

Criminology's case against the media reconsidered with special reference to radio.

The Research Question

I am a criminologist with an ongoing interest in the media. I teach a course in media and crime; and, after further training and the guidance of colleagues, contribute to media courses on issues unrelated to crime. I was obviously professionally aware of the criminological critique of 'the media' and the contention amongst psychologists and campaigners that the media caused crime or violence. A life long radio listener I had not adequately recognised that my favoured medium was included implicitly in the criminological critique of the media or, more often, ignored. Teaching the literature on media and crime, but now sensitised by further study and reflection, lead me to question this implicit and explicit (but unsupported) inclusion of radio in the contention that media misunderstands, distorts or uses crime for ideological purposes. My research therefore seeks to test the extent to which radio might properly be included. At the same time – as a radio listener and as a criminologist with an interest in communicating about crime – I wanted to see what scope there might be to differentiate radio from the worst excesses of the media and explore its potential to communicate complex issues about crime and criminal justice.

To this end the literature has been critically evaluated, radio crime news has been roughly quantified and its content qualitatively assessed. To explore the positive potential of radio a number of interviews with professionals in the field of crime and communication were interviewed and two case studies are presented to further investigate the potential of radio.

Introduction

Many criminologists and non-governmental organisations concerned with crime and criminal justice are critical of the coverage their subject receives in the media. Sometimes ministers, officials and criminal justice personnel bemoan the extent and

nature of coverage. For instance, Home Office Ministers were said to be privately blaming violent story lines in ITV's *The Bill*, and even the BBC's flagship *Crimewatch UK*, for unjustifiably high levels of fear of crime in Britain (TV series 'stoke fear of crime' *The Guardian* 7 November 2000).

Arguably critics have been too quick to decry all media *tout court*. It may be argued that radio cannot be dismissed so easily; though critics of the media cannot be unreservedly condemned when radio itself has been ignored within media studies. However, radio has close, and growing yet closer, connections with all media so cannot escape criticism. Yet radio offers specific potential technological and social reasons to be used by those with a professional interest in crime to communicate about it.

Broadly the literature on media and crime shows that press, film, TV (and radio where mentioned) typically over-represent certain crimes and under-represent others; favour certain explanations and policies over others and generally bolster the prevailing ideology of law and order. As little research is specifically about radio - rather than press, TV or film - a demonstration analysis of radio news was carried out alongside a critical assessment of news scripts.

Both the literature and the research point towards condemning the media and radio with it. However, interviews with a number of players within the field and two case studies give some hope of mitigation; radio has been used imaginatively to communicate about crime and criminal justice. One, on local radio, was specifically about crime and criminal justice; the other is Radio 4's soap opera, *The Archers*, with an original remit of educating farmers but now a soap opera covering all aspects of rural life, including crime.

To answer the research questions this dissertation has to go beyond a limited 'newsmaking criminology'. Barak (2001:190) defines newsmaking criminology as:

The process whereby criminologists use mass communication for the purposes of interpreting, informing and altering the images of crime and justice, crime and punishment and criminals and victims.

However, in practice this often comes over as a rather pompous presumption by some criminologists that they are uniquely qualified to lecture the media. A weaker form of this presumption can be found in the work of Roberts and Hough (2002) who call for ‘replacement discourses’ on crime and justice to better inform the public. The aim here is not just to lecture the media or criminology on their manifold lacunae but to understand the close intertwining of both crime and criminal justice and their representation in the media, particularly the audio broadcast media. Only then might it be possible to make an assessment of the suitability of radio for Roberts and Hough’s ‘replacement discourses’ or other formulations.

The literature

We have moved on since Chibnall was able to claim that ‘crime reporting has habitually been rather ignored by academic researchers or treated as essentially apolitical’ (1977:1). The certitude of some of the earliest attempts to render it political may also seem dated but these interventions make a good place to start.¹ The classic literature on crime and media (i.e. not about radio) is set out below before looking at the little said about radio.

Cohen and Young’s (1973) edited collection offers clues to some of what was to come but concentrates on the print media and concludes with a chapter on do-it-yourself media sociology in which TV and print dominate. In his chapter Roshier (1973) notes the choice of crime stories over other stories and the choice within crime stories of particular crimes or criminals. In what can be seen as an early example of newsmaking criminology he examines the space given to crime stories, the content of them and the relationship to the crime statistics.² He was able to show that not only did the *News of the World* (then as now) carry a lot of sex crime news but that, despite disapproving, the readership was well aware of it and bought the paper for it. In his study of papers between 1938 and 1967 crime content was as low as 2% of total news space for the *Newcastle Journal* in 1967 to as high as 29% for the *News of the World* in 1955.³ He

found little consistency of line in crime reporting save for a tendency to talk up the seriousness of football hooliganism and drug taking.

Perhaps most enduring has been the work of Galtung and Ruge (1973). It has featured in a number of collections on news and primers on journalism. The twelve factors that they found favoured publication of a news event (Frequency, Threshold, Unambiguity, Meaningfulness, Consonance, Unexpectedness, Continuity, Composition, Reference to élite nations, Reference to élite persons, Personalisation and Negativity) were recently revisited by Harcup and O'Neill (2001). The age of Galtung and Ruge's study (1960-1964), its concentration on foreign news in Norwegian newspapers and its prospective stance all presented a problem. Much modern news is not events driven but campaigning (Aldridge, 2003) and home news often of only passing significance. Harcup and O'Neill (2001) use a retrospective methodology to update Galtung and Ruge (1973) taking particular note of celebrity and entertainment. Thus some stories might be included simply because they offered the opportunity for a good headline. They conclude with their own list of factors: power elite, celebrity, entertainment, surprise, good news, bad news, magnitude, relevance, follow-up and the newspapers own agenda.

Chibnall (1977) covers the usual suspects of left-leaning media investigation: mugging, terrorism (IRA and Angry Brigade), hooliganism and trade union disputes.⁴ He concludes by seeking to go beyond vulgar Marxist explanations of the media but is now best remembered for setting the agenda for sociological studies of the media (Kidd-Hewitt: 1995:14) with his 'eight professional imperatives' (Chibnall, 1977:23). The imperatives were: immediacy, dramatisation, personalisation, simplification, titillation, conventionalism, structured access and novelty. None of which should surprise a modern reader nor would have surprised an old time hack. He was writing before many of these categories were fused into one - celebrity. Galtung and Ruge, Harcup and O'Neill and Chibnall all get at different aspects of news-worthiness and crime fits many of them.

The work of Cohen and Young and Chibnall can be seen to culminate in Hall at al's (1978) findings. It takes a detailed look at the press and applies a consistently

sophisticated version of Marxism to the problem of how the United States term ‘mugging’ was taken up in Britain by the media. It also develops Stan Cohen’s concept of the ‘moral panic’ by placing it firmly in the context of concerns about the inner city and the legitimacy of the State. We also see a move away from the simple counting of stories and crimes and comparing them. Moving on we find Reiner (2001) measured content as well as discourse in newspapers from 1945 to 1991 noting a move from a focus on the criminal, sometimes sympathetic, to a demonising of offenders and sympathy for victims and a concern for the effects on society.

The studies quoted above can be seen as a radical reading of the traditionalists concern about such effects; but during the late 70s further developments of the ‘effects’ debate started to become apparent. The concern was that the media, rather than causing crime, might be responsible for causing fear of crime and the studies above can be reread in that light. Moreover, feminism urged us to look at the treatment of women and children by society and in the media. So we have Soothill and Walby (1991) and Kitzinger (1999) examining national and local newspapers in ways which emphasise the existence of a problem – so not a moral panic – but the misdirection of the problem, and hence of any solution, away from men in the home onto the dangerous stranger.

Studies of TV did not feature strongly in the early work on crime and the media but have since become standard. An early intervention on the ‘media-as-ideology’ side is Hurd (1981). He examined *The Sweeney* and *Z Cars* and points out the ideological work such series, in their different ways, carry out. In *The Sweeney*, ‘the centred biography inserts an isolated hero into an anomic social world in which individual actions are the only guarantee of effectivity’ (1981:63). Whereas, in *Z Cars* ‘the group functions to deny the anonymous world of large-scale organisation and its incumbent distortion of personal relationships’ (1981:63/64). To put it baldly; they were both adverts for the police, or maverick cops, in the way that *Crimewatch* is sometimes now portrayed (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1993).

