Moral Panic and Critical Realism:
Stratification, Emergence and the Internal Conversation

by

James Meades
B.A. with Honours in Sociology, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2006

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Abstract

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The concept of moral panic has enjoyed a rich history in sociological literature. Since Stanley Cohen (1972) published his seminal study on the Mods and Rockers, scholars have used the concept of moral panic to identify and explain disproportional and exaggerated societal reactions to perceived threats against the social order posed by some condition, episode, person or group of people. However, recent scholars have sought to revise or problematize Cohen’s initial conceptualization, culminating in calls to ‘rethink’ (McRobbie and Thornton, 1995) and ‘think beyond’ (Hier, 2008) moral panic, as well as to ‘widen the focus’ of moral panic analysis (Critcher, 2008). In response, my thesis seeks to strengthen the conceptual and methodological approach to the concept of moral panic by integrating the meta-theoretical principles of critical realism. Critical realism, I argue, provides both the conceptual clarity and methodological insight necessary to enhance scholarly research on moral panic. In addition, the integration of critical realism allows me to more fully explore the internal dynamics and causal mechanisms involved in the genesis of moral panic. The result is a deeper understanding of the ontological nature of moral panic.
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Dedication

To my mother,

For all your support and encouragement.
Chapter 1: Introducing Moral Panic and Critical Realism

The concept of moral panic has enjoyed a rich history in sociological literature. Since Stanley Cohen published his seminal study on the Mods and Rockers, scholars have used the concept of moral panic to identify and explain disproportional and exaggerated societal reactions to perceived threats against the social order posed by some ‘condition, episode, person or group of people’ (Cohen, 2002). In other words, the concept of moral panic denotes the processes by which the representation of harm embodied in a ‘folk devil’ becomes viewed as a major threat to social values, interests or even its very existence. At root, moral panic involves a complex set of relations between folk devils, claims-makers, the media and the general public (Hier, 2002a). Put simply, claims-makers (e.g. politicians, police officers, members of interest groups or social movements, etc.) seek to curtail or eliminate some harmful condition, attribute or behaviour they see represented in a folk devil. The claims regarding the potential harm embodied in the folk devil enter the mass media, which then disseminates the claim to the general public. At this point, the threat comes to be seen as more menacing and problematic than it really is, stimulating widespread feelings of social anxiety and concern.

After nearly forty years of conceptual and empirical academic research, the concept of moral panic currently exists in a precarious position. McRobbie and Thornton (1995), for example, argue that the proliferation of media into mass, micro and niche forms has created new space for discursive contestation of folk devils, which limits the possibilities for a successful moral panic construction. Conversely, far from limiting the
possibilities for moral panic, Thompson argues that it is the “all-pervasive quality of panics that distinguish the current era” (1998: 2). By contrast, Ungar (2001) argues that the implications of the risk society thesis antiquate the concept of moral panic as a result of changing sites of social anxiety. Yet, Hier (2003) maintains that the risk society thesis strengthens the need for the concept of moral panic as a result of converging sites of social anxiety. These disparate attempts to problematize and revise the concept of moral panic have produced an identity crisis for moral panic theorizing and research, culminating in calls by scholars to ‘rethink’ (McRobbie and Thornton, 1995) and ‘think beyond’ (Hier, 2008) moral panic, as well as to ‘widen the focus’ (Critcher, 2008) of moral panic analysis. The identity crisis denotes the difficulties of maintaining conceptual coherence and developing empirical applications amidst the internal disagreement among scholars on how or why to use the concept of moral panic. In turn, the identity crisis facing moral panic research has undermined the concept’s analytical utility and led some scholars (Hunt, 1997; Ungar, 2001) to dismiss the concept as analytically unrewarding.

Rather than endorsing the position that the concept of moral panic has lost its analytical value, I argue that the concept is ripe for revival. In fact, the recent surge of articles on moral panic (Critcher, 2008; Doran, 2008; Garland, 2008; Hier, 2008; Jenkins, 2008)\(^1\) speaks all too clearly to the present need to seriously reassess the concept’s analytical and explanatory potential. Thus, the task of the present work is to reassess the concept of moral panic by integrating the meta-theoretical principles of critical realism. Specifically, I argue that the critical realist conceptualizations of stratification, emergence

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\(^1\) In addition to these five articles, *Crime, Media, Culture* dedicated an entire issue to commemorating the 30\(^{\text{th}}\) anniversary of *Policing the Crisis* by Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts (1978).
and social action prove invaluable for understanding the internal dynamics and causal mechanisms involved in genesis of moral panic. Moreover, the integration of critical realism also provides the conceptual coherence and methodological insights necessary to recapture the analytical and explanatory potential of moral panic. Echoing Critcher, “if there is a better guide than the moral panic concept… then it has yet to be discovered” (2006: 3).

The remainder of this chapter will serve as a broad introduction to the two main bodies of literature involved in my thesis. First, I will provide a brief and heuristic introduction to moral panic, concentrating on how scholars have explained moral panic. Second, I will provide an overview of the foundational tenets of critical realism, emphasizing the implications of critical realism for social scientific investigation. Third, I will provide a synopsis of how I will structure my argument by highlight the central themes and concerns of each chapter.

Moral Panic

As a heuristic device, the sociology of moral panic has been separated into three explanatory models: interest group, elite-engineered and grassroots (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994). Cohen’s study of the Mods and Rockers exemplifies the interest group model. In fact, his opening paragraph encapsulates the interest group model so well that it is one of the most frequently cited in British sociology (Ungar, 2001). Cohen writes:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something
which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself (2002: 1).

For Cohen, deviance results from social processes that label particular acts and behaviours (and therefore individuals) as deviant; deviance is not inherent to a given act or actor (Cohen, 2002). Specifically, Cohen argues that moral panic emerges from the active campaigning of moral guardians; in his own words, “the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people… who pronounce their diagnoses and solutions” (2002: 1). In this way, the folk devil of moral panic is, “perceived of as ‘a problem’ only in and through social definition and construction” (Hier, 2002a: 313- emphasis added). As Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) explain, by demonizing the conduct of some harmful other, interest groups seek to extract a material and/or ideological benefit for their own cause. However, neither the precarious demarcation between morality and self-interest nor the benefit(s) gained through claims-making activities are at issue here. Instead, it is sufficient to note that through their active campaigning, interest groups label the conduct of others as harmful, creating the conditions for moral panic.

By contrast, the elite-engineered model, exemplified by Hall et al.’s (1978) study of ‘muggings’ in 1970’s Britain, offers a more structural, neo-Gramsician account of moral panic. While Cohen’s interest-group approach holds that claims originate in the ‘middle rungs’ of power in society (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994: 139), Hall et al. contend that the elite (political and corporate) intentionally construct moral panic as a means to orchestrate hegemony. The argument rests upon, the view that elites have immense power over the other members of the society- they dominate the media, determine the content of legislation and the direction of law enforcement, and control much
of the resources on which action groups and social movements depend (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994: 135).

Characteristic of the elite-engineered model, Hall et al. argue that the ‘muggings’ moral panic functioned as an ideological tool to mystify public perception of the crises in British capitalism. As claims-makers, the elite consciously divert public attention away from the structural problems stemming from the capitalist system (crisis in profitability, increasing inflation, decreasing exports, etc.) by directing their own attention to the purported harm represented by the young, urban, black male street mugger. In this way, the elites facilitate ruling class hegemony by “convincing the rest of society…that the real enemy is not the crisis in British capitalism but the criminal and the lax way he has been dealt with in the past” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994: 137). For Hall et al., the utility of moral panic lies in the ability for the state to persuade the general population that new legislative powers are necessary under the guise of maintaining law and order, while limiting the potential for any serious structural criticism. In Gramscian terms, moral panic creates the ‘exceptional’ conditions that allow the state to extract public consent for increasingly coercive measures by exploiting a heightened state of social anxiety.

Claims-makers, in both Cohen’s and Hall et al.’s conceptualizations, emerge from somewhere distinct within, or above, civil society (i.e. interest groups, state elites). By contrast, the grassroots model articulated by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) conceptualizes instances of moral panic as originating within civil society itself. They argue that the development of moral panic does not depend on the active work of moral entrepreneurs, such as public interest groups, the media or the political elite. Instead, “expressions of concern in other sectors (that is, in the media, among politicians, political
action groups, and law enforcement) are an expression or a manifestation of more widespread concern” (1994: 127) already present in society. While recognizing that interest groups, the media and politicians can act as catalysts, triggers or guides, Goode and Ben-Yehuda argue that they “cannot fabricate concern where none existed initially” (Ibid). Rather, the empirical manifestation of moral panic represents only the instantiation of a diffuse anxiety already present beneath the surface, which has emerged because of a spatio-temporal specific triggering event. Thus, they contend that, “what explains the outbreak or the existence of the moral panic - is deeply felt attitudes and beliefs on the part of a broad sector of the society, that a given phenomenon represents a real and present threat to their values, their safety or even their very existence” (1994: 128).

While not intended as an extensive overview, the three explanatory models outlined above do offer an initial introduction to the sociology of moral panic. As ‘ideal types’, these three models are designed to encompass any possible instance of moral panic by taking into account the varying social positions of claims-makers (Critcher, 2003: 3). However, since these models are only ideal types, recent scholarship has sought to revise or problematize the taken-for-granted aspects of moral panic theorizing by drawing on concepts of discourse and ideology (Hay, 1995; Hier, 2002a; 2002b), moral regulation (Hunt, 1999a; Hier, 2002a, 2002b; Critcher, 2008) and risk (Ungar, 2001; Hier, 2003, 2008). The result of these revisions and problematizations has been both positive and negative for the concept of moral panic. It has been positive insofar as it has opened the analysis of moral panic to a wider conceptual field; it has been negative insofar as it has led scholars to concentrate on particular issues or problems, thus marginalizing the potential for a coherent, holistic analysis.
Critical Realism

Critical realism, as a meta-theory, possesses distinctive ontological and epistemological tenets. However, to summarize the entirety of critical realism is the substance of books, not paragraphs. For the purpose of this introduction, I have chosen to focus my attention on four foundational tenets of critical realism. First, I will distinguish the transitive and intransitive dimensions of knowledge. Second, I will address the features of a stratified and structured ontology. Third, I will explore a non-Humean theory of causality based upon the concepts of generative mechanisms and emergent properties. Fourth, I will outline explanation at the societal level through the transformational model of structure and agency.

The most fundamental characteristic of critical realism is the assertion that reality exists independently from the knowledge we produce about it. That is, there is a distinct separation between the possible objects of scientific study (the intransitive dimension) and the knowledge we produce about these objects (the transitive dimension) (Bhaskar, 1998; Sayer, 2000). It is important to note that this ontological quality does not, in any way, hinder our ability to develop knowledge about reality. In fact, it is precisely because reality exists independent of our mental conceptions that we are able to formulate knowledge in the first place. However, this separation entails recognizing the fallibility of our knowledge production; it means recognizing that, as humans, we can get things wrong. “When theories change (transitive dimension) it does not mean that what they are about (intransitive dimension) necessarily changes too” (Sayer, 2000: 11). For example, when human conceptions of Earth’s shape changed from flat to spherical it would be absurd to assert that the physical properties of the planet mimicked our knowledge (Ibid).
In addition, the separation of intransitive and transitive dimensions results in the assumption that reality possesses an objective character, which places critical realism in opposition to strictly constructionist or idealist ontologies. The point is made clearly by Sayer: “if, by contrast, the world itself was a product or construction of our knowledge, then our knowledge would surely be infallible, for how could we ever be mistaken about anything?” (2000: 2).

Developing from the distinction between transitive and intransitive dimensions, proponents of critical realism argue that reality should be conceptualized as both structured and stratified. The notion of reality being structured rests upon an assumption of ontological depth (Bhaskar, 1998). Here, it is argued that reality exists beyond the strictly empirical level of experience, which consequently means that scientific investigation must not stop at the surface of things. Proponents of critical realism conceive reality as existing across three domains: Real, Actual and Empirical. Although the conceptual language involved in explaining each domain is discussed in more detail below, we can crudely conceptualize these distinctions in the following terms. The Real domain is comprised of human experiences, the events that form these experiences and the generative mechanisms that interact to the produce the events. The Actual domain is comprised only of experiences and events, while the Empirical domain is comprised solely of experiences (Bhaskar, 2008: 13). It is important to note that critical realism posits the potential for mechanisms to exist without ever actualizing into an event, and therefore, without ever emerging at the level of experience. Although this admission carries a significant impact, especially for a critical social science, for the sake of space I am not going to elaborate here. However, I will say that generative mechanisms operate
in a relational field, thus allowing the potential of one (or more) mechanism to counteract the actualization of one (or more) other mechanism.

Further, the notion of ontological depth also necessitates a concept of stratification. In this conceptualization we find a more complex understanding of both how the world is and how the world works. Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen and Karlsson demonstrate the process of stratification, “in a simple way by imagining that we start from ‘the bottom’ finding physical mechanisms in one stratum, chemical in another, biological in a third, and ‘at the top’ are the psychological and social strata” (2002: 60). They argue that, in moving upwards, “each new stratum is formed by powers and mechanisms of the underlying strata. At the same time, this new stratum represents something entirely new, unique and qualitatively different, which cannot be reduced to underlying strata” (Ibid). This process of conceptual stratification is essential for the critical realist epistemology because the basis for its explanatory schema rests upon a system of emergent properties, capable of producing events at higher levels. Concisely stated, this necessitates viewing the production of events analytically as

a complex compound effect of influences drawn from different mechanisms, where some mechanisms reinforce one another, and others frustrate the manifestations of each other. Taken together this- that objects have powers whether exercised or not, mechanisms exist whether triggered or not and the effects of the mechanisms are contingent- means we can say that a certain object tends to act or behave in a certain way (Danermark et al., 2002: 56).

The passage above articulates the two final concepts necessary for my purpose here: contingency and tendency. It is through the recognition that mechanisms are contingent, that objects (broadly speaking) only tend to act in certain ways, that there are ‘no guarantees’ where we find the full range of possibilities for taking into account the “non-manifest or non-realized modes of operation” (Danermark et al., 2002: 57) into our analysis.
The preceding argument presents a fundamental shift in understanding the concept of causality. For Bhaskar (2008), the positivist notion of causality as a constant conjuncture of events is inherently problematic in three ways. First, it presupposes a closed system in which individual variables can be identified and controlled (for example, in a laboratory). Conversely, Bhaskar (1998, 2008) argues that reality exists in an open system wherein it is impossible to identify and control every possible variable. The potentiality of counteracting mechanisms, and the acceptance of contingency, necessitates extending the analysis beyond linear equations of cause and effect. Second, within this false notion of linear causality lies the conviction that scientific knowledge can discover law-like regularities that govern our social world. As I demonstrated above, the critical realist position explains phenomena (especially social phenomena) as tendencies not laws. Third, according to Bhaskar (1998, 2008) those who have traditionally supported the positivist philosophy of science have failed to recognize the human agent as an active causal force. In other words, they have neglected to account for the role the scientist plays in producing a constant conjuncture within an artificially closed laboratory setting. The neglect of agential properties becomes even more problematic when the discussion is placed specifically in the context of the social sciences. Here, the positivist notion of causality is dogged by structural determinism that severely limits the active powers of human actors to alter the structural conditions of their social world.

The final aspect of critical realism that I will cover involves examining the relation between structure and agency. The Transformational Model of Structure/Agency (TMSA), first developed by Bhaskar (2008) and later elaborated by Archer (1995),
proves conceptually superior to the three most common alternatives. Archer (1995) provides the most accessible articulation by centering her argument on three types of conflation: downward, upward and central. The downward conflationists, traditionally associated with the structuralism of Durkheim, tend to conceptualize agency as an epiphenomenon of structure; the upward conflationists, traditionally associated with the methodological individualism of Weber, tend to conceptualize structure as an epiphenomenon of agency; the central conflationists, such as those influenced by Giddens, admittedly collapse the two because they argue that the two concepts bear such influence on one another that they cannot be separated. However, Giddens (1979) qualifies the relation, arguing that it is possible, heuristically speaking, to methodologically bracket one when dealing with the other. However, even as a heuristic device, methodological bracketing is unnecessary if we consider structure/agency as two distinct things rather than as an epiphenomenal of each other or as a single, indistinguishable entity (Bhaskar, 2008). In this case, structure is recognized as enabling and constraining agency, while agency is seen as reproducing and transforming structure. This separation provides a greater explanatory utility by affording structure and agency their own distinct mechanisms and emergent properties, which in turn, allows for a deeper analysis by situating phenomena in particular spatial-temporal locations.

The four central tenets of critical realism outlined above serve as a guiding metatheoretical framework for scientific investigation. When taken together, these tenets form the foundation for an initial approach to any object of inquiry. In terms of moral panic, I maintain that critical realism provides the best ontological, epistemological and methodological vantage point to rectify the pressing problems inherent to recent
conceptualizations of moral panic. What this means in practice, however, is that specific reference to the notions of ontological depth and epistemological relativism are kept in the background. That is, they guide my analysis without being the central focus. Instead, I argue that the critical realist conceptions of stratification and emergence that result from a critical realist ontology prove more valuable for enhancing scholarly understanding of the internal dynamics and variegated processes involved in the genesis of moral panic.

**Thesis Structure**

I argued above that instances of moral panic involve a complex set of relations between folk devils, claims-makers, the media and the general public. Thus, any inquiry into moral panic must detail, at least to some extent, the various ways in which these relations emerge and affect one another. In a Marxian sense, I should state that my mode of investigation differs from my mode of presentation. At first glance, each chapter stands alone, intensively detailing particular problems in the conceptualization of moral panic and their particular critical realist solutions. However, I maintain that when one considers the nuances of each argument separately, a more holistic understanding of moral panic emerges. I should also state that while the three explanatory models developed by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) are useful as a heuristic device, the three models actual conceal as much as they reveal about the internal processes involved in moral panic. With these points in mind, each subsequent chapter will abstract one set of necessary relations involved in the genesis of moral panic for analysis and explication.

The second chapter focuses on the folk devil/claims-maker relation and how critical realism provides the conceptual tools for understanding its internal dynamics and
dialectical movements. I argue that critical realism also provides the tools for conceptualizing the neglected question of agency possessed by folk devils and claim-makers, which leads to the stratification of both the folk devil and the claim-maker into primary, corporate and phenomenal forms. The third chapter delves deeper into the phenomenal form of folk devil by examining the relation between folk devils, claim-makers and the media. To address the role that the media plays in instances of moral panic, I examine both the institutional and extra-institutional factors of news production, concentrating on the gap between reality and representation. In other words, I concentrate on how the phenomenal form of folk devil becomes distorted and exaggerated in the process of its representation and how this ties intimately with concept of ideology. Ideology, in the sense used here, simply denotes a false belief or a set of false beliefs (Bhaskar, 1998). The fourth chapter moves to integrate the general public into the analysis, examining the relation between media messages and media audiences. As an alternative to interpellation, I argue that Archer’s conceptualization of the internal conversation provides a better analytical and explanatory avenue for engaging the complex ways that members of the general public interpret and engage with media messages. The fifth chapter combines the three necessary sets of relations involved in moral panic to assess its regulatory potential. In response to Critcher’s call to ‘widen the focus’ of moral panic by drawing on theories of moral regulation, I argue that Jonathan Jospeh’s realist analysis of hegemony provides the only way of dealing with the problematic relation between moral panic and moral regulation (Critcher, 2008). The sixth and final chapter explores the methodological features of critical realism and examines the implications of a realist analysis for actually ‘doing’ moral panic research.
When taken together, I contend that we arrive at a stronger, more coherent conceptual territory for the future development of the concept of moral panic.
Chapter 2: Folk Devils and Claims-Makers- An Emergent Dialectical Approach

In the first part, the Mods and Rockers are hardly going to appear as ‘real, live people’ at all. They will be seen through the eyes of the societal reaction and in this reaction they tend to appear as disembodied objects, Rorschach blots on to which reactions are projected. In using this type of presentation, I do not want to imply that these reactions—although they do involve elements of fantasy and selective misperception—are irrational nor that the Mods and Rockers were not real people, with particular structural origins, values, aims and interests. Neither were they creatures pushed and pulled by the forces of the societal reaction without being able to react back. I am presenting the argument in this way for effect, only allowing the Mods and Rockers to come to life when their supposed identities had been presented for public consumption (Cohen, 2002: 15).

Folk devils, as the embodiment of future harm to come, exist in a dual nature. On the one hand, they are no more than stylistic representations, abstracted social constructs of some condition, episode, person or group of people. On the other hand, folk devils, as abstracted social constructs, emerge from and depend upon the actions of real people who exist relationally to others in the social world. From the passage cited above, Cohen clearly understood this duality, yet he consciously chose to focus on the former while marginalizing the latter. Adopting Cohen’s conceptual language, other scholars, however, have not always undertaken the same stark and conscious discretion. Far from the ‘real people’ capable of ‘reacting back’ against their demonization in the media, scholars tend to treat folk devils only as representations, as chimerical effects of social anxiety (Hunt, 1997: 633; Ungar, 2001). Through the error of conceptual reification, scholars characterize folk devils as one-dimensional representations, minimizing the inherent vibrancy of real people with structural origins, engaged in dynamical social relations. Granted, some notable attempts have been made to address how ‘folk devils fight back’ (McRobbie, 1994; Hier, 2002b; de Young, 2007), but there remains considerable theoretical work to be completed.
In this chapter I address two major issues. The first issue involves examining folk devils, claims-makers and the relation between them. In other words, it involves exploring the first-order relation necessary for the emergence of moral panic. As an alternative to the three explanatory models, I develop a realist approach to the folk devil/claims-maker (henceforth: FD/CM) relation. I argue that characterizing the FD/CM relation as both internal and dialectical provides a greater methodological insight than does characterizing the FD/CM relation by the social position of claims-makers. That is, the FD/CM relation must be viewed as internal because the two roles are mutually constitutive. Just as it is difficult to conceptualize a student without a teacher, it is difficult to conceptualize a folk devil without a claims-maker. Likewise, the addition of dialectics to the FD/CM relation provides the analytical means to characterize the temporal possibilities of change inherent to an active relation with real people. Thus, even though the social position of claims-makers can affect the empirical form that any one moral panic takes, it is not a necessary element for a theory of moral panic sui generis. Rather, the necessary condition for moral panic is simply that social actors come to relate internally and dialectically as folk devils and claims-makers, subject to the contingency and change that comes with living in an open system.

