THEORIZING CRIMINALITY AND POLICING IN THE DIGITAL MEDIA AGE

Edited by Julie B. Wiest

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Tayfun Kasapoglu, University of Tartu, Estonia

Kristjan Kikerpill, University of Tartu, Estonia

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Anu Masso, Tallinn University of Technology and University of Tartu, Estonia

Amy May, Shippensburg University, USA

Victoria McDermott, University of Maryland, USA

Nickie D. Phillips, St. Francis College, USA

Ruth Quattro, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA

Andra Siibak, University of Tartu, Estonia

Suido Valli, Playtech Estonia

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mary Angela Bock is an Associate Professor at The University of Texas at Austin School of Journalism. She is a former-journalist-turned-academic with an interest in the sociology of photographic practice, the relationship between words and images, and digital media. She is particularly concerned with matters of truth and authenticity in the process of image production, and her most-recent research has examined the way citizen videos are changing the public conversation about police policy in the United States. Her previous career spanned more than 20 years in television news, with stints as a newspaper reporter, a radio journalist, and public relations writer. Most recently, Bock co-authored *Visual Communication Theory and Research* with Shahira Fahmy and Wayne Wanta. Her 2012 book, *Video Journalism: Beyond the One-Man Band*, discusses the relationship between solo multimedia practice and news narrative.

Nicola Bozzi is Associate Lecturer at London College of Communication and former PhD student in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Salford. His main research interests are globalized identities and the way they circulate, as well as the role of art in society. Nicola's doctoral thesis is a critical exploration of tagging in relation to the esthetics of social media cultures, centred on cultural figures like the Gangsta and the Digital Nomad. His writings have been published in academic outlets like *Social Media + Society* as well as cultural publications like *Frieze*, *Elephant*, *Domus*, and *Wired Italia*.

Mercedes Calzado is an Adjunct Researcher of the National Scientific and Technical Research Council of Argentina (CONICET) at Gino Germani Institute (School of Social Sciences, Buenos Aires University). Ph.D. in Social Sciences, master's degree in Social Sciences Research, and a bachelor's degree in Social Communication (Buenos Aires University). Professor in Communication Sciences Program (Social Sciences Faculty, Buenos Aires University). Fulbright postdoctoral scholarship (2017) and visiting researcher at the Center for Latin American Studies at Georgetown University (2017/2018). Director of the Group on Communication, Politics, and Security at Buenos Aires University. She researches the problem of urban security in Argentina and its connection with communication media, the political arena, and the emergence of insecurity victims' movements.

Nicholas Chagnon is a Lecturer in Women's Studies and Sociology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. His work examines how the politics of criminal justice play out in the media. He has published in journals such as *Feminist Criminology*, *Crime Media Culture*, and *Critical Criminology*.

Stephanie Dailey (PhD, University of Texas at Austin) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Texas State University. She is interested in how people learn about and feel part of organizations. Her research, therefore, seeks to advance research at the intersection of organizational socialization and organizational identification scholarship. Specifically, her theory-driven program of work spans three contexts: organizational membership, wellness, and social media. Her publications and current projects capture how these activities help bring people together to create shared meaning in the process of organizing.

Jessica J. Eckstein (PhD, University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign) is Professor in the Communication Department at Western Connecticut State University (WCSU). She currently serves as Director of the Women's Studies Program and Chair of the IRB for Human Subjects Research at WCSU. Her publications appear in a variety of journals and edited volumes related to communication, relationships, family, and/or violence (see https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4532-9702).

Tom Grimes (PhD, Indiana University Bloomington) is a Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication and Adjunct Research Professor in the Department of Psychology at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. His research areas include attention and memory processes, and the filtering role of psychopathology in message comprehension.

Tayfun Kasapoglu is a PhD candidate at the Institute of Social Studies at the University of Tartu, Estonia. His main research interest lays in critical data studies. His studies focus on perspectives of data subjects that are more likely to be the targets of datafied governance procedures. His current research deals with Syrian refugees and their perspectives on the use of datafied solutions in the management of forced migration.

