

LIKE THE DEAD & THEIR KILLERS (THEY'RE BORN TO BE STORIES)

by Mina Garay

Before We Start

Trigger Warnings Include;

Mentions of children associated with sexual things (Balenciaga ad).

Mentions of crimes like murder, assault, etc.

Some sources may include graphic images (blood, etc) or discuss heavy topics (murder, assault, etc).

Disclaimers;

Was last written on 17th of June 2023. Articles cited may have been changed because of recent news.

Images sourced at the latest 17th of July 2023.

Originally written as a video essay, but was unable to upload the file (CapCut is free, but unreliable folks). Now it's just a regular essay.

Appendix;

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_yx3a2et7xuT1sf9ykGStewbvLnPs-rFaiYkHA1M3J8/edit?usp=sharing

Essay starts on the next page.

Currently, it's almost impossible not to see some form of media. It has become a part of everyday life, breaking down the door and letting itself in. Whether you like it or not is up to you, but its impact is still prevalent.

For example, advertising— it can be the making or breaking point of a company. It doesn't matter how good your product is, if it's not advertised properly it won't sell. Advertisement is an inescapable part of our society. Hence, it's understandable as to why in 2021, Aotearoa's advertising revenue was \$3.199 billion,¹ equivalent to roughly 3,200 houses of average price in Aotearoa.²

But everyone already knows that advertising shapes our media landscape. And so, then we ask, if advertising shapes our media landscape, what shapes the population— what shapes *us*?

If not *all* media, then the news.

News is one of the most accessible types of media. Sure, you have to pay for things like *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*, but *stuff.co.nz* is free. Nowadays, the news isn't even restricted to where you live. Think of all the uproar throughout the world when police brutality was exposed in the U.S, the sympathy expressed across platforms when mass shootings happened, and the horror those all over the globe can experience when finding out that despite all the awareness being spread, SHEIN workers are still severely underpaid.

The news is accessible, and by consequence, so is all the knowledge of crime going on.

If the news is impactful to us, then shouldn't we question the amount of crime they report? Is the crime they report unnecessary? Is it harmful to us? Has it exceeded its original purpose? I answer all of those questions with a simple 'yes.'

A Sculptor's Tool Named Literature (a Painter's Tool Named Films)

Why is media so important in the first place? Why do people advocate for representation in film and TV? Why does literature get banned from countries? The answer is simple— because the media shapes who we are.

From an early age, it's quite obvious we know nothing. While it may seem like we know everything, we do not. Babies don't know about taxes, and toddlers don't know about the

¹ [NZ Advertising Turnover Report](#)

² [What Is The Average House Price In New Zealand? \(2023\) | Opes Partners](#)

concept of death and finality. This knowledge isn't embedded into our DNA, we instead learn about it.

It's kind of like cultivation theory, where people internalise any beliefs from the media they consume after a long period of time. We're constantly surrounded by the media, and so, we're constantly surrounded by the messages it wants to tell us.

For example, I don't remember the first time I learned about the whole complicated world of ethics, all I remember is it probably came from something I read. Yes, Klaus Baudelaire was a good person, but if he was a good person then why would he break out of prison? If you read the books, you'd know it was because he and his siblings were falsely accused of murder. People are complicated and we cannot wholly be good. As said by the Hook Handed Man in *The Grim Grotto* by Lemony Snicket, "*People aren't either wicked or noble. They're like chef's salads, with good things and bad things chopped and mixed together in a vinaigrette of confusion and conflict.*" That was probably the first idea I got of being morally grey. While the world may present itself as black and white, it isn't. I had only really learned that idea from a series of children's books.

Media is the first tool given to us to sculpt out the world.

Spot the Difference (They're the Same Picture)

If the media is *that* impactful, then that brings up the question of what media is presenting to us. Again, we go back to advertisements and the news.

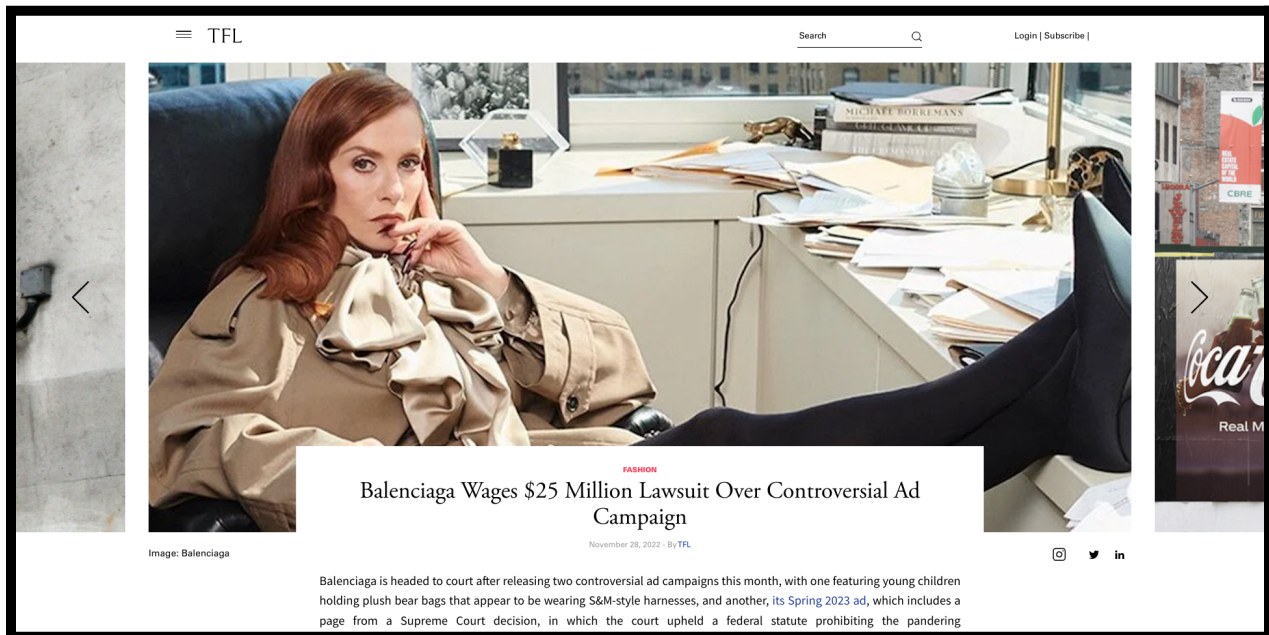
Advertising influencing us is quite obvious. We vote with our dollar, so it only makes sense that companies need to influence our wallets. We know this already— think of all the sponsored segments you see on YouTube videos —, but the influence from the news is a bit less obvious, yet quite similar to advertising. But we'll get back to that later.