The second issue to be addressed, emergent from the first, involves the question of agency, and in particular, the question of folk devil agency. Having set the conditions for agency in the preceding section, I begin by examining how recent scholars have attempted to address the agency of folk devils (McRobbie, 1994; Hier, 2002b; de Young, 2007) and how folk devils can fight back (McRobbie, 1994; Hier, 2002b). From this, I argue that Bhaskar’s TMSA and Archer’s ‘stratification of the person’ reveal not only a
more vibrant internal dynamic for the FD/CM relation, but more importantly, provide the analytical lens to avoid viewing folk devils simply as Rorshach blots, devoid of structural origins and agential powers. What this means, in clear terms, will be a move towards recognizing the real stratification of both folk devils and claims-makers into three distinct forms: Primary, Corporate and Phenomenal.

**Dealing with the Folk Devil/Claims-Maker Relation**

*What is a folk devil?*

At a general level, a folk devil is an unambiguous representation of harm that constitutes some threat to the social order that requires an immediate remedy (Hier, 2002a). As the personification of evil (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994: 28), a folk devil is stripped of all positive attributes and characterized by only negative traits, which in turn are seen to be responsible for producing the threatening behaviour in question (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Hier, 2002a). Goode and Ben-Yehuda argue that, “while all folk devils are created out of some existing and recognizable elements, a full-scale *demonology* takes place” (1994: 28-italics in original). Through this process of demonization, a folk devil is typified as a distinguishable social type in times of social unrest, “onto which social fears and anxieties may be projected” (Hier, 2002a: 313). The folk devil, in this sense, serves as a scapegoat for societal angst during periods of social crisis and change.

At a more specific level, Cohen’s original conceptualization maintains that a folk devil can be ‘a condition, episode, person or group of people’. But as Ungar (2001: 272) notes, Cohen’s inclusion of ‘condition’ and ‘episode’ runs contrary to the more common usage of the folk devil concept found in moral panic studies. Generally, folk devils
emerge from a particular social group that possesses identifiable characteristics and
behaviours, such as the mugger, the satanic daycare operator and the pedophile (Hall et
al. 1978; de Young, 1998; Critcher, 2002). As a result, Ungar argues that Cohen’s
inclusion of conditions and episodes proves problematic, in that it prevents the
development of a clear ‘folk devil rubric’ (2001: 272). To illustrate this problem, Ungar
(2001: 272) cites the swine flu panic in USA as one example in which the diffusion of
responsibility and blame left us foraging for an identifiable folk devil. For Ungar, even
though a condition may contain several characteristics of moral panic, the inability to
construct a particular folk devil consequentially means that the concept of moral panic
cannot be applied. Thus, according to Ungar, the inclusion of ‘condition’ as a possible
folk devil not only limits, but also proves problematic, for the application of moral panic.

Ungar’s objection raises a crucial issue pertaining to the construction of folk
devils for the genesis of moral panic. First, I will examine Ungar’s objection to the
inclusion of conditions as folk devils. At root, I argue that his entails reifying social
phenomena by implying that conditions can emerge as a panic without being the product
of social actors. As Goode and Ben-Yehuda correctly state,

A condition that generates such widespread public concern must have had a personal agent
responsible for its inception and maintenance. Such evil does not arise by happenstance or out of
thin air; there must be a circle of evil individuals who are engaged in undermining society as we
know it (1994: 29).

Consider, as a similar example to the swine flu panic, the outbreak of bovine spongiform
encephalopathy (BSE) that triggered a moral panic in Britain during the mid-1990s.

According to Jasanoff (1997), in this particular case, the Tory ministers and government
officials who failed in their responsibility to maintain public safety became demonized as
the folk devil (cf. de Young, 2007). This example illustrates how instances of moral
panic, even when stemming from a particular condition, depend on an identifiable agent
for the construction of a folk devil. Yet, the necessity of social agents for the construction
of moral panic emerges as an uncontroversial prerequisite for moral transgression.

Clearly, for example, no one would hold Mount Vesuvius morally culpable for destroying
Pompeii. While a particular condition may represent a threat to society (its values,
interests, etc.), only the social actors responsible for that condition can be characterized
as a folk devil. Thus, what Ungar’s objection entails is the simple recognition that risk
issues and moral panic are qualitatively different phenomena, despite the commonalities
between them.

However, the notion of a clear folk devil rubric deserves some further
consideration. Under Cohen’s conception, the folk devil is a distinguishable social type
characterized by collective styles of fashion, age and public identities (i.e. the “Mods”
and “Rockers”). However, as Colin Hay (1995) astutely observes, not all instances of
moral panic allow for such a definitive characterization. Hay argues that the James
Bulger case, in which the two-year-old Bulger was abducted from a Liverpool shopping
mall and subsequently murdered by two ten-year-old boys, constituted the first instance
of moral panic with an invisible folk devil (Hay, 1995: 198). This is not to say that Robert
Thompson and Jon Venables- the two boys responsible for Bulger’s death- were
unidentifiable as perpetrators. Rather, given the age of Thompson and Venables, the folk
devil they represented lacked a definitive social type. In other words, the difficulty arose
in attempts to distinguish which ten-year-old boys represented a threat to the social order
and which ten-year-old boys did not. In turn, Hay argues that,

Our inability to distinguish between the face of the ‘juvenile delinquent’ and that of ‘innocent
youth’ stimulates a profound sense of anxiety and insecurity as conventional conceptions of
As a result, the abduction and murder of James Bulger, “came to act as a point of condensation and connotive resonance for a variety of wider social anxieties” (Hay, 1995: 217) related to juvenile crime and the breakdown of the ‘traditional moral family unit’ (Ibid.). While moral panic often contains a clear, identifiable folk devil, Hay demonstrates that the folk devil rubric is not rigid and static, but open and fluid capable of functioning as a conduit for wider social anxieties.

From the above discussion, I can make several preliminary remarks regarding folk devils. First, folk devils vary depending on the source of moral panic and are not confined to deviant subcultures, identifiable social groups or marginal populations. While those in positions of political or social power (politicians, media corporations, lobbyists) are better equipped to construct folk devils, we have seen that they are not immune from becoming folk devils themselves. Second, folk devils embody the existence of, or the potential for, some type of harmful or troublesome action(s) perceived as threatening by the wider social body. Third, folk devils are ideal types in the Weberian sense, which depend on some real features of an already existing condition or social group. This third assertion, however, leaves out the problematic questions of how folk devils emerge, which can only be addressed by first examining the concept of a claims-maker.

What is a Claims-Maker?

To consider of the emergence of a folk devil necessitates attending to the role of claims-makers in instances of moral panic. As I demonstrated in Chapter One, the three major explanatory models are distinguished by the social position of the claims-makers. Yet, the role that claims-makers play in contributing to moral panic remains in the background of
all three models as a taken-for-granted *a priori* assumption. When attention is paid to claims-makers, it tends to concentrate on the dynamics and difficulties of claims-making activities (McRobbie and Thornton, 1995; Hier, 2003) rather than the concept of a claims-maker in moral panic. However, I argue that both the *concept* of a claims-maker and the *activity* of making claims require equal analytical assessment.

Tautologically, the role of claims-makers is to make claims regarding the negative behaviour or conduct of some other person or group of people. That is, the role of a claims-maker is to engage in claims-making activities. Roughly speaking, these tautologies encapsulate the conditions from which the concept of a claims-maker emerges. However, when examining moral panic, the concept of a claims-maker denotes much more than simply someone who makes claims. In other words, a subtle, though important, analytical distinction must be maintained between the act of making claims and the concept of a claims-maker. The distinction rests on the view that all people make claims in the course of their everyday lives but not all people enter the social role of a claims-maker as in an instance of moral panic. Each time someone signs a petition, writes a letter of complaint, or utters a phrase like, “Isn’t it horrible what x did to y”, they are engaging in the act of making claims, but this does not automatically qualify their inclusion in the concept of a claims-maker.

When dealing with claims-makers in terms of moral panic, the analytical distinction between the act and the concept is more than a question of referentiality or signification. This is neither to eschew the ontological gap between the intransitive and transitive domains nor the epistemological problems inherent to a floating signifier; rather, it is simply to assert that claims-making activities in cases of moral panic possess
a qualitative difference in comparison to the routine mode of claims-making that people enact in their everyday lives. In fact, this qualitative difference must be the case; otherwise instances of moral panic would occur at such a rapid rate that social life would be unmanageable. What gives the act of claims-making its particular quality in instances of moral panic is the articulation of the claim in such a way that is ‘emotionally and normatively resonant’ to civil society (Hier, 2002a: 318). Further, as Hay demonstrates, when a claim gains such an articulation even the invisibility of a folk devil cannot inhibit the panic from acting as a conduit for wider social anxieties.

Towards a Realist Analysis of the Folk Devil/Claims-Maker Relation

In the preceding section, I examined the folk devil and the claims-maker as particulars. The next step is to explore the relation between the two social roles, working towards a realist analysis of the FD/CM relation. First, I will review how the three explanatory models prove problematic for conceptualizing the FD/CM relation. Second, I will draw on the critical realist concept of emergence to reposition the FD/CM relation as both internally and dialectically related. Third, I will argue that this conceptualization is better equipped to incorporate a notion of change required to grasp the internal dynamics of the FD/CM relation. Moreover, I maintain that only through a realist analysis of the FD/CM relation can the issue of agency be adequately addressed.

In a similar manner, all three explanatory models prove problematic for analyzing the FD/CM relation. Succinctly, both the interest group and the elite-engineered model conceive the FD/CM relation as one-dimensional. For the interest group model, claims are transmitted from a distinctive body within civil society outwards to state officials and
the general public. For the elite-engineered model, claims-making activities are transmitted from political and economic elites to civil society in a top-down manner. Since both the interest group and elite-engineered models conceptualize moral panic as a process, and a linear process at that, there is little room to incorporate an internal dynamic to the FD/CM relation. Conversely, in the grassroots model, moral panic is not characterized by its process but by its attributes. Thus, claims-making activities are reduced to the “more or less spontaneous” (1994: 127) outbreak of an already existing feeling of widespread fear and concern within the social body. However, Goode and Ben-Yehuda limit their own conceptualization by admitting that this constant (though latent) state of fear, “sometimes requires being assisted, guided, triggered or catalyzed” (Ibid) by interest groups, social movements or political elite before becoming a moral panic. While the grassroots approach does gain some ground on the interest group and elite-engineered models by opening the analysis to a wider array of possible causal mechanisms, it simply replaces a one-dimensional FD/CM relation with a spontaneous and indeterminate eruption of social anxiety. Evidently, such a conceptualization cannot address the internal dynamic of the FD/CM relation because there is nothing internal that can be properly related. Instead, the result of the grassroots approach is an ontological flatness that favours description over causal analysis.

However, drawing on the critical realist conceptions of causality and emergence can restore the internal dynamic of the FD/CM relation. To review, critical realism holds that the way phenomena enter the empirical domain is premised upon the notion that causal powers exist regardless of whether they are active, being counter-acted or are altogether dormant in any one event. As a result, emergence is conceptualized as the
interaction and counter-action of different mechanisms to produce phenomena, further
entailing that phenomena, “have properties which are irreducible to those of their
constituents [causal powers], even though the latter are necessary for their existence”
(Sayer, 2000:12). In other words, the emergence of phenomena rests contingently upon
the inter- and counter-action of mechanisms, which in turn, constitute the necessary
conditions for its emergence; yet, phenomena are irreducible to their specifically
necessary, though contingently produced, conditions.

With these concepts in mind, the FD/CM relation reveals itself to be both a
distinct emergent phenomenon as well as necessary internal relation. While Cohen
already reasoned folk devils as an emergent phenomenon from the social definitions of
claims-makers, I argue that this phenomenon results from a far more differentiated and
antagonistic social process. The first step to uncover this process is to explicitly position
folk devils and claims-makers as necessarily constituting an internal relation. I take this
move to be uncontroversial since many of our social roles and identities exist as internal
relations (Sayer, 2000). For example, to understand the role of a landlord requires
understanding the role of a tenant- the two roles necessarily form an internal relation. The
importance of characterizing the FD/MC relation as internal results from the fact that,
“individuals obtain novel characteristics by virtue of their insertion within specific kinds
of social relations, not simply by pooling their individual capacities or powers” (Creaven,
2002: 137). Now, two things can be said concerning folk devils and their relation to
claims-makers. First, the conditions for folk devil emergence depend upon the contingent
interaction of causal powers through which one social group attempts to demonize the
behaviour or conduct of another group. Second, this process creates an internal relation in
which both folk devils and claims-makers obtain novel characteristics, but it is crucial to note that these characteristics are irreducible to this relation.

The second step is to explain how this relation functions. Given the methodological difficulty of explaining an interaction between abstract social roles, I will move forward by conceiving the folk devil/claims-maker relation dialectically. In this regard, Hier’s (2002a) work provides an initial point of departure. Hier argues that moral panic operates as a political technology, “through a dialectical process of signification (discursively articulated in terms of ‘us’/‘them’)” (2002a: 329). For Hier, the dialectic depends on the discursive construction of a harmful ‘other’ that poses a threat to ‘us’ all.

Yet, through critical realism this dialectic can be extended beyond the discursive to examine how folk devils/claims makers constitute a material (that is, extra-discursive) social relation. To conceptualize this process, I draw on the work of Sean Creaven (2002), whose synthesis of critical realism and dialectical materialism proves invaluable for understanding how we can view the folk devil/claims-maker dialectic as a social relation and not solely a discursive configuration.

The shift from a discursive to a material dialectic requires addressing how we form concepts and decipher dialectics. First,

> Concepts are the product of real conditions, shaped by existential contradictions, even if they have to be abstracted from their objects, and subjected to rational procedures of scientific testing, then reapplied to their objects in the form of more sophisticated concepts, if they are to apprehend the nature of real world processes and structures (Creaven, 2002: 140).

Dialectics, conversely, are not the *products* of real conditions, but the internal dynamics of the conditions themselves. Creaven, drawing on Marx and Engels, argues that dialectics cannot be constructed by the active will of a researcher, but only identified through empirical investigation. In his own words, he contends that, “dialectics is no
ready-made formula into which the real world has to be fitted, but must instead be discovered by means of empirical-scientific investigation into the different facets of the world” (2002: 148). In both cases, the emphasis remains on the empirical to form concepts and identify dialectics. However, the assumption of ontological stratification requires viewing empirical phenomena as emergent from the events of the Actual and the mechanisms of the Real. Consequently, Creaven argues that the merger of critical realism and dialectical materialism offers the conceptual grounding to develop an ‘emergentialist dialectical materialism’.

Immediately, Creaven foresees the possible objection, “that dialectical materialism is not an emergentialist ontology at all” (2002: 144), thus making it unnecessary and unrewarding for critical realism to engage, conceptually or otherwise, with dialectic materialism. While there is no need to rehearse the entirety of Creaven’s response to this hypothetical objection, the three arguments he posits in defense deserve brief mention because they demonstrate why I have chosen to formulate the folk devil/claims-maker relation as an emergent material dialectic. First, Creaven argues that, “dialectical concepts are in fact explicit descriptions of the reality of stratification and emergence” (2002: 144). Second, “such concepts are as reasonable a way as any of capturing in the most general terms the reality of the world as a ‘differentiated unity’” (2002: 145). And third, dialectical concepts are successful in historicizing stratification and emergence. That is, they allow us to grasp the dynamics or processes through which higher-order levels of the material world develop out of lower-order levels, not as ‘radical contingency’ but as integral aspects of a continually evolving totality of interrelated systems (2002: 146).

In the context of moral panic, these three responses establish the necessary theoretical foundation for grasping the internally dynamic relation between folk devils and claims-
makers. Further, premising the analysis of this relation on conditions of emergence opens considerable theoretical space for a more complex conceptualization of the extra-discursive elements intrinsic to how claims-making processes create folk devils.

By conceptualizing the folk devil/claims-maker relation as an emergent material dialectic allows for an important theoretical advance concerning the issue of change. As Bhaskar and Norrie argue, the addition of dialectics to critical realism involves treating dialectics, “ontologically, as the dynamic of conflict and the mechanism of change” (1998: 562 cf. Creaven, 2002: 151). This, however, does not mean treating processes of change as historically teleological or epistemologically tautological. Instead, Creaven argues that,

> Change is now grasped as the collision of social or physical oppositions, without the certainty that a specific resultant or fixed end-state must follow from initial causes or conditions, in advance of the development process itself, as would the conclusion of a problem in logic from its initial premises (2002: 140).

This approach to change can avoid the tendency in studies of moral panic to either (a) present their analysis ahistorically or (b) to view the dialectic of folk devil/claims-maker as a reductive social construction (i.e. moral panic is constructed by claims-makers) or as a structural determination (i.e. structural forces create folk devils, and thus moral panic).

However, integrating this notion of change serves a larger purpose than simply conceptualizing the folk devil/claims-maker dialectic as internally dynamic. Rather, it opens the theoretical space for posing serious questions regarding agency, especially the agency of folk devils. In freeing the folk devil from a purely phenomenal form of discursive representation, emergent dialectical materialism presents the opportunity to explore the emergent properties and causal mechanisms specific to active human agents. In critical realist terms, the shift from the discursive to the material reveals the symbiotic
relation between the intransitive and transitive dimensions of knowledge. In other words, the discursive representation of a folk devil (transitive) emerges from, but is irreducible to, the real referent, the actual people (intransitive), who are characterized as folk devils. This distinction requires bringing the real referent of the folk devil into the transitive dimension of knowledge if either our concepts or explanations are to have methodological merit.

On Agency

Only recently has the question of agency entered into conceptualizations of moral panic. On the one hand, the agency of claims-makers has been taken-for-granted, since to make a claim is to act. On the other hand, the agency of folk devils has been marginalized resulting from the problematic way in which scholars fail to treat folk devils as real people with structural origins, values and interests. In the final section of this chapter, I argue that the concept of agency needs to be at the forefront in analysis of moral panic. First, I examine how the works of McRobbie (1994), Hier (2002b) and de Young (2007) have begun to address the question of folk devil agency. Second, I argue that through Bhaskar’s Transformational Model of Structure and Agency (TMSA) and Archer’s stratification of the person, the question of folk devil and claims-maker agency can be resolved. In addition, Archer’s stratification of the person provides the context to establish the conceptual connection between folk devils as real people, as well as (mis)-representations of some future harm to come.

McRobbie (1994) provides the first notable attempt to examine the agency of folk devils. However, it should be noted that her emphasis is not the agency of folk devils, per
McRobbie argues that ‘new centres of conviction politics’ such as ‘social movements, pressure groups and other voluntary organizations’ (1994: 114) have arisen to defend contemporary folk devils by providing “oppositional views and alternative information and analysis” (1994: 115). From this, she argues that, “[o]ne of their most important functions lies not just in challenging the discrimination against folk devils but also in actively redefining the [political] agenda” (Ibid). She continues by highlighting that, “folk devils can also fight back by producing their own media, given the relative cheapness and availability of new technology” (1994: 114; also see McRobbie and Thornton, 1995). The crucial point to note here is how McRobbie’s argument reveals the transformative potential involved in counter-claims processes when folk devils, or their defenders, fight back.

To better illustrate McRobbie’s argument of how folk devils can fight back, Hier’s (2002b) analysis of the ‘rave and ecstasy panic’ proves instructive. In Toronto, Ontario during the summer of 2000, a moral panic developed over the consumption of the designer drug Ecstasy at raves. While raves are often characterized as secretive, underground dance parties held in abandon warehouses, factories or open fields, Hier notes that, “on 15 December 1999 Toronto city council voted unanimously to regulate raves held in the city under the auspices of The Protocol for the Operation of Safe Dance Events/Raving” (2002b: 38). This Protocol set out guidelines for rave venues concerning security, ventilation as well as other health and safety precautions. However, following the deaths of three teenagers, the issues of ecstasy use and raves took a more politicized and more prominent place in the media, causing the city to retract their support for
holding raves on city property. Yet, supporters of the rave community quickly undertook to subvert their demonization in the media, seeking to characterize, “Toronto’s rave communities as being ‘at risk’… by amplifying and accentuating the risks associated with forcing raves into locations containing substandard facilities” (Hier, 2003: 10). This case study, as Hier correctly argues, emphasizes “social actors as dynamic agents capable of penetrating and contesting moralized political projects” (2002b: 35) providing one of the clearest examples of how folk devils can, and do, fight back.

The second, and most explicit, attempt to address the agency of folk devils comes from Mary de Young, in a 2007 paper presented at the American Sociological Association’s Annual General Meeting. She argues that the agency of folk devils, “their reactions and resistances to their demonization and social control, as well as the effects these have on the courses and outcomes of moral panics” (2007: 4) remains under-theorized in studies of moral panic. In her paper, de Young identifies three ways that scholars can begin to recognize and assess folk devils as active agents.

