander leashes (sic) out at the nearest undefended target." Thus, those who offered public input about the



causes of the riot at the library display did so literally in the shadow of this pre-existing official account of the causes.

Ironically, the City's final "Administrative Report" on the riot and review - produced after the public input sessions in October - was actually much shorter and less comprehensive than the document "Riots - A Background Paper", distributed before public input from the meetings. In fact, this Background Paper - "intended to provide background information for the information centre, the public forum, and the working sessions" - actually very much shaped the final results of the review,

According to the Background Paper, one key cause of the riot was the television cameras themselves. The Background Paper contained an extensive section titled "Role of the Media". This suggested, for example, "the presence of TV cameras in a volatile situation can cause violence to escalate...Media forecasting of an event has been blamed for the event occurring...Researchers have stated that the media's use of violent, adversarial language can influence the mood of the crowd," (p. 6) and so on. This section did not however cite research evidence which is more dubious about the media's role in feeding riots. It is difficult to see how they could have simply overlooked or not come across the only book focusing specifically on this topic, Howard Tumber's Television and the Riots (1982: see especially p. 45-46).

The validity of these criticisms of the media's role in the riot is discussed later in the chapter. Regardless, for the City, the media was apparently a much more acceptable scapegoat politically than the police.

The whole situation was encapsulated by the two page Feedback Forms widely distributed by the City to solicit input. More people filled out these Feedback Forms - about 285 according to a consultant - than were involved in any other aspect of the public process.

The Feedback Forms began with the open-ended question: "What do you think were the causes of the June 14 riot and how can we prevent it from happening again?". However the space allotted to answer this question was quite limited, compared to the space allotted in the rest of the form to ask about certain causes the City seemed to have pre-ordained.

Thus, most of the form contained a number of questions designed to elicit responses about the role of the media, particularly television, in causing the riot, as well as two other key factors, the spatial arrangements on Robson St and the role of alcohol. For example, the Feedback Forms asked: "What influence did the media have in creating this gathering?" and "What role should the media have during a disturbance?" and "How can the media assist in preventing another riot?". In fact, approximately 20 per cent of the space on the Feedback Forms was given to eliciting concerns about the media. Furthermore - and this is perhaps the most striking demonstration of how "public opinion" was pre-formatted - the Feedback Forms were actually sometimes distributed stapled to a four-page-summary of the Background Paper!

To put this whole situation in a nutshell, the City review asked the public respondents: "What influence did the media have in creating this gathering?" on one form, that was often distributed

stapled to another document which, on the very next page, contained a summary of assertions criticizing the media, including, for example, "violence on TV" and the media's "use of inflammatory language". This second document - the one actually stapled to the very survey people were answering - suggested further that "some people say the media's intense and immediate coverage actually incites violence". In short, this was methodologically akin to a sociologist circulating a survey, and then stapling another sheet of paper to it with suggested answers. The summary did also contain some arguments in defence of the media, though these were lower down in the document and given considerably less space.

Given all this, it is not surprising to read in the City's final report that the public had expressed a number of concerns about the media's role in the riot! For example, "...many suggested pre-game media stories created an environment which made a riot more likely...they suggested that cameras filming the looting and rioting actually encouraged such behaviour" and so on. I should make it clear here that I believe the media may well bear some responsibility for the riot, so such concerns may be legitimate. I am merely suggesting that, either way, the review pushed public input in this direction.

In vivid contrast, there was only one question on the Feedback Forms which mentioned the police at all: "What advance measures should the City and Police take to prevent major disturbances in the future?" One will note the specific focus on "advance measures" as opposed to police behaviour on the evening itself. Encapsulating the broader situation of the review process, the Feedback Forms did not ask specifically about the police response to the riot.

As I observed first-hand, the public meetings during the review were also structured to shift the blame from police to television and the other media. When we split into small discussion groups at the first City public meeting on Oct.1, 1994, a Vancouver police inspector joined our group. The police inspector sat in, even though, as I pointed out earlier, the review had already formally excluded discussion of the police role. As the discussion proceeded, questions and comments by people in our group which challenged police behaviour at the riot were deflected by the moderators; for example, one moderator redirected the discussion away from police issues by saying, "We want to keep this focused on the future". Instead other questions by people in the group looking at the role of television (and other possible factors) in causing the riot were drawn out; for example, a moderator said to one group member, "You started out saying you thought the media played a big role...could you expand on that?"

On the other hand, when participants in our group began to praise rather than criticize the police, the police inspector joined in the discussion, even though the review was not supposed to examine police behaviour. At this point the inspector offered his account of why police had done what they had done. A business person asked for more time at this point for the group to talk with the inspector. In contrast, this part of the discussion - focused on a more positive account of police behaviour at the riot - was not curtailed by the moderators, even though it was off the ostensible topic.

Following the meetings, unsurprisingly, the City's final report offered a narrative of events on June 14 that did not implicate the

police in any way: "A crowd, estimated between 40,000 and 70,000 gathered...in the course of a few hours, looting, vandalism and open violence developed. Store windows were smashed, bottles and rocks thrown, and cars trashed. Many people were injured, some seriously. The police crowd control unit eventually dispersed the crowd." (p. 2).

Instead, the final report blamed the same factors that had been presented throughout the review: the media, event planning and security, and alcohol. In contrast, "the subject of violence (especially youth violence and its causes) is beyond the scope of this review, but many individuals expressed their concerns about what happened on June 14th and how our values are changing. The ideas expressed varied significantly - from changing the Young Offenders Act and our educational system, to developing more activities for youth." In other words, the proposed solutions ran the gamut from A to B. While denying ownership of the problem of "violence", the City's report simultaneously constructed it as a problem of "youth violence" rather than a problem partially stemming from police crowd management.

The City's review process was supposed to culminate in a "public" meeting at City Hall on November 23, where this final report was presented to council. However, advertising for this meeting was quite limited. I searched in vain in local newspapers like the Kitsilano News, Vancouver Courier and Vancouver Sun for display ads similar to those by which the City had advertised other recent public meetings.

As it turned out, there was only a handful of people at the final meeting in the review process who did not have some institutional

affiliation. Only four of these people spoke. At this point, a final incident occurred which demonstrated once more how the political context of the review precluded criticism of the police. It was at this time that Dr. Stuart Rulka, a Burnaby dentist who had been in the riot crowd, first spoke up. Dr. Rulka came to be a dramatic symbol of the missing public in the review process. Dr. Rulka certainly represented a visual contrast from the image that had been constructed of the crowd member as a "young punk": the balding dentist appeared to be around 45 years old and wore a muted sports jacket and tie. He was accompanied at the meeting by his wife and school-aged daughter. Dr. Rulka said he had not attended any of the previous meetings because, as he lived in suburban Burnaby, outside the city of Vancouver, he had not seen any advertising or otherwise heard about the review.

Standing at the microphone, the dentist narrated - with considerable length and clarity - his experiences in the crowd that night. Dr. Rulka told the meeting that, based on his first-hand knowledge, both the City's report and the B.C. Police Commission report gave a false accounting of the events leading up to the riot. Dr. Rulka suggested instead that the advance by the Crowd Control Unit at Robson and Thurlow was the flashpoint of the riot, in short, that police triggered the worst of the mayhem. "I state categorically that the first window on Robson was not broken until after the tear gas...I just don't buy that section of the report," he said. His statement was a jarring moment. A police inspector seated next to me in the audience covered his face with his hand.

After Dr. Rulka spoke, one councillor said he appreciated the "lucid account", but raised no additional questions. Then two other members of council launched verbal attacks on the dentist. For example, Councillor Craig Hemer noted that Dr. Rulka and his daughter had wandered away from Robson and Thurlow earlier in the evening, and then returned. Councillor Hemer said, "I don't have a great deal of sympathy for individuals who return to a riot site."

Dr. Rulka was clearly one member of the public that this "public" review did not want to hear from. With no further discussion about the concerns Dr. Rulka raised, Council voted to accept the City review's final report and follow its recommendations.

Not only did the City avoid talking about the police response in their own review, City council didn't want to talk about the police reviews either. Councillor Jenny Kwan, the lone left-winger, tried to move that the public should bring comments about the police reviews to City council. However, the other councillors defeated this motion. They moved the public should take their comments to the Police Board instead. In the view of most councillors, the City just didn't want to hear about the police reviews.

In sum, the City review was formatted in such a way that it could not address any concerns about police behaviour on the evening of the riot. The "public process" instead seemed formatted to produce other findings, notably that there was "public" concern about the role of television and other media in the riot.

#### **THE POLICE REVIEWS OF THE RIOT**

While there was some effort made to involve the citizenry in the City's review, public involvement was minimal in the other two

reviews, conducted respectively by the B.C. Police Commission and by the Vancouver police themselves. In contrast to the City's review, these two - the reviews which *were* actually mandated to examine the police role - did not offer any similar Feedback Forms or any equivalent method for soliciting public input. One police review only offered a brief series of newspaper ads asking for people to write letters commenting on the riot, while the other did not try for any public input at all.

First I will discuss the B.C. Police Commission review and its political context. Like similar bodies (McMahon and Ericson 1987; McMahon 1988), the B.C. Police Commission has come under fire for being too cozy with the police. In fact, just three months after the riot review was announced, it was recommended that the Police Commission be abolished because it was not sufficiently impartial. The Oppal Report, the conclusion of the two-year, \$4 million Royal Commission Inquiry into Policing in British Columbia, recommended that the Police Commission be scrapped. Justice Wally Oppal, who headed the Royal Commission Inquiry, stated that an independent ombudsman was needed instead to look into suspected cases of police wrong-doing. According to the Oppal Report (1994: Vol One, page B-46-B-47) "There are a number of problems with the current mandate and operations of the (B.C. Police) Commission, which raise questions about its ability to carry out the function (of supervising municipal police forces)...although the commission's mission statement describes it as "a public accountability body", the nature



of that accountability and mechanisms for enforcing it are poorly defined....

"Since its inception the commission has been staffed primarily by police officers...the complaint commissioner is deputy chair of the commission, a relationship that was widely criticized in submissions to this Inquiry. The complaint commissioner and the chair of the commission defend their inter-relationship on the basis that they work together to resolve the problems that give rise to complaints. The Inquiry, however, found ample reason to believe this is not, in fact, what is occurring..." As it turned out, in the case of the Stanley Cup riot, the recommendations of the Police Commission would be very similar to those of Vancouver police themselves (Vancouver Sun, Feb. 4, 1995, p. A5).

In any case, public involvement in the Police Commission's review of the riot was quite limited (B.C. Police Commission, 1994b: 5-6). The commission's research included: "interviews with people who were downtown that night, including people working downtown" (with whom, how many and how they were contacted were never stated). Research also included "a review of written comments about the riot from members of the public. Some of these were unsolicited and others came about as a result of newspaper advertisements published by the Commission asking for such comments..." (p.6). This methodology would seem to restrict the type of individuals who would respond. For example, teenage street people would be unlikely to see a newspaper ad and then sit down and write a letter to the Commission.

The 101-page Police Commission report was made available to residents and to the media upon completion in October 1994. I was able to obtain a copy through the mail by phoning the Commission's offices. Critical public viewpoints do appear occasionally in the police commission report, for example:

"One member of the public who was at the corner of Robson and Thurlow on June 14 following the hockey game states that 'There were a few rowdies and a lot of commotion, but otherwise the crowd was extremely well behaved and very civil.' "(p.12)

However, the Police Commission immediately undercuts this statement by constructing its own version of public opinion:

"This opinion appears to be the minority view of what was taking place downtown that evening and is not borne out by a review of the video tapes. Our examination shows that some of the crowd that gathered downtown after the game were looking for trouble, whereas others were there just waiting for something to happen" (p.12)

This example demonstrates how the Police Commission simply used the fact they had viewed the confiscated TV footage as a warrant for their own interpretation of events. As the only authorized definers of the TV footage, they could simply say what the footage meant, without having to provide much of a justification for their interpretations. For example, there was no need to explain how the Police Commission was able to discern the state of mind of all these crowd members - that they were "looking for trouble" or "waiting for something to happen" - simply by a review of the confiscated videotapes.

The report also says (p.11) "a review of the video footage reveals a crowd composed almost entirely of teenagers and young adults". In contrast, this chapter offers comments from members of the public present that night who were in their thirties, forties and fifties.

The Police Commission report absolved police from triggering the chaos, stating that the atmosphere "seemed to reach a 'flash point' of sorts" around 10 p.m. - that is, very shortly before the Crowd Control Unit advanced at 10.09 pm (p. 13).

Like the City's review, the BC Police Commission review instead found that the media, particularly television itself, were partly to blame for the riot (p. 40-45). Why? Firstly for playing up the rivalry between the Canucks and Rangers: "for the type of broadcasting that heightens the rivalry and aggressiveness of a sporting event" (p. 41); secondly, for advertising a "party atmosphere" downtown (p. 41), and thirdly, for placing cameras in a fixed location which was suggested to encourage crowd members to gather and perform for the cameras.

While TV and other media were constructed as partly to blame for the riot, media accounts of the riot were also very selectively relied on as evidence for the review. For example, the Police Commission report listed an extensive bibliography of newspaper articles. Yet only one article concerning the 1994 riot itself was included in the bibliography of more than 80 articles. The rest were stories about previous riots. The only media article included in the Police Commission's bibliography concerning the current riot was a column by Denny Boyd condemning the rioters as "Pusillanimous

punks: Classic Non-Achievers with no Class." (Van. Sun, June 17, 1994). Thus the Police Commission's bibliography included none of the newspaper articles which I quote from earlier in the chapter, which repeatedly highlighted alleged examples of police misconduct.

Given the "cozy" relationship Oppal discussed between police and the Commission - and the limited attempts to solicit input from members of the riot crowd - it is perhaps not surprising that the Commission concluded (p. 71) that "the police did a commendable job considering their lack of experience in dealing with a hostile, unruly crowd".

Apparently referring to Michael Berntt, the 19-year-old with sub-normal intelligence who was shot in the side of the head, the commission noted that "the importance of respecting agitators as 'skilled alchemists' is emphasized by riot study literature; there must be a means to remove those alchemists from a crowd in some circumstances" (p.66-67). However, they recommended that the Arwen gun not be used in future because of the concern it might hit somebody who was not an "agitator".

The Commission pointed out further that "there were *only* (emphasis mine) five complaints of misconduct filed against Vancouver police department officers; four of these were informally resolved." The fifth complaint was "considered withdrawn" because "the complainant refused to cooperate with the investigation" (p. 71).

After choosing to omit from their collection of media stories all those containing criticism by individuals of police action, the Police Commission chose to conclude their section on "police

response" with three quotations from individuals supporting police (p.71).

To sum up, the B.C. Police Commission report offered very limited possibility for input from concerned individuals, yet at the same time, constructed its own version of "public opinion", one highly supportive of police.

The third and final review was an internal review conducted by Vancouver police themselves. While these various reviews were announced as a response to public concerns, the ongoing process was cited several times as a reason why Vancouver police could not comment to the media on aspects of the riot. Thus, ironically, professing to address public concerns about policing was used as a justification to keep the review process secret from the public.

As part of this third and final review, Vancouver police arranged a public meeting to talk about police behaviour for Oct. 11, 1994. Vancouver police chief Ray Canuel said that night, "The Vancouver Police Department is committed to open public communication. That's why we're here this evening."

Despite the police chief's claim, one senior City staff member told me privately at the time that, in fact, initially no public meeting at all was scheduled by the police. Indeed, I was told, the Vancouver police only made a last-minute decision to hold any kind of public meeting at all to look at police behaviour - deciding this just days before the meeting was actually held - because of criticisms of a lack of public input into the police review process.

As it turned out, the meeting to look at police behaviour was scheduled for a weekday evening, little advertised, and even by

official estimates drew only 20 to 25 people. Furthermore, it seemed that only two of the individual members of the public present at the meeting had actually been at the riot.

Asked about the low attendance, a consultant hired to assist with the review process told me the police meeting had not been well advertised. The consultant blamed financial constraints for the lack of advertising. He said the police did not have much of a budget for publicizing this type of event. However, this explanation seemed highly unlikely given the large amount of resources police normally commit to public relations (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1989, Ch: 2; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994).

Nevertheless, Vancouver police chief Canuel commented at the meeting, "We hoped there would have been a lot more people than we have here now." This meeting was the only public meeting held for either of the police reviews.

Vancouver police at first said they would not release their "internal" report to the public at all. However this secrecy met with substantial criticism in the news media. The Vancouver police review was finally released in early 1995. The internal review was actually the most critical among the three of the police operation that night. However, much of the criticism was focused on the limitations of the communications technology used that evening. The criticism would be used to justify a call for funding a new regional communications centre. The report was also used to warrant a request to council (quickly approved) for \$238,700 worth of new riot equipment for police.

In late December 1994, Constable Anne Drennan announced that no police officer would face charges, either criminal or internal, as a result of the Berntt shooting, which left the teenager permanently brain-damaged. Police said the Arwen gun had been used appropriately, but that Berntt had "ducked and turned" as it was fired. She said police would continue to use the gun, despite the recommendation of the B.C. Police commission that it no longer be used in crowd situations; that the Arwen gun was a "satisfactory" method of crowd control when none other was available. Of course, it would be difficult for police to announce that the gun would no longer be used without calling the legitimacy of their previous actions into question.

### **MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS**

Media coverage of the riot story - both from television and newspapers - tailed off in quantity as the reviews progressed. Ultimately coverage of the reviews was much less intense and less critical than initial coverage of the riot. The way the review process was structured seemed to defuse media interest over time. A number of journalists attended only portions of the evening review meetings, leaving long before they finished. After the earlier meetings in the review process, some journalists produced stories commenting on the low turnout. The media began to read the absence of the public at these meetings as a message from the public. Media accounts began constructing the public as either apathetic or simply satisfied and secure with current arrangements. "June outrage turns into October indifference" said a headline in the Province newspaper.

With some notable exceptions, media accounts did not suggest the low public turnout might instead be a result of the way the reviews were being conducted.

By November, there was very limited media coverage of the final public meeting. Most media outlets mentioned the meeting - if at all - lower down in stories focusing instead on security preparations for the upcoming Grey Cup festivities the coming weekend. In fact, Dr. Rulka and the story he told of police escalation were not mentioned in any of the five newspaper and television stories which mentioned that last public meeting. The middle-aged dentist was one of the lone members of the public who actually attended the meeting. Yet his "lucid" account of the riot - contrary as it was to the official reports - seemed to sink without trace. Why was this?

One journalist with a television news organization spoke to me privately for a long time after the last public meeting. He said the tale of the riot and its aftermath was "the most frustrating story" he'd ever worked on. The television journalist suggested that questions about police behaviour had simply not been addressed in the review process. However, in stark contrast to his comments to me, when his story on the meeting appeared the next day, it made little mention of any of these concerns. Despite what he told me, his TV news story focused instead on security for the upcoming Grey Cup festivities. The television journalist told me those in his newsroom were "gun shy" about pursuing the riot story, partly because of what they perceived as strong public support for the



police. Perhaps this is why he produced a story so in contrast with his previous comments.

More generally, why was media criticism of the police role in the riot curtailed during the review process? Obviously, the review process lacked the drama and spectacle of the riot itself, though television stations sometimes used the review as a context to recycle footage from the riot. More speculatively, the media may have also been "gun shy" after coming under fire themselves for their role in the riot. It is possible they may have been intimidated by the riot review's criticisms of the media.

In the early days after the riot, a number of crowd members apparently contacted the media to tell stories critical of police. However, few similar sources critical of the police emerged from the review process. Simply put, the review itself was not very critical of the police.

Another factor was that journalists apparently perceived that public interest in the riot had diminished because of limited public involvement in the review process. Thus the review was seen as less newsworthy.

Some journalists also experienced interesting confusion about their role in the review: were they reporting on it or participating in it? For example, one local journalist asked questions about crowd control at the meeting on police behaviour, but directed television camera people from other organizations not to record her, saying "Don't show me, I'm a journalist". Another journalist from a prominent national outlet attended the meeting on the media's role on the riot but, despite repeated prompting from the moderators,

said he could not participate in the meeting as he was doing a story on it.