Advertising's main purpose is to get us to buy something. How else would we know our favourite brands made new seasonal flavours? Or how would we know fast food companies would be bringing back an old item for a limited time only? Advertising is very prevalent in our society, it rears its head around every corner. Posters, ads on websites, billboards, sponsorship segments, social media accounts, etc. It's very much in your face.

Not only does advertising get us to buy something, but it also changes the way we think. When we're exposed to many ideas, ways of life, etc from ads, we start to associate the product we're advertised to (assumedly sell) something positive. In the late 1880s, there was a huge demand for tobacco products which made the Duke Company advertise the cigarettes like this (described in an article from Duke University on tobacco advertising), "*With each pack of cigarettes, a small*

cardboard insert was added to stiffen the box. (...) a picture that was part of a larger series and which was meant to be collected. Series of birds, flags, Civil War generals, and baseball players were employed, frequently with historical or educational information on them. Photographs of "actresses" - women placed in a variety of poses and often rather revealing costumes for the time - also were used on the insert cards and exceeded all expectations in their popularity among the public."³ Suddenly, smoking was not just something that eased you through your day, but something classy, alluring, and on occasion patriotic...? Of course, lung cancer and addiction is not classy nor alluring, and I suppose it can be patriotic though I can't imagine why you would want it to be. These advertisements not only sold tobacco, but sold false ideas of tobacco, hiding it behind pretty images so people wouldn't question the later consequences of an early grave.

Think as well, of *that* Balenciaga ad, and all the controversy they got into. Suffice it to say, pushing the idea that children are okay with being sexualised or being associated with sexual things is an atrocious thing to promote, even if it wasn't the original intent.⁴



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Advertising influences us as consumers, and also influences actual companies. With ads we can be swayed to buy that new sweater, and with ads we can see how a company tackles its politics. Not only do we buy things, but we can also force companies to question their ethics. Advertising affects almost everyone, and so the way advertisements are used is vital.

³ [EAA: Tobacco Advertising Category Information](#)

⁴ [Balenciaga Lawsuit Document \(PDF form\)](#) & [Balenciaga Wages \\$25 Million Lawsuit Over Controversial Ad Campaign](#) - Links about the Balenciaga ad if you'd like to know more

⁵ Article if you'd like to know more. Didn't want to spread the images of the ads further. Taken 17th of July 2023.

All of this is also not mentioning all the advertisements in history (or even now) with sexist, fatphobic, ableist, racist, etc undertones that enforce harmful ideas that we're still trying to undo. Even then, they still get coverage for their controversial messages, trending on social media and getting free word of mouth. Any attention is good attention.

In advertising, we're not just convinced to buy a new drink— we're also convinced that something about that drink is part of a bigger picture. We're sold an idea.

As for the news, it's one of our most key sources of information. Thinking back to 2020 when COVID first arose, the news was quick to publish articles on any sort of information it could. Often this led to misinformation about things like vaccine development, government protocols, and who to blame for the virus. The effects of this misinformation is quite obvious, from false conceptions of the severity of COVID, xenophobia, and anti-vaxxers being given more reasons to stand with their beliefs. According to an article published by *The Harvard Gazette* in 2023, “...*uncertainty and evolution in scientific inquiry can come across to nonscientists as inaccuracy and unreliability, leaving a dangerous void that disinformation and misinformation will fill. During the pandemic, critics accused public health officials of misleading the public when new evidence about the novel coronavirus triggered revised protocols for prevention and treatment.*”⁶ The misinformation was pushed further, and when people told them they were wrong, they were simply pushed to the side to sell the story that the government couldn't be trusted because they had a hidden agenda. We knew next to *nothing* during COVID, we just had to grasp at whatever straws we could. If we didn't know what was going on, then how could we protect ourselves from any threats? We sought out any information we could because we didn't want to be oblivious. And this need for information just led to vulnerability in being deceived.

But why couldn't these journalists and news companies, especially those on social media, just actually research what was going on with COVID? Because otherwise, they wouldn't make as much money. To quote American author Peter McWilliams, “*The news media are, for the most part, the bringers of bad news... and it's not entirely the media's fault, bad news gets higher ratings and sells more papers than good news.*”

Misinformation simply makes more money, and so it encourages people to share and to publish.