First, de Young suggests that scholars must avoid the tendency of reifying ‘Otherness’ (2007: 4) by treating folk devils as ‘objects’ instead of as ‘subjects’ in their analysis. Avoiding a reified conception of the ‘other’, de Young argues, opens up space for considering that contemporary folk devils may not be the ‘cultural strangers’ or the atypical actors characteristic of traditional moral panic studies. Instead, as subjects, folk devils can be viewed as, “typical actors against a background that is atypical” (de Young, 2007: 6), possessing the resources and social standing to resist and challenge attempts to demonize their behaviours.

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2 The paper presented by Dr. de Young was sent to me via personal correspondence. Since it has yet to be published, I have noted the conference where it was presented at her request. The page numbers cited in my discussion of de Young’s work are based on the original word document of the paper.
Second, de Young suggests that scholars reconsider how media representations and societal reactions operate in late-modern society. There are two related issues at work: first, the proliferation of media sources that allow for folk devils to launch counter-claims; and second, the transmission of news/entertainment across national boundaries leading to the internationalization of particular moral panics. Since I briefly dealt with the first issue above, I will focus solely on the second issue here. Citing Critcher (2006: 14), de Young argues that developments in media communications facilitate the internationalization of moral panic as operative beyond discrete national spheres. By implication, she contends that while mass media outlets can spread the information of a moral panic across national boundaries, they can also “serve as conduits for differently situated folk devils to share strategies of resistance and challenge, and to recruit international constituencies” (de Young, 2007: 7). Evident in de Young’s argument, is that the rise of international news media creates a unique method for folk devils to exercise their agency and unite to fight back.

Third, de Young argues that conceptualizations of folk devil agency could be improved by integrating notions of risk. While recognizing that risk is ‘a tricky concept’ (2007: 7), de Young contends risk society issues are presenting new conditions for moral panic, and thus, for creating new types of folk devils. Since risk issues generally involve more complex institutional relations, de Young notes that, “responsibility, representation and blame are likely to be more diffused” (2007: 9) than in conditions of tradition moral panic. In turn, the integration of risk into moral panic can necessitate ‘foraging for folk devils’ (Ungar, 2001) because clear demarcations between ‘us and them’ are not readily apparent. However, as we saw in Jansanoff’s analysis of the BSE panic in Britain,
identifiable folk devils can emerge from risk-related incidents. The implication, for de Young, is that these new folk devils often emerge already possessing “resources, constituencies and institutional affiliations” (2007: 9) granting them greater autonomy in contesting their folk devil status.

While de Young does provide some ground to open more theoretical space for considering the agency of folk devils, her analysis leaves several important issues unresolved. In particular, her intent emphasis on the agency of folk devils marginalizes the personalizing effects of social structures on individual human conduct. That is, she marginalizes the powerful effect that structural forces as well as their enforcers (i.e. the legal structure and the police) have on governing individual behaviour. Second, though de Young correctly identifies of problem of the subject/object analytical duality, her argument to avoid reifying Otherness is insufficient from a methodological point of view. Third, de Young’s analysis remains tied to the empirical, leaving no room for a concept of stratification or the theorization of underlying causal mechanisms. However, I argue that these issues can be overcome with the insights provided by critical realism.

A Realist Account of Agency

The first step to providing a realist account of agency is to develop the conceptual framework provided by Bhaskar’s Transformational Model of Structure/Agency (TMSA). Concisely, the TMSA views structure and agency as distinct yet interrelated phenomena. In this conceptualization, social structures constitute both the product of, and necessary conditions for, human agency that in turn are capable of transforming or reproducing social structures. Bhaskar’s model proves invaluable because, “its emphasis
on material continuity, can sustain a genuine concept of change, and hence, of history” (1998: 37- italics in original). Further, since the potential for change is a requisite for transformative action, the TMSA constitutes the only acceptable conceptualization of structure and agency. However, for my purpose here, the role of social structures is secondary\(^3\). Since moral panic will affect particular societies at particular moments in time, the identification of particular structural influences will involve intensive empirical investigation. The important point to bear in mind here is on how social structures play a distinct role in enabling or constraining human agency. Specifically, it is crucial to note that while structural causal powers will vary in any one particular instance of moral panic, depending, of course, on whether they are active, being counter-acted or dominant, this can only provide the pre-conditions, and not the determinate outcome, of human action. Thus, while it is uncontroversial to acknowledge social structures as a causal power in producing moral panic, the lack of contention solely depends upon developing the conceptual pre-conditions of change detailed above.

Moving forward from the TMSA, I can now examine the issue of folk devil and claims-maker agency, and by conceptual extension, develop a stratified conceptualization of the folk devil and the claims-maker. In dealing with the emergence of folk devils through dialectical materialism, I hinted towards how a stratification of a folk devil is not only possible, but also necessary for theorizing agency. There, I offered an initial stratification of the folk devil as possessing a phenomenal form and a real referent. The phenomenal form, I argued, consists of the stylized and exaggerated representation of folk devils in the media. In other words, it refers to the way in which the representation of

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\(^3\) I address the more structural aspects of moral panic in Chapters Three and Five.
the folk devil develops a set of false beliefs (i.e. ideology) regarding the potential social harm. The real referent, by contrast, consists of the actual people labeled or characterized as folk devils. Recalling that concepts emerge from the process of engaging in material activity, the folk devil, even as an ideal type requires that particular social actors engage in particular social actions for an instance of moral panic to emerge. As a result, I would like to extend the conceptualization of the real referents (that is, the actual people) of the folk devil also in terms of stratification.

To develop a stratified conception of people, Archer (2003) makes the initial analytical distinction between agents and actors. For Archer, “‘agents’ are defined as collectivities sharing the same life-chances” (2003: 118) and can only be dealt with in the plural. From this, two related propositions can be extracted: one, all people are necessarily agents because of their position in the social distribution of resources; however, two, simply being a part of a collectivity of people via resource distribution is not sufficient for a strict social identity (Ibid). Actors, on the other hand, are properly singular and possess the criteria for acquiring a unique social identity based upon a definite number of social roles available to them at particular times. Thus, people become agents as an involuntary product of birth, while to become an actor requires a deeper sociality within the field of social relations. That is, it requires agents to assume particular social identities (parent, teacher, etc.) and to engage in the internal and external relations inherent to social life.

Further, Archer provides an analytical distinction between Primary Agents and Corporate Agents that bears particular relevance for conceptualizing folk devils as well as

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4 The phenomenal form of the folk devil, along with its characterization as an ideological embodiment of potential harm is dealt with in detail in the next chapter.
claims-makers. On the one hand, primary agents are simply agents as defined above. Corporate agents, on the other hand, are those collectivities that “have articulated their aims and developed some form of organization for their pursuit” (Archer, 2003: 133n). Stated differently, the movement from primary to corporate involves, examining “our social contexts, asking and answering ourselves (fallibly) about how we can best realise the concerns, which we determine ourselves, in circumstances that were not of our choosing” (Archer, 2003: 133). It is precisely this shift that de Young alluded to when discussing how media proliferation has opened space for, “folk devils to share strategies of resistance and challenge, and to recruit international constituencies” (2007: 7). The methodological value deriving from Archer’s distinction lies in the ability to conceptualize how different agents respond to folk devil status and how folk devils can exist in a dual nature as both real people and false phenomenal representations.

Moreover, the stratified conception of people also provides an insight into the emergence of claims-makers. To become a claims-maker in an instance of moral panic requires that agents move from a primary to a corporate form. By collecting their shared feelings, anxieties and concerns, primary agents shift to corporate agents and only in becoming corporate agents can the social role of a claims-maker be satisfied. As I argued in the first section of this chapter, the act of making claims is not particular to instances of moral panic, but rather, is a routine feature of social life. What gives claims-making activities their special character in moral panic depends upon how successful claims-makers are in taking on this corporate form and in articulating the diverse interests of individual actors as a common interest. As Goode and Ben-Yehuda argue,

Professional associations, police departments, the media, religious groups, may have an independent stake in bringing an issue to the fore... altering legislators, demanding stricter law enforcement, instituting new educational curricula, and so on (1994: 139- emphasis in original).
Yet, in order to succeed, this independent stake must come to be viewed as beneficial to other interest groups, social movement and agents. In other words, the special quality of claims-making activities in moral panic emerges from the successful transition from primary to corporate agents. When examined together, the TMSA and the stratification of people offer a fresh perspective for understanding the complex social roles and social relations involved in instances of moral panic.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to address the more problematic features of folk devils and their relation to claims-makers. At a descriptive level, I provided an overview of how previous scholarship has addressed (with greater or lesser success) the variety of social forces and agential powers that underlies cases of moral panic. I began by outlining the general features inherent to both folk devils and claims-makers, paying close attention to the nuances and problems posed by previous scholarship. Next, I argued that all three explanatory models inhibit scholarly analysis for grasping the internal dynamics involved in the FD/CM relation. In doing so, I argued for the necessity of recapturing the ‘real people’ implicitly noted in Cohen’s study that are generally neglected in other studies of moral panic as a means of re-conceptualizing how folk devils and claims-makers relate.

At an analytical level, I extended theoretical understandings of folk devils and claims-makers through a conceptualization of emergential dialectical materialism. In this conceptualization, I argue that folk devils and claims-makers must be seen as internally related and engaged in a transformative dialectical process. The value of this conceptual
advancement, I contend, lies in the ability to properly speak of folk devil agency without resorting to a reified notion of the ‘Other’. Furthermore, through the TMSA and Archer’s stratified conception of people, I advanced a unique methodological perspective for empirically examining how folk devils and claims-makers respond to their (ascribed) identity and how a conception of Corporate Agents provides the methodological context for folk devils to collectively fight back. In the next chapter, I return to the stratified conception of folk devils to address what role media plays in instances of moral panic. However, my focus shifts from the folk devil as agent, to the folk devil as phenomenal form.
Chapter 3: Moral Panic and the Media- Exploring the Concept of Ideology

The media plays a prominent, if not causal, role in all instances of moral panic. In fact, Critcher argues that “modern moral panics are unthinkable without the media” (2003: 131). As I argued in the previous chapter, claims-making activities gain their particular quality in cases of moral panic through the media’s apprehension and dissemination of the claims. Further, I also maintained that in the process of disseminating claims, the media produce a categorical misrepresentation, or what I have called the phenomenal form, of a folk devil which functions as an ideological embodiment of some potential future harm. In this chapter, I move to examine the elemental aspects of the media that facilitate moral panic by amplifying claims and producing the phenomenal form of folk devils. However, I should clearly state that my focus in this chapter is not to analyze the media per se, but rather to explore the implications of the media’s role, and in particular the implications of characterizing the folk devil as ideological, for scholarly analysis of moral panic.

To explore these implications, I have divided this chapter into three main sections. The first section examines the role of media in defining social problems and how recent organizational changes (proliferation and conglomeratization) of mass media impact the occurrence of moral panic. I also explore how scholars address the ‘reflexive turn’ wherein news media have come to adopt (sometimes explicitly) the concept moral panic in their reporting (Hay, 1995; Arnold Hunt, 1997). To encompass the general features of this discussion, I conclude the first section by examining Raymond Lau’s (2004) critical realist analysis of news production. I argue that Lau’s analysis provides the
methodological insight to assess the institutional factors of news media in instances of moral panic. The second section examines how scholars have used the concepts of signification (Hall et al., 1978), discourse and ideology (Hay, 1995; Hier, 2002a) to enhance our understanding of moral panic. From this exploration, the third section extends the conceptual usage of ideology to develop the logical basis for characterizing a belief (or set of beliefs) as ideological, which in turns, provides the logical conditions for critiquing instances of moral panic. This, I contend, allows for a better understanding of how moral panic necessitates a false phenomenal form of a folk devil, but more importantly, how the conditions that create moral panic can be critiqued, and therefore, altered.

An Initial Look at the Media

While it is uncontroversial to acknowledge the central place of the media in moral panic, an initial caution must be exercised to avoid reducing the occurrence of moral panic to the volatility of media discourse. For some scholars (e.g. Welch, Price and Yankey, 2002) the way in which the media focus intensely on a particular moral offence and its danger for a short duration of time constitutes the empirical boundaries of moral panic. During this time, the potential harm is extrapolated and exaggerated to signify a more widespread societal problem that requires an immediate solution and then, without warning or inherent reason, news coverage of the apparent threat declines, signaling that the moral panic has passed. Given that moral panic is volatile by definition, using media discourse as an empirical boundary of moral panic may appear heuristically attractive, but it ultimately proves methodologically unsound. To equate moral panic to its volatile
manifestation in the media is problematic in at least two ways. First, media coverage of a particular event or phenomenon provides a poor measure of social anxiety (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Hier, 2002a). Second, this equation unnecessarily limits the possible scope of scholarly analysis to media discourse, ignoring the complex web of social relations involved in moral panic (Hier, 2002a). Therefore, while an increase in media coverage can function as an empirical indicator, it is ontologically insufficient and methodologically inappropriate as the sole basis for analyzing and explaining the emergence of moral panic.

With this caution in mind, the role of the media in moral panic must be first understood in terms of how the media functions to define or highlight social problems. In advanced industrial societies, Cohen argues, information about what constitutes criminal, sick or otherwise deviant behaviour is often received second hand, largely through the media. The way in which certain issues are reported, or not reported, reveals how the media come to define and shape social problems (Cohen, 2002: 7). Citing Erikson, Cohen notes, “a considerable portion of what we call “news” is devoted to reports about deviant behaviour and its consequences” (2002: 8), which in turn helps to formulate the normative boundaries for acceptable social action. More importantly, Cohen contends that, “the media have long operated as agents of moral indignation in their own right: even if they are not self-consciously engaged in crusading or muckracking, their very reporting of certain ‘facts’ can be sufficient to generate concern, anxiety, indignation or panic” (Ibid). In other words, the way in which the media

5 For my purposes here, tautologically speaking, moral panic constitutes a social problem insofar as the potential harm represented by folk devils constitutes a problem for, or threat to, society. However, moral panic is a specific form of social problem when compared to the more typical social problems of drug use and gang violence for example, because the potential harm in moral panic is disproportional to the threat that actually exists, while in the latter case this element of disproportionality is not present.
construct social problems not only helps to define and shape social problems but can simultaneously pose a fundamental challenge to society’s normative boundaries. Thus, for Cohen, the panic surrounding the ‘Mods and Rockers’ was more reflective of how the mass media construct social problems in a ‘stereotypical fashion’ than the actual threat posed by these groups.

However, McRobbie and Thornton (1995) point out that while the media appears as a monolithic entity in Cohen’s study, contemporary developments in telecommunications have diversified media sources and altered the ways in which folk devils are constructed. Specifically, McRobbie and Thornton (1995) contend that these developments have fuelled a rise of niche and micro media sources (e.g. flyers, zines, web pages, etc.), and have created new discursive spaces for folk devils to fight back by providing the means for folk devils to construct counter-narratives against their demonization. More interesting perhaps is the way in which contemporary folk devils can often find their interests defended in the same mass media sources responsible for amplifying claims against them. For McRobbie and Thornton (1995), the ability of mass media to both stigmatize and defend contemporary folk devils reflects a fundamental shift in the way mass media reports news. Consequently,

Moral panics, once the unintended outcome of journalistic practice, seems to have become a goal. Rather than periods to which societies are subject ‘every now and then’ (Cohen, 1972/80: 9), moral panics have become the way in which daily events are brought to the attention of the public. They are a standard response, a familiar, sometimes weary, even ridiculous rhetoric rather than an exceptional emergency intervention. Used by politicians to orchestrate consent, by business to promote sales in certain niche markets, and by media to make home and social affairs newsworthy, moral panics are constructed on a daily basis (McRobbie and Thornton, 1995: 560).

With “a flare for the sensational” (Hier, 2002a: 315), the issue of moral panic is no longer strictly a question of social control, but rather is seen as an integral component to the way media attempt to sell the news. However, Hier cautions that, “this technique of reporting
is caught up in a wider trend towards ‘service journalism’: the ways in which the news media impart knowledge, information and advice to their audiences on how to negotiate the moral and social problems of everyday living” (2002a: 316). In which case, there is no reason to equate sensationalist news reporting with moral panic a priori (Ibid) even though media sensationalism often factors into cases of moral panic.

As a corrective addition to McRobbie and Thornton, it is imperative to recognize that while the proliferation of media sources has opened new discursive spaces for the contestation of the folk devil label, this proliferation has occurred largely at the fringe of media operations. That is, there is a reason why we use the concept of mass media, and in fact we use it in two senses. In one sense, the concept refers to the ability of particular media outlets (e.g. CNN) to reach mass audiences in the millions of viewers across the globe. In the other sense, recent years have seen the unprecedented corporatization and conglomerization of news sources, in which a small handful of corporations control the majority of print, television, radio and online news sources (McChesney, 1997; Cottle, 2003; Flew, 2007). Recognizing the conglomerization of mass media outlets provides a partial solution to why news media simultaneously demonize and exonerate contemporary folk devils. Simply put, mass media succeeds (financially speaking) by appealing to mass audiences and does so by zealously attempting to appear objective, as fair and balanced at all times. However, the corporatization of news media also signals a problem for analyzing moral panic, as various news sources come ‘to speak in one
voice’. The problem here is crystallized in the ‘reflexive turn’ of the media’s involvement in moral panic.

*The Reflexive Turn*

Contemporary mass media have increasingly come to use the concept of moral panic explicitly in their everyday reporting. According to Colin Hay, the murder of James Bulger constituted, “the first reflexive moral panic in which the British media itself…co-opted Cohen’s terminology to describe its own culpability in the narration of the James Bulger incident and its broader resonances” (1995: 197). Since Bulger’s death, media reporters, spokespeople and their guests increasingly question ‘whether this or that issue is another moral panic’, or ‘whether a political party or media organization is trying to create a new moral panic’. Likewise, McRobbie and Thornton claim that, “it has become a standard interview question to put to Conservative MPs: are they not whipping up a moral panic as a foil to deflect attention away from more pressing economic issues?” (1995: 559). As an empirical indicator, Arnold Hunt (1997) demonstrates the extent to which the mass media has come to increasingly use the concept of moral panic to describe a variety of issues ranging from football hooliganism to surrogate mothers since the late 1980’s. Using the FT Profile, Hunt notes eleven uses of moral panic in the British press up to 1989, but by 1993, this number had escalated to eighty-nine uses of the concept.

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6 Viewers of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* would be familiar with the montages depicting various guests and pundits from the major news networks (Fox, MSNBC, CNN, etc.) repeating the same hackneyed phrases and clichés on the issue of the day.

7 To cite Hunt, the FT Profile is, “a computer database covering most of the national press [in Britain] from the late 1980s” (1997: 630).
Commenting on Hunt’s study, Hier (2002a) notes two important implications. First, there is a visible relation between the usage of the moral panic concept in scholarly research and its usage in the mass media press, albeit with a time delay. Second, as a result of the mass media’s adoption, scholarly debate has subsequently lost at least partial control over the theoretical and analytical development of the moral panic concept (Hier, 2002a: 315). Now, neither of the implications noted by Hier are inherently problematic for scholarly analysis of moral panic. In the first case, “newspapers do not initiate linguistic change so much as ‘push the language along further in the direction in which it was already going’ and sociologists must therefore bear some responsibility for the use of ‘moral panic’ in the media” (Aitchison, 1994: 19 cf. Hunt, 1997: 630). By extension, in the second case, having to bear some responsibility for the media’s use of the concept of moral panic only entails the partial loss of control in how the general public uses the term, not in how scholars use it. The issue here is simply one of conceptual clarity, the hallmark of good scholarship.

Yet, Hunt maintains that there remain three reasons for scholars to abandon the concept of moral panic. While I introduce all three reasons here, I will only address one in detail, leaving the explication of the other two for later on. The first reason involves the tendency to conceptualize moral panic de-contextually, as “timeless [and] common to ‘all societies’” (Hunt, 1997: 644). In other words, it is a question of history and is the subject of the fifth chapter. The second reason involves how analysis of moral panic, “fails to distinguish between the media and social reality, between what the papers say and what the public thinks” (Hunt, 1997: 645). This raises fundamental questions regarding media representation and is the subject of the next section. The third reason
Hunts provides as grounds for abandoning the concept of moral panic involves the impact of the media’s increasing usage, and the consequent development of self-referential moral panic. According to Hunt, the way in which the mass media have adopted the concept signifies improper moral language that hinders the possibilities for the media to seriously deal with moral issues. He argues that the manner in which mass media use moral panic conflates morality and panic, and thus, is unable to, “incorporate notions of moral reasoning or decision-making” (Hunt, 1997: 647). As a result, “it makes morality appear dangerously volatile” (Ibid) and steadily reproduces panics because, “of a moral language that admits no other possibilities” (Ibid). However, the basis for Hunt’s objection to the conflation of morality and panic emerges from his own conflation of morality and media discourse. As I demonstrate below, a great level of analytical care must be taken to avoiding reducing what appears in the media and what people accept as true.

**Critical Realism and News Production**

Raymond Lau’s (2004) critical realist analysis of news production provides a way to incorporate the various threads of the preceding discussion. Using the critical realist concepts of open system, domain stratification and multiple causal powers, Lau (2004) attempts to determine, “whether the various factors seen to distort the representation of reality in news can be removed” (2004: 694) so that news messages could produce a richer account of real events. Lau sees room for an alternative to constructionist and post-modernist conceptions of news production that view the news as neither reflecting nor distorting reality, “but as a purely constructed discursive reality reflecting only routine [journalistic] practices” (2004: 696). Unsatisfied with the reduction of stratified reality to
discourse, Lau begins by distinguishing extraneous from internal factors that affect news production and constitute the final news product. According to Lau,

factors such as ownership, governmental regulations, technical and logistical factors, newspaper size and the like constitute extraneous factors. Factors such as professional journalistic practices, and ideologies and values held by journalists constitute internal factors deriving from journalists themselves. Extraneous factors act as constraints on journalists, whereas internal factors exercise their effects within journalistic autonomy (2004: 695).