Nevertheless, some media criticism of police persisted throughout the review process and afterward. For example, In late December, local CBC television news did a story with a critical tone reporting police's decision not to charge anyone over the Berntt shooting. The Globe and Mail ran a lengthy column on the review process on Nov. 12 (page D2). The headline summed it up: "Vancouver turns blind eye to the police role on the Night of Shame".

The Vancouver Sun also continued to run some critical comments. For example, the Sun encapsulated the riot in its year-end review (Dec. 31, 94 p. B1): "A B.C. Police Commission report found that police performed well. But some observers felt that the police panicked and provoked much of the looting with their aggressive tactics". On June 14, 1999, on the five year anniversary of the riot, CBC-TV ran a story suggesting that the reviews never really got to the bottom of what happened that night.

#### **OTHER ROLES OF TELEVISION IN THE RIOT**

We have thus far discussed the role television played in retrospective interpretation of what happened the night of the riot, and in the competition between different stories of what caused the events. The remainder of the chapter moves on to focus on other roles that television played in the riot and its policing.

#### **Did the media cause or exacerbate the Stanley Cup riot?**

A central premise of this thesis is that television may reshape what it records. As noted above, the riot reviews suggested the

media - mostly referring to television - were partly to blame for the riot. I have not yet addressed the possible validity of that claim. Similarly, for example, there has been widespread criticism of the media's role in possibly fuelling the Los Angeles riot of 1992 (O'Heffernan 1992). Not surprisingly, the media have been considerably less critical of their own role in the Stanley Cup riot than they have of the police.

There have been a handful of earlier pieces of research on the media's possible role in causing riots (Tumber, 1982; D. Waddington, 1992) but these have not uncovered much evidence indicating that media have played a key role in causing the riots studied.

The Stanley Cup riot reviews cited both immediate factors and broader cultural concerns in examining the media's role in the riot. At the most immediate level, it was suggested that the position of TV cameras in fixed locations on Robson St. rooftops encouraged crowds to gather and "perform" for the cameras.

It was also argued that the media invited audiences to come downtown and join the celebration. Sometimes these latter arguments ignored the role of news sources such as police in extending this invitation through the media. These suggestions were thus "mediacentric" (Schlesinger et al. 1991) to an absurd degree. For example, to quote from the Background Paper, "The media has also been blamed for advertising the party on Robson St. at the end of the game." However, no mention was made of news sources' role in advertising the party. According to several sources, a Vancouver police officer, apparently Constable Drennan, appeared on television shortly before the riot dressed in a Canucks sweater and telling

people to come downtown and celebrate! This embarrassing situation was not mentioned at all in the City review. However it was acknowledged by the B.C. Police Commission review (p. 42): "We have been told that a police spokesperson came on television in the early evening and invited the public to join the party after the game. It is particularly surprising to us that this happened, in view of police intelligence prior to the 14th that there might be trouble."

Broader cultural concerns suggested by various sources included the media's involvement in perpetuating the spectacle of sports violence, and in the blurring of boundaries about what is acceptable violence, or more simply a version of long-running cultural concerns about "media violence".

By arguing earlier in the chapter that the police helped shift blame to television in the review process, I am not arguing that television was blameless. There is some surface validity to arguments suggesting television contributed to the riot, but I do not have enough evidence from the night in question to give a very definitive evaluation of them. My focus instead has been to examine the interaction of policing and television in the aftermath of the riot.

## **TELEVISION AND POLICE SURVEILLANCE**

As discussed in the previous chapter, television news recording and broadcasting also dramatically enhances police surveillance capability through the use of video wanted posters. The Stanley Cup riot is a cogent example of this. Police used a massive collection of media videotapes, photographs and negatives of the event to enlist public help in identifying members of the crowd so

they could be charged. This led to 120 arrests of alleged rioters and 300 charges by the end of 1994 (Vancouver Courier, Jan. 1, 1995, p. 3). A high-technology video kiosk was set up in local shopping malls and other public locations, moving around the Greater Vancouver area for many weeks (Van. Sun, Oct. 7, 1994, front page). In the kiosk, passersby could use interactive computer technology to call up segments of video footage from the riots on a screen. Then they could type in information identifying individuals featured in the footage, as well as other details such as the individuals' school or place of work. The information went by cellular phone directly into the Crimestoppers computer. Those who could identify suspects were given a tip number. They could check in later with this number, and if their tip led to charges they could claim a reward.

A similar approach was used after the Tiananmen Square uprising in Beijing in 1989, employing video footage from what was nominally an "advanced traffic control system". "The system was used to faithfully record the protests (at Tiananmen), then the images were repeatedly broadcast over Chinese television along with an offer of a reward for information, with the result that nearly all the participants were identified, captured and punished." (V. Sun, June 1, 1999, p. B1). Television footage was used in the same way by police, for example, after the Los Angeles riot of 1992, after the smaller parallel riot at the same time in Toronto, and after a riot in Carbondale, Illinois, several years later.

One police inspector said that although police deployed two of their own hand-held video cameras at the scene of the Stanley Cup

riot, the news media cameras used to record the riot were much superior for surveillance purposes than the police cameras.

This episode demonstrated, as in the previous chapter, how such surveillance is highly selectively deployed. In this case, surveillance was employed against members of the crowd but not against police themselves. While over 100 rioters were charged as a result of reviewing the tapes, Police Chief Ray Canuel said no charges or complaints were made against police as a result of this process. The kiosk was criticized for this reason by lawyer Rick Brooks: "Well, it's very one-sided, isn't it. I don't see any police officer in here misconducting himself or herself."

Although it is unknown to what extent all media outlets maintained copies of the seized tapes and negatives - the CBC did maintain copies - one journalist suggested that the seizures may also have had the effect of the police controlling knowledge of any acts of police deviance recorded by the media.

Local media outlets showed varying degrees of resistance to involvement in the post-riot surveillance program. Some were quite co-operative. For example, television stations BCTV and UTV initially offered special video segments enlisting help in identifying rioters. While involvement in the surveillance program may have been seen by media workers as a threat to institutional autonomy, this was constructed in terms of public interest. As CBC lawyer Daniel Henry said, "Our camera operators have to record riots in the public interest, but they are not police." (Van. Sun, June 23, 1994). Similarly, an editorial by Province editor-in-chief Brian Butters (the Province, July 12, 1994, pA4) argued, "The (media's) role is not

to be an investigative arm of the police department. Our role is to inform you, our readers, about significant events in the community." In any case, the video kiosk effectively bypassed the news media - essentially giving police their own "Crimestoppers" media outlets.

Indeed, one may argue the video kiosks are useful not only for enlisting help in surveillance. These visuals of the riot produced by police served a second function: to publicize the police version of events. They served as a highly visible outlet for police-controlled "news" -repeatedly displaying the police's own edited version of the riot, from which any footage casting police in a bad light was expunged. Interestingly, the police constable in charge of the video wanted poster project, Grant Fredericks, was a TV reporter prior to joining the police force.

In this respect, there was a parallel in that police now produce and distribute their own local newspapers in Britain (Schlesinger and Tumber 1994: 110) or their own "reality-TV" programs on cable (Getz 1995). Here again, surveillance was combined with the publicizing of "promotional footage" for police.

While the video kiosk program was given fairly positive coverage on some television news programs, it also came under fire from other outlets. For example, a Sun editorial headline characterized the initiative as "A myopic video snitch" (Dec.15, 94, p.A22). The Sun editorial asked: "Dare we hope there's another interactive video in the wings that will show just how the police conducted themselves on the night of June 14, and give the public the opportunity to zap those who screwed up."

The television footage collected by police was still surfacing as late as 1999 as evidence after Berntt sued police over the Arwen gun shooting. A police witness used a laserpointer to give a verbal interpretation of the footage in court absolving police of wrongdoing.

The footage was even used by the judge to make an assessment of criminal behaviour in passing sentence. It served a kind of shaming function simultaneously. In one case, a man who threw bottles and taunted police during the Stanley Cup riot was sentenced to 45 days electronic monitoring and ordered to write letters of apology to the Mayor and the Chief of Police. After a video clip was displayed in court, the Judge passed sentence and told the man he had made an "ass of himself".

## **CONCLUSIONS**

How has the advent of television changed riots? There is some evidence that TV can contribute to the complex chain of events creating a riot, as my data suggest. Furthermore, television has changed riot policing. Meyrowitz might like the optimistic argument made elsewhere that, by making visible violent police tactics, TV has led to a softening of police behaviour in controlling riots. While there is previous research evidence to support this (Filleuile 1998), my data from the Stanley Cup riot show the situation is much more complicated.

A key point demonstrated in this chapter has been that television footage of policing riots or demonstrations seems to rely a great deal on verbal interpretation. While this might be true with



many kinds of TV footage, it applies particularly in the complex, chaotic and highly ambiguous realm of public order events such as riots or demonstrations. I have shown in this chapter that the initial footage of the Stanley Cup riot broadcast on local TV news seemed to rely much more on verbal interpretation by witnesses or experts rather than being simply a visual record of the riot with a self-evident storyline. The key to deciding between competing stories after the riot was the politics of verbal interpretation, not simply the existence of video evidence. I have shown at length that the subsequent riot enquiries were structured to exclude critical interpretations of police behaviour. Instead they were structured in a way which made it easy to shift the blame for the riot to other factors, notably television itself. The fact that a television record existed of the riot did not inhibit this shifting of blame very much at all. Indeed the existence of TV footage actually facilitated the shifting of blame, as police became the authorized definers of this TV footage in the various reviews, and simply used the fact they had viewed it to warrant their preferred account of events. The fact that police were authorized definers was the key to the various other ways in which TV also enhanced police power during the riot aftermath. Because police could define the footage's meanings this allowed them to produce their own video accounts for the public and the courts, let them construct TV itself as a convenient scapegoat in distributing blame for the riot, and dramatically enhanced police surveillance capability and their ability to criminalize members of the riot crowd.

Has television led to the "mediatization of protest policing" as other analysts have suggested? It is likely that the advent of TV has been a factor in an overall tendency toward the softening of the policing of crowds or protests. This is a good example suggesting that Meyrowitz may have been right in certain circumstances: that increased visibility on TV can lead to democratization. But that is only part of the story. My data demonstrate that, in a particular political context such as that of the Stanley Cup riot, the story of violent police suppression of a crowd can sometimes be retrospectively silenced, even if the whole thing is recorded on television. If police are aware of this, it would fit with the accounts of Fillieule (1998) and P. Waddington (1994) indicating that the softening of protest policing has been a selective one, depending largely on how socially marginal the protesters or rioters are. In this way, rather than leading to democratization, the advent of television has once more exacerbated or intensified inequality in how criminal justice is practised, just as my previous case studies have also indicated.

This analysis exemplifies how Meyrowitz's medium theory neglects the politics of interpretation in the new information systems created by television. In conjunction with the first two case studies, it suggests that Meyrowitz overreads the importance of visibility and of the visual component of television in assessing TV's influence on social life and institutions. My data indicate that, as with "Cops", it is the words, not the pictures, that are more often ultimately important in how television makes sense of the world. It is partly in relation to this point that Meyrowitz gives insufficient

**attention to the power relations involved when television reshapes social situations in other institutions. More broadly, it seems to be the most powerful players - in the case of the Stanley Cup riot, the police - that control to a large extent the authorized definition of the institutional situations recorded by TV, and thus dictate how television reshapes institutional life.**

**CH. 5****CASE STUDY FOUR: TELEVISION AND GREENPEACE'S  
LAWBREAKING PROTEST****INTRODUCTION**

My final case study shifts to an analysis of attempted resistance in the area of televised criminal justice. In this fourth study, it is actually the deviant actor, rather than police or television journalists, who initiates the televising of criminal incidents. Here it is actually the criminals themselves who are choreographing criminal justice for TV. Instead of asking how television impacts policing, the focus is on how television influences political law-breaking.

As with the first three empirical studies, this chapter answers two broad types of questions, which are intertwined. Firstly, what are the power relations shaping communication in this case? To what extent can activists who are challengers to the established order successfully initiate their own dramas of crime and control made for TV, in order to get their own oppositional messages across through television news?

Secondly, how does television reshape the situation in front of the camera, and more broadly the institutions which it televises? How has the presence of television affected law-breaking political protest and the activists and "criminal" social movement organizations that use it, just, as we have seen in the three previous studies, TV has influenced policing?

This chapter focuses on the premier creators of such televised micro-dramas, Greenpeace. Born as a tiny band of protesters in

Vancouver in 1971, Greenpeace is now the world's largest and best-known environmental organization. While it has made a range of important achievements in protecting the environment, Greenpeace has also swollen into a wealthy and powerful international institution. Greenpeace International's 1997 annual report showed a \$30 million budget and offices in 33 countries. As of June 1999, the organization claimed 130,000 members in Canada and 3 million world-wide, according to the Greenpeace Canada website. In the spring of 2000, Greenpeace was still expanding, opening two new offices in Asia.

Greenpeace has, since its early years, been carefully choreographing media stunts. These often involve calculated law-breaking, including many actions in which demonstrators get arrested in front of television cameras. As the Greenpeace Canada website states, "Greenpeace is best known for its non-violent direct actions". This is the organization's most central tactic, its trademark or signature.

This chapter begins by giving some history and background, which illustrates how Greenpeace has from its birth been a creature of the media, and particularly television. After describing the key components of Greenpeace's stylized direct actions and showing how they are specifically designed for television consumption, I use examples to examine ways in which activists, journalists, police and movement opponents might negotiate control over the televising of these media stunts. My argument in this section is that television journalists, Greenpeace opponents and police all have some available strategies to subvert the stunts if they desire,

strategies which they have used on occasion. Yet, in the main, the other players simply go along, so that Greenpeace stunts largely appear on television as intended by the activists. However, more significant constraints are imposed by Greenpeace itself in the manner it has designed its actions for the media. Greenpeace in effect censors its political actions to fit television news requirements.

Furthermore, as it influences the nature of what happens in front of the camera, Greenpeace's political lawbreaking, TV also has had broader effects on Greenpeace. Television has fed back on and shaped the style and political direction of the whole Greenpeace organization more broadly, including its organizational structure, its goals and philosophies and its relationship with its members. This kind of protest tailored for TV has defined the relationship between Greenpeace and its constituents, its publics. Greenpeace's television tactics are bound up with a particular view of the public and public involvement in protest. Thinking about the public in this way in turn becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, dictating how the public are actually involved with Greenpeace.

In short, focus on televised lawbreaking has molded the overall nature of Greenpeace as it has grown from a handful of activists into the world's biggest environmental group. My research has found that Greenpeace is the epitome of an organization forged in "media logic" (Altheide and Snow 1979). This has shaped not only the institutional practises directly in front of the camera - the nature of Greenpeace's law-breaking media stunts - but also shaped the over-all contours of Greenpeace as an institution.

The media tactics of Greenpeace have been discussed previously by a number of academic and journalistic sources pursuing other research questions and theoretical interests (eg. Cassidy 1992; Hansen 1993; Rucht 1995; Dale 1996; Anderson 1997; Carroll and Ratner 1999). However, I use the same empirical focus to make novel theoretical arguments here.

Eyerman and Jamison (1989) detail the institutional rationalization which Greenpeace has undergone as the organization has grown exponentially. However, they neglect how Greenpeace's focus on media and television in particular is a central factor in this rationalization. Indeed, Greenpeace's orientation to television is barely discussed in Eyerman and Jamison's account of the evolution of the organization. This is a crucial missing element which must be considered to understand fully how and why Greenpeace has evolved.

My case study is based on varied sources of ethnographic data. Key data come from numerous Greenpeace documents and texts I have obtained: websites, a consumer survey form, a feature-length video, a book-length history by the organization's first president, a photographic history of the organization's protest actions, and a media handbook written by a veteran campaigner. I have analyzed examples of Greenpeace news coverage from video-taped television news items, and from Greenpeace press releases and TV news transcripts of reports of Greenpeace actions, as well as from archived newspaper and magazine clippings. I subscribed to a Greenpeace media mailing list and was e-mailed hundreds of press releases over a 10-month period. I also draw on interviews conducted under the aegis of research in collaboration with

**Professor David Tindall. These are interviews with Greenpeace staff and with other environmental activists, with journalists covering environmental issues, and with the communications manager of the B.C. Forest Alliance, a pro-logging organization in conflict with Greenpeace.**

### **THE MEDIA AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

**Publicity concerning crime and punishment is not always undesirable for the deviant actor. As Greenpeace actions epitomize, sometimes such publicity is deliberately sought for political ends. Highly public lawbreaking may be an important tool for activists.**

**Greenpeace is the example par excellence of how social movements have increasingly become media movements, of how media success may become equated with movement success. More generally, the news media, particularly television, are increasingly the crucial playing field for contemporary politics (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989; Jamieson 1992; Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). Like the police and many other institutions, social movement organizations or pressure groups which used to work behind the scenes are now proactively adopting a higher media profile, becoming increasingly professionalized in media-relations or "mediatized" (Grant, 1989: 80, Ericson et al. 1989; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994; Doyle and Ericson 1996; Anderson 1997; Carroll and Ratner 1999). Ideally, at least, media coverage can give social movement organizations standing and allow them to advance their preferred frames of meaning concerning movement issues, in order to gain public support, pressure governments and corporations and rally the morale of existing supporters (Gamson and Wolfsfeld**



1993). The increasingly central place of television in society is implicated in the mediatization of social movements from the 1960s onward (Tarrow 1994). Television, for many years now the source of news most relied on by audiences (Baker and Dessart 1998: 127), has offered tantalizing new opportunities for social movements to capture attention with a striking image or sound-bite. Counter-culture leaders in the 1960s like Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin were early television masters. Hoffman's autobiography was titled *Soon To Be A Major Motion Picture*. The actions of Palestinian terrorists taking Israel hostages at the 1972 Munich Olympics represent perhaps the most dramatic example of an oppositional group capturing the world television spotlight. Similarly, anti-AIDs activists took over the set of an evening network news program in the United States. These are only the most dramatic cases of a process where many oppositional groups struggle to seize control of the TV airwaves.

Much previous empirical research has explored the extent to which social movements receive favourable or unfavourable news media attention (eg. Gitlin 1980; Entman and Rojecki 1993; McCarthy et al. 1996; Couldry 1999). Such research has explored in some detail how activists may (or may not) shape media content. However, there has been little empirical exploration of the converse question I raise here: how do media simultaneously feed back on protests and on social movement organizations more broadly? The point that media coverage has an impact on reshaping movements themselves has been raised in theoretical discussions (eg. Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993) but the nature of this

impact has not been examined much empirically. Todd Gitlin's (1980) analysis of media coverage of student protest against the Vietnam war in the mid-1960s suggested that the student activists were unprepared for media attention and that it ultimately had a divisive influence, helping fracture the protest organization Students For A Democratic Society (SDS). In counterpoint to Gitlin's research, I consider instead what happens when less naive social movement organizations, those more media-wise, shape their actions more professionally and pro-actively to gain media coverage. Sociologists exploring the constraints on pluralism presented by mass-mediated politics have most often been missing a big part of the equation: how do movement organizations shape themselves to fit media requirements? Do they, in effect, constrain or censor themselves in order to be media-friendly?