Even ignoring all the negative attention conspiracy theorists get on social media platforms, they still garner an audience. Imagine yourself completely clueless on something, no idea what's happening or where to even start because that information isn't accessible. But then, someone from the internet or an article published on the second page of Google promises you the answer—the one that others won't tell you. That knowledge isn't like anything you've heard before, it's

⁶ [Why did so many buy COVID misinformation? It works like magic.](#)

something hidden, and you feel awakened. That is the trap these people fall into, they feel special or above others, supposedly knowing things others won't know, having 'broken out of the Matrix.' And we all know that COVID deniers, anti-vaxxers, etc are not only harming themselves, but all the easily influenced people out there too.

As Joan Donovan, someone studying disinformation campaigns at Harvard University's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, said in reference to Donald Trump's misleading statements on COVID, "*Sharing misinformation only makes things worse, whether it's from a politician or anyone else.*"⁷

News is presented as this factual, unbiased piece of media, but it's not really. Rather than have us vote with our dollar, it almost votes for us— gives us information with varying reliability to sway our decisions.

I ask you, what's the difference between advertisers and newsagents? Advertisers don't hide that they want to make money off of you.

Advertisers will sell you a product and an idea. The news will sell you *a story* and an idea. At the end of the day, they'll be selling you something.

Look in the Mirror

To draw back to the idea of the news being factual and unbiased, the news almost tries to present itself as a reflection of our world, but is that *really* true? The news is already biased to one thing, and that's whatever sells, so then is the mirror already broken before it reflects? Are we being fed a false perception of our world?

An *NZ Herald* article written by sociologist Peter Davis posed this question, "*One area of particular media focus has been violent crime, particularly murders and the use of firearms. There is not only the matter of human interest but also personal safety. Is New Zealand really becoming a more dangerous place?*"⁸ Always a good thing to question the news and what it's telling us. In the article, he found that the number of children before courts had actually declined⁹ ¹⁰ despite what the news said. How peculiar. Another article, this time published on *TeAra* stated that despite a 2006 study finding fears about public safety rising, crime rates decreased and

⁷ [Who is spreading COVID-19 misinformation and why](#)

⁸ [Crime and media – perception and reality – Peter Davis NZ](#)

⁹ [Crime and media – perception and reality – Peter Davis NZ](#)

¹⁰ [Despite ram-raid rhetoric, youth crime is dropping year on year - NZ Herald](#) - Article Peter Davis sourced

police resolved more crimes and more quickly.^{11 12} Odd that the news would paint falsified or exaggerated pictures of our communities. I could never imagine the news wanting to present a story in a different light to serve a monetary purpose.

But why would they not reflect what's actually happening in our world? After all, it's factual and unbiased, right? An article published by Alice Courtauld in *Shoutout UK* gave an explanation, stating that because people only discuss and think about crimes they're told about, it causes people's perceptions of crime in society being influenced by what the media want them to know. And so, the media severely influences what people think about crime, whether or not it's true.¹³ While people in the news do try to be unbiased, often they aren't. They don't necessarily always have an agenda, however they're still leaning towards one side, influencing people's opinions and perceptions. Even if, by some magic, they aren't, there's still the problem of having to find stories noteworthy enough to pay the bills. Often, the crime stories are more entertaining, and so honing in on crime, furthering these false perceptions.

The news tells real things that happen... usually, but that won't necessarily mean they'll tell these real things accurately. They will change, stretch, crop, or whatever to suit a story. A *1 news* article details things about the increase of cocaine in the country, but doesn't report much on who's affected, why, and what we can do to fix it. It simply tells us we've seen a lot of heavy cocaine busts in Aotearoa.¹⁴ It's still a fairly recent article, but they don't tell us the whole picture.

¹¹ [Carl Walrond, 'Crime and the media'. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#). - Note that the statistic was not sourced in a footnote, but in an appendix (go to footnote 11)

¹² *Mayhew, Patricia. The New Zealand crime & safety survey, 2006: summary of key findings. Wellington: Ministry of Justice, 2007* - Source of statistics in the article.

¹³ [How the Media Controls Our Perceptions of Crime - Shoutout UK](#)


¹⁴ [Exclusive: New data shows cocaine seizures on the rise](#)

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NEW ZEALAND | 1NEWS

Exclusive: New data shows cocaine seizures on the rise

By Yvonne Tahana, 1News Reporter | Thu, Jun 15



Exclusive: New data reveals cocaine seizures on the rise 4:03

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And now we reach one of the main questions of this essay— about time, right? —does the news media focus too much on crime reporting? Because if so, that image of rising crime in Aotearoa can only lead to distortion.

Ripples/Ricochet

With the portrayal of this crime, tragedy, etc, we ask ourselves, how does it affect us? Many articles on crimes can lead to many things, but namely, unnecessary panic, harmful stereotypes, and desensitisation.

It's no surprise that people feel threatened by crime stories. I doubt anyone would want to get murdered, and so reading these articles lets them know of any dangers and what to look out for. However, if the news is continuously sensationalising all these stories, then they portray a false image of increased crime, making people more scared or panicked than they should be. A *Pew Research* survey found that “*Despite double-digit percentage decreases in U.S. violent and property crime rates since 2008, most voters say crime has gotten worse during that span...*”¹⁶. To grab another statistic from the same *TeAra* article again, “*Aside from driving offences, around half of offences reported to police are property crimes (such as theft, burglary and white-collar*

¹⁵ Taken 5th of July 2023.