Sparks (1992) stands out for going beyond the commonplace counting of incidences, assessing the criminogenic effect or ideological import of 'the media'. He engages at a high level of theory in seeking to understand the moral, sometimes reassuring content of TV drama; the extent to which it makes us fearful but also reassured. This usefully goes beyond the concentration on news but offers less obvious correlates for a study of radio, unless specifically of radio crime drama. Historically crime drama formed a part of radio schedules and informed the TV genre; yet, save *Dick Barton*, no fondly remembered crime series comes to mind for radio. Whereas many, even those born too late, can recite *Dixon of Dock Green*, *The Sweeney*, *The Bill* etc from the TV. Interestingly he has argued more recently that 'constructive and oppositional stories can be told if we develop the skill and cunning needed to tell them better' (Sparks, 2001)

Radio programmes are mentioned by Schlesinger and Tumber (1994) but their main focus is on press and TV. What is also interesting for us is the equal emphasis they give in their work to studying news sources (official, professional and pressure group) but also news production and content.⁵ Much of the previous literature concentrates on the end product which is endlessly analysed for effects or evidence of ideology. That is many have seen the State, or a nebulous culture of control, as the primary definers of deviance or social problems and the media as only secondary definers. Following Schlesinger and Tumber it is possible to see the media as potentially primary definers or part of a tripartite array of agenda setters along with the public and policy networks. Critcher (2002) makes productive use of such an approach in analysing the challenge that the *News of the World* posed to primary definers in its 'naming and shaming' campaign against paedophilia. The commercial logic of such campaigns for some local papers (the originators of the naming and shaming ploy in respect of paedophiles) is noted by Aldridge (2003).

Police use of radios to communicate with each other and headquarters is now commonplace. *Police Radio* however, was exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art from 2 October for one week. It comprised 24 hours worth of 'ride-along' audio of Merseyside Police Officers gathered over nine months inter-cut with their favourite tunes

from Prokofieff to Eminem.⁶ As Nick Crowe, the artist, explained on the BBC's arts programme, *Front Row* (Radio 4, 30 September 2003) 'It confounded a lot of the prejudices and expectations I brought to the project'. The supervising – and participating – officer, Inspector Mike Dixon had this to say of the artist 'He's a decent guy and [...] realises what a difficult job the police have'.

Clearly getting a contemporary artist and the police to come to understand each other might be seen, in copper's terms, as a 'result' or, more formally in Mawby's terms, 'good image work' (2002). Mawby examines both press and TV coverage of policing and the police use of the media in their investigations (see also Innes, 1999). Both Mawby and Innes might be forgiven for concentrating on TV and press as they are interested in the 'image' and radio cannot show an e-fit (though it might now mention that it has been posted on the website).

They are not alone in ignoring radio. Many introductory histories or surveys of the media's engagement with crime and criminal justice rush through or ignore radio to get on to TV. Radio is treated as a 'cinderella medium' in much sociology of the media according to McNair (1999:132) and illustrates his own point in concentrating on press and TV in an earlier book (McNair, 1998). Media regulator Ofcom's website reveals over twenty research reports into TV yet none on radio.⁷ Moreover, little of the current concern over the renewal of the BBC's Charter centres on radio.⁸

Hilmes, (2002) argues that radio was ignored in the United States, or treated simply as a precursor to TV, for a number of reasons. Its commercialism and embrace of, and by, youth and ethnic subcultures earned it suspicion amongst cultural elitists of both left (Frankfurt School) and right. The unique public service broadcasting history of the UK might lessen the strength of that argument but her suggestion that research effort was poured (and continues to pour?) into TV 'effects' research is plausible. She does though see some hope for the future.

Within media and cultural studies radio is turned down and left to play in the corner so it is unsurprising that within criminology we find Muncie commencing with this long list from which radio is explicitly, if not implicitly, absent:

Crime consumes an enormous amount of media space as both entertainment and news. Whether it be TV cop shows, crime novels, docudramas, newspaper articles, comics, documentaries, or 'real life' reconstructions, crime, criminality, criminal justice appear to have an endless capacity to tap into public fear and fascination. (Muncie, 1999:174)

The point will be is it possible to tap into that 'fear and fascination' positively? Less typically within criminology we find Jewkes' (2002) study on the use of the media by men within prison, which, perhaps unavoidably, makes much mention of radio; though some of the large numbers of indexed references to radio turn out to be to the couplet 'television and radio'. This formulation, at least, avoids the aggregating fallacy of talking of 'broadcasting' or 'the media'. Moreover, her respondents (see also King, 2004) noted that the introduction of in-cell TV had displaced radio listening, though more cheerily 'Paul', a young black prisoner in maximum security, cited Radio 4's *The Moral Maze* as his favourite listening (Jewkes, 2002:118).

Much other criminological engagement with the media is with the press, TV and film (for instance: Mason, 2003; Leishman and Mason, 2003; Wykes, 2001; Fishman and Cavendar, 1998; Sparks, 1992).⁹ A notable exception to the rule of sidelining radio is Surette's work. He states that it is wrong to see the media in monolithic terms arguing that:

Audio media - radio [...] - are neither print nor visual, but bridge the two by delivering their information in linear fashion akin to print and evoking mental images and emotions analogous to visuals. (1998: 18)

Allan (1999) notes the significance of the kidnapping of Charles Lindberg's son in 1932 (see Surette, 1998:59 too) for the development of radio news reporting in the USA but the bulk of his discussion of crime and the media is of press or TV. He argues for the immediacy of radio's address and its capacity to deliver the 'actuality' of a news event

but also its limiting brevity (1999:95). For, as he notes in the televised Senate hearings into organised crime, in the early 50s, only the twitching hands of alleged mobster, Frank Costello, were shown, ‘a revealing close-up of psychological tension that could only be described on radio’ (Allan, 1999:46).

Kidd-Hewitt (1995:5) notes the absence of any studies into radio within the “‘direct causation’ category”¹⁰ but, citing Chibnall (1977), notes that the Chief Constable of Gloucester sought to ban the late 40s show *Dick Barton Special Agent* as ‘crime propaganda’. Yet as Kidd-Hewitt points out Quinney (1975) noted the contrary ‘good’ influence of the *Lone Ranger* (then a radio programme).¹¹

Books specifically about radio rarely mention crime (for instance Barnard, 2000 and Hendy, 2000) unless it is to remind journalists of their legal obligations (Boyd, 2001 and White, 2002). Even the 500 plus pages and twenty four chapters of the *Radio Reader* (Hilmes and Loviglio, 2002) offers the scantest reference. Thus we find the police as subjects of criticism on Black Liberation Radio and complainants to the Federal Communications Commission (Fiske, 2002). The police are criticised over the beating of Rodney King on the one hand they are lauded by the ‘shock jocks’ (Douglas, 2002) on the other. Crime and deviance are celebrated in thriller and horror dramas (McCracken, 2002) but that is that.

There is a real issue as to whether the reported results can simply be mapped onto radio. Taking Surette’s (1998) observation about radio ‘bridging’ between print and visual media it is, at least arguable that the generality of comments about one media are true of the others. They will have their particularities as well. Thus Surette (1998:33) notes the prevalence of crime drama on radio in the 30s and 40s and the adoption of its plots and themes by television. He also notes, but does not comment on, the violence that both portray save to say that on radio it has to be imagined (see McCracken (2002) for examples). It could be argued that greater violence might have been imagined than was commonly portrayed at that time. Moreover, ‘radio producers created the style that

television would embellish: short-term, visceral, emotional news coverage' (Surette, 1998:59).

Cumberbatch *et al's* (1995) study of Radio and TV output from 14 November to 4 December 1994.¹² They found that crime was consistently, and by a long way, the most popular news topic but with wide variations even within each media. Thus, while BBC1 scored 19%, ITN 23% and Sky 24% radio varied from Radio 5's 18% to IRN's 38%. Of these stories between 26% (IRN) and 44% (Radio 4) were about death and murder.

Even where the news source is the same, editorial decisions make a real difference. Barnard (2000) gives an example from Radio 4 and 5 for the 7am bulletin on 30 September 1998. Of eleven items on Radio 4 only one was a crime story; the ninth story, lasting 25 seconds (out of 530 seconds), told of a man arrested in Holland suspected of a murder in Sussex. Whereas, on Radio 5 (total story time 285 seconds) there were nine stories, three of which were crime stories: fifth a story on powers to curfew disruptive children (15 secs); sixth the Lawrence family call for Sir Paul Condon's resignation (15 secs) and ninth football violence arrests (10 secs).

Turning more to the treatment of criminal justice issues we find Millwood-Hargreave's (2000) research into what gives offence to radio listeners. They were asked to listen to a number of clips that had been censured by the Radio Authority; one from a late night phone-in on rape. All their respondents felt that the presenter's style was unacceptable and that the subject had been belittled and might encourage the disturbed to commit rape. The report concluded, 'Participants were not saying that rape was a subject that should not be discussed but that care should be taken to make sure it was handled in a sensitive way' (2000:41).