### **MEDIA AND POLITICAL DEMONSTRATIONS**

Inquiries about the media and activism quickly lead one to consider the political demonstration and how it plays in the news, particularly on television. A central way social movement organizations obtain media attention is through such demonstrations. As Ericson et al. (1989: 299) note, "the contemporary political demonstration owes just about everything to news media coverage, especially to television. It is the marginal organization's press conference." This was epitomized in the violent confrontations between police and demonstrators at the Chicago 1968 Democratic convention, with protesters' repeated chants that

**"The whole world's watching! The whole world's watching!" (Gitlin, 1980). Nevertheless, political demonstrations have become increasingly common-place and institutionalized in Western nations in recent years (Etzioni 1970; Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Della Porta and Reiter 1998; Cleveland 1999); a great many do not receive any media attention at all. For example, McCarthy et al. (1996) found only a small fraction of political demonstrations in Washington D.C. which received official permits in 1982 and 1991 were even mentioned in the Washington Post, in the New York Times or on national television news.**

**Furthermore, simply getting media attention may not be enough for social movements. Outsider organizations may be quite constrained from communicating their desired messages effectively by having to use demonstrations and stunts to get media access. A well-known case study by Halloran et al. (1970) examined one day's television coverage and two weeks' newspaper coverage of a British anti-Vietnam war demonstration. The researchers found that nearly all media outlets which they studied focused on violence in the demonstration as the defining element of the story. Various other research since then has confirmed this tendency, suggesting that media accounts of demonstrations or political riots focus on portraying the demonstrators as deviant rather than on conveying their grievances (D. Waddington 1992; McLeod and Hertog 1992). According to Gitlin (1980), in covering SDS anti-war demonstrations in the U.S. in the 1960s, the media zeroed in on violence, on the presence of communists, and on the carrying of Viet Cong flags.**

**McCarthy et al. (1998) analyzed 766 newspaper and television**

reports of political demonstrations in Washington, D.C. in 1982 and 1991. The researchers found that 42.7 per cent of the newspaper stories and 61.9 per cent of the television stories they examined did not even mention the specific policy goals of the protesters. Hackett (1991: 214) studied coverage by the three Toronto daily newspapers of mass protests against the 1986 American bombing of Libya. He also found that the arguments of the peace protesters received little attention in the newspapers. A recent content analysis of newspaper coverage of British Columbia environmental protests in 1993 and 1994 by David Tindall and myself (Tindall and Doyle 1999) showed a similar pattern. When environmentalists were quoted in news coverage of protests, most of the time they were talking about the protest itself. Our content analysis found that only 33 per cent of their quoted statements actually touched on any aspect of the environmental questions that triggered the protest. By contrast, when they were quoted in non-protest stories, environmentalists were able to focus much more on the environmental issues themselves - in fact, 77 per cent of the time. The numbers from our content analysis thus capture a dilemma for activists: they can get more media coverage through staging protests, but this coverage comes at the expense of turning the media focus away from the underlying issues and on to the protest action itself. Compared to the newspapers we looked at in our content analysis, television news provides even less of a window to get the activists' message out. McCarthy et al. (1998) compared television news coverage of protests to newspaper coverage and found that television focused on the underlying issues even less. This previous research points to a

key question: how much can Greenpeace overcome this general tendency by the media to focus on the deviant action or spectacle of the demonstration, rather than on the desired message of the protest?

### **MEDIUM THEORY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

Interestingly, in contrast, the small number of works which take a long-term historical view of the influence of shifts in the predominant media are considerably more optimistic about the relationship between media and movements. In his book Power in Movement, social movement historian and theorist Sidney Tarrow (1994) integrates what is essentially a medium theory argument in tracing the evolution of social movements, although he does not make an explicit connection with the medium theory literature. Tarrow's account is much more optimistic concerning the liberating potential of new medium formats. Tarrow argues at length that the growth of modern social movements can be linked in part to the rise of the commercial print media, among other factors. Tarrow goes on to argue more briefly that the advent in more recent years of the late-modern so-called "new social movements" such as environmentalism and feminism is connected in part with the rise of television. This is analogous to the argument made by Meyrowitz (1985), although Tarrow makes no mention of Meyrowitz's work.

The civil rights movement in the southern U.S. in the early 1960s gained massive momentum through network television footage, particularly that of Southern police brutalizing civil rights crusaders (Kielbowicz and Scherer 1986: 83; McAdam 1996). One may also link the development of 1960s counter-culture resistance

in the U.S. in part with the confluence of the Vietnam War and the rise of television, such that Vietnam became the first "living room war", because of the emotionally-charged impact of these television images (Rutherford 1989). Obviously a very broad variety of other simultaneous social changes must also be taken into account, but certainly the rise of television seems to have been one important factor in the advent of 1960s-style activism.

Thus Tarrow writes:

a tidal wave of movements...arose (in this era) amid technological and social changes that gave them a new set of resources and connections with which movement organizers could work....The expansion of mass media from print to electronics - and especially the advent of television - was the most important of these developments.... (Tarrow 1994: 143).

I will argue here that Greenpeace is the epitome of such a movement organization linked to the television medium as described by Tarrow. In a later piece, Meyer and Tarrow (1998: 13-14) develop these arguments:

The growth of the mass media, along with citizens' capacity to both consume and participate in it, has also increased the velocity of diffusion of contentious politics, for at least three reasons. First, when ordinary citizens see others like themselves demonstrating on television, they learn how protests can be mounted and occasionally how they can succeed - demonstrations have a demonstration effect. Second, television focuses attention not on discrete issues that can divide viewers from those they see protesting on screen but on visual images that diffuse information about the routines of contentious politics, which can be used regardless of the content of demands. Third, because television broadcasters attract viewers through visual images, social actors with claims to make may learn to mount them through dramatic public performances that are

more likely to attract the attention of the media than through less public forms of collective action.....Contemporary activists, recognizing the critical role of the media in projecting their activities and claims, have developed more sophisticated ways of influencing how their activities are covered...And an organization like Greenpeace maintains a skilled staff that instantly diffuses images of its activists' dramatic activities to news sources around the world (Meyer and Tarrow 1998: 14).

Thus, in the passage above, Meyer and Tarrow single out Greenpeace as exemplifying this new brand of television protest. Juxtaposing these two sets of literature - more narrowly focused empirical research on what the news media actually report concerning demonstrations and, on the other hand, broader, more speculative historical analyses of the role of television in the evolution of protest - raises important questions for analysis. Does the experience of Greenpeace - and its distinctive form of protest - fit with the generally negative prognoses of previous researchers who studied news media coverage of such protest? Alternatively, does the Greenpeace story fit with the more optimistic speculations of Tarrow, who suggests new liberating potential in the television form?

These specialized bodies of literature on social movements thus mirror the split described in the introductory chapter between the medium theory account of Meyrowitz and the body of research on the sociology of news production. The analysis of Tarrow, like that of Meyrowitz, focuses on the formal properties of TV as a medium, and is optimistic about the advent of TV leading to democratization. In contrast, empirical investigation into the actual social

circumstances of news production and content leads to more pessimistic conclusions.

### **DIFFICULTIES PRESENTING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS ON TV**

Environmental organizations like Greenpeace face some specific problems in trying to present environmental concerns in particular in the media, most notably on television. Environmental problems are difficult to communicate in the mass media because they are often geographically distant or dispersed, multi-national or international, have a slow onset, are invisible and are highly technically complex (Yearley 1991: 44-45; Beck 1992; Medler and Medler 1993; Hannigan 1995). Some environmental concerns do become highly tangible and visible in the most horrific way, as with the holocausts in Bhopal and Chernobyl that slew thousands. Others remain relatively intangible and are difficult to make visible.

A second problem is that one key task of environmental movement organizations can be seen as imputing deviance to governments or corporations. These may be faceless villains. Unlike the criminal justice system, the administrative compliance regime that deals with environmental concerns tends to operate with minimal publicity (Hawkins 1984). Some environmental problems may be easily represented visually, for example, the devastation of a clear-cut forest or the clubbing of baby seal pups. Other problems, like the ozone hole, are much more difficult to make visible for the media: both the "crime" and the corporate or government "villain" may be abstractions.

Environmental problems may also be focused in isolated locations in the wilderness or on the high seas, far from major news



outlets. In getting to the centre of the media stage, environmental news also has had to deal with the "event orientation" of the news media. (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1987; Hannigan 1995) As Hansen (1993: 158) notes, "the environment and 'environmental issues' do not ordinarily - other than in the form of major disasters and accidents - draw attention to themselves". The environmental problem is most often a long-term situation, rather than the distinct dramatic event that fits news media formats (Hall et al. 1978; Ericson Baranek and Chan 1987). The need to overcome these particular problems for environmental groups helps explain in part Greenpeace's approach to media.

#### **GREENPEACE AND THE MEDIA**

Many social movement groups and other non-governmental organizations experience considerable difficulty in obtaining media access . Greenpeace, however, has been exceptional in its repeated successes in mobilizing the media to its own ends. In fact, Greenpeace has been very geared to the news media since the moment of its birth. Greenpeace was created by a small group of anti-nuclear activists in Vancouver in 1971. Its initial target of protest was a scheduled American atomic bomb test on Amchitka in the Aleutian Islands. A demonstration by 7000 protesters at the Canada-U.S. border about the atomic testing had failed to attract much media attention. As one Greenpeace founder, Jim Bohlen, said, "We decided to start an organization, informing the public in a way the media cannot ignore," (Cassidy 1992: 168). The new group conceived a media stunt: sailing a boat close to the test area, putting the crew in danger and thus preventing the detonation. They

recalled that Quakers had tried a similar tactic to protest testing in the South Pacific some years earlier. Marie Bohlen, Jim's wife and another founding member, said, "They were arrested in Hawaii before they got to the site, and that made all kinds of national news...Why don't we get a ship and take it up there?" As Jim Bohlen recounted, "I liked the idea. Then the phone rang. Some reporter wanted to know what was going on in the environmental movement...The next day, there it was in the newspaper" (Brown and May 1989: 8).

Even in its embryonic stage, Greenpeace was instantly proficient at dealing with the media - because journalists themselves were some of the key individual players who started the organization. There were three journalists among the 12 person crew on the initial Greenpeace protest voyage towards the Aleutians:

Journalists and a camera-man among the crew would play a crucial role, recording the events of the journey and sending reports to radio stations and newspapers back home. A key figure among the journalists was Robert Hunter, a columnist on the Vancouver Sun...There were also Ben Metcalfe, a veteran of radio, politics and public relations, who was the theatre critic for the CBC, and Bob Cummings, a former private detective now on the staff of the Georgia Straight. (Brown and May 1989: 11).

As Robert Hunter, who later became Greenpeace president, (1979: 60-61) writes in his history of the early years of Greenpeace:

Metcalfe had been in the newspaper business 25 years longer than me. We both had gone through the same hoops in the peculiar small world of western Canadian journalism...We saw it as a media war. We had studied Marshall McLuhan. Metcalfe had a street-fighter's

understanding of public relations: "It doesn't matter what they say about you, as long as they spell your name right." For Metcalfe, the voyage of the Greenpeace was a campaign like others he had run in the past when he had been paid by politicians to apply his knowledge of the day-to-day mechanics of journalism to get them elected. Image was everything. He knew exactly how to grab headlines, how to drop catchy phrases that would be reprinted, how to play on the reflexes of bored editors...Madison Avenue and Hitler had changed the face of the world through application of the tactic of image projection and we could hardly attempt to do less. (1979: 60-61).

Greenpeace's early media tactics had some interesting theoretical underpinnings. They were rooted somewhat in a kind of theory of the media that Robert Hunter had developed in two philosophical books, Enemies of Anarchy and The Storming of the Mind, (Hunter 1970, 1971). These books discussed ecology, media and changing public consciousness, among many other things. Hunter wrote:

As we have seen, even operating mindlessly and at random, mass media have helped to reshape human consciousness. That initial period of 'accidental effects' is passing. We see the media are now deliberately being brought to bear in an effort to stimulate further changes in consciousness...If the pen was a hundred or thousand times mightier than the sword, we can only estimate that television is at least a million times more powerful...Marshall McLuhan has been our greatest prophet. (Hunter 1971: 217-221)

Hunter suggested the new technology of television allowed a "revolutionary strategy that was not possible in any previous historical context" (1971: 221) and that "the new consciousness revolutionaries are now hurling mind-bombs through the delivery

systems of the mass media" (1971: 223). In his books, Hunter suggested that revolutionaries could help bring about a major shift in public consciousness through the media. Hunter used the term "mind bombs" to describe these dramatic images disseminated through television.

Up until the mid-1970s, Greenpeace focused its actions on nuclear issues. Then it began to diversify its focus, first to whaling. For their next campaign, the activists "took musical instruments with which to serenade the whales, and most important, film cameras to document their work" (Yearley 1991: 69). From this point on, Greenpeace became more and more oriented toward television in particular.

### **GREENPEACE'S MEDIA STUNTS**

Greenpeace's central tactic for much of its history has been the creation for media consumption of brief vignettes - micro-dramas, often in the form of daring direct action stunts - that dramatically visualize and encapsulate an environmental problem for the media. By using these stunts, Greenpeace attempted to overcome the difficulties faced by outsider organizations trying to get news media attention in general, and media attention for environmental problems in particular. Greenpeace's stunts are well-planned and organized and announced to the media in advance. They are timed for media deadlines, and executed with precision by a small number of professional activists, rather than involving a large crowd of demonstrators. The stunts always involve visually striking, made-for-television elements such as acts of physical daring, dressing in costume and/or unveiling a banner with a very brief message. The

stunts very often involve calculated non-violent law-breaking, such as a sit-in or blockade, with the deliberate goal of prompting on-the-spot arrests to add television drama. As a former Greenpeace campaigner indicates in a media handbook he wrote to instruct other activists, an "arrest scenario" may be negotiated in advance with police, timed for television deadlines. In addition to maximum effort being made to facilitate media coverage in any way possible organizationally and technically, the stunts are also recorded by Greenpeace videographers themselves for release to television outlets that are unable to send cameras.

Greenpeace's media stunts have included "hanging banners from smokestacks, plugging industrial sewage pipes, and buzzing around ships in inflatable dinghies" (Gorrie 1991: 50). As Greenpeace grew around the globe and took on diverse campaigns, by 1981 there were around 50 such actions globally (Brown and May 1989: 76). In particularly spectacular stunts, Greenpeace climbers scaled Big Ben and the Statue of Liberty in the summer of 1984 and hung banners (Brown and May 1989: 99). Stunts may occur simultaneously at many locations around the globe in an attempt to create international news coverage. The array of stunts in 28 countries on five continents on August 5, 1995 to protest French nuclear tests gives a sample of the media-genic Greenpeace repertoire: blockades or sit-ins leading to arrests in many countries; forming a human chain around an embassy; activists dressed as executioners pouring black paint over a replica of the earth as the death march plays; others climbing embassies to hang banners or erect crosses; sounding loud sirens; staging a die-in (Greenlink, Vol. 3, #3, p. 16). Sometimes the

actions are more playful but equally telegenic: dressing as salmon and trying to catch politicians in fishing nets (Greenlink, Vol. 4, #2, p. 16). In November 1998, Greenpeace climbers scaled a 70 meter obelisk in Buenos Aires to display a banner reading, "Save the Climate. Clean Energy Now." To add to the visual impact, Greenpeace had erected five windmills surrounding the obelisk (press release on Greenpeace International website).

I interviewed the communications manager of the B.C. Forest Alliance, which does media lobbying for logging companies in response to environmentalism. He described a Greenpeace media stunt in Vancouver in 1994 related to a forests dispute:

They (Greenpeace) blocked off part of Georgia Street. They had a 40 foot inflatable chainsaw...Greenpeace had hired a helicopter which was shooting video footage of the whole thing. It was pro-quality video - and it was fast. The demonstration was from 3 to 4 (p.m.) and every major TV station had that footage from the air on the 6 o'clock news.

The stunts sometimes involve placing trained activists in highly visible situations from which they cannot easily be whisked away by police. The stunts have key temporal qualities crucial to the media, particularly television: they are brief dramatic events, which fit with the news media's event orientation, and they are pre-scheduled at convenient times to allow for television news assignment editors to plan to record them in time for deadlines.

Greenpeace also provides various forms of expert technical assistance to the media to ensure the law-breaking media stunts are recorded optimally. In its B.C. forests campaign in the late 1990s,

**Greenpeace used a floatplane to fly out news footage from the remote forests, and provided its own helicopter to ferry journalists in and out. (C. Anderson (The Province 15/06/97 p. A11). At some stunts, Greenpeace will make sure the area is appropriately floodlit by arranging for a light truck to be present. (W. Boei, Vancouver Sun, Nov. 10, 1993, p. A3).**

**As Nick Gallie, publicity director of Greenpeace put it:**

**Greenpeace has always been inherently fascinating and newsworthy as far as the media are concerned. It presented them with totally pre-packaged, simplistic, but very powerful images of confrontation that were very new and exciting. TV news journalists saw it as fascinating and bizarre that people were willing to stand in front of whaling harpoons or under a barrel of nuclear waste being dumped at sea. These activities were seen as heroic and they were an absolute gift for the media. (Porritt and Winner 1988: 94).**

**As noted above, one key element of the stunts - of conducting direct action for media purposes - is very often that Greenpeace activists deliberately get arrested on camera. Deviance is a defining characteristic of newsworthiness (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987). The official history The Greenpeace Story (Brown and May 1989) provides numerous capsule accounts of direct actions through the 1980s and repeatedly draws attention to the number of Greenpeace activists arrested. Similarly, the Greenpeace photographic history of its direct actions, Witness: Twenty-Five Years on the Environmental Front Line (Warford 1997), features 17 different photographs of law enforcement officers, such as police,**

military and coast guard personnel, taking various forms of control action such as arresting or beating Greenpeace demonstrators. As a veteran Greenpeace campaigner explained in his media how-to book for activists:

Arrests can make stunts by activists more newsworthy - perhaps elevating them out of the stunt category altogether. "I wouldn't encourage people to get arrested," says Greg Todd, a former editor for the Rocky Mountain News, "but that definitely adds to the news value of the story" (Salzman 1998: 19).

Indeed, as the former Greenpeace campaigner describes, a criminal component to a media stunt may be crucial to obtaining television coverage:

In Chicago once, I was on a cell phone explaining to a television assignment editor at a local TV station that Greenpeace had two activists holding a banner on the side of a major hotel where nuclear power promoters were meeting. I said that the fire department was about to extract the activists from the side of the hotel....I asked the assignment editor if she was going to send anyone down. She said, "Call me if there is any blood or any signs of police brutality." (Salzman 1998: 129).

The former Greenpeace staff member advises on how to capitalize on media interest in such arrests:

If you do get arrested, call journalists from jail. Talk-radio shows, in particular, are receptive to putting you on the air live from jail. (Plan for this by writing the phone number of media outlets on your body in case your clothes and belongings are taken from you.) (Salzman 1998: 130).



Another prominent Greenpeace campaigner in British Columbia resisted the idea of getting arrested for a long time, but finally was arrested in any case: "It was the best thing that could have happened to (the Greenpeace activist). It vaulted her into the limelight. She became not only a crusader for the rainforest; she was now a soldier for free speech. The sight of her wavy mane became a regular occurrence on television news hours. (Her name) appeared in the Vancouver Sun 32 times after her arrest" (P. McMartin, Vancouver Sun, July 2, 1994, p. B1).

Indeed, televised arrests were deemed to be such an effective communication tool that another environmental group working alongside Greenpeace, the Friends of Clayoquot Sound, actually supplemented news coverage by buying ads on BCTV replaying over and over again the same video footage of its members getting arrested. As televised images of the arrests played, a narrator stated:

These are people you may know - accountants, teachers and carpenters. They are not against logging. They are against the continued clearcutting of Clayoquot Sound.....MacMillan Bloedel has been convicted 23 times for destroying fish habitat, negligent logging and other environmental offences. 50 more cases are pending. Who are the real criminals? For more information, call the Friends of Clayoquot Sound.

The media-savvy ads were produced by the Media Foundation, the non-profit group - started by former advertising industry star Kalle Lasn - which criticizes the ad industry and publishes *Adbusters* magazine. These ads demonstrate a tension or paradox which, I will argue, is also apparent in many of Greenpeace's media

stunts (and indeed more generally in media culture): a surface fascination with deviance existing in tension with an underlying pervasive ideology of support for the status quo. The ads' imagery relies on the attention-grabbing value of showing the environmental group's supporters being arrested, while simultaneously arguing that MacMillan Bloedel are the "real criminals" and thus the environmentalists are actually the ones who are upholders of consensus values. This is very similar to how, to use another cliché, Greenpeace tries to have its cake and eat it too. Greenpeace grabs attention by using some of the symbolism of deviance - its members being taken away by police in handcuffs - but, as discussed below, Greenpeace simultaneously aims for a broad general appeal, and so cannot push the deviance very far beyond this surface level. Clearly, a social "movement" operating within these conditions can only actually "move" so far.

Related to this strategy, another defining element is that Greenpeace media stunts are non-violent - at least to the extent that the activists will not engage in any deliberately violent activity. Greenpeace does not adopt the active violence or the property destruction practised by the more radical environmental groups such as Earth First! and the Sea Shepherd Society. While the stunts themselves are non-violent in this way, ironically violence perpetrated by others has often been a key media selling point for Greenpeace: the bloody, harpooned whale, the bludgeoned baby seal, and the apex of Greenpeace's notoriety, the single media episode which most propelled it to its global prominence: the sabotage bombing by French spies of the Greenpeace vessel *Rainbow Warrior*

and killing of a Greenpeace photographer in New Zealand in 1985. Media culture is enthralled by violence as long as it can be expressed in a context which is simultaneously supportive of established norms. Indeed, if there is a suitable violent aspect to a Greenpeace action, such as an incident in the summer of 1999 where a Greenpeace activist was injured by the Norwegian coast guard, Greenpeace press releases will spotlight the violent component. Nevertheless, Greenpeace must never be seen to initiate this violence.