From this, Lau posits that extraneous factors are ontologically realist in a double sense. First, he contends that extraneous factors exist objectively, independent of any particular social actor (but not, it should be noted, independent from all social agents). And second, in the case where news is seen to provide a false or partial representation of reality, Lau argues that it still derives this representation from a reality that exists objectively (2004: 695).

Moving forward to specifically address the finished news product, Lau argues that what are called ‘news values’ such as eventalization, personalization, conflict-bias, etc., “determine how some events, and not others, become news” (2004: 697). There is no need to list all the factors that constitute news values (see Lau, 2004: 697), because Lau’s concern here is with the epistemological rather than ontological nature of news production. That is, his concern is to explore the underlying issues that comprise news values as ‘a form of consciousness’ (Ibid). Drawing from a behavioural psychological model, Lau argues that people, in the course of their everyday lives, cognize reality in a more or less spontaneous fashion, “in terms of events concerning (changes occurring to) people (in the flux of action)” (2004: 699). This, when considered within the stratified ontology of critical realism, leads him to conclude that:

news presents a specific representation of reality based upon certain values; however, this is not due to some non-reality-based arbitrary features, but because these values are basically spontaneous everyday cognitive (confinement to De [empirical domain]) and selective perceptive (within De) features transposed to news production. News construction in this respect does no
'violence’ to reality (in relation to people’s indirect experience) that people do not themselves do (in relation to their direct experience) (Lau, 2004: 700). Hence, while recognizing the existence of particular structural constraints on news production, and the active powers of news writers as agents, Lau reduces, at least at one level, the problematic relation between reality and representation to an inevitable by-product of hermeneutics. Yet, when news production is explicitly linked to conceptions of ontological depth, addressing the relation between representation and reality undergoes a fundamental alteration.

In making this connection, Lau endeavours to explain news production as an overdetermined product in the Althusserian sense (2004: 698) resulting from its position in an open system. He argues that both the extraneous and internal factors involved in news production contain causal powers that interact to produce the finished product we call news. That is, both structural conditions and agential forces combine to effect the manner in which particular events are covered in the news as well as the manner in which these events are portrayed in news reporting. While Lau incorrectly asserts that the causal powers of internal factors will always be exercised by neglecting structural constraints (that is, how structure constrains agency), his final conclusion on news production is precisely correct. He states, “news…will inevitably provide certain specific representations of reality, even if other distorting factors were to be removed” (2004: 707). That is, the production of the news can only provide a representation of real events, regardless of whether the extraneous and internal factors seen to distort the news message were to be somehow removed.  

8 For example, see Carroll and Hackett (2006) on the democratization of media.
media that necessitates examining these distorting factors, or in other words, necessitates examining the role of ideology in instances of moral panic.

**Extra-Institutional Factors: Discourse, Signification and Ideology**

At the heart of scholarly concerns with analyzing news media messages lies the contradiction between representation and reality (McRobbie and Thornton, 1995). How the news media characterize particular events, often in short edible segments, inevitably produces a partial image of complex social processes and relations. As Todd Gitlin comments, “news concerns the *event*, not the underlying condition; the *person*, not the group… the fact that “*advances the story*”, not the one that explains it” (1980: 28; cf. Lau, 2004: 697). What, then, does this mean for scholarly analysis of mass media messages? Simply stated, it means taking a critical eye at both the discursive and extra-discursive features involved in the construction and dissemination of media messages.

*Discourse, Signification and Signification Spirals*

The most logical point for beginning an analysis of the extra-institutional factors of news production is at the level of discourse and signification. Broadly speaking, discourse refers to the more semiotic or linguistic features, as opposed to the tangible and physical aspects, of social life. More specifically, “discourse allows certain things to be said and impedes or prevents other things from being said” (Purvis and Hunt, 1993: 485), thereby constructing parameters through which the communication of ideas/events takes place. While the particular discursive features of moral panic are evidently an empirical
question, at the theoretical level we can move into examining how the construction of discourse signifies that a particular social problem requires an immediate solution.

According to Hall et al., the development of moral panic as well as the changing shape of panics over time is to be understood as sequence of signification. They argue that the best way to understand and analyze the ‘generation of moral panics’ is through the processes of a ‘signification spiral’. The conceptualization of a signification spiral is quite similar to the concept of an ‘amplification spiral’ (see Cohen, 2002) in which the societal reaction to a deviant act, under certain circumstances, tends to intensify or increase the deviant act instead of lessening it. In much the same way, a signification spiral, “is the self-amplifying sequence within the area of signification: the activity or event which the signification deals is escalated- made to seem more threatening- within the course of the signification itself” (Hall et al., 1978: 223). It is through the signification spiral that Hall et al. argue the entire process of moral panic can be viewed: first, a social problem or potential harm is identified; second, this problem or harm ‘converges’ with another social problem; third, the converged problem crosses the ‘threshold’ of societal tolerance as the perception of the threat escalates; fourth, the process culminates in calls for ‘tough action’ and ‘quick measures’ to remedy the problem.

There are two relevant concepts within the signification spiral: convergence and threshold. According to Hall et al., convergence “occurs when two or more activities are linked in the process of signification so as to implicitly or explicitly draw parallels between them” (1978: 223). The purpose of convergence is to describe new problems or issues in such a way that is meaningful to the public by setting them within the context of
an already existing social problem. From this, Hall et al. contend that there are two types of convergence: real and imaginary. In the case of real convergences, two or more social groups merge into a single signification; for example, the infamous summer of 1968 saw the real convergence of workers and students into a protest movement. However, Hall et al. argue that, “signification spirals do not depend on a necessary correspondence with real historical developments. They may represent such real connections accurately, or they may mystify by exaggerating the nature or degree of the convergence, or they may produce altogether spurious identities” (Hall et al., 1978: 224). It is in the production of these ‘spurious identities’ that we can view the function of imaginary convergences by deconstructing the signifiers involved. Take, for example, the issue of ‘student hooliganism’ that demonstrates the convergence of students (protesters) and hooligans (violent and destructive), which produces a ‘mystified’ and ‘exaggerated’ representation and legitimates a harsh state response. As the authors note, “the public might be reluctant to see the strong arm of the law arbitrarily exercised against legitimate political protesters. But who will stand between the law and a ‘bunch of hooligans’?” (Hall et al. 1978: 224). In this light, the creation of an imaginary convergence serves “an ideological function- and that ideological function has real consequences, especially in terms of provoking and legitimating a coercive reaction by both the public and the state” (1978: 224-5).

The second major feature of the signification spiral is the notion of ‘thresholds’, which refers to the limits of ‘societal tolerance’ to certain violations of social norms and values. As real and imaginary convergences develop through sequences of signification, their construction (largely in the media), in conjunction with their societal response, has
the potential to ‘escalate’ and intensify the panic state. To illustrate this idea Hall et al. develop a hierarchical model of three central thresholds: low, legal and violent. The ‘low threshold’ tends to be broken by issues that signify a moral harm and will “mobilise moral sanctions and social disapproval- but not necessarily legal control” (Hall et al., 1978: 225). However, in the course of contestation the ‘shifting boundaries’ of the immoral act can be re-secured if some features of the act are viewed to also transgress the law; that is, if they can be seen to cross the legal threshold. It is, “the law [that] clarifies the blurred area of moral disapproval, and marks out the legally impermissible from the morally disapproved of” (Hall et al., 1978: 225). Any act deemed to transgress the law represents not simply a threat to the moral fabric of a society but to the entire legal system and intensifies the perceived potential of the threat itself (real or otherwise). Moreover, “acts which pose a challenge to the fundamental basis of the social order itself, or its essential structures, almost always involve, or at least are signified as leading inexorably across, the violence threshold” (Ibid). It is placed at the top of the hierarchy of societal tolerance because, “violent acts can be seen as constituting a threat to the future existence of the whole state itself” (Ibid). While certain acts, such as wars of aggression, are clearly intolerable and do pose a serious threat to society (especially thinking non-eurocentrically), the violence threshold becomes much more problematic as, “political acts which do not necessarily espouse or lead to violence…[are signified]…as ‘violent’ because of the fundamental nature of the challenge they make to the state” (Ibid). Further still, the processes of signification are not dependent on real events and therefore they serve rather as a means of expressing the ‘potential’ for violent conflict if the issues are left to fester and grow.
For Hall and his colleagues, the process of signification in the construction of social problems serves a specific political end that operates as a means for securing the hegemony of the state. They argue that, “the use of convergences and thresholds together in the ideological signification of societal conflict has the intrinsic function of *escalation*” (Hall et al., 1978: 226). That is, it is through the perceived escalation of the threat that the space for a more coercive state response is built and sustained. As issues converge in signification, relatively harmless activities, say political protest, are imputed upon more threatening issues, say a bloody insurrection, at which point, “the scale of danger implicit is made to appear more widespread and diffused” (Ibid). For Hall et al., “the important point is that, as issues and groups are projected across the thresholds, it becomes easier to mount legitimate campaigns of control against them” (Ibid). Thus, what emerges from this discussion of signification is the clear demonstration that the amplification or rather, escalation of social problems has the tendency of securing consent from the social body for increasingly coercive practices by the state.

*Ideology and the Phenomenal Form of Folk Devil*

What Hall et al. provide in their conception of a signification spiral are the analytical means for exploring how a particular discursive representation of a social problem or harm emerges; and how, in the process of its emergence, it becomes signified as a more menacing issue that requires an immediate solution. In addition, Hall and his colleagues demonstrate how the process of signification serves an ideological function to provoke and legitimate, “a coercive reaction by both the public and the state” (1978: 225) to deal with the purported problem in question. It is worthwhile to point out that an important
conceptual distinction must be maintained between discourse and ideology. In maintaining this distinction, to put it simply, we see that discursive formations contribute to ideological positions and that ideological positions are embodied in, and gain articulation through, discursive forms. However, it is necessary to explore, in greater detail, how the concept of ideology has been used in theorizing moral panic.

In using the concept of ideology to address the relation between media and its audience, it is crucial to avoid lapsing into an ideological determinism that views social actors as mystified dupes of media messages. As Hier argues,

> there is an important analytic distinction to be maintained between what people think and what they do, and an even greater level of analytic care to be exercised concerning what appears in the media and what people accept as factual (2002a: 313 cf. Ungar, 2001).

In other words, it is theoretically necessary “to discriminate analytically between the production, reproduction and transmission of cultural meanings on the one hand, and the functions to which those meanings and representations extend on the other” (Hier, 2002a: 316). According to Hier, integrating the concept of ideology provides the grounds to make this analytical distinction, with two additional benefits. One, it allows for an examination of how dominant and subordinate subject relations are reproduced at the level of social action (Hier, 2002a). Two, it allows for the conceptual inclusion of *directionality*: the processes by which ideology functions to serve the interests of one group while neglecting or marginalizing the interests of another group (Purvis and Hunt, 1993; Hier, 2002a). In a methodological sense, these two benefits constitute the conceptual frame to characterize the demonization of folk devils as a function of ideology, which places the folk devil into a subordinate subject position. Evidently for Hier, the emphasis is on the function and the effect of ideology, on how we come to identify ideological systems only when they manifest objectively in discourse. In other
words, Hier comes dangerously close to conflating ideology with discourse, even though he explicitly states the importance of maintaining their separation. Fortunately, it is quite simple to uphold the distinction between discourse and ideology, without sacrificing advances made by Hier.

While it is clearly true that the ideas possessed by social actors will impact their actions, including but not limited to the ways in which they relate to others, it is insufficient to only move forward when using the concept of ideology analytically. In fact, the concept of ideology has less to do with the effect of a false set of beliefs and far more to do with explaining how a false set of beliefs is necessitated in the first place. In other words, ideology moves backwards from false beliefs to investigate how the false beliefs arise, rather than forward to how those false beliefs are received. The shift here is towards critiquing the structures that are necessitated and sustained by ideology, rather than the effect of ideology that manifests objectively in discourse. The advantage in making this shift for analysis of moral panic is the opportunity to move from description and analysis to critique. That is, it allows me to extend the theoretical value of the concept of ideology one step further by integrating the logical system for critiquing ideological positions from the work of Bhaskar (1998), while still situating the role of a causal explanation at the forefront.

**Bhaskar and the Critique of Ideology**

In approaching Bhaskar’s argument for critiquing ideology, we must begin by clarifying a pressing theoretical problem. Namely, emerging from the Humean tradition, the contention that the “transition from ‘ought’ to ‘is’, factual to value statements, although
frequently made, is logically inadmissible” (1998: 54). According to Bhaskar, this contention hinges on two corollary propositions that he calls Hume’s Law. First, that any factual conclusion is dependent on at least one factual proposition; and second, that any value conclusion is dependent on at least one value judgment. For Bhaskar, however, not only is the transition from ‘is’ to ‘ought’, from value to factual statements, logically acceptable, it is mandatory, provided a minimum set of criteria are met to characterize a belief(s) as ideological (these criteria are addressed below).

Before moving on to the criteria necessary for characterizing a belief as ideological, it is imperative to understand how the transition from value to factual statements is made. In doing so, it is crucial to bear in mind that, “to criticize a belief as false is *ipso facto* not only to criticize any action or practice informed or sustained by that belief, but also anything that necessities it” (Bhaskar, 1998: 63). Thus, for Bhaskar, if one possesses a theory that explains why a false belief is necessary, then one can make negative assessment of the conditions, relations, structure, etc. that necessitate the false belief in question and can do so without recourse to additional value judgments. Further, Bhaskar anticipates the objection, “that the fact/value distinction only breaks down in this way because one is committed to the prior valuation that truth is good” (Ibid.). However, he contends that a positive valuation of truth is a condition for both moral and factual discourse and thus, “cannot be seized upon as a concealed (value) premise to rescue the autonomy of values from factual discourse, without destroying the distinction between the two, the distinction that it is the point of the objection to uphold” (Ibid.).
At this point, we can shift our attention to the three types of criteria Bhaskar provides for characterizing a belief, or a set of beliefs, as ideological: critical, explanatory and categorical (See below).

**Bhaskar’s Three Types of Criteria**

To consider the *critical* criteria first, in order to designate *I* as ‘ideological’ one must be in possession of a theory (or a consistent set of theories) *T* which can do the following:

1) Explain most, or most significant, phenomena, under its own descriptions, explained by *I* (under *I*’s descriptions, where these are ‘incommensurable with those of *T*).
2) Explain in addition a significant set of phenomena not explained by *I*.

To satisfy the *explanatory* criteria for the designation of *I* as ‘ideological’, *T* must be able to do the following:

3) Explain the reproduction of *I* (that is, roughly the conditions for its continued acceptance by agents) and if possible, specify the limits of *I* and the (endogenous) conditions for its transformation (if any), specifically:
   3a) In terms of a real stratification or connection (that is, a level of structure or set of relations) described in *T* but altogether absent from or obscured in *I*.
4) Explain, or at least situate, itself within itself.

Finally, to satisfy the *categorical* criteria for the designation of *I* as ‘ideological’, *I* must be unable to satisfy either of the following:

5) A criterion of scientificity, specifying the minimum necessary conditions for the characterization of a production as scientific; or
6) A criterion of domain-adequacy, specifying the minimum necessary conditions for a theory to sustain the historical or social nature of its subject-matter.

And *T* must be able to satisfy both.

(Bhaskar, 1998: 67-68)

In examining Bhaskar’s criteria, we can see that both 1) and 2) refer to ways in which *T* must contain a higher degree of cognitive appeal in relation to *I*; that is, there are reasonable grounds for accepting *T* over *I*. In addition, 3a) specifies a particular type of cognitive appeal necessitated by a depth ontology lacking in *I* because of its false, phenomenal form. What 3) does is distinguish our social and natural scientific explanations necessitated by the internal relation of social theories to their subject matter. Thus, social scientific explanations must consider both the beliefs about a certain phenomenon as well as the phenomenon in and of itself. In turn, given the internality of
social theories to their subject matter, we can see that 4) indicates a necessary criterion of reflexivity. Lastly, 5) and 6) stipulate that $T$ must specify the necessary conditions for forming social scientific explanations—that is, a critical realist philosophy of science (See Bhaskar, 1998, 2008; Sayer, 2000).

Taken together, these criteria provide the logical basis for engaging in a critique of ideology. For Bhaskar, the concept of ideology “reveals not only a gap between how an object is and how it appears to be, but a contradiction… between the way it presents itself in experience and the way it really is” (1998: 70). Furthermore, since phenomenal forms are a requisite for engaging in (making meaningful) social activity, Bhaskar contends that they are, “internally related to (that is, constitute necessary conditions for) the essential structures that generate them” (Ibid). Lastly, “it is important to stress that such contradictions, which involve merely the necessary co-existence in social reality of an object and a categorically false presentation of it, can be consistently described” (Ibid–italics in original) and therefore, altered.

In terms of moral panic, the conceptualization of ideology, alongside Bhaskar’s criteria for critiquing ideological positions, being endorsed here, can supplement theories on moral panic in several crucial respects. First, this conceptualization of ideology provides the logical connection to the stratification of folk devils developed in the previous chapter, without forfeiting the emphasis on an existing social relation between folk devils and claims-makers. If we are to advance our understanding of moral panic, its emergence from and effects on, existent social relations must be maintained.

Second, explicating the phenomenal form of folk devil through Bhaskar’s conceptualization of ideology shows, at least on one level, how folk devils can exist in a
dual nature as real people and as categorically false representations. Inherent to this
duality is a contradiction between the way in which folk devils are experienced, largely
through the media, and the way they really are. Stated differently, the folk devil is the
experience but the possibility for this experience to emerge depends on actions and
relations of real people. Moreover, this contradiction is itself internally related to, and in
fact emergent from, the initial FD/CM relation. Yet, despite being emergent from the
FD/CM relation, the phenomenal form of folk devil cannot be reduced to this initial
relation. Instead, the phenomenal form of folk devil, as an objective social fact, possesses
its own causal powers, capable of influencing the course of the FD/CM relation as well as
how the general public perceives the threat folk devils represent.

Third, and most importantly, Bhaskar’s argument sets out the theoretical grounds
for critiquing the misrepresentation of folk devils, in addition to the generative structures
and antecedent conditions necessitated by instances of moral panic. Since the
phenomenal form of folk devil can be consistently described, it is possible to engage in a
critique that can aid in altering the conditions that produce moral panic. This mode of
critique, I argue, is the best suited to answer McRobbie and Thornton’s call to re-
examine, “the labyrinthine web of determining relations which now exist between social
groups and the media, ‘reality’ and representation” (1995: 560). And as Critcher argues,
“if there is no disparity to identify between reality and representation—if perhaps the
distinction between reality and representation is denied—then the whole political point,
the urge to ‘social justice’, has been lost” (2008: 16).
Conclusion

In Chapter One, I argued that the FD/CM relation must be conceptualized as internally and dialectically related to the existent social relation between primary and corporate agents. From this relation, I argued for a stratified conceptualization of both folk devils and claims-makers. This conceptualization allowed for analytical distinction between the real people from which folk devils emerge on the one hand and their ideological representation (that is, the false phenomenal form) in the media on the other. Further, I contended the stratified conception of the folk devil, grounded in existing social relations, provided additional benefits for assessing the agency of folk devils without lapsing into reification.

In this chapter, I have addressed the role of the media in contributing to moral panic. Drawing selectively from existing literature on moral panic, I have sought to explore how internal and extraneous factors of news production facilitate the emergence of a categorically false representation of a folk devil. In this way, the crux of this chapter hinged upon examining the disparity between reality and representation inherent to moral panic. To examine this disparity, I argued for reassessing the concept of ideology in greater detail, supplementing the current usage of ideology in the moral panic literature with Bhaskar’s realist conceptualization. The value of Bhaskar’s position is the necessity that any critique of ideology must address the generative structures and the antecedent conditions that produce ideological representations. In terms of moral panic, this means critiquing the actions and practices of the general public as well as the resulting impact on modes of social organization that instances of moral panic have. In the next chapter,
the focus shifts towards the role of the general public, the receivers and perceivers of media messages, as I explore the implications of characterizing moral panic as ideology.
Chapter 4: Existential Anxiety, Ontological Security and the Internal Conversation

The general public constitutes the final set of necessary relations for the emergence of moral panic. In exploring how the general public factors into instances of moral panic, there is both an analytical and an explanatory component that must be addressed. The analytical component necessitates developing a conceptual framework capable of examining the complex ways in which media messages and media audiences relate. By definition, instances of moral panic are held to elicit widespread feelings of anxiety, concern and hostility within members of the general public (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994). However, this is not to assert that any particular instance of moral panic must affect all agents in a given society, but rather that it need only affect “certain social categories, groups or segments” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994: 157). Consequently, making this assertion poses an additional obstacle for analyzing the relation between media messages and media audiences. Thus, analytical attention must be paid to understanding how agents, possessing their own personal biographies, goals and practices respond (or not) to moral panic. In other words, the analytical component requires eliminating any assumption that agents are automatons responding to media messages in a uniform and unreflexive manner.

The explanatory component involves examining how moral panic can elicit feelings of anxiety and hostility within members of the public. While the analytical component provides a partial explanation to how a moral panic discourse can affect members of society, it leaves aside the issue of how the discourse of moral panic can evoke such a visceral response from agents. The central thrust of this explanation
emerges from a very interesting, though somewhat marginal, debate in the moral panic literature concerning the role of risk and the risk-society for future analysis of moral panic. I say marginal because the debate itself consists of only two journal articles: one by Sheldon Ungar in 2001 and one by Sean Hier in 2003- a response to Ungar. Despite its small stature, I argue that these two pieces provide the basis to explicate a holistic explanation of moral panic.