Kristjan Kikerpill (MA in Information Technology Law) is a doctoral student at the Institute of Social Studies (University of Tartu, Estonia). His main areas of interest and research are online deception, the mechanics of phishing and other cybercrimes, the social impact of deepfakes, and crime prevention in online environments. Recent publications include a socio-legal analysis of phishing e-mails, a critical analysis of cybercrime case law, and the operationalization of phishing e-mail detection in organizational environments.

Vanesa Lio is a Researcher of the National Scientific and Technical Research Council of Argentina (CONICET) at the Research Institute in Humanities and Social Sciences (School of Humanities and Educational Sciences, National University of La Plata). She got a bachelor's degree in Social Communication at Buenos Aires University (Argentina) and a master's degree in Public and Political Communication at Pisa University (Italy). She held funded doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships, earning her PhD at Buenos Aires University. She has done research and published articles in several areas, including security policies, video surveillance, political communication, campaigns, qualitative research methods,

new media, and television news. She also participates in several research projects, taking part of the Research Group on Communication, Politics and Security at the University of Buenos Aires and of the Nucleus of Security Studies in the Province of Buenos Aires (NESBA) at the National University of La Plata.

Anu Masso is an Associate Professor of big data in social sciences at Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance, Tallinn University of Technology, and a senior researcher at the Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia. Her research focuses on (digital) social transformations, spatial mobilities, and the socio-cultural consequences of big data. Her recent work concerns misconceptions regarding social diversities in data technologies.

Amy May (PhD, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) is currently an Assistant Professor at Shippensburg University in the Department of Human Communication Studies. Her research has been featured in several peer-reviewed journals, including *Journal of GLTB Family Studies, Teaching in Higher Education,* and *Patient Education and Counseling*. She is currently serving as co-editor on the forthcoming edited volume *Women of the Wild: Challenging Gender Disparities in Remote Field Stations and Marine Laboratories*.

Victoria McDermott is Doctoral student and Instructor of Record at the University of Maryland in the Communication Department. She has an interest in gender communication, organizational communication, and the communication dynamics influenced by mass media. Previous research projects have included the impact of beard memes on the formation of the masculine identity, the impact of mass media content on college students' understanding of consent, and the mass media representations of the female rapist. As an instructor with multiple teachers in her family, Tori understands the impact of media on perceptions of classroom safety. As mass media continues to play a large role in Tori's life, she understands the importance of exploring the narratives being perpetuated. With a keen interest in research and adding to the discipline, Tori looks forward to continuing to complete research related to the portrayal of narratives and potential impacts within mass media.

Nickie D. Phillips, St. Francis College, Brooklyn, USA, is author of *Beyond Blurred Lines: Rape Culture in Popular Media* (Rowman & Littlefield) and co-author of *Comic Book Crime: Truth, Justice, and the American Way* (NYU Press). She has published work on media, crime, and popular culture in journals such as *Feminist Criminology*, *Feminist Media Studies*, and the *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*.

Ruth Quattro (BA, Western Connecticut State University) holds a degree in Communication Studies and a minor in Community Health. She is currently pursuing a Master of Public Health degree at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she will focus on community education and environmental health.

Andra Siibak (PhD in Media and Communication) is Professor of Media Studies at the Institute of Social Studies (University of Tartu, Estonia). Her main areas of research are related to internet and social media use, privacy, online audiences, and datafication. Her research has been published in many international edited collections and peer-reviewed journals, including *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, *Social Media + Society*, *Cyberpsychology Technology*, and *Pedagogy and Education*.

Suido Valli is Data Migration Manager at Playtech Estonia. He holds an MSc in Software Engineering from a joint program between University of Tartu and Tallinn University of Technology.