Obviously civil disobedience or non-violent calculated law-breaking for protest had a long and noble history preceding the advent of television, and activists engage in it for a number of other strong reasons besides garnering media attention. In the original Greenpeace philosophy, getting media attention was one of two "philosophical bases", according to Greenpeace co-founder Robert Hunter. In addition to targetting the media, Greenpeace's early direct actions were partly rooted in the Quaker idea of "bearing witness". Bearing witness: "is supposed to change the observer and increase their level of activism, compassion, anger, whatever it is." However, Hunter added: "The other part of it was to try to focus the mass media on the issue, which is otherwise like a mugging going off in a back alley" (Dale 1996: 17).

Acts of daring by Greenpeace members as individuals or in small groups are another telegenic aspect of many of these micro-dramas. If the Greenpeace activists make themselves outlaws, they are heroic outlaws. Part of Greenpeace's appeal is the daring of its eco-cowboys, its rebels, its "rainbow warriors"; the stunts are

visualized as acts of desperate courage by small bands of individual underdogs and individual heroes like Robert Hunter against international corporate villains, as David standing up to Goliath. This belies Greenpeace's latter-day status as somewhat of a large multi-national corporation itself.

In tandem with the media stunts is the use of direct mail fund-raising (Shaiko 1993) and door to door fund-raising, to elicit financial support from the passive television constituency fostered by Greenpeace media actions. To coordinate and calibrate its media tactics with its fund-raising efforts, Greenpeace conducts audience surveys which gauge how successful its various media tactics are. I obtained a copy of such a survey conducted in the Victoria, B.C. area several years ago. People were asked about their patterns of donating money to Greenpeace and other organizations, and about their level of support for various Greenpeace campaigns and different tactics. Then they were asked questions such as, "In the past few months have you seen, heard or read anything about Greenpeace in newspapers, on television, on radio or in any other medium? Please tell me what you recall. Was what you read or heard favourable or unfavourable to Greenpeace? What impressions did these articles give you about Greenpeace?" There were other questions on people's media consumption, asking how many hours a week they spend watching television, listening to the radio, or reading magazines, whether they watch CBC television or read the Globe and Mail on a regular basis and so on.

In their newsletter, Greenpeace members are also asked to assist the media monitoring process: they are asked to clip and

record news items and give them to the Greenpeace information office (see Greenlink Vol. 2 #4, 1996) .

Media stunts are only one of a range of Greenpeace approaches and tactics, but they are the central one, as repeatedly emphasized by the organization itself. Checking the Greenpeace International press releases for any given week, one frequently finds releases on Greenpeace protests involving arrests, but these are only a minority of the releases. Greenpeace has evolved toward working as an insider news source in some circumstances (Hansen 1993; Anderson 1997; Carroll and Ratner 1999: 13-15) so there is a division of labour between media stunts and insider strategies. Greenpeace has employed its own scientists, developed a very sophisticated mobile laboratory and devoted more time to lobbying, research and report-writing, and relying less wholly on media stunts (Grant 1989: 20; Hansen 1993: 153). Hansen (1991: 451) argues that in situations where an issue has a low profile, social movement organizations must rely on demonstrations or direct action to get media attention; if claims about the issue are already being made in other key fora, the social movement organizations may be given a mantle of legitimacy and thus no longer need to use such tactics (1991). Advertising is another important item in Greenpeace's media toolkit. "Greenpeace is known for the skillfulness of its advertising and its use of the latest techniques of marketing and opinion research...They use opinion research organizations to control and report on the success of their advertising and make the necessary adjustments to reach their target audience" (Eyerman and Jamison 1989: 107). Greenpeace also uses the name power of big celebrities such as

Brigitte Bardot (during the anti-sealing campaign) or rock stars like the Eurhythmics as another way of fitting media formats.

There has been some on-going debate within Greenpeace over the years concerning whether the effectiveness of the stunts may wear off. Nick Gallie, Greenpeace publicity director said back in the 1980s: "We still use those same techniques (direct action stunts) now, but the novelty has worn off. There's an increasing awareness that just because you do something spectacular and clever doesn't mean the media are going to pick it up anymore" (Porritt and Winner, 1988: 94). This issue - whether the stunts are getting stale - seems to come up repeatedly for the organization. Nevertheless, Greenpeace continues frequently to use direct action stunts to gain wide media attention. They have remained the organization's trademark or signature activity. "Greenpeace is really re-emphasizing a return to its direct action roots now," Gerry Leape, the group's legislative director for ocean ecology said in 1995. "It's what we do well." (Motavalli, 1995: 30).

As the official history The Greenpeace Story put it:

Direct action remains the central theme of Greenpeace operations. This needs to be stated clearly because there is a current media cliché that Greenpeace is turning its back on such tactics and becoming a more bureaucratic, softer version of its earlier radical self. This is demonstrably untrue; the number of direct actions continues in an upward spiral (Brown and May 1989: 5).

As the president of Greenpeace USA, Barbara Dudley, put it: "People remember the actions. It's the same image that's been going for Greenpeace for 20 years, and it still works" (Dale, 1996: 27).

## **RESPONSES TO THE STUNTS**

How do police respond to such tactics? Advice from former Greenpeace campaigner in a media handbook is revealing of how all parties may co-operate to execute the well-choreographed ritual of televised arrest: "If possible, conclude your protest with the media in mind. Sometimes you will want to negotiate an arrest scenario with police. If so, settle on a time for your arrest to coincide with live TV or before deadlines" (Salzman 1998: 130). An extensive review of reports of Greenpeace's law-breaking media stunts suggest in many or most cases, police simply arrest the participants, as the activists intend.

One alternative is, if circumstances permit, for police or Greenpeace opponents to simply ignore the protest or avoid confrontation. This was the approach adopted by Russian whalers in the late 1970s, and it was quite effective in preventing Greenpeace coverage from hitting the television airwaves (Dale 1996). Such an approach has also been used with a Greenpeace blockade of logging operations near Tofino in British Columbia . In the latter situation, forest company MacMillan Bloedel cancelled plans to log on that day because "the forest fire risk was high". No police were sent to the site. Greenpeace supporters chained themselves to a huge grapple yarder machine, and unfurled banners, but no confrontation developed and they ultimately simply unchained themselves. "There was no urgency to the situation," said RCMP Sergeant Pat Edwards. "It appears that it was basically a staged event for the media" (Van. Sun, July 22, 1994, p. B3).

If police do not wish to co-operate, another strategy is to disrupt the scheduling to thwart media routines. If demonstrations are timed for media deadlines, police may choose to make their arrests at the least optimal time for media purposes, if they can afford to wait. For example, at a June 1999 Greenpeace action in Cherbourg, France, police waited 20 hours before arresting Greenpeace activists at 6 a.m. (news release on Greenpeace International website).

In isolated cases, police have also arrested television crews along with Greenpeace personnel. In 1984, a CBC TV crew was arrested along with 10 Greenpeace activists who were attempting to block an acid waste outfall pipe (Greenpeace Canada website). TV personnel were also arrested, for example, at Greenpeace actions in Britain in 1995 and New Jersey in 1990.

In sum, while police have a range of strategies for disrupting the Greenpeace television script, they are used relatively rarely. In general, the policing of protest may sometimes be a source of "trouble in the job" for police (P. Waddington 1994) - intra-institutional recriminations - due to its high visibility and the difficulty of enforcing order in some chaotic crowd situations. However, my data and reading revealed few examples of the more tightly choreographed rituals of Greenpeace causing trouble for police. In most cases, it seems to cost police little to play along. Greenpeace demonstrations, tightly managed by the activists to fit media requirements, appear to be much less of a problem to police than other forms of protest.



## **TELEVISION JOURNALISTS AND GREENPEACE**

**How do journalists react to Greenpeace stunts? Whether or not they are sympathetic to Greenpeace, how much influence do these journalists have on television coverage of Greenpeace demonstrations? As Greenpeace publicity director Nick Gallie says, Greenpeace stunts are "totally pre-packaged...packaged in such a way that the media - newspapers as well as TV- could swallow them without having to chew. (Porritt and Winner 1988: 94).**

**A package the media could swallow without having to chew - this sentence of Gallie's comment offers a neat metaphor for the notion of "post-journalism" (Altheide and Snow 1991), as discussed in Chapter One. Have journalists simply become conduits, as Altheide and Snow argue, for stories which are essentially prepared by source organizations like Greenpeace? Chris Rose of the environmental public relations organization Media Natura suggested:**

**What Greenpeace are very good at is they've invented, if you like, a sort of morality play...that takes Greenpeace straight out of the editorial system of gate-keepers...It puts them into that sort of tabloid news and that's what headline news in television is about because it has to be thirty-second subjects, thirty second-visuals...So I mean they're using the media in that way, deliberately restricting most of their input using that one visible bit that you can see, using television news, basically and, newspaper photographs. (Anderson 1991: 470)**

**Rose said some environmental correspondents may dislike Greenpeace for this reason:**

**They don't like Greenpeace because Greenpeace goes past them. It gets straight on to the front page of the newspaper because the news editor will say I don't care whether you**

think this is news or not, that they're blocking this ship up the Thames, it looks like news as far as I'm concerned and the public will think its news. (Anderson 1991: 471).

Are journalists covering Greenpeace simply "post-journalists" who process pre-packaged news coverage? Not necessarily. In a BCTV newscast I have on videotape from 1996, TV cameras recorded a Greenpeace media stunt at a forest company's annual meeting - but the newscast aired the footage accompanied by a journalist verbally interpreting it in a very negative way, as the following transcript shows. The journalist's oral interpretation of the TV imagery came in the form of a mock recipe for a formulaic protest:

First, rent a truck. Pull up to the entrance of the hotel where Mac Blo is having its annual meeting, and pretend to obey the cops' order to leave the area. Then, when they're not looking, jump out and make it really difficult for the cops to move you away (image of activist locking himself to the wheel of the truck). Then bring in the rest of your little army. Apply a little light harassment to the Mac Blo shareholders going into their meeting. Then send in leader Tzeporah Berman in a mock attempt to get elected to the Board of Directors. Test the patience of the meeting (image of activist arguing with a forest company official during question period.) Throw a pie, blow a whistle, make some noise, but definitely get thrown out. Mission accomplished.

The key point is that this example is very much the exception. Negative framing of Greenpeace stunts like this is very unusual on television news, although it is possible. The example demonstrates that Greenpeace visuals do not always simply speak for themselves, but depend to some extent on a relatively friendly interpretation by journalists.

Indeed, Greenpeace's initial 1975 stunt which was captured for television, perhaps their most famous single direct action, was dependent to some extent on journalistic interpretation. The importance of the stunt in question in Greenpeace history is detailed in a news story about the organization's 25th anniversary:

Greenpeace burned itself into the public consciousness in 1975, when it sailed into the North Pacific to try to halt whaling. Video footage of the group's tiny Zodiac craft racing to save a whale while a Russian harpoon sails over the environmentalists' heads, was Greenpeace's great 'mind-bomb', a visual flashed through the world." (Andrews, V.Sun, Oct. 12, 1996, p. B7).

I obtained a copy of this key early news footage on videotape. It is revealing that even in this most well-known of Greenpeace's media stunts, the grainy, distant TV footage actually relied heavily on verbal interpretation by network news anchors such as Walter Cronkite, as well as diagramming on screen, to make sense to the viewer.

A former television journalist whom I interviewed suggested that the constraints of being dependent on visual material could be overcome. As a television reporter who had been perhaps B.C.'s most prominent specialist in environmental issues, he found he had enjoyed a great deal of independence in pursuing his own in-depth investigations for a local outlet. He told me: "You can do good television with virtually no pictures if you've got a good story to tell...Clearly television is very powerful in terms of implanting images...But I never based my journalism on doing just that...The interesting thing for me was that I was a print reporter and I came to television with a bias. So I tended, in a way that a lot of

reporters who were trained in television don't, to go out and get the kind of newspaper story almost, and the visuals, while important, were just supporting materials." This comment again suggests the extent to which the constraints of the television news form may be negotiable by some reporters.

Thus, even Greenpeace's media stunts do not always simply speak for themselves. They also rely to some extent on the verbal framing of television journalists and producers to make sense of these images. That said, Greenpeace stunts depend much less on verbal interpretation than other situations described earlier, for example with "Cops" or the Stanley Cup riot. In the case of Greenpeace stunts, because they are carefully planned and executed and feature fully co-operative "criminals" with the aim of providing good visuals for television news, they provide much more straightforward and unambiguous imagery realized under optimal conditions.

In any case, of the dozens of television items and transcripts concerning Greenpeace lawbreaking direct actions which I have examined, only the BCTV example above and one other are framed in this kind of negative way by the media. This is what one would expect: if Greenpeace stunts were framed more frequently in a negative way, the organization might have second thoughts about using this approach so consistently.

Because it is not automatic that visuals of Greenpeace stunts will be always framed favourably by television crews, it is not surprising that Greenpeace cultivates friendly relationships with key sympathetic journalists. From the beginning, Greenpeacers have

often enjoyed favourable relationships with journalists, unsurprisingly as many of the activists have been former, and sometimes current, journalists themselves. As Hansen (1991: 451) notes, a number of researchers have suggested that reporters who cover environmental issues tend to be positive about environmental groups as news sources. One aspect of this is that these journalists have an on-going interest in maintaining good relations with the groups; the groups are no longer marginal in this respect (Ericson 1994). Beyond this, however, numerous journalists have demonstrated sympathy with the environmental movement. For example, in Britain, a "media charity" called Media Natura was established in 1988 whereby media personnel donated their public relations skills to help conservation groups (Anderson 1991: 474). Front-line journalists who are low in the editorial hierarchy may be seen as belonging to a particular class of young, university-educated people in the social and cultural fields (Doyle, Elliott and Tindall 1997). Research by Kriesi (1989: 1083,1111) suggests this particular group are particularly inclined to "post-materialist values" and to support new social movements such as environmentalism.

For example, award-winning B.C. television journalist Ian Gill left the CBC to become director of another environmental group, Eco-Trust Canada (Doyle, Elliott and Tindall 1997: 260). This crossover is most notable with Greenpeace. There continues to be some notable intertwining of Greenpeace and media organizations. For example, Robert Hunter, the Vancouver Sun columnist who became president of Greenpeace, later moved on to becoming

environment reporter for CITY-TV in Toronto. The former Greenpeace president's daughter is now also a journalist. In this capacity, she spent an extended period living on a Greenpeace vessel and reporting during an ocean-going environmental campaign. She later also became a reporter for the Vancouver Sun. Similarly, the former media director of Greenpeace later became head of the environmental reporting unit at CNN (Motavalli 1995: 37). Today Greenpeace still features numerous journalists in key positions among its staff. For example, Blair Palese, former head of the Greenpeace media unit in Washington, D.C., previously worked as a journalist for a number of years (Dale 1996: 26). In Britain, former Fleet Street journalist John May has been another key Greenpeace communications expert. All this illustrates not only how Greenpeace may be able to draw on goodwill from sympathetic journalists, but how the organization itself has consistently from its birth internalized news media logic and considerations by utilizing journalists as key personnel. Indeed, another former journalist was actually running Greenpeace's training camp in Florida, teaching Greenpeace activists how to break the law for television (Dale 1996: 62). One may see this particular ex-journalist as the very personification of my argument that media do not simply stand back and report criminal justice, but help to shape it.

### **GREENPEACE-PRODUCED NEWS**

While journalists can frame their footage of Greenpeace stunts in various ways, the Greenpeace approach often represents "post-journalism" (Altheide and Snow 1991) in a more extreme way. Greenpeace actually produces heavy photographic and video

documentation of their own activities and makes it available to the media. Greenpeace took advantage of economic pressure and cutbacks in the television news world (Kimball 1994; Baker and Dessart 1998) to get more footage on the air produced by Greenpeace itself (Anderson 1993). Press releases I found on Greenpeace websites now give information on how television news outlets can obtain Greenpeace-produced video-footage directly via satellite link-up. Digital photographs taken by Greenpeace operatives of Greenpeace activists getting arrested are also made available to be lifted by the news media off these websites.

The Brent Spar episode against the Shell oil company in Europe was one of the more controversial involving Greenpeace video news releases:

Greenpeace protests against the intended sinking of the Brent Spar oil platform at sea (by Shell) sparked off a major controversy. Video news releases of two Greenpeace vessels sprayed with high pressure water cannons, together with protesters occupying the platform, made dramatic television news footage. At the start of the campaign 20 journalists were invited to board a Greenpeace vessel. The pressure group ensured that the media were kept directly informed through sending live satellite pictures to news desks (Anderson 1997: 111).

A boycott by environmentally sympathetic Germans of Shell gas stations caused a 30 per cent drop in revenue, and Shell abandoned plans to sink the Brent Spar rig. Subsequently, however:

Shell's announcement was followed a few months later by an admission from Greenpeace that their calculation of the amount of oil on the platform had been inaccurate.....Shell's original estimate (about one per cent of the Greenpeace

estimate) ...proved to be considerably closer to the final figure. Greenpeace wrote to Shell apologizing for the error...Following Greenpeace's admission, some journalists claimed that the news media had been too ready to accept news releases supplied by the pressure group (Anderson, 1997: 112).

Journalist Stephen Dale found that Greenpeace's Communications Department, or "Coms", based in London, England, had a budget of over \$1 million a year by the early 1990s. This department mediates between the campaigners and television news agencies. Because Greenpeace provides its own video footage, this allows it to overcome the problem discussed earlier that many environmental problems are focused in geographically isolated spots. Dale reported that typical Greenpeace Video News Releases contained two reels: an "A" reel featuring a complete, finished report, or, if the news providers do not opt for this, a "B" reel featuring a package of video clips which the news programs could intercut with their own footage.

Greenpeace's television profile has risen dramatically since the late 1970s because of its close relationship with the international television news broker Viz News, which was co-owned by NBC, the BBC and other broadcasters. It was at that time that Greenpeace began crafting its direct actions for TV. "Our idea was to reach a global audience through the agencies," said Greenpeace communications expert Tony Mariner. "And the direct action (law-breaking incidents) gave us a product to sell, if you like, in terms of a news event" (Dale 1996: 114).



## **HOW MEDIA LOGIC HAS SHAPED GREENPEACE**

The above account of the development of Greenpeace Coms illustrates a key argument in this chapter. This is that the example of Greenpeace demonstrates how not only law-breaking protest in particular, but more broadly the social movements organizations which use it, may come to be shaped to some degree by "media logic" (Altheide and Snow 1979). This demonstrates once again, how, as television reshapes the criminal justice situation in front of the camera, it also has various broader ripple effects on the institutional players. Thus, while social movement organizations can become important players in negotiating media content, the news media also come to constitute the social movement organizations to some extent. As a Greenpeace staffer put it:

Right from the beginning we have changed or monitored our activities so they would be just right for the media....Literally, the actions and things we do are dictated that way and we close up shop really fast if the media doesn't show up (Carroll and Ratner 1999: 10).

If Greenpeace is seen as expert at manipulating the media, it may be argued that the media have conversely shaped the activities of Greenpeace. As another Greenpeace activist stated:

If we wish to get a message out then we have to follow certain rules, certain media set-up rules, in order for those things to get out. A continuation of media stunts as direct action is largely because that's the way the media will need to have it in order for it to get there. But more soft, broad-based things don't get media attention, therefore we don't do them. (Carroll and Ratner 1999: 11).

Televised direct action may constrain the kind of messages Greenpeace can communicate. It may limit the ability to contextualize particular environmental problems for TV audiences as part of broader concerns about, for example, consumerism and capitalism, North-South inequality or unbridled technological advancement. Furthermore, particular environmental issues or campaigns - such as the baby harp seal hunt in Newfoundland- may be chosen for their mediagenic qualities, while others are ignored.

Because Greenpeace actions are designed for TV, the resulting form of protest has the following three elements: simple messages, media-friendly goals, and a passive public.