This chapter is comprised of three sections. The first section examines the relation between media messages and media audiences. Extending from the discussion of ideology in the previous chapter, I first explore how scholars have used the concept of interpellation to explain the connection between media discourse and members of the general public. From this, I argue that the concept of interpellation proves inadequate for conceptualizing the reflexive causal powers of agents. As an alternative, I argue that Archer’s (2003) conceptualization of the ‘internal conversation’ provides a greater analytical and methodological value for theories of moral panic than does interpellation. The second section develops the contextual grounding for a causal explanation of moral panic by examining the debate between Ungar and Hier on the implications of risk for analysis of moral panic. From this debate, the third section re-examines how Hier uses Zygmunt Bauman’s analysis of community as well as Anthony Giddens’ conceptualization of existential anxiety to provide the best explanatory foundation for a theory of moral panic sui generis.
From Interpellation to the Internal Conversation

In all three main explanatory models, some consideration is paid to how moral panic affects, and is affected by, members of the general public. Roughly speaking, all three models share the underlying commonality that the media’s portrayal of a specific social problem evokes feelings of anxiety, concern and fear amongst social agents, which in turn, can be seen as responsible for causing moral panic. Yet despite the central role that the public plays in moral panic, all three models suffer from some variant of an inability to conceptualize how a moral panic discourse can be translated into moral panic, fuelled by, and contributing to, social anxiety. That is, they all suffer, in some way, from the inability to conceptualize the relation between structure and agency.

For some scholars, the concept of interpellation, most commonly associated with the work of Louis Althusser, provides the way to explore how social agents receive media messages (Hay, 1995; Hier, 2002a). According to Althusser, the true power of capitalist ideology is not some magical ability to mystify the consciousness of workers. Rather, the power of ideology lies in the active internalization of its principles by social actors themselves. Stated differently, interpellation is the process through which individuals come to see themselves as constituted in and through hegemonic discourses set within a larger ideological frame (Hier, 2002a). In this light, discursive formations can be constituted as an ideological hail that calls social actors to be recognized and to self-recognize as subjects. In terms of moral panic, it is through subjects’ acknowledgment and response to the hail that ideological interpellation can be viewed as a dialectic of subjectification between us and the Other, wherein there is a reinforcement of hegemonic conditions (Hier, 2002a). That is, empirical manifestations of moral panic, through
increased media coverage for example, interpellate social subjects into discourses of harm and harm avoidance through an ideological representations of some harmful Other.

As Hay states,

[we] inject our own subjectivities into the empty scenarios constructed within a mediated discourse. We recognize ourselves (as mothers, fathers, or guardians) as we position ourselves as subjects within the narrative structure constructed within such reported events. It is in this moment of identification, empathy, recognition (connaissance) that the point of resonance is secured, as we find our ‘hailing’ and become subjects through it, and thus subject to it (1996: 208 cf. Hier, 2002a: 322).

As a result, “interpellation is henceforth revealed to constitute subject positions in a manner that reinforces, reproduces and recontextualizes dominant social relations through ‘common sense’” (Hier, 2002a: 322). That is, by appealing to an individual’s common sense to avoid harm, “socially constructed problems are discursively transformed into a set of risks and dangers which serve political—and morally regulative—ends” (Hier, 2002b: 36). To summarize, interpellation reveals one way that agents are hailed by media discourses, which reproduces hegemonic relations by constituting agents into a particular subject position.

However, despite some obvious benefits to using the concept of interpellation, several problems emerge from a realist perspective. First, as Callinicos argues, Althusserian interpellation tends towards the view that “individuals are not agents but rather the raw material which ideology transforms into subjects ready to submit to their predestined role in the relations of production” (2004: 177-78). The problem here is inferring some form of determinism that views media discourse as a pervasive social force conditioning all agents into a given mode of existence. Agents are not merely dupes of media messages, but instead, have the ability to reflexively navigate their day-to-day lives, making what they will of media discourse. The second problem to avoid is lapsing
into constructionism that negates or neglects the objective conditions that confront agents. Simply put, “we make ourselves and our history, but not under the times and circumstances of our own choosing” (Archer, 2003: 104). Third, and most importantly, it is crucial to stress that not all agents engage with media discourse in a universal way. Rather, given different objective conditions and personal biographies, different agents will comprehend (fallibly) and possibly act on, a panic discourse in radically different ways. To address all three problems, I argue that by incorporating Archer’s (2003) conceptualization of the internal conversation, it is possible to endow agents with reflexivity, without jettisoning the causal powers of structural conditions or the unique qualities of individual agents. Further, the internal conversation does so in such a way as to provide a deeper and more methodologically sound explanation of how moral panic occurs.

According to Archer, the internal conversation functions as the mediator between structure and agency, and possesses a three-fold character: interiority, subjectivity and causal efficacy. By interiority, it is held that there exists a domain of mental privacy that “cannot be exteriorized as ‘behaviour’, which could be impersonally understood by all” (Archer, 2003: 95). This simply means that even though some mental acts may be expressed in behaviour (i.e. grimissing at the thought of pain), others acts may not be expressed (i.e. deliberation or self-criticism). Similarly, subjectivity means that, “the inner dialogue cannot be transmuted into ‘objectivity’, as if first-person thoughts could be replaced by third-person ideas” (Ibid). In other words, the internal conversation is ontologically subjective. Lastly, our internal conversation is causal efficacious, in that, “the personal causal efficacy of our deliberations cannot be taken over by the forces of
‘socialization’: this would be to replace the power of the person by the power of society” (Ibid). Instead, it must be upheld that agents are active and reflexive beings whose deliberations and reasons for pursuing a given course of action constitute causal powers in social phenomena. Stated differently, the internal conversation exists as a ‘personal emergent power’ (PEP) that is enabled and constrained by structure (both cultural and objective).

Despite the similar connotative tone, it should be clear that the internal conversation differs significantly from versions of social psychological behaviourism or notions of introspection. Against behaviourism, it is maintained that our internal deliberations possess a genuine interiority that does not necessarily manifest in behaviour, leaving it unobservable to a third-person perspective (Archer, 2003). Properly speaking, the internal conversation is ontologically subjective. The case against introspection, however, involves a slightly more detailed critique and requires examining both observational and linguistic models of introspection. In the first place, introspective observation, through which we ‘look-in’ at our mental selves, proves inadequate in at least two respects. At a theoretical level, the “perceptual criteria [of introspective observation] limits one to the level of empirical events. It thus precludes causality from being attributed to unobservable generative mechanisms” (Archer, 2003: 93) and thus, cannot be endorsed by a realist ontology. Generically, observational introspection invokes a split-consciousness in which the agent is simultaneously subject and object, the seer and the seen. The problem, as Archer notes, is that “we [can] not turn our gaze around fast enough to catch ourselves in the mental act” (2003: 96). As a result of this problem, John Stuart Mill posited a time delay to save the observational model, in which,
“as subjects, we could observe ourselves a little later as objects by inspecting our memories” (Ibid). But this solution only substitutes retrospection for introspection, moving the debate from the reflexive development of self-knowledge to the interrogation of memories.

In the second place, linguistic introspection offers a partial advance over the observational model. Evidently, the linguistic model moves from the duality of seer and seen to that of speaker and listener. Archer argues that, “this had the obvious advantage that we can indeed both speak and listen to ourselves speaking, internally just as externally. When we utter something we are the subject; when we hear our utterance, we listen to ourselves as object” (Ibid). Yet, the move from seeing to listening only provides a monological solution to ‘simple reflexivity’ because “subject and object are forever frozen in these roles of speaker and listener” (Archer, 2003: 97). As Archer argues, the difficulty is that these frozen roles cannot deal with the more extended forms of reflexivity in which we engage, as in cases of self-doubt, self-criticism and self-correction. For in such deliberations, subject and object interact, and the self-knowledge that is generated is not just a matter of passive listening and recording (Ibid).

In this way, we have moved from an introspective monologue to an internal dialogue, in which we are able to ask ourselves questions and provide ourselves (fallibly) with answers. This is an important step if we are accept that agents gain self-knowledge reflexively because without the ability to question ourselves internally, we would not be able to reflect on our own position, either individually or socially.

Yet, since the internal conversation acts as the mediator between structure and agency, the questions remains, how does society gain entrance and influence our internal conversation? The traditional approach, emerging from the work of George Herbert Mead, posits that our internal conversation “is not a dialogue with oneself...[but] a
conversation with society” (Archer, 2003: 79). For Mead, “the self ‘is a gift to the individual from society and always remains part of the social process’” (Archer, 2003: 81). As such, Mead contends that we cannot experience ourselves as objects directly, but only indirectly, and only by constructing and incorporating the perspective of some ‘generalized other’. That is, because the social provides the entire constitution for the self, an internal dialogue cannot be anything but a conversation with society. By implication, Mead’s position severely curtails the potentialities for the internal deliberations of agents to be causally efficacious. Since the social factors into our internal dialogues so prominently, all individual action bears society’s imprint to such an extent that the causal powers of the agent are transposed onto society. In short, Mead’s position negates the interiority, subjectivity and causal efficacy of the internal conversation.

The move that Archer makes to resolve the difficulties posed by Mead’s position is astounding in its logic and simplicity. Rather than conceiving that agents conduct their internal dialogues with society, Archer argues that the internal conversation is about society. She states:

> Because, on the present argument, our inner dialogues are with ourselves, we are not short of a conversational partner. Instead, by alternating as subject and object, we can genuinely engage in self-talk and can set our own dialogical agendas. Because the self who does the talking, listening and responding is not ‘Society’s Being’, this relatively autonomous person is free to reflect upon society. Therefore, things social are amongst the topics of our internal deliberations, rather than society being our (censorious) interlocutor, as Mead represents it (2003: 121).

It is through the internal conversation that agents reflexively assess (fallibly) their own social position, in relation to the objective conditions that confront them, but that are not of their own choosing (Archer, 2003). Archer argues that agents must assess their social position because all agents engage in practices and projects designed to satisfy their ‘ultimate concerns’ (2003: 122-3). For example, a man for whom family is an ultimate
concern will engage in particular projects (such as getting married and having children) and in particular practices (such as aiding in housework and prioritizing family meals) to best realize his concern (Archer, 2003: 148-9). Of course, “life in an open system…can play havoc with the most careful deliberations and nullify the best-laid plans” (Archer, 2003: 149), so there is no claim to absolute determination here. Quite conversely, the only thing that can be said here with any absolute determination is that we, as humans, can be wrong about us ourselves, our modes of conduct and our circumstances. Nevertheless, the internal conversation provides the means to conceptualize how agents can reflexively re-evaluate (fallibly and under their own description) past events or actions in light of future concerns to determine their present practices.

**Modes of Reflexivity**

As I stated above, it is theoretically incorrect to posit that all agents engage in reflexivity in a universal way. The differences between agents necessitate conceptualizing the internal conversation as a unique process for every individual resulting from their own personal biography, objective conditions and personal goals and powers. From Archer’s exploratory study on the internal conversation, she identifies four reflexives or modes of reflexivity: communicative, autonomous, meta- and fractured. These four typologies correspond to the different ways in which people engage with their internal conversation. In terms of moral panic, the four modes of reflexivity explain how moral panic can affect only a particular segment of society.

For communicative reflexives, the topic of the internal conversation is raised intra-personally but is completed inter-personally. Communicative reflexives, “share their
problems, discuss decisions and thus externalize much of what…remains intrinsically an internal deliberative process” (Archer, 2003: 167) for others. The need to externalize their private mental deliberations results from the doubt that they are capable of factoring in all the necessary considerations to develop an informed course of action. By contrast, autonomous reflexives, feel no need to consult others on the topics of their internal conversations because they feel that “their internal deliberations are self-sufficient” (Archer, 2003: 210). This is not to say that autonomous reflexives are infallible or even that they hold themselves to be infallible. Rather, autonomous reflexives maintain that they alone possess the capacity to reason through their life goals, projects and practices, without requiring recourse to the thoughts and opinions of others.

Differing from both the communicative and autonomous modes of reflexivity, meta-reflexivity, “entails being reflexive about our own acts of reflexivity” (Archer, 2003: 255). The difference here is that the internal conversation is not focused on the external actions of agents but on the agent him or herself. Unlike communicative reflexives that seek self-knowledge by externalizing their internal dialogues with others, meta-reflexives tend to “withdraw into self-interrogation” (Archer, 2003: 256), in turn causing them to lack the decisiveness possessed by autonomous reflexives. This means that meta-reflexives are more apt to experience structural enablements and constraints at a deep personal level, as they seek develop a more creative relationship between self and society (Archer, 2003). Lastly, like all human powers, reflexivity exists only in potential. For fractured reflexives, the contingencies and events of social life in an open system have suspended or rendered inoperative their ability “to deal subjectively with the objective environment they [confront]” (Archer, 2003: 298). However, this does not
mean that fractured reflexives are unable to hold an internal conversation, but rather, “that their self-talk provides them with no instrumental guidance about what to do in practice” (Archer, 2003: 299). Taken together, the four-fold typology of reflexivity conceptualized by Archer provides the analytical means to distinguish the causal factors that lead to moral panic affecting different agents in different ways. At this point, I will explore the implications of the internal conversation for understanding the emergence of moral panic.

*Moral Panic and the Internal Conversation*

Integrating the internal conversation into the analysis of moral panic offers a significant analytical advance. First, the internal conversation provides a sounder grounding for assessing the reception of media discourses by agents. While the concept of interpellation, especially as used by Hay (1995), does provide the initial context for examining how audiences receive media discourse, there are two related problems with such an approach that can be solved by the internal conversation. One, interpellation is premised upon agents being ‘hailed’, which leads agents to be constituted and to self-constitute into particular subject positions; in this way, interpellation does not involve agents talking with or about society, but rather, society talking to agents. The internal conversation, by contrast, is premised upon the relative autonomy of agents who cannot simply be hailed or constituted by discourse. The internal conversation does not deny that agents can self-recognize their subject positions in discourse, but it maintains that the agents must self-constitute their own subject position. Two, by implication, the internal conversation adds a degree reflexivity absent in the concept of interpellation. Not to
belabour the obvious, but it is important to remember that agents are reflexive beings, capable of interpreting and re-interpreting their environment (social or natural). Since interpellation tends to view agents as empty vessels for the internalization of media discourse, the distinction between what agents hear in the media and what they accept as factual collapses. Only by stressing the reflexivity of agents can this distinction be maintained analytically.

Second, the internal conversation contributes a significant advance for analyzing moral panic as ideology. By definition, moral panic represents a categorical and characteristically false belief (or set of false beliefs) regarding the folk devil and the potential threat(s) they pose. I have already addressed, in some detail, how this false belief is constructed and disseminated, so here I wish to emphasize how this false belief affects agents in civil society. In other words, the key to analyzing moral panic lies in examining how moral panic, as ideology, affects the way in which agents determine and reflect upon their concerns, projects and practices. While the internal conversation provides the analytical means to explore the complex relation between media messages and media audiences, it leaves the question of how moral panic can evoke feelings of anxiety and fear unresolved. To answer this question, I will turn my attention to the tricky concept of risk (de Young, 2007).

On Risk

At least some notion of risk has been inherent to conceptualizations of moral panic, but it is only recently that scholars have integrated risk with explicit detail. Fuelled largely by the work of Ulrich Beck, the debate between Ungar (2001) and Hier (2003) hinges on
whether the concept of risk antiquates or enhances the possibilities for analyzing moral panic. On the one hand, Ungar argues that the introduction and further development of the risk society thesis illuminates the changing sites of social anxiety, rendering the explanatory value of moral panic problematic. On the other hand, Hier maintains that the incorporation of risk increases the explanatory utility of moral panic as sites of social anxiety converge. In comparison, Ungar does highlight some significant problems with the concept of moral panic, but I will argue that there is good reason for supporting the direction Hier is heading. Granted, to reap the benefits requires taking his mode of analysis one step further.

According to Ungar, what is considered a threat to society has undergone a shift in advanced industrial societies. He argues that new threats related to “nuclear, chemical, environmental, biological and medical issues” (2001: 273) characteristic of the risk-society have produced new sites and sources of social anxiety. Whereas moral panic has largely been connected with a relatively small number of social problems or threats, especially those concerning youth, the risk society signifies a much wider array of threats, potential threats, emergencies and would-be emergencies. In this shift, Ungar argues that, “occasional problems are supplanted by a burgeoning pool of contending ‘catastrophes’ [in which] all aspects of claim-making are rendered more open, variable, and problematic” (2001: 276). Thus, while traditional studies of moral panic have adopted a constructivist approach that generally views claims-making in a top-down fashion (see Chapter Two), Ungar argues that the institutional diffusion of risk, and of responsibility in the risk-society, leads to the off-loading of ‘hot potatoes’ by those people who could be blamed for the ‘institutional bad’. Succinctly he states that,
claims making on risk society issues is, in comparison with conventional moral panic issues, hedged in by more apparent and sticky issue trajectories, by a more equal balance of power on the part of rival claim makers, and by a comparative absence of distinguishable types of folk devils that evoke deep-seated hostility and fear (Ungar, 2001: 287).

In other words, because people (and institutions) in positions of power can find themselves held responsible for risk-based problems, the concept of moral panic loses its explanatory strategy of social control in late modernity as risk issues gain more prevalent attention. Yet, as I demonstrated in Chapter Two, the source of Ungar’s problematization emerges from the conflation of risk-issues and moral panic. In this way, the increasing prevalence of risk-based problems may reflect different, but not necessarily changing, sites of social anxiety, thus saving the concept of moral panic from antiquation.

Conversely, Hier (2003) argues that the introduction of the risk-society thesis does not necessitate abandoning the concept of moral panic, but rather provides a new theoretical territory to strengthen our understanding of moral panic. According to Hier, it is more useful to assert “analytic priority…not with an understanding of changing but of converging sites of social anxiety” (2003: 4- emphasis added). What this means is explicating how discourses of risk in late modernity are converging with moral discourses, culminating in mixed/hybrid knowledge formats (Hier, 2003: 4). Assuming that risks are conceptualized as ‘objective conditions’ facing modern society, Hier uses the concept of risk to “reveal how the affirmation of social order… [is]…situated in the realm of everyday living” (Ibid). Consequently, this highlights the problematic assumption regarding the ‘reality’ of contemporary risks inherent to Ungar’s articulation. Hier contends that Ungar comes dangerously close “to an over-socialized conception of individual choice, failing to consider seriously how people deal with contingency” (2003: 5). This over-socialized conception reduces individual action to the result of “mere ‘risk
actors’ playing a predetermined role in a culturally prescribed risk narrative” (2003: 11). Instead, Hier argues that by conceiving the relation between risks and moral panics as distinctive yet sometimes convergent improves our conceptual understanding of both risks and moral panics without tending towards an over-socialized conceptualization of individual action.

To consider an example, Hier uses his examination of the moral panic over ravers in Toronto during 2001 (for more, see Chapter Two). According to Hier, the panic over Ecstasy use at raves, “exemplifies the convergence of the sties of social anxieties purported to reside within the risk society and with more traditional formulations of moral panic” (2003: 10). He argues that the scientific processes involved in Ecstasy production, lead to anxiety and fear over the possible side-effects (including death) of a drug produced in an illegal, underground laboratory. Yet, as city council officials and the news media sought to characterize the rave community “as being ‘at risk’” (Ibid), the rave community responded by using the same discursive techniques to highlight the risks of forcing raves into underground, substandard facilities. In this way, what began “as a mechanism of social control by authorities… was subverted as a mechanism of resistance” (Ibid) by the rave community. This example serves to demonstrate how moralized discourses (i.e. rave parties are bad) can converge with risk discourses (i.e. forcing raves underground is dangerous), culminating in a mixed/hybrid knowledge format. However, the crucial aspect to Hier’s analysis is his move to situate this form of knowledge at the level of community and everyday existence. It is precisely this move in which Hier provides the grounds for a causal explanation of how moral panic evokes feelings of anxiety and concern from members of the general public. Yet, it should be
noted that Hier’s purpose lies in demonstrating the grounds for convergence between moral panic and risk, not in providing a causal explanation of moral panic. Thus, instead of restating the bulk of Hier’s argument, I have isolated those aspects of his framework most situated to my present task.

**Existential Anxiety and Ontological Security**

The first step towards a causal explanation of moral panic entails examining how Hier treats the concept of anxiety, and in particular, existential anxiety in his work. Drawing on Hollway and Jefferson (1997), Hier begins by conceptualizing, “anxiety as a complex dimension of the human psyche rooted in the dynamic unconscious, which only secondarily assumes the form of historically and culturally specific, shared anxieties” (2003: 11). In this definition, anxiety possesses both an individual and social component. However, social “anxieties are understood to derive from a more deep-seated intersubjective human condition which is not etiologically social in the last instance” (Ibid) or, I should add, in the first instance either. This means that any social-psychological explanation requires considering, “the experiential forms of anxiety, in addition to the social conditions that serve to generate it” (Ibid). For Hier, to need to addresses both the experiential forms and the causal social conditions can best be addressed by integrating the conceptualization of late modernity offered by Giddens.

According to Giddens, societies in late modernity are characterized by conditions of ambivalence and existential anxiety. Through the effects of what Giddens calls ‘time/space distanciation’ and the ‘disembedding of social relations’, individuals come to experience a variety of events and relations in a disjointed and distant manner as global
phenomena become experienced in local contexts. As a result, Hier argues that the “human experience [becomes] increasingly susceptible to the actions and agency of ‘absent others’” (Ibid) capable of impacting our everyday lives. Yet, as Hier notes, the notion of anxiety found in Giddens is not solely the product of globalization but rather, must be understood at a deeper existential level, related to the way in which people develop trust and security systems during their infancy (Hier, 2003).

