What is “Criminology”?
And what is “crime”?

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

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

Meaning & Measures Vary Widely

- National, state, local, temporal variations
- Whether measured, how, & by whom

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

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,
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.

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

(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

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

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

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
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 Finkenauer & Scared Straight

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
  - Scientificity 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)

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

Examples of Scientificity

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

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*