### **SIMPLE MESSAGES**

Firstly, their media approach limits Greenpeace to simple messages. Eric Draper (1987: 8), a campaign co-ordinator for Clean Water Action in Washington D.C., gives an example:

Four years ago, I stood with a group of citizens and environmental activists in front of a burned-out hazardous waste dump in Jacksonville....We shouted to be heard...but the camera-operators, already looking bored, were dismantling their recorders. Then two members of our group, campaigners from Greenpeace, vaulted the yellow cordon that surrounded the site and attempted to plant our banner in the toxic-saturated soil. Guards quickly dragged them off site, but the image of confrontation was permanently recorded...The event, as retold by photo editors, took on a different cast... Lost was the statement by neighbourhood residents that they, as injured persons, no longer trusted the health authorities' bland reassurances. Lost was the connection between their local struggle and the broader national movement against toxics. Instead our audience got videos of a barricade stand-off.

Direct action stunts may be particularly effective at publicizing the organization itself, and the fact that there is a confrontation over a single issue. A stunt such as floating a giant inflatable whale into Yokohama harbour with a banner saying "Let the Whales Live - Greenpeace" (Brown and May, 1989; 142) is superb for getting a bite-sized message across, which includes promoting the organizational brand-name. The banners that Greenpeace often uses in its media stunts are a literal representation of the way in which they limit the complexity of messages that can be communicated. Similarly, in March 2000, 25 Greenpeace activists blockaded a Romanian goldmine, and unfurled a huge banner saying "Stop Cyanide". While on one level, it might be argued that this is simply effectively communicating the nub of the issue, at another level it represents a considerable constraint. The most extreme example of simplistic communication was a stunt in which Greenpeace hung banners on eight smokestacks spelling out simply "Stop. Stop." (Brown and May, 1989).

Television tends to reduce politics to a spectacle, inhibiting more complex forms of political discourse that may lead to a deeper critique of contemporary social relations. The news media's orientation to distinct dramatic events in the immediate present (Ericson et al. 1987) and media focus on short-term monocausal explanations (Hannigan 1995) may displace a focus on broader social issues. By its very adeptness at utilizing media formats, Greenpeace buys into the these limitations. As one local Greenpeace campaigner told David Tindall in an interview:

**It looks easy to just get on the camera and say what you think but when you're under a tremendous amount of pressure and you have 15 seconds to convey an idea...Noam Chomsky talks about how it's very difficult to change the status quo in 15 seconds but incredibly easy to reinforce it.**

**As a veteran Greenpeace campaigner writes in his media handbook for activists:**

**Your first task in creating a media event is...to identify one simple message you want to communicate...Your message should be contained in one simple phrase; following are some examples of messages for the news media:**

**The incinerator will cause cancer....**

**Stop hunting whales...**

**Vote yes on amendment one....(Salzman 1998: 9)**

**As the Greenpeace campaigner explains, this is a particular imperative with television news, which is most often Greenpeace's primary target:**

**Journalists - television journalists in particular - rarely confuse their audience with complex information, which might prompt some lazy people to change the channel. For this reason, the script of a newscast is generally written with the assumption that viewers comprehend at a sixth-grade level. To fit this format, your message needs to be simple, clear and easily understood.**

**This quotation is a dramatic example of just how much Greenpeace has taken on board the constraints of the television form. Clearly, this Greenpeace activist had internalized media logic to a point which severely constrained the kinds of messages he would attempt to communicate for the organization, so that communication in this context would have to be at a Grade Six level. Arguments not only have to be simple, but, beyond that, middle-of-the-road, resonating with dominant cultural understandings.**

## **CHANGING GOALS**

Secondly, television has contributed to reshaping Greenpeace's organizational goals. Reliance on the televised stunt thus feeds back on Greenpeace more broadly as an institution. The story of Greenpeace has been a shift from a concern with the broader philosophical and political roots of environmental problems to a focus on more narrowly defined goals (Eyerman and Jamison 1989). The limitations of communicating through televisual media stunts may be linked to this shift.

Greenpeace also appears to target particular environmental issues precisely because of their capacity to provide strong images for television. Not only their tactics, but the choice of whole campaigns may be driven to a considerable extent by media considerations. As Eyerman and Jamison note (1989: 106), "the selection of which environmental issue to tackle next (is) made by the board of Greenpeace International...the criteria used in selecting a campaign are the following: its suitability to the Greenpeace profile and its "visibility", ie. connection to marine life or to "innocent nature"; and that a campaign must appear winnable." Such "visibility" involves in part the capacity which a campaign offers for TV images.

As Cracknell (1993: 5-6) suggests, "the issues on which groups choose to campaign on are undoubtedly influenced by considerations of likely coverage. This is important as it can mean that 'non-sexy' and unmediagenic subjects are targeted less than those with instant media appeal, regardless of the intrinsic importance of the issues in question." This is not to say Greenpeace does not relies simply on

media campaigns: for example, its long-term, worldwide effort to eliminate hydrofluorocarbons is focused to a large degree on extensive negotiations with various governments and industrial boards. However, as British environmental journalist Chris Rose describes, media considerations often seem to have shaped the campaign choices of Greenpeace:

You've got to have the pictures, it doesn't matter what they're talking about, you've got to have the pictures....if you can't deal with it in those terms, and their formula, they can't really campaign on it. (Anderson 1997: 126).

For example, the Greenpeace campaign focusing on the baby harp seal hunt in Newfoundland was made for television. The power of the TV imagery of the baby seals being clubbed to death overrode opposition arguments. Greenpeace members shielded the seals with their bodies or sprayed the live baby seals with a harmless green dye to render their pelts commercially useless. Mother seals barked helplessly and followed along pathetically as sealers skulked off with the corpses of their babies (These images feature prominently in the "Greenpeace's Greatest Hits" video).

As Draper (1987) argues, "Greenpeace was never able to establish that there was a threat to the seal population at all. They justified the call for preservation with statistics of severe population declines from the 1950s - before the Canadian government had imposed limits restricting the number killed. Today Atlantic coast fisherman complain that seal overpopulation is playing havoc with fish stocks" (Draper 1987: 9). While the campaign was a media hit, the indigenous economy of 40 Native communities

was devastated (Ostertag 1991: 84). The Inuit fishery of adult seals using different methods, which Greenpeace had not meant to shut down, was crushed as a byproduct of the publicity. "Unfortunately, anybody who took any seals was painted the same way in the media...our attempts to differentiate between the commercial slaughter and other types of sealing didn't make it into the media", said Greenpeace campaigner David Garrick (Dale 1996: 93). By contrast, environmentalists who have worked to save less telegenic creatures have more difficulty. Not surprisingly, for example, there has been little success generating public concern over the possible extinction of the "giant earwig of St. Helena", a nine-inch monster insect (Yearley 1991: 46).

#### **GREENPEACE'S PASSIVE PUBLIC: "COUCH POTATO ACTIVISM"**

Thirdly, reliance on televised stunts also reshapes Greenpeace's relationship with its constituency, with its publics. Greenpeace's reliance on professionally-executed media stunts contrasts with earlier demonstrations and protests which historically have depended on mobilizing large crowds. Public order events involving such crowds, such as the Stanley Cup riot, are much more difficult to control for both police and activists, in contrast to demonstrations conducted by a small number of professional activists like those of Greenpeace. Another factor may be that, as Ryan (1991: 106-107) argues, it is difficult to give large crowds a sympathetic, personalized appearance for television, because of the distance the television camera must maintain. Furthermore, TV means it is no longer necessary to assemble a large crowd to communicate directly, to gather a crowd to provide the audience.

**This allows a shift to a more tightly controlled and choreographed, ritualistic form of protest, epitomized by the actions of Greenpeace.**

**This shift away from gathering large crowds of protesters, and toward stunts executed by a handful of professionals, raises questions about the limited role of "the public" in Greenpeace's new kind of activism. As suggested by Tarrow (1994), the new television-driven social movements require a form of organization that is quite different from mass mobilization:**

**The implications for movement organization (of the arrival of television) were profound: If movements could transmit their messages to millions of people across the airwaves, encouraging some to follow their example and larger numbers to take sympathetic notice of their claims, it was possible to create a movement without incurring the cost of building a mass organization. This had been true in the past with the advent of cheap newspapers. But where the press only described what movements wanted, television showed graphically how they behaved, and how their opponents responded, in a form of public spectacle that required little in the way of formal mobilizing structures (Tarrow 1994: 143).**

**On the one hand, this is enabling for social movements which require less internal resources to seize the political spotlight. Meyer and Tarrow (1998: 13) argue that television thus facilitates social movements. Yet this situation arguably also has a very significant down-side for movements. Tarrow (1994: Ch. 6) traces a long-term historical trend prior to the age of television from violent direct action to non-violent mass mobilization. Now, in the TV age, Tarrow argues, such mass mobilization is no longer required. I argue that Greenpeace epitomizes this shift. In Greenpeace Germany, for example, "the great majority of registered Greenpeace**



supporters - that is about 99.7 per cent - are limited to the role of spectators or regular or occasional contributors" (Rucht 1995).

Tarrow argues that the advent of this kind of television politics interacts with the increasing affluence of movement supporters to encourage passive support rather than action:

If the spread of affluence and mass communications has given organizers at the summit new resources, it has also deprived movements of the steady participation at the base that prewar movements could count on through party branches and union locals. People who watch television in the evening and go away for long weekends are less interested in attending meetings and marching in Sunday demonstrations than their parents were in the 1930s and 1940s (Tarrow 1994: 146).

Greenpeace supporters fit this description: the Greenpeace public is constituted by the organization's tactics as a dispersed group whose political role is simply to watch demonstrations on TV and then mail in money. An activist for another B.C. environmental organization told us in an interview similarly about this drawback of televised protest. His comment encapsulates how Greenpeace's reliance on television has transformed its relationship with its publics:

I think to a certain extent what we've done with civil disobedience unfortunately is we've created this sort of couch potato activism where people sit at home and they watch the news and they see people getting arrested and they go, 'Oh gee, isn't that horrible' and then they turn the TV off and they go to bed.

**Greenpeace's physically heroic stunts may also contribute to the effect of positioning the audience as bystanders to the spectacle. As one Greenpeace staffer stated:**

**I think that seeing someone as a hero is rather disempowering...most people can't really see themselves driving a Zodiac, stopping a warship, or something like that...I think the majority of people put us up on a pedestal and say "You're Greenpeace; you're doing the work...It's not me; I can't do that" (Carroll and Ratner, 1999: 14).**

**A key point is that, whether or not the activists' perceptions of an increasing shift toward such passivity in public attitudes are actually empirically accurate, the way Greenpeace and similar organizations treat their publics make such observations a self-fulfilling prophecy. Whether or not the publics are actually becoming more passive in attitude, Greenpeace sets them up to be passive in practise. Greenpeace simply does not provide the mobilizing structures that would gives its public a more active role. In perceiving a passive public, Greenpeace creates one.**

**Thus, the type of media politics Greenpeace practises may be seen as inherently disempowering. Like many contemporary institutions in late-modern democracy, Greenpeace deals very much in constructing "phantom" images of the public (Lippmann 1920, Robbins 1993) shaped for institutional use, rather than actually mobilizing its diverse audiences.**

**Greenpeace relies on a top-down approach with power centralized in the hands of a small number of professional experts. "Greenpeace International is organized like a multi-national**

corporation, with a five-man board of directors answering to a general council made up of individuals representing the seventeen national corporations...Greenpeace has a policy of not using too many volunteers in their office work and especially not in any key positions" (Eyerman and Jamison 1989).

Greenpeace's ability to mobilize miniature environmental dramas for the media does not necessarily have to speak to the public, so much as merely make politicians think that it is speaking to the public. Greenpeace claims millions of "members" - yet in practical terms the activities of the organization are conducted by an elite professional hierarchy. Much sociological literature on social movements concerns itself with how movements gain and keep adherents - yet, as the case of Greenpeace indicates, this may not be crucial for the achievement of movement goals. As Eyerman and Jamison suggest, "Success is not measured in how many new converts have been added to the cause, although membership rates are very important to Greenpeace both in its lobbying work...and in its finances." (1989: 104). The membership rate - the constructed representation of the public - becomes more important than the members themselves. As Eyerman and Jamison note:

The vast majority of Greenpeace members are passive, whose sole contribution to the organization and its goals is the money they send in once a year. Being a 'supporting' member involves no right to participate in any of Greenpeace's meetings or even its campaigns. Most members are recorded as traces on the computer of the national office, as number, name and address (Eyerman and Jamison 1989: 106).

Laurie Adkin suggests:

**the paradox of Greenpeace is that while it fights for the rights of present and future generations - of other species as well as humans - against powerful state and private interests, it is itself an elite organization. Greenpeace solicits donations that fund a small core of militants to act as an international environmental police force. (Adkin 1992: 150).**

**I argue the transformation of protest due to television is a key factor that has shaped Greenpeace's structure as an organization comprising a small elite leadership and a huge passive membership.**

**Similarly, Greenpeace may have recognized the tenuous nature of its public support in their decision to target specific businesses with their boycott publicity campaigns rather than the public at large. In this case, they only have to make the corporation's executive believe that the market may turn against them, rather than influence the public itself.**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

**Robert Hunter's initial media theorizing suggested that a change in "public consciousness" would be wrought by Greenpeace's media campaigns. This now seems very secondary to achieving the organization's financial and political goals.**

**One of Greenpeace's founders, journalist Ben Metcalfe, left the organization in the 1970s and now argues it has lost much of its effectiveness. Metcalfe suggested that Greenpeace opponents, governments and corporations have:**

**learned to accommodate the protest. They'll do something and wait for the protest and just keep doing it. The protests**

**are accommodated like Christmas or Easter...they're just part of the agenda. Greenpeace is now institutionalized...(Dale, 1996: 84).**

**I have shown in that it is in large part the way in which the requirements of media logic have fed back on Greenpeace that has resulted in its taming, its institutionalization. In making its central modus operandi televised law-breaking, Greenpeace has allowed its particular protest activities - and its organization more broadly - to be largely shaped by the needs of television.**

**CH. 6:****CONCLUSIONS**

In light of the evidence from the four case studies, I will now evaluate the three theoretical conceptions I have discussed concerning how media influence other institutions - Meyrowitz's "medium theory", Altheide and Snow's "media logic" perspective and Ericson, Baranek and Chan's "institutional perspective". My data lead me to support some key aspects of each of the latter two theoretical perspectives. My conclusion argues these two perspectives need to be synthesized to best capture the various institutional influences of television which I have uncovered.

I will review how the answers to each of my specific research questions led me to these conclusions. Then I will briefly outline some key propositions of a new, synthesized theory that accounts for the influences of television I have found in these four cases. This set of propositions might be applied more generally to understand the influences of television as it records more and more aspects of contemporary institutional life.

My studies have shown that these newly-televised situations are altered in fundamental ways by the cultural logic of mass media (Altheide and Snow 1979, 1991). However, powerful source institutions, exemplified by the police, most often tend to shape and control the nature of such influences (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989). Rather than having a democratizing or social levelling effect in these situations as predicted by Meyrowitz's medium theory (1985, 1994), television tends to have opposite impacts. In my studies, TV mostly instead has various influences on these

**institutions which reproduce the established order, and often strengthen existing power relations.**

**A theory of how television influences other institutions must incorporate the fundamental ways in which the cultural logic of mass media can alter institutional phenomena (Altheide and Snow 1979, 1991), which the "institutional perspective" of Ericson, Baranek and Chan does not fully capture. At the same time such a theory must be more cognizant than the analysis of Altheide and Snow concerning the limits of media logic, and the power of source institutions to tame and harness media considerations for their own ends.**

**I will first address my research questions relating to what factors shape and control the content of what is televised. Discerning these factors is crucial to explaining how and why these criminal justice situations are altered as they are televised.**

**To what extent does TV "make visible" or reveal "back region" information in these new situations it broadcasts?**

**Meyrowitz's medium theory (1985, 1994) suggested variously that television "made visible", "exposed" or "revealed" social situations which it broadcast, metaphorically "lifting veils of secrecy", allowing viewers to see through a "one way mirror", "peek behind a curtain" and so on. He used the concepts of "front regions" and "back regions" to discuss media influence, suggesting TV lets viewers into newly-seen "back regions" to view "back stage behaviour". Meyrowitz severed these concepts of "front region" and "back region" from the spatial situations to which the creator of the**

concepts, Erving Goffman (1959), originally applied them. Meyrowitz used these terms instead to describe "information systems". Using Meyrowitz's definition, what constituted "back region" information thus became relative to the particular players: what police wish to keep hidden is probably quite different from what criminal suspects wish to remain private. My specific research question here thus became, in broadcasting these situations, to what extent does television reveal new information, and in particular, information which the various players wish to keep hidden in their metaphorical "back regions".

Despite Meyrowitz's arguments, the general tendency across the four case studies was that police most often controlled the selection of which criminal justice situations were broadcast on TV. The most striking examples were potentially very damaging situations for police which were recorded for "Cops" and other reality programs, but never aired: a botched drug raid at the wrong address and a high speed police pursuit that ended in the death of an innocent driver. More generally, police exert very large control over which situations air on "Cops". As the second study discussed, police also select which surveillance footage they release to the media; thus "back region" information is very unlikely to be revealed from this source. Police also tend simply to play along with Greenpeace media stunts: broadcasting police's role in them does not reveal any "backstage" behaviour police wish to keep hidden.

However, I have also examined a couple of televised situations which police may have preferred to keep shrouded in metaphorical "back regions". The increasing use of home video means that some



**"back region" moments of policing are recorded by amateurs and released to the news, as the Rodney King incident infamously demonstrated. However, members of the public who submit home video to news outlets face considerable skepticism about the validity of such "amateur" footage. Home video is also much more narrow and haphazard in its reach than, for example, police surveillance camera footage. The broadcast of the Stanley Cup riot also demonstrated a second type of situation which police would have probably preferred to keep out of the public eye.**

**My data show that, even when thinking about the changes introduced by TV, we need to return to Goffman's original use of the term "front regions" and "back regions", to describe different *physical* spaces (Goffman 1959). My four case studies demonstrate that, not surprisingly, police are more vulnerable to having so-called "back stage" behaviour broadcast in what are actually relatively public physical spaces where professional or amateur journalists might be present with cameras, such as the roadside where the Rodney King beating occurred, or the downtown streets which featured the Stanley Cup riot. The advent of TV has increased police visibility somewhat in these already relatively public areas. In more private locations, for example, the police cruisers where much "Cops" footage is recorded, police still maintain almost complete control over what might be made visible by TV. Meyrowitz (1985) argued that electronic media diminish hierarchy based on spatial relations - that, because of TV, people are no longer kept in their "place". There may be some partial validity to this argument: TV increases visibility in some spaces which were already public, such**

as the downtown streets where the riot occurred. Television also expands the effective boundaries of public space, by recording events in obscure, but still public locations, as in the Rodney King incident. However, police are still able to keep many physical locations, for example in buildings or in police cars, as private police "back regions", concealed from TV.

My findings in the four case studies thus fit more here with the analysis of Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989). Ericson et al. also found it made sense to keep Goffman's original conception of "front regions" and "back regions" as actual physical spaces, even when discussing media visibility. They found that police control of news media knowledge was in part linked to the ability to keep various physical spaces as private "back regions". Similarly, contra Meyrowitz, my studies also show police maintaining control by keeping the media and others in their "place", both literally and metaphorically.

**What ideological biases might there be in the "social information" conveyed by TV about these criminal justice situations and why?**

Even when TV is allowed to broadcast selected criminal justice situations, these situations are far from simply "made visible" or "unveiled". My case studies show that Meyrowitz overstates how much TV simply "reveals" social information unproblematically as viewers are allowed into new "information systems". Thus, a second limitation to Meyrowitz's argument is that it neglects ideological biases in the "social information" presented by television. Meyrowitz (1985) was certainly aware of previous

research showing television content tends to support a world view which helps maintain established power and authority (eg. he cites the research of Gerbner and Gross (1976)). Meyrowitz argued, however, that the formal properties of TV somehow worked the other way: because of these properties, viewers were included in new social settings and received other types of social information, the nature of which tended to reduce social distance, rather than reproduce the established order. In the situations I have studied, however, the simple fact is that, although TV broadcasts new types of information from previously unseen situations, the same kinds of ideological biases described by much previous research still occur in this new material. This is the case even when television is broadcasting footage of "real" events, the situation where the alternative tendencies described by Meyrowitz would be most apparent.

