

CRIM1010

SAMPLE

CRIMINOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION
COURSE WORK

Core Topics

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Core Topics

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Topic 1: Deconstructing Crime

Presented by Dr Sanja Milivojevic & Dr Jesse Cale

Lecture 1

What Is Criminology?

The term 'criminology' was coined in 1885 by Raffaele Garofalo (Lanier and Henry 2004:4). Criminology has its roots in other disciplines: anthropology, biology, economics, geography, history, philosophy, sociology, political science, police science, psychiatry, law and psychology to name a few (Lanier and Henry 2004:5-6).

The Discipline of Criminology

Criminology deals with complexity and ambiguity and is multi-disciplinary

- Sociological input (groups, society/social structure, environment, power)
- Psychological input (the individual, behaviour, mental processes, personality, attitudes)
- Situational input (the lived experience)

Definition of Criminology

Criminologists work to try and create knowledge about crime and its control through research and it's aim is to gain understanding of crime, its causes, how to prevent crime and how to formulate crime policies.

"Criminology can be defined as the systematic study of the nature, extent, cause, and control of law-breaking behaviour" (Lanier and Henry 2004:3)

The Seductions of Crime

Why does it appeal? Crime captures our imaginations. It:

- Attracts
- Repels
- Amuses
- Frightens
- Angers
- Intrigues

Key Concepts: Crime and It's Definition

- Legal approach: is it against the law?
- Human rights approach: does it breach anyone's human rights?
- Social harms: does it cause significant harm?
- Social process approach: do other people think it is a crime, and label it as such?

What Is Crime?

There is no easy answer and there is little consensus as definitions are ever evolving. Crime is however a social construction - a label imposed on particular behaviours. It describes a vast range of offences e.g. non payment of fines, insider trading, illegal waste dumping, murder etc.

What Shapes Your Views on Crime?

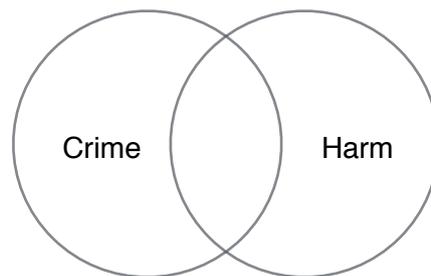
- Individual values
- Personal experience
 - As a victim
 - As a perpetrator
 - As a bystander
- Social context
 - Parents/Friends
 - School/Job
- Information sources
 - Mass media
 - Niche media
 - Reading, research, thinking and discussing

What Is Counted as Crime?

Q. Are there behaviours that you think are wrong but that are not criminal?

and conversely...

Q. Are there crimes that you don't think are really wrong?



Behaviours That are Criminalised

- ...vary across time and place
- ...may be highly contested
- ...may or may not be considered immoral
- ...may be 'normalised' if commonplace

Crime is 'socially constructed'

Processes of Boundary Defining

Criminalisation/decriminalisation. Institutional practice through which certain acts and behaviours (people?) are labelled as 'crimes' and 'outlawed' (Sage Dictionary of Criminology) --- or cease to be so labelled.

Examples of Changes Over Time

- Rape in marriage
- Consenting homosexual acts
- Environmental crimes
- Cyber bullying

A 'True' Picture of Crime?

- Stereotyping
- Sensationalism
- Magnification
- Mystification
- Marginalisation
- Privilege

Who is a Criminal?



Why Do We 'Need' Criminal Labels

- Boundary definition/maintaining established consensus (Conservative)
- Adjudicating between competing values/achieving consensus (Liberal)
- Protect unequal social order (Radical/Critical)

A Crime-Free Society?

"In the first place crime is normal because a society exempt from it is utterly impossible."

(Emile Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*, pp65-66, NY: Free Press, 1964, First published 1895)

Topic 2: Crime, Media and Policy

Presented by Dr Alyce McGovern

Lecture 2

Crime and The Media

3/4 of the public form their opinions about crime from what they see or read in the news (Marsh & Melville 2009). There is a constant 24/7 news cycle. Kidd-Hewitt (1995) on academic work in the field of crime and media:

- Cause
- Construction of reality
- Fear
- Impact

Who Are The Media?

The media are seen as key communicators of information about crime, and influential on public opinion and policy formation. Mass media are the means of mass communication. The media can take many forms:

- Print
- Visual
- Audio
- Digital/Electronic
- Fact/Fiction/'Faction'

Mass media outlets devote a great deal of energy to 'deviance; sensational crimes, scandals, bizarre happenings and strange goings on' (Cohen 1972:17). There are stories that make it and stories that don't (Jill Meagher's case). Journalists actively construct stories based on audience - those who provide info to the media also help construct crime narratives.