¹⁶[Voters' perceptions of crime continue to conflict with reality | Pew Research Center](#)

*crime). The media underreports (sic) these, and focuses on the 18% of crime that is violent.”*¹⁷ While it's true that crime is happening, the news media makes it exaggerated and often unreliable. The belief that crime is more rampant than it actually is only drives fear and unneeded caution into our lives. It's not sensible.

The reporting of crime's main purpose is to warn others of any dangers arising (even if at the moment it's being sensationalised and inducing unnecessary panic). The excess of crime in the media makes people feel more endangered than they actually are. But what happens when those dangers happen to paint certain minorities in unflattering lights?

Often minority groups are portrayed as more criminal or dangerous than others, leading to racial profiling and further stereotypical identification. We can easily look at America and their police brutality situations, sympathise and be grateful we're not unconsciously racist like that, but we'd be lying. After all, why is it that so many Māori & Pasifika people are portrayed as criminals in news articles? According to an article from *Te Koa Koa*, ethnic tagging in news stories was most common in crime stories (38% of all news tags), and Pasifika people in 84% of these crime tags, followed by Māori people at 13%, with many of these articles having Pasifika & Māori people as the ones committing the crimes.¹⁸ The news pushes an idea, even if you're not aware of it. Even if, hypothetically for argument's sake, more people of colour *were* committing more crimes, it doesn't justify any of the malefic assumptions people put onto them. To quote Dr Liam Martin, a criminologist at Victoria University, “*Māori had been marginalised in New Zealand society over many generations, and the most marginalised and vulnerable in society were always at the greatest risk to become victims of crime.*”¹⁹ When the news media pushes these ideas, it also pushes excuses for racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. Hateful people do not need the mic— their victims do.

And finally, what I think is the worst effect from over reporting of crime, the desensitisation of it all.

To Drown

News is meant to warn us, but like most things, if we get used to it, it's not abnormal anymore.

The sheer number of stories about allegations, court rulings, robberies, and so much more overflows and takes over the headlines. We see it so often it's almost expected. Like I've stated many times already in this essay, crime sells— it's the main product of the news media and its

¹⁷ [Carl Walrond, 'Crime and the media', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#), - Note that the statistic was not sourced (or at least I could not find their source)

¹⁸ [Allen, J. M., & Bruce, T. \(2017\). Constructing the Other: News media representations of a predominantly 'brown' community in New Zealand. Pacific Journalism Review : Te Koako, 23\(1\), 225-244.](#)

¹⁹ [New Zealand survey suggests real crime figures could be seven times official tally](#)

tags take up over a third of news stories.²⁰ With all of these stories of murder upon burglaries upon assault upon endless other articles, it's so hard to know what to pay attention to. You simply don't have the time to sympathise with every victim and every dead person.

Everything is so loud, we don't know what to pay attention to. Everywhere is bad— everywhere is crime ridden. If we just ignore it, if we just disregard it as a part of everyday life, then it's not so dangerous anymore. It's not something we'll fear. ...It's just another story.

Yes, every article on felonies, or trespasses, or whatever, causes an uproar of panic, but like most things crime is a spectrum, with a range of perspectives. There are those who look at this rise of crime and scream, and there are those who shrug. What could they do anyways? Best to move on and not give it a second thought. It's easier to pass it by. It becomes normal even when it shouldn't be.

This very concept is seen in cultivation theory, but we get a specific example this time. The overreporting of these crimes gets us used to it, we become less attuned to all the tragedy and violence attached to it. It's just the norm now.

What is the use of reporting a crime when the victim is reduced to just a name? It's so easy to read the headline of a '*Joanne Betsy, Dead at 23*' article and skim through the details. The *NZ Herald* doesn't even tell you who was physically assaulted in this article shown on the right, mainly focussing on the McDonald's employees and not the victim's family.²¹ The victims aren't prominent in this, they aren't even given names.

Calls for security guard outside North Shore McDonald's after more parents tell of attacks and abuse near fast-food restaurant



By [Kirsty Wynn](#)

15 Jun, 2023 02:59 PM © 3 mins to read

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An arrest has been made after a 12-year-old girl was beaten on the steps outside a McDonald's restaurant in Glenfield on Auckland's North Shore. Photo / Supplied

²⁰ [Allen, J. M., & Bruce, T. \(2017\). Constructing the Other: News media representations of a predominantly 'brown' community in New Zealand. *Pacific Journalism Review : Te Koako*, 23\(1\), 225-244.](#)

²¹ [Calls for security guard outside North Shore McDonald's after more parents tell of attacks and abuse near fast-food restaurant - NZ Herald](#)

McDonald's spokesman Simon Kenny said the franchise owner of the Glenfield McDonald's was in regular contact with local schools and police to "try and help manage antisocial behaviour from young people in the area.

"Senior restaurant management are present during peak times, and in the lobby addressing any issues and moving people on once they've finished their meals."

Kenny said some customers had been given trespass orders.

"This is often managed in conjunction with schools," he said.

McDonald's restaurants nationwide were fitted with CCTV and footage was provided to police to assist with investigations, he said.

"Some restaurants employ external security for certain periods of the week, and we continue to assess at local and national level what more we can do."

Kenny said McDonald's, like many retail businesses, was seeing societal issues play out in its restaurants.

"The safety of customers and staff is a priority, and restaurants constantly look at what is going on in the local communities in which they operate," he said.