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The idea for a volume on media and crime arose from the success of a plenary panel that I organized and moderated for the 2019 Media Sociology Preconference, titled "Media Representations of Crime: Constructing Culture and Shaping Social Life." The topic drew so much interest, in fact, that Emerald approved an additional volume on a related topic that follows this one in the series (and I still had to turn down many promising proposals!). Thanks again to the preconference panelists – one of whom co-authored a chapter in this volume – for sharing their expertise in the broad field of media and crime: Valerie J. Callanan (Kent State University), Venessa Garcia (New Jersey City University), Lisa A. Kort-Butler (University of Nebraska – Lincoln), Nickie Phillips (St Francis College), and Alicia Simmons (Colgate University). And a big thank you to Casey Brienza and her organizing committee for all their hard work, and to Kenneth Kambara for hosting the preconference.

Lastly, thank you to the scholars who generously gave hours of their time to review the scholarship in this volume and offer thoughtful comments and suggestions that greatly enhanced the quality of every chapter; to *Emerald Studies in Media and Communications* Series Editors Laura Robinson, Shelia Cotten, and Jeremy Schulz for their support and dedication to producing high-quality scholarship in media and communication studies; and to the members of Emerald's production team who helped me navigate this project amid a global pandemic, especially Jen McCall, Dheebika Veerasamy, Carys Morley, and Harriet Notman.

Julie B. Wiest
Professor of Sociology, West Chester University of Pennsylvania
Senior Crime and Media Editor, *Emerald Studies in Media and Communications*

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Julie B. Wiest, *West Chester University of Pennsylvania*, USA

Criminality, policing, and mass media are enduring topics in studies of the social world, and scholarly advances in these areas are particularly pertinent in times of social and cultural change. The digital revolution that began in post-industrial societies has affected, to varying extents, most nations around the world, introducing new opportunities for both crime commission and crime control, transforming social structures and institutions, and inspiring novel considerations for scholarly inquiry. Each chapter in this volume offers empirically supported investigations and insights into the evolving landscape of criminality and policing in the digital media age. Scholars address emerging patterns and practices such as technology-mediated violence, digitally altered pornography and its consequences, and algorithm-supported methods of law enforcement; representations of crime, criminals, and police on social media and via digital productions of traditional media; and methodological considerations for studying crime and media in a changing world.

New Opportunities for Criminals and Police

Digital technologies have advanced and spread faster than any other innovation in human history. It took only about two decades for approximately half of the population in developing nations to gain access (UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel, 2019), while a mere fraction of those in the most-advanced economies now lack access (Schumacher & Kent, 2020). With rapid advancements that continually improve the capabilities, ease of use, and costs of these technologies, the point of user saturation surely is at hand. Although some experts continue to emphasize the inequalities related to persistent domestic and global digital divides (Poushter, 2017; Robinson et al., 2020a, 2020b), others suggest that opportunities for greater equality ultimately outweigh the potential drawbacks (UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel, 2019). Whatever the eventual outcome, widespread access to digital technologies has created new opportunities for both criminality and policing. Crimes committed via digital technologies – frequently referred to as cybercrimes – continue to increase year over year and result in soaring financial losses worldwide (Anderson et al., 2019). Common types include identity theft, financial fraud (including cryptocurrency-exchange hacking), travel fraud, and ransomware (Anderson et al., 2019; Gorham, 2020).

The initial chapters in this volume examine some lesser-known types of cybercrime. In the first chapter, "Does Exposure Matter? Media, Education, and Experience Affecting Technology-Mediated Abuse Knowledge, Understanding, and Severity-Perceptions," Jessica J. Eckstein and Ruth Quattro advance scholarship on digitally facilitated violence. Their study takes an in-depth look at technology-mediated abuse (TMA) and examines the ways in which exposure to different types of education and media about TMA, as well as personal experiences with it, shape related public knowledge, understanding, and perceptions. Then, in "Dealing with Deepfakes: Reddit, Online Content Moderation, and Situational Crime Prevention," Kristjan Kikerpill, Andra Siibak, and Suido Valli present a fascinating study of deepfakes (i.e., the replacement of one person's image in existing – often pornographic – media content with the likeness of another) for which they applied the situational crime prevention framework to examine members' responses when their online community decided to ban such content.