From this brief survey we can see that the media have been subject to a growing body of research some of it quantitative - counting instances - and much qualitative - 'reading' what the content meant. However as we have seen, radio is often ignored or bundled into wider discussions of broadcasting or, worse, 'the media'. While some note

the extent of crime reporting much of the criminological literature is critical of that coverage. The historical sweep of Reiner (2003) and his use of both quantitative and qualitative methods marks his work out as valuable in this field but regrettably ignores radio and Schlesinger and Tumber (1994) briefly touch on radio but valuable look not just at journalistic output but at sources too. The findings below looks at output but the interviews and case studies rely on sources. First though we briefly examine the methods to be used.

Methods

From the argument above it follows that the research uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to generate data for discussion (Bell and Garrett, 1998; Deacon *et al*, 1999 Chapters 6-8). Whilst McQuail (1992: 253) believes ‘there is little difficulty in measuring, by normal methods of content analysis, the degree of attention paid to crime news’, yet he says this of violence, ‘it is clear that all such indicators are to some degree arbitrary’ (1992: 254). In what follows no attempt is made to align crime stories with crime statistics but the breadth (arbitrariness?) of the category of crime is touched on.

A limited amount of content analysis has been carried out on radio news output. This is in part to confirm the literature above and to demonstrate the potential for further work. That is this research accepts the importance of crime, criminal justice and law and order stories for all media and is not intended to contest that or make claims about differences between radio and other media or between radio stations. Story order, length of story etc were recorded from the internet for news on Radios 1 (Newsbeat 12:45) and 4 (6pm bulletin) and Independent Radio News (3pm) on three days – 3 November 2003, 1 December 2003 and 22 December 2003. The days were chosen to coincide with the available research time. Coincidentally the first day of the Soham Trial occurred on the first day and featured in the second bulletin too. I had hoped to avoid the Soham Trial; it had been expected to be heard earlier in the autumn.

Soothill *et al* (2004) trawled through enormous amounts of newsprint in their work but point out ‘rather than just counting the quantity of words, one must understand the differences between the cases in what triggers the type of coverage’ (2004:1). For such reasons the scripts of the Radio 4 6pm news bulletin (see Appendix 1) for those days were subjected to a critical analysis though not as thoroughly as Fairclough (1998) does for one edition of the *Today* programme. Moreover, given the significance of fictional representations of crime and punishment a number of scenarios and plotlines (see Appendix 3) from *The Archers* are also critically considered. At the same time records of radio coverage of crime and criminal justice have also been examined (see Appendix 2).

However, as has been stated this research is intended to go beyond showing whether radio is more or less concerned with crime than TV or newspapers but to assess the extent to which that crime coverage could be made ‘smarter’. Therefore a number of journalists, creative workers within radio and commentators on criminal justice were interviewed in person, by phone or by email about these issues. In addition to supplementing the quantitative material and the literature some historical dimension is added in that two of my respondents were also interviewed by Schlesinger and Tumber (1994). A profile and summary of each interview is set out in Appendix 4 but further quotes and references from them may be found elsewhere in the text.

At the same time a certain reflexivity is required. Elsewhere I have argued that a car-driving man cannot ignore his gender or motoring history and behaviour when studying joyriding (Groombridge, 1998b). Here I would argue that I also draw on nearly four decades of Radio 4 listening and nearly three decades of Guardian reading. However, a lot of that would have been uncritical and unconsidered. Indeed some of it might hinder understanding through too great a familiarity.¹³ In part I have been able to retain a critical distance through formal study of the media; specifically practical training in press and broadcast media, particularly radio.¹⁴ I have also had some experience of the media¹⁵.

Further triangulation might have involved focus groups or other reception studies to discover the who, what, why, when, where and how of listening to crime news and other relevant radio.

Findings

As has been mentioned Barnard (2000) sets out the different contents of radio 4 and 5 news bulletins for one day. Set out in figures 1-5 are the running orders for 3 different length bulletins from different sources with different intended audiences from 3 different days. The 'stations' were IRN and BBC Radios 1 and 4. Observations are made in respect of each figure and aggregate data on crime stories set out in a table. In each figure times are given for stories that might be seen to be crime.

IRN (see figure 1) is the commercial news provider for National and Local Independent Radio and from Cumberbatch's work (1995) one might expect high levels of crime reporting and you will see that stories for which times are given suggest a minimum of two and a maximum of five 'crime' stories out of the eight stories run in each bulletin. However, there are a number of issues that render such observations problematic. It clear that no bulletin had no crime story but it is less easy to classify some stories and even stories which are clearly crime are not necessarily handled as 'crime' stories.

Thus for the bulletin of 3 November the two stories timed – Soham and abduction - were clear crime stories. Such stories about crime or criminal justice might be called 'classic'. That is they are less likely to cause disagreement about their coding or interpretation by a listening public rather than an academic audience. Such stories have been marked by an asterisk in the figures above and below. It is these 'classic stories that have been used to generate percentages for comparison in the table

Fig. 1
Independent Radio News 3:00-3:03
Monday 3 November 2003

P&O passengers refused entry to Spain	
Soham Murder Trial (first day)*	22"
'Abduction' by marine of girl met over internet*	15"
Scaffolding injury	
PO Strike	
Leaves on Line	
Charity Fireworks causes animal deaths at sanctuary	
Rugby World Cup	

Monday 1 December 2003

Soham Trial (Ian Hartley's evidence)*	32"
Mobile phone use*	29"
US death in Iraq	
Vigilante attack on paedophile *	14"
Firework accident at football ground	
Legalise brothels says woman peer*	10"
Bid for Man U?	
Concorde auction	

Monday 22 December 2003

Columbia hostage	37"
US Terror alert	35"
Libyan WMDs	
Iraq deaths	
NHS lawsuit against drug companies	18"
Sick notes on demand	
Lost/stolen Rugby World Cup balls	24"
Car theft index*	12"

* = 'classic crime/criminal justice stories' see text

All four stories in the 1 December bulletin are clearly crime stories with Soham now leading. The mobile phone story was about the disparity between the decisions of English and Scottish Police Forces/Services over whether to take action against drivers for using mobile phones. This might have sparked a discussion about the different jurisdictions or police discretion but the sub text seemed to be motorist as victim (of the criminal justice system).¹⁶ The opening paragraph of the story on legalising brothels concentrated on the age of the peer who had made the proposal – perhaps setting up the expectation for some listeners of ‘randy old lord’ – only later naming Baroness Trumpington as the source and World AIDS day as the context.

The release of a British man kidnapped by Columbian rebels and the US terror alert in the bulletin of 22 December and the deaths in Iraq in both bulletins might have involved crime but were treated as foreign news. The NHS story involved civil action

against drug companies for alleged price-fixing was said to have been revealed in fraud investigations. So a crime story to those in the know but not treated as such. This would accord with Stephenson-Burton's (1995) observations. She notes that white collar crime is popularly assumed not to be covered in the media; but, using newspaper and TV data though, shows it is often quite well covered though under particular conditions. White collar crime is covered more in the broadsheets than the tabloids and then on City, business or legal pages and quite extensively in specialised media and broadcast. Indeed if the numbers are large enough or the white collar criminal or victims are celebrities then it is well covered. However, even if coverage is good there is a tendency to fudge the 'criminality' of the actor or actions linguistically with terms such as 'disgraced executive'. Neither should the 'chilling effect' of potential defamation actions be forgotten (Barendt et al, 1997).

Whilst the missing Rugby World Cup balls involved speculation that they had been stolen the story's emphasis was that they had been found. Finally, the story about the latest Home Office Car Theft Index, suggesting that a particular type of Vauxhall Astra was particularly prone to theft was treated as a consumer item and was probably expendable in the event of over running i.e. it was a NIB (news in brief) but counts as a classic story.

Some of the crime and other stories are shared by the different stations but not always in the same running order and some stories are exclusive. Clearly the longer time for the Radio 1 bulletins (see figure 2) allows for greater explication, actuality, two-ways between presenter and reporter, vox pops, reports and music and effects.

