

1: WHAT IS CRIME AND WHO IS THE CRIMINAL

- Crime is appealing because it captures our imaginations through emotions
- What is crime
 - No easy answer
 - Definitions ever evolving
 - Describes a vast range of offences e.g. non payment of fines to murder
 - Consensus or contested field?
- What shapes your views on crime?
 - Individual values
 - Personal experience – victim, perpetrator, bystander
 - Social context – parents/friends, school, job
 - Information sources – mass media, niche media, reading, thinking and discussing
- **Deviance** – ‘behaviour that violates the normative rules, understandings or expectations of social systems’
 - Exists wherever people hold others to behavioural standards
 - Criminology → breaking of formal vs. Sociology of deviance → breaking of informal norms
 - Public order offences – very minor ‘crimes’ at one end of the spectrum
 - Deviance can be criminal or non-criminal
- Examples of change overtime – rape in marriage, consenting homosexual acts, environmental crimes, cyber bullying
- Behaviours that are criminalised → **crime is ‘socially constructed’**
 - Vary across time and place
 - May be highly contested
 - May or may not be considered immoral
 - May be ‘normalised’ if commonplace
- We need criminal labels because,
 - Conservative – boundary definition and maintaining established consensus
 - Liberal – adjudicating between competing values and achieving consensus
 - Radical/critical – protect unequal social order

4 approaches to crime

- Legal approach – is it against the law?
 - ‘Crime is what the law defines as crime’
 - ‘The most precise and least ambiguous definition of crime is that which defines it as behaviour which is prohibited by the criminal code’
 - Criticism
 - The rich and authoritative create distinctions between deviance and normality. Their divisions are driven by the necessity for conflicting practical enforcement and conquest, domination and possession, which divides the world up into positive and negative, right and wrong, normal and deviant.
- Social harm approach – does it cause significant harm?
 - Regardless of the law, if an act causes enough harm that an individual group ought to be held accountable, then it should be regarded as a ‘crime’
 - Widens the scope of what is considered criminal behaviour
- Human rights approach – does it breach anyone’s human rights?
 - ‘Crime occurs whenever a human right has been violated, regardless of the legality or otherwise of the action’
 - Can be an individual, social relationship, social system etc.
- Social process/labelling approach – do other people think it’s a crime, and label it as such?
 - It is not the act that is inherently criminal but the way it is perceived by others which makes it a ‘crime’

Criminology

- Coined by Raffaele Garofalo, 1885
- Lanier and Henry, 2004 'the systematic study of the nature, extent, cause and control of law-breaking behaviour'
- Discipline of criminology
 - Deals with complexity and ambiguity
 - Multi-disciplinary
 - Sociological input (groups, society/social structure, environment, power)
 - Psychological input (the individual, behaviour, mental processes, personality, attitudes)
 - Situational input (the lived experience)
- Shared goals within criminology
 - Extent and nature of crime
 - Causes of crime
 - Formulation of criminal law
 - Enforcement of law (policing)
 - What to do about 'offenders' (sentencing)
 - How, why, to what effect to punish (penology)
 - How to prevent or control 'crime'
 - How to assist victims (victimology)
 - Considering the role of media, public opinion, politics

2: CRIME, MEDIA AND POLICY

- $\frac{3}{4}$ of the public form their opinions about crime from what they see or read in the news
 - Crucial role in shaping public perceptions
- Academic work in the field of crime and media
 - Cause – is the media affect behaviour
 - Construction of reality – distortion, may reinforce or challenge stereotypes
 - Fear – engender moral panic
- Who are the media?
 - Key communicators of information about crime, and influential on public opinion and policy information
 - Multiplicity of institutions
 - Mass media – means of mass communication
 - Can take many forms – print, visual, audio, digital/electronic etc.

Media representations of crime: Newsworthiness (!) – making the necessary choices for inclusion for media outlets as media can only portray certain things

- Immediacy – what's new and what has just happened
- Dramatization – sensational
- Personalisation – relatability
- Simplification – eliminating shades of grey for ease of digestion
- Titillation – voyeurism
- Conventionalism – we read to consume knowledge
- Structured access – authoritative voices, expert voices
- Novelty – how random and crazy it is
- Risk – notions of vulnerability and fear
- Proximity – geographical significance, cultural proximity
- Children
- The visual – imagery and lexical components, immediacy of watching live

