Chapter 10

Humans and Monsters:
Reintegrating Perpetrators of Mass Violence to Society

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ABSTRACT

Crime, and in particular violent crime, is a frequent source of media interest both in the form of factual reporting and fictional portrayal. As explained through an analysis of academic and theoretical literature, media representation has the potential to influence large populations and shape the opinions that mainstream society hold related to the perpetrators of such crimes. Case studies examining the CONTEST counterterrorism strategy in the United Kingdom and the failure of the UK Government to implement this strategy in the manner intended, and strategies for demobilization of perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda are outlined in detail. The case studies are then considered together in terms of how they align with what the underpinning theory argues. Overall conclusions are drawn that success and failure of strategies for reintegration of perpetrators of mass violence are dependent on a combination of state buy-in and destruction of the 'monster' narrative associated with fictional and factual media portrayal of perpetrators in the West in particular.

INTRODUCTION

Crime is one of the most popular topics for coverage across all popular media, with documentary and dramatization being two of the most popular forms produced and broadcast globally. Sumser (1996) explains that crime dramas in particular present polarized conflicts between good and evil, with Kelner (1995) providing further contextualisation by outlining that the things that we see, hear and read in the media "help shape our view of the world and our deepest values; what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil" (p. 24). A logical link might then be inferred that to at least some extent, the

ways in which those that break the law are consistently presented through different forms of media, the more the perceptions of the general public may be shaped by that presentation.

Poniewozik (2004) notes that the number of crime dramas in particular have increased since the September eleventh terrorist attacks in 2001, and linked with this Shaheen's (2009) research shows that there is a greater presence of both Arab and Muslim individuals within crime dramas in America today than there was prior to the attacks on the World Trade Center. Importantly, Shaheen argues that the negative portrayals of these people significantly outweighs the number of positive portrayals, where those individuals will often be scripted to be the criminal or antagonist. Saleem and Anderson (2013) go a stage further and note explicitly that across this form of media, Arab and Muslim individuals are consistently portrayed as being involved in terrorism or with other violent tendencies, reinforcing stereotypes that many have already internalized. The real consequence of this is then shown by Greenhouse (2010) who argues that in the years following the events of 2001 the workplace for both Arabs and Muslims, and importantly also those that others simply *perceived* to be Arab or Muslim, became a hostile environment where they suffered increases in discrimination compared to the years prior to 2001.

The nature and frequency of different categories of crime is further misrepresented through the media, where the most frequent forms of crime being reported or portrayed fall under the categories of violent or predatory offences, whereas official crime statistics consistently show that these types of criminality are by far a minority of offences as compared to non-violent ones (Chermak, 1997; Garofalo, 1981). Sacco explains that this overrepresentation of violent crime has helped to create a widely held, but false, perception amongst the general population that there is an "epidemic of random violence" (1995, p. 149), whereby there is a high chance of anybody falling victim to a violent crime at any given moment. Indeed, Reiner, Livingstone and Allen further quantify the problem of false perception when they argue that around two-thirds of crime-related news stories reported cover sexual or other violent offences, yet "these account for less than ten percent of crimes recorded by the police" (2003, p. 19). Pollak and Kubrin (2007) conclude that the reason for this exaggeration is perhaps a cynical one on the part of the media who seek to increase the value of any news item by including an element of drama within it. This conclusion is backed by Chermak (1997) who argues that the reality perceived by those that consume media, and broadcast news in particular, is socially constructed through bureaucratic decision-making by producers regarding which stories are selected for reporting, and how such stories should be reported.

A further problem linked to the social construction of perceived realities of crime can be found when considering the reasons that many people tend to believe as to why offenders do become involved in perpetrating violent acts. Scholars including Fabianic (1997) and Soulliere (2003) have explained that it is common within crime dramatization to set out simplistic, expressive and individual motivations held by a perpetrator. This can be problematic when, as Soulliere argues, these overly simplified motives "tend to locate the 'cause' of crime within the individual" (2003, p. 28). Conveying such simplified understanding of the genesis of violent or mass criminality in this way can be damaging to the efforts to tackle the true root causes of such crimes as the message prevents the realities behind such offences being widely understood and accepted. As Cecil explains, the popularized and misleading explanations "allow the viewers to absolve themselves of any responsibility for the crime problem, as it is caused by bad individuals not criminogenic factors in society" (2007, p. 254), and so more complex and evidence-based explanations of root causes are frequently rejected in favor of the narratives that have been constructed through mass media. Lopez et al characterize this by explaining that the media have "become a tool that can shape public attitudes through entrenching naturalized perceptions, reaffirming the dominant social, political, and cultural discourses in society" (2020, p. 24). The effects of such naturalization of inac-

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