Fig. 2 Radio 1 Newsbeat 12:45-1:00
Monday 3 November 2003

Headlines: strike, OD, shark attack, Liz Hurley wedding, drugs in soccer and Rugby World Cup

Postal Strike	
Drug overdose at club in Liverpool involving GHB*	1'35"
Iraq helicopter crash	
Soham Trial starts*	17"
Gun injury of girl in a feud*	15"

Trail for upcoming programme and the P&O story

Shark attacks surfer	
P&O cruise ship illness	
Sport (including cocaine allegations in football)*	32"
Hurley wedding off or on?	
Postal strike reprise	

Monday 1 December 2003

Headlines: Soham, mobiles, fireworks at football, Sport, AIDS gig

Soham Trial*	1'13"
Mobile phone*	2'56"
Terror held suspect in Gloucester*	12"
Missing person's data base	25"
Murder of paedophile*	9"
Employment law changes*	9"

Trail next programme and Beyonce on AIDS gig

Deaths in Iraq	
Fireworks accident at football match	
Workers fiddling expenses*	7"
Lord of the Rings premiere	
Sport	
World AIDS Day gig hosted by Nelson Mandela	
Soham reprise*	30"

Monday 22 December 2003

Headlines: NY Xmas terror alert, Rio drugs ban, Sport preview, Xmas No1

NY Xmas terror alert	2'26"
Child Tax Credit cuts	
Colombian hostage release	9"
Soldier's death in Iraq	
Xmas shop closure law	

Trail Virgin pilot breathalysed and will Michael Jackson come to UK for Xmas?

Rio eight month ban	
Virgin pilot*	1'35"
Michael Jackson	1'26"
Winter weather stories	
Sick notes	
Pop Idol	
Sport	

Note the download from website only 12'23" cutting off last items

The low key start to the Soham Trial is shared and the order of this story and the mobile phone story is matched in the second bulletin (first and second respectively) but the relative time given to each is interesting. Radio 1 gave greater time to the mobile

phone story. In part this would have been because Ian Huntley had not finished giving his evidence but also because the mobile phone story was likely to have the greater effect on the Radio 1 audience. Whilst the bulk of the report was given over to the concerns of users – exactly what could or could not legally be done – time was found for a ‘victim’s’ voice and a police voice. Moreover, the different approach of police in Scotland was pointed out and the complete absence of a similar law in Northern Ireland noted. Notable too in a quarter hour bulletin is the brevity of some crime items. The suspected vigilante attack on a paedophile warranted only 9 seconds in a quarter hour on Radio 1 yet 14 seconds in IRN’s three minute bulletin. The Michael Jackson story combines celebrity, music and his forthcoming trial for child molesting. This story might have been carried before his arrest but was bound to be after it (because of the glancing reference to crime in the story it has not been categorised as a classic crime story).

In the figures 3-5 (Radio 4) we find some of the same stories but again different running orders, contents and emphases. Noticeable too is the greater mix of news which brings more foreign stories and, with the Parmalat story, a foreign white collar crime story. The story ‘DPP’ in Fig 3 is about potential contempt of court by the media.

Fig. 3 Radio 4 6PM News (28 mins) <u>Monday 3rd November</u>	
Headlines	
<u>Gib 1</u>	
<u>Gib 2</u>	
<u>Post</u>	
<u>Post 2</u>	
<u>Church</u>	
<u>Soham*</u>	1'32"
<u>Saudi</u>	
<u>Milosevic</u>	
<u>Tories</u>	
<u>Mid Heads & Trails</u>	
<u>Regions</u>	
<u>Russia</u>	
<u>Afghan</u>	
<u>Shooting*</u>	56"
<u>Studabaker*</u>	15"
<u>HIV Assault*</u>	48"
<u>Shot Policeman*</u>	13"
<u>Bskyb</u>	
<u>Ryanair</u>	
<u>City News</u>	
<u>School</u>	
<u>DPP</u>	24"
<u>Rail Leaves</u>	
<u>Bustard</u>	
<u>End Headlines</u>	

Fig. 4 Radio 4 6PM News (28 mins) <u>Monday 1st December</u>	
Headlines	
<u>Soham *</u>	1'23"
<u>Iraq</u>	
<u>Defence</u>	
<u>Osce</u>	
<u>Terror</u>	42"
<u>Tuition</u>	
<u>Primary</u>	
<u>Abortion</u>	
<u>Paedo*</u>	1'07"
<u>Mid Heads & Trails</u>	
<u>Ireland</u>	
<u>Mideast</u>	
<u>Mideast Unrest</u>	
<u>Mobiles*</u>	1'0"
<u>Hooligans*</u>	30"
<u>Diplomats</u>	
<u>Boeing</u>	
<u>Man United</u>	
<u>City Figures</u>	
<u>Italy</u>	
<u>Plain English</u>	
<u>End Headlines</u>	

Fig. 5 Radio 4 6PM News (28 mins) <u>Monday 22nd December</u>	
Headlines	
<u>Hostage 1</u>	
<u>Hostage 2</u>	
<u>Hostage 3</u>	
<u>Israel</u>	
<u>Libya</u>	
<u>Honours</u>	
<u>Olympic Row</u>	
<u>Sex Ring*</u>	1'30"
<u>Tax Credit</u>	
<u>Mid Heads & Trails</u>	
<u>Iraq</u>	
<u>Alert</u>	
<u>Parmalat*</u>	2'00"
<u>Copter</u>	
<u>Drug Firms</u>	1'25"
<u>Gas</u>	
<u>Baby*</u>	20"
<u>Post</u>	
<u>City News</u>	
<u>Qm2</u>	
<u>Weather</u>	
<u>End Headlines</u>	

First it needs to be noted that no claim is made for the statistical significance of these findings. Indeed even were the validity and reliability of the method impeccable the figures would add little to our understanding because the concept of crime story is difficult to operationalise and, as even the extent of discussion so far would indicate, involves the aggregation of categories that closer scrutiny reveals to have rich contextual differences and references that only qualitative analysis can reveal. That analysis follows when the scripts and interview material are assessed. For the moment we remain with the brute quantitative facts.

Table 1 percentage of classic crime stories in bulletins

	<u>IRN</u>	<u>BBC Radiol</u>	<u>BBC Radio 4</u>
3 November 2003	20.5	17.7	13.3
1 December 2003	47	35.1	14.3
22 December 2003	6.7	10.5	13.7
Average	24.8	21.1	13.8

The figures for IRN are much more reliable as the bulletin carries no surplus trails, jingles, mid-heads etc; you get eight stories in 3 minutes flat. For both Radio 1 and 4 the true figure should be out of the available time spent on stories rather than time of bulletin. For these reasons the overall percentage of crime stories on IRN and Radio 1 can be seen as similar to and even, allowing for timekeeping doubts that of Radio 4, less. Again this is as might be expected from a review of the literature but the differences between weeks are interesting. Clearly the second week represents a peak for each station – though hardly for Radio 4 – with Soham, mobile phone law and the murder of a paedophile causing the bulge. But also, had a broader definition of crime been employed, the third week figure on IRN would have hit 49% or even 100%, as all eight stories might be argued to have something to do with crime and deviance to the eclectic or radically motivated criminologist. That is the figures provided above are in line with figures provided by other researchers into a variety of media. Greater precision of categorisation and timing and a wider and longer sampling frame would add something to our knowledge but is sufficient to demonstrate the broad dimension of radio news coverage of crime. We now turn to an analysis of the Radio 4 News scripts for the period under discussion to tease out some further issues.

As signalled earlier the quantitative findings are mostly to confirm whether the findings of the literature already reviewed for crime in the media are applicable to radio. The material above suggests that this is so but additional material comes from discussion of the material listened to rather than measured. It was necessary to listen to the recordings several times during the course of the research but when in timing mode found it was not possible to 'listen' to them. To 'listen' required playing them again and that has already informed some of the discussion above. This attempt to 'fix' the sound reminds us of the ephemeral nature of much radio. Here we move to another mode of analysis, attempting to remember the sound but concentrating on the written text – specifically the BBC 6pm news bulletin scripts which are reproduced at Appendix 1.

BBC Radio 4's 6pm bulletin for 3 November 2003 lead with two stories about a diplomatic wrangle between Spain and Britain over the quarantine of a P&O cruise ship in Gibraltar and followed with two stories on the Postal Strike. There then followed another episode of the Church of England's potentially schismatic debate on gay priests and bishops. Only this last story is likely to have resonance in the future, but on the day all were clearly of greater immediate relevance than the opening day of the Soham Trial.¹⁷ Both IRN and Radio 1 covered the P&O and Postal stories and neither the Church story but both gave greater prominence to the Soham Trial. As it was the first day of the trial they had little to say other than the jury was being selected. With proceedings active the Contempt of Court Act 1981 should have been in the minds of journalists and editors alike. IRN mentioned the jury selection but personalised their report by mentioning the attendance at the court of the parents of the victims. Radio 1 stuck simply to the legal niceties. As can be seen Radio 4 did so but at greater length and employing the reporter to give full details of the jury selection process. This might be seen to aid a proper understanding of criminal justice.

Stories 13, 14, 15 and 16 that day are all classic crime stories, two of which - Studabaker and Shot Policeman – are quite short and help break up the rhythm of this block of stories. The Studabaker story concerns the alleged abduction of an under-age

British girl by a former US Marine she had met through internet and can be short because it is an ongoing story. It also features the internet which currently adds newsworthiness to an event. All the stations covered this story briefly that day as he was committed – via videolink from prison – to trial. The shot policeman also refers to a court case but was not covered by the other stations but may have come later in the day. It also features a current news obsession – gun crime.