What gets reported, how and why: Framing

- Mass media devote a great deal of energy to
 - Deviance, sensational crimes, scandals, bizarre happenings and strange goings on
- Journalists actively construct stories based on assumed audience – those who provide information to the media also help construct crime narratives
- Complex process of selection, processing, prioritisation shaped by the interactions between journalists, their editors, their working conditions and their sources of news (police, politicians etc.)
- Emphasis on particular facts, values and other considerations over other things
- Public depend on media for pictures to frame the crime
- Frames are pre-packaged constructions of associated ideas include factual and interpretative claims and associated policies
 - Simplifies the consumption of news
- Why framing occurs
 - Pragmatic reasons

Media representations of crime

- News and fiction stories about crime are prominent in all media. While there is evidence of increasing attention to crime in some parts of the media, overall this fascination has been constant throughout media history
- News and fiction concentrate overwhelmingly on serious violent crimes against individuals, albeit with some variation according to medium and market. The proportion of different crimes represented is the inverse of official statistics
- The demographic profile of offenders and victims in the media is older and higher status than those processed by the criminal justice system. Child victims and perpetrators are also represented disproportionately
- The risks of crime as portrayed by the media are both quantitatively and qualitatively more serious than the official statistically recorded picture, although the media underplay the current probabilities of victimisation by property crimes
 - Some crimes are reported a lot in the media and some crimes should be represented more
 - Need to be careful about drawing a linear cause and effect relationship between media and policy
 - Can highlight deficiencies in policies and can accelerate pace of reform
- The media generally present a very positive image of the success and integrity of the police, and criminal justice more generally. However in both news and fiction there is a clear trend to criticism of law enforcement, in terms of both its effectiveness and its justice and honesty. While in the past the unbroken media picture was that crime does not pay, this increasingly called into question in contemporary news and fiction
 - The presentation of systems of justice
- Individual victims and their suffering increasingly provide the motive force of crime stories

‘Law and Order’ politics – common misconceptions about crime and justice (!)

- Crime rates are soaring
- Crime is worse than ever
 - Nostalgia looks back to a golden age
 - New York and L.A. are pictured as the shape of things to come
- The criminal justice system is depicted as soft on crime and does not protect citizens
- The solution is identified as a need for more police with greater powers
- Tougher penalties
- Victims are encouraged to exercise revenge through the courts

Fear of crime and 'Moral Panic' (!)

- Over-reporting of crime can contribute to generalised social fear and anxiety
- Crime that makes it into the newspaper/TV constitutes a very small part of what is generally mundane, and routine actions of crime e.g. shoplifting, non-payment of infringement notices, parking fines
- **Moral panic** – public and political reactions to minority and marginalised individuals and other groups that appear to be a threat to interests of the community
 - Tendency to deal with any problem, first by simplifying its causes, second by stigmatising those involved, third by whipping up public feeling and fourth by stamping hard on it from above
 - Social reaction is fuelled by the media
 - Mass media defines these groups as deviant
 - Folk devils – individuals or groups who are blamed for problems in society
 - Scapegoat for social unrest
 - Represented as a threat to decent society
 - Labelled
 - Concern about folk devils amplifies to the point of moral panic
 - Cohen states that the behaviour of folk devils are actually the norm but are specifically scrutinised by the media to make it seem larger than it really is
- **Deviancy amplification cycle** – the moral panics are traceable
 - A group of people engage in a deviant act which may be defined as 'criminal' by crime control agencies
 - Media picks up the story and reports it selectively according to journalistic 'news values'
 - As the story catches readers' interests, media compete to produce the most attention-grabbing story. Exaggeration, distortion and stereotyping may be introduced as thresholds to keep the story alive

3: OFFICIAL CRIME STATISTICS AND THE DARK FIGURE OF CRIME

What do we mean by 'official crime statistics'

- We can't rely on media as an accurate source
- Epistemology – how we know i.e. thinking, experiencing, reasoning
 - There are limitations to each method
- **Official crime statistic** (legalistic definition) – a category of human acts that are proscribed by law and for which those responsible, if found guilty, are liable to some form of judicial punishment
- The amount of data kept varies and the public availability of data varies from country to country

Why we measure

- The 'Governmental' project
 - Managing crime → administrative criminology i.e. controlling crime
- The 'Lombrosian' project → understanding why, whether there is a specific criminal type
- Summary of purpose → to monitor, understand (research and evaluate), promote informed public debate, incidence, prevalence, severity, track progress of moral health, causes to help offender/community/victim, to help make good policy decisions

Who does the counting: sources of crime statistics

In Australia, possibly at each level of government (federal, state, local),

- Police
- Courts
- Prisons
- Justice Departments
- Oversight departments e.g. Ombudsman's office
- Non-government agencies e.g. Amnesty
- Built for purpose issue based agencies
- Built for purpose statistical agencies e.g. ABS