'Framing'

Media 'frame' news and information about crime

Frames - pre-packaged constructions of associated ideas include factual and interpretative claims and associated policies - ways we make sense of the world/ 'common sense' understandings

Simplify the world by processing, labelling and understanding of crime and justice easier for individuals.

- Murder - a predatory stranger who isn't deterred because the criminal justice system is too lenient (Jill Meagher's case)
- It's not safe for older people to go out at night because of random attacks by lawless youth
- P plate drivers are a danger to themselves and to others

The Media, Crime and The Politics Nexus

Can you think of any examples of crime/justice policy driven by media and public campaigning?
Some examples:

- Skye's Law- police car chases
- P Plate Legislation- Daily Tele campaign
- Gang rapes- changes to sexual assault legislation
- Four Corners corruption- Fitzgerald Inquiry

“Our Campaign to Stop Carnage”

From: The Daily Telegraph December 05, 2006

“The full extent of the national tragedy in which hundreds of young people are needlessly dying on NSW roads every year was revealed by The Daily Telegraph in 2004... The Daily Telegraph, in conjunction with road safety experts, proposed an answer to reduce the death toll. It took two years, and much lobbying, but the new laws were eventually introduced in January 2007... As a result, we sought to have three changes made to the law. Two were rapidly introduced”

They succeeded in enacting the following:

- Driver training
- Capping horsepower of cars
- Passenger restrictions
- Zero tolerance on speeding
- P1 drivers are banned from using mobile phones
- Tougher driving test

‘Law and Order’ Commonsense

1. Crime rates are soaring
2. Crime is worse than ever law and order nostalgia looks back to a golden age
3. New York and L.A are pictured as the shape of things to come
4. The criminal justice system is depicted as soft on crime does not protect citizens
5. The solution is identified as a need for more police with greater powers
6. Tougher penalties are called for
7. Victims are encouraged to exercise revenge through the courts (Hogg and Brown 1998: 21).

Election Time!

At election times in NSW crime and ‘fear of crime’ are hot issues - politicians use frames to gain political advantage. Politicians compete to outbid each other in being seen to be ‘tough’. They attempt to gain mileage out of more police, heavier sentences. Progressive policies, alternative voices, in depth balanced articles aren’t common.

Prisons – ‘penal populism’ = common sense understanding

Media Representations of Crime

Criminologists have conducted research to determine the common themes that the media use to represent crime.

Chibnall (1977)

- Newsworthiness
- Immediacy
- Dramatisation
- Personalisation
- Simplification
- Titillation
- Conventionalism
- Structured Access
- Novelty

Jewkes (2004/2010)

- Risk
- Proximity
- Children

Greer (2007)

- The Visual

Why Is The Disappearance Of Madeleine McCann Newsworthy?

- Immediacy (at the time and when new information arises)
- Dramatisation
- Titillation
- Novelty
- Children
- Risk