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Crime is normal nowadays. It doesn't mean it's not terrifying, it just means we've become desensitised to it. They're numbers and letters, nothing else. It drowns you.

All this stuff about assaults, murders— it's hard to escape. It's like the news is everywhere.

It's Headline Central Somewhere

News today isn't just restricted to articles or prints, it's wherever you look. From Instagram posts to TikTok videos, you will hear about something somewhere. What's happening in our world now isn't kept in a single industry; anyone can be a reporter with an app and a good story.

Currently, it's much, *much* easier to spread any type of news you want. There's the rise of fake news, misinformation/disinformation, AI created media, and all other kinds of wonderful things out there. Social media is kind of its own news source, which makes everything a whole lot worse. Misinformation is more easily spread on social media sites like TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook. A *Pew Research Centre* survey found half of US young adults (18-29 year olds) had some or a lot of trust in information from social media.²³ Once again, *Pew Research Centre* had another survey in 2021 that found about a third of US adults got their news from Facebook, followed by YouTube at a fifth and Instagram and Twitter with just over a tenth.²⁴ Plus, the

²² Both images taken 5th of July 2023. Image linked is an excerpt from the article.

²³[US adults trusting news from social media at record level | World Economic Forum](#)

²⁴[News Consumption Across Social Media in 2021 | Pew Research Center](#)

ability to share news so easily on these sites spreads the fire that is fake news.^{25 26} These people may use news sites too, sure, but social media is just so much easier because well, everything's already there, right? Why click away from that endless scroll? Social media not only makes it easier for people to spread misinformation, but also it's just easier to stay and get everything from the same site.

All of this is also quite recent (well, I hardly think they were using Twitter in the 1800s unless they were messenger birds of some sort, but still), and as TikTok especially becomes more popular, it gets incredibly concerning how people can be easily deceived. Most people don't really develop media literacy, and even if they do, as people realise the trickery behind fake news, fake news will only become a lot more hidden. You don't report a cheat because the only thing they learn is to hide better. Roughly half of Kiwis have fallen for fake news,²⁷ and about a third are unsure if they even have.²⁸ This insecurity is worrying— how good are we getting at *lying* to each other? Can we even tell at this point? I mean, even political parties are using this kind of thing to get ahead. National's used AI generated images for their campaigns, depicting increases of crime in Aotearoa.²⁹ If they do it, why shouldn't we? News is easy to make, and just as easy to spread. I mean, isn't this essay too, some sort of news? It's a bit meta, but it's still news.

The worst thing about this? Anyone reporting news, whether it be people on social media or professional journalists, don't even need to make the news accurate— they just need it to be entertaining enough.

The way social media works isn't through publishing something and hoping people read it, rather it uses an algorithm. It'll notice you like a conspiracy theory and keep pushing it if it keeps you on the platform. Unlike news, the algorithm doesn't sell stories— it sells your attention. Many social media sites have histories of this, especially Facebook and YouTube, with Facebook being the biggest culprit in pushing alt-right ideas. The pushing of these ideas promotes alt-right people, giving them more attention, and in effect, the company giving them a platform.³⁰ Like how news media pushes crime stories for money, social media does the same with conspiracies and intense political ideals. Facebook continually has its far-right accounts pushed more, getting more engagement than other accounts.³¹ According to *Medium*, Facebook far-right accounts had 426 interactions per thousand followers weekly vs 259 interactions per thousand followers

²⁵ [Social media as a news source - Wikipedia](#) - Source was Footnote 52, but you need to pay for it. I've linked it anyways, but just so you know where the information is from. Wikipedia gives a brief summary, and I'm not paying them \$15 to read the study. Refer to footnote 20 for their source.

²⁶ [Says Who? The Effects of Presentation Format and Source Rating on Fake News in Social Media](#)

²⁷ [NetSafe Fake News Survey Results \(PDF\)](#)

²⁸ [Half Of NZ Has At Least One Misinformed Belief – Expert Reaction | Scoop News](#)

²⁹ [National using AI for attack ads: The AI political campaign has arrived | Stuff.co.nz](#)

³⁰ [Far-Right Misinformation Is Thriving On Facebook. A New Study Shows Just How Much](#)

³¹ [Far-Right Misinformation Is Thriving On Facebook. A New Study Shows Just How Much](#)

weekly for non-misinformation accounts.³² As David Leur wrote, “*The only thing Facebook truly understands is money, and all of their money comes from engagement. If we disengage, they lose money.*”³³ They’re all just in it for the money, there is no ‘truth’ to be shared (if there ever was one in the first place).

With more traditional news forms like news channels or articles, some sense of truth and reliability is there. With news from social media? The only thing that really matters is how viral it gets, how many eyes are on this topic. Unfortunately (but not surprisingly) the best way to attract attention is with hate. To quote an article from the University of South California, “...*misinformation spreads because users lack the critical thinking skills necessary for discerning truth from falsehood or because their strong political beliefs skew their judgement.*”³⁴ They’re blinded by being ‘right’, they don’t even focus on if their information is correct or reliable. Misinformation is the ember of conflict. Political group versus political group, “why do men always do that?” and “why do women keep doing x?”, the things authorities don’t want you to know– us against *them*. You find a story that can brew enough tension between people, and well, if it’s not *exactly* the truth, who’s gonna notice? The money certainly won’t.

Social media makes it even easier for news to spread. Everywhere is news, which also means everywhere has news about crimes. Everything is a story if you want to sell it.

To Play Devil’s Advocate

Of course, like any complex topic, there’s another side to the argument.