One key form of power is the ability to define the situation so that others act on that definition as reality (Altheide and Snow 1991: 4). As many examples in my thesis show, the definition of these televised criminal justice situations is not self-evident, even if they are recorded directly by cameras. Instead the meaning of these televised situations derives from an interaction or "negotiation" (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989) between the key players - television journalists, police, criminal suspects and TV audience. This is an interaction in which power relations are usually unequal. Police most often provide what I call the "authoritative definition" of these televised situations. Of course, audiences may subvert this definition and make their own meanings of what is

televised (Fiske 1987). Yet the authoritative definition is the one which carries the most force: it is the definition that is actually presented on TV, and the definition that carries the official stamp of the police. It defines the situation for those in front of the TV set but also for those in front of the camera, often actually constituting particular televised behaviour as criminal.

Previous research shows a strong tendency in the media toward heavy reliance on police as an authoritative news source (eg. Chibnall 1977, Hall et al. 1978, Fishman 1978, 1980, 1981, Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989, Sacco 1995). This tendency is only magnified with the advent of reality TV and "Cops". TV does allow viewers into some new "information systems" (Meyrowitz 1985) with "Cops". Yet the vision of criminal justice which emerges is quite similar to those which have come before in the news media. This is because the reality-TV of "Cops" offers a very particular kind of "reality". Its narrative techniques--such as naturalization, positioning of viewer identification, and closure--shape "raw reality" into made-for-TV stories offering a pro-police perspective. The most powerful players - the police - strongly tend to dictate how the actual policing situations shown on "Cops" are packaged interpretively. One central way this packaging occurs is through verbal scripting of the visuals on "Cops". Audiences must rely heavily on informal narration by police, narration edited together to provide a verbal storyline explaining the video images. The result is a situation where "seeing" may very often be believing what one is told - by police.

With the televising of surveillance footage discussed in Case Study Two, police again have the most control over how the material is presented. Police surveillance footage released to TV news comes in a package with an authoritative police interpretation. In contrast, the truth claims of "amateur" journalists offering home video may be treated more skeptically by news organizations.

In Case Study Three, of the Stanley Cup riot, police were not able to censor what was televised. Even so, police dominated the complex process in the months afterwards of defining what actually happened during the riot. The third study demonstrates that TV news footage of policing crowds also depends a good deal on verbal interpretation. While this is true with many kinds of TV footage, it is even more so with footage of riots or disorderly demonstrations. Such footage in particular features a rapidly unfolding, chaotic blur of events, too complicated and ambiguous to offer much of a self-evident narrative, perhaps even to the participants themselves. I showed how TV news coverage of the Stanley Cup riot relied heavily on verbal interpretation of the televised events by witnesses or experts. There was a televisual record of the riot, but without these verbal interpretations the visual material on tape had no clear definition. I showed how competing accounts emerged immediately after the riot, including one which was widely told concerning how police were brutal and heavy-handed, and police made the situation worse. However, despite the fact that a TV record existed of virtually the whole riot, the competition between sharply diverging accounts was settled in the politics of verbal interpretation. Irrespective of what might be seen on TV, only some voices were

heard, and told what became the official story; others were silenced. The three riot enquiries were structured in ways that stifled any critical interpretations of police behaviour. Instead the reviews were set up in ways which made it easy to blame other factors for the riot, notably television itself. The fact that the Stanley Cup riot was recorded by TV news cameras did not inhibit this shifting of blame very much at all. On the contrary, the existence of the TV footage actually helped police promote their version of the story: police and their allies became the authorized definers of the footage during the riot enquiries. They alone could review the TV material, in private. Then they could use the fact they had reviewed it simply to warrant their chosen account of what happened that June 14, without actually producing any specific video evidence to back this up. I showed how, in particular, the City of Vancouver's riot review was structured in a way to pre-ordain a finding that television itself was one of the key culprits. As it turned out, TV also offered a handy scapegoat in deflecting the blame.

If police dominated the defining process in the first three studies, in the fourth case study, of Greenpeace, there was no need for such definitional struggle. In shaping and formatting its law-breaking protests for television news, Greenpeace internalizes a particular set of constraints. Police can simply play along at little cost in the peaceful arrest of Greenpeace activists. Ironically, in what are ostensibly acts of dissent against the established order, there is actually more convergence of interest among all the key players during Greenpeace's televised law-breaking stunts than in

any of the other cases I studied. This convergence of interest is demonstrated, for example, when an "arrest scenario" is negotiated in advance, choreographing the televised arrests of Greenpeace activists to the satisfaction of all the players.

To sum up then, the first three case studies show how the police are often able to control the authoritative definition of television accounts featuring footage of "real" criminal justice, one factor that results in particular visions of crime and policing which tend to support the established order. In contrast, my final case study, on Greenpeace, reveals a situation where police do not need to exert such control. Thus, television does not simply include viewers in "new information systems" in these four cases (Meyrowitz 1985). Instead, the resulting visions of criminal justice are ideological ones.

Meyrowitz (1985) is critical of much previous research on media for focusing overly on content and neglecting the question of medium form in analyzing media influences. My thesis shows that these questions are very difficult to separate. In the end, Meyrowitz's analysis itself relies on an argument about content - that TV makes available revealing new types of information from the situations it records. The evidence from my research does not support Meyrowitz's arguments, and instead fits with other research showing TV tends to present a world view that supports established power (eg. Gerbner and Gross 1976, Gerbner et al. 1994, Tuchman 1978, Fiske and Hartley 1978, Fiske 1987, 1996, Gans 1979, Ericson et al. 1987, 1989, 1991, Shanahan and Morgan 1999).

**What role does the broader cultural context play in the media's influences?**

My four studies show a third factor that constrains any potential levelling or democratizing influence of TV. This third factor is the broader cultural context in which these particular criminal justice situations are televised. The new social situations or "information systems" created by television on the front-lines of criminal justice are not discrete and isolated entities. These new "information systems" derive their meanings in part from an interaction with the wider culture, which provides the symbolic resources used to make sense of these particular glimpses into the world of criminal justice. Of course, audiences give their own interpretations to what they see on TV, but the broader cultural context will be a key influence on these interpretations. The wider culture also influences TV production, for example, shaping the choices producers make in deciding what video-taped activity constitutes a "story" for "Cops", and how such a story is packaged interpretively. This broader cultural context, which tends to support what I have called the ideology of law and order (Scheingold 1984, 1995), is thus another factor which introduces a particular ideological bias into these visions of criminal justice.

In the case of "Cops", the role of the broader cultural context is illustrated by how its televised vignettes of "real" policing interact with various other representations of criminal justice surrounding it in the schedule: in TV news, TV fictional entertainment programming, and advertising. Together these various images of crime and control produce a larger portrait of criminal



justice, a whole which is more than the sum of its parts. "Cops" occupies a unique and important place in this mix. "Cops" is not just more of the same: offering footage of "real" crime and policing, "Cops" makes distinctive and forceful new claims to show the "reality" of criminal justice. Nevertheless, in how it structures its stories, "Cops" still resonates very well with existing representations of criminal justice in both TV news and fictional TV entertainment. "Cops" has a way of nicely tying together the whole media package on crime. It shows both news and entertainment portrayals of criminal justice are much like its version of "reality". In turn, the meaning of "Cops" is understood in the context of these various other portrayals of crime which are prominent in contemporary culture. These other accounts of crime confirm that what we see on "Cops" is "reality". Thus, rather than offering new visions of previously unseen "back regions" of policing as Meyrowitz might predict, "Cops" reaffirms - and is reaffirmed by - dominant cultural understandings of criminal justice, tending to reproduce an ideology of law and order.

As discussed in the second case study, surveillance footage which airs on TV news has key similarities to the images of policing on "Cops". This televised surveillance footage tends also to resonate with dominant ways of thinking about criminal justice. Like the vignettes on "Cops", the surveillance footage shown on TV spectacularizes individual crimes (eg. Young 1996). Such footage is most often delivered to the media along with an authoritative interpretation by police. Surveillance footage carries with it the implication that police and their technologies are the answer to

crime. It is biased toward showing poor and non-white suspects, and against showing police in a bad light. Indeed, another finding of my research is that video surveillance material is often released to TV outlets as what I have called police "promotional footage" even when it serves no practical crime-fighting purpose. Like the vignettes on "Cops", the broadcast of such surveillance footage serves to promote an ideology of law and order.

Similarly, in Case Study Three of the Stanley Cup riot, the authorized version of events which emerged also meshed with dominant cultural understandings of criminal justice, understandings in which such a riot must have been caused by "punks" rather than involving everyday people; in this way of thinking, police are the solution, never part of the problem.

These various examples show how the new cultural logic of mass media interacts with older, more deeply-rooted cultural templates about crime and punishment (Sparks 1992). In the situations I have studied, television tells criminal justice stories in new forms, and using new technologies. However, these are often the "same old stories", following enduring cultural scripts which long predate the advent of TV and contemporary media culture.

Finally, the fourth study shows how the broader cultural context even directly constrains the behaviour of Greenpeace activists in front of the camera, who feel they must tailor their own activities for TV to keep them within widely-held cultural norms. I have shown how Greenpeace activists, in designing their actions for television news, constrain themselves to fit with dominant cultural understandings - for example, keeping their media actions non-

violent, and focusing on simple messages. As a consequence of making television stunts its primary modus operandi, Greenpeace has tended to shift more toward strictly defined goals consonant with the dominant culture. Greenpeace has moved away from trying to bring about the broader, overall cultural transformation or shift in consciousness envisioned by its founders.

In sum, then, all four case studies show how the wider cultural context is a third factor which works to reproduce the status quo as it interacts with the particular televised situations in question.

I have thus far argued that three factors tend to shape how television broadcasts these criminal justice situations: 1) the most powerful players - usually the police in my case studies - tend largely to determine which situations are televised. 2) These players also tend to determine how these televised situations are presented or packaged interpretively, often providing the "authoritative definition" of the televised events. 3) The meanings made of each televised situation are also determined in part by a broader cultural context which tends to support the established order.

After thinking about my case studies for a long time, I observed that a fourth factor also seems to be at work in reproducing the status quo: the actual properties of television itself as a medium. This observation answers another of my specific research questions.

**To what extent do the formal properties of television tend to reduce or reproduce the status quo?**

Meyrowitz argues that TV tends to reduce inequality because television is more capable than print of revealing new types of social information to wide audiences in ways which reduce social distance. However, my research has led me to an opposite conclusion. TV as a medium actually has properties which make it prone to supporting and strengthening existing power relations.

My case studies demonstrate that Meyrowitz tends to overread greatly the importance of the visual aspect of television in determining the meanings of what is broadcast- for example, by his analogies with a "one-way mirror", "lifting a veil", and "peeking behind a curtain". One might argue that he is simply using visual metaphors as a way to speak about the knowledge transmitted by TV more generally. However, his various examples also focus very much on the visual. Based on my data, I argue that TV is clearly not dominated so much by its visual component as Meyrowitz suggests. TV does not simply provide the audience with windows into criminal justice. What is "revealed" instead is more often what the most powerful players in each situation want us to believe we are seeing. One of the key reasons, especially with footage of "real" crime and policing, is because these players often provide their verbal interpretation of the visual material. Television's images certainly have a force, but the TV images most often rely to varying degrees on verbal interpretation for their meanings.

In particular, when producers broadcast video footage of "real" events, they are heavily reliant on oral interpretation of the footage, because TV producers must make the best of whatever visuals are available, regardless of their quality. Even more so, real footage of

crime and policing incidents in particular presents various practical obstacles to record - it is often of quickly-unfolding, chaotic incidents recorded in difficult locations - further limiting the quality of available visuals, and making such TV footage even more reliant on accompanying oral interpretation.

Meyrowitz's analysis fits with other social scientific and popular understandings of TV which heavily emphasize its visual aspect. This emphasis on the visual is even shown in the word "television" itself, and the fact that TV is commonly understood as something we "watch" as "viewers". However, particularly, in my first three case studies, I have found that it is very often largely the words, not the pictures, that give meaning to these various televised events. Police provide authoritative definitions by verbally interpreting the TV footage, with "Cops", with surveillance camera clips, and with confiscated footage of the Stanley Cup riot. Because it facilitates the most powerful players supplying these verbal interpretations, this means television as a medium has much more of a tendency to reproduce the status quo than Meyrowitz acknowledges. Rather than revealing the "truth" of these situations, the fact that there is an actual TV record of the events often serves instead simply to give added legitimacy and force to the chosen verbal account of the most influential players. TV tends to validate the words of those who hold the upper hand.

Thus the most important formal property of TV is not its ability to provide audiences with new types of social information as Meyrowitz argued. Instead, the most important formal property of television may be its ability, compared to other media, to make more

forceful truth claims. In these studies, TV does not have greater power than other media to let viewers see the "truth" of institutional life; TV instead has greater power to validate the ideological stories it tells about what happens in other institutions.

Meyrowitz (1994: 50) listed the various formal properties of media which medium theorists study: "the senses that are required to attend to the medium, whether the communication is bi-directional or uni-directional, how quickly messages can be disseminated, whether learning how to encode or decode in the medium is difficult or simple, how many people can attend to the same message at the same moment, and so forth". I would add to his list that different forms of media like TV have different epistemologies linked with them. Television often relies on the particular epistemology that "seeing is believing". Thus, for example, the anchor of television's news magazine *Inside Edition* (June 5, 1999) described the video camera as "the truth machine" and stated, "it never lies."

Why can television make such potent truth claims? Through its presentation of visual material, TV invokes a strong tendency in Western culture to understand that "seeing is believing" (Fetveit 1999). This cultural notion is so ingrained as to be present in the roots or etymology of our language, for example in the word "evidence". This cultural tendency to rely on the visual for evidence was reinforced by the development of still photography and then video, technologies which were purported to offer an indexical relation to the real. In these technologies, the truth-telling power of visual evidence was paired with the truth-telling power of science.

For example, when photography was first developed, it was conceived partly as a tool with both scientific and legal evidentiary uses (Fetveit 1999: 789-790).

The widely-held understanding that "seeing is believing" might even lead some to think that TV displays a relatively unmediated "reality". Consider the notion of "reality TV" itself, and that the promoters of "Cops" can conceivably sell claims that such TV programs represent "raw reality" or "unfiltered reality". It is difficult to imagine a parallel "reality book", for example.

Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1991: 23) argue similarly that television news has greater powers of validation than do radio or newspapers. These increased powers of validation are seen by Ericson et al. to account for the very consistent research finding that TV is the most trusted and relied-on source of news, in comparison with print media and radio (1991: 24). Ericson et al. suggest that TV news derives these powers of validation from its ability to present sources making their statements directly to the camera in appropriate social contexts which convey the sources' authority. I have investigated different types of television situations from those studied by Ericson, Baranek and Chan: I have studied situations where TV actually records the events in question. These situations I have studied offer TV even greater powers of validation because they show "the real thing".

Altheide and Snow (1979: 98-99) offer a somewhat similar explanation of the epistemological force of TV visuals. They argue visual information depends to a large degree on context for its meaning. TV takes its visuals and places them in a new context. The

viewer may not be aware of the extent to which visual information depends of context for its validity, and the extent to which in the absence of such context, the viewer is heavily dependent on verbal interpretation of the visual information.

Thus, we should invert the meaning of the quotation above from the anchor on *Inside Edition*. TV might indeed be termed the "truth machine", but this is not because TV "never lies". It is because TV, more strongly than other media, *seems* to be presenting the truth.

In indicating this limitation of Meyrowitz's analysis, I raise the more general point for future consideration that many lay and social scientific understandings of TV place too much emphasis on the visual aspect of television, as opposed to its oral or verbal component. I am certainly not indicating that this verbal component is all-important in determining TV's meanings. What I am arguing is that the balance needs to be shifted somewhat: TV is simply not as much a medium dominated by visuals as some prominent accounts, such as that of Meyrowitz, suggest.

If TV's powers of truth-telling or validation help reproduce the established power relations, other formal properties of TV as a medium also have this influence. My data on Greenpeace fits with earlier research suggesting that because TV has a limited capacity for complex communication, this inhibits political discourse, and in particular critique of the status quo (Postman 1985; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993). Compared to print media, TV has a limited capacity for complex messages, for discursivity. This is a result of limited space and time TV has to



communicate. It is also a consequence of television's ephemerality (Ericson et al. 1991). Most of the time what is shown once on TV is simply gone and cannot be reviewed. A further constraint on complex messages flows from the way TV is consumed: in the home, by an audience who may be attending selectively rather than fully.

Attempting to hold the interest of a very diverse audience who often attend very selectively, and mostly in their leisure hours, TV often features a strong entertainment imperative (Altheide and Snow 1979, Postman 1985). For these reasons, in communicating through TV, Greenpeace must restrict itself to simple messages, as my fourth case study shows. This constrains Greenpeace's ability to bring about any substantial transformation in political consciousness.

Now, with the above arguments in mind, I will move on to discuss the question: how does television influence these situations in front of the camera, and, more broadly, the institutions it records?

Clearly, TV does indeed alter or reconstitute these four types of criminal justice situations when they are broadcast, essentially creating new social situations. Furthermore, in doing so, television has various broader ripple effects on the institutions studied. How much does each of the three theoretical perspectives I have discussed help us understand the influences of TV in these four situations? First we will consider Meyrowitz's argument about these influences of television. This argument is addressed by the two specific research questions I will discuss next.

**To what extent does televising these criminal justice situations bring about levelling of hierarchies or reduction of inequality between different social groups?**

Meyrowitz argued that in "exposing" new situations, television has social levelling effects, reducing hierarchy and social inequality. I have just outlined four factors which together mean that TV does not simply "expose" or "reveal" these situations, but instead tends to give ideological visions of them which support the established order. These four factors tend greatly to limit the levelling or democratization effects predicted by Meyrowitz, although such effects may still occur in certain instances.

In the case of "Cops", for example, these factors severely constrain how much television might break down social barriers and cause the levelling predicted by Meyrowitz. How TV feeds back - or in this case does not feed back - into the situations recorded for "Cops" is dictated by this point. If "Cops" offered a more rounded portrait of front-line police behaviour - if it actually revealed "back stage behaviour" which police wished to keep secret - "Cops" might lead police to modify their behaviour. Instead, "Cops" selects and presents its "real" footage to portray crime and policing in ways which legitimate the status quo. "Cops" not only reproduces the symbolic power of police. "Cops" also supports a law and order ideology which reinforces social inequality along dimensions like race and class. For example, "Cops" is biased toward showing suspects who are non-white and lower class individuals.

Similarly, the televising of surveillance footage and home video footage of crime, analyzed in the second case study,

apparently will tend mostly to reproduce established power relations. It likely does not help create social levelling, or what celebrants of the home video camera called optimistically "video democracy". Previous research has shown police surveillance camera footage offers a selective scrutiny, focusing heavily on poorer neighbourhoods and on non-white suspects (eg. Norris and Armstrong 1999). The surveillance camera and home video camcorder provide an interesting comparison in understanding how much new media technologies will or will not result in social levelling. Home video may offer an occasional highly effective tool for resistance to police abuses, as the Rodney King video demonstrates. However, home video is a limited tool in comparison to the expansion of police power that comes with the surveillance camera.

The third case study provides a further test of Meyrowitz's theory. Other researchers have described changes in protest policing as a result of broadcast TV. These researchers (P. Waddington 1994, Della Porta 1998, G. Marx 1998) have argued that, by revealing violent police tactics, TV has led to a general softening of police behaviour in controlling demonstrators or rioters. This fits well with Meyrowitz's general thesis.

My study of the Stanley Cup riot shows, however, why this softening of riot policing might not always need to take place. The historical shift in crowd policing tactics has apparently been a selective and unequal one. Previous research shows only some social groups are policed more gently because of the threat of damaging TV coverage (P. Waddington 1994; Fillieule 1998). With more marginal,

less organized and less powerful groups, police can still crack down hard and get away with it, despite news cameras. Thus, it may well be true that, as previous research suggested, TV coverage has been an important factor in a broad tendency toward the softening of the policing of crowds or protests. This would support Meyrowitz's arguments. Yet my case study shows that, given the particular political context, the story of violent police suppression of a crowd can sometimes be retrospectively silenced, even if the whole thing is recorded on television. My findings thus fit with other accounts (P. Waddington, 1994, Fillieule 1998) indicating that the softening of crowd policing has been a selective one, depending largely on how socially marginal the protesters or rioters are.