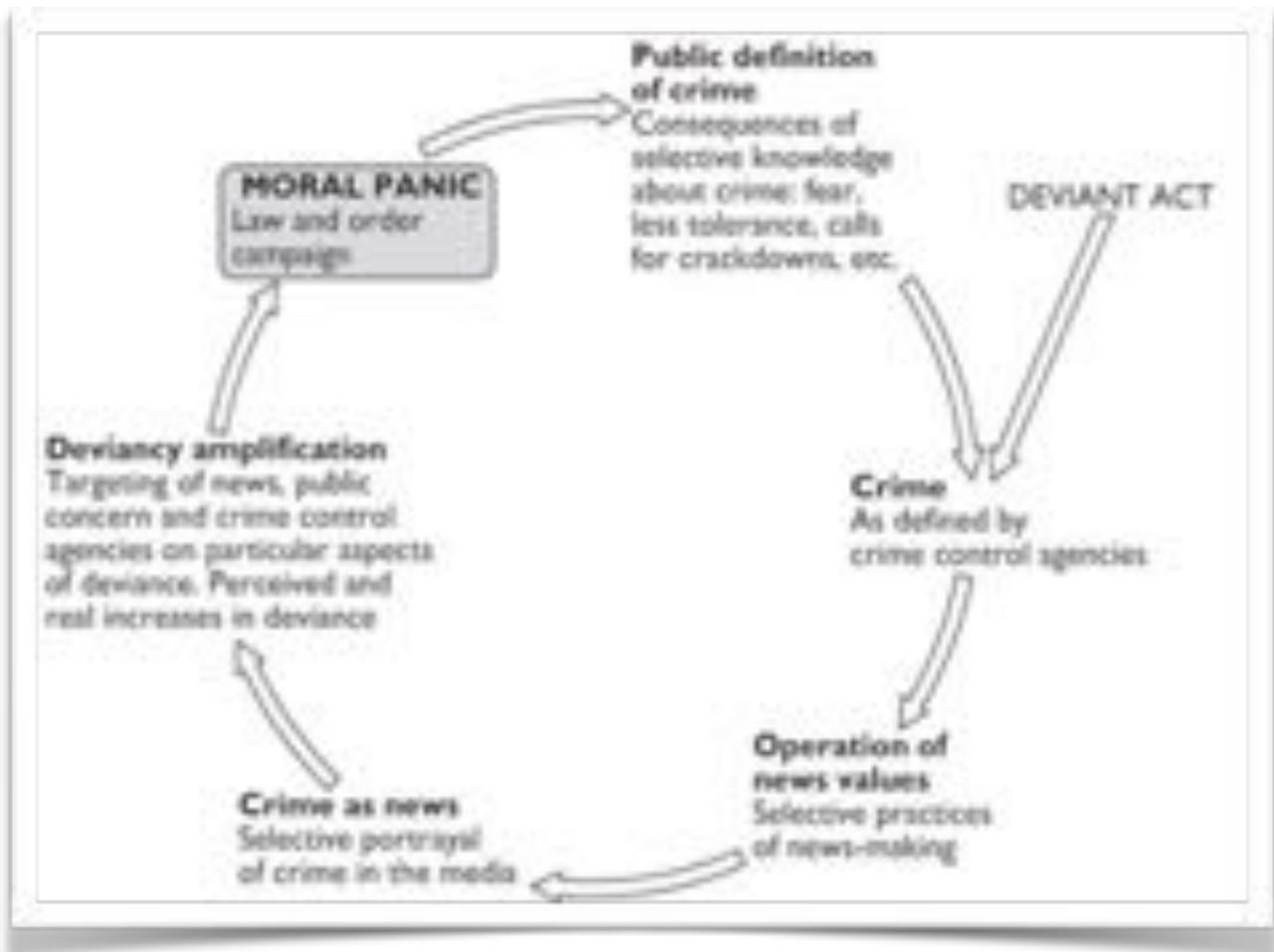


A Summary

(Reiner 2004)

1. 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.
2. 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. (Right)
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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 is increasingly called into question in contemporary news and fiction
6. Individual victims and their suffering increasingly provide the motive force of crime stories.





Fear of Crime

Over-reporting of crime can contribute to generalised social fear and anxiety. The crime that makes it into the newspaper/TV (i.e murder, manslaughter, rape, robbery) constitutes a very small part of what is generally mundane, and routine actions of crime such as shoplifting, non-payment of infringement notices, parking fines (Surette 1998:49; Weatherburn 2004).

Surette uses US statistics to show that murder and robbery account for 45% of newspaper crime news and 80% of TV crime news, where in fact murder constitutes only 0.2% of crime known to the police in the USA (even less in Australia). Murray Lee discusses the manufacture of 'fear of crime' as a social phenomenon

Moral Panic

"the tendency...is...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"

- (Hall 1978: 34 cited in Jewkes 2004: 77; Surette 1998: 202).

"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 stylised 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 ;and 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 of itself.”

- (Cohen 1972/2002:9)

Mods and Rockers

(Cohen 1972)

Folk devils that sparked moral panic.

Video link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r61ks18Bd7I>

Deviancy Amplification

A group of people engage in a deviant act, which may be defined as ‘criminal’ by crime control agencies. The media then picks up the story and reports it selectively according to journalistic ‘news values’. Then, as the story catches readers’ interests, the media compete to produce the most attention-grabbing story. Exaggeration, distortion and stereotyping may be introduced as thresholds to keep the story alive.

- (Jewkes 2004:70)

Deviancy Amplification: The Outcome

- Public call for protection and crackdowns on the deviants
- Politicians may seek to gain political mileage
- Police respond to public and political demands, for example zero tolerance
- This can feed back into the cycle
- A process of deviancy amplification is now in place
- Increases in real and perceived deviance occur as the group revel in their new status as ‘folk devils’ and become more like the monsters the media have created

Contemporary Contexts and Continuities

- Media influence public perceptions; are they the key influence on policy?
- Police increase involvement in the news making process (fact, fiction and faction) – is this a form of editorial control?
- Do we get critical representations of crime and victimisation?
- What is its impact on public knowledge and opinion when it comes to crime?

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