For example, there are still honest, reliable journalists, aren’t there? It’s not *all* sensationalised. I mean, looking at media bias charts, a lot of news sources seem to be reliable.³⁵ However, the reality is, we are biased. It’s our nature. That’s not inherently a bad thing, and it doesn’t take away our reliability either, it just means we need to be aware of our biases. We can be objective and still be leaning one way or another. To quote *PressBooks*, “...*journalists may believe that their reporting is written with “fairness and balance” but most times there is an underlying bias based around what news provider the story is being written for (Pavlik and McIntosh, 61).*”³⁶ Even then, news companies are often owned by someone else that’s able to control what stories get published. *The Washington Post* is owned by Jeffery Bezos,³⁷ and *NZ Herald* is owned by a company with a huge amount of others, including advice sites on purchasing houses and cars.³⁸

³² [Far-right news sources on Facebook more engaging | by Cybersecurity for Democracy](#) - NPR also cited this in their article.

³³ [Facebook’s ethical failures are not accidental: they are part of the business model - PMC](#)

³⁴ [USC study reveals the key reason why fake news spreads on social media](#)

³⁵ [AllSides Media Bias Chart](#)

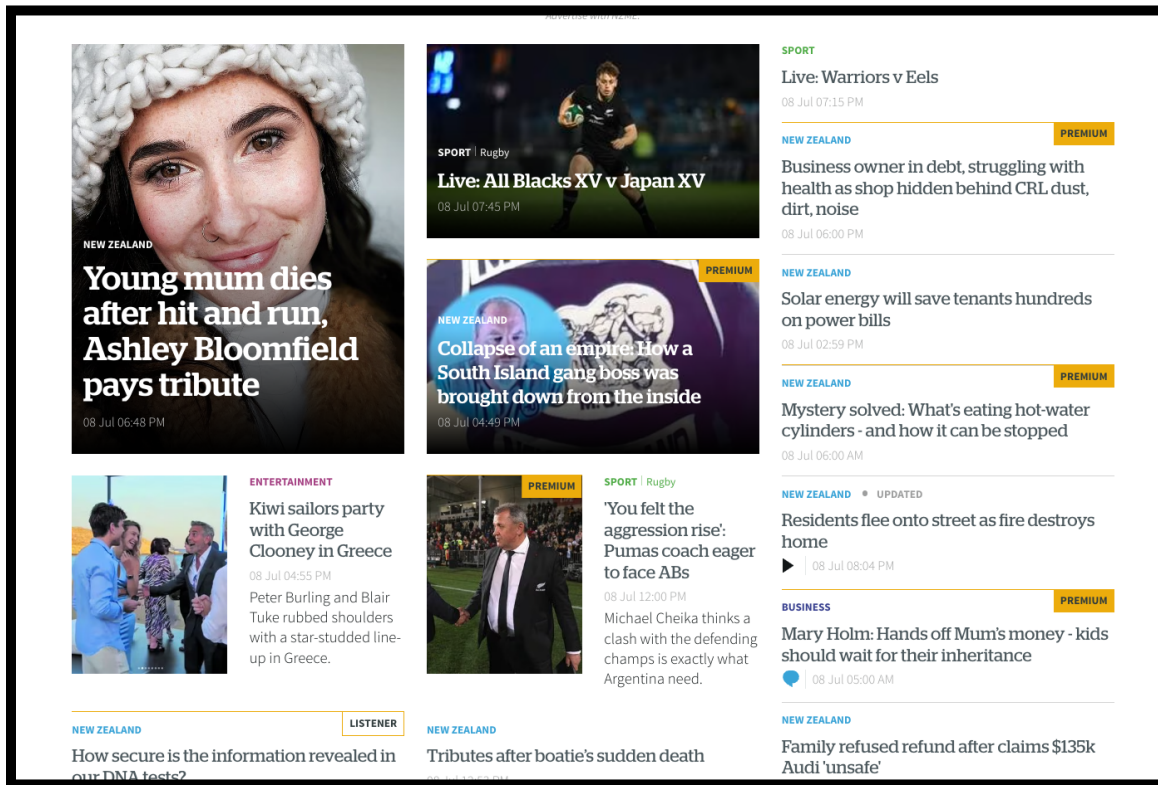
³⁶ [Media Bias – Introduction to Media Studies](#)

³⁷ [These 15 Billionaires Own America's Media Companies - Forbes](#)

³⁸ [NZME. - Advertise with New Zealand's Leading Media Brands](#)

There's always some sort of agenda or someone behind the scenes. We like to imagine it's not biased, but often news will portray a warped lens. People try to write as objectively as possible, but because we each see the world differently, we can't always reflect reality.

Maybe crime isn't really reported as much as I claim it is. This could be a dependent thing, of course. Algorithms naturally adapt to your behaviours and patterns, so if you don't frequently engage with crime stories then they won't get pushed. You might not actually *see* the crime articles, but they can still be there. I've attached some screenshots of various homepages of Aotearoa news sites so that you're able to gauge a more accurate picture (footnotes are in order of appearance).³⁹⁴⁰ ⁴¹ ⁴² ⁴³ ⁴⁴ Again, keep in mind these homepages are adapted to what I frequent and what I see.