During childhood infants develop a sense of trust and ontological security through the relation to their caregivers (mother, father, guardian, etc.). By learning to accept the temporary absence of their caregivers during childhood, “infants acquire a fundamental sense of trust based on the ‘existential anchorings’ of confidence and the expectation that caregivers, in their absence, will eventually return” (Hier, 2003: 12). According to Giddens, after childhood this sense of trust is transferred from the caregivers to ‘expert systems’ (institutionalized, specialized bodies of knowledge) and functions to quell existential anxieties. As Hier writes, “the ability to trust, developed in childhood, acts as a ‘protective cocoon’ permitting the continuity of routine daily functioning, relatively free of what would otherwise be debilitating anxieties” (Ibid). In other words, despite the variety of potential risks inherent to life, individuals come to develop a protective cocoon that allows them to navigate their lives without succumbing to the paralysis of existential anxiety.

Yet, to more fully appreciate the notion of a protective cocoon, Hier makes the conceptual connection to Bauman’s arguments regarding community and ontological security. In a similar fashion to Giddens, Bauman (1991, 2001) also conceptualizes late modernity by conditions of ambivalence and insecurity. In fact, as Hier notes of
Bauman’s argument, “one of the principal, though impossible, tasks that modernity sets out for itself is the production of order and the quest to extinguish existential uncertainty” (2003: 14). According to Bauman, the need to eliminate ambivalence and uncertainty, and to produce existential order, results in the construction of rigorous definitional boundaries for incorporation/inclusion. He argues that, “the substance of modern politics, of modern intellect, of modern life, is the effort to exterminate ambivalence: an effort to define precisely- and to suppress or eliminate everything that could not or would not be precisely defined” (Bauman, 1991: 7, 8 cf. Hier, 2003: 14). Further, this attempt to eliminate ambivalence, Bauman argues, crystallizes most profoundly in the modern pursuit of community.

For Bauman (2001), the pursuit of community stems from the need to find ‘safety in an insecure world’. Without question, the contingencies and insecurities of life in an open system are a universal, but not ahistorical social fact. While past societies have relied upon deep-seated spiritual beliefs and kinship ties to mitigate the effects from some of these insecurities, the increasing diversity and differentiation of modernity renders such traditional coping mechanisms insufficient. As a result, the notion of community comes to signify that ‘warm and cozy place’ (Bauman, 2001: 1) where people can feel safe and secure; a place where people see those around them as friends instead of strangers, trusting them and relying on their good will. But we “live in ruthless times, times of competition and one-upmanship…[where] in reply to our cries for help we hear admonitions to help ourselves” (Bauman, 2001: 3). Thus, “‘community’ stands for the kind of world which is not, regrettably, available to us- but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess” (Ibid). Despite the obvious differences
between the way things are and the way we wish them to be, and the inevitable difficulties associated with moving from one to the other, the pursuit of community remains.

As an ideal, the pursuit of community is not inherently problematic. The means by which we attempt to engage in this pursuit and the costs of this engagement, however, are indeed quite problematic. First, Hier argues that, “the quest to establish as sense of existential security- community- has come at the expense of the de-legitimation of the Other: the criminalized, racialized, gendered or stigmatized” (2003: 15). The pursuit of community, in this way, denotes the equation of homogeneity to safety and necessitates the demarcation of ‘us’ and ‘them’. In short, community is stridently “divisive, exclusionary and protectionist” (Ibid) during a historical period in which the movement of things, people and information occurs more frequently and at a greater speed than ever before making the protective cocoon of community increasingly easy to breach. Further, pursuing community by divisive and exclusionary methods, “serves only to contribute to an extended range of uncertainty” (Ibid) because total sameness- absolute homogeneity- is an elusive, if not impossible task, within the conditions of modernity.

Second, the cost of attempting to capture the elusive notion of an idealized community extends far beyond the exclusion of Others, affecting the precarious relation between freedom and security. For Bauman, “we cannot be human without both security and freedom; but we cannot have both at the same time and both in quantities which we find fully satisfactory” (2001: 5). The implication of this position is that, “missing community means missing security; gaining community, if it happens, would soon mean missing freedom” (Bauman, 2001: 4). While the sacrifice of security and freedom tends
to come at the expense of ‘them’—that is, other people’s security and freedom—(Bauman, 2001: 20), those of ‘us’ on the inside are not immune from, nor unwilling to, sacrifice freedom for security. Bills such as the USA PATRIOT ACT and the rise of closed-circuit television surveillance in Canada and the UK speak all too clearly of our susceptibility to relinquish some freedom for some feeling of security, regardless of how elusive or untenable that feeling may be.

The conceptual inclusion of existential anxiety and ontological security, as well as the contradiction between freedom and security, has a tremendous impact on understanding moral panic. Moving backwards from Bauman to Giddens, consider the argument in this way: people attempt to create an ontological bubble or protective cocoon to guard against the existential uncertainties inherent to social life in a diverse and differentiated world. Using the ordering practices and security systems developed from childhood onwards, people develop strategies to mitigate and navigate the variety of sources that may ignite existential angst and feelings of insecurity. Yet, despite the best attempts, the contingencies of living in an open system where things (whether natural or social) can change unexpectedly ineluctably present moments in which existential anxieties rise to the surface. That is, regardless of how sturdy our ontological bubble appears to be, and regardless of how many strategies we have developed to quell existential anxiety, events still occur that pierce our protective cocoons and ignite our existential anxieties.

At a high level of abstraction, but in very clear terms, moral panic is one of those events capable of piercing through our protective cocoons and igniting our existential anxieties. Moral panic represents an outbreak of social anxiety resulting from the
potential threat (real or imagined) posed by some person or group of people. The articulation of this threat is picked up largely by the media, which disseminates the threat discourse to agents in society. Through the signification spiral, the potential threat intensifies, piercing through our ontological bubbles and igniting our existential anxieties. It does so by exploiting what is an inevitable facet of the human condition—uncertainty in the face of contingency. This is not to say that a particular panic discourse will immediately and forcefully grab the attention of all agents in society. Rather, given the various modes of reflexivity possessed by different agents, a panic discourse may only pierce the ontological bubble of a segment of agents located in a given social context. In this way, Goode and Ben-Yehuda are quite correct to assert that moral panic needs only to affect some portion of people, some of the time. The explanation of how this occurs emerges from the complexities of the internal conversation. Since agents all possess their own concerns, projects and practices, the panic discourse must embody elements that reasonably could jeopardize the attainment of their life goals, particular to their own social positions and mode of reflexivity. Only once the object of the moral panic becomes a topic for our internal conversation, can we contend with the potential threat, deciding whether or not it deserves to be acted upon.

Conclusion
In this chapter, I have examined how media messages and media audiences relate, and how this relation can evoke feelings of anxiety and concern within members of the general public. Emerging from the discussion of ideology in Chapter 3, I began by problematizing the concept of interpellation for analyzing the media/general public
relation. I argued that interpellation proves inadequate because it 1) relies on a reification in which society speaks to individuals and 2) neglects the reflexivity of agents possessing their own biographies, goals and practices. As a solution, I argued that Archer’s internal conversation overcomes the problems inherent to interpellation and provides an improved methodological approach for understanding how agents receive and perceive media messages. Furthermore, the various modes of reflexivity explain how a particular moral panic may only come to affect a segment of the population, and not the entire social body. Despite the value of the internal conversation for the analysis of moral panic, I argued that it leaves open the question of how moral panic evokes feelings of anxiety and concern.

To explain how moral panic can evoke social anxiety and concern, I explored how Hier uses the works of Bauman and Giddens to situate the effect of moral panic at the quotidian front. Specifically, I argued that moral panic is a social phenomenon that is capable of piercing our ontological bubbles and igniting our existential angst. It does so by providing the empirical context to justify that our anxieties are well founded and that our pursuit of community is just as important as ever. Through the dissemination of the panic discourse, the potential harm(s) embodied in the folk devil serves as a point of resonance for collective anxieties, which reinforces our internal desire for security. Further, as Bauman argues, the more strained our pursuit of security becomes, the more willing we are to sacrifice our freedom and the more susceptible we become to both overt and covert forms of regulation. In other words, the more susceptible we become to reproducing hegemonic social practices and relations.
Chapter 5: Regulation and Governance - A Realist Conception of Hegemony

In a recent article, Chas Critcher (2008) argues that it is time to ‘widen the focus’ of moral panic analysis by addressing the concept of moral regulation. Here, Critcher provides three logical possibilities for examining the “problematic relationship between moral panic and moral regulation” (2008: 15). The first possible option emerges from Alan Hunt (1999) and entails rejecting the concept of moral panic in favour of moral regulation. The second possible option emerges from Sean Hier (2002a; 2008) and entails subsuming moral panic as an element of/moral regulation projects. The third possible option, where Critcher positions himself, entails conceiving moral panic as such an extreme form of moral regulation that it requires its own conceptual category (2008: 15).

Evidently, Critcher’s position overlaps with Hier’s, but I intend to show there is good reason for favouring Hier’s position, while still responding the challenges posed by Critcher. To do so, I argue that integrating a realist analysis of hegemony can alleviate the problematic relation between projects of moral regulation and instances of moral panic.

While Critcher provides a useful template for exploring the relation between moral panic and moral regulation, his analysis marginalises key differences between two separate articles by Hier (2002a; 2008) and unnecessarily restricts the arguments of Hunt, who in turn, is too restrictive in his reading of Gramsci. Specifically, I argue that both Hunt’s and Critcher’s insistence on maintaining a separation between the moral and the political as means of defining “what is included and excluded by that troublesome adjective [moral]” (2008: 15), proves problematic for grasping the regulatory potential of
moral panic. As a solution, I argue that instances of moral panic may serve a regulatory function, but one that is not necessarily moral. In realist terms, there is a contingent, not a necessary, correspondence between cases of moral panic and projects of moral regulation. This contingent correspondence can be seen through a temporal distinction between volatile and episodic moral panic and more long-term projects of moral regulation, in which some instances of moral panic contribute to processes of moral regulation and others do not. In spite of this contingency, I argue that both moral panic and moral regulation share the general regulatory function of (re)-producing hegemonic social relations, albeit in different ways.

To explicate my solution to the problematic relation between moral panic and moral regulation, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section explores how Hunt (1999), Hier (2002a; 2008) and Critcher (2008) have taken up Corrigan and Sayer’s (1985) original conceptualization of moral regulation, as well as Dean’s (1994) subsequent critique, in theorizing the regulatory potential of moral panic. Using the organizational template provided by Critcher, I offer my own reading of Hunt, Hier and Critcher. The second section situates the concept of hegemony at the forefront. First, I extrapolate from Hunt’s (1997) attempt to ‘put Gramsci to work’ to demonstrate the intimate link between moral regulation and hegemony. Second, I juxtapose Hunt’s argument to the works of Hall et al. (1978) and Hier (2002a, 2008) to illustrate how both moral regulation and moral panic involve the production of hegemonic social relations. Third, I offer a supplement to Hall et al. and Hier by drawing on Jonathan Joseph’s (2002) realist analysis of hegemony. Joseph’s articulation of two types of hegemony, I argue, not only evinces the temporal distinction between moral panic and moral
regulation but also provides the conceptual grounds in which the regulatory aspect of moral panic as a generative structure can be fully appreciated.

**Moral Regulation**

In this section, I examine the sociology of moral regulation and its potential benefit for conceptualizing moral panic. I begin with a brief overview of Corrigan and Sayer’s influential study on state formation in Britain as well as Dean’s subsequent critique since it provides the common point of departure for Hunt, Hier and Critcher. From here, Hunt’s work constitutes the initial link from moral regulation to moral panic. In his attempt to integrate moral regulation and governmentality, Hunt rejects moral panic because of its tendency to imply irrationality and to entail negative normative judgments. In turn, Hier’s first work attempts to save the moral panic concept in understandings of moral regulation by situating moral panic “as the *volatile local manifestation of… the global projects of moral regulation*” (2002a: 329- italics in original). His second piece, however, does not simply redefine the issue in “new and comparatively unfamiliar terms”, as Critcher implies (2008: 7), but rather extends the discussion, “to explain the dynamics of the more common rather than atypical volatility of moralizing in everyday life” (Hier, 2008: 172). Consequently, as I demonstrate, by conflating Hier’s two articles, Critcher fails to appreciate the impact of Hier’s argument on theories of moral panic and leaves his own argument in a precious position. In concluding this section, I argue that while Critcher’s three dimensions of moral regulation are useful, they do not adequately solve the deeper problems of the relation to moral panic. Rather, only through a realist analysis of hegemony can these problems be solved.
Corrigan and Sayer

The sociology of moral regulation owes its origin to Corrigan and Sayer and their historical analysis of state formation in Britain. Approaching the state not simply as a coercive extension of the economic base, but as productive force in its own right, Corrigan and Sayer aim to explore the regulatory mechanisms by which the state forms citizens into subjects. As an ‘instrument of regulation’ (Critcher, 2008: 2) through legal, economic and social institutions, the state, “investigates and legislates; it defines and classifies; it registers and recognizes” (Ibid); in short, the state operates through a myriad of forms which, in the last analysis, function to constitute citizens as subjects. This process, for Corrigan and Sayer, is termed moral regulation:

a project of normalizing, rendering natural, taken for granted, in a word, ‘obvious’, what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order. Moral regulation is coextensive with state formation, and state forms are always animated and legitimated by a particular moral ethos (1985: 4 – emphasis in original).

In other words, moral regulation is the way in which the state, through its engagement with various institutions in civil society, facilitates the hegemonic reproduction of particular social relations and particular types of social agents by “having certain epistemological social arrangements appear to the citizenry as both natural and inevitable” (Hier, 2002a: 324). This signifies that projects of moral regulation are not just ‘externally regulative’ but more importantly, are ‘internally constitutive’ (Corrigan and Sayer, 1985: 194; cf. Hunt, 1999: 15) penetrating deep into ‘who we are’ as citizens and subjects (Critcher, 2008: 2).

However, Dean (1994) argues that Corrigan and Sayer’s attempt to join a Marxian conception of the state with Foucauldian ideas on subject construction falters in several respects. Mainly, Dean asserts that Corrigan and Sayer overemphasize the state, leaving
little room for the role of non-state agencies in moral regulation projects; relatedly, Dean contends that the underestimation of non-state agencies emerges from a simple conception of civil society that fails to account for the spatial differentiation, yet interconnections, between various state and non-state actors. However, as Hunt correctly argues, Corrigan and Sayer’s, “immediate object was precisely to provide an account of state-formation: it seems to be beside the point to criticise such a project for being state-centred” (1999: 15). In any event, Dean’s approach presses for a more detailed look at “ethical self formation: the processes and practices whereby individuals come to act upon the self independent of the state or external materiality” (Hier, 2002a: 325). He concludes by rejecting the concept of moral regulation, favouring instead the more explicitly Foucauldian approach of governmentality (see Dean 1994; Critcher, 2008) that emphasizes the governance of self in the formative processes of ethical subjectivities.

Alan Hunt

While Dean rejects the explanatory utility of moral regulation in favour of a Foucauldian-inspired understanding governmentality, Hunt argues that the greatest analytical purchase is achieved by bringing the two conceptions together. For Hunt, moral regulation refers to the “form of politics in which some people act to problematise the conduct, values or culture of others and seek to impose regulation upon them” (Hunt, 1999: 1). However, according to Hunt, moral regulation is not identified by the social relations that it acts on or produces, but rather by its discursive form (Hunt, 1997). By virtue of its common structure, Hunt argues that all “moral discourses link a moralized subject with some moralized object or practice in such a way as to impute some wider socially harmful
consequences unless subject and practices are subjected to appropriate regulation” (1997: 280). In this way, projects of moral regulation involve moralization, not morality (Ibid). The implication of this conceptualization places the emphasis on the discursive form connecting “subject, object, practices and their projected social consequences” (Ibid) over the social relation that exists between subjects (or subject and object) in projects of moral regulation.

For Hunt, the importance of studying moral regulation is three-fold. First, it provides a means to examine the duality of regulatory projects governing moral conduct undertaken by both state and non-state agencies. Second, it provides “an intimate link between the ‘governance of others’ and ‘governance of the self’” (1999: 2) to explore how attempts to regulate others often manifest in processes of self-regulation. Third, the politics of moral regulation has not only become more visible in the last two decades, but has expanded to include a more diverse range of social issues that are increasingly characterized in highly moralized terms (Ibid). To examine these three points together, I move backwards through them using the example of recent anti-smoking campaigns.

First, through public discourses on health, smoking has become increasingly moralized (i.e. smoking is bad). Once considered a sign of status and distinction (Hunt, 1999: 3), smoking now represents a moral harm to be exorcized. Second, the regulatory processes to eliminate smoking clearly demonstrate the intersection between the governance of others and the governance of self. What emerges as an attempt to regulate others (i.e. you should not smoke) concomitantly involves self-regulation (i.e. I will not smoke). In fact, particular to the anti-smoking campaign is a more morally righteous interaction in which self-regulation gives rise to the attempts to regulate others. We can
neatly characterize this process as: ‘I do not smoke, and therefore, you should not smoke either’. Third, anti-smoking projects provide an empirical example of how both state and non-state agencies engage in moral regulation. It demonstrates how regulatory projects undertaken by non-state agencies (such as, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Non-Smokers Rights Association and the Grim Reaper Society) can, “articulate projects outside the mainstream of official politics and state institutions—sometimes so successfully that these projects get forced upon mainstream political parties and the state” (Hunt, 1999: 2). In Victoria, B.C., the implementation of the provincial Tobacco Control Act in March of 2008 not only outlaws smoking in public doorways or near open windows, but prevents retailers from even openly displaying tobacco related products⁹. The moralization of smoking and success of non-state agencies to compel the state to institute new regulatory measures against smoking is only one example that exhibits the importance Hunt places on conceptualizing and studying projects moral regulation.

In developing his conceptualization of moral regulation, Hunt argues to abandon concepts of social control and moral panic. On the one hand, he maintains that the concept of social control has no place in studies of moral regulation because it tends towards reifying society “as some unitary entity that acts” (1999: 19). The problem, evidently, is that such a position marginalizes the issue of agency, which contradicts the emphasis on the relational social processes of moral regulation. On the other hand, Hunt argues that the concept of moral panic also has to be abandoned because it “implies that the response to some social problem is an over-reaction or exaggerated” (Ibid). Hunt contends that the problems with moral panic, as an explanatory tool, stem from the

⁹ Please see: [http://www.leg.bc.ca/38th3rd/1st_read/gov10-1.htm](http://www.leg.bc.ca/38th3rd/1st_read/gov10-1.htm) for further details.
implicit negative normative judgments generally associated with panic research. While
not negating notions of anxiety explanations, Hunt explains that it is fundamentally
dangerous to import any notion of irrationality into the processes of moral regulation. He
argues that using a term like moral panic is a “short step from a conspiracy theory in
which some agent – for example, the state or mass media – actively sets out to fan the
smoke of anxiety into the flames of panic” (Hunt, 1999: 19). What this signals for Hunt is
the distinctly political nature of the moral panic concept. Conversely, he argues that
“projects of moral regulation have no necessary political label stamped on them and
assumptions about their political tendency should…be avoided” (Ibid). Even though Hunt
is correct in asserting caution against some conspiratorial view of moral panic, his
dismissal of the concept altogether neglects the possibilities of moral panic to stimulate
institutional, as well as individual, change. That is, he neglects to recognize that moral
panics can, and often do, produce real regulatory effects.

*Sean Hier*

To rectify the problematic dismissal of moral panic by Hunt, Hier’s (2002a)
conceptualization of a moral economy of harm bridges the gap between the sociology of
moral panic and the sociology of moral regulation. Hier (2002a) argues that it is possible
to situate instances of moral panic as elements of moral regulation by more fully
exploring how moral panic operates in the formation of ethical subjectivities. To do so,
Hier draws on Valverde’s (1994) conceptualization of a mixed economy of regulation
that, extending from Bourdieu, includes social, economic and moral capital. For
Valverde, moral capital is “an ‘elusive inward essence’ oriented towards considerations
of how others come to judge one’s moral worth” (Hier, 2002a: 326). To illustrate her argument, she forms a comparison between late Victorian philanthropy and modern forms of charity. The distinction, in the context of a mixed economy, is made by examining how charity involves donating money with little concern for its specific use, while philanthropy tends to invest little financially but receives “doses of moral capital to the end that s/he receives a particular ‘moral gain’ in the form of character development and habit reform” (Hier, 2002a: 327). That is, their philanthropic activity enriches their own moral worth, both in terms of their own self-perception and in the perceptions of others.

The understanding of moral regulation through a mixed economy provides a helpful insight into the complexities of governing human conduct (Hier, 2002a). Essentially, this understanding provides a conceptual basis for demonstrating the analytic distinction, while retaining the interrelation, between regulatory projects and moral panics. As Hier notes, “both [moral regulation and moral panic] involve a disturbance in the processes of regulating the conduct of others, as well as processes concerning how to conduct oneself” (Hier, 2002a: 328). However, they differ in that “moral regulation is understood to entail long-term processes of normalization concerning some field of moralized conduct” (Ibid), whereas moral panic is understood to entail the episodic and volatile disturbance in the more general field of moral governance. While the volatile disturbance is viewed as reflecting deeper social anxieties, the function of a moral panic is not to reform the moral conduct of an individual (Hier, 2002a). In fact, moral panic tends to limit the possible field of regulation by emerging with both a problem (the object of the panic) and a solution (dealing with the folk devil). This signifies that the success of
a panic discourse depends as much on the need for claim-makers to appeal to the common-sense of civil society as it does on the abilities of folk devils to fight back (Hier, 2002a).