Within policing, data-mining techniques and artificial-intelligence systems are being used to detect, solve, and even predict crime (Brayne, 2017; Hassani, Huang, Silva, & Ghodsi, 2016). This includes software for assessing recidivism risk and uncovering crime patterns, as well as automated video surveillance with facial recognition and listening devices (e.g., for detecting gunshots in urban spaces; see Merrill, 2017). Adding to this cutting-edge scholarship, Tayfun Kasapoglu and Anu Masso's chapter, "Attaining Security Through Algorithms: Perspectives of Refugees and Data Experts," offers a fascinating look at how police risk-scoring algorithms are perceived by data experts and refugees in Estonia and Turkey, while exposing some of the ways in which digital technologies are used to make highly consequential decisions.

Digital Media Representations of Criminality and Policing

Media representation has long comprised a significant amount of social science scholarship. Scholars have examined the ways in which a wide array of groups and topics has been portrayed in news and entertainment media, with some theorizing about the potential consequences. Yet, the digital media age has significantly increased opportunities for producing and distributing media content – by professionals and amateurs, alike – and, thus, allows for substantial shifts in what may be portrayed and how. In Chapter 4, "Dramatization of the @Gangsta: Instagram Cred in the Age of Glocalized Gang Culture," Nicola Bozzi uses the cultural trope of the "Gangsta" to demonstrate the ways in which criminals are portrayed, even dramatized, on social media and within a broader cultural context that is intertwined with the digital media realm.

Chapters 5 and 6 feature studies that are perhaps more traditionally aligned with media representation scholarship, yet each centers its thesis solidly in a digital environment. In "Perp Walks as Contested Rituals: Documents, Affordances, and Performances," Mary Angela Bock examines the variety of meanings that frame perp walks and how the subjective perspectives of defendants, visual journalists, and members of law enforcement all contribute to understandings

of media ritual and embodied practice. In "Images of Crime: Empathetic Newsworthiness and Digital Technologies in the Production of Police News on Television in Argentina," Mercedes Calzado and Vanesa Lio guide readers through an examination of new modes for producing and presenting television crime news in Argentina, revealing the transformative impact of the spread of digital technologies as information sources.

Studying Criminality and Policing in the Digital Media Age

Alongside changes to crime commission, policing, and the production, distribution, and influence of media content in the digital age, the practices and procedures used to scientifically understand these changes also are adapting. Although many digital media researchers previously enjoyed ready access to digital data via Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), changes to the landscape in recent years are posing new challenges (see Perriam, 2020). The last three chapters in this volume lend novel insights for media and crime scholars who are working to forge a path forward. In "'Every Day When I Go to Work, I Wonder If It Will Be the Day I Die': Sensemaking Mass Media and School Shootings," Victoria McDermott and Amy May examine a sensitive and personal topic in crime and media – how educators make sense of their experiences related to the threat of school shootings – by using an unobtrusive digital method that may serve as a model for future research focusing on sensitive topics and/or vulnerable populations.

Chapters 8 and 9 focus more specifically on methodology and include clear, practical conclusions that surely will influence crime and media scholarship well into the future. In "Lost in the Mediascape: Embracing Uncertainties and Contradictions at the Cultural Nexus of Crime and Media," Nickie D. Phillips and Nicholas Chagnon explain methodological crises in criminology scholarship but also offer tools for researchers who seek better wayfinding in this new and dynamic landscape. Concluding the volume with "Five Things That Went Wrong with Media Violence Research," Tom Grimes and Stephanie Dailey draw on decades of research to identify and explain in remarkable detail five methodological errors frequently made by researchers of media violence and behavioral aggression, as well as to outline ways for social media researchers to avoid making the same mistakes.

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