³⁹ All taken 8th of July 2023

⁴⁰ [Latest and Breaking News - NZ Herald](#)

⁴¹ [Stuff.co.nz](#)

⁴² [Newsroom NZ](#)

⁴³ [RNZ](#)

⁴⁴ [1 News](#)

to why Christina Leon is kept awake until the early hours with uncontrollable shock-like sensations.

family fled their home when a fire rapidly took hold.



fifa womens world cup 2023
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national

Man in stable condition after becoming stuck in machinery

The man had been freed from the machinery before firefighters arrived on the scene in Auckland.

crime

Brazen thieves target Christchurch street



league

Live: Warriors lead the Eels

Three tries in rapid succession from the visitors have them looking sweet as they look to bolster their NRL top-eight standings in Sydney.

7:10pm Stuff sports reporters



wellbeing

The late night 'bizarre' experience of restless leg syndrome

There seems to be no discernable pattern as to why Christina Leon is kept awake until the early hours with



auckland

'Get out, get out': Children heard screaming as fire destroyed home

A neighbour has described hearing screams as an Auckland family fled their home when a fire rapidly took hold.

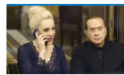


rugby

Live: All Blacks XV vs Japan XV

Stephen Perofeta has the only try after 25 minutes as a team including a sprinkling of players unwanted by Ian Foster look to prove a point.

59m ago Stuff sports reporters



europa

Silvio Berlusconi's will leaves \$176m to his last girlfriend



fifa womens world cup 2023
Nigeria threaten FIFA Women's World Cup

latest headlines



Hipkins ditches novice diplomat hat

The PM looks more comfortable than ever threading the complexities of both the US and China into NZ's worldview

Jo Moir

14 HOURS AGO

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14 HOURS AGO



Greens plot path back to power
JUL 07 2023



Kiwi ref poised for third World Cup
14 HOURS AGO



'Gut-wrenching': Gisborne couple remaining positive despite losing home

A Gisborne couple are preparing to move out of their home of decades, after it was labelled Category 3.

[New Zealand / Natural Disasters](#) 19 minutes ago

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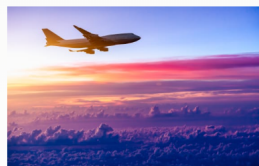
New Zealand prepares to embrace NATO

[New Zealand](#)



Deputy Prime Minister receives traditional Samoan tatau

Carmel Sepuloni has taken part in one of Samoa's oldest traditions, considered a rite



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A majority of the government organisations working to become carbon



'This is it' - Shaw, Greens throw down gauntlet on climate change

Green Party co-leader James Shaw has survived this year's co-leadership vote at


NEW ZEALAND
'Gut-wrenching': Gisborne couple lose home to Category 3
11:35am

FOOTBALL
Football Ferns prepare for one last hit-out before World Cup
42 mins ago

WORLD
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22 mins ago

POLITICS
Davidson, Shaw to stay on as Green Party co-leaders
4:54pm

NEW ZEALAND
Too scared to shop: Rotorua residents want walkway closed
3:50pm



NEW ZEALAND
Calls for more recognition for Mururoa nuclear peace mission survivors

In 1973, after France ignored an international court ruling to end nuclear testing in French Polynesia, two frigates were dispatched by then-Prime Minister Norman Kirk.
7:13pm


WORLD
China sends warships, fighter jets near Taiwan
7:20pm

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UN agency to present report on Fukushima wastewater dump to NZ
6:39pm

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5:05pm


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Full steam ahead for historic Northland train
7:40pm

NEW ZEALAND
Lydia Ko bounces back at US Open after tough opening day
5:27pm

US
mum admits giving daughter abortion pills, helping bury fetus
4:40pm

Girl, 8, clinging to life after deadly London school crash
3:18pm

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Shane van Gisbergen finishes fourth in return to Supercars

Will Brown launched himself to the top of the Supercars championship standings at the expense of teammate

Aus man dies after being run over by own bus

The 28-year-old had stopped and hopped out of the vehicle, when it rolled forward and struck him.
6:14pm

Except, articles not being pushed or published still isn't one of the main issues. It's desensitisation and exploitation. Does the decrease of crime stories wash away any previous or current discriminatory behaviour towards minority groups? Does the decrease of crime stories take away the milking of victim stories? Does the decrease of crime stories remove the incentive to make money off of these articles? No, it doesn't. Just because we don't see it happening doesn't mean it's not there, and even then, the larger issues of crime falling under the radar and victims becoming articles would still be present.

Then again, if crime is constantly reported and increases caution, wouldn't that reflect in lowered crime statistics? People take greater care in avoiding being involved in crime because of the news articles, and so the crime decreases. That's wonderful, spectacular even. The over-reporting of crime just tells people to be more cautious and in turn, decreases the chance of any danger. Sounds like a win-win scenario to me.

However, the main issue in thinking this way is it doesn't acknowledge the other problems with crime reporting. Unnecessary fear isn't really the focal or even core problem (I mean, why else does desensitisation get its own section?), it's the discriminatory behaviour and, like always, desensitisation. People being wary of crime doesn't exactly take away any racial or other types of undertones. Yes, you can be suspicious of people, but if all the people you find suspicious are Māori or Pasifika, then at what point does the caution become racism? That extra care in keeping yourself safe sometimes instils unconscious discrimination.

Plus, this doesn't take away any normalisation of seeing crimes. We see again with cultivation theory that repeated presentation of crimes and violence makes us become more used to it. We may be more cautious, but then we start *expecting* crime. It's part of our everyday routine when it shouldn't be.

So We Rise (So We Better Ourselves)

What can we do about this? Or maybe, better question, what should we be doing about this *now*? While we aren't *NZ Herald* or *stuff.co.nz*, nevertheless, we can do something.