From here, Hier’s more recent article represents a significant advance in understanding the deeper processes involved in moral panic. He argues,

Whereas criminologists regularly characterize what I am calling the volatility of moralization (or what has been referred to as ‘moral panics’) as irrational, disproportional, and exceptional forms of social action, this article conceives such volatility as a much more routine extension of everyday life operating through flexible configurations of risk and responsibility” (Hier, 2008: 175).

Hier maintains that efforts to rethink moral panic remain reliant on “cognitive, behavioral, and normative measurement criteria” (2008: 180), which imposes negative normative judgments on “explanations of the volatile moralizing discourses as ‘irrational’ evaluations” (Ibid). These negative normative judgments, Hier argues, emerge from the lack any suitable criteria of proportionality, leaving researchers with only their own deductive reasoning to determine “the point at which a sober, realistic appraisal or evaluation transforms into an irrational and disproportionate ‘panic’” (Ibid). Hier continues, arguing that this requires an explanatory framework capable of exploring the discursive volatility of moralization as an everyday process of negotiation between self and other, risk and responsibility.

In connecting moralization and risk-management to develop his explanatory framework, Hier offers a means to ‘think beyond moral panic’. He argues that under neoliberalism, risk-based problems articulated through moralized discourses individualize the responsibility for harm avoidance and risk-management. This individualization occurs through juxtaposition to a “collective subject position or symbolic dimension of harm”
(2008: 183) in which individuals make rational calculations regarding their conduct. In other words,

what this implies on a conceptual level is that moralization in everyday life contains a dialectic that counterposes individualizing discourses (which call on people to take personal responsibility to manage risk, e.g. drinking responsibly) against collectivizing discourses (which represents more broadly harms to be avoided, e.g. the drunk driver) (Hier, 2008: 174).

Thus, the individualization of risk management produces self-corrective action of harm-avoidance resulting from a dialectical presence of collectivized harmful other. In addition, Hier argues that the volatility of moralization becomes increasingly common under neo-liberal forms of self-governance, in which “the deployment of volatile moralizing discourses, as more direct interruptions in the process of moral governance, temporarily remove responsibility for harm reduction from the prudent individual by attributing responsibility for harm to others” (2008: 183). The volatile shift of responsibility for harm onto others presents an important conceptual distinction between moralization through risk and moralization through grievance. On the one hand, risk-based problems induce self-corrective behaviour through the rational calculation of avoiding potential future harms. Grievance-based problems, on the other hand, attempt to regulate the behaviour of others resulting from an already present harm (Hier, 2008). In both cases, however, moralization and the increasing volatility of moralization under neo-liberalism, forms a process of negotiation between self and other, risk and responsibility, in which individuals conduct their everyday lives.

*Chas Critcher*

In response to Hier’s two articles, Critcher attempts to construct empirical boundaries for the conceptual application of moral regulation. Engaging with Hier’s most recent article,
Critcher argues that the boundary between moral regulation and moral panic has become problematic as a result of Hier’s, “insistence on including in moral regulation a whole range of issues that go well beyond anything that moral panic analysis might incorporate” (Critcher, 2008: 8). In other words, by placing moral panic as an element of moral regulation, Hier risks atrophying the conceptual utility of moral panic by speculating the potential for panic from what are properly issues of moral regulation. For example, Critcher demurs over Hier’s endnote inclusion of “public surveillance, crime and disorder, child allergies, bullying, teen violence amongst females, ‘hockey parents’, and a myriad of health concerns” (Hier, 2008: 188) as capable of falling within the rubric of moral panic research. The solution, according to Critcher, lies in developing criteria to differentiate how moral regulation issues are discursively constructed and how they can give rise to moral panic, by examining the concepts of: moral order, social control and self-regulation (2008: 9). I will demonstrate how Critcher develops his criteria by briefly addressing these three concepts.

For all three concepts, Critcher constructs a three-fold typology for assessing their position in the field of moral regulation. First, the concept of moral order succinctly defined refers to, “the degree of perceived threat to basic values” (2008: 9). In other words, the concept of moral order provides an abstraction for assessing the level to which the regulatory target threats “the very foundations of society” (2008: 10). For example, smoking constitutes a low threat, while violent crime constitutes a high threat. Further, the issue of internet pornography constitutes a middle-range threat which some, but not enough, people view as truly threatening the moral order of society. However, middle-range threats, Critcher contends, have the potential to be discursively constructed as a
higher threat at various times. Second, the concept of social control refers to, “the extent to which there is identified a viable solution” (2008: 9). Stated differently, the concept of social control considers whether techniques of coercion and punishment are available or could be developed to prevent or cease individuals from engaging in a particular behaviour. For example, crime ranks as highly amenable to social control because legal sanctions can be invoked as a deterrent, while obesity ranks low because of the absence of legal measures. Recreational drug use like smoking marijuana, rank in the middle-range because the existence of legal sanctions rarely acts as a deterrent (Critcher, 2008).

Third, the concept of self-regulation refers to, “how far moral regulation of others is represented as requiring ethical formation of the self” (2008: 10). In Critcher’s three-fold typology, obesity ranks high as being primarily concerned with self-formation, whereas conversely, the issue of child abuse ranks low as being first directed at others “and only rarely and then implicitly at the self” (2008: 13). In the criteria of self-regulation, middle-range issues include problems with media content (violent or sexual) that strike a balance between regulating the conduct of others and simultaneously the conduct of oneself.

Taken together, Critcher argues that the concepts of moral order, social control and self-regulation constitute the three dimensions of moral regulation. By examining where particular issues fall within his typology, Critcher contends that we can distinguish which issues will most likely produce moral panic and which issues will remain solely within the scope of moral regulation. Critcher argues that only those issues, like violent crime or child abuse, which represent high threats to the moral order, are highly amenable to social control and involve a low degree of ethical self-formation can produce moral panic and be conceptualized as extreme forms of moral regulation. Other issues, such as
obesity or smoking, do not rank high enough in threats to the moral order or as highly amenable to social control to erupt into moral panic. Instead, the predominance of a high level of self-regulation means they can only be conceived as projects of moral regulation.

In the introduction to this section, I argued that while Critcher provides a useful template for examining the distinctions between moral panic and moral regulation, his insistence on separating the political from the moral proves problematic. In addition, I argued that the deficiencies of Critcher’s typology surface from his conflation of Hier’s two articles as well as his restricted reading of Hunt. On the first count, Hier’s two articles constitute considerably different arguments. The first article sought to save the moral panic concept from Hunt’s (1999) problematic dismissal for conceptualizing moral regulation. The second article, however, sought to think beyond moral panic by examining the more routine volatility of moralization in everyday life. In this second piece, Hier makes a significant advance in conceptualizing moral panic by situating ‘the internal conversation’ (Archer, 2003) at the forefront. In other words, Hier contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the processes by which individuals reflexively negotiate risk and harm in their everyday lives. On the second count, I argue that by considering Hunt’s (1997) earlier attempt to ‘put Gramsci to work’, another, more analytically fruitful, means of exploring the commonalities and differences between moral regulation and moral panic can emerge by integrating the concept of hegemony. Below, I will demonstrate how hegemony, and specifically a realist conception of hegemony, can rectify the problematic relation between panic and regulation.
Moral Regulation, Moral Panic and Hegemony

In this section, I demonstrate how a realist conception of hegemony provides a solution to the moral regulation/moral panic problematic without negating the advances already made by Hunt, Hier and Critcher. First, I briefly examine how hegemony factors into discussions of moral regulation by Hunt (1997) and moral panic by Hall et al. (1978) and Hier (2002a) to demonstrate the conceptual commonalities. Second, I provide a realist perspective of hegemony by drawing on the work of Joseph (2002) to demonstrate how moral panic does serve a regulatory function, albeit, one that is not necessarily moral. Consequently, I argue that adopting a realist conception of hegemony also demonstrates how the relation between moral regulation and moral panic produces a contingent, not a necessary, correspondence. Third, I argue that Joseph’s analysis of hegemony provides a richer conceptual territory for exploring the problematic relation between moral regulation and moral panic.

Moral Regulation and Hegemony

Through Gramsci’s analysis of ‘Americanism and Fordism’, Hunt supplies the context for understanding the relation between moral regulation and hegemony. While Gramsci never used the term moral regulation (Hunt, 1997: 276), Hunts argues that he provides a unique insight into the processes of self-formation that operate through projects of moral regulation. The development of Fordism in the United States after WWI, Gramsci argues, constructed a new hegemony, one ‘born in the factory’ but extending its influence out into the cultural and moral realms as well (Hunt, 1997: 277). Hunt argues that, “fordist discipline requires workers with new attributes and capacities; it requires a set of
aptitudes for detailed but repetitive work, which in turn necessitates, outside the factory, regularity, self-control and emotional stability in everyday life” (1997: 277). Thus, for Gramsci, the construction of Fordist hegemony requires not only restructuring labour relations or the labour process, but more importantly, also restructuring the labourer himself. In short, Fordist methods of production require making an entirely new type of worker (Hunt, 1997).

For Hunt, the interest in Gramsci’s analysis involves examining how Fordist hegemony necessitated regulating the leisure practices of the working class, especially those practices concerning sexuality and alcohol. Hunt states that, “indulgence in alcohol and ‘womanizing’ both demand unstructured leisure-time to be available to workers, but this is incompatible with the stressful conditions of intensified labor” (1997: 279). Instead, the leisure-time of the working-class should be spent performing physically undemanding activities to rejuvenate (and thus reproduce) the workers for the following day’s labour. However, Hunt argues that Gramsci’s connection between moral regulation and the interests of capital proves problematic through the tendency to, “confl ate culture and economic relations” (1997: 295). The solution, Hunt contends, can be found in extracting the distinctively moral aspect, the moralizing ‘discourses, practices, and techniques’ (ibid) involved in making new workers. In particular, the solution requires examining, “the independent role of social movements of moral regulation grounded in the social and cultural conditions of the middle-class” (1997: 295). While the aim of Hunt’s research is unproblematic, his logic presents two related problems for consideration.
The first problem involves the distinction between hegemony and moral regulation. In Hunt’s attempt to abstract the specifically moral dimension in Gramsci’s analysis of Fordism, he risks atomizing the highly relational quality of Gramsci’s work. Interestingly, Hunt applauds the depth of Gramsci’s insights, especially his acute ability to stress the importance of cultural factors in economic processes. Yet, Hunt needs a way to distinguish moral regulation without such a conceptualization being reductive to hegemony, which is why he attempts to isolate, and then emphasize, the specifically moralizing discourses, practices and techniques. However, beyond the simply heuristic, I can see little need to isolate moral regulation as altogether separate from hegemony. Instead, it is precisely the relation between projects of moral regulation and hegemony that needs to be brought to the forefront. In fact, I argue that this was exactly Gramsci’s purpose. Thus, while hegemony possesses a distinctly moral dimension, from which the concept of moral regulation emerges, the analysis of this moral dimension requires bearing in mind the influence of economic, political and cultural spheres.

The second problem, related to the first, involves the relation between coercion and consent. For Hunt, “the concept of hegemony tends to erect a binary opposition between coercion and consent; this encourages us to think of them as opposites such that an advance of one implies the retreat of the other” (1997: 288). However, Hunt notes that, “Gramsci himself was able to demonstrate that the interconnection between coercion and consent was not a zero-sum relation” (ibid); as a result of this acknowledgment, Hunt moves to conceptualize moral regulation as comprising forms of ‘consensual coercion’. In Hunt’s words, moral regulation, “projects operate by securing consent to forms of coercive intervention which, without the securing of prior consent, would have provoked
resistance” (1997: 289). The notion of consensual coercion, while overcoming a binary opposition, neglects those instances in which securing consent to coercive intervention required prior coercion, Moreover, the concept of consensual coercion is hindered by linearity, wherein one temporally precedes the other. Instead, consent and coercion need to be viewed as existing simultaneously, in which the emergence of one does not entail the retreat of the other. Only in this way can consent and coercion be conceptualized without the reduction to a zero-sum relation.

*Moral Panic and Hegemony*

*Policing the Crisis* still represents the most substantial attempt to use the concept of hegemony in explaining moral panic. Since Hall et al’s study, few scholars have retained the concept of hegemony in their analysis of moral panic, with the notable exception of Hier (2002a). I argue that the need to reappraise the value of hegemony for analyzing and explaining moral panic is long overdue. Therefore, I would like to extend the previous discussion, in light of the issues raised by Hunt, by drawing from Hall et al. and Hier to situate the conceptual relation between hegemony and moral panic. Specifically, I would like to work backwards from the two problems I identified in Hunt: i) the relation between coercion and consent; and ii) the relation between hegemony and regulation. Doing so, I contend, offers the theoretical space to examine how hegemony relates to moral regulation and moral panic, in addition to providing the grounds for exploring the regulatory potential of moral panic. Recall, however, it will be seen that although moral panic does serve a regulatory function, it is not necessarily a moral one.
First, the relation between coercion and consent can prove troublesome if conceptualized in a haphazard manner. Now, Hunt notes that Gramsci was careful not to characterize coercion and consent as a zero-sum relation, which led Hunt, as I noted above, to a concept of ‘consensual coercion’. However, I believe that the new terminology is superfluous if we simply accept that it is theoretical futile and methodological unsound to attempt to pinpoint the precise moment(s) we were coerced into accepting $x$ and the moment(s) we consented to $x$. Obviously, hegemony does not rise or fall in a day. It is this realization, I argue, that simultaneously strengthens and hinders how Hall et al. explore the relation between coercion and consent in the context of moral panic. The strength lies in the temporal changes between coercion and consent as social problems are amplified and converge through a signification spiral. Roughly we can say that coercive practices (i.e. exploiting social anxiety) are employed to elicit consent from civil society to implement coercive measures, which can then be used to secure future consent for further coercive action. Yet, even in periods of coercion, a certain element of consent remains; likewise, the act of consent does not result in the total disappearance of coercion.

While Hall et al. tread carefully through the coercion/consent relation their somewhat linear path hinders how far they can conceptually integrate hegemony and moral panic. Recall from Chapter 1 that for Hall et al., moral panic creates the ‘exceptional’ conditions that allow the state to extract public consent for increasingly coercive measures. That is, moral panic serves as a distraction from the surfacing structural contradictions inherent to capitalism, which in turn facilitates ruling class hegemony. Stated differently, Hall et al. argue that the elite orchestrate hegemony by
using moral panic to convince, “the rest of society…that the real enemy is not the crisis in British capitalism but the criminal and the lax way he has been dealt with in the past” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994: 137). As a result, the state allocates more resources towards combating the ‘problem’ of mugging, rather than towards the conditions (inflation, unemployment, cuts to welfare, etc.) that necessitated the theft (i.e. the need to live). In this way, the regulatory function of moral panic is not strictly moral, but also structural, at least insofar as instances of moral panic facilitate hegemony. Further, it is precisely because moral panic does exhibit a distinguishable moral element that scholarly analysis should make use of the concept of hegemony, since hegemony by definition requires capturing the hearts and minds of civil society.

Hall et al.’s analysis appears very structural, leaving the question of agency largely in the hands of elites who orchestrate public consent, which in turn, leaves their own analysis with a hint of conspiratorial determinism. Conversely, Hier (2002a) places the issue of agency at the forefront, albeit in a way quite distinct from *Policing the Crisis*. In Gramsican terms, Hier argues that the emergence and maintenance of a hegemonic order is dependent upon the extent that, “individuals’ understandings of how the social world ‘is’ intersects with their lived experiences in such a fashion as to fuse perception/understanding of ‘reality’ with lived experience in a manner which is emotionally and normatively resonant” (Hier, 2002a: 318). In this way, instances of moral panic can be seen to lead to the preservation of a hegemonic order by connecting an actor’s lived experience and their wider perceptions of what society reality is. The implication for Hier, is that, “hegemony…cannot simply be understood to come about through the organic cohesion of political and civil society at the level of consciousness of
those who rule and those who are ruled” (Ibid), but rather, must be understood to come about through ideological-discursive formations that reverberate in social actors as articulations of common sense (Hier, 2002a).

Now recall how Critcher characterized three logical possibilities for exploring the problematic relation between moral panic and moral regulation in the work of Hunt, Hier as well as his own: Hunt rejects the moral panic concept in favour of moral regulation; Hier subsumes moral panic as an element of/in moral regulation projects; while Critcher conceives moral panic as such an extreme form of moral regulation that it requires its own conceptual category. Also recall that I claimed a fourth logical possibility existed, which could be found by more thoroughly utilizing the concept of hegemony. However, before developing this fourth option, let me draw some conclusions from the preceding discussion.

First, in his attempt to isolate the particular moralizing discourse, technique, practice, Hunt simultaneously minimizes the role of hegemony and rejects the concept of moral panic. This, I contend, proves problematic as a simple result of the close relation that projects of moral regulation bear to hegemony and moral panic, as I demonstrate below. Second, Hier develops two very different arguments in his 2002a and 2008 works, which are unnecessarily conflated by Critcher. In the first piece, Hier utilizes the concepts of discourse, ideology and hegemony to situate moral panic as, “the volatile local manifestation of what can otherwise be understood as the global project of moral regulation” (Hier, 2002a: 329). In the second piece, Hier attempts to think beyond moral panic by exploring the more typical, rather than atypical, volatility of moralizing discourses in everyday life. The crucial difference between the two pieces can be
expressed rhetorically such that not every moral quandary leads to moral panic. Third, Critcher is correct to draw conceptual distance between moral regulation and moral panic, but not because moral panic manifests as an extreme form of moral regulation, nor because moral panic is an element in/of moral regulation (as Hier contends), but rather because the two terms refer to distinct phenomenon that operate relationally in an open social system. Furthermore, it is in precisely this distinction that the fourth option to address the problematic relation between moral regulation and moral panic emerges.

_Two Types of Hegemony- Bridging the Gap_

The fourth, and in my opinion the best suited, option to address the relation between moral regulation and moral panic comes from Jonathon’s Joseph’s (2002) realist analysis of hegemony. In this work, Joseph provides the basis to simultaneously situate Hunt, clarify Hall et al., and critique Hier, while still providing an improved basis for scholarly analysis of moral panic. He does this by making a simple yet useful argument, “that there are two distinct, but inter-connected types (or aspects) of hegemony, concerned with (1) structural hegemony and (2) a surface hegemony of actual hegemony projects” (2002: 127). For Joseph, structural hegemony “has the role of securing the unity and cohesion of the social system and in ensuring the reproduction of basic structural processes and relations” (2002: 128), which by definition, Joseph argues, “is fundamental to the unity of all human societies and a basic material necessity concerned with the interrelation of the different parts to the social whole” (Ibid). Conversely, surface hegemony denotes, “hegemony in a more conscious, political and manifold sense concern[ing] concrete hegemonic projects and practices” (Ibid). Even though the distinction is admittedly crude,
and difficult to make given the highly relational nature of hegemony, Joseph concisely argues that,

The deeper, more structural form of hegemony is expressed through various hegemonic projects. In turn these projects are dependent on and determined by the underlying hegemonic conditions. And while the underlying hegemony is the pre-existing cause for such projects, these projects are an important manifestation of this cause. Thus the distinction is between hegemony’s basic material necessity and various forms of its actualization through concrete projects and intention agency (2002: 128-9).

However, to maintain this distinction, Joseph must make a ‘“dialectical abstraction’ (Olman, 1993) to separate out in theory two aspects of a continual process” (2002: 128-italics in original). And, as I contend, it is precisely this move by Joseph that allows me to situate Hunt, clarify Hall et al., and critique Hier.

In the first case, it should be evident from the preceding discussion the way in which Hunt can be situated. While Hunt’s attempt to isolate the features of a particular process/project of moralization works quite well at a descriptive level, it proves lacking in terms of a causal explanation for why projects of moral regulation occur. Hunt’s emphasis on the more discursive and inter-subjective aspects of moral regulation inevitably results in his privileging surface hegemony over structural hegemony. To develop a causal explanation of moral regulation projects, Hunt would have to engage seriously in analyzing the structural conditions that give rise to and sustain these projects. In this way, Hunt can be situated providing a conceptual link between moral regulation and hegemony, but one that is incomplete.

In the second case, the need to clarify Hall et al. may not be so apparent. At a general level, I contend that Hall et al. provide a fascinating look at the relation between moral panic and hegemony. However, at a more specific level, there are two related issues that deserve a more detailed examination. First, the analytical manner in which
Hall et al. use the concept of hegemony in relation to moral panic appears to straddle both aspects of hegemony outlined by Joseph in a curious way. On the one hand, moral panic emerges from the need to sustain conditions of structural hegemony. On the other hand, moral panic constitutes the exceptional moment, or rather the diversion, wherein the state extracts consent for future coercion. The interesting point here lies in considering moral panic not as specific hegemonic project, but as a distraction to retard counter-hegemonic projects during moments of structural weakness or crisis. I say this is curious because even though moral panic does operate as a surface hegemonic project, it fails to be recognized explicitly as such, quite conversely to the way Hunt’s analysis of regulation of working class leisure can be explicitly recognized as constituting an actual hegemonic project.