The longest story of this section – slugline, Shooting – also features guns, so was covered by both other bulletins, but also comes close to a *Crimewatch* (on radio, note) style of presentation where the police officer leading the enquiry was given equal time to assure the public that the attack was not random (sub text don't worry its only scallies killing other scallies) but the girl was innocent (obviously of any crime but also as a child) and beseeching 'the criminal fraternity to search their consciences'.

The HIV story centred on a man who had persuaded women to have unprotected sex with him in the knowledge that he was HIV positive. He was given eight years in England's first case of 'biological' grievous bodily harm. The novelty and the judge's strong condemnation guarantee it a spot but as the man's name is of Asian origin other factors might be read in by others.

By chance, the second set of bulletins monitored and analysed coincided with the first day of Ian Huntley's evidence. It was the lead in all three bulletins monitored that day. IRN used nearly on sixth of its time, and allowing for stings and jingles Radio 1 about one tenth of its time. With nearly twice the time available Radio 4 only spent 10 seconds longer on the story. The script shows a recitation of the facts and the correspondent sets out a 'contempt-proof' account of the proceedings. Where IRN and Radio 1 have mobiles as second story this is relegated to thirteenth on Radio 4 with only one minute given to the topic. Furthermore, the reporter was despatched to Glasgow to file the report and duly concentrated on the early arrests and different attitude of Scottish police.

Most interesting though is Radio 4's ninth story for that day. It was covered in the other two bulletins further up the running order in the briefest of detail but without any hint of gloating (contrast, for instance, the *Sun*'s Headline on the death of Harold Shipman 'Ship Ship Hooray'; appalling sentiment badly expressed) over the suspected vigilante killing of a paedophile. Indeed sufficient time was given for presenter, reporter and local police officer all to be heard. It is the officer who gives the clearest indication of censure for the community's silence on the issue. Yet the published slugline for the story is 'paedo' which suggests a thoughtless complicity with the presumptions of the attackers. It might, though, also suggest journalistic cynicism insufficiently tempered by the knowledge that the script would later be available to the public.¹⁸

The Soham Trial had finished by the monitoring of the third bulletin so crime coverage can be seen to return to 'normality' yet the first story of the bulletin for 22 December illustrates again the definitional issues. The first three stories concerned the release of a young Briton captured (the war metaphor) or abducted or kidnapped (the crime metaphors) by Marxist rebels in Colombia. The story though was treated as a foreign 'triumph over tragedy' and the following two stories on Israel and Libya were treated as foreign stories though one involved an assault and the other international law.

The first clear crime story is interesting in that it also has a foreign element (as in the perfidy of the offender and possibly the naivety of the victims). Whilst sexual violence was used to control and introduce the women into prostitution this is not a classic sex crime story (Soothill and Walby, 1991).

The combination of quantitative and qualitative research combined with the knowledge of the literature enables us to show the, not unexpected, extent of crime coverage on radio but also the interconnections with issues of race, gender and geopolitics. We turn now to the interview material to help judge the specific utility of radio for communicating about crime and criminal justice.

The interviews

In addition to considering the literature on how criminologists and penal reformers might improve communication with media and public a number of them were interviewed as were experts on and in the media. Those interviewed were: Professor David Wilson, Frances Crook, Una Padel, Sarah Cable and Marcel Berlins. For each a pen picture was drawn to indicate their locus, followed by a summary of their opinions (These are at Appendix 4). Since all those interviewed about radio and crime – and those others interviewed specifically about the case studies below – have appeared in the media extensively or are media professionals it is not unexpected that they are supportive of the possibilities. This is not to say that all have had good experiences at the hands of the media; Frances Crook and David Wilson – perhaps as campaigners – had worse experiences than Una Padel. Yet all emphasised the need to engage with the media. Marcel Berlins – as a broadcasting lawyer – was critical of the inaccuracies of other parts of the media’s presentations of crime and justice. Largely the interviews confirmed the literature but do inform some of the more speculative material that follows and, where specifically relevant, will be cited.

Case Study - The Archers¹⁹

TV news and newspapers have been the staples of criminological research into the media; for that reason some time has been given to news on radio but drama also needs to be considered because, as Brown says, ‘empirical’ or ‘administrative’ criminologies:

render crime no more comprehensible and law no more legitimate than do the supposedly ‘fictive’ cultural maps of detective novels, or the imagined justice of the courtroom drama, or the hybrid genres of news docudrama and reality TV.(2003:182)

Moreover, Reiner (2001) states, ‘in the longer term crime fiction and entertainment are arguably of greater significance’. Indeed it is argued, along with some of the interviewees that non-crime fiction is important too. So we turn now to the case of *The Archers*.

At the time of writing one story line concerns the new Vicar's attempts to clean up a heroin addict and provide shelter within the village for other troubled youth with 'nimby' results. Whilst the radio soap long ago gave up its specifically didactic educational function in respect of good farming practice it remains rurally focussed and issues aware.

In police dramas it is common for the villains to be played by actors brought into the action specifically to be the baddie, leaving the central much-loved police characters to be 'good'. More morally complex tales are now possible, for instance TV's *Between the Lines* involved police corruption (Eaton, 1995) but often in soap opera proper main characters may be allowed to do wrong and a crime theme seems almost obligatory in *Coronation Street* and *East Enders* these days. Some might link the growing crime theme with attempts to woo male viewers. *The Archers* is no different in taking its main characters through a variety of complex issues and emotions. Whilst some listeners have claimed (BBC Radio 4's *Feedback* programme 16 January 2004) that the current crime story is not rural there is no doubt that rural crime is an issue. These issues were fully covered in autumn of 2003 (with some reverberations continuing). Synopses for seven episodes between August and October are attached at Appendix 3.

The three crimes are domestic burglary, horse slashing and the shooting of a badger. The burglary is committed by Ed Grundy, son of occasional poacher and lovable chancer Eddie Grundy, who nearly went to prison in July 2004 for selling illegal meat. The second offence is carried out by Clive Horrobin, brother of Susan Carter. The final offence is committed by David Archer scion of the main family of the drama.

Issues of rural burglary were brought into focus by the case of Norfolk 'farmer', Tony Martin. The boredom and shortage of money that lead to Ed and Jazzer committing the offence might be rural but it is as likely that Ed's love rivalry with his brother, William, was also involved. The offence was committed against the incomers on the 'Executive' Estate who are mentioned but not voiced so victimisation is downplayed –

indeed his parents are heard to be the main victims – shocked to be wakened late at night and outraged that their house is searched. The previous year he had become involved in joyriding without any formal punishment arising but injured his brother's girlfriend. Jazzer's own informal punishment about that time, for stealing and taking ketamine – horse tranquiliser - was a coma. However, this story involves formal punishment.

The synopsis can only hint at the content, thus behind the sentence 'The custody sergeant takes Ed's details and gives him his rights.' is virtually a walk-through of reception into custody at a police station and the practical application of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and its codes. Later his solicitor, happily a voiced character, Usha Patel, illustrates the lawyer-client relationship by taking him through what would happen later and at court. He appears before the Magistrates the next morning but, following a believable timescale, his case is not heard until a month later. He receives one hundred hours community service and we learn much about Magistrates' Court procedure and, in cross talk between the characters, about the punitive and rehabilitative elements of the sentence. Real time is kept for this as he finished his punishment and enhanced learning course in the edition broadcast on 19 February 2004. Later we found he and Jazzer were growing 'skunk' cannabis in a barn loaned by Tony Archer.

Tony Brewerton, Assistant Chief Probation Officer²⁰, West Mercia Probation recalled giving advice to the producers and was glad to have the acquiring of qualifications by Ed made part of the story but was too late to influence Clive's story (see below) towards the consideration of mental health issues.

The horse slashing story mirrors some real life examples of sexually-motivated attacks on horses. In this instance it turns out Clive's motive is a wrongly-directed revenge against a former police officer now gamekeeper (a privatised rural police officer of sorts) who had lead to his imprisonment. We learn that Clive has drifted around after prison and dealt drugs. He eventually receives a custodial sentence: the rights and wrongs of which are discussed by a number of characters including the actual and intended victims. The events also raise issues for his sister Susan who had served time in

prison for sheltering him, under duress, in the past. Briefly as the ‘Ambridge 1’ her plight attracted media attention, though not rivalling *Coronation Street*’s ‘Weatherfield 1’, Deidre Rashid, the dupe of a conman.

