

What is “Criminology”?

And what is “crime”?

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Meaning Elements Science

Origins & Meaning Criminology

- ▶ **Classic definition**
 - Edwin Sutherland & Donald Cressey:
 - (law)making, (law)breaking, social reactions
 - Differs from criminalistics (forensic science)
 - Esp. crime-scene investigation (CSI etc.)
- ▶ **Origins of Criminology**
 - Latin *crimen* – “offense”
 - Coined by Paul Topinard (anthro.), 1889
 - But data older, research broader
 - Quetelet (1796–1874)
 - Rates stable
 - Esp youth, men, and poor

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Lecture Outline

- ▶ **Meaning of Crime**
- ▶ **Origins & Elements of Criminology**
 - Empirical Interests
 - Criminology & Sociology
 - Theoretical Perspectives (w/i Crim.)
 - Limitations of Criminology
- ▶ **Context for Studying Criminology**
 - Aims
 - Ways of Knowing (esp. Science)
 - Conceptual Levels

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Origins of Criminology, cont'd

- ▶ **Developed as a subdiscipline**
 - Now often a separate program
 - Intensively quantitative
- ▶ **Quetelet (1796–1874)**
 - Rates stable
 - Esp youth, men, and poor
- ▶ **Durkheim (1895)**
 - Deviance is normal (& nec. for change)
 - Structure, vs. individualism
- ▶ **Wells (1892) & DeBois (1899)**
- ▶ **Sutherland (1940s) – criminogenics**

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What is crime?

- ▶ **No common definition**
 - Socially harmful behavior?
 - How harmful?
 - Harmful but not banned?
 - Unlawful behavior?
 - Banned but not harmful? (talking in monastery)
 - Who decides?
 - Behavior formally processed as criminal?
 - Seems only demonstrably bounded idea
 - Crime = relative – to time, space, & case
 - Defined by reactions to behavior, not behavior itself
- ▶ **Meaning & Measures Vary Widely**
 - National, state, local, temporal variations
 - Whether measured, how, & by whom

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Criminology & Sociology

- ▶ **Sociology: scientific study of social life**
- ▶ **Sociology emphasizes *social beings* rather than individuals**
 - DVs: Behavior, attitudes, life chances
 - Ivs: Social structure & inequality
 - Durkheimian (?) – social forces, suicide
 - Public issues, not private troubles
- ▶ **Mutual relevance**
 - Concepts – anomie, reprivation, conflict
 - Methods – data, analysis,

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Empirical Interests

- ▶ Patterns of deviance that violate criminal laws.
 - Criminology of Criminal Law or Sociology of Law
 - Sometimes called theories of criminalization, not theories of crime.
 - Which acts come to the attention of authorities, and which are formally penalized
- ▶ Breaking laws
 - Criminogenesis, etiology (the study of causes), or crime causation.
 - Studying "the criminal mind"
 - Most interdisciplinary
 - anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, or sociology
 - NOT concerned w/ fighting crime or catching criminals more effectively
 - clinical, applied, and praxis (theory in action) criminology, as well as the field of criminal justice, advocating better management, investigation, social change, and systems, respectively.

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Criminology & Sociology, cont'd

- ▶ "Sociological Criminology"
 - Mostly redundant
 - Emphases: poverty, race, ethnicity, class, gender
 - "structural" criminology (Hagen, 1994)
- ▶ Modern Criminology
 - Return to individualistic explanations
 - Bio, psych, choices, etc.
 - Avoids important questions:
 - Historical & cultural variation
 - Social-structural variation
 - Variation in crime rates *and responses to crime*

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Empirical Interests, cont'd

- ▶ Reacting to lawbreaking (Most sociological)
 - Societal reaction theorists: media glamorization of crime, moral boundaries by which communities tolerate or do not tolerate crime
 - Social response theorists: justifications and consequences of different styles of reacting to crime
 - Normative theorists: determinants of norms (expectations for behavior)
 - Relativity of crime specialists: whether there is consensus of public opinion about seriousness of various criminal acts
 - Criminologists of criminal justice: often indistinguishable from criminal justice specialists
 - Study e.g. society's carrying capacity (rates of imprisonment and how many prisoners prisons can hold) or police strength (as an indicator of repressive social control). The three

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Theoretical Perspectives

- ▶ Functionalist
 - Focus: systematic relationships
 - Emphasis: purpose/need/goal fulfilled
 - Envisions: consensus, balance, harmony
- ▶ Conflict
 - Focus: diversity, inequality, inconsistency
 - Emphasis: inherent tensions & stratification
 - Envisions: competition, domination, subjugation

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(Good) Criminology is Sociological

- ▶ Crime *and state responses* as...
 - historically variable
 - rooted in a social context
- ▶ Unlike ethical accounts
 - *Empirical*, not normative
- ▶ Unlike psychological accounts
 - Emphasize interactions, groups, histories
- ▶ Unlike legal accounts
 - Consider disparities & inequalities
 - Sociological vs. Jurisprudential

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Theoretical Perspectives, cont'd

- ▶ Interactionist
 - Focus: individual, day-to-day behavior
 - Emphasis: nuances and routines to exchanges
 - Envisions: ongoing reproduction of meaning
- ▶ Geometric
 - Focus: empirical patterns, at any level
 - Not micro or macro (or meso) - but applies to all
 - Emphasis: how patterns of behavior are explained by social variations
 - Location
 - Direction
 - Distance
 - More
 - Envisions: multi-dimensional model w/ testable explanations

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Aims of Criminology

- ▶ Challenge assumptions w/ data
 - Verifiable knowledge – e.g. jobs & delinquency (parents & school)
- ▶ Policy recommendations
 - Edwin Sutherland, 1939: white-collar crimes
- ▶ Assess effectiveness of CJS programs
 - James Finckenaue & Scared Straight

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What is “scientific”?

- ▶ Five characteristics
 - Simple, general, valid, **testable**, original
- ▶ Each is a variable
 - Can be more or less of each (not absolute/binary)
 - More an idea is any of these, more scientific it is
- ▶ Can even predict when ideas are these
 - Scienticity varies curvilinearly w/ an observer’s familiarity w/ a topic or subject matter
- ▶ The more of each of these, the “better”
 - I prefer scientific approaches
 - Criminology does well (vs. Sociology generally)

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Alternative Perspectives

- ▶ Personal Ways of Knowing
 - Common Sense
 - Personal Experience
 - Popular Opinion
 - Intuition
- ▶ Classical Ways of Knowing
 - Tradition – Galileo
 - Authority – realms of expertise
 - Mysticism – faith
- ▶ Science
 - Describing and explaining observed patterns
 - Generalized from observations to other, like instances

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Examples of Scienticity

- ▶ Law varies curvilinearly w/ relational distance.
- ▶ Scienticity varies curvilinearly w/ the observer’s distance from the subject.
- ▶ Counting God
- ▶ Dancing Social Structures

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Why be Scientific?

- ▶ Personal Ways of Knowing
 - Powerful but frequently incorrect
- ▶ Classical Ways of Knowing
 - Resist/reclassify contrary evidence
- ▶ Science
 - Seeks valid and reliable data
 - Invites contradictory evidence, *for support*

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