**How and through what mechanisms might audience pressure for democratization be applied?**

Meyrowitz's analysis drew my attention to how televising these various criminal justice incidents creates new social situations by involving the TV audience in them. Indeed, TV audiences become not only spectators but, as shown in the second, third and fourth studies, actual players in the front-line criminal justice situations now broadcast to them. The TV audiences become involved in these social situations in a variety of ways. For example, audiences can identify criminal suspects shown in "video wanted posters" on TV, submit their own home videos of criminal justice situations to news or reality-TV, participate in public enquiries into a televised riot, or, after watching protests on TV, support the law-

breaking environmental activism by joining in Greenpeace and sending in money.

Yet involving audiences in these ways does not seem to produce the political pressures for social levelling which Meyrowitz predicted. This is because, in the cases I studied, audiences become involved in these social situations largely through institutional mechanisms and channels. Audiences' roles are defined by the key institutional players, and this highly constrains these roles. This is partly because TV is a one-way medium, and watching does not itself create a vehicle for active involvement. This unidirectional quality is another key way TV differs from a face-to-face interaction, and creates another problem for Meyrowitz's attempt to transpose Goffman's analysis (1959) to mass-mediated situations.

In my case studies, audiences tend to wind up simply being used by these powerful institutions in ways which reproduce hierarchy and the status quo. This may be seen as a fifth factor which tends to reproduce the existing order as these new situations are televised. The first four I outlined are factors which shape what is broadcast; this fifth factor shapes audiences' responses to it.

For example, case studies two and three shows how TV creates new ways that audiences can be used in surveillance of each other, expanding police surveillance power. The Stanley Cup riot reviews I discussed in Case Study Three were swathed in much rhetoric about the importance of the "public" and the "community". However, public input into the review process was structured in such a way as to pre-ordain the desired outcome for police and their political allies. When the public account emerging was not the desirable one for

these players, as in the example I gave of the dentist who questioned the official story, the public voice was quickly stifled.

**Ironically, with the rise of Greenpeace, even purported resistance to authority occurs in ways which actually reproduce institutional authority, rather than empowering the TV audience. Case Study Four shows how reliance on television means Greenpeace constitutes its membership, its public, as passive: instead of a protesting crowd, Greenpeace members remain a TV audience of "couch potato activists". The passive television public constituted by Greenpeace's version of activism is analogous to that which emerges in earlier studies: an audience which may be stirred by watching its criminal justice passion play - but yet is only able to act in narrow and pre-ordained ways through authorized institutional channels.**

**To sum up, my studies have found a number of limitations to Meyrowitz's theory. Now I will move on to consider the specific research questions aimed at examining the second theoretical position, Altheide and Snow's "media logic" perspective.**

**Do these situations - where crime and policing is televised "live" - show distinctive types of TV influence on the situations themselves? To what extent and in what specific ways do the activities of the institutions which are televised come to be shaped by media considerations or "media logic"?**

**Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989) revealed in detail the "mediatization" of bureaucracy - how criminal justice bureaucracies organized themselves to deal with the news media and vice versa. My**

four case studies shift the empirical focus instead to front-line situations of crime and policing which are directly recorded and broadcast on television. I have found that, in these situations, new types of influences of TV are revealed which are more fundamental than those described by Ericson et al. Televising these front-line situations affects actual day-to-day practises of criminal justice. TV singles out particular cases as important or "bigger than life" for the justice system and the system treats them as such. Televising these situations promotes dramatic, spectacular, simplistic approaches to criminal justice by various actors in the system. These kinds of changes are predicted best by the "media logic" perspective (Altheide and Snow 1979). Even so, these influences of media logic on criminal justice seem largely to take forms, and occur within parameters, set by police.

Through "Cops" and numerous similar programs and initiatives, television feeds into the day-to-day practices of policing. Policing is converted into informal media shaming rituals of summary justice. Television considerations not only shape the immediate situations before the cameras, but feed back in broader ways into the source institutions I have examined. For example, police-in-training learn from watching "Cops". Similarly, in the second case study I gave examples of various types of situations where crime and policing are captured by surveillance cameras or home video cameras, and then become spectacularized on TV news. This may in turn lead to an intensification of the formal justice process in those cases which become media spectacles and therefore "bigger than life" (Altheide and Snow 1979).

The second and third case studies also exemplify the role of broadcast TV in the expansion of, and qualitative shifts in, criminal justice surveillance, and how this further contributes to the spectacularization of criminal justice. "Video wanted posters" extend police surveillance capability but also spectacularize crime. This may also intensify the formal criminal justice process, as epitomized by the Bulger case (Young 1996).

Media logic influences not only police but prosecutors, judges, and policy-makers, promoting dramatic, spectacular, sometimes simplistic forms of criminal justice: informal media shaming rituals by police like the "perp walk" (Doyle and Ericson 1996), more vigorous prosecution (Young 1996), spectacular sentences tailored for the media (Altheide 1995), and media-friendly crime policies such as "three strikes, you're out" (Surette 1996).

**What difference does it make to the influences of media logic how dependent the particular source institution is on the mass media?**

My first three case studies show the police are often able to maintain a great deal of room to maneuver vis-a-vis the media, even when police behaviour is directly recorded on camera. In contrast, my fourth case study reveals Greenpeace is much more wholly a creature of the media, and particularly of television. As opposed to the police, who are much less directly dependent on mass media, Greenpeace is thus an example par excellence of an institution greatly influenced by "media logic" (Altheide and Snow 1979). Greenpeace exemplifies Altheide and Snow's point that the more



dependent an institution is on media, the more likely that media logic will dictate its operations, even to the point where such an institution is consumed by media considerations (Altheide and Snow 1979: 238-239). Thus, Greenpeace is the strongest example among my four studies of how media logic can fundamentally alter organizational activity which TV broadcasts, and in doing so shape the institution more broadly. Television concerns almost wholly shape Greenpeace's signature activity, its law-breaking protest. Made for TV, such protests are carefully organized and planned in advance, non-violent, middle of the road, conducted by a little group of professionals with a bite-sized message.

Furthermore, through this point of entry, media logic has fed back on and shaped the contours of the whole Greenpeace organization more broadly. Centering the organization on television, Greenpeace also chooses particular telegenic campaigns, and has re-oriented itself to short-term goals which fit better with TV communication, rather than aiming to bring about a long-term shift in philosophy or consciousness, as it originally intended.

Now I will move on to discuss the remaining research questions. Answering them situates the second conception in relation to the third and final one analyzed, the "institutional perspective" of Ericson, Baranek and Chan.

**What is the relative balance of power between media institutions and media considerations and, on the other hand, various source institutions? What are the limits of media logic?**

If these criminal justice situations are fundamentally influenced by "media logic" , this influence also has its limits. In case studies one, two and three, media logic certainly does not extend its influence to the point that media become the dominant institution. Furthermore, police create their own new uses of television for their own purposes, such as the development of video wanted posters, or the various alternative uses of television made after the Stanley Cup riot. In these cases, it would probably make more sense to speak of television being shaped by "police logic", rather than vice versa.

This finding is most consistent with the institutional perspective of Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989). Television as a technology, or the influences of media culture more broadly do not simply, in isolation, cause changes in policing and criminal justice, or in other institutions. As Altheide and Snow (1979: 236) state: "The entire process is best understood as an interaction among the various participants rather than as a one-way form in which media dictate definitions of reality." Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989) argue media content is best seen as a product of inter-institutional "negotiation" between media and source institutions. Their "institutional perspective" gives much more weight than do the conceptions of either Altheide and Snow, or Meyrowitz, to the relative influence of source institutions as opposed to media considerations. Similarly to Ericson, Baranek and Chan, I have found, in case studies one, two and three in particular, the police have mostly dominated this process. Thus, police often use broadcast TV to their own ends in the situations researched here, centrally as a

means of legitimation, but also for other institutional purposes, for example, to assist in identifying and criminalizing suspects. In the case of the Stanley Cup riot, police even constructed television itself as a convenient scapegoat, deflecting blame from themselves after they came under fire for heavy-handed crowd policing. If police use TV to their benefit, conversely, when the introduction of broadcast TV threatens to alter the situations in ways which the police do not want, sooner or later police tend to manage or control the influence of television. Police exert control in part through various mechanisms of censoring or of controlling the definition of the situation in the televised account. Alternatively, the status quo is mostly maintained as police simply accommodate - making simple adjustments or going along when it costs them relatively little to do so (the softening of crowd police tactics in some circumstances; playing along with Greenpeace media stunts). In short, the introduction of TV reshapes these criminal justice situations - but in ways controlled and managed to a large extent by police. These abilities by police - to adapt television to their own purposes and to accommodate its influences - may be seen as final factors that reproduce or strengthen existing power relations when these situations are televised.

**Do particular situations of crime and policing which occur directly before the cameras present more vulnerability for police than does standard police news?**

In showing the general dominance of the police over media influences in these studies, my thesis fits well with the research of Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989). It also fits with other research on the sociology of the news media which has demonstrated such dominance of source institutions, particularly the police, in the news-making process (eg. Davis 1951; Chibnall 1977; Hall et al. 1978; Fishman 1978, 1980, 1981; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994; Sacco 1995). My research extends this previous research to new contexts involving TV news and reality television. My work shows how police dominate in new ways, not only managing media messages, but mostly controlling how media considerations feed back into the actual practise of criminal justice itself. Ironically, in these situations where policing is recorded directly, with certain exceptions, police actually seem even less vulnerable.

### **COMPARING THE THREE PERSPECTIVES: A SUMMARY**

To sum up, my four case studies have found least support for the medium theory perspective of Meyrowitz. It is very useful to think of television as creating new social situations through introducing viewers into new information systems, as Meyrowitz does. Indeed, television does reshapes these front-line criminal justice situations as it records them. There are some examples which do support Meyrowitz's arguments: for example, the reported increase in police brutality complaints following the Rodney King

incident, or the general softening of protest policing tactics with some kinds of protesters. However, rather than breaking down social barriers and having a levelling effect to the degree Meyrowitz argues, this reshaping process more tends instead to reproduce the established order for the reasons I have given. A key problem is that Meyrowitz's analysis focuses overly on the formal properties of TV itself. At the same time, Meyrowitz neglects a sociological investigation of the actual contexts in which media production occurs.

The four case studies provide more support for the second perspective considered, Altheide and Snow's conception of "media logic". Key forms in which media logic influences these situations are that it makes certain criminal justice events "bigger than life" spectacles and promotes dramatic and spectacular behaviour on the part of the justice system itself. Altheide and Snow's conception of "media logic" probably captures best the pervasive sweep of media influence on other institutions. But it needs to be revised to take more account of the limits of media logic and the power of source institutions.

Clearly, the ways in which these criminal justice situations are reshaped as they are televised are not simply determined by media considerations: either by the formal properties of TV itself (Meyrowitz 1985) or by the cultural logic of mass media more generally (Altheide and Snow 1979). Rather, the various impacts of the introduction of TV into these criminal justice situations are dictated in large part by the most powerful institutional players in each situation, generally the police. In this way, the case studies

fit best with the "institutional perspective" of Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989).

In the introduction I raised the question of how much the dominance of the powerful institutional players shown by the research of Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987, 1989, 1991) was merely an artefact of their theoretical orientation and methodology. My case studies suggest otherwise - I found a great deal of further evidence of this type of dominance, particularly by the police. My studies instead thus lend further empirical support to the arguments of Ericson, Baranek and Chan concerning the dominance of source institutions like the police in the process of "negotiating control".

The discrepancy between the analyses of Altheide and Snow and Ericson, Baranek and Chan is in part a function of different empirical foci. Altheide and Snow focused their institutional analyses on institutions which are more heavily dependent on TV audience support. Thus these institutions showed more thorough influence of media logic. In turn, my findings are somewhat different from those of Ericson, Baranek and Chan because of shifting empirical foci within the realm of policing. Unlike them, I focused on situations where crime and policing were recorded directly by television. Those situations are reshaped by the influence of television in more direct and fundamental ways.

Thus, it is important to bear in mind that there will be some variation in the depth of influence of media considerations from institution to institution, and from situation to situation, depending on the particular role of television.

**A central aspect of the dominance of key source institutions is the power of such institutions and their players to provide the "authorized definition" of what is televised. Whoever controls the definition of the particular televised situation controls to a great extent how television feeds back on and reshapes that situation, and television's resulting influences on criminal justice more broadly. The police definition of the situation is most often the one which carries the most force, and this dictates how TV reshapes criminal justice in these cases.**

**This fits with the arguments of Hall et al. (1978) who conceived key news sources like police as "primary definers", or those of Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989) who conceived institutional news sources as "authorized knowers". However, these ways of thinking about the definitional role of official sources need to be extended. The conception of the powerful definitional role of police and other sources in authority should include not only how these sources shape the meaning of media content. Simultaneously official definitions shape the situation in front of the camera.**

**Indeed, the power to provide the authorized definition of the televised situation is the power largely to shape and control all the various institutional influences of television more broadly.**

### **PROPOSITIONS OF A NEW SYNTHESIZED MODEL OF HOW TELEVISION INFLUENCES OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

**As my thesis has shown, television is broadcasting more and more front-line situations in other institutions, due both to new technological developments and to the institutions themselves becoming more pro-active with the media. Combining key elements**

of the "media logic" (Altheide and Snow 1979) and "institutional" perspectives (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1989, Ericson 1991, 1998), I can outline the key propositions of a new synthesized model of how television influences other institutions as it broadcasts their operations. I have focused on situations where television broadcasts crime and policing directly, but these propositions will apply to a variety of other contexts in which TV reshapes institutional life.

My four case studies have provided substantial evidence supporting each of the following propositions:

1. When television broadcasts situations in other institutions, it reshapes or reconstitutes them. The presence of television introduces audiences into the social situations, but also changes the meaning for the various institutional players of the situations, thereby altering the experience and behaviour of these players.
2. When television broadcasts front-line situations in institutions, this feeds back into those institutions, resulting in wider changes beyond the front-lines.
3. These changes include the institutions becoming more pro-active with the news media and restricting or concealing particular operations. Particular phenomena which are televised in other institutions will also often have tendencies to become more important, tightly managed, dramatic, spectacular, simplified, to occur in narrative form and to be shaped to fit more with conventional or dominant values.



4. The more dependent a particular institution is on television audience support, the more broadly TV reshapes that institution as it televises it.

5. When television records a situation directly, it will be reshaped more fundamentally in the ways stated than if media report on the situation indirectly.

6. Even though television creates new social situations and reshapes institutions more broadly as it televises them, the various changes which result tend simply to reproduce existing power relations, for the following seven reasons:

a) The more powerful players tend to dictate which institutional situations are broadcast.

b) The more powerful players tend to be able to produce the "authorized definition" of those institutional situations which are broadcast.

c) Through its power to invoke the notion that "seeing is believing" the medium of TV is uniquely effective at warranting and naturalizing the "authorized definition" by the more powerful players of a situation which is broadcast.

d) The meanings of particular institutional episodes which are broadcast are produced and understood in the context of a broader culture which tends to support the established order.

e) Television interacts with other institutions to create new institutional roles for audiences as they become part of the social situations which are broadcast. However, these institutionally-created roles tend to limit the TV audiences to types of involvement which simply reproduce institutional power.

- f) The more powerful players have more ability to introduce various changes in institutional practises made possible by TV which are beneficial to those players and reproduce or strengthen their power.
- g) The more powerful players have more ability to adapt their operations to avoid negative publicity without substantial harm to those players, or simply to withstand negative publicity.

In the first instance, these propositions apply to the situations I have studied in which television broadcasts front-line operations in criminal justice. But they can also help us understand how TV reshapes other institutional situations it records, and how TV and other media influence other institutions more generally.

### **SECONDARY CONTRIBUTIONS**

In addition to its primary aim of evaluating and advancing these three theoretical perspectives on media influence on other institutions, my thesis also makes a number of secondary contributions to knowledge. Case Study Two is the first study of the use of either surveillance camera footage or home video on TV news. In addition the thesis contributes to existing literatures in the various sociological subfields concerned with the substantive areas of the other case studies, as follows.

In the case study of "Cops", I contributed to the literature on crime in the media by examining this distinctive new type of media product, and how it compares with more established mass media portrayals of criminal justice, as detailed in Case Study One. But I

also made a novel argument which can be applied more generally as a theoretical contribution to the literature on crime in the media. As I stated in that chapter, most social scientific analyses consider either crime news, crime fiction or crime on reality-TV in isolation, or else treat these as discrete components of media content. This approach ignores the extent to which these media products are intertwined and mutually constitutive: each helps shapes the meanings which will be made of the others. Together they make a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. Thus, further research on the influence of representations of criminal justice in the media should attempt to treat it more wholistically as a cultural phenomenon. Crime in the media is a phenomenon which derives its full force from merging the drama of fiction with the claims to truth of news and reality-TV.

My study of the aftermath of the Stanley Cup riot also contributes to the specialized body of literature on public order policing. It provides further empirical evidence consistent with previous research arguing that the softening of public order policing is a selective one (P. Waddington 1994, Fillieule 1998) and that more marginal groups may still be policed in a heavy handed fashion regardless of the presence of media. My thesis also builds on previous analyses of the retrospective process by which the meaning of riots is constructed (Tumber 1982, P. Waddington 1998). My research shows how and why police can dominate this process in spite of the presence of television.

My thesis makes further secondary contributions to the sociological literature on social movements, as discussed in Case

**Study Four.** It contributes to the literature on media and social movements by showing another way in which media considerations constrain such movements, not only by giving them unfavourable coverage, but as movements themselves internalize the constraints of news media communication.

My thesis also raises further questions about a recent trend in social movements. The example of Greenpeace illustrates how television has helped reshape social movement organizations and political protest more broadly. The rise to pre-eminence of Greenpeace among environmental organizations can be situated within a broader trend. This trend is the institutionalization and formalization of protest and of protest groups which has occurred since the 1960s (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; McCarthy and McPhail 1998). As discussed in Case Study Three, since the 1960s and 1970s, protest policing has increasingly moved to a "negotiated management" approach (Della Porta and Reiter 1998) in which the ugly spectacle of televised conflict between protesters and police is increasingly avoided through the formalization of protest arrangements. More generally, protest groups have become increasingly professionalized since the 1960s (Everett 1992). The role of television news has been neglected in other attempts in the sociological literature on social movements to account for the formalization and institutionalization of protest since the 1960s (eg. Meyer and Tarrow 1998; McCarthy and McPhail 1998). The growth of Greenpeace can be seen as an extreme case in this more general trend. McCarthy and McPhail (1998: 84) argue that protest has become accepted since the 1960s as a normal, legitimate part of

the political process, like voting or petitioning. They also argue that "the recurring behavioural repertoires of both protesters and police, and their interactions within one another, have become institutionalized and therefore routinized, predictable, and perhaps as a result, of diminishing impact" (1998: 84.) McCarthy and McPhail develop a complex account of the processes that have led to this, including the transformation of the legal context, the evolution of protest policing, and the professionalization of social movement organizations. Yet they neglect any discussion of the role of the media, particularly television, in their analysis. It may be argued that the televising of protest is one cause of the (selective) adoption of softer protest policing styles. Also the fact that crowds no longer need to be assembled to communicate to large audiences allows for a streamlining and professionalization of protest activity. Furthermore, the need to execute protest precisely to fit television news production requirements requires professionalization. The example of Greenpeace thus shows that McCarthy and McPhail have neglected one important contributing factor - the influence of television - in the range of reasons they list for the formalization of protest.

Thus, the last secondary contribution of my research that I will highlight here is that it points to how the role of television needs to be considered more in analyses attempting to explain the recent trend toward the institutionalization of social movements.

I conclude by noting that this assorted list of secondary contributions again reflects the myriad influences of television as it increasingly records more and more aspects of institutional life.