Finally David’s shooting of the badger brings in rural concerns about bovine TB allegedly spread by badgers. It also allows for David to fulminate against the long established, eighteen years, but still ‘newcomer’ Lynda Snell’s interfering. He appears in court gets fined £400 with an additional £200 costs and has to face interrogation outside the court by the local television news which seems like a further trial to him. Current storylines suggest he may be heading for a breakdown.

These three story lines woven into other concerns of these everyday countryfolk represent an informative insight into the criminal justice system and issues of crime and punishment. However, its listeners might well know many of these things already and even fear that Radio 1’s listeners are educated through gangster rap and urban music like UK garage and grime with their conspicuous consumption and gun worship.

Case study – Section 18

In 2002, the Ukrainian Centre for Common Ground produced 13 pilot episodes of a conflict prevention radio drama for young adults in Crimea. *Nasha Ulitsa* (Our Street) depicting the complexities of conflict related to everyday pressures on young adults, including school, drugs, parents, relationships, friends, government, and religion.²¹ Such overt propagandising may not be possible in the UK but Cable (2003) gives examples of campaigning work with soap operas on television and particularly the Hitting Home season on domestic violence.²² This season was two years in the planning and involved: the scheduling of three films; coordinated plotlines in *East Enders*, *Casualty* and *Neighbours*; special editions of *Kilroy*, *Panorama* and *Newsround*²³; phone-ins on local radio and to Radio 1’s *Sunday Surgery* as well as a play on Radio 4 by Benjamin Zephaniah.

A smaller scale but no less interesting case is provided by BBC Radio Shropshire which made a dramatised documentary, called Section 18. The programme was aired on BBC Shropshire, Stoke and Hereford and Worcester. The title is derived from the section of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 that deals with Wounding with Intent. Over ten twenty-minute episodes covering the build up to and fall out from a scuffle in a pub car park.²⁴

The programme came about through the joint actions of Tony Fish²⁵, then editor of BBC Radio Shropshire, and Judge Michael Mander²⁶, then of the Crown Court at Shrewsbury but now retired. The judge had been keen to increase understanding of the criminal justice system and had already been running a structured introduction to criminal justice amongst local schools in his court. His support for the project meant that his court was made available for recording and local criminal justice agencies and professionals offered to play themselves in the drama; only the ‘accused’ and witnesses were actors. However, despite the willingness of both parties, problems arose through the very different expectations of criminal justice and media professionals. Tony’s use of the term ‘soap’ and the need for each episode to have a cliff-hanger ending caused some problems (the writer also wrote for *The Bill*) but both sides came to respect the professional judgement of the other.

The episodes went out over two weeks in 2000 in the mid-morning show with a longer evening omnibus where even greater detail about criminal justice process was given. In each of the episodes different parts of the criminal justice system – police, lawyers, CPS, courts etc were featured in their appropriate order. The programme was always followed by discussion in the mid-morning show with a representative of the appropriate agency and phone-ins. Judge Mander faced a phone-in and persuaded his opposite numbers in the Crown Court Centres covered by the other stations to do the same. Two programmes were recorded to complete the drama: one a ‘guilty’ version the other a ‘not guilty’ version with the station’s audience acting as the jury by phone. A jury of volunteers was also empanelled, but Judge Mander’s request to the higher judiciary that their deliberations be recorded was denied. Thus art imitated reality.

The programme was deemed to be a success by the station. Several hundred callers voted the man not guilty by a substantial margin. Since the four lines were only open an hour this is a good outcome. Tony was invited to address probation officers and the BBC's in-house magazine *Ariel* (3 October 2000) gave it a front-page splash captioned: 'Court in session...West Midlands local radio joins forces with Crown Court staff to show workings of CJS'. Tony recalls that the local print media showed little interest and, because of the ephemeral nature of radio, there was little trace of it now. The ultimate accolade of a Sony award eluded them.

As we have seen from these interviews – and it is argued from the case studies of *The Archers* and BBC Radio Shropshire's 'Section 18' – there is some support for the contention that radio can be part of a strategy for engagement with the media.

Discussion

The literature review confirms common sense and anecdotal impressions that crime has been the subject of much journalism, and the coverage by journalists of crime has attracted the attention of criminologists and campaigners. The findings of this research corroborate the position set out in the literature. Specifically they show the extent to which radio covers crime in much the same quantities as TV and press. However, because of restraints on broadcasters the tone differs from newspapers, and, divorced from visuals, radio offers a slightly calmer discourse on the subject than TV. Therefore, we might conclude that all media is mistaken – a generous liberal pluralist interpretation – or ideologically motivated – the radical's retort – in its coverage of crime. However, if any engagement is to be made then it is argued that some of the literature, interviews and case studies show that radio might offer some hope for intervention.²⁷ To assist us towards a conclusion we need to consider not only these comparative matters but also historical issues and the specificity of radio. Discussion of the specificity of radio will inform discussion of its suitability for the crime and criminal justice message and

finally some speculation is aired on what might be done with radio on the crime and criminal justice front; that is radio's crime future.

There is not sufficient scope here for a proper historic review, though some historic material has already been adduced in the literature, but it might be noted that one commentator, writing over 30 years ago, on the prospects for using the media to further democratic participation noted that only 7% of respondents to a survey had rated radio as helping them 'know and understand what is going on in Britain' (Groombridge, 1972:88) and chose, therefore, to write on the prospects for interactive, participatory television.²⁸ This represents a considerable change from 1939 in America where *Fortune* magazine found 70% relied on the radio as a prime source of news (Czistrom, 1982:86, cited in Allan, 1999:35). The recent renaissance of radio means that it might again be seen as a credible source of news, or as the Henley Centre (nd) has it, 'A trusted medium for the discerning consumer'.

radio's specificity

One reason for ignoring radio may be the tendency within cultural and media studies for focussing on visual representation. To coin an ugly phrase, radio may appear (sound?) 'unpolysemic' though it might be argued that Surette's (1998) 'evocation of mental images' offers enormous scope for preferred and perverse 'readings' (or listenings) of radio's text. Paraphrasing McLuhan, Hendy suggests:

people in the late twentieth century ... want room in their lives for differences, ambiguities, alternative interpretations – and would therefore reject *radio's over-heated certainties*' (Hendy, 2000:1 emphasis added)

Radio may or may not lend itself to multiple readings. The intention here has not been to render radio programmes as multiple 'texts' but, in part, to clear the ground for the investigation of radio through the prism of crime and criminal justice and *vice versa*. Nor is this the place to engage with the argument as to whether radio is a 'hot' medium and TV a 'cool' medium as McLuhan (1994) suggests, but the North American

perspective may be relevant to his analysis and that of Hendy. That is American talk radio may be over-heated (though the FCC has called Clear Channel to account for the worst excesses of Howard Stern) and the UK version may aspire to heat the reality of most UK speech radio is calmer than tabloid and middle market newspapers. It is this specific of UK radio that might render it more suitable for handling discussions on crime. Elements of the UK public service provision can be seen in Australia where ABC's documentary strand *Radio Eye* on Radio National devoted four episodes to crime and punishment in October 2002.²⁹

Harcup and O'Neill (2001) note the importance of picture opportunities for entertainment stories in print but it might be argued that photo opportunities are increasingly crucial for all stories.³⁰ This clearly has significance for radio but need not be fatal. Most radio stations now have a website on which related material can be placed. Moreover, it cannot be imagined that anyone gets all their news solely from one source.

For instance, at the time of the research the Soham trial was being extensively covered by all media. So radio listeners might also imagine the, increasingly iconic, picture of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in their Manchester United shirts. Radio is capable of conjuring pictures for us but we also bring pictures to our listening. Though as one respondent told Hargreave (2000) of radio, 'There are no pictures so it's easier to lose concentration'. Or, as Crisell says, radio can be, 'used in a casual, desultory way that television cannot: we can slip into and out of its contents' (1994:219). Yet, as Hendy argues from Crisell (1994), radio can "'sneak under the radar" – for messages to be absorbed by the listener with little clear sense of where, and when and how they were absorbed' (2000:134). That is TV's visuality may act as a barrier to some messages.

Hendy (2000:1) might have spoken of 'radio's over-heated certainties' yet the end of the Soham Trial should remind us that the British tabloid press would not easily relinquish its hold on the monopoly of certitude and intemperateness; some gave over ten pages to dishing the dirt on Huntley and Carr, the police, social services etc after the conviction. So we might conclude that radio is a good place for alternative or

replacement discourses about crime and criminal justice.³¹ However, it is also clear that it is not uniquely qualified and is itself subject to social, political and technological change.

The brief historical review of the literature shows a tendency to ignore or bundle radio in with other media which has continued today. It may seem a little late in the day to try and unpick radio from that bundle. After all, we now have bi- and tri- media working which means that the same reports may appear on TV and radio and be recycled online and in print. The literalism of television means that the law correspondent is required to report from outside the Courts of Justice so we see this and are obliged to be told it on radio. Thus distinctions between the media are flattened. Moreover, radio is now increasingly heard through digital means or on the internet - allowing subtitles and even pictures or weblinks to accompany sound.

