Moral Panics Over the Internet

Bill Dutton

Oxford Internet Institute (OII)
University of Oxford
www.ox.ac.uk

Moral Panic

- disproportionate reaction
- threat to the moral order

Questions:
- Internet replacing Media?
- Overreaction?
- Why?
- So what? What impact?
• Cross-sectional Surveys versus Panels
• Multi-Stage Probability Sample
• England, Scotland & Wales
• Respondents: 14 years and older
• Face-to-face Interviews, High Response Rates
• Sponsorship for 2009 from the British Library, Higher Education Funding Council for England, Ofcom, and Scottish and Southern Energy
• Component of World Internet Project (WIP)
Figure 1-3: Reconfiguring Access

TECHNOLOGIES
- What know-how you require
- How you do what you do

PEOPLE
- Who you know
- How you communicate

SERVICES
- How you obtain services
- From whom and from where you obtain services

INFORMATION
- How you get information
- What you know
“[Edmund] Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters’ Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more prominent far than they all. It is not a figure of speech, or witty saying; it is a literal fact – very momentous to us in these times.”

Thomas Carlyle (1831), *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, at [www.gutenberg.org.etext/1091](http://www.gutenberg.org.etext/1091)
Feudal Estates into the 21st Century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estates</th>
<th>Feudal</th>
<th>Modern</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>Public Intellectuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nobility</td>
<td>Business, Industry and Economic Elites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commons</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘4th Estate’</td>
<td>Press</td>
<td>Journalists and the Mass Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mob</td>
<td>Mob</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Fourth and Fifth Estates

- Press in the 18th Century -- the ‘Fourth Estate’
- Internet in the 21st -- enabling a Fifth Estate

Enabling people to network with other individuals and with information, services and technical resources in ways that support social accountability in business and industry, government, politics, and the media.
The Social Order

- Isolating Individuals?
- Substituting Virtual for Real Friendship?
Online Contacts: Meeting New People Online (QC12)

Current users. OxIS 2005: N=1,309; OxIS 2007: N=1,578; OxIS 2009: N=1,401

Note. The question changed in 2009.
The Information Order

• Diminishing the Quality of Information?

• My Daily Me – Personal Echo Chamber?

• Globalization Undermining Local Community?
Information Seeking Online (QC22)

Current users. OxIS 2005: N=1,309; OxIS 2007: N=1,578; OxIS 2009: N=1,401

- Making travel plans: 77% (2005), 84% (2007), 87% (2009)
- Getting information about local events: 66% (2005), 77% (2007), 82% (2009)
- Looking for news: 61% (2005), 69% (2007), 75% (2009)
- Finding information about health or medical care: 68% (2005), 68% (2007), 68% (2009)
Average Importance of Media for Information by Internet Users and Non-Users (QA2 by QH14)

OxIS 2009: N=2,013
Looking for Information on Different Media (QA1)

OxIS 2009: N=2,013
Looking for Information on Different Media (QA1)

OxIS 2005: N=2,185; OxIS 2007: N=2,350; OxIS 2009: N=2,013.

**Planning a trip**

- **Use the Internet**
  - 2005: 46%
  - 2007: 55%
  - 2009: 62%

- **Use the telephone**
  - 2005: 35%
  - 2007: 30%
  - 2009: 25%

- **Personal Visit**
  - 2005: 13%
  - 2007: 8%
  - 2009: 8%

- **Directory or book**
  - 2005: 7%
  - 2007: 5%
  - 2009: 5%

**Taxes**

- **Use the Internet**
  - 2005: 11%
  - 2007: 22%
  - 2009: 38%

- **Use the telephone**
  - 2005: 10%
  - 2007: 18%
  - 2009: 33%

- **Personal Visit**
  - 2005: 35%
  - 2007: 39%
  - 2009: 48%

- **Directory or book**
  - 2005: 7%
  - 2007: 8%
  - 2009: 5%
Looking for Information on Different Media (QA1)

Local schools

- Use the Internet
- Use the telephone
- Personal Visit
- Directory or book

OxIS 2005: N=2,185; OxIS 2007: N=2,350; OxIS 2009: N=2,013.
Reliability of Information by Internet Users and Non-Users 2009
(QA4 by QH14)

Note. The scale changed from a 10 point scale in 2007 to a 5 point scale in 2009.
Average Importance of Media for Entertainment by Internet Users and Non-Users (QA3 by QH14)

OxIS 2009: N=2,013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Non- and Ex-Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spending time with other people</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Internet</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Centrality of the Internet and Trust over Time

OxIS 2003: N=2,029; OxIS 2005: N=2,185; OxIS 2007 N=2,350. OxIS 2009: N=2,013
Information Order:
Privacy and Data Protection

• ‘Privacy is dead, get over it.’ Scott McNealy

• Social Networking Eroding Privacy

• New Identities to Escape Embarrassing Posts

• Fumio Shimpo’s Video
Concerns over Privacy Online: 2005-09 (all Britons)

Present use of computers and Internet is a threat to personal privacy

- 2005: 61%
- 2007: 66%
- 2009: 45%

Use of public CCTV is a threat to personal privacy

- 2005: n/a
- 2007: 39%
- 2009: 36%

OxIS 2005: N=2,185; OxIS 2007 N=2,350; OxIS 2009: N=2,013
The Information Order: Loss of Secrecy and Confidentiality

• Surveillance and Google Street View

• Location Awareness

• WikiLeaks
Online Poll fielded on 4 December 2011:
‘Wikileaks: Do you think that the daily barrage of
new revelations has far reaching consequences for
global governance and humanity? Y/N’

**ATCA: Asymmetric Threats Contingency Alliance**

‘The first serious Infowar is now engaged. The field
of battle is WikiLeaks. You are the troops,”
Electronic Frontier Foundation co-founder John
Perry Barlow said in a tweet reposted by
WikiLeaks to its 300,000-odd followers …’
WikiLeaks

We help you safely get the truth out.

What does the world need to see?

WikiLeaks

WikiLeaks
WikiLeaks: Ethical Choice Points

• Files Leaked by US Army Intelligence Analyst
• Source Identified by a Hacker
• Charges in Sweden Against Julian Assange
• Accepted, Redacted, and Distributed by WikiLeaks
• Accepted, Analysed, Redacted and Published by the Press (collaborating with WikiLeaks)
• Take Down Efforts (Denial of Service)
• Attacks on companies that support or abandon WikiLeaks, such as PayPal, Mastercard, Visa
Many More Panics

• Multitasking and Attention – or Holding Power

• Children and the Internet – Classroom Use

• Artificial Companions

• Access to Extremist Ideas –

• Inequality and Divides – or Education
Why the Panic?

- Deterministic Perspectives – Loss of Control
- New Technology – Experience Divides
- A New Order - Transformative
- Tipping Point – Becoming Essential
- Lack of Systematic Empirical Research
- Limits of Disciplines – Multi-disciplinary Issues
What Difference Does It Make?

- Undermine the Fifth Estate

- Chilling Effect on Freedom of Expression

- Undermine the Vitality of the Internet – fuelling social, economic and political development

- Question Moral Panics, or Trivializing Tussles: Define Serious Issues for Research and Debate
Centrality of the Internet, Trust in Government and Attitudes toward Internet Regulation over Time

OxIS 2003: N=2,029; OxIS 2005: N=2,185; OxIS 2007 N=2,350; OxIS 2009: N=2,013
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