It's not necessarily a bad thing to lean towards one side, it's just pretending you aren't biased when issues pop up. You can't help having preferences, and that's okay. As a *Link Newspaper* article said, "...each journalist has a set of experiences and viewpoints that affect their work. *Journalists are people first.*"⁴⁵ We need to be aware that people are biased, and try to look past that— seek out what's really happening.

Researching companies and who they work for is a good thing to do, even if a bit tedious. Doing that extra step, seeing if there are any hidden agendas can open our eyes to why certain stories are being told and others aren't. Biases are something we regularly experience, but pretending the bias is the truth is when we should become suspicious of a source. Journalism is a job, and people want to get paid. Knowing that lets us think a bit more critically.

Finally, we can all stand to hear more than just our own view. It's nice to be affirmed in our opinion, but echo chambers lead down similar rabbit holes conspiracy theorists fall under. If we can't hear each other out, then how can we be united? We become divided without listening to one another and thinking about the other side. Seek out articles not *just* about ram raid incidents,

⁴⁵ [Being honest about our biases makes for better journalism | Opinions – The Link](#)

but also why it's often youth who go to commit crimes. And hey, why not just see how the flat earthers are doing too?

We need to be more aware of the news media we consume, because otherwise, it could start to turn from information into a spectacle.

The Aotearoa Post

As we reach our conclusion, we draw back to the answers to the main two questions— does the news media focus too much on crime reporting? And, whatever that answer is, is that good or bad for Aotearoa?

I believe that yes, it does and this is bad for Aotearoa.

Like advertising, and really any type of media, news plays a bigger part in influencing us than we'd like to believe. News presents itself as an unbiased, factual bit of media, and while it *should* be, the unfortunate truth is that it's not. Emotive language runs rampant in a lot of articles, cutting out other perspectives is seen a lot, and fake experts are used commonly. They do all this to get you to share, spread the word, and anything else that can make them money. This isn't to say all news is unreliable, but rather it's easy to miss the cracks in a story.

To draw a quote from an article from *Te Koa Koa*, “...*those who control the media control a society's discourses about itself.*”⁴⁶ We like to think there are honest journalists, but everyone is biased in some way. The news is supposed to be an objective reflection, but it's really a funhouse mirror.

And when the news does that, it can push harmful ideals. How many news articles are there of raids, framing the young children? How many news articles are there of increased crime in bad neighbourhoods? How many news articles are there of statistics of black on black crime? These articles may seem like they portray the truth that you don't want to see, but really, their motive is to instil more excuses for hating minority groups.

Even if we can distinguish these crime stories from the 'regular' ones, it's not enough.

The overflow of various different pieces of crime news from not only traditional news sources, but also from social media surrounds us. The burden of infinite amounts of knowledge piles on us so heavily that we can't discern real news from fake news— news that informs us about things and news that wants to influence us to do something. We drown in the mass number of crimes that we can't find sympathy within us to give it a second thought.

⁴⁶ [Allen, J. M., & Bruce, T. \(2017\). Constructing the Other: News media representations of a predominantly 'brown' community in New Zealand. *Pacific Journalism Review : Te Koakoa*, 23\(1\), 225-244.](#)

It may increase our caution and safety, but is it worth the cost of turning people into their salaries, furthering discriminatory stereotypes, and turning a blind eye to the violence we see?

Crime news *should* warn us about potential threats and bring justice to those affected by the crimes. Instead its overflow of reports portray a false image of what our society is really like, desensitises us to these stories and their victims, and reduces people to stories to sell.

Will we have another George Floyd? Will we have another Rodney King? Will we have another Fan Man-ye (樊敏儀)? The answer is that we already have, it's just that their stories were only that— a story. Articles to be sold; another statistic. Every tragedy was another dollar in their pockets. It was not honest— it was not what it needed to be.

Reporting crime is important, but it has lost its purpose. Every tragedy is only a tragedy for a moment. You glance, feel sad, maybe share, and then move on. There is no depth.

As Ann Ballin said, *“Victims become the meat of stories and frequently are used not only for news, but entertainment value. In this way they are exploited unmercifully. In my judgement a person who is a victim should not be subject to media attention unless that is what they want.”*⁴⁷

Victims turn into an easy pay cheque. They aren't given the proper respect.

We need to be better when we read and consume news media. We should acknowledge that while the article presented to us may seem like fact, there could be underlying biases hidden underneath. Looking into where the news comes from is key too, as it lets us know if anyone's pulling the strings. Seeking out different perspectives is crucial so we don't get stuck in an echo-chamber. Taking the time to be a little bit more aware of our surroundings is part of the first step in bettering our world.

It's less that the news shouldn't report as much crime, but rather because they already have done so much of it, it's hollow to us all. These stories are temporary fuel to the fire, and eventually, if this cycle of news keeps up, so will our sympathy be temporary too. It's just a question of when the crime stops selling.

And, when it finally does, is it because we chose for it to, or because it wasn't interesting to us anymore?

⁴⁷ [Carl Walrond, 'Crime and the media', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand.](#)

Credits

Essay Reviewers - Ms Neal, Ms Grey, Ash Millward, Grace Shepherd, Tully Steven, and Kimberly Callixto

Writing - Mina Garay (me :D)

Sources/Appendix -

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_yx3a2et7xuT1sf9ykGStewbvLnPs-rFaiYkHA1M3J8/edit?usp=sharing