Advertisers have long recognised that some of radio's specific qualities are particularly suitable for the establishment and maintenance of brands. The Henley Centre (nd) reports that against a climate of loss of trust in institutions radio equals TV (65/66%) and outperforms print media (40-46%). It is particularly trusted by women (104/96), the young and classes A-C2. Radio is seen to be the most intimate media and trusted on rational and emotional grounds. Because of changes in the nature of society and technology radio is increasingly the only media which reaches a wide but individualised audience simultaneously. TV is likely to be watched collectively and may not be watched when broadcast. Some of these conclusions are relevant to radio's suitability as a medium for discussing crime.

radio's suitability

This dissertation has sought to be more specifically about radio rather than 'the media' with the intention of addressing its suitability for 'newsmaking criminology', 'replacement discourses', 'cunning' or 'alternatives within the public sphere'.

Roberts and Hough (2002) have been criticised that they, ‘too easily give up on the tabloids and fail to consider the internet and radio as potential arenas’ for engaging public opinion on crime and criminal justice (Groombridge, 2003:304). We need to discuss how they might have addressed the issue. For instance, Schlesinger and Tumber (1994:78) quote Paul Cavadino³² as saying, ‘most of our stuff is of its nature not visual and you are therefore interested in getting into the papers ... or the radio’. In particular, like Leslie Curtis of the Police Federation and Stephen Shaw³³ (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994:55&84), he singled out BBC Radio 4’s *Today* programme as a key outlet. In interview Una Padel felt we should go beyond ‘getting a letter in *the Guardian* or a mention on *Today*’.

The case studies indicate the potential of soap. The significance of soap opera, at least on TV, is outlined by Gillespie (2003). She concludes that, ‘the most relevant information on all aspects of the CJS were derived from soaps’ and that, ‘opinions and attitudes to crime and sentencing across the focus groups revolved, to a significant extent, around scenarios portrayed in soaps’ (2003:56). Other examples are the work of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies with the producers of *Bad Girls* to provide a critical commentary for each episode. Much of this might be applied to the *Archers* story lines so it is good that the producers went to the lengths they did to be accurate but it is regrettable that no tie-ins came from this collaboration.

Because of the increased focus on the victim within the media (Reiner, 2003) it might be more difficult for organisations seen as ‘offender’ based, such as the Probation Service, to engage with the media.³⁴ Yet Victim Support’s experience has not been entirely happy. A character in *Linda Green* was introduced as being from Victim Support and their logo was used but the character broke all the rules. Victim Support tried to get the BBC to apologise but failed and was further galled to discover the episode repeated on UK Gold during European Victims Week.

There are further difficulties, phone-ins can prove particularly difficult to control but it was not a failure of campaigning groups to get their message across that lead to

trouble for Beacon FM. Two breakfast-show DJs have been criticised for potentially prejudicial comments during the Soham trial. They derided Ian Huntley's defence and invited listeners to phone and text in. Many listeners agreed with the presenter but two texted warnings about contempt of court and the principle of *sub judice*. (MediaGuardian.co.uk)^{35 36}

Furthermore the potential contempt of court at Beacon FM shows how unscripted radio³⁷ can cause problems but the *Today* programme's recent 'Listeners' Law' poll reveals other potential problems. The winning suggestion for a change in the law, with 26,000 votes (37%), was the proposal to homeowners to 'use any means to defend their home from intruders'.³⁸ The MP who had agreed to seek the Listeners' Law passage through Parliament was upset that a 'ludicrous, brutal, unworkable blood-stained piece of legislation' (*The Independent*, 2 January 2004) had won through and many commentators thought that supporters of Tony Martin had influenced the vote.

Now, were such populist measures the way in which law was passed this would be worrying. However, it is as likely, from the coverage of the poll, that both pro and anti sentiment has been stirred up and the issue aired in a more abstract way than when tied solely to Tony Martin's killing of 'his' burglar.

We can see, as with all media, there are real difficulties in simplistically embracing radio, yet Gaber has this to say:

Radio, in particular, is a strong speech medium and features intelligent discussion of social science issues across a wide range of programming including outlets such as 'Women's Hour' 'You and Yours' and Radio 5Live. And don't ignore local radio - it provides plenty of time for talk and it will give you good practice for when you appear on the national media. (2003:3)

We might conclude from this that radio, particularly UK-based speech radio, including drama, does offer the opportunity to communicate about crime issues.

However, whilst there is no room for simplistic optimism a future for crime and criminal justice issues might beckon.

radio's crime future

Clearly multi-channel digital 'on demand' radio might be expected to change listening habits and therefore effect the basis for the following section.

Based upon what is known about radio, and the media more generally, from the literature, case studies and interviews we might speculate on how the potential of radio might be increased and realised. A frequent suggestion is that TV's visuals might be used to inform the public about crime and criminal justice through televising the courts. Stepniak (2003) summarises the position and concludes that televising the Court of Appeal might be welcomed but he still had reservations about coverage of other earlier proceedings.³⁹ It is the ongoing ban on cameras in English Courts that prompts Malcolm Balen, Head of News for ITV's London Network, to argue that, for all the legal errors in the portrayal of proceedings in an episode of *Coronation Street*,

The real problem is not that *Coronation Street* got it wrong, but that no one else has a chance to get it right. Its court case is a rare glimpse into a closed world for television viewers who have no opportunity to see a British court in action on their screens. (The Guardian, 2 June 2003)

As Stepniak (2003) points out some courts already allow verbatim court reporting on the internet and the Supreme Court of the United States began audio taping oral arguments in 1955 and since 1994 many of the most significant have been made available on line by the Oyez Project.⁴⁰ Internet summaries were made for the Hutton Enquiry.

These arguments about the televising of courts continue, in much the same way that they did in respect of the televising of parliament. Radio would make a suitably unobtrusive and reliable conduit that might overcome some of the objections to televising courts.⁴¹ It would have avoided Judge Mander's reservations about 'soap' by offering 'reality'. Marcel Berlins' experience of working with the Parole Board on his latest

programme confirmed his view on the convenience of radio and its anonymity (see Sarah Cable's interview too). He had never thought of applying this principle to a trial hearing. He remains opposed to the televising of the Courts but saw that a continuous live feed of radio 'gavel to gavel' (as the American's call it) might be acceptable.

A particularly appropriate site for action is local radio (and now the 'third tier' 'access' or community stations) where a pro-active voluntary sector or academics might seek to provide pre-recorded packages on crime and criminal justice to hard-pressed stations. Rather than just react to media demand for quotes or issuing press releases perhaps sound releases might be made. Obviously well-funded organisations might want to issue video material (see Undercurrents alternative news⁴² and Research TV⁴³) but sound is much cheaper and should be within the capacity of many organizations - especially if they collaborate. Given the political economy of commercial radio and the tenor of many phone-ins this work assumes the necessity to support public service broadcasting in the United Kingdom.

Many groups complain that their particular interest is ignored by the media (for example: health, see Harrabin et al (2003); environment, see Porter and Sims (2003); older people (Media Forum 1998) and asylum-seekers (Refugees and Asylum-seekers and the Media Project⁴⁴). Clearly this complaint might be made of the media's portrayal of crime and criminal justice but the literature review also suggests that crime and criminal justice have, along with others, ignored one part of the media - radio. Some have talked up social action broadcasting (Groombridge, 1994) and this dissertation argues, with Wilson (see interviews), for the possibility of working within the current discourse. Most of the literature and research is into the media as produced and received – that is product - but the following example shows how producing and presenting radio might also be used.

Radio Wanno has been set up by Radio for Development⁴⁵ at Wandsworth Prison in an attempt to help educate and rehabilitate prisoners. It will use a talk based format including a soap. It received a lot of media coverage on its opening, perhaps because of

the presence of Cherie Booth, but HMP and YOI Feltham has had a radio since 1994. This was evaluated recently by CCJS (King, 2004). Run by and for prisoners it also broadcasts to the local area for one month a year on FM. Presenters found value in participation but listeners liked to ‘chill’, though information and a forum for discussion were also valued. However, whilst all cells should have had a radio not all did and radio listening came second equal with playing Gameboy as the most popular in cell activity.