**As I stated at the outset of the thesis, a theory of television's social impacts must not narrowly focus on television's influence on the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of individual audience members. Analyzing television's influences on other institutions is thus an important way forward toward a fuller sociological understanding of TV's central role in shaping contemporary social life.**

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**APPENDIX:****TELEVISION AND THEORIES OF THE EVOLUTION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

My case studies have shown that, in recording situations on the front-lines of criminal justice, television has some wider ripple effects on criminal justice institutions. My primary aim in this thesis has been to advance theories of how TV reshapes other institutions, a project I have summarized in the conclusion. In this appendix, as a final, secondary contribution of my thesis, I briefly note that it has implications and raises important further questions for another body of theory, one which I have not so far discussed in any detail.

This second body of work theorizes the evolution of criminal justice institutions in particular. In answering my research questions, I have raised further questions for this other body of literature. Because television reshapes institutional practises, we need to incorporate analysis of the role of TV into theorizing how criminal justice institutions have evolved. In this appendix, I will briefly show how my case studies suggest that sociological theories of the evolution of criminal justice need to be more sensitive to the historical role of television.

**THEORIZING A SCHISM IN CONTEMPORARY CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

I focus first on the argument of David Garland (1996, 2000). Garland suggests that a kind of schism or bifurcation has developed in modes of contemporary criminal justice. He argues that presently in the justice systems of Western democracies (using the examples of the US and the UK) there are two alternative discourses about, and

corresponding strategies of, crime control: on the one hand, a rather dispassionate, preventive, technical and managerial one (see also Feeley and Simon 1994), and, on the other hand, a more emotionally charged and retributive, vengeance-oriented way in which our justice systems treat crime. The latter way of thinking about crime which Garland identifies as an alternative, conflicting current in contemporary Western criminal justice, fits very well with what I described earlier as "law and order ideology".

Garland argues that punitive public sentiments which fuel this retributive form of criminal justice are especially strong now in Britain and the U.S. for various historically specific reasons (2000: 11). These reasons include the current media situation and particularly the rise of television:

Television viewing emerged as a mass phenomenon at much the same time that high crime rates began to become a normal social fact i.e. between about 1950 and 1970. TV's...affinity for crime as a theme, its sympathetic portrayal of individual victims who have suffered at the hands of criminals and been let down by an uncaring system, have transformed perceptions of crime and further reduced the sense of distance from the problem that the middle classes once enjoyed...This is not to say that the media has *produced* our interest in crime, nor that it has *produced* the popular punitiveness that appears as such a strong political current today....My point is rather that the mass media has tapped into, then dramatized and reinforced a new public experience - an experience with profound psychological resonance - and in doing so it has institutionalized that experience. (TV) has surrounded us with images of crime, pursuit and punishment, and provided us with regular, everyday occasions in which to express and play out the emotions of fear, anger and resentment and fascination that crime provokes. ...Public knowledge and opinion about criminal justice are based upon collective representations

rather than accurate information; upon a culturally given experience of crime rather than the thing itself (Garland 2000: 28-30).

Garland thus emphasizes how television may have contributed to this schism in criminal justice by helping create more punitive public attitudes toward crime. In effect, he suggests that television promotes ways of thinking about crime by the public that fit with what I have called "law and order ideology". Indeed, the ways television presents criminal justice described in my various case studies are good examples of the kind of TV representations of crime which might fuel such public punitiveness.

However, my thesis is more concerned with another type of television influence - on criminal justice institutions. I argue television has also contributed to this alternative, more retributive mode in criminal justice institutions, not just by influencing individual audience members, but by directly influencing those institutions in a variety of other ways. Thus, I expand on Garland's suggestion by showing that television's role in promoting the schism in criminal justice he describes goes far beyond simply affecting public views of crime.

These alternative, more vengeance-oriented currents within contemporary criminal justice are reflected in part in some increasingly punitive formal policies (Scheingold 1995; Garland 1996). In the United States, for example, these punitive policies have included "three strikes, you're out" legislation, boot camps, the rebirth of chain gangs and the renewed rise of capital punishment. Surette (1996) analyzes how media coverage of the murder of a young girl, Polly Klaas, was instrumental in kick-starting a

campaign to support "three strikes" in California in 1993 and 1994. As Surette wrote: "In an electronic-dominated, visual media society, the massive emotional coverage of heinous crimes overwhelms any analytical coverage" (Surette 1996: 198).

But this is not a simple case of television influencing the public who in turn influence criminal justice policy. The news media play an important role in promoting these kinds of policies by creating direct political pressure on politicians and policy-makers (Roberts 1992; Surette 1992). In fact, as Surette notes, "the public is frequently excluded from the process" (1996: 181). With "three strikes" legislation there was in fact some actual public pressure for the new law. But this came only after the Klaas case became a media spectacle and after electronic media commentators began promoting "three strikes" specifically as the response to the Klaas case, putting a good deal of direct pressure on state politicians. In short, television may influence policy-makers directly, rather than simply shaping public views.

Another type of direct media influence on the system is described by Attridge (1995). He gives numerous examples of what he calls "gonzo justice" in the criminal courts, spectacular criminal sentences apparently aimed at getting media attention.

My thesis adds to these earlier accounts by showing that the television culture of crime also feeds back in smaller, more individualized ways into the actual day to day practises of criminal justice. The influences of television both intensify the formal prosecution of individual cases (as in the various examples in Case Study Two) and affect informal practises in the justice system.



These include, for example, the unofficial shaming rituals on "Cops" discussed in Case Study One, or the "perp walk", a somewhat similar informal media shaming ritual in which suspects are paraded in handcuffs by police so they can be recorded by news cameras (Doyle and Ericson 1996).

Thus television and other media do not simply influence the public's views of criminal justice, but feed into the system at numerous other points, influencing policy-makers, prosecutors, sentencing judges and front-line police. Furthermore, all these tendencies fueled by TV and other media - punitive formal policies like "three strikes", intensified prosecution of cases which receive heavy media attention, media-targetted sentences, and different media shaming rituals conducted by police - in turn feed back into the public culture through TV and other media, further strengthening the element of punitiveness in the wider culture.

In short, the schism described by Garland (1996, 2000) in criminal justice is in part due to the influences of TV and other media. But TV does not simply affect public views as Garland describes. Beyond this, TV fuels an alternative current toward the spectacular and vengeful in the actual operations of criminal justice institutions themselves.

### **THEORIZING SPECTACLE AND SURVEILLANCE**

A second, analogous way of theorizing a split between different modes of criminal justice is in terms of "spectacle" and "surveillance". Theorists of the evolution of criminal justice - and social control more broadly - have described a long-term historical shift from "spectacle" to "surveillance" as the predominant

mechanism of control (Foucault 1977). My case studies have led me to reconsider this formulation.

As is well known, in Discipline and Punish (1977) Michel Foucault posited that the rise of the modern prison marked a shift from "spectacle" to "surveillance". This shift in predominant modes of control is seen to have occurred beginning in the early 19th century. Prior to this, the predominant mode was the spectacular exercise of "sovereign power", in rituals of public punishment and torture directed against the body of the criminal, for example, public hangings. Foucault argued that sovereign power was displaced by a new type of control exemplified by the prison. Foucault famously adopted the metaphor of Jeremy Bentham's proposed Panopticon. This was an imagined building in which one individual from a viewpoint at the centre might watch many, each in different cells, while the many never knew at any time whether they were being watched. For Foucault, the prison was the archetype of modern "Panoptical" institutions which enable surveillance. Thus, according to Foucault, there was a move from spectacles of criminal justice in which the "many" saw the "few", to surveillance in which the "few" saw the "many". Thus Foucault wrote, "our society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance" (1977: 217).

It is clear that this tendency toward surveillance as a mode of control, which began in the early 19th century, has been dramatically enhanced in contemporary society (Marx 1988; Dandeker 1990; Staples 1997). Describing this shift from spectacle to surveillance, and the massive expansion of surveillance, some authors see a movement from a highly passionately charged mode of

control to a more dispassionate, technical and instrumental one, a shift from moral outrage to a more utilitarian morality (Shearing and Stenning 1984; Lyon 1993; Feeley and Simon 1994).

In some very broad ways, these two modes of control - spectacle and surveillance - are somewhat analogous to the two discourses described by Garland, the former spectacular and vengeful, the latter secretive, technical and instrumental - although this second, Foucauldian account takes a longer term historical view, and here the former is superseded by the latter. Some authors influenced by Foucault theorize the more recent trend toward increased surveillance in contemporary society as an extension of Foucault's notion of "disciplinary" power (eg. Cohen 1985); others situate it using another Foucauldian formulation, in terms of the strategies of "governmentality" or "government at a distance" (Garland 1997). These differences need not concern us here. Either way, there is a contrast with the old-style spectacular, vengeful approach to punishment.

Can the history of social control thus be told broadly as a transition from spectacle to surveillance? A number of other authors argue against this narrative. They say that the analyses by Foucault and others neglect the persistence of somewhat similar spectacles of punishment in contemporary society. For example, in critiquing the Foucauldian account, Thomas Mathiesen (1997) sets up an opposition between Foucauldian Panopticism - in which "the few see the many" - and what Mathiesen calls Synopticism - "the many see the few". Mathiesen argues that Foucault neglects the persistence of Synopticism, in which "the many see the few".

Foucault ignores how spectacles persist in contemporary society as a complement to the kind of control in which "the few see the many". (for similar arguments about the persistence of spectacle see Shearing 1992: 428; Hatty 1991; Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1991: 107; Thompson 1994: 42-43; Garland 1990: 61, 163; Garland 1996; Sparks 1992: 134; Donovan 1998). Thus, these alternative accounts which describe the persistence of spectacle fit more closely in a broad way with Garland's analysis, which also describes two competing parallel approaches still current in criminal justice, rather than the supersession of one by the other.

The nature of the periodization Foucault actually intended in his account is somewhat unclear, and ultimately beside the point. Regarding interpretation of Foucault's work, Garland (1997: 188) argues, "there is no phased historical progression from 'sovereign punishment' to 'discipline'..., nor is there an easy or coherent relationship between these different conceptions and practises of crime control. In any concrete conjuncture the field of crime control will manifest an uneven...combination of these modes of action." In short, according to Garland, subsequent interpreters of Foucault have read too much periodization into his work. However, whether or not this neglect of contemporary spectacles of control is on the part of Foucault himself, or a fault introduced by his legion of interpreters is moot, ultimately irrelevant. The question is how we are to take into account the persistence in contemporary society of spectacles of criminal justice which are at least somewhat similar to those back in the 18th century. Clearly a shift *has* occurred in the visibility of *formal* penal practises, which are now largely invisible

to the general public (Garland 1990). However, rather than disappearing, instead it may be argued that spectacular power has simply shifted in form and location. Spectacle remains present in contemporary control, but it is much less focused on the formal administration of punishment. Thus, in Wayward Puritans (1966), Kai Erikson wrote that the contemporary news media "offer much the same kind of entertainment as public hangings...A considerable portion of what we call 'news' is devoted to reports about deviant behaviour and its consequences" (1966: 12).

A second problem concerns how we theorize exactly what we mean by "surveillance" in contemporary society. As a number of analysts point out, surveillance is expanding - yet surveillance also seems sometimes to be shifting qualitatively. In a second way, these qualitative shifts may again lead us to rethink the relationship of "surveillance" to "spectacle".

Surveillance is certainly a central part of the contemporary institutional order (Giddens 1985, 1990) but it is not the sole and defining part. Surveillance and spectacle in contemporary criminal justice have transformed in part because of the advent of broadcast television. A somewhat analogous kind of spectacular power continues - but it is now sometimes intertwined with surveillance in complex ways, so that these two forms of control sometimes converge rather than exist in opposition.

Foucault's neglect of contemporary spectacles of control derives in part from the empirical focus of his analysis: the rise of the prison. However, another crucial shift would take place in Western criminal justice systems around the same time: the birth of

the modern police institution. While Foucault's account focused on how punishment was increasingly made private and invisible in the prison, police have always been a much more public and visible institution than the prison (see Doyle and Ericson, 1996, for a detailed examination of contrasting attitudes to publicity in these different institutions). As Garland (1990) has observed, the locus of publicity in the criminal justice system has moved since the 18th century from the formal administration of punishment to earlier in the criminal justice process. Ian Loader (1997) argues that the broader cultural and communicative aspects of the police have been neglected by sociologists. In particular, for example, the RCMP are a central symbol in Canadian culture (Walden 1982). As opposed to the dramatization of pre-modern sovereign power described by Foucault (1977), however, police came to symbolize a new kind of power and authority. If spectacle persists in criminal justice, I argue it is much more now the property of the police than something occurring in the penal system; the connection has now been severed between spectacle and the formal administration of punishment.

In particular, as policing and broadcast television come together, spectacle becomes bound up with surveillance. The interaction of surveillance cameras and home camcorders with broadcast TV discussed in the second case study, or the use of TV news footage broadcast to identify rioters in Case Study Three, represents not only the expansion of surveillance. It marks a new kind of surveillance which is qualitatively different in significant respects. Previous academic research has argued (Norris and Armstrong 1998; McCahill 1998) that the widespread introduction of

surveillance cameras or CCTV may be seen as part of a broad trend toward dispassionate, managerial, technicized approaches to crime (Feeley and Simon 1994). More generally, David Lyon (1993) argues the advent of contemporary electronic surveillance marks a shift to an increasingly rational, dispassionate, instrumental mode of social control.

However, in considering contemporary surveillance, there has been little previous scholarly attention to the secondary role of surveillance cameras described in Case Study Two: spectacularizing criminal justice through the media. In this situation, the cameras also facilitate a very different form of criminal justice. Their stark visuals add emotional or visceral impact to the media spectacularization of certain crimes. These are anything but dispassionate, rational and technical when broadcast to general audiences in their living rooms. Indeed, police often release footage from surveillance cameras to television as "promotional footage" even when it serves no rational crime-fighting goal. As Alison Young (1996) describes, the highly passionate and morally-charged atmosphere surrounding the Bulger case in Britain, culminating in a massive public call for harsher punishment for the 10-year-old perpetrators, was partly a consequence of the repeated TV broadcast of these surveillance camera images. "Mrs Bulger's panicked flight from the shop, as she realized her son was gone, was recorded on the security cameras and replayed over and over, on the television news, before and after her son had been found, and then to the jury at the trial" (Young 1996: 118). This is clearly at odds with the notion that the cameras are simply part of an emerging form of control which is

instrumental, technician and dispassionate. Instead this type of surveillance is also a spectacle, a media spectacle that fits with the alternative tendency described by Garland above toward emotionally-charged, retributive criminal justice.

As Donovan (1998) argues, "The relationship between surveillance and spectacle, 20 years after Foucault's book (Discipline and Punish), seems no longer one of competing images or supercession, but mutual dependence. Specifically, the surveillance and spectacle aspects of (reality-TV) programming share a technological, ideological and emotional foundation." (Donovan 1998: 119). Certainly, surveillance is often invisible rather than spectacular and there are also myriad forms of secret surveillance. But surveillance may as well now become a public spectacle as it occurs through broadcast television, as in my second and third case studies.

The examples in my case studies raise other questions about the properties of surveillance. Foucault (1977) is read by some analysts (eg. Hatty 1991, Thompson 1994, Mathiesen 1997) as describing a shift from a situation in which "the many see the few" to one in which "the few see the many". However, whether or not the notion of surveillance can indeed be encapsulated in the expression that the "few" see "the many" is highly debatable. In fact, the Panoptical metaphor did not necessarily mean that "the few" were actually watching "the many", just that "the many" did not know whether they were being watched or not, and understood they might be watched at any time. In this way, Foucault's use of the Panopticon metaphor suggests surveillance was something that was built into a



system, rather than necessarily being conducted by individuals. In fact, in contemporary surveillance, most often there are no "few" capable of monitoring the "many". It is impossible for a small number of watchers to be so omniscient and all-knowing. Instead, surveillance is often embedded in systems themselves, as Foucault's original reading of the Panopticon suggests, rather than conducted by individuals. However, an alternative possible solution to this problem - how only a few may monitor a large population - is that through broadcast television, the "many" may be enlisted to watch each other. In this situation, to paraphrase Staples (1997), "Big Brother" is us.

The metaphor of the Panopticon suggests that each individual is watched in isolation. In contrast, as surveillance has become greatly elaborated as one part of modernity's time-space distancing (Giddens 1990, 1991; McCahill 1998), surveillance has also sometimes become a more public and collective phenomenon. If old-style spectacles of punishment featured an assembled crowd of onlookers, these new forms of surveillance through broadcast TV create a new type of watching collective or public. On one hand, this greatly increases the reach of surveillance, enlisting all the knowledge of audiences to identify those whom authorities cannot. Yet this change also has another significance.

Like punishment (Garland 1990) and the police (Loader 1997), surveillance also has a neglected broader cultural importance beyond its immediate instrumental function. The omnipresent symbolism of surveillance communicates to audiences about late modern life and society more broadly. Another way of looking at the Panopticon

metaphor is that it shows how surveillance may centrally involve communication - surveillance is communicated to the subject and internalized. The Panopticon, like the camera in the corner of the convenience store, doesn't just watch the public; perhaps more importantly, it communicates to them. But it communicates much more than simply that one is being watched. As technologies of surveillance pervade our society, so too do the cultural implications of surveillance (Staples 1997): that crime is everywhere; that others among us are not to be trusted, especially those with visible signs of difference; that technology rather than community is our safeguard; and that the answer is to surreptitiously monitor all others and report them to authorities, specifically police, who are the only ones authorized to act in order to deal with the crime problem.

The concept of "surveillance" uses a visual metaphor and visual language to encapsulate a variety of other activities which often do not involve literally watching the subject; instead surveillance often involves other, non-visual ways of gathering knowledge for control action. However, medium theory calls attention to the point that, with the advent of the video camera, and even more so with the broadcast of surveillance footage on television, surveillance has not only expanded its reach; surveillance has also become more literally visual again. With this development, surveillance has also become more intertwined with spectacle. Television is a highly emotive medium (Meyrowitz 1985). Because surveillance moves back into the literally visual realm through the advent of television, it is also more emotionally and morally charged, less dispassionate and

instrumental. Other authors have described contemporary surveillance as becoming increasingly instrumental, rational and technical (eg. Shearing and Stenning 1984, Lyon 1993). It may be that such more literally visual surveillance - and surveillance using broadcast television in particular - runs counter to this trend.

The spread of surveillance is in part a gradual, almost invisible accretion in which surveillance technology and habits of surveillance slowly penetrate into everyday life, resulting in a "quiet revolution" (Staples 1997: 128). On the other hand, surveillance is also often a highly visible, shared public cultural phenomenon. If, as Staples (1997) suggests, surveillance is gradually expanding through the quiet introduction of innocuous-seeming technologies and habits, consider the alternative example of the reality-TV program *America's Most Wanted* (Cavender and Bond-Maupin 1993). After presenting dramatic, highly-charged television re-enactments of crimes, host John Walsh enlists the audience's help in identifying the suspects and announces that criminals will be "hunted down by millions of viewers." With the involvement of broadcast television, the "culture of surveillance" also includes such massive spectacles.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Like the examples I gave in the first half of the chapter, these televised spectacles of surveillance contribute to the schism described by Garland: alongside contemporary rational and technical approaches to crime, television influences criminal justice institutions in ways which aid in the perpetuation of another, age-old, way of understanding criminal justice, one in which crime and

punishment becomes an emotionally-charged drama of vengeance. This latter way of thinking about crime fits with what I have called "law and order ideology".

Television does not only promote this way of thinking about crime by the public as Garland suggests, but also helps push police, prosecutors, judges and policy-makers toward this mode of criminal justice. Television expands surveillance, but in ways which are also qualitatively different and also fuel an emotionally-charged retributive way of thinking about criminal justice. As it operates through broadcast TV, surveillance is neither embedded in a system independent of human agency, nor a situation where the "few" see the "many". Contemporary theories of surveillance must incorporate the novel way in which instead "the many watch the many" through broadcast TV, and how this combines surveillance and spectacle. We need to examine how, thanks to television's influences on criminal justice, Big Brother is becoming us.

To sum up then, my aim in this thesis has been to evaluate and advance theories of how television influences other institutions. My findings are summarized in the conclusion. In this brief appendix, I have discussed how, in addressing this primary aim, my research has raised some further questions for a second body of theory, that which addresses the evolution of criminal justice institutions in particular. I plan to address these new kinds of questions which my thesis has raised in more detail in future work.