Second, extending from the first, emphasizing the structural conditions that necessitate moral panic, Hall et al. risk reducing hegemony to its function of maintaining the cohesion of the social whole. While there is little doubt on the importance of this function, it should be stressed that this “requirement of hegemony must be performed by real, living agents with their own specific interests and projects” (Joseph, 2002: 127). In other words, how hegemony functions to maintain hegemonic structural conditions can only be fulfilled by agents who consciously or unconsciously reproduce or transform these very social structures in the course of everyday existence. Thus, the theoretical framework developed by Hall et al., while sufficient for their particular study of muggings, cannot operate as a generalized theory, since it cannot adequately address when (or if) folk devils fight back.
In the third case, the critique of Hier that results from Joseph’s distinction proves more difficult to explicate than addressing either Hunt or Hall et al. The difficult results from Hier’s attempt to synthesize elements of discourse and post-structuralist theory, while maintaining a rough materialism concentrated upon existent social relations. As Joseph argues, both discourse and post-structuralist theories tend to “reduce hegemony to the role of articulating discrete elements” (2002: 127), leaving them unable to make the distinction between to the two aspects of hegemony. On one the hand, discourse theories tend to reduce hegemony, “to the articulation of subject positions within discourse…[severing]…the material relation to the reproduction of social structures” (Ibid). On the other hand, post-structuralist theories tend to reduce hegemony’s “location to various human practices and the exercise of power, an ontological flat description that fails to look at the underlying social structures and generative mechanisms” (Ibid). Given how Hier integrates various theoretical perspectives into his analysis, he manages to avoid, at a certain level, lapsing into the errors of either camp completely. However, I contend that Hier does in fact commit both these reductions by placing too great an emphasis on the discursive construction of subject positions and identities, and simultaneously by developing, implicitly, an ontologically flat description of moral panic.

Not to detract from Hier’s contribution to the study of moral panic, but the problems that I identified within his conceptualization do need to be rectified. Expectedly, both problems can be addressed using critical realism and Joseph’s analysis of hegemony. The first step to resolve these problems requires revisiting the TMSA, only this time concentrating on its structural aspect. Social structures, considered here, constitute both a condition for, and a product of, intentional human action. Yet, insofar as
human action may be intentional, it tends to have “wider unintentional consequences owing to the powerful influence of pre-existing social structures” (Joseph, 2002: 129).

In this way,

the TMSA requires that the present actions which serve to reproduce social structure only be intentional under *some* description, not under the description of reproducing the structure concerned (which would make all social reproduction or persistence the produce of conscious acts) (Ibid. cf. Bhaskar, 1994: 95).

Further, the largely unconscious quality to the reproduction of structures enables its relatively enduring character over time. Further still, this relatively enduring character demonstrates the strength or stability of hegemony through the absence of serious challenge. That is, it demonstrates the influence of hegemony even, or especially, in a negative state (Joseph, 2002).

The second step requires re-examining the process of emergence in the context of hegemony. In spite of the distinction between the two aspects of hegemony, it must be stressed that they exist in a mutual and continual process with one another. “[W]hile structural hegemony has a certain causal primacy, the workings of surface hegemony have an emergent character” (Joseph, 2002: 131) that is irreducible to its underlying causal powers. Conceptualized in this way, Joseph argues that surface hegemony takes on its own internal dynamic resulting from the fact that, “hegemonic practices and struggles necessarily entail some form of agential conception of these processes based on various forms of group or class understandings” (2002: 132). To express both aspects of hegemony requires understanding that surface hegemony emerges from conditions of structural hegemony, which in turn, presupposes the existence of material resources for its own creation and dynamic.

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10 For a fascinating argument on the social structures as *sui generis*, see Potter (2003).
Taken together, these two steps provide the conceptual grounds to rectify the problems posed by Hier’s (2002a) analysis. Through the TMSA and the conceptualization of emergence offered by critical realism, I developed a meta-theoretical framework that avoids both discursive and ontological reductions. Further, Joseph’s realist analysis of hegemony provides a new perspective on the relation between moral regulation and moral panic, which largely results from the distinction between structural and surface hegemony. This perspective holds that projects of moral regulation manifest most evidently as processes of surface hegemony, but the success of these projects is a key element in creating/reproducing the conditions of/for structural hegemony. In this way, the relation between moral regulation and hegemony is both causal and explanatory. Conversely, instances of moral panic rarely appear as an overt project of surface hegemony, but nevertheless, these instances can aid in sustaining particular conditions of structural hegemony (as Hall et al. indicate). However, the relation between moral panic and hegemony is causally insufficient for explaining moral panic (contra Hall et al.) unless the complex relations inherent to moral panic are likewise subject to analysis and explanation (see Chapters 2,3 and 4). That is, moral panic represents more than the exceptional moment in which the state extracts consent for increasingly coercive measures; rather, instances of moral panic sustain structural hegemony by fostering and perpetuating feelings of existential anxiety and fear without ever manifesting as a conscious project of surface hegemony. Thus, while hegemony can play a key role in explaining the effect of moral panic, hegemony alone is insufficient to explain the causal factors involved in moral panic emergence.
The integration of Joseph’s realist analysis of hegemony serves to illuminate three crucial methodological considerations for analyzing moral panic. First, the reproduction of social structures, while depending on intentional human action, tends to be a largely unconscious process. Nevertheless, the ways in which people reproduce particular social structures reveals not just the relatively enduring character of these structures, but more importantly, the analytical value of hegemony for explaining social forms. Second, Joseph’s two aspects of hegemony can sustain examining how non-state agencies conduct hegemonic projects while contributing to the reproduction of hegemonic structures. This signifies a conceptual advantage over Hall et al., since in their view, hegemony finds embodiment purely in the state. Third, despite the conceptual importance of hegemony for the analysis of moral panic, the concept of hegemony, in and of itself, is insufficient as the basis for a causal explanation of moral panic. While maintenance of the current hegemonic system seems to necessitate moral panic, at least insofar as contemporary hegemony requires a suspicious and fearful populace, and while moral panic aids to sustain hegemonic conditions, the relation is contingent on how a complex set of social relations causally interrelates.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explored the problematic relation between moral regulation and moral panic in response to Critcher’s call to ‘widen the focus’ of moral panic analysis. I began by examining how Hunt, Hier and Critcher have taken up this problem. For Hunt, the concept of moral panic should be dismissed in favour of moral regulation. For Hier, moral panic represents a temporally limited element of more long-term projects of moral
regulation. While for Critcher, moral panic represents such an extreme form of moral regulation that it deserves its own conceptual category. From these three positions, I argued that a fourth, better suited, position emerges through the concept of hegemony, in particular, through a realist conceptualization of hegemony.

Using the distinction between the two types of hegemony offered by Joseph, I argued the problematic relation between moral panic and moral regulation is solved. Specifically, I argued that a conceptual distinction needs to be maintained between moral regulation and moral panic because the two concepts denote different types of social practices and conditions. That is, a distinction must be maintained between long-term structural features of moral regulation and the episodic agential features of moral panic. Undoubtedly, there are potential benefits to widening the focus of moral panic analysis, but caution must be exercised so as to not usurp one concept into the other. This caution is particularly important, I argue, because the relation between moral panic and moral regulation is contingent, not necessary. In other words, while we can “expect a proliferation of moral panics as an ordering practice in late modernity” (Hier, 2003: 19), the moral reform of individuals is not a determinate outcome.
Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks on Doing Moral Panic Research

The central concern of the preceding analysis has been with developing an improved conceptual model of moral panic by integrating the meta-theoretical insights of critical realism. Specifically, I sought to demonstrate how critical realism performs the methodological underlabouring necessary to clarify and enhance the ways in which scholars approach and use the concept of moral panic. By means of abstraction, I separately dealt with the three constitutive relations\textsuperscript{11} that are involved in the genesis of moral panic. In each case, I argued that the critical realist conceptualizations of stratification, emergence, causality as well as the TMSA advance our understanding of moral panic both theoretically and empirically. The theoretical advance was made particularly evident in the previous chapter, demonstrating how a realist conceptualization of hegemony resolves the problematic relation between moral regulation and moral panic. Thus, in this chapter I will conclude my analysis by explicating how critical realism also advances the ways in which we study moral panic empirically. In other words, the focus of this chapter is on actually doing moral panic research.

As a meta-theory, critical realism is not a method and can be used in conjunction with a variety of empirical research methods (Sayer, 2000). For the critical realist, “the particular choices [of method] should depend on the nature of object of study and what

\textsuperscript{11} The three relations are between:
- folk devils and claims-makers;
- folk devils, claims-makers and the media;
- the media and the general public.
one wants to learn about it” (Sayer, 2000: 19), which means, “that a particular method cannot be excluded beforehand” (Danermark et. al, 2002: 151). However, for any object of study, particular methods will prove more valuable than others but only after the researcher has performed the initial methodological work. As Sayer argues, “realists reject cookbook prescriptions of method which allow one to imagine that one can do research by simply applying them without having a scholarly knowledge of the object of study in question” (2000: 19). For the social scientist, possessing this knowledge is essential. Unlike the natural scientist who can create an artificial closure in a laboratory, isolating components of their object in a controlled setting, the social scientist operates in an open system with objects of study that are always multifaceted and subject to change (Sayer, 2000). Consequently, the social scientist must rely on careful conceptualizations, modes of abstraction and thought-experiments to consider how the various structures, relations, and practices of the object combine to form its transcendental conditions. That is, only through careful abstraction and conceptualization can the social scientist “expect to return to the concrete, many-sided object and make sense of it” (Ibid).

In addition, the objects of social science involve meaning and thus require an interpretive element. In this way, social science operates in a double hermeneutic. These [hermeneutic] circles imply a two-way movement, a ‘fusing of the horizons’ of listener and speaker, researcher and researched, in which the latter’s actions and texts never speak simply for themselves, and yet are not reducible to the researcher’s interpretation of them either (Ibid).

The point to bear in mind is that “social phenomena are intrinsically meaningful, and hence that meaning is not only externally descriptive of them but constitutive of them (though of course there are usually material constituents too) (Sayer, 2000: 17). The meaningful quality of any social phenomenon is not something that can be measured or
counted but only understood by means of interpretation (Ibid). However, for the critical realist, “to interpret what actors mean we have to relate their discourse to its referents and contexts” (Sayer, 2000: 20). That is, the production of meaning, and the process of communication generally, always take place in “material circumstances and practical contexts” (Sayer, 2000: 18) that possess a non-discursive element. Moreover, it is crucial to remember that, “social reality is only partly text-like. Much of what happens does not depend on or correspond to actors’ understandings; there are unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions and things can happen to people regardless of their understandings” (Sayer, 2000: 20). Therefore, even though social science inevitably involves a hermeneutic element, the objective features of social life cannot be reduced to interpretation or semiotic play.

Yet, the interpretative element of social life does require that social scientists attend to the nuances of agential causal powers when developing their explanations. Given that for critical realism, an agent’s reason(s) for doing x, y or z are causal powers in the production of social phenomena, the social scientist must be attuned to the complex relation between structure and agency. Close attention must be paid to the way agents interpret their objective conditions (always fallible) when determining their practices and projects to formulate any sort of explanation. The social scientist requires some notion of the internal conversation to explore and explain how agents deal with the objective structural constraints and enablements that confront them. As Archer argues,

this final stage of mediation is indispensable because without it we can have no explanatory purchase upon what exactly agents do. Deprived of such explanations, sociology has to settle for empirical generalizations about ‘what most of the people do most of the time’. Indeed, without a real explanatory handle, sociologists often settle for much less: ‘under circumstances x, a statistically significant number of agents do y’. These, of course are not real explanations at all. They are a retreat into Humean ‘constant conjunctions’, from which a causal mechanism linking the two cannot be derived. Methodologically, this means that efficient causation will always be
lacking, whilst ever the subjective powers of agents are excluded from research designs” (Archer, 2003: 133, original italics).

The necessity to include the causal powers of agents in explaining social phenomena is in fact dictated by the necessary conditions for social life to be at all possible; namely, the ability to consciously engage with the material surroundings in order to produce at least a base level of subsistence. To put this even more simply, society is inconceivable without agents to engage in meaningful action.

With the vast array of possible objects of knowledge for social science, its inherent double hermeneutic and endless potential of human agency, our decision as researchers to employ a particular research method must be made with careful precision. Based on the object we have chosen to study, as well as how we have made our abstractions and conceptualizations, there will often be several possible methods available, all possessing some strengths and some weaknesses. Unfortunately, sociological research tends to eschew making such deep, and frequently time consuming decisions, opting instead for a shotgun approach to methodology that employs methods as a result of personal preference rather than the object of study. In fact, the secondary concern paid to the object in question manifests unmistakably in those who uphold the archaic demarcation between qualitative and quantitative methods as if only one or the other is capable of producing scientific knowledge.

However, if we base our choice of method on the nature of the object we wish to study, as critical realism endorses, then the resulting methodological question becomes one of extensive and intensive research designs. As Sayer argues, “superficially, this distinction seems nothing more than a question of scale or ‘depth versus breadth’” (Sayer, 1992: 221) and appears at first glance to uphold the quantitative versus qualitative
dichotomy. While extensive research tends towards using quantitative methods and intensive research tends towards using qualitative methods, it is crucial to recognize that the two types of research design possess fundamental differences. To cite Sayer again, “the two types of design ask different sorts of questions, use different techniques and methods and define their objects and boundaries differently” (Ibid). In this way, the methodology of critical realism is not a blanket endorsement for either quantitative or qualitative methods, nor is it an endorsement of a simple ‘mixed-methods’ approach. Instead, the selection of any particular method depends on the specific qualities of the object under study and the research questions that one wishes to answer about the object. For practical matters, the methodological pluralism found in critical realism means that actual research is best conceived as a continuous and mutually beneficial interaction between extensive and intensive approaches (Danermark, et al. 2002).

To illustrate the differences between extensive and intensive research designs, I will briefly examine the central features of each. On the one hand, in extensive research the emphasis is on “discovering some of the common properties and general patterns of a population as a whole” (Sayer, 1992: 221) largely by using quantitative statistical and numerical modes of analysis. By pre-constructing a representative sample of the population under study, extensive research produces descriptive accounts of “taxonomic groups, that is groups whose members share similar (formal) attributes but which need not actually connect or interact with one another” (Ibid). However, because society is highly heterogeneous even the most rigorous extensive research design will sacrifice explanatory penetration in favour of empirical generalization. Nevertheless, the
descriptive accounts produce by extensive studies can highlight general social patterns, illuminating areas for further intensive research (Sayer, 1992).

On the other hand, intensive research emphasizes, “how some causal process works out in a particular case or a limited number of cases” (Sayer, 1992: 221) largely using qualitative methods such as interviews, participant observation and structural analysis. Contrary to extensive designs, intensive studies focus “mainly (though not exclusively) on groups whose members may be similar or different but which actually relate to each other structurally or causally” (Ibid). As a result, intensive research designs do not need to pre-construct a sample population but can allow the sample to grow as the researcher gains a better understanding of the causal connections involved in their object of study. The findings produced by intensive studies, while lacking a representational generalization, are thus better suited to developing causal explanations of social phenomena than extensive studies. Sayer argues that, “extensive studies are weaker for the purpose of explanation… because the relations they discover are formal, concerning similarity, dissimilarity, correlation and the like, rather than causal, structural and substantial, i.e. relations of connection” (1992: 224). Yet, extensive and intensive research designs should not be viewed as oppositional but as complementary. If social science is to grapple with the complexities of social life, then our accounts must possess at least some level of a descriptive understanding as well as a causal explanation. To reiterate again, the choice to employ a particular method emerges from the object of study and the goals and questions of the researcher, which can be of either a descriptive or explanatory type.
What, then, does the methodological pluralism of critical realism mean for actually doing moral panic research? In looking at existing empirical studies of moral panic, elements of both extensive and intensive research designs have been used in several different ways. Given the central role of the media in instances of moral panic, scholars have focused in an extensive way on statistically analyzing the quantitative shifts in news coverage of a particular story or event (Welch, et al. 2002), as well as on the statistical data gathered by various governmental agencies (e.g. the FBI) and other academic researchers on crime rates (Hall et al., 1978; Ben-Yehuda, 1986; Burns and Crawford, 1999). Similarly, the majority of intensive research into moral panic tends to concentrate on the discursive construction of potential harm inherent to a given folk devil. Emphasizing the way in which media construct discursive formations, analysis of this kind deconstructs and re-contextualizes media messages to reveal the production of meaning as a (if not the) elementary part of moral panic (Hall et al, 1978; Hay, 1995; Critcher, 2002; Hier, 2003). In very rare cases (i.e. Ben-Yehuda, 1986), intensive research designs have also included interviews with police and other governmental officials in an attempt to explain the deeper structural and causal relations that contribute to moral panic. Unfortunately, in even fewer cases (i.e. Hall et al., 1978), are scholars willing to spend the time and effort to integrate components of both extensive and intensive approaches into their analysis. But alas, this is the inevitable result of “a climate where academic work has become more commodified, intensified and managerialized” (Clarke, 2008), and where quantity matters more than quality.

In terms of moral panic, the unwillingness to use both extensive and intensive approaches within a single study proves particularly problematic because of the specific
qualities and relations involved in moral panic as an object of analysis. As I have
demonstrated in the previous four chapters, moral panic, as a social phenomenon,
involves a labyrinthine of determining relations’ existent between folk devils, claims-
makers, the media and the general public. With the various structural conditions and
agential powers that go into producing moral panic, it is unlikely that using only one
method (be it content analysis, discourse analysis or inferential statistical analysis) will
be able to both describe and explain the complexity involved. Instead, a more fruitful
approach to studying moral panic would entail gathering data from a wide array of
sources, making use of statistics on crime, changes to governmental policy or legislation,
as well as media content and discourse analysis.

Most importantly, future analysis of moral panic needs to provide a stronger
account of agency. In Chapter 2, I demonstrated how agency is a key feature in
understanding the internal dynamics of the FD/CM relation. In doing empirical research,
the agency of claims-makers is a taken-for-granted aspect of their constitutive role in
moral panic, in which their causal efficaciousness is inferred through their statements that
appear in the media. Conversely, the agency of folk devils remains an under-theorized,
and therefore an under-researched, element of moral panic. Yet, to conduct research on
the agency of folk devils presents a couple of problems. Unless folk devils move from
primary to corporate agents, their agential powers rarely come to the surface during an
instance of moral panic. As corporate agents, folk devils are capable of forming interest
groups and engaging in media strategies to subvert their characteristic misrepresentation.
That is, the real people behind the phenomenal form become visible, and in that visibility
are able to fight back. Moreover, the visibility of folk devils as corporate agents opens up
the possibility for researchers to conduct interviews with specific individuals, illuminating the structural origins, values and interests which folk devils possess as real people.

However, as primary agents, evidence of the agential powers of folk devils is not always empirically available. Given the possible invisibility of folk devils, access to those people who serve this role may be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. In cases where the researcher cannot gain concrete access to the real people from which the folk devil emerges, a sufficient but necessarily incomplete explanation can be advanced with the stipulation that the agential powers of folk devils remain existent even when they are inactive or being counter-acted (most likely by a structural constraint). Such a stipulation requires recognizing two crucial points. One, social reality is an open system, in which a folk devil may shift from primary to corporate agent and thus, alter the internal dynamics and relative character of moral panic. Two, generative mechanisms (in this case the causal power of agents) exist below the surface and existentially do not directly manifest in the empirical. These two points are in fact given for a critical realist position, and require no further attention.

In addition to the study of folk devils and claims-makers, the need to provide a stronger account of agency also applies to how scholars analyze the general public in cases of moral panic. In fact, I argue that this is the most pressing task for future research and where critical realism makes its greatest contribution. The tendency in analysis of moral panic is to approximate societal concern and anxiety by the rise of media coverage or legislative activity (Ungar, 2001). However, Ungar argues that, “both media coverage and legislative activity involve actors several steps removed from the general public”
(2001: 279) and therefore, cannot provide an adequate measure of societal anxieties.

Further, even though,

public opinion polls would appear to furnish more direct and cogent measures of public concerns, polls typically occur too infrequently to capture the dramatic soar and slump cycles of issues that make it in the air (Ungar, 1994). Moreover, the questions used in polls tend to be too limited to tap into intense outbreaks of concern that verge on or encompass fear” (Ungar, 2001: 279).

If researchers cannot rely on media coverage, legislative activity or public opinion polls, how can they gain access to the concerns and anxieties of the general public? For Ungar (2001), analyzing public talk radio broadcasts, various Internet pages, chat rooms and blogs would provide the closest indications of actual public sentiments and could do so in virtually real time. While gathering data from these sources could only improve our empirical research findings, the analysis of moral panic can be taken further still.

In Chapter 4, I argued that Archer’s conceptualization of the internal conversation provides an innovative approach to conceptualizing the relation between media messages and media audiences. However, I argue that the internal conversation also provides an innovative approach to studying societal levels of anxiety and concern. In fact, the basis for Archer’s conceptualization of the internal conversation emerged from her own exploratory study in which she interviewed 20 people, consisting of both males and females of various ages and occupations. Despite the inevitable difficulties of investigating an individual’s internal conversation, such as those posed by the double hermeneutic and the fallibility of giving inter-personal accounts of intra-personal acts, this type of research is really no different in kind than most social research. As Archer argues, “all research touching upon our ‘attitudes’, ‘beliefs’, ‘outlooks’, or ‘intentions’ taps into syntheses of our mental activities; to explore the ‘internal conversation’ does not entail qualitatively different difficulties” (Archer, 2003: 156). Archer argues that,
the point of the in-depth interviews is not to establish the proportional representativeness of views...but to think about life’s ultimate questions. The point of the interviews, in other words, is to identify inner mechanisms of thought on...what is of most concern to subjects, according to their own definitions” (Archer, 2003: 159).

It is precisely this purpose, to identify what is of most concern to agents under their own definitions, that the internal conversation provides an invaluable research strategy for examining moral panic. Only when scholarly research into moral panic makes a conscious and rigorous decision to seriously consider the impact of a moral panic discourse on agents can the analytical and explanatory value of moral panic be recovered. That is, only when scholars recognize that neither a wholly extensive nor wholly intensive methodology will suffice for causally explaining instances of moral panic can the real analytical reward be achieved.
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