The future of radio now appears to be much more secure, but in forms unlike those previously ignored. This may mean that media coverage of crime, whether ‘factual, fictional and factional’ (Leishman and Mason, 2003) also converges. Thus some of the point of this study may be lost in due course – that is the unique and specific quality of radio – what is not lost though is the ongoing need for criminologists, criminal justice professionals and NGOs to engage with an evolving media and not simply endlessly examine it for malign ideologies. One difficulty though, will be the need to argue with the media, and even commentators on it, that crime itself is a subject worthy of study. Thus it is necessary to take issue with Barnett *et al*’s (2000) simple division of TV news into broadsheet and tabloid concerns and contest the aggregation of crime with humour, royalty, consumer and celebrity into the tabloid category.

Conclusion

The research questions asked by this dissertation were whether radio could properly be included in the general critique of the media and whether, despite this, radio offered any scope for a richer appreciation of the complex issues of crime and criminal justice. The literature surveyed rarely mentions radio specifically and where it does rarely backs it up with research. The research presented above indicates that writers have been on safe ground including radio in their general comments. It confirms their hunches and presumptions. However, material from the interviews, attention to the qualitative issues and the case studies do suggest radio news still to be preferable to ost TV and much press coverage and that other genres have potential too. As we shall see in the

concluding discussion below, other matters have also been raised in the course of the research, which were not apparent as research questions at the outset.

This dissertation has shown that the media has not favoured the sort of understanding of crime and criminal justice that criminology, criminal justice practitioners and associated NGOs might want. However, crime is so clearly the perfect journalistic subject that to simply complain about it is naïve. Criminology, broadly understood, should understand this and learn more of journalism if it wishes to engage with it. Potential subjects for that engagement might be: a campaign for the radio broadcasting of courts; the pro-active provision of audio press releases (or soundbites) for radio or on websites and the study of all types of media including radio from a variety of perspectives not just output, but process, sources and audiences. Indeed, to return to its roots (Cohen and Young 1973) some DIY radio criminology might be required. Indeed the police may be ahead of the game as the *Eastern Daily Press* reports (1 May 2004) that two officers now have a show on community station Future Radio. In the USA the City of San Luis Obispo Police's website has audio clips that they call 'Radio-The Prevention Minute'⁴⁶

A great deal of good work has been done within criminology and media/communications studies to show the extent to which crime is news. Both quantitative and qualitative as well as the rarer comparative and historical studies confirm this. But it is what most readers should be able to spot and all reporters and editors take for granted. Both groups may, however, need the consequences of this exploring. This dissertation has sought to balance criticism of the media with an exploration of its possibilities and a criticism of criminology with an appreciation of its concerns.

In addition to showing that the criticism of the media could properly be extended to radio and that some possibilities existed for 'newsmaking criminology' or even criminological newsmaking it also showed the paucity of work on radio and the ongoing emphasis on TV by both its supporters and detractors.

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Endnotes

¹ Frontispiece of Cohen and Young (1973) has a quote from Marx writing in a letter to Kugelmann, 27 July 1871 ‘The daily press and the telegraph which in a moment spread inventions over the whole earth, fabricate more myths ... in one day than could formerly have been done in a century’.

² The edited collection contains an earlier example still in offering a transatlantic take. Davis concludes that ‘there is no consistent relationship between the amount of crime news in newspapers and the local crime rate’ ([1952]1973:133).

³ Adapted from table 1 on page 33 of Roshier (1973).

⁴ Citing all of the authors of *Policing the Crisis* (Hall *et al*, 1978) in various early ‘versions’ of that text.

⁵ Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1987) cover some of the same issues based on the Canadian media.

⁶ It is also available on the net <http://www.policeradio.org.uk>. Crowe was only asked to edit out suspect’s addresses and police swearing.

⁷ http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/consumer_audience_research/radio_res_index/?a=87101

⁸ Steve Barnett, Voice of the Listener and Viewer Seminar Institute of Education, London 22 March 2004

⁹ Cavendar and Fishman note the influence of radio on TV programming styles and the popularity of police drama series based on books or real crime but all their sources are books on TV!

¹⁰ The canard that media causes crime (or fear of crime) in an ‘unmediated’ fashion though Orson Welles famous radio adaptation of H. G. Wells’ *War of the World* (30 October 1938) clearly shows effects.

¹¹ A dataset from 1976 in Holland on the reactions of radio listeners to crime is mentioned at http://www.niwi.knaw.nl/nl/maatschappijwetenschappen/steinmetzarchieef/datazoeken/title_r/11493/toon

¹² I am grateful to Cory Way a post-graduate student at the University of Oxford’s Centre for Criminological Research for introducing me to this material.

¹³ My contributors mainly identified themselves as Radio 4 listeners.

¹⁴ I am grateful to Jim Latham of the University of Westminster for showing me the rudiments of radio journalism and to Alan Hiscock, also of Westminster, for demonstrating the qualities of an old-style print editor.

¹⁵ An appearance on *Kilroy* speaking about Restorative Justice and a ‘spiked’ radio interview on CCTV.

¹⁶ Billboards for Evening Standard 22 January proclaim ‘More drivers jailed than burglars’.

¹⁷ Only time will tell whether the murder of Holly and Jessica becomes not only a ‘mega-case’ but ‘iconic’ adding to our “social, public ‘general knowledge’ of homicide” (Soothill *et al*, 2004)

¹⁸ See Silverman and Wilson (2002) for greater details of the treatment and hounding of paedophiles, particularly by the press.

¹⁹ Like David Wilson and Una Padel I am an Archers fan though not an addict but have lurked on the discussion boards associated with the programme during the period of research. I have been listening sporadically since childhood.

²⁰ in a phone interview 24 March

²¹ Thanks to Brian Groombridge for bringing this to my attention, see <http://www.comminit.com/pdskdv102002/sld-6444.html>

²² see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/hh/campaign.shtml>

²³ An excellent news programme aimed at children.

²⁴ I am grateful to Una Padel for the loan of the tapes.

²⁵ I am grateful to Tony Fish for a phone interview with him on 25 March 2004

²⁶ I am grateful to Judge Mander for a phone interview on 29 March 2004

²⁷ . For instance, it is, perhaps with this in mind, the reason that some oppositional groups have founded Air America Radio to counteract the influence of right-wing 'shock jocks' <http://www.airamericaradio.com/>

²⁸ He gives five pages to the possibilities of local radio and gives one example of an early broadcast on BBC Merseyside that, in its examination of the life of Liverpool 8, uncovered police malpractice that the Chief Constable was obliged to investigate. (Groombridge, 1972: 225-230)

²⁹ Their website www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/radioeye/crime/default.htm carries audio and transcripts of all the programmes.

³⁰ Modern listeners may wonder that a ventriloquist was successful on the radio in the 1940s, forgetting he had already established himself as a star. *Woman's Hour* persists with the occasional live cookery session.

³¹ Heather Payton, presenter on Radio 4 and World Service but also with TV experience, told me she believed radio to be the ideal medium for the presentation of news stories. (Personal communication 14 January 2004)

³² Then and now of the National Association for the Care Resettlement of Offenders.

³³ Then of the Prison Reform Trust, now Prison Ombudsman, showing an interplay between NGOs and Government that is characteristic of crime and criminal justice research and activism.

³⁴ I am grateful to Chris Greer for this observation in his seminar (and subsequent discussion) 'Representing Crime, Power, Place and Media in Late Modernity' British Society of Criminology Southern Branch 11 March 2004

³⁵ <http://media.guardian.co.uk/radio/story/0,12636,1109027,00.html>

³⁶ Such a crass 'contempt' of court might be seen as the diminution of standards of which McNair warns (1999:132).

³⁷ Not least Andrew Gilligan's infamous 6:07 two-way on the *Today* programme that some blame for the Hutton Report, though see Stewart Purvis (*Media Guardian* 8 March 2004) on the part an earlier Radio 2 scripted report played.

³⁸ http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/reports/misc/law_result_20040101.shtml

³⁹ Matt Wells and Clare Dyer (The Guardian November 17, 2003) 'First step to put TV cameras into courtroom' claim this will happen in 2004. See http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0%2C3604%2C1086759%2C00.html . This prediction appears now to be accurate as a pilot project of filming, but not broadcasting, some appeals was announced mid July 2004.

⁴⁰ <http://www.oyez.org/oyez/frontpage>

⁴¹ It is still banned under s.41 of the 1925 Act although strictly the Act only dealt with photos and sketches, and it was the case of *Re Barber v Lloyds Underwriters* (1987) that extended the ban to include TV and radio. Thanks to Paul Mason Southampton Institute for this information, 22 March 2004.

⁴² <http://www.undercurrents.org/>

⁴³ Research TV showcases the work of academics on its website <http://www.research-tv.com/> and distributes videos to press agencies.

⁴⁴ <http://www.ramproject.org.uk/pwtrust.htm>

⁴⁵ http://www.rfd.org.uk/project_det.asp?P_ID=11

⁴⁶ see <http://slocity.org/police